NOTHING LIKE IT:

OR,

STEPS TO THE KINGDOM.

BY

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AUTHOR OF

"ALICE VALE," "HELEN HARLOW'S VOW," "MAYWEED BLOSSOMS," "SUFFRAGE FOR WOMEN,"

ETC., ETC.

"THY KINGDOM COME."

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TO THE LOVERS OF TRUTH

EVERYWHERE, TO THOSE OF WHOM THE WORLD IS NOT WORTHY, AND TO THOSE FOR WHOM SUCH PRAY IN DEEDS THAT TELL, IS

This Work

DEDICATED BY THE AUTHORESS.

FORWARD IS OUR WATCHWORD, AND TRUTH OUR PILLAR OF CLOUD BY DAY AND OF FIRE BY NIGHT.

TO THE READER.

KIND READER, — My characters are not such as are usually found in books; but they are none the less real, — are, indeed, more real than are any of those in my previous works. "Eben Rockman" is a friend of other years, though bearing a different name; still there are those who, if they read this book, can not fail to recognize who is intended. He was, as is stated, once a Methodist minister, but before his death was up to the most radical questions of this hour; and we have portrayed him as he would naturally have been under similar circumstances.

In "Minnie Morris" we have combined two living characters, making her greater than one and less than the other; and there are many facts connected with what I ascribe to her, enough to warrant me in saying that the character is not overdrawn.

In the one spoken of as "I," we have a living counterpart; a progressive mind with large caution

and small self-esteem, in which an educated conscience struggles with, but can not set aside, the truths that press themselves upon the understanding.

Robert Crandall is no uncommon character, and just such a one as our present order of society would naturally produce under some combinations of circumstances.

That we have portrayed, have fairly delineated, some of the causes that produce the unequal conditions of society, making ignorance and degradation prevalent, we are quite certain; and whenever we hear the prayer, "Thy kingdom come, and thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," we tremble before the import of the words uttered; for we know that there must come such a change, such an overturning, ere such a prayer can be answered, that the mighty ones of earth may well call upon the rocks and mountains to hide them.

But, no matter how new the thoughts advanced may be to you, we hope, dear reader, that you will not on that account set them aside, but will candidly weigh their import, taking them for what they are worth to you. And may the God of truth lead you into all truth! L W.

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NOTHING LIKE IT.

CHAPTER I.

A QUEER CHARACTER.

"Mankind should be like rivers free:
The less they are damned, the better."

ERPENTS, generation of vipers! how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" I was threading my way through the back streets of a Christian city, and wondering the while that, within sight of so many steeples, there should be so much misery, so much degradation, when the above words fell upon my ear with so startling an emphasis that, in spite of my hurry, I paused to see who had spoken them.

Turning in the direction of the sound, I found that I was not alone in my curiosity; for quite a group had gathered around a tall, singular-looking man, who stood with his head thrown back, his right arm extended, his chest heaving with emotion, and his eye flashing with a fire that seemed volcanic in its intensity.

"Eb is raving again," said a well-dressed but sensual-looking man standing near me.

"Who is he?" I asked.

"Oh! a half-crazy fellow who believes that society is all wrong. Rockman they call him, —Eben Rockman. I do not see what he is allowed to run loose for. But I suppose he is harmless."

The last words caught the ear of the one of whom they were spoken, and a look passed over his face which I have no power to analyze, — such a mixture of severity, pity, and contempt, all in one; the object of which cowered and shrank within himself as though from a flash of coming doom. This but a moment, however, and then he burst into a loud laugh with, —

"Come, Eb, don't annihilate a fellow."

"A fellow, are you? I am glad of it; something less than a *man*, of course; a sheep-thief, people used to call such when I was a boy."

Rockman paused till the laugh that this retort had produced died away, and then continued, "No, I would not annihilate a *fellow;* it would be too small a business: but, had I the power, I would kick this damned system of society to the hell in which it belongs, and to which it is going too, as fast as time can carry it."

"What has roused you so now, Mr. Rockman?" asked a clerical-looking gentlemen who had just come upon the scene.

"I suppose, parson, that you would say it was the devil, the natural depravity within me; but, if I should hold my peace, the very stones would cry out

against the self-righteous injustice of this Pharisaical world."

"It is necessary that we be charitable to all," replied the parson.

"Charitable? yes, even at the expense of justice. Look there."

I looked in the direction indicated by his finger, and saw a woman of perhaps thirty years of age issuing from the office of a petty justice, police-court, or something of the kind, — a place where men sit in judgment on woman; where they condemn her for breaking laws that she had no voice in making, and no control of the circumstances which pressed her into the breaking.

This woman was fair to look upon, notwithstanding the despairing expression upon her features; handsome she had been, was yet. There was something of her native dignity left, for the jeer of the crowd was hushed into silence ere it rose to the lip, and all seemed to feel the splendor, the majesty even, of the ruin that had been wrought, and so shrank back, and allowed her to be led away by the burly policeman without sending an insult after her.

The Rev. Mr. Small sighed and turned away. The well-dressed man who had called himself a "fellow" asked, "What's the crime?" and Rockman replied, "Love's sacrifice."

"Love's sacrifice?" I repeated inquiringly.

"Yes; do you not know that it is a sin to love? People can hate each other with impunity; but when, like an innocent child, a woman loves and trusts a man, then she is accursed, trodden under foot."

"Please explain yourself," said I, for there was something in this singular man that interested me.

"There is nothing to explain, madam; only she loved a man, or a being called by that name, and this is her requital. She bore him three children, or, rather, she bore the State three children; for as soon as they are old enough the State will take them, if it needs them, and send them off to be shot at. But the man she loved has forsaken her; and the State that makes laws for her without her consent refuses to provide for her while she is doing its work, and so she took what they and she needed; and this is the result."

"But where is her husband?"

"She has no husband that the law recognizes."

"No husband! What right has she with children, then?"

"The right that God Almighty gave her, madam, — the right in virtue of her being a woman."

"But"—

"The law had not said she might. I know it had not; but had the law any right in the matter?"

"We should be in a state of anarchy, if there were no laws to regulate society," I found tongue to say at length, in spite of the piercing eye that Rockman fixed upon me.

"Oh! come away, sister, and leave that crazy man to himself," said a voice near me.

"Yes: go, madam, and don't waste your time and strength on me," said Rockman; "go, and think out this question: Has the law, has God or man, the right to deprive us of the natural use of any organ of the body or brain?"

And then, turning, he walked away, repeating loud enough for all to hear, "God damn this thievish, Christian nation!"

I went to my bed that night earlier than usual, but could not sleep. My soul was full of questionings; and the voice of the singular being that I had met kept ringing in my ear, like the veritable curse of the Almighty. His closing words would have seemed the rankest profanity from any other lips; but as I remembered his tall form, his white hair, clear eye, and erect carriage, I could almost fancy that one of the ancient prophets had returned to earth to rebuke its sin.

And yet what strange ideas he had advocated? A woman a right to be a mother, and not a wife? Horrible! could I think of such a fate for my darling sister just budding into womanhood? And yet it might be hers; but woe to the man who would dare to wrong her! I would take his heart's blood. And then my mind went back to the woman I had seen led away a prisoner. Where was the father of her children? Who was he? Where were the children?

It was useless. I could not sleep: so I arose, bathed my face, dressed, and sat by the window till daylight broke. The first sound that I heard in the morning was that of an early workman in the adjoining lot, on which a house was being built. Presently he began to sing in an undertone, raising his voice a little as he entered into the spirit of the piece; and I caught the words, —

"Woe to the man whose wealth proclaims
Another man's undoing;
Whose palace walls so proudly rise
On interest, rent, and ruin!"

"Hallo there, John! you seem to be merry this morning. But where did you get those words,—

'On interest, rent, and ruin'?"

"I do not know, Mr. Wellby. I have heard them somewhere, I presume, and repeated them without thinking."

"I am glad you are not one of the discontented sort, John; for I should dismiss you if you were. I want none of your moping people about me. Why, where do you suppose I get the money to build this house?"

"Indeed I do not know, sir."

"Didn't care, so that you got the pay for your work, eh? Well, I guess you would be bad off if we moneyed men did not furnish you work. And it saves you the trouble of thinking too. All you have to do is to do your work, and take your pay for it."

"We ought to be very much obliged to you, Mr. Wellby, and very thankful for our lot, I presume," was the quiet reply.

"Come, now, don't be sarcastic, John, for I was just going to tell you where the money came from to build this house; and, as work is not very brisk this season, perhaps you would have gone hungry if I had not been able to build it."

"Please go on: I am listening."

"Yes: well, I suppose you know that twelve years

ago city lots were not as high here in this part of the city as they are now; and, more than that, there was a bankrupt sale of some half-dozen or more; and, having a little ready money, I got them for a mere trifle."

"Less than their real worth, sir?"

"Yes; but business is business, you know, John, and they had to be sold."

"True: a bankrupt sale, I think you said?"

"I did, and a pretty mess they made of it; got in debt to everybody, and then could not pay fifty cents on a dollar. Downright dishonesty I call that."

John looked up, as if he would speak, then, closing his lips firmly, looked down again, and went on with his work; but there was a sort of tremor, a nervousness in his movements, that had not been evident before.

I was becoming interested, and listened for the next word, fearing that I should lose it, or that some other portion of the conversation would escape me.

"Yes," he continued, after a moment's silence, "people have no business to go so beyond their means. But, as those lots were to be sold, I might as well have them as any one else; so I bought them, and in two years' time sold two of them for twice as much as I paid for the whole six. That money I sent West, for I could get a better rate of interest there than here. Twelve per cent I realized, getting my pay once in six months, one hundred and twenty dollars on two thousand, twice a year. I then borrowed three thousand here at seven per cent, and put up a house on one of the lots. Business grew

brisk, rents went up; and in two years from the time it was completed I received four hundred dollars rent-money; over and above interest on the three thousand, and taxes on the whole purchase, or what there was left, — the four lots and the improvements.

"This, with the two hundred and forty from the West, was the commencement of the second house; I managing to support my family, wife and one child, on what I could earn outside this business. In eight years from the time I made the purchase, I had the second house built and paid for without any additional debt. Two years more, and I had the third one built; and in the last two years I have paid up the three thousand, and have enough left to build another house.

"So much for interest and rents, and no robbery nor ruin about it. Those who have hired my houses have been glad to get them to do business in, and have made money out of it too; and the man who hired my money was glad to get that. I have given employment to many a poor man who did not know where else to go; and, taken as a whole, I feel that I have blessed the world, instead of cursing it.

"And blessed yourself too, Mr. Wellby."

"Yes; for to-day I would not take fifty thousand dollars for what I paid one thousand for twelve years ago."

"For the lots?"

"For the four lots and the improvements; it has all come from the six and my management."

"Has the same man held the money that you sent West, all these years?"

"Yes; or, rather, his widow has for the last two years. But, had I not taken pains to have had it well secured, I should lose it now; for, since the man's death, things have gone badly with them, and there are other debts. He would have worked out of his embarrassments, had he lived. I was there just before he died, and talked over his plans with him; but now I do not know how it will be. But I am secure, at all events; for the farm and buildings at forced sale and half price will bring twice that sum; and, as I have the first mortgage, no one else can get any thing till my claim is satisfied."

"So your one thousand twelve years ago has become fifty thousand here, and the two thousand there beside. Mr. Wellby, you seem to be a fortunate man; but I do not think I would change places with you."

"You are a sensible man, John Brown, and you may well say that; for no one knows the care and perplexity that property is, but those to whom it is intrusted; and, as the Lord's stewards, we have no right to set it aside."

"Woe unto you, scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites," rang out upon the morning air; and I turned to see my friend of the day before rapidly approaching. He paused beside of employer and employed, looked at each a moment, and then to Brown, "'Thou art faithful over a few things, and shall yet be ruler over many;'" and to Wellby, "'Woe unto those who devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers;' the Lord's stewards indeed;" and, passing on with rapid strides, was soon lost to sight.

Wellby and Brown looked at each other in astonishment, while the latter after a moment asked, "How did he know what you were saying? he certainly was not near enough to hear."

"I do not know," was the reply, "unless the Devil helps his own; for surely, if ever any one was possessed of the Devil, it is old Rockman."

"He seems quite familiar with Scripture," said Brown.

"Yes; as much so as was his master when he took Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple."

"He is harmless, I believe?"

"Yes, only so far as his tongue goes; and, if I had the control of him, he would use that less. But I must go, or I shall lose the boat. Good-morning, John: I shall trust you to see that all goes right till my return." And the man of money passed quickly down the street toward the landing, while John resumed his singing. This time his refrain was, —

> "Whose money comes from usury,
> And brings another's ruin."

I was sitting close to the window that looked out over the new wall that was going up; and the sounds floated up to me on the still morning air as distinctly as though uttered in my room. But the blind was partly closed, so the speakers had not seen me, and doubtless never once suspected that they had a listener; but their words were not soon forgotten. Indeed, the fact that I am now penning them down, shows that they are not likely to be forgotten. But the sound of the breakfast-bell aroused me from the

train of thought into which I had fallen; and for the time it was dropped.

The next morning, however, as I sat by the open window fronting the street, Eben Rockman again made his appearance; he saw me, bowed, crossed over, and rang the bell. My sister went to the door.

"Say to the lady I would like to see her a few moments."

"Yes, Mary, show the gentleman this way," I said; for I had heard what he asked.

"May the blessing of the Lord rest upon his handmaiden!" he said, bowing low as he entered. "I ask no pardon for this intrusion," he continued; "for I feel that thou art chosen to a work in the vineyard, that thou wilt willingly do, when thou seest the path plain before thee. This is a wicked and perverse generation; but woman shall yet be clothed with the sun of power, and the moon shall be under her feet."

I looked at my strange visitor in silence, for I knew not what to reply. Just then the refrain of the song of the workman in the adjoining lot came plainly, and to me it seemed plaintively, to my ear, —

> "Whose palace walls are proudly built
> From usury that bringeth ruin."

Rockman listened, as if to hear more; but whatever came next was lost in the noise of the hammer. "Poor soul! there is a tale to that undertone, if we could only learn what it is," was the next comment.

This opened the way for me to speak; and I told him what I had heard Wellby say the day before.

"Two thousand dollars for ten years, at twelve per cent interest, twenty-four hundred dollars, — four hundred more than the original sum," said Rockman as if to himself; and then turning to me, he asked, "And, if this steward of the Lord had paid twelve per cent on each six months' interest that has been paid back to him, how much do you suppose, madam, the amount would have been?"

"I do not know," I replied, "but nearly as much as the original sum, I should think."

"True; but, instead of paying twelve per cent, he has made it bring him more than that, so the matter stands thus: For the use of two thousand dollars ten years, he has received two thousand four hundred dollars direct, and usury on that sum, through the tricks of trade, at even a higher than twelve per cent, for the time varying from nine years and six months, down to six months.

"But the interest on two thousand two hundred and ninety dollars for six months, at twelve per cent, is one hundred forty-five dollars, eighty cents."

"Where do you get that sum for six months?" I asked.

"It is the amount from the two thousand at twelve per cent for nine years and six months; and Wellby has had the use of these sums, as they have been paid from time to time, and, from his own statement, has made them turn to what he calls good account."

"Yes, I see now," I replied after a moment's thought; and Rockman continued, —

"At the end of the first six months, he received one hundred and twenty dollars; we have counted

the interest on that for one six months in our last statement; that would give, in nine years, one hundred twenty-nine dollars, and over. But I will not go on bothering you with figures: you can work it out for yourself. According to his own statement, however, Wellby has made that two thousand pay him more than twice the amount; and now he talks of securing the original sum. Outrageous! damnable!

"Yes, I know it sounds rough," he said as if in reply to my thought; "but not half so rough as it will be on that poor widow when her home is sold as a sacrifice to, and she left penniless by, the wolves of usury."

"I did not reprove you, sir," I said.

"Your lips did not, madam, but your eyes did. No, you need not regret it: it is no more than is to be expected from the way we have been educated. Avoid rough things, seek smooth things, be delicate, tender, refined; better slide down to hell on a polished surface, than to climb into heaven over thorns and briers. 'Prophesy smooth things unto us;' that is the language of the people; but woe unto them that sew pillows to all armholes, that cry, 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace!"

"You seem familiar with Scripture," I said.

"I am, madam, and I ought to be: I was a Methodist minister for twenty years, and the power of the Lord went with me. I have had sinners lying in heaps all about me, crying, agonizing for mercy. The groan of anguish that told of soul travail, the shout of the new born — well, well, I see, I feel, I am in the spirit of it now; but it is past, it is past;

the glory has departed. Ichabod is written upon all the borders of that people; I am alone, alone." Here his voice fell to a low, wailing pathos, ending in a gush of tears.

He had remained standing, merely bowing as I requested him to be seated; but now he sank into the nearest chair, and sat some minutes, as if lost in thought.

"Forgive me," he said, at length, rising slowly to his feet, "but even Jesus wept over Jerusalem."

Then clasping his hands, in attitude of supplication, with eyes upraised, and head thrown back, he exclaimed, "Oh, my country, my country! Father, if it be possible, let the bitter cup pass from it;" and then with a "Good-morning, madam," he left the house, and walked rapidly away.

His manner was so earnest, and the transition so quick, so entire from the tone of anguished entreaty to that of common politeness, that I was completely puzzled, and could come to no decision whatever concerning him. Was he crazy? If so, there was method in his madness. But the cares and duties of the next few days drove all thought of him from my mind; and it was months before I met him again.

CHAPTER II.

LOVE AND LAW.

"Love divine, all loves excelling,
Fix in me thy humble home."

LOVE is the fulfilling of the law." These were the words that the Rev. Arthur Berrian took for his text one sabbath morning, some three months after the occurrence related in the last chapter.

I had not met Mr. Rockman since; but somehow, as these words were read from the desk, the thought of him came to my mind, and I involuntarily looked around as if expecting to see him. Nor was I mistaken: there he sat, three or four slips in front, and just far enough to the right, so that, by turning a little sideways, he could look me in the face.

He was doing so when I looked up; perhaps it was the magnetism of his eyes that drew mine that way. I was surprised, and a little annoyed, at the fixedness of his gaze. Its expression was that of questioning, as though he was trying to read something, to solve some problem. After a few moments a conclusion seemed to have been reached; and then he dropped his eyes, leaned forward till his head rested on the slip in front of him, and never once looked up again during service.

But the sermon was spoiled for me. I could not listen to it. I do not know why, nor whither my mind wandered; but I seemed in a sort of dream, and this continued till far into the night. True, I did whatever the occasion required, arose when the congregation arose, spoke to my friends when service was over; but it was like a dream in a dream, and all done mechanically.

About a week afterward Rockman called again. "Well, madam, what do you think of love's being the fulfilling of the law?" was his first salutation.

I looked at him, but made no reply. I could not think why he should ask such a question.

"Do you not remember the text of last sabbath?" he asked.

"Oh!" said I, and that was all I could think to say.

"You heard the text, but not the sermon," he continued, smiling.

"How did you know that?" I asked.

"By your looks and manner."

"By my looks and manner! you did not once look at me during the sermon!" I exclaimed.

"Perhaps not; yet I saw you, and saw, too, that you will one day hold this sin-cursed people to the logic of their own teachings."

"The logic of their own teachings?"

"Yes, — that 'love is the fulfilling of the law.'"

"Who and what are you?" I asked in astonishment; for his manner awed me.

"The Devil, some say; those who, were He here, would call the master of the house Beelzebub."

"But who do you say that you are?"

"Eben Rockman, a man who has been in a trance with his eyes open; and 'man can not hide what Heaven would reveal:' so says the poet, and so say I. But never mind what I am, or what I predict; you remember what I said to you when we first met, that woman has a right to become a mother in virtue of her womanhood?"

"Yes, I remember it," I said.

"Well, put that with the Bible declaration, 'Love is the fulfilling of the law.' But first let me ask, what law is referred to, human or divine?"

"Divine law, of course."

"When the divine law is fulfilled, has the human a right to step in, and exact something more?"

"It would seem not," I replied hesitatingly; for I did not see the full bearing of his questioning, though I had a glimpse of it.

"Well, I will change the form of the question a little: have Christians a right to exact more?"

"I can not see that they have, Mr. Rockman."

"Don't put a handle to my name, madam. Once I needed the Mr. and the Rev., but I have grown big enough to do without either. I am simply Eben, the son of Sarah and John. I would not allow the Rockman, only for the convenience of the people; I do not need it. Reid, Sarah Reid, was my mother's name; and I have as good a right to be Eben Reid as Eben Rockman, — should, only my mother was a slave, and my father her master."

"Your mother a slave! you have no colored blood in your veins?"

"None, only red; and that, I believe, is the prevailing color of healthy blood; if you mean African blood, no; but there are other slaves than those of African descent."

"I have never seen any," I said.

"Is not 'love the fulfilling of the law,' madam? and, if so, any additional bond enslaves."

"But you would not have us do without law?"

"I would have law fulfilled; love alone can do this. Legal enactments cannot fulfill: they make void the divine law, if they have any effect whatever. When in accordance with love, they are a useless addition; and, when contrary to, they supersede, or, as I have said, make void."

I must have looked the perplexity I felt; for he regarded me a moment with a sort of paternal manner, and then said, "Do not try to solve the problem now, but watch and wait; it will all come clear in time. 'Here a little, and there a little.' When will the people reach the stature of men and women in Christ Jesus?"

"But I do not believe in Christ Jesus in the sense that the church teaches," I said.

"You need not believe in him at all, unless you choose; believe in yourself, and you will find your Christ soon enough."

"My Christ?"

"Yes; for 'love is the fulfilling of the law.' Christ came to fulfill the law; and those who love have found their Christ.

"But I will mystify you no more now; think of what I have said, and watch and pray; and may the God of Eben bless thee! Fare thee well."

This last visit of Rockman had a most singular effect upon me, and I resolved that I would not see him again. I had read of mesmerism, and witnessed some experiments in that direction; and, having never felt such an effect from any one else, I came to the conclusion that it was psychology, or mesmerism, and, as such, to be avoided.

So I told each member of the family separately, in order to impress it upon their minds in a way that they could not forget it, that they were not to let him in if he called; deciding for myself to keep out of his sight if possible, and, if accidentally meeting him, to ignore him, and get away from his vicinity. This done, I resolutely set myself to the duties devolving upon me, determined to drive even the thought of him away.

But this was not so readily done: he had opened a floodgate, and it was not easily closed. I saw more reason in his remarks, more truth in his suggestions, in his questionings, than I was willing to admit.

I feared to be convinced of what was being urged upon me by observation, and the pertinacity of my own reasoning. I could not, I would not, have it proved to me that the profession and practice of even good people were entirely at variance; in a word, that it was utterly impossible, under the present order of society, to obey even the plainest teachings of Scripture.

Finally, I settled down to the conclusion, that all that was required of us was to do the best we could under the circumstances; that God was not unjust; that he would demand of us only what we were able

to perform. I say I settled down to this conclusion, and so I did. But I could not rest upon it; for I found that to be relieved of the fear of God's displeasure was not enough; I wanted the blessing of being able to bless others; I wanted the power to DO, to remove the causes of the evils that everywhere prevailed. Was I presuming? Was I trying to take God's work out of his hands? At last, however, I succeeded in smothering the voice of my own heart, in a measure at least.

"It is of no use," I said; "I can do nothing." So I determined to ignore the evils that I could not cure; but Eben Rockman was my fate, my Nemesis, would not let me sleep. I had, as I supposed, nearly gained the point of indifference which I sought, when the voice of that disturber of my peace fell upon my ear with the following startling words: —

"Pay the price of your ignorance till you learn that the cause is not beyond your reach. Talk of the altar of sacrifice! Talk of fires extinguished, of the sacrifice being made once for all in the person of Jesus! The altar is yet standing; it is piled high even at this hour, and the flame is consuming that which is laid thereon. And still they come; heaps upon heaps slain by the Samson of human prejudice, of human power; by the jawbone, not of dead, but of living stupidity."

By this time he had passed beyond hearing; or, at least, I could no longer understand what he was saying, though I still caught the sound of his voice as it floated out upon the air.

I wonder, even yet, how I retained so clearly what

I did hear; not a word lost, but all as distinct as if written upon my brain with a pen of fire; but the sentence that impressed me most of all was, —

"Pay the price of your ignorance till you learn that the cause is not beyond your reach."

These words came to me with a power of conviction that I could not rid myself of. Not beyond our reach? not beyond our reach? Surely, causes belong to God, and not to us. So I reasoned, but so I could not feel with those words ringing in my ears as they came from Eben Rockman's lips that morning; and, since then, I have searched for causes with a ceaseless searching.

It must have been at least a year before I met this strange man again, and then under circumstances that I shall never forget till my dying day. I was passing along the outskirts of the city in search of the residence of an old schoolmate who had lately moved into the vicinity. I had her street and number, but, not being familiar with the neighborhood, did not know exactly where to look. I was upon the point of inquiring, when a crowd just ahead of me attracted my attention.

I moved quickly forward to learn what it meant; when a woman started up, and attempted to move forward, but reeled, and caught the lamp-post for support.

"Are you sick, or drunk?" asked one of the crowd.

"Both," she fairly shrieked; "sick of this false world, and drunk with despair."

Great heaven! yes, it was — it was my little

Rose, the pet of my schoolroom ten years before, my darling, blue-eyed gazelle that I had loved almost as if she were my own child.

I sprang to her side. "Who has done this?" I exclaimed, in an agony of grief.

Rose looked up, recognized me, and fainted. I caught her in my arms, and rained tears over her upturned face.

"Let me have her," said a voice as tender as a woman's; and Eben Rockman took her from me, took her in his strong arms, and, bearing her through the crowd, turned into a house near by, and laid her upon the sofa in the parlor, the door of which was standing open.

I followed him; and, as soon as he had deposited his unconscious burden, he turned to me with, "I am at home here: it is all right."

"Why, uncle, whom have you here?" said a pleasant-looking woman coming in from the back way.

"One who has fallen among thieves, and been stripped of all." And then straightening himself to his full hight, with his eyes flashing like coals of fire glowing to the white heat, and his right arm extended, he exclaimed, "Serpents, generation of vipers! how can ye escape the damnation of hell?"

"Ye priests, ye Pharisees, ye preach from your pulpits that love is the fulfilling of the law; and this is the reward that one gets for loving."

"Where am I?" said the poor girl, as she opened her eyes, and looked around with a bewildered air.

"Where the angels of God are watching over you, my poor lamb."

"Rose, my sweet darling," I said, laying my hand caressingly upon her fair head.

"Mr. Rockman, and my teacher that I have not seen for so long: what does it mean?" Then, as if something had come back to her that she had for a moment forgotten, she uttered a quick, gasping, "Oh!" followed by such a despairing cry as I never wish to listen to again.

Rockman's frame shook with the intensity of his emotions. "I must say it, or die," said he; and then he burst forth with the words I had heard him utter once before, "God damn this thievish, Christian nation."

"Don't, Mr. Rockman! don't call on God to curse anybody: forgive them as I do," said Rose, who seemed calmed and steadied through the intensity of his emotion.

"It is well for you to say that, little one; but you could not have done it, had I not scattered the force of your agony by that very curse. I can stand it, and you can not; I have been a sort of lightning-rod to carry off the surplus charge."

This reply surprised me exceedingly; and I must have looked what I felt, for he said, as if in response, "Never mind, madam: I will explain that to you another time."

"I think I understand it," said Rose, "though I never thought of it before."

"Can you explain it?" he asked.

"No, but I can feel it. Still," she added, after a moment's pause, "I can not say that I am glad of the relief, for it only prolongs the torture; and, the

sooner it is over, the better. I have lived too long now."

"No, no, you must not die," said Rockman: "you must live, live to help find out and destroy the causes which lead to such results."

"The cause is plain enough," she answered. "It is only to love and trust a man; and the rest follows as certain as night follows day."

"O little Rose! there is strength where that bitterness came from; you are worth a dozen dead ones yet," he said.

The pleasant-spoken woman, who had addressed Rockman as "uncle," had been absent from the room a few moments: she now came with water and towels, and, handing them to him, said, "Now, you two see that she is well washed; bathe her face, neck, and arms; it will help to rest her; and after a little I will bring her some tea and toast."

When this was done, and her supper eaten, Rockman said, "You will stay here, Miss Rose, for the present. I have not had a sweetheart for some time, and I think you will do me if you will be good."

"Had I no worse men to deal with than you are, I should never be harmed," was her reply.

"Don't be too sure, puss: remember that there was one woman so lovely that she drew an angel from the skies, or, rather, God himself, if the book is true."

"Why, Mr. Rockman!"

"Shocked, are you?"

"Yes: how can you compare me to her who was counted worthy of being the mother of Jesus?"

"And he was counted worthy to be her son; I do not see but the honors were even; and, as to you and Mary, I do not know why one loving woman is any worse or any better than another, only as they differ in the degrees of their love. If they get defiled by loving, the defilement is an outside matter, and not a part of them."

Rose looked bewildered, shocked at the reasoning used, and Rockman only laughed. "Poor little one!" he said, "somebody knocked it down, and trampled on it, and it is ready to die with self-abasement; better get well, grow strong and self-respecting."

The unhappy, wronged girl dropped her head upon her hands, and wept convulsively; and Rockman quietly left the room. As soon as she could listen, I gave her a few kind words, and then proceeded to the place I had started to find.

I afterward learned poor Rose's story, gathered the history of her wrongs from her own lips, and I must say that I had not deemed such things possible; but further investigation and experience has shown me, *not only possible, but true.*

But to return to Mr. Rockman, or Rockman without the Mr., as we called him, both because it was easier, and because it suited him better: I was not at all pleased with his rough expressions when strongly excited. I felt that he had a great, warm heart; but why mar the effect of his manifest goodness? and I resolved to talk with him seriously upon the subject. I had not long to wait, for he called the very next morning.

As it happened, I answered the bell; and his first words were, "Well, are you going to let me come in?"

"Of course I am: why do you ask that?"

"I thought you would change your mind if I waited long enough," said he as he walked past me to a seat.

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"You did not intend to be bothered with me any more, when I left your house last, madam."

"Who told you that?"

"God told me,—the God of Eben Rockman; and he further told me to stay away till you had need of me; and that time has come."

I could only look my astonishment; and he continued,—

"You think you do not; but never mind that. Your spirit called me; and I have come, and am ready to ease you of some of your load by allowing you to criticise me."

"Now, don't go out and ask your friends to come and see a man who has told you all you ever did; for I have only hinted at a few things that you have thought, and that only where those thoughts flowed toward me. I can do it with but now and then one, and you are of the number."

I thought of Mesmer again, and decided that it were wise for me to be on my guard.

He read my thought, and said, "You are mistaken, madam; this comes by no will-power of mine; neither do I know the law which controls it. I only know that it is so, and that we have a work to do with and for each other.

'God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform.'"

"This is very singular," I said at length.

"Yes; I am one of God's peculiar people, and you are another: only you have not blossomed yet. A rosebud of one color or variety does not look so different from that of another; it is the blossom which tells the story."

"And do you think that I shall ever blossom out to swear?" I asked, pleased that I had found a path to what I wished to say, at last.

"Perhaps not: I hope not," he replied.

"What is your reason for hoping that?"

"Because, madam, I do not wish you to have that kind of work to do; would rather do a double amount of it myself to save you."

"But I can not see the necessity of its being done at all, sir."

"I presume you can not; and you have been puzzling your brain ever since I left you yesterday, as to how you could convince me that I should not talk so. I thank you for the compliment you thus unwittingly give me."

"I can not see any compliment in it. It seems to me that your language should comport, somewhat more at least, with your white hairs and venerable appearance."

"Appearances are deceitful, madam, but the compliment comes in just here. If you did not believe that I intend to do right as fast as I see the right, you would not try to show me an error; for you would know that it would be of no use."

I did not attempt to reply; for I was in doubt whether to proceed, or drop the subject.

"Yes; go on, I wish to hear your strong reasonings. It will do you good, if I get no benefit therefrom."

"But, really, Mr. Rockman, can you see any possible good in the use of such language?"

"Full as much as there is in your putting a handle to my name; and to me it is a necessity, consequently of great use. Air will bear but a certain amount of pressure; when that point is reached, there must be egress equal to the ingress, or there is an explosion. The pressure may be so great, and the means of escape so small, that it comes with a report like a pistol. This does not suit sensitive ears; but is it not better than an explosion?"

"I should say it was an explosion, when it comes with a force like that," I replied, laughing in spite of myself.

"Yes; an explosive warning, which, if not heeded, is only a precursor of complete wreck. I wish I could say smooth things; wish I could draw the elements from the overcharged mental, moral, and spiritual atmosphere as quietly as the lightning-rod draws the electricity from the over-burdened clouds, and conveys it to the bosom of our common mother, earth."

"But, my friend, there are principles in the philosophy of nature which enable us to so construct the lightning-rod that it can do this: is there not power enough in the soul, through the application of spiritual principles, to make us to the moral, what

that rod is to the physical, the quiet extractors of evil?"

"Not extractors, madam, but equalizers. It is only the unbalanced condition which makes that which is of itself good, an evil."

"Well, no matter about the terms, so that we get at the bottom of this question; can we not become spiritual lightning-rods?"

"Yes; and, were there enough such, all could go on smoothly; but, where the supply is not equal to the demand, there must be destruction somewhere, or those in use must take on an extra charge, shocking and throwing back those in the vicinity, but, after all, doing less damage than if the stroke had come elsewhere.

"I tell you, madam, we are safety-valves, saviors, though not recognized as such. The pressure brought to bear on the wronged souls, who have no voice to speak for themselves, is so great, that, but for such expression as is forced through lips like mine, I sometimes think that the very air would take fire, or the stones cry out. The masses who move on in the ordinary routine of life are insulated from all this; shut out, or rather, shut in, as the occupants of pleasant parlors are shut in from the winter's blast.

"But there are some who are caught in the draught when the doors are open: such get some idea of the strength of the tempest, and they give an audible shiver. So spiritually, there are tides, currents, rivers, of human woe that permeate the moral atmosphere; and there are souls who are so

related to these currents that they express the language of wailing or indignation, with at least a tithe of the strength with which it comes to them; they must do this, even at the risk of jarring upon musical ears, or chilling sensitive plants.

"It would be useless for me to express this to the multitudes; but there is that in your nature, which will enable you to comprehend this in part now, and more fully after a while. Those who are counted as the prophets of the ancient time were of this class. They only expressed what came to them by contact with the inner life of humanity, poured forth in glowing language the unconscious and yet sensed possibilities that were borne upon these currents, gave expression in God's name to the condemnation of the ignorance, the wrongs, which prevented the actualization of these possibilities. I tell you, the kingdom of heaven is within us; we are the temples of the living God, but, as yet, temples with darkened windows, and muddy walls. We do not have to go hence to find God; we only need to purify the temple; then the glory that is within will shine out. It is coming, it is coming!" he exclaimed suddenly, while his face shone as though bathed in light.

But this changed quickly to a look of intense suffering, while he added, "But oh the agony of the purification! for our God is a consuming fire." And then, as if the atmosphere was becoming too close for him, he abruptly left the house.

For my part, I was more than astonished; I was bewildered. Was this man what they called him, half insane?

Well, whatever he was, I would not attempt to convince him that he was wrong again. I would take my way, and he must have his without criticism from me; I was not equal to the task.

But where was this to end? What was to be the result of the law of sympathy which seemed to unite us? Should I strive to break it, or should I let things take their own course? I finally decided upon the latter, for I must know more of Rose; and, to see her, I must meet him again, for she was still where he had taken her the day before. I was mistaken, however, in my supposition that I should meet him at the house of Mrs. Thorn (the lady who had called him uncle). He had taken himself away, and left Rose wholly to me.

In answer to my inquiry concerning him, Mrs. Thorn said, "I do not know; he goes and comes as he pleases, and I never question him."

"But is he really your uncle? or do you only call him that because of his years, and for acquaintance' sake?" I asked.

"He is my mother's step-brother, madam, and one of the best men I ever knew. I am used to his singular ways, so they do not annoy me as they do strangers."

"He seems a good man," I remarked, a little ashamed of the curiosity which prompted my questioning. "How is Rose to-day?"

"Better in body, but very much depressed. I am glad you have come. It will do her good. You will find her up stairs in the front chamber. Please walk up, and excuse me, for I am very busy," said she, opening the door, and pointing the way.

Rose shuddered, and covered her face with her hands, when she saw who it was; and I had considerable difficulty in getting her to talk with me at all. The full force of her situation was pressing itself upon her so keenly, that the poor girl seemed utterly incapable of control.

Finally I calmed her somewhat, and so far won upon her as to get her to promise that she would go home with me, if I would come for her after dark. She was in such a state of mind, that I feared that she made this as an excuse, and would slip away from me when I left; so I staid till nearly night, keeping her mind occupied as well as I could with subjects that tended to lead her thoughts away from herself. At last I told her that I had an errand to do, but would return for her soon; and then, charging Mrs. Thorn to see that she did not leave the house till my return, I hastily secured a carriage, and a policeman to aid me if she attempted to break from me at the door, and hastened back.

But she made no objection to going with me; seemed glad that she could ride, and, as the policeman kept in the shade, had no suspicion of my precautions. I had resolved to keep her with me, and I succeeded, even till months lengthened into years; and I never once had reason to regret doing so. She took the place of the sister who soon left me for a home of her own, and was ever after as a sister to

CHAPTER III.

A THRIVING YOUNG MAN.

YES, a thriving young man was Robert Crandall: so every one said who knew him, and to all appearances they told the truth; but "things that are, and things that seem," often bleed in fantastic strife in this stage of existence.

If to prosper in externals is to thrive, then Robert Crandall was a thriving young man. If it is to be cool, calculating, ambitious, and to know how to adapt means to the accomplishment of self-aggrandizing schemes, then Robert Crandall was a thriving young man. But if more than this is required; if honor, truth, veracity, soul-growth, must be taken into the account, — then it might be questioned as to whether he was what the world called him.

"Why did he not marry?" this was the question that mammas with daughters to sell often asked, to themselves at least, even if they were kept from expressing their query aloud lest they should be suspected of being interested.

Yes, why did he not marry? Ask that blue-eyed little woman who stands aside from the crowd, but follows him with her eyes as he passes, and, when she sees him lift his hand to his head in a careless

and yet peculiar manner, — ask her, as with a smile in her eye, she turns and glides quickly away. She will not say to you that she even knows who he is; but in her soul she will be thinking, "Some day they will know that he is married; but not yet, not yet. Well, I can afford to wait, for he knows best; but I wish the time would come."

That motion told her that he would be with her soon. And he, — he is thinking, "How she loves me! It is too bad to deceive her so; but a man can not afford to sacrifice his prospects to a foolish marriage. And yet she is so sweet and true! She believes in me as she does in God. And what a face and form! How the fellows would envy me, if they knew! But I must keep my secret yet a while, for I can not do without her: her love gives me life when I am tired, worn out with anxiety. If I go to her, my brain becomes clear, my pulse even, and I can see my way out of any difficulty that comes up." And then, as if a thought had occurred to him for the first time, he adds after a moment, "I wonder if all women are such helps to men."

But he is there now. He ascends the stairs, he walks in at the open door; it is quickly shut behind him, and he is as quickly clasped around the neck by a pair of white arms.

"How is my little wife to-night?" he asks, as he returns her warm caresses.

"Happy, now you are here, Edwin." You see that he has not even given her his real name, that is, his first name. He has a cousin who somewhat resembles him, whose name is Edwin Crandall; this

cousin is "rather wild;" so, if Robert's affair should leak out, it would be laid to Edwin, and people would think it only another of his *liaisons*.

When Robert Crandall first met Clara Warren, he was poor and disheartened. He felt dissatisfied with himself and with every thing about him; but having, through the kindness of an uncle, been well educated, his manners were those of a gentleman; and, being what is called magnetic, readily made friends. His mother was from a proud family, and, failing to reach the mark of her ambition, stamped the feeling upon her son with such an intensity that success was the god to which he sacrificed.

All else was swallowed up, lost, in the one desire to make his mark in the world; to be looked up to, courted, honored. Still this man had the same needs as other men have; was not sensual in any true sense of that term; could not have been satisfied with the paid harlot's caress; must have love, must have the sweet caress that comes from love: but this must not be at the expense of his ruling passion, ambition. All the aids that he could secure were admissible, desirable; but nothing must stand in the way.

As I have said, he was depressed, disheartened, when he met Clara Warren. Her presence, her smile, thrilled, filled him with new life, gave him power to do; and of course she must be his. He succeeded in taking her from her home, and making her believe that she was his wife; but it was —

"Power assumed by one who had none, —
Priestly robe and saintly face:
Thus they lured the trusting maiden,
Thus they snared her youthful feet;
But the soul, in unstained whiteness,
This their plotting could not reach."

He who aided in the plot supposed that it was simply a joke, a frolic that neither party had any intention of carrying out, and thought no more about it. Going to sea soon after, even this possible witness was removed from his path. So Robert Crandall had things all his own way; and Clara, pure, sweet, innocent Clara, waited patiently for the day when he could acknowledge her before the world, without incurring the anger of his "rich uncle."

"I do not care for his wealth, my bird: I had rather owe success to my own efforts. But I want his influence for a time. If that was turned against me now, I fear that I should fail in what I have undertaken."

And Clara listened and believed, while Robert planned and prospered; she never once dreaming that she was contributing to his success, that her *life forces* were being worked up in the results of his efforts. Oh, no! she was only an expense to him; but he loved her so much, that it was no burden for him to care for her, to furnish her with food and clothing.

This was what she thought, and what women are taught to think. But this will change some time. As well say that the sun contributes nothing to the

products of the earth because it neither plows, sows, nor harvests. But the sun is not subject to man; if it were, he would pay for its warmth as he pays woman for her favors, and think it enough that he was taking care of that luminary, *because* it had no executive power, could not be self-supporting. If the inhabitants of the sun were dependent on this earth for food and raiment, would not the quickening warmth received therefrom be sufficient compensation without their coming here to sow and reap?

Woman is the sun of our social system, or should be; would be, were she not dragged from her place by impious hands; and, as such, should be as independent of man's control, as is the sun of the earth's.

But to return to Robert Crandall and Clara Warren. Robert, as we have said, prospered from the time he met Clara. She gave her forces, her love-life to him; he gave his to his business: consequently there came a time when she had nothing more to give, for an unreplenished fountain must some time become dry. Robert continued to visit, to gather her life-forces; till at last she closed her beautiful eyes, folded her hands upon her breast, and went to her final sleep, — went thinking how kind he had been to her, and how lonely he would be without her.

"You will take me home," she said, "and bury me by my mother. And tell father and sister that I was really your wife."

He promised, and intended then to do as she

wished; but afterward prudential reasons caused him to decide otherwise.

She lay a few moments in silence after he had made her this promise, and then added, "I am so glad you could be here! I feared that the business which detained you would keep you till it was too late; and it would have been so sad for you to have come, and found that your Clara had left you!"

Self-forgetful to the last, thinking only of him; if love is the fulfilling of the law, surely she was not lacking.

To say that Robert did not mourn her loss would be false. He felt for a time that the light of his life had gone out. He missed her smile; he missed her cooling hand upon his tired brain, and in every other way where she had been a blessing to *him*. He did not once think of her in any other light, did not think of what she might have become in and of herself. It was *his* loss that he mourned.

A few weeks, and he saw another face that pleased him, listened to another voice that charmed. But this time he found a more ready acquiescence. The girl loved him as well, was as earnest, and as innocent in her nature, as was Clara; but her education had been different, and she did not sense as fully the necessity of the form, if the spirit of marriage was present. She loved William Smith (another false name), and he loved her; and, if he thought so, that was enough. The world would say that she was bad; but the world judged falsely (as it generally does). It was Robert Crandall who knew better: he was the one who was bad, for he did not intend to do rightly by her, and she did by him.

Minnie Morris had a different style of beauty from Clara Warren, was more sparkling, and less gentle in her manners; and Robert loved to tease her occasionally, "just to see the fire flash from her eyes," as he said.

Once, when he had provoked her more than usual, she turned upon him with, "William Smith, you will be sorry for this some day."

"Why, what will you do, puss?"

"Will find out if you have lied to me."

"And what then?" he asked.

"It will be time enough to decide when that time comes," was her prompt response.

"Well, darling, you really do look dangerous. I guess I had better behave myself," he continued in a tone of pleasant raillery; and so there was peace for the time.

Robert's business did not prosper quite as well as it did while Clara lived, for he could not absorb Minnie as readily; still he was remarkably successful, and on the high road to fortune. He rather liked her spunk. He said to his particular friend, Charles Reading, "And when I tire of her, and wish to leave, I have only to make her angry, and the thing is done."

You see, he had changed, was becoming more and more the man of the world; was learning that a new love was one of the necessities of a man of business. "Life's elixir," he termed it. Still he was rather constant: Minnie remained with him nearly three years, and during that time he had added to his possessions over six thousand dollars. Now, whose money

was it? The law, human law, *man*-made law, gave it to him; but the law of love, of justice, of equity, would have given her one-half of it. To our sorrow, however, we are not under the jurisdiction of these. Love is the fulfilling of the law; but love's law is not obeyed, or only, if at all, at a most terrible cost.

The time came at length when Robert cared no longer for Minnie's company; and, with the ready tact of a preconceived plan, she was provoked beyond endurance, and he was so offended that he refused to be appeased. "He would give her a small sum to aid her till she could look about a little; perhaps she could please herself better; he could not put up with her temper any longer, and he was doing better by her than many would do under the circumstances, but he could not bear to see her go out penniless:" so he said.

And so poor Minnie was turned away with a paltry sum that could last her but a few weeks at best. The babe that was the fruit of their union was dead; and the mother, heart-broken, and depreciated in body and soul, was thus cast upon the market of lust to be sold for her keeping.

Well, the sacrifice of the ages will be complete some time; and then the "refining fire" will consume the altar itself.

"But why did she not go to work?" you will ask. Ah, and who would employ her? Would that respectable lady whose lover meets her by stealth at night, and deals out the bread and wine to kneeling communicants the next sabbath morning? Of course not: she can not encourage vice by taking such a character into her house.

Will that calm, blue-eyed beauty (if beauty can be soulless) who is as cold as ice, and as chaste as snow? Not she, indeed! for how can she understand the power of the creative fire that responds to the touch of its kindred flame? The fact that a woman has yielded herself to love is proof positive to her of total depravity; and such must not be sheltered in her house. She, of course, is an *obedient* wife; but her husband must not come into daily contact with such a creature.

And thus we might go the entire round of respectable holiness, with perhaps now and then a rare exception; and those exceptions poor Minnie knew not where to find; and so, with a soul shrinking from her fate, she is drawn into the whirlpool in which so many rare gems are ingulfed.

But she does not yield without a struggle, and Robert Crandall's steps are watched. She is not long in learning that he had given her a false name; and, this clew gained, she tracks him till she has learned the story of his connection with Clara; then she sets herself to find Clara's friends. But this was not so easy a task, and for a long time she was completely baffled.

But the hate that comes from wronged, outraged love is as persevering as the fates; and Minnie was no tame character. She would have been a superior angel; but, cheated of this her birthright, she becomes a splendid devil, — devil so far as her hatred of men, and her arts to accomplish their ruin, were concerned; but angel still to the innocent and wronged of her own sex.

Many a man who had, as he supposed, his victim just within his grasp, found himself suddenly and entirely defeated, and some one else thrown across his path to whom he himself became the victim. Finding that the door to an honest living was closed against her, she coolly looked her fate in the face, and made friends with the "mammon of unrighteousness."

In this work of love and revenge, Eben Rockman became her friend and ally; but she set about that work too late to save poor Rose, who became his next victim. Neither did Rockman learn aught of her wrongs till the day that he took her from the street in his arms, and bore her to a place of safety. Something of the steps taken by Crandall to accomplish his object was learned from Rose herself, but more through Minnie and those she set upon his track. Crandall had a clerk in his business, a sort of head man, of whom he sometimes made a confidant: they were together when he first met Rose, and his first remark was,—

"Look there, James!" pointing in a way that seemed a careless, unpremeditated movement, in the direction from which she was coming, "did you ever see her equal? One could sip the nectar of the gods from those lips."

"Better not let Minnie catch you at such sipping," was the reply.

"Minnie! Pshaw! do you suppose I am to be tied to her apron-strings? no, indeed! and she is becoming tiresome too, altogether too imperious. I had as soon break with her as not."

"But you are not certain of getting this one; and a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush, you know."

"The bird in the hand might frighten the bird out of the bush, and then there would be no chance of securing it, so I will run the risk of letting the one in hand go."

This conversation was related by James to Minnie afterward. "I would have warned her," he said, "but I had no opportunity of doing so: I did not meet Rose again till it was too late, and he never spoke to me of her after that day. I think he must have read something in my face that warned him not to trust me."

"But why have you come to me with this now?" asked Minnie, looking at him as if she suspected that his motives were none of the best.

James blushed beneath her gaze, but replied frankly, "I always liked you, Miss Morris; but, knowing that you loved Crandall, I felt that it would be useless for me to say a word as long as you could hold him. But, now that the breach between you is irreparable, I hoped that you would look favorably upon me."

"And so you thought to win my favor by telling me his faults; that is honest, to say the least; and, on one condition, I do not know but it may be as you wish," she replied.

"Name the condition!" he exclaimed eagerly.

"Not quite so fast, as you may not like to agree to it when you hear it."

"But please give me the chance of deciding without the torture of suspense, Miss Morris."

"Miss Morris: very respectful now, sir."

The young man looked her in the face, but made no reply. He saw that she was in the mood for teasing, and so would not be hurried. Finding that he did not speak, she continued, "Men stand by their own sex, and women turn against theirs."

"Quite true," he assented, "but there are exceptions to all rules."

"I mean to be one exception, James, and I want you to be another. I intend to stand by my sex, and fight yours; and I want you to work with me, to help me defeat such as are trying to ruin the innocent. If you see a wolf in sheep's clothing on the track of a lamb, I want you to come and tell me, and help me to save them, and to throw such as are already branded across the track instead. Pledge this, and I am yours."

"I will pledge it till I meet one who attracts me stronger than yourself, which I do not think likely to occur soon."

She laid her hand upon his arm, and lifted her eyes to his with a pleading gaze. "And if she be innocent you will marry her? Think of it, James: is it not enough that society accords to you the privilege of taking a pure girl to your bosom as a wife, after you have mingled with us, but it gives us no such chance of getting husbands: think of this; and think, if you should live to have a daughter, would you not like to feel, as she looked you in the face, that you had never wronged such?"

"I will promise," he said, more moved than he liked to own. And so their strange compact was concluded; she taking a house, and boarding such as wished, or had no other alternative than to live what the world calls free lives, but which is in fact the most terrible slavery; and he aiding her in seeing to it that no unwilling victims were brought thither. But, as I have said, this was too late to save poor Rose.

Robert Crandall knew that the utmost caution and skill were needed if he should succeed with Rose Barron, but this did not deter him in the least from the pursuit. What strange pertinacity is this which causes a man to pursue so unrelentingly, and then after possession to throw away so carelessly, so heartlessly?

I have sometimes thought it was a disease, or species of madness. If so, it is a madness upon which society looks without seeing, of which it takes no account; but woe, woe to the victims who come within its power!

Slowly but surely the citadel of the heart was giving away to the insidious approaches that were being made, till at length Rose loved.. She showed this by the light in her eye, the deepening color upon her cheek, and the sweet cooing cadence, that, unconsciously to herself, crept into the undertones of her voice.

Crandall marked all these, and yet dared not venture by any word or act to show his real purpose. But, while he was thus careful and deferential, his magnetism, his sphere as Swedenborg would call it, was permeated with intense passion; and Rose in her loving had become receptive to this sphere, took it in as air will receive escaping gas, even till a match

lighted in the room will set it on fire. She did not comprehend the nature of this feeling; neither did he intend that she should. But still it was pervading her entire being, running along her nerves with a strange thrill, mounting to and bewildering her brain. She had no power to think, to reason; and, when the moment came that the besieger decided to storm the castle, she had no power to resist.

And this was the being that the pharisaical ones, the cold and calculating ones, the false, the hypocritical ones, together with the ignorantly innocent, and the untempted ones, — this was the being that these, all these, presumed to call fallen!

Great heaven! and is this a Christian people? does Christian morality presume to lift its head here? Is this the Christ charity, the Christ love and tenderness? Out upon such hypocrisy! It is condemned, damned, cursed, and only waits the execution of the sentence that has been pronounced against it.

Do you say that I am getting to be as bad as Rockman? Perhaps; as page after page of society's workings open before me, as the wrong, the outrage that I find so prevalent, becomes manifest, I sometimes think that I shall become worse.

Still I meet with good people, kind, tender-hearted people, everywhere. Touch the right chords, and the sweet music of sympathy gushes forth like the song of spring birds. The husband and father toils unceasingly for wife and little ones; the mother will even give her own life to save her children. The sick man's couch is watched the livelong night by the neighbor who knows that there can be no release from the next day's toil.

What does it all mean? so much goodness, so much evident desire to do the right, and yet so much wrong! Even Robert Crandall, I have no doubt, once thought only of being a good boy, and was till some strong desire, something that he wanted so badly, came in conflict; and so on, till the man forgot all but self.

Why is it that our wants, our needs, so conflict? Are we not all the victims of false conditions? Who will help me to solve this problem, so that if condemnation must fall it shall not fall amiss?

But let me return to the point from which I have wandered. I shrink from the finale, and yet it must be told. Crandall, as he sat beside Rose, silent, and seemingly abashed at the boldness of what he had done, was expecting a storm of tears and reproaches, and, as they did not come, was wondering what course she would take, when she laid her hand on his arm with, —

"Robert, we have been carried beyond ourselves, and there is only one course open to us."

The calmness with which these words were uttered disturbed him more than any amount of upbraiding would have done. "*We* have been carried beyond ourselves:" she had no suspicion, then, that it was premeditated on his part; no condemnation, but only holding him to the right by taking it for granted that he would be but too glad to place their relations on a recognized basis, for he knew, without asking, that she referred to an immediate marriage.

"Oh, dear!" he sighed: "I wish I had controlled myself, for it will be impossible for me to marry you" —

"Impossible to marry me!" she exclaimed, springing to her feet.

"Wait, will you, till I have finished what I was going to say," he interrupted, in an impatient tone. "It will be impossible for me to marry you immediately; of course I shall do so soon."

"Soon, how soon?"

"It will be at least a month before I can bring things into shape to make it convenient," was his reply; this with his eyes fixed on the ground, for, hardened as he was, he could not look her in the face.

Rose stood like one stunned. She had not doubted him till now. Her face became the hue of death, and her hands were like ice; another moment, and she had fallen at his feet, as unconscious as the dead. When she came to herself he was bending over her with a frightened look; and, as soon as he saw that she could hear him he began, —

"Rose, don't, oh, don't feel so! indeed I will bring things about as quickly as possible."

He was distressed, frightened; but, as she interpreted it, not on her account, but lest she should do something desperate, and thus bring him into difficulty. She, however, gathered hope from his manner, and promised to trust him for a few days, a week at least.

He continued to see her as usual, invented excuses that put marriage two weeks ahead instead of one, venturing, after a few days, to approach her again. He was repulsed so thoroughly that he saw that while he had overcome he had not subdued her; that she was so thoroughly shocked and steadied, that

there was no further hope for him only through the channel which she most firmly believed came the right to the relation he desired; to wit, the legal sanction.

No amount of argument or sophistry could move her in the least. This angered him, roused his worst feelings, and lashed them into fury; he would not be thus defeated; if he could not conquer in one way, he would in another. True, his heart plead, "Why not marry her and be happy? She is more to you than another ever can be; you love her as you never have loved, and you know that you do."

But pride, ambition, said, "No, she is poor, and, though very lovely, not the one to help you in your upward career: her stern sense of right would be sure to stand in the way, to defeat your plans." Ambition triumphed, and he thrust his cup of life from his lips. But the demon in his nature was aroused; he would hold her in his arms again, at all hazards: so he drugged, and managed to have her conveyed where she could not escape him, and then, day by day, and week by week, wreaked the passion, that, from its perversion, had become hellish, upon her defenseless form.

This, till thoroughly sated; and then he turned her over to another, for it would not do to let her escape and tell her story. And for these wrongs that were heaped upon her she was counted vile.

She managed to escape at length, and, reeling from weakness and despair, she had fallen in the street; and it was thus that we found her. And could not this man be brought to justice? you ask. How? he had given her a false name also, called himself Rob-

ert Wilson, and always went in partial disguise when he visited her. His business was unknown to her, as was his real position in society; and how was she to track him out?

Besides, she was so broken in spirit that she had no courage to act; and, shrinking as she naturally was, how could she go before the great world and declare the indignities to which she had been subjected? For a long time we could not learn who was the real author of her wrongs; but finally Rockman got upon his track, and, with the aid of Minnie and her friend James, succeeded, at length, in identifying him.

After leaving Rose, he had made no more efforts in the direction of unlawful love. Indeed, he sickened at the very thought of love, made no pretensions to it whatever, and that which his nature demanded he went to the paid harlot for. He seemed to have overacted, and to have recoiled from the shock that his course had produced: business did not thrive with him as formerly; and it was a question as to whether he could so harden himself as to go on, or whether he should yield and go down. The restless hungering that had taken possession of him, since he no longer received the caress, the magnetism, of real love, well nigh drove him to the love of strong drink. Finally, however, the ruling passion, ambition, triumphed, and he took up life once more with a firm hand. True, his heart had turned to ashes; but he urned it in a marble heart of the natural hue and size, and the world saw not the difference.

His brain cleared, at least the portion of it brought

into action; and he decided, that, to go forward to the goal desired, it was necessary that he should marry. So he began to look about for the one who could bring him the most wealth, family influence, and personal dignity: he wanted a queenly creature, one who could command homage as she walked by his side. Tall and finely formed himself, he wanted people to say, —

"What a fine-looking couple!"

He soon fixed upon one that he thought would suit; and now he taxed his energies as entirely to win her openly as he had hitherto done to win the others secretly; and he succeeded, for, as you already know, he was a thriving man, though not quite so young as once; still a young man, for he had seen only thirty summers.

Lucelle Loudan was a fitting mate for Robert Crandall: proud, imperious, cold, ambitious, and counted regal in her beauty. He told her of his purpose to win a high place in society, that he had struggled alone, had worshiped her at a distance, hoping to be able one day to offer her the position that she deserved, but that he had concluded that he could climb better, faster, with her by his side; would she consent to aid him by becoming his honored wife?

Flattered by his preference, his courtly address, and the expression of sentiments so in accordance with her own, she consented to give what he asked, her *hand;* and the preparations for the bridal commenced.

But one day a letter was handed her, that, when she had read it, she started up with flashing eye, and demanded of the waiter who brought it.

"The gentleman waits in the parlor, and would like to see you." She descended thither quickly, and found Eben Rockman in waiting.

"You?" she said when she saw him, surprise for the moment overcoming every other feeling.

"Yes, Miss Loudan, Lucelle. I have known you from a child; and though, since to womanhood grown, you have ignored your eccentric but true friend, yet I could not be silent, and see you taking a step which, if you have any real womanhood, must make you wretched."

"You refer, I presume, to my approaching marriage with Mr. Crandall," she said, drawing herself up proudly; "and I must say that it well becomes one who is known to be on intimate terms with as notorious a character as is Minnie Morris, to bring such accusations as are contained in your letter, against one whose reputation is as unsullied as is that of my promised husband."

"It was he, Miss Loudan, who made Minnie Morris what she is."

"It is false, false as her own vile heart; and this story is some of her concocting."

"You mistake, Lucelle: I learned it first from other sources, and can bring proof of what I state. My connection with Miss Morris only relates to aiding her in saving young girls from just such men as Robert Crandall, *alias* Edward Crandall, *alias* William Smith, *alias* Robert Wilson."

"Aiding a keeper of a house of infamy in saving young girls! really, now, do you expect me to believe so absurd a statement?"

"Lucelle! you dare not look me in the face, and tell me that you believe I would lie to you."

"I dare to call you an insane fool, and to ask you to leave this house, and never enter it again."

"I obey you," he said, rising; "but it shall be more tolerable for Minnie Morris in the day of judgment than for you."

And so the marriage took place,—a mockery of what marriage should be; and still it was marriage, for the active faculties of each were in unison, they both bowed at the shrine of ambition, were united in their purpose to rise at any and every cost to their higher selves, or to others. It was a union of what was left of two dwarfed souls.

So Robert Crandall, the thriving young man, became the successful, the wealthy married man, and the world looked on and envied; people were proud of him as a man and a citizen; and his victims were never mentioned, never thought of, by those who courted his smiles.

But there is a day coming that shall burn as an oven; and the wood, hay, stubble, gold, silver, precious stones, whatever men and women have gathered that can not stand its intensity, must be consumed, while they themselves will be saved as by fire; and Heaven help Robert Crandall then!

CHAPTER IV.

THE OTHER SIDE.

I WISH people would ever look at the other side of a thing before deciding upon it," said Rockman, as he walked into my sitting-room one morning without as much as saying, "By your leave." I had long since given up the idea of shutting him out, or being in any way afraid of him; and he came and went at his own convenience as if at home, as, in fact, he was when he chose to be.

"What now, Eben?"

"Nothing new; only I do not like one-sided arguments, though perhaps inclined to make them myself sometimes. I have just been hearing the song, —

'The world is what we make it,'

Which is all very true; and yet it is equally true, that we are what the world makes us."

"The world seems to have but little influence upon some people either way," I replied.

"And yet those very ones may be more easily influenced than others, if you touch them rightly. Do you remember, child, the day you gave me such a schooling for talking so roughly?"

"Of course I do," I replied, laughing at the recollection.

"I presume you think you did not influence me in the least; but I have either so enlarged my capacity that I can hold a greater amount of indignation without exploding, or I am really softening down; now, which is it?"

"There may be some truth in both suppositions, Uncle Eben; but there is still another cause, of which you do not seem to have thought."

"And what is that?"

"You have divided the load; Minnie and I are helping you carry it."

"There, you have given me the other side, and I understand it better now. Why, if you will believe it, I have chided myself for this very modification, have feared that I was becoming hardened."

"Well you need not; for, if what I sometimes feel were thrown back upon you, I fear you would outdo even your old self in cursing conditions, to say nothing of what Minnie carries. To use your own illustration, it is like using three lightning-rods where formerly there was but one; for, being in direct sympathy with you, we aid you to carry off in deeds the forces that formerly had to explode in words."

"Ha, ha, ha! what a philosopher you have become!" he exclaimed; "but I have another side to show, as well as you. You remember Wellby, with his two thousand on interest, his rise of property, and his rent-roll, together with the good that he boasted of doing with his money; to wit, giving poor men the chance to work so that they could live."

"Yes, I remember, and have often thought I should like to know what he was doing now, how he was

employing men since that house was finished; the one on the last of his four lots here, I mean. I do not know how many lots he may have bought since, or how many houses he may have had put up in some other part of the city."

"Well there is another side to that question; and if he could see the workings of the system which has made him rich, if he could see its effects on that other side, I hardly think that even he is selfish enough to boast of the good he does with the money thus obtained.

"In the first place, how came he by the money with which he bought those lots? Was it by any worth or industry of his own? Not in the least. His father took what was thought a worthless piece of ground in payment of a liquor bill; took it because he could get nothing else. This piece of land became valuable in time; not that it had changed its nature, not that it had become better calculated to produce what would support human beings; but because there had been some unexpected improvements put up in the vicinity, and, by grading down and filling up, it would be valuable for business purposes.

"It was sold; and, the elder Wellby dying soon after, this son inherited his portion of the proceeds. The widow of the man who had sold the lot was poor; and her children were growing up in ignorance and rags, were being fitted for paupers or criminals. To say nothing of the uses or abuses of strong drink, had the elder Wellby taken the principal and interest of the original debt out of the

proceeds of the sale of what had become valuable through no exertion of his, and then handed the balance to that widow to aid her in bringing up her family, it would have looked a little more like justice. It should have belonged to her children, instead of his."

"But how have you found all this out?" I asked: "are you certain of its correctness?"

"I found it out because I sought for it; and I know that what I have learned is a correct statement of facts," he replied; "and I have learned, too, that more than one widow has contributed her mite to the building-up of this man's fortune, — contributed through the force of circumstances which said, 'Your money, or your life.'"

"Eben Rockman, was there ever a text of Scripture, a common saying, or any thing else, that you could not quote, or use to illustrate your ideas, when you wished?" I exclaimed.

"What now, child?"

"Who but you would have thought to use the robber's argument in that relation?"

"I do not know as any one would; but it is so perfectly natural, that I can not understand how a wayfaring man, though a fool, could fail to see the justice of the application. But, to go on with *the other side* that I was showing up: those six lots that Wellby bought with the 'ready money' he happened to have by him belonged to a widow also; and she could not keep them because she was not able to pay the taxes, and make the improvements that the city demanded."

"I was not aware," I said, "that people were obliged to improve their own property, or sell it."

"Not where such improvement would not add to the general wealth, madam; not where rich people do not need aid to become richer. We never grind the poor for nothing."

"I wish you would explain this matter, for I can not understand it."

"And that is what I will, if you will give me time, little woman."

"All the time you need, if you will only make it plain: I want to see the exact workings of a system that seems to me like a mill where one portion of the people are ground, used up, for the benefit of another portion," was my reply.

"And those who are thus ground prove any thing but the bread of life: such flesh and blood has little of the saving power attributed to the blood of Christ."

"Why should it have?"

"And why should it not have, if the Scriptures are true in the sense we have been taught to understand them? We are there told that the sufferings of Christ are fulfilled in his members. 'Inasmuch as ye have done it to the least of these my disciples, ye have done it unto me.' Now, if the broken body and shed blood of Jesus has such saving power, why should not that which is ground from his members, that which is a part of his body, be efficacious also?"

"I get a glimmer of a sense in which it is; but we shall never get to the explanation, uncle (I had taken to calling him that for convenience), if we keep on making digressions."

"True, but the explanation will keep: you promised me all the time I needed, and there is such a thing as digressions helping the main point. I do not know as I can illustrate this grinding process, this species of civilized, of Christian robbery, better than by telling you a story, 'a true story,' as my boy used to ask for, before God took him. I had a friend who several years since went to a Western State, and bought a few acres of land on the outskirts of a thriving village. He put up a small but comfortable house, and set out some three acres of ground to fruit, mostly of the smaller kind, together with a few peach, apple, and dwarf-pear trees.

"He was consumptive, did not expect to remain here many years, and wished to provide his family with a comfortable means of support; and he saw in the growing tendency of a neighboring city a ready market for what he was thus cultivating. Finding his health failing fast, he sold all but the three acres thus appropriated, and used the money to put what was left in the best possible shape for those for whose future he was thus caring, his dearly loved wife and children.

"This man was a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and a Christian if I ever saw one; and after doing all that he could for his family, he closed his eyes in death, committing his widow and fatherless ones to God, relying upon the Scripture promise that they would be cared for. The village grew, and its limits enlarged till it became an incorporated city. Several wealthy members of the church of which this woman, whom for the sake of convenience I will call

the Widow Brown, was a communicant, bought lots near her, and commenced putting up residences.

"But these men were business men: they must go every day to the business part of the city, and they wanted a sidewalk. And still another reason why a sidewalk should be built was, that a new church was to be put up soon; and, if they could secure its location in that part of the city, it would induce those who were of the Methodist faith, who should move thither to settle there, so as to be near their place of worship. Mr. Blank owned ten acres just beyond his own residence, which was at the outskirts in that direction; so, if he could only get the church out there, he might in time make himself independently rich.

"But, to bring this all about, there must be some wire-pulling, some planning done. Now, it happens that Mr. Ledger owns land in that direction also; so they put their heads together, look over the probabilities of success, and decide accordingly. There must be an *appearance* of growth in that direction. A stranger comes into town a few days after, and, after looking around a while, buys a lot of Mr. Blank (it is so supposed), and talks of building; will do so right away, if there can only be a walk made to the business part of the place, and the street so improved otherwise that it will be passable at all times.

"'Well, I don't know,' says Blank reflectively: 'what do you think, Mr. Ledger?'

"Mr. Ledger wishes it could be done; for he knows of two or three parties who would build out there, were it not for the badness of the street in muddy weather.

"'I will tell you what we can do,' says Blank: 'we can lay the matter before those who live out this way, and those who own property here and would come if this could be done, and see what they say about it. If we can get them, or a majority of them, to sign a petition to that effect, we will present it to the "city fathers;" and perhaps we can get them to decree that it shall be done. Each owner will have to build that portion of the walk in front of his own lot; but where it crosses the street, and whatever is done to the street itself, will have to be raised by tax. It will make the taxes high, and they may object to such a drain on the city treasury; but the increased value of property, even with a lower rate of taxation, after another year will soon replenish that. We can try what can be done, anyhow. I had rather give the city a lot than to have it fail.'

"They did try, and they succeeded too; for one or two of the *city fathers* owned property in that part of the city also. The next move was to get the church there. And this, too, was accomplished; for those men who were to be benefited gave largely. But the hardness of that pavement bruised the feet or, rather, the hearts, of those fatherless ones; and the shadow of that church took the roof from over their heads.

"The Widow Brown must build her proportion of the pavement; and she had twenty rods of ground fronting on the street. She must also pay her rate of the increased amount of taxation; and, as the valuation of her place had thus been increased, this was no small addition to her burden. Her returns

from fruit and garden had been even less than usual, and sickness in her family had laid a heavy bill of expense upon her, and it was impossible for her to build the walk; so the city must do it, and charge it to the estate.

"Brother Blank visits her about this time; and, as he is a member of the same church, she consults him. He thinks a while, and then says, 'Sister Brown, I am really sorry for you. It is too bad for you to have to give up your home upon which Brother Brown spent so much time and care; but I do not see how it is to be avoided. I fear you will have to sell.'

"'But I do not know of any one who wishes to buy,' replies the widow with a tremor in her voice that is almost a sob.

"Another silence. Brother Blank is very much affected himself. Finally he says, 'Well, sister, I will do what I can for you. I will try to find you a purchaser.'

"Brother Blank leaves; and Widow Brown thinks, 'What a good Christian brother he is!'

"A few weeks pass, and Brother Blank calls again. 'Well, sister, I have not succeeded in finding a purchaser yet. How are you getting along? any hope of being able to keep the place?'

"He says this with a cheery voice, as though he really expected she was going to reply, 'Yes, things are growing brighter;' and when he finds the reverse his faces clouds, and his tone changes to one of sympathy. After a little he says, 'I have about all on my hands I can attend to; but, if you will give me

time, I do not know but, to save you trouble, I will try and take your place, if you will let me have it at a reasonable price. I can pay you the interest till I can sell a portion of it, and, as fast as I can, will pay the principal.'

"'What can you afford to give, and how much time do you want?' is the reply, speaking cheerfully of what but a short time before she could scarcely bear to think; for the prospect of having the pressure removed for the moment makes her forget the bitterness.

"Again Brother Blank thinks a while, and finally says, 'I think I might pay you half of it in two years, and the balance at the end of four; and I will give you'—so much; naming a sum that was about what the property was worth taken at the old valuation, but much less than it could have been sold for with the improvements that were being made in that neighborhood; and remember that it was because her place had been made to contribute to those improvements that she was obliged to sell.

"'If you can pay me something in advance, say two hundred dollars, I will do so,' is her reply; and so the bargain is completed, Brother Blank thinking that he has done the fair thing by the widow. 'It will be better for her,' he says to himself, 'to leave the city, and go into some smaller place; and now I will have a good residence put up in the place of that little house, which really spoils the looks of the street.'

"Brother Blank put up the new house; and in six months sold half the ground for more than he was to

pay for the whole, retaining to himself the half on which the new house was built. So you see, that, with a little management, he got half of Widow Brown's place for nothing. He could have paid her up then, thus giving her a chance to have invested her money in something that would have increased in value, while values were on the increase; but so said not the bond, and she was forced to plan and contrive to eke out her scanty income the best way she could."

I had listened without interrupting Mr. Rockman, for I wished to retain every point in the story; but now I asked, "How did you learn all this, so as to relate the particulars so minutely?"

"I have preached in that church," was the reply: "my sister's child is Brother Blank's wife. I have been behind the scenes. I know how much religion there is in church building, and in business men who furnish the money, and hold the best pews. We are a thievish Christian nation: we devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. The condemnation of justice, of a just God, rests upon us, and it ought to. There! does that manner of expressing it suit you any better than the other?"

"Some better, I think," I said.

"And yet, little woman, it is a tame, stereotyped form of speech, that will make about as much impression as a pancake would on a rock."

I laughed outright at the originality of his comparison. "Laugh if you wish," he continued, "but it is true. 'The agitation of thought' is far more likely to prove 'the beginning of wisdom' than a

blind 'fear of the Lord.' One of the draymen on the street, or an angry ditcher, might swear to his heart's content, and no one pays any particular attention, for there is nothing in particular meant; but let Eben Rockman call for God's curse upon a nation's sins, and what a shock it creates! the mental atmosphere is stirred all about him; and why?

"Simply because he means something. There is intent, purpose, force, intelligence, behind it. It is a breath from the flame of God Almighty's indignation."

"I gave up contending with you on that point long since, uncle, and have nothing to say now, only, do your own work your own way, as you will, no matter what I might say; but I should like to know what became of Widow Brown and her children."

"Ah, you would? Well, you have seen one of them in the carpenter who sang

> 'Woe to the man whose wealth proclaims
> Another man's undoing!'"

"What, John Brown!" I exclaimed. "I thought you called the woman Brown just for convenience. I did not suppose it was her real name."

"And why should it not be as convenient for me to call one by their right name as by any other, I should like to know? Besides, a genuine surprise is a good, healthy mental shock. You are quite a philosopher, madam, but you have not learned it all yet."

"Are Blank and Ledger real names too?"

"Certainly they are *real* names; but they did not exactly belong to the men I designated by their use."

"Your pun is lost, uncle, for I am not annoyed in the least, not even a slight mental shock. Did you learn what became of the rest of the family? — Browns, I mean, not Blanks or Ledgers."

"I did," he replied, but said nothing further. I waited a little, and then added, —

"Will you tell me, please?"

"I did not learn it all from John, but enough so that I could trace out the rest. Mrs. Brown caught a heavy cold consequent on the overwork and anxiety caused by moving; and this held her, in spite of remedies, till it became a settled cough, ending in the same disease of which her husband died, — a lingering consumption, — which finally took her hence. George, the eldest, became reckless through strong drink and evil companions, into whose company he was thrown by the change; and, of the three girls, two of them, so I have learned from Minnie, are in a house of prostitution. Mary, the second girl, is married; but they are very poor, her husband not being able to work near all the time; and John you have seen."

"A sad conclusion, but are we sure that it would have been better had they remained where they were? All that you have named might have occurred, even then," I said, not willing to look upon their misfortunes as the legitimate outgrowth of the prosperity of others.

"Perhaps," he replied; "but Brown does not think so; and suppose that Blank had acted the part of a brother to 'Sister Brown,' — suppose he had paid what was laid upon her in consequence of his

efforts to add to the value of his own property. Had he done this, instead of paying that extra hundred toward building the church, she could have got along for a while; and then, as the value of the property increased, he could have aided her in selling a portion of it, and have helped her to put the proceeds to such use as would have enabled her to have educated her children, and still retained a home. Do you not believe that the genial influence of such a course would have saved that family to have become a blessing to the community?

"But he had the power to do otherwise, and so he did it; and that is just what he ought to have been deprived of. No government is a just one that permits one man or class of men to grow rich upon the necessities of another man or class of men. If we had city mothers, as well as city fathers, I opine that the poor would not be hedged around us as they are now. In a case like that of Widow Brown's, the power that decreed those improvements should have seen to it that she sustained no loss thereby. City fathers, indeed! such fathers ought to be accursed."

"But I cannot see the necessity," I said, "for those girls becoming prostitutes because they were poor: there is certainly work enough to be done to give one an honest support in a country like this. I know of any number of ladies who would count a quiet, steady American girl a treasure; for they are so annoyed with ignorant, inefficient help they hardly know what to do at times."

"They have no business to be *ladies:* let them be women, — true, whole-souled, helpful women; and

then quiet, well-educated girls who chanced to be poor would not shrink from taking a part of their burdens; but, as it is now, it is about the worst place that an intelligent girl can be put. They can have no society, unless they accept that of the coarse and ignorant who occupy the same sphere that they do, — that of servants. If they can not do this, then they are subject to all the annoyance that ignorance and jealousy can inflict, this becoming especially bitter if there chance to be one or more of this class in the same house.

"The poor girl has no society, no sympathy, and she is human. She is lovely, intelligent, refined; often more so than the one who occupies the place of mistress. The husband or sons can not fail to see this, and speak kindly to her if at all; relieve her of some burden, do her some favor, and in so respectful a manner that she can no more put them aside, than one famishing of thirst can dash a cup of cold water to the ground. And step by step the bonds of sympathy draw them toward each other; no thought of evil on her part; on his, perhaps, and perhaps not, oftener not: till, finally, they are borne beyond the point of safety; to one, at least.

"O God! how I wish I could show up these things as I see them! Our system of society makes men what they are, makes women what they are; and then we curse them, despise and curse ourselves. Well does Scripture say, 'The creature was *made* subject to vanity, *not willingly*.' We do not do as we do willingly; we are urged on by an invisible force, fate, devil, or whatever else you may choose

to call it. In cases like these to which I have referred, the woman tempts the man."

"Tempts the man! do you know what you are saying, Mr. Rockman?"

"*Mr.* Rockman knows what he is saying perfectly well. Does the parched, the thirsty earth tempt the falling rain? does a vacuum tempt a fullness? I do not say that there is an intelligent effort to tempt the man; far from it: but her loneliness, her heart-hunger, goes out in her magnetic sphere, and reaches toward him as the plant turns from darkness toward the sunlight. Oh this accursed spirit of caste, this devil of the pride of position! Wealth sets a fool on high: the want of it drags an angel down to the ditch."

"All that you say is true," I answered, "but where is the remedy? We must find and apply that, or make the best of things as they are. There is not much use in running into a hedge, if the only result is to scratch ourselves."

"Of course not: it is easier to push others on."

"But why need we do that?" I asked.

"If there is not room enough for all, how is it to be helped. In the very efforts we make to keep off, we push others on, and we can not avoid it."

"What can we do, then, uncle? tell me that."

"Tear down the hedge; burn it up; dig it out by the roots; any way to get rid of it. But that will never be done till people learn to look on both sides of a thing. They think now that the Devil is just the other side of the hedge, think the hedge is the only thing that keeps his satanic majesty from hav-

ing full sway among the human family. That crown of thorns, it can't be spared; some one must wear it to save the rest.

"If they would only look a little closer, — would look on the other side, — they would find an angel instead; would become so charmed, that the hedge could not hold them back: they would break through it, jump over, or crawl under. Those who cared only for themselves would do one of the latter; but those whose hearts burned with love for humanity would bare their breasts to the thorns, and, pressing forward, carry the hedge with them, that they might make a breach through which others could follow. And that is what the martyr heroes, the Christs of the ages, have been doing."

After this outburst, we sat for some time in silence. Finally he commenced again with, "Mankind love the good, love to think they are doing good: some where, in some shape, you will be sure to find this desire manifest, if you will watch for it; if they only knew how, they would love to make everybody happy. Wellby enjoys the thought that he is doing good with his money; but if he could only comprehend the workings of the system which makes him rich at the expense of others" —

"And that reminds me," I interrupted, "that you have only given a portion of the other side to that matter."

"Yes; have only told you how he came by his money: the results of its use are yet to be given. Well, we will look at the other side there, now. We have already seen that he bought six city lots at a

low price, and sold two of them, two years afterward, for twice the sum that he paid for the whole six. Now, what was the cause of this increase in value? Improvements made in that vicinity; an increase of business facilities. But did he do any thing toward increasing that business? did he make any of those improvements?

"Neither the one nor the other; and a large proportion were made at the city's expense. Of this he paid his proportion in tax; but the increase in value, to the tax he paid, is as a thousand to one. Consequently that widow who owned a little home, and paid one-tenth as much of that tax as he did, did one-tenth as much as he did toward that thousand increase, and, when he sold those lots at such an advance, had just as good a right to her proportion of the increase as he had to the whole."

"Was not her property increased in value, as well as his, uncle?"

"Yes, so far as the lot was concerned; but the house was cheapened, made valueless, for it had become out of place with its surroundings; and, if she sold, it would be to some one who could and would put up another house, moving that back for a stable, or tearing it down: consequently she would be likely to get only what the bare lot was worth, thus, as I have said, making her house valueless.

"Neither would it be worth as much to *her* for a home; because, her income not increasing, and her taxes becoming higher on account of increased valuation, she would find it more difficult to support herself and children than before. So of that laboring

man on the opposite corner. His garden will yield no more than before; neither will his house hold any more people. He gets no more for his work; but he, too, must pay higher taxes on account of increased valuation. But Wellby, or another who held vacant lots, could sell them, and put the money at interest, while every dollar thus obtained goes where he can make it pay him, where it will coin other dollars to gain still others, and so on.

"You see that property is valued according to what use the rich can make of it, and not by what the poor need, or can do; and the result is, that the poor are forced by their necessities to aid in making the rich richer, while they themselves are driven into the highways and byways.

"John Brown is not able to own a house of his own, and so he hires one of Jerome Smith; but Mr. Smith has plenty of money, and he sees, that, by putting up a block of new buildings, he can bring more business into the neighborhood, and increase the value of his property. He does not mind the increase of the taxes, because he has the power to make others pay them. How? do you ask? I will tell you. He hires Brown to put up these buildings; and when they are done he says, 'Mr. Brown, I shall be obliged to raise your rent, for there is a demand for house-room; and, besides, property has increased in valuation, and my taxes will be higher. I must make the place pay interest and taxes.'

"So he computes thus: 'The property is worth a cool thousand more than it was;' and then he adds the probable increase of taxes to the interest on a

thousand, puts it into Brown's rent; and he must pay it, or move elsewhere. John Brown's work has increased the valuation of the house over his own head; and John Brown must pay the bill, or go into less respectable quarters. Oh! it is a splendid grinding-machine, the present structure of society; and the poor must not only turn the crank, but hold their own noses to the grindstone.

"And yet Smith, Wellby, and others think they are doing good with their money, *because* they furnish poor people employment. Suppose I am hungry, and see what will bring me bread, but am not able to reach it. Well, here comes along another hungry man, and I see that he can do what will bring me that bread: so I say to him, 'I have some bread out yonder, which, if you will bring me, I will give you some of it.' Now, the bread does not belong to me, any more than it does to him: only I claim it by right of discovery. But he goes and gets it, and of three loaves I give him half a loaf; and I boast of the good I have done by giving that man work, and keeping him from starving.

"Starving, indeed! did he not keep me from starving? He knew not where to get bread, and I showed him. I had not the strength to get it, and he got it for me. We should both have starved without my knowledge, and we should have both starved without his strength; why, then, do I presume to deal out his share, making it only one-fifth as large as mine? An equal division would have been justice."

"This is Christianity, is it? this is the brotherhood that Jesus taught? Not much!

"Now, to show the other side of the workings of this system which puts money into one man's pocket, so that he can employ others and keep them from starving, — to show up this system more fully, let us take Wellby's case again; and perhaps we may learn whether it is he, or some one else, that does this.

"If I remember rightly, it was two thousand dollars that he sent West to draw twelve per cent interest. Men of money, men of speculative powers, could use money, and make it bring them as great a return as this, or more; and so the *fathers* of the State, or 'State fathers,' made that rate legal. No 'State mothers,' to care for the *little ones*, the poor.

"Well, 'little ones' try to do as the big ones do. There is a man who has a piece of land that he is told, and he believes, that it will become very valuable if he can put certain improvements upon it. He has a growing family, and he would like to shape things so that they may have something to begin life with; so he is persuaded to borrow two thousand, and make the desired changes, or additions. His eighty acres of land, for which he paid one hundred dollars, is not worth half enough to secure this sum on mortgage, not even with the five years' labor that he has put upon it; but he is so bound to use the money on the premises, that his farm is the forfeit if he does not, and the men of money are safe."

"They look out for the safety of the dollar, I perceive," said I.

"Oh, yes! it is the nest-egg, upon which they manage to set the geese that lay them golden ones; *poor geese!* and they get plucked of their feathers in

the end, to pay for the privilege. I am showing up the workings of a civilization that calls itself 'Christian,' remember."

"I shall not be very likely to forget it," I replied, as some of my own bitter experiences flashed across my mind; and he continued, —

"But you see there is an agent in the case, and he must live. He charges from two to five per cent for doing the business, and that must be taken from the two thousand; then there is the expense of the mortgage, putting it on record, &c.; so, by the time the man gets the money, it is considerably less than two thousand; but that is the sum upon which he must pay interest. The lender gets the benefit, and the borrower pays the bills.

"Now, when the improvements are made for which what is left of the two thousand pays, the man has put considerably more than that sum into them, for his time, labor, &c., have gone in also; and he gets what? A business that will pay him just about as much more than he could earn before as to enable him to pay the two hundred and forty dollars interest, and perhaps the additional tax that the increased valuation of his property brings. Perhaps, and perhaps not; all he gets, then, in return for all this trouble and care, is the satisfaction of being *counted* a wealthy man."

"A goose indeed!" was my audible thought.

"The world is full of them, child; but I have not done with the results of the two thousand yet, as seen from the other side than that which puts money into Wellby's pocket, and enables him to do good.

Every acre of land, within a mile each way from where these improvements have been made, is counted as worth at least a dollar more, more likely from two to five more; and within a few weeks an Eastern capitalist sells a piece of land in that vicinity for three thousand dollars, for which, eighteen months before, he paid only one thousand."

"The two thousand has gone back to Massachusetts, to Boston, perhaps," said I.

"Yes, or is expended where some one else will make improvements, till it doubles or trebles itself again; but the man's debt is not paid. Still he has run the risk, been to the trouble of doing what has put money into that other man's pocket; while the other man has done nothing toward it. Justice would have given at least a portion of that increase to him, to aid in canceling that debt; but there is no justice in the God-cursed system. Away with it from the face of the earth!

"Wellby, however, gets his two hundred and forty each year," continued Rockman, after taking time to quiet down a little from his burst of indignation; "for his money has made slaves of that Western family, and they must furnish him with that sum, or they lose their home. He thus has them by the throat, you see; and it is 'your money, or your life.'"

"But there is one point you have not named even yet, Uncle Rockman."

"And what is that, child?"

"The State gets a greater amount in taxes from the increased valuation caused by the use of that two thousand."

"Yes, I spoke of increased taxes, little woman: you forget."

"Not so fast, uncle; I do not forget. It is true that you spoke of increased taxation in reference to the people's pockets, but you said nothing of the use made by the 'State fathers' of that money; you failed to look on the other side."

"Oh! they increased their salaries on account of their increased duties, I presume. As there were no 'State mothers' to do it for them without charge, their washing bills would grow large; their spit-boxes would have to be cleaned occasionally too; much oftener than before *they* became a great State, and had a great deal of company from abroad; gentlemen, of course. These virtuous fathers would never think of entertaining ladies."

"When did you take your last dose of wormwood, Uncle Rockman, that you are so sarcastically bitter?" I asked; for the sneering tone that he used when in some of his moods annoyed me.

"The last time I was athirst. This sin-cursed world has nothing but vinegar mingled with wormwood and gall, to give to such as I.

> 'Nothing but a manger,
> Cursed sinners could afford,
> To receive the heavenly stranger.'"

"But Jesus sweetened his with, 'Father, forgive them,' you know."

"That is what we are told, madam: he sweetened his in his way, and I must mine in my way. But we have not done with Wellby yet."

"And are not likely to be, it seems," said I laughingly.

"Not if you keep interrupting me, puss. Every year he receives his two hundred and forty dollars, and uses it in paying men for doing what will bring him twice that sum. He is doing so much good with his money, you know! Those men didn't do him any good; oh, no! Why, they would starve if he didn't furnish them with work!"

"You see, he doesn't look on the other side."

"Well, ten years have rolled away. The husband and father has died with the two thousand unpaid, the thought thereof imbittering his last moments. True, Wellby has received two thousand four hundred; but what of that? It has only been for the use of the money: it is only the interest that he has received; but he now needs the principal, and must have it, for he sees a chance to do so much good with it. The result is, the property must be sold. When the two thousand is paid, together with the expense attendant on forced sale, the widow and children have about as much as they would have had, had it been sold before the two thousand was used upon it.

"Ten years of labor gone, and Wellby has had the avails in that two thousand four hundred of interest-money. For ten years, men East and men West have worked for this man, he so managing that those West paid those East; and neither have added to their possessions, while he has been growing rich all the time. Now, what would be justice between them, in your estimation, madam?"

"I can give you my estimate of it," said I.

"Well, if you please."

"All that Wellby has now, over and above what he had ten years ago, should be divided between him and those who have helped him to gain it. Fifty thousand dollars, I think he said that his property is worth now. Well, suppose that he was worth five thousand then; and suppose that it has taken the labor, the time, of eight men beside himself, to make this increase; he having had his living for self and family, and they theirs. Taking out his original five thousand, we have forty-five thousand left; an equal division of that would give him and them five thousand each."

"And that is your idea of justice?" he asked.

"It is," was my reply.

"Why, woman! you have given capital no chance whatever."

"I did not intend to, further than the chance of keeping itself whole. Give us the same chance to repair life's forces as they wear away, and we should live forever. Death would be swallowed up in victory, and immortality sure. Why should dead matter, in the shape of capital, be permitted to increase itself at the expense of human hearts and brains, I would ask?"

"Well done! well done, little woman!" he exclaimed, rising and walking rapidly back and forth; "but we cannot spare you yet."

"And who talks of sparing me?"

He stopped in his walk, faced me a moment, and answered, "You are so near the kingdom, that, if the

gate should be left ajar, the draught might take you in."

"And then I should know what was on the '*other side*,'" said I quickly.

"There may be a possibility of seeing the 'other side' of things too soon for our own good. I sometimes think there is," was his thoughtful response.

"And there comes the 'other side' to this discussion; or, rather, what will put an end to it," said I, starting up as I saw a carriage stop at the door, and a friend preparing to alight.

CHAPTER V.

OTHER POINTS.—A PROBLEM.

"I DO not exactly like the way the other side of those questions was illustrated," I said to Rockman a few mornings after we had been interrupted, as related in the preceding chapter.

"Why? did I not compliment you highly enough?"

"Pshaw! you know better. But it seems to me that you took particular pains to bring out the very darkest points, to cite extreme cases; and I think it hardly fair. Do you?"

"Don't, now, appeal to my sense of justice, I beg," said he in tones of mock distress; "besides, it is 'not fair' to make a witness testify against himself."

"Never mind your 'sense of justice:' waive that in favor of gallantry, and answer my question, please," I returned in the same strain.

"Well, if I must, I must. But I shall defend myself. YES, I DO. I think it perfectly right to match one extreme with another. It is the system that I am showing up. It is the system which causes men and women to make fools of themselves and one another; hardening their hearts, and blinding their eyes, by continually presenting to them false issues, false hopes.

"I do not like to make human beings look ugly; but if there is something that is making them really so, and its advocates show us what is good in us in spite of that something, that system, claiming this good to be the result of the system itself, have I not the right to hold up the true results, and the worst that can be found, in order to convince them of their error?"

"But will it do that? Will they not see at once that you have given extreme cases, the results of individual folly perhaps, and thus just the opposite effect from what you desire be produced?"

"So thought not the agitators of the slavery question: they quoted the worst features, not because they were everywhere true, but because they existed under, were the legitimate fruits of, the system. Many of our best people thought them too severe; but they knew that it took Gabriel's trump to wake the dead, and they could not be induced to blow softly, even to save weak ears."

"Still I can not but feel, uncle, that those 'anti-slavery' veterans made a mistake somewhere, somehow; though I do not see clearly how."

"Well, I can," he said: "they condemned the people with the system; they denounced the slave-holder as the chief of all villains, as well as the system as the sum of all villainies. They said, 'Stand by thyself: I am holier than thou,' forgetting that we are all sinners, that we have all come short of the perfect law. People are conscious in their inner souls of a desire to do right; and whatever of wrong they admit, they justify by the force of circumstances, consequently will not submit quietly to unqualified condemnation."

"And that is where you think the mistake was?"

"I do."

"Perhaps you are right," I said after a moment's thought; "but it seems to me that people are so inclined to identify themselves with that which they advocate or sustain, that opposition thereto is considered as opposition to themselves."

"Where, then, did the mistake come in?"

"I do not know: perhaps there was none."

"Perhaps," he repeated: "Christians say that there are no mistakes in God's perfect plan, and I suppose that slavery comes in with the rest; but it seems like blasphemy to admit it."

"If we go into the realm of the absolute, Uncle Rockman, we are sure to get beyond our depth; let us confine ourselves to facts and their relations. You have owned that you have quoted extreme cases to illustrate the workings of our present financial system, and"—

"You mistake, child: it was you who accused me of that, and I claimed that I had that right, neither affirming nor denying as to the accusation."

"You said that you should defend yourself; and what need of defense if there was nothing to defend?"

"The rights of the people, your rights; general principles."

"But they are not yourself?"

"Oh, yes! they are when they are represented in me. You said it was not fair: I said that it was, and thus defended myself in the right to do so if I chose; and, in defending myself, defended you, should you be placed in a similar position."

"Thanks for your championship."

"Of truth," he interrupted.

"Well, I am truth when I represent it," I retorted, using his own illustration against him; "so thanks for your championship of myself; but did you not really use extreme cases in illustrating the other side of the results of Blank, Ledger, and Wellby's speculations?"

"If you mean beyond the medium, yes; if the very worst, no. I have given extremes perhaps, as they occur through the acts of people who have a desire to be honest in their dealings one with another; such as would not willingly injure any one; but 'business is business, you know,' is their motto, and they obey it. But there are those whose ruling love is money, or, it may be, an ambition that money is needed to carry out. Such will let nothing stand in their way: the technicalities of the law itself are taken advantage of, and the system can not prevent even this. Here extreme cases come in; but I did not use them, though I have known some such.

"Why? do you ask? Simply because they would not have been the true opposite, the other side to the characters I was dealing with. Blank and Ledger were not bad-intentioned men; neither is Wellby. On the contrary, they were and are good men, as the world goes; as good, perhaps better, than the average; consequently, are a fairer illustration of the workings of a system which *must* change, pass away, to give place to one more perfect."

"I wish that time would come," I said.

"But what shall take its place?" he asked with

startling emphasis: "you can not answer, neither can I; it is a problem that is yet to be solved."

"And, till it is, we must be content with what we have, for any thing that I can see," I asserted in a tone that showed a desire to close the discussion.

"Not content with, but as patient under it as is consistent."

"A patience that will permit of cursing when one feels like it," I retorted: "ha, ha, ha! you are a pretty example of patience."

"Of course I am," he replied with the most imperturbable coolness; "an emetic deliberately taken to dislodge the contents of an overloaded stomach is no sign of impatience; but it is a sign, is good evidence, that the party is not content with his condition: so I may be, am discontented; and cursing may help me to bear, to make me patient, simply because of the relief to overcharged nerves; do you comprehend?"

"I think I do."

"But you are tired of this, and are too polite to say so in words, though your manner shows it plainly enough: no, I am not offended; it is time I was going. Good morning."

"Is there or was there ever another like him?" was my involuntary comment as he closed the door behind him. Then my mind reverted to the system of society, to the methods of dealing one with another, to the powers that be, and their natural resistance to the changes, that I agreed with Rockman in saying, must be made; and I cried out in an agony of spirit, —

"Who is sufficient for these things?"

Then there came to my mind the Rabbinical legend of Sandalphon, the angel of prayer; and I wondered if he was really gathering the prayers of humanity, the heart-hungering prayers, that were constantly going up for a better state of things.

If so, and they finally "change into flowers in his hands," what a flowery future we have before us, which will be ours *when we get to it!* But the, "How long, O Lord, how long?" that we send up so often, seems many times to be met too much as was the darky's when overheard by his master, —

"As long as my whip-lash;" the weight of its swift descent resting, at the same moment, upon the poor fellow's back. Well, if "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth," then we are all beloved; and if the words of the Methodist hymn are true, "Through tribulations deep, the way to glory lies," we shall be likely to reach the glory some time; for the *deep* tribulation comes to us all sooner or later.

The poet, after portraying the legend of Sandalphon, says, —

"It is but a legend, I know, —
A fable, a phantom, a show,
Of the ancient Rabbinical lore;
Yet the old mediæval tradition,
The beautiful, strange superstition,
But haunts me and holds me the more.

When I look from my window at night,
And the welkin above is all white,
All throbbing and panting with stars,
Among the majestic is standing
Sandalphon the angel, expanding
His pinions in nebulous bars.

And the legend, I feel, is a part
Of the hunger and thirst of the heart,
Of the frenzy and fire of the brain,
That grasps at the fruitage forbidden,
The golden pomegranates of Eden,
To quiet its fever and pain."

Yes, that is it, — the true reason of our restlessness; we are fevered with the results of false conditions; fevered, and full of pain, our restless spirits grasp hither and thither. Some look upward to the stars, and pour forth their longings in language of such plaintive eloquence, that I sometimes wonder if the angels ever stoop to listen.

Still it is a feverish pleading, in which the true and false are strangely mixed, in which realities and shadows interchange and multiply each other.

Others, with different phases of this fever, this heart, soul hunger, take to whiskey, tobacco, opium, dress, style, fashion, politics, religion, — yes, religion; for a fevered devotion is as common as any other form of this disease. O God! how much gall and wormwood will it take to cleanse and clear both heart and brain?

Thus questioning and groaning in spirit, the atmosphere of my room became too close for me, and I went out into the sunlight. Brick walls all about me, brick under my feet, and hard pebbles, threaded with iron rails, over the entire street. I looked upward, and the sky was as blue, as pure, as soft and yielding, as though it was not made up, in part, with emanations from brick that had been hardened by man's invention, from iron that he had wrenched

from its native ore, and from stone that he had made to serve him.

"O man!" I said, "thou makest all things to serve thee: why canst thou not solve this problem of the ages? why canst thou not find that which will allay thy fevered thirst?

"The churchman points me to Him who sat by the well of Samaria, and talked of the living water, of which if one drink, it shall be a well of water springing up within him into everlasting life. But have they received it? Do they not sicken and die like others?"

On, on, through the busy streets, I pass as I thus question, till at length my feet become weary with pressing the unyielding pavement; and I take my seat in the cars for the convenience of which those iron rails separated the pebbles in the equally unyielding street.

Passengers must get on and off; and we stop in front of a vehicle from which two strong men are lifting something. What is it?

Can it be possible? yes, it is a woman; in spite of all her rags and dirt, I recognize the sad fact, that soul-hunger, that the "fever and pain," have dragged a woman down to this. Those strong men, some woman's sons, were policemen; and the building into which they were taking her was a police court. Alas, my sister! unconscious, stupefied by the liquid fire of man's invention, thou hast for the time forgotten thy thirst, but only to awake with keener gnawings.

But who is this sitting opposite me? his bloodshot

eyes, his blistered face, his blossoming nose, all tell the same tale, three witnesses testifying to his degradation; but he is well dressed, and sits independently erect. He has never been obliged to sell himself for bread; he is a gentleman, of course he is; and yet his magnetism would scorch a sensitive, a pure woman like the flames of hell. No wonder that a woman with a spark of the human still left in her takes to alcoholic fires, if forced by conditions into such fires as that.

But I pass on till at length the bit of nature beautified by art, the park, meets my eye, — an oasis amid a desert of brick and stone.

Thank heaven that the god Mammon can not rob Nature of all of the love of her children! The good mother still retains her hold, and so there is hope.

Here I took my seat, and watched the comers and goers, studying the various characters as they passed before me. Presently my attention was attracted by the appearance of a tall, finely formed man, with jet black wavy hair, and eyes to match, who stepped quickly forward to meet one of the most lovely girls that I had ever seen. She seemed to me like a gush of sunshine and song pervading a bed of violets. She blushed and smiled as the gentleman approached; and then they walked slowly back and forth, his head bent toward her the while, with a deferential air, as he listened and talked.

I could see, both from her dress and manner, that she was unaccustomed to city life; and the deference paid her by the courtly man of the world evidently charmed and bewildered her thoughtless little head.

"Another victim!" "Who is she?" "Some one ought to warn her," were the remarks that I heard from those around me. Just then I saw Rockman coming quickly toward me.

"Prepare for a scene," said he, as soon as he was near enough to speak without the others hearing.

"What is coming?" said I, glancing toward the couple who had just passed.

"Yes, it is of them; Minnie has been defeated so far in every movement that she has made to separate them; and she feels that something must be done soon, or it will be too late. Be prepared to act as the occasion demands, for I never saw Minnie so aroused: there she comes!"

I turned, and saw a lady approaching with a quick, firm step, and the air of a princess. Was that Minnie Morris? Was she an infamous woman? She went up to the couple, threw back her veil, and confronted them. Her face was as pale as it will ever be when in her winding-sheet, but her eyes flashed.

The girl gave a frightened little scream, and shrank closer to the man's side. "You here!" he exclaimed turning pale, then flushing to an angry red.

"I am here, and intend to save that child from your hellish grasp, if it costs me my life."

"Begone, or I will call the police."

"If you dare, Henry Gould."

"I most certainly should, did you not wear a woman's form; though there is not much womanhood left, I should infer from the character you bear."

"Enough left to match all the manhood that is left

of a dozen such as you; and much you care for a woman's form, only so far as you can make it minister to your demands," was her quick retort.

"Come away, Miss Leland: this is no place for you," he said, attempting to pass. But the crowd was too dense to make that an easy matter, and Minnie had come prepared. Suddenly there stepped forth a veiled form; and, dropping upon her knees in front of the pair, she threw back her veil, and looked Gould in the face; it was but a moment, till another and then a third did the same thing. It was too much; the man fled from the faces of his victims.

"Now you and your friend look after this sweet child," said Minnie, turning to Rockman, "and I will away to my own work." The others went their ways also; but the poor child (she was but a child, not more than sixteen) when she found that her "*hero*" had fled and left her, fainted, and would have fallen prostrate had not Rockman caught her.

"Poor lamb, poor lamb!" he murmured, as he rested her head upon his breast, and chafed her hands and temples.

"Who, what, what does this mean? my child, oh, my child!" cried a middle-aged man, who had just come up, starting forward as he beheld the fainting girl.

"We have saved her," said Rockman, comprehending the anguish of the question.

"Thank heaven!" and, tottering to a seat, he extended his arms.

"Thank heaven, and Minnie Morris," said Rockman, placing his child therein; and when Violet

opened her eyes, her head was resting upon her father's breast.

"Violet," I repeated, as I heard the name, "my comparison, my thought, was not out of place. She is a violet in her sweet modesty, and a golden crowned lily in her rare beauty."

It was her sweet, shrinking modesty, that had held the destroyer back, even while it intensified his desire to possess. He dare not move too fast, and thus there had been time for Minnie to act; and faithfully had she worked.

From the first moment she had set her eyes upon the girl, she felt that the city was not her atmosphere, — that she was marked for some one's victim, but whose? To learn this, she must move cautiously. She set her agents to work, Rockman with the rest, and finally she learned the girl's name and home; then her friends were warned; and the father set forth to find the child that he had supposed, till a few hours before, was safe with an aunt in an adjoining State.

They had learned before Minnie's letter reached them, that she was not, had not been, with her aunt, and were in a state of the utmost consternation, when they, through the efforts of one that the world called infamous, found the clew that led to her restoration.

But things were taking such a shape, that Minnie dared not wait the result of her letter, so resorted to the method that we have related.

I had often heard Mr. Rockman speak of Minnie Morris, had become interested in her, but had never met her till now, and now had not even spoken with

her; but a glance at her determined face, as she confronted Gould, had bound me to her for ever. I cared not what the world called her, my soul claimed her as sister; and I no longer wondered that Jesus said of such, —

"The publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of heaven before you."

It would be needless to relate, even if a full account could be given of, the steps that were taken, the means used to draw Violet Leland from the protection of her friends. We have seen that the plot was defeated, and we rejoice together, my dear reader, — defeated in this case; but, oh! of how many plots that are laid, can this be said?

Is God partial? does he leave things to be directed by chance? or what does it all mean?

> "God moves in a mysterious way,
> His wonders to perform;
> He plants his footsteps in the sea,
> And rides upon the storm.
>
> Blind unbelief is sure to err,
> And scan his works in vain:
> God is his own interpreter,
> And he will make it plain."

So says the poet; and John the Revelator says that the angel who stood with one foot on the sea and the other upon the land sware that —

"In the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets."

And our hearts cry out, "Hasten the unfolding of this mystery;" but, even as we thus ask, there cometh to us the words of Jesus, —

"Ye know not what ye ask."

CHAPTER VI.

A SURPRISE. — FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS.

I NOTICED, when describing the scene in the park, that Rose was particularly interested. Her color went and came; and, as I neared the finale, her excitement increased. When I concluded, she drew a long breath, and left the room; and as I passed her door, soon after, I heard her sobbing. I asked no questions, but resolved to watch and wait; for as I remembered how Rose looked when I knew her, a happy school-girl, I fancied that I could trace a resemblance between her and Violet Leland.

Mr. Leland remained in the city a few days, but he did not lose sight of his daughter. With a strange pertinacity, so it seemed to his friends, he took her with him while he sought out Minnie Morris, the three girls who had confronted Gould, and, last of all, coming with Rockman to call upon me.

"I will risk Violet's coming to any harm by going where her father goes, and listening to what he hears," he said. "Had my girl been better informed, she could never have been drawn so near to the precipice."

I had said nothing of my suspicions to any one;

but, when I saw them coming, I sent Rose to my closet for an article that I could have done without, but which I took a notion to have just then. I did this to have her as far from the door as possible.

"I have brought Mr. Leland and his daughter," said Rockman, leading the way, "as they wished to see you before they left the city."

"I am glad to meet you," said I, extending my hand; "and allow me to introduce my friend Miss Barron," turning quickly toward Rose, who had started to leave the room.

Mr. Leland looked up with a start, as I pronounced the name; then, getting a full view of her face, he exclaimed, —

"Do the dead come to life? Rose, O Rose! what does this mean?"

Rose managed to say "Uncle," but was too much overcome to add any thing more; and I replied for her, —

"It means, Mr. Leland, that the lamb can be saved out of the den of the wolf, as well as prevented from going in."

Violet looked from one to the other with a puzzled expression upon her face: "I should say it was Cousin Rose, only I thought she was dead."

"And so I was, to all intents and purposes; oh! why have you come to drag me out before the world again?" sobbed Rose.

"But why do this, Rose? why leave us to think you were dead? who wrote that letter telling us that you had fallen into the sea, and that your body had never been found?" asked Mr. Leland.

"I wrote it, uncle; I thought my friends would feel better thinking so, than to know the truth;" and then, "oh, my poor mother! how is she?"

But I will pass over the next half-hour, in which something of what Rose had suffered was told to her rejoicing yet sorrowing relatives.

Still the worst was kept back to be told by Rockman afterward.

"And this is what I have been saved from," sobbed Violet. "How much I have learned within a few days! I feel as though I was ten years older."

"It is a terrible awakening, my child," said Mr. Leland; "but the lesson learned has not cost us too dearly."

Mr. Leland tried hard to induce Rose to accompany him home, Violet joining in the request.

"I can not, I can not," was her only reply.

"What shall I tell your mother, then?" he asked, when he found that his pleading was useless.

"I would rather that she would continue to think me dead," was the reply.

"But I can not allow that, my child; for I know that she would give all she possesses to look upon your face once more."

Rose opened her lips as if to speak, and then closed them again.

"What is it, my child?" he asked.

"I was thinking of what I have heard her say, but no matter; say to her what you please. If she wishes to come here, I will see her; but I can not go there."

I had tried several times to learn of Rose where

her friends resided, but could get nothing from her. When she attended my school she was boarding with a distant relative, a maiden lady who had since died: and so I had no clew whatever. But that which I had sought to do was at length brought about without my aid, and she was restored to her friends, at least so far as the knowledge of her whereabouts was concerned.

A few weeks afterward, a pale, sorrowful-looking, elderly lady rang the bell, and asked for me. I knew, as soon as I looked into her face, who it was that stood before me; and, quietly leading the way, I rapped at the door of Rose's room. She came and opened it; and I left them standing face to face.

What transpired between mother and child, the next few hours, none but God and attending angels know; but, when they came down to tea, Rose wore a look of subdued happiness such as I had never seen upon her face before; while every line of the mother's features said, —

"This my child was dead, and is alive; was lost, and is found."

But no word of pleading could induce Rose to return with her mother: "I can not, I can not," was still her cry. After her mother had left, I tried by gradual efforts to bring her out from her seclusion, to mingle in that society of which she was so well fitted to form a part. She resisted my efforts, and finally turned upon me one day with, "I will go where you will never hear from me again, if you will not leave me in peace."

"But why will you persist in throwing your life away?" I asked.

"I am not throwing it away," she replied. "It has been taken from me, and I can not bring it back. Do you suppose, with the wrongs I have endured for ever haunting me, that I can go out and face the world?"

"Yes, and show that you are greater than that world by looking it in the face, and defying its injustice. I know, Rose, that you have suffered terribly: I have waited, giving you time to gather strength, still hoping, expecting, that you would yet become a worker in

'The cause that lacks assistance,'

against

'The wrong that needs resistance.'

Tell me, have I hoped in vain?"

"Oh, my kind, my best of friends, do not, do not press me so hardly!" she exclaimed, sobbing as if her heart would break.

My heart bled for her; but I knew that she must be aroused, so I continued, —

"Will you allow the only benefit that can be gathered from your sufferings to escape you for want of courage to use the opportunity thus afforded you? It seems to me that it has cost too much to have it thrown away."

She gave me a startled look. "What do you mean?" she asked.

"I mean this: you have not sinned, but have been sinned against. You have been crucified, have worn the crown of thorns, drinked the wormwood and the

gall, and you have lain in the grave of inaction, of forgetfulness; but has it not been long enough? I know that it is hewn out of a rock, that it is well guarded; but let the angel of determination come to your rescue, and the keepers will begin to quake before you. I mean, Rose Barron, that you are greater than all you have suffered, greater than all that opposes, if you will only think so."

"But what can I do?" she asked, in a way that showed me I was making an impression.

"I will find enough for you to do, if you will only do it; but the first thing necessary is to look yourself squarely in the face without blushing; in other words, assert your self-respect. Why, even Minnie Morris, in saving others, will yet save herself; for their loving magnetism will bear her upward, whether she will or no."

"Yes, Minnie is doing a good work; but I wish she would leave the business she is in," was her reply, after a moment's silence.

"From the world's standpoint, it might seem better; but I am not so sure that it would be."

Rose looked at me with so much astonishment depicted upon her countenance, that I laughed heartily, in spite of my efforts to the contrary.

"Don't be frightened, dear: I am not advocating prostitution," I said, as soon as I could speak. "But Minnie's life is under her own control where she is, as much as though she was in some other business; and perhaps more so, for she has the means to be independent. True, she boards those whose lives are not what we could wish; but the merchant, the

lawyer, the dressmaker, and all others, are just as ready to take their money in payment of dues, as she is for their board; at an exorbitant price, you may say, but not in proportion to the risk. Society, though ever ready to take their money, would push them out of existence if it could.

"If they should go to church, as they often do, and, when the contribution-box was passed, should put in a five or a ten dollar bill, the minister will be just as glad to get it, as he would have been had it been paid first to the deacon for goods, and then passed into the box for his use."

"Do you mean to say that you think Minnie can do more good where she is than elsewhere?" asked Rose.

"I mean to say that she can if she will; that she has greater opportunities. She has access now to those that she could not reach, were she to try to work with such as call themselves Christians. Beside, if she were to attempt to join with that class of people, she would have to conform to their ideas of things, or she would not be accepted; and even then she would be expected to take a back seat, and Minnie will never do that.

"Many a one who would otherwise be efficient workers are kept back by the Pharisaical, 'Stand by thyself: I am holier than thou,' pride of those who take the lead in benevolent enterprises and works of charity; and, where she now is, Minnie is not limited by long faces or mock prayers; so she can do her own work in her own way, and saves more young girls from destruction in one year than any half-

dozen church-members in the city do in twice that length of time. True, her good is not unmixed; but whose is?"

I waited for some further response from Rose, but she made none. She seemed in deep thought; and I left her, praying that she might yet learn that —

> "Heaven has its own peculiar way
> Of making angels out of clay;
> And deep the chiselings of God,
> That mold a seraph from the sod."

The next morning Rose came down to breakfast as usual, but her face wore the same thoughtful look as when I left her on the night previous: her manner was quiet and subdued, but it lacked the give-up, the helpless element that had so long pervaded it. Toward night she came to me with, —

"I do not know as I quite understood you last night; but it seems to me you intended to say, that, if we were lost to the world, we should find ourselves."

"That is just what I meant, but you have said it better than I did," I replied, more pleased than I chose to show.

"And, when we have thus found our real selves, that we should do what we can in our own way, regardless of what the world that had cast us out might say, our acts being subject only to the approval of God and our own souls?" she continued.

"Yes: that is, we must not *seek* the approval of the world; but, if our line of duty lies where it comes without seeking, then we need not go out of our way to provoke martyrdom."

"Well, I do not know as I crave martyrdom," she said, "but I do not feel as though I desired the world's approval; I should fear that I was not wholly unselfish; beside, I see so much that is false, that I think I should prefer its frowns to its smiles. I had hoped to remain quiet, and provoke neither; but I find that it is not to be."

I waited, expecting to hear some definite decision, some expression of purpose as to what she intended; but she did not seem inclined to converse further, and I would not question. I knew that time was the best developer in her case, and I was content to abide the result.

The next day, as she came down dressed to go out, she put her hand upon mine, looked into my face, and said, —

"Whatever you hear, whatever you see, trust me."

"Yes, and bless you too!" I replied, pressing a kiss upon her sweet lips.

"Thank you," and she was gone. She did not return till in the evening, and then Rockman came with her. She said nothing, neither did I. This was repeated some three or four times within the next two weeks, till at length I remarked, —

"Are you two engaged in a conspiracy?"

"Perhaps," said Rose; and Rockman added, "Where ignorance is best, 'tis folly to be wise."

"You are not good at quoting, sir," I said.

"Oh! yes, I am; for I know just how to bend the quotation to suit the case. Ignorance is not bliss for you or any other child of Eve; for you all want to know all that is going on."

"Well, I do not seem very likely to find out," I retorted, assuming an injured look.

"Now, don't, or I shall cry; don't, please, be angry with me," said Rose, with mock terror depicted upon her countenance.

"Come, little girls, don't waste your time in trying to be actresses; for you will never succeed, though you might become good at caricature."

"Now, Uncle Eben, that is too bad!" we both exclaimed at once; but his only response was, —

"It's the truth."

About a week after this, Rose said, on going out, "Do not be alarmed if I do not return to-night."

I wondered what it all meant, but felt certain that there was nothing wrong, so simply bowed in assent.

The next morning about ten o'clock the bell rang; and a lad, apparently about fifteen years of age, presented a note, saying that it was from Miss Morris, and with a bow retired.

"No answer is needed, it seems," I said to myself as the boy left, and then proceeded to read the note, which ran thus: "Do not be uneasy about Rose: she is under my care, and I would protect her with my life if necessary. Your friend,

"MINNIE MORRIS.

"P.S. — How do you like the looks of my errand-boy?"

I had no anxiety about Rose, but the postscript puzzled me. It made me keep thinking of the boy; and somehow I fancied that I had seen that face before, or one very much like it. But, the more I

thought, the more I couldn't tell where or when, so the more I was puzzled.

Another night passed, and Rose did not return. The next morning, about the same hour, another note was brought; but this time the bearer was a middle-aged man of dignified appearance and gentlemanly bearing, and the postscript read, —

"How do you like the looks of my *particular* friend, or, in other words, lover?"

This, as before, had the effect to keep me thinking of the bearer; and the same haunting resemblance to some one I had seen, that had troubled me in reference to the boy, existed in this case also. In the afternoon Rockman called, and I related these facts to him.

There came a look over his face that was like a flash, gone before you have caught it, and yet saying so much. That look told me that he understood the mystery, and yet told me so indistinctly that I was not quite sure that I had read aright.

He laughed, and remarked, "You women are always imagining something. I presume that you have met them on the street."

"And you men are always doing something to make us imagine," was my retort.

"Humph!" said he, "how much of your doings would you like to have us shoulder, I should be glad to be informed? It seems to me that in this case it is women who are doing, — Minnie and Rose, for instance; while the third one can only imagine, and so is troubled. Poor puss wants a corner. That's what's the matter."

"Well, there should be four corners, uncle; and if Rose, Minnie, and yourself occupy but three, why should I not have the other?"

"You mistake, child: it is Rose, Minnie, and her errand-bearers, the boy and the lover, who occupy the corners."

"And yourself left out also. Well, I must say that it is too bad. Still you are such a philosopher, I suppose that you can endure it; but what can I do?"

He smiled at my nonsense, and replied, —

"Prepare for denouements."

"There is something at the bottom of all this that I intend to find out," said I, noticing his peculiar tone.

"Of course you will; when a woman says she will, she will, you may depend upon it;" and then, rising to his feet, he added, "The atmosphere of a curious, inquisitive, dissatisfied woman does not exactly suit me: so I will bid you good afternoon, madam."

"Cowards always run when the battle gets too hot for their liking," I flung after him as he closed the door, and then I sat down to think. But I must confess that, in this case, thinking did not give me any light. The next morning the boy brought a third note, saying that Rose would be back that evening; and, as I looked into his face, the truth flashed upon me.

"Rose," I exclaimed, "what masquerading is this?"

"Don't," said she, casting a quick, apprehensive glance around: "no one must know but yourself; take me to your room, and I will explain."

I took her to her own room, and, closing and locking the door, pointed to her closet. "Go and change your dress," said I, "that I may know it is really you; but, how you are going to be yourself without your curls, is more than I can understand."

She laughed, and, taking a package from her pocket, tossed it to me with, "Undo and brush them, while I do as you have so peremptorily demanded."

I undid the package; and there was her own beautiful hair, and so fitted to her head that when adjusted one would not know, without looking closely, that it had ever been cut off. She was soon arrayed in one of her becoming dresses; and, with the hair in its old place, she was again my own sweet Rose.

"I can not realize it," I said: "you look so differently from what you did a half-hour since!"

"Many things are hard to realize, that are nevertheless true," she replied in a tone of such serious gravity, that I was again astonished. How many transformations was my little Rose to pass through?

"I begin to think," she continued, "that the whole world is two-sided; and we judge of those with whom we come in contact by the side that is turned toward us."

"Have you been with Minnie all this time?" I asked, beginning to be anxious to get at the bottom of her plans.

"I have: Minnie and I have a common bond of sympathy. We have both suffered from one man's perfidy; and, would you believe it, I saw him there."

"Is it possible, Rose!"

"It is not only possible, but true; and he patted Minnie on the back, saying that she was a trump, had too good sense to go moping around because a fellow happened to be changeable, and so spoil the rest of her life.

"'Spare your compliments, if you please, Mr. Crandall,' was her quiet reply; but I saw the fire flash from her eye in a way that boded him no good.

"Well, Minn, it was your own fault, after all: your temper drove me from you, or I presume I should have been faithful yet.'

"'Miss Morris, if you please,' she said, drawing herself up proudly.

"'None of your airs with me, miss: they won't go down.'"

"But where were you, Rose?" I asked, interrupting her.

"Oh! I was Miss Morris's little waiter, and no one paid any attention to me; that is, only once, when a gentleman who seemed a little the worse for liquor commenced talking to me."

"Were you not frightened?"

"Just a little startled; but Minnie's stern, 'Let my servants alone, if you please,' put a stop to any thing further in that direction. But I have not done with Robert Crandall yet. Minnie turned upon him with, 'Where is Rose Barron, Mr. Crandall?'

"Had a clap of thunder burst upon him from a clear sky, he could not have been more startled. 'Why, what, what do you know of her?' he asked.

"'I know the history of that transaction, and that is enough for you, sir,' was the prompt reply.

"Robert was silent for some moments. Minnie had said to me, pointing to a chair a little back of where she was standing, 'Sit down and rest you, Henry: I shall want you presently." I knew that she did it to give me an excuse for staying, so I took the seat indicated.

"I watched and listened, without seeming to do so; and Robert, judging from his looks, was trying to decide what course to take to disarm Minnie of whatever feeling she might have toward him on account of his treatment of me.

"At length he said, 'Well, Minnie, I must confess that was the very meanest thing I ever did; I have been sorry ever since, indeed I have; but your temper drove me from you, and her beauty and her prudery made me wild. Where is the girl? do you know?'

"'I do, but you can not find her;' and then, looking him full in the face, 'you say that you are sorry. Prove it.'

"'How?'

"'I will tell you,' she answered. 'You wronged that girl beyond the power of language to express; you are a wealthy man in and of yourself, and, more than that, have married a rich wife: you have plenty, Rose is poor; put a thousand dollars into my hands for her use, and I will believe what you say."

"'But how am I to know that she gets it? I have only your word.'

"'And that is the word of one who has never told you an untruth,' she replied proudly.

"'Pshaw, the word of a'—

"'Stop,' said she in a tone of command: 'Henry,' turning to me, 'show the gentleman out.'

"I do not think I could have walked to the door but for the look she gave me, — a look which said, 'You are the one to do this. It is justice.'

"When he had gone, she sat down and laughed till the tears rolled down her cheeks, and then, catching me in her arms, exclaimed, 'Well, this is turning the tables, isn't it? Woman is not helpless, if she only knew her power; but, by holding us up to our own contempt, they take that power from us.

"'Yes,' she continued, 'if woman only knew her power! Why, if I could get all who occupy a position of shame in this city, if I could get them all to feel as I do, we would turn things bottom side up, and for the better too. We would have justice, and no real harm can come from rendering justice to the wronged.'

"I tell you she looked like a queen, when she said it," said Rose, her eyes kindling as she told me all this.

"But who is Minnie's lover?" I asked: "is he another disguise?"

"Minnie's lover? I have seen none," she said wonderingly.

I began to suspect who it was, and said, "We will go down now: I see Mr. Rockman coming."

"And so you have got Rose back," was his first remark.

"Yes, uncle, and I have found the boy who brought the note. Do you think I shall succeed as well in learning who the lover is?"

"Perhaps: was he any thing like this?" taking a wig and false whiskers from his pocket.

"You, too," said Rose starting forward; while I said, "I can not tell, sir, till I see them on."

I could not imagine how he was going to do this with the hair and whiskers he had; but he did, and in such a manner that his own were entirely hidden, or only appeared as a slight sprinkling of gray mingling with the glossy brown.

Rose fairly shrieked with laughter. "And you are the gentleman who came in soon after I shut the door on Robert Crandall," she said, as soon as she could speak.

"I was told that Crandall had been there," he replied demurely; while Rose continued, "I thought it such a pity that so pleasant, kind-looking a gentleman should visit such a place! And I wondered if he had a wife, mother, or sisters, and how they would feel if they knew it."

"Oh, ho! you did, puss; and what were you doing there?"

"Watching you, sir, and others, gathering information to serve me in the future," she replied.

"There as the friend, and under the protection, of the mistress of the house?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, make the world believe that you was there for any but an evil purpose, if you can."

"I shall not try, my friend," she said as the tears came to her eyes. "I care but little now what the world thinks: if I can only win the approval of my own soul by helping to save some poor girl from suffering as I have done, I shall be content."

"You may be content with that," he said; "but I shall never be satisfied till I have found means to remove the causes that produce such results."

"Perhaps, in doing my work, I may learn something that will aid you in what you wish to do; at least, I shall keep my eyes and ears open, and my brain thinking, Uncle Rockman."

"I do not undervalue your work, little girl, and shall often be near when you little think it, to aid you, if need be; but when, oh! when, shall the problem be solved, the mystery finished, and this double dealing cease?" he exclaimed; and a far-off, prophetic look came into his eyes, as he laid his hand upon Rose's head, and added, —

"Yes, keep eyes and ears and heart open; not only to what you see around you, but don't forget to look heavenward, for from thence must come your strength. My child, God help you! Amen."

"Amen," we both responded, and from earnest hearts; then there fell upon us the cooling dew of a silence, such as those experience who come into converse with their inner selves.

"Why can not we hear God's voice now?" asked one who had been reading the Bible account of those who talked with him of old.

"And so we could, if we could get still enough," was the reply.

"Louder than ten thousand thunders
Is the *silent* voice of God;
Wonderful above all wonders,
Coming from his blest abode;

While my heart to him is praying
In a sweet rapportal kiss,
Up in heaven I hear him saying,
Trancing all my soul in bliss,
Come up hither, come up hither."

It is ever thus: in our calm, silent blendings with the unseen, we must gather the strength that will be our sheet-anchor in the hour of trial, the strength that will enable us to ascend to the hights that are above the storm-cloud.

CHAPTER VII.

CHANGED. — TREASONABLE DESIGNS.

"IT seems to me that you have changed wonderfully since I first met you, Mr. Rockman," I said to him a few days after the occurrence related in the last chapter.

"Why do you think that? Is it because I allow you to have your own way, and put a handle to my name when you choose?" he asked.

"Oh! that is because you have grown lazy, sir, and do not wish to take the trouble to correct me so often."

"Not so very often, madam; for you do not do it only when you forget yourself; but perhaps I am yielding somewhat to the friction of life, — smoothing off a little. Do you like me any the better for it?"

"I can not say that I do, sir. Indeed, I miss those startling speeches, and feel as though I had lost something."

"So you prefer lightning let loose to lightning harnessed," he said, with one of his old flashes.

"Lightning let loose," I repeated, not exactly understanding what he meant.

"Yes, lightning let loose darts along the blackened cloud in zigzag lines of brightness, dazzling the eyes

with its intensity; but it may prove very destructive, and it will do no good to dodge, for you can have no idea of where it will hit. Lightning harnessed loses this brilliant flash, but follows the track of the wire with unerring certainty; still, if designed for that purpose, may be far more destructive than before."

"Oh! you think it is the brightness, the flash, that I miss," I said.

"Well, is it not?"

"I had not thought what it was; but there is certainly an exhilaration about a thunderstorm that the telegraphic wire can not give, — to me, at least."

He looked at me and smiled, repeating, after a moment, —

> "But whether good, or whether bad,
> Depends on how you take it."

"The application, if you please?" said I.

"Depends upon how you stand related to it, would have been better; for, if you are waiting a dispatch that may bring you a message of life or death, I think the excitement would be as great, and the interest more intense, than could be produced by any ordinary storm, even though

> "The lightning's flash, and the thunder's roll,
> Were seen and felt from pole to pole."

"But will you give me the particular application of all this to the change in your character?" I asked.

"No change of character, my child; iron is iron, whether liquid in the furnace, or molded into vessels of use. When 'God damn this thievish Chris-

tian nation,' burst from my lips, it was the flash of the lightning from the overcharged cloud. I mingled with the world, and looked upon wrongs that I could not redress, till my soul was stirred to a fever heat, and must find vent in some manner; so, being deeply religious by nature, my indignation took the form of an appeal to God for his curse upon such a state of things. Before people understood the use of lightning-rods, when the storm came, they made the unspoken, if not spoken prayer for God's intervention in their behalf; but now their prayers take an entirely different form, that of practical work to the same end. As I walked in and out among the people an unseen presence went with me, and was ever whispering, 'Come up to the help of the Lord against the mighty.' —"

"An unseen presence, Mr. Rockman?" said Rose.

"'Yes, unseen, but still believe me,
Such a guide my steps attend.'

"Thus I used to sing when I preached for the Methodists. I believed it then; I know it now."

"You know it now! pray tell us how?" we both exclaimed, almost in the same breath.

He sat a moment in silence. "I can not," he said, at length: "my experience would be no evidence to you; you must learn for yourselves; but I have found that there is more than one mount of transfiguration, and more than Moses and Elias, of those who have gone before, who walk by our sides, and give us of their aid."

The solemnity of his manner awed us, and we tried

to shake off its influence by calling him a Spiritualist; but he only replied, "Yes, such a Spiritualist as Jesus was; we are of the same family, only he is a few years older."

"How can you?" said Rose, her reverence being shocked, in spite of her appreciation of his genuine goodness.

"How can I speak thus of my brother? Why not? He called himself our brother, and have I not a right to take him at his word? I tell you we put him too far off, — hold him at arm's length, instead of close to our hearts. He is not far away, or his words are not correctly reported; for he said, 'If I go, I will come again;' and, 'Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world.'"

"Yes, unseen, but still believe me."

"Now, if Jesus is here, he is here for a purpose; and he must have agents, both in the seen and in the unseen, to aid in carrying out that purpose; and why not use me as well as another?

"But a purpose indicates a plan," he continued. "Electricity in the overcharged cloud is a force; obedient to the law of the wire it is a power."

"Where is the difference between power and force?" I asked. "If I force this window open, it is because I have the power to do it."

"True. But if you know how to undo the fastenings, you have the power to open it with a much less expenditure of force, of strength."

"I see," I said, and then waited for him to go on with his illustrations.

"As I was saying," he resumed, "a purpose indicates a plan. But the wages of sin is death; sin is the transgression of the law, a lack of coming up to its requirements. A perfect thing can not die; is not, can not be, condemned, damned. We have not now, have never had, a perfect form of society; no part of it is, or has been, constructed according to the perfect law: consequently, it is God-damned, or damned, condemned of God.

"To have it otherwise would be the most terrible thing that could be possible. What! God sanctioning, accepting, approving an imperfect thing, in the final sense of that term! He may approve *as an experiment*, may bless us in the experiment; but we must not expect to be left alone with the results of such experiment till that which is perfect is reached. As a nation, we are an experiment, and a grand one; in that sense the blessing of the Almighty has rested upon us in a wonderful manner.

"But the experiment is a failure, full of good points, but still a failure; and when I call upon God to damn, condemn, cast it aside, that a more perfect may take its place, I am really calling for his blessing."

"O Mr. Rockman, what a thinker you are!" said Rose, drawing a long breath, as though she felt a relief in thus giving a partial expression to the intense feeling stirred within her; while my thought was, —

"Prophet of God, go on!"

"A perfect life, The Perfect Good, or God, smiles upon an imperfect thing or good, only so long as it

strives to attain to the perfect, reaches higher and yet higher, cries out after the good, the God," said he in continuation. "The purpose of our brother Jesus in remaining with us, as I understand it, is the bringing about of a perfect government, a perfect order of society; and he is planning to that end.

"But we must work out our own salvation; for it is God, the good in us, that both wills and does, while our forces must be so directed as to become the power of God, of our good, unto salvation. Well, our brother Jesus, or some other brother of the unseen realm, finds in me a great deal of that element which, under certain conditions, becomes sheet or chain lightning. It is a good, though evil-spoken of while in that form.

"Some messenger sent from God, or the inner good of his own being, becomes a Franklin to me, takes Minnie as the kite, uses you and Rose here for tail, and, drawing the force of this lightning from the dark cloud of my ignorance, sets me to organizing it as a power with which to execute the before-uttered curse.

"Yes, I am going deliberately to work; first, to find where the imperfection lies, in society and in government; then I shall plan for their overthrow, and the inauguration of a higher."

"Treason," said Rose, half in sport and half in earnest.

"You have undertaken a mighty work, call it treason or what you will," I added.

"The work that my Father hath given me, shall I not do it? beside, I am only opening the way, am the

voice of one crying in the wilderness. Woman must eventually lift up her own banner, she must be free, ere she can bring forth the power to bruise the serpent's head. 'The son of the bond-woman' *can not*, instead of shall not, be heir with the son of the free-woman.

"Society, government, is to-day the child of the bond-woman, and as such must be cast out. Woman everywhere is in bondage, is not accorded equal rights with man, has not the right even to the use of her maternal functions unless *bound* to some man. A *bound*-woman, how can she become the mother of the sons and daughters of the Lord, the all-powerful, the perfect good?"

"Is not man bound also?" I asked.

"Most certainly he is: his relations with woman are such, that, no matter how much he may think it otherwise, she can not be bound without involving him. But the year of 'full release, of jubilee,' is on its way: it will come, and not tarry, for the Lord of hosts hath declared it."

"When do you commence your treasonable campaign, Mr. Rockman?" asked Rose.

"I have commenced it, and you have been acting as spy, little one," he replied gayly (he could go from the solemn to the playful, or the ridiculous, as quickly as a musician can touch the different keys of an instrument).

"Me a spy!" she repeated, holding up her hands in mock distress.

"Yes, you a spy. For what else were you in the parlor of a disreputable house, and dressed as a boy?"

"Oh, oh! and you have entrapped me into this!"

"Not a bit of it, little one: you went to my chief counselor of your own accord, and without my knowledge; if she persuaded you to enlist, it is not my fault."

"Of course not, Mr. Rockman; I never saw a man yet who was to blame: Eve did it."

"Take care there, you little rebel," he said, as she snapped her fingers at him, and ran up stairs to her room.

After Rose left, we had some further talk as to the course to be pursued; I, as usual, bringing in objections, principally against the deceit practiced in appearing in disguise. I could not quite reconcile it with my ideas of right.

"Society is one mass of deceit now," I said; "and I can not see the good that can come from doing what we condemn, of doing evil that good may come."

"We are not doing evil, but good," he urged: "we are only gaining a knowledge of the evil, that we may know how to overcome it with good; or, in other words, that we may supersede it with good. Time was when it would have been sin to me to have planned otherwise than for the present order of things; but that time has gone by; it has been weighed and found wanting, and must pass away. The 'young child' that is to take its place is already born; but its life is threatened, will be taken if it is not carried into Egypt, is not hidden, covered with darkness, disguise. Egypt signifies darkness."

"You quote Scripture very readily," I said; "but you can not convince me, sir, that your application is always correct."

"Perhaps not, but history only repeats itself. The facts of one age become the symbols of the next; while its symbols in turn are to become the facts of the coming one on a still grander scale."

"Well, well," said I, despairing of making any headway against him in argument, "do as you think best: I am not responsible for your sins or mistakes."

"And you are glad to be free of the load," he responded, laughing at me, as usual when I showed annoyance at defeat.

"You are an enigma to me," I answered: "you make me hold my breath with your lofty flights, make me feel as though one of the old prophets had returned to earth, and then propose methods of action that shock all my previous ideas of right."

"Don't try to solve the riddle, child.

'God is his own interpreter,
And he will make it plain.'"

Then, as he generally did when he had wrought me up to about such a pitch, he left me to my own thoughts.

CHAPTER VIII.

CHANGE OF BASE.

"MINNIE has been absent from the city for a few days, but when she returns she will let me know," said Rose, in reply to a question from me as to what Miss Morris was doing; "and then I wish you would go with me to see her."

"I would rather not," I said hesitatingly.

"Who was it that taught me to be brave?" she asked, looking me searchingly in the eye.

"But — but," I stammered.

"But, as you have never been trodden under foot, you prefer to keep at a distance," she said bitterly.

"Rose, Rose, do not say that!"

"It is the truth, nevertheless: you have been, you are, very kind to me, you urge me to self-respect, tell me that the fault was not mine; and yet, ere you are aware of it, you show me that you do not forget, that you think it well enough for me to go where it would not be quite proper for you."

"But, Rose" —

"I know; you feel that I have nothing to lose, but something to gain; while you risk your good name, and have nothing to gain;" and she burst into a passion of weeping. "No, don't touch me now, I

can not bear it," she said, as I tried to put my arms around her: "it is not pity I want, but genuine respect, and I will have it too, or nothing," she exclaimed, starting up, and walking rapidly back and forth through the room, and then out into the hall, with a movement as though she was smothering.

I had never seen her in such a mood, and knew not how to comfort her, and so was silent; but my heart was busy with questionings. Had I indeed given the poor child cause to feel thus? "*Poor child*," yes, I saw it now; in that very term was wrapped the pity from which she shrank.

"Rose, my dear friend, my sister, you distress me beyond measure," I said at length.

She came, and laid her head in my lap like a wearied child. "My best of friends, forgive me; but a wounded spirit is hard to bear, and mine is very sore."

"I will go with you to see Minnie, or you can invite her here," I said.

"Will you invite her as one who must come in disguise, or as an honored guest whom you can introduce to your friends?" she asked, raising her head.

"I should insult my friends by doing that; not in reality, but by trampling on their individual rights," I said, after a moment's thought.

"How? I can not see that," she said.

"Would you like to have me introduce to you one with whom I knew you did not wish to have even a speaking acquaintance?" I asked.

"No, I should not."

"You would feel that I had done what I had no right to do, at least without your consent."

"I should," she replied. "I see I was wrong; but Minnie is really far nobler than many who scorn her."

"I do not doubt it, Rose, and has self-respect enough to rest in that nobility."

"And I will try to have self-respect too, and rest in what I am, instead of trying to grasp at what is not freely and fully accorded," she said, throwing her arms about my neck.

I had learned a lesson, and so had she; so the hour was not lost, nor the tears wasted. The next morning a note came, telling of Minnie's return. Rose laid it in my hand when she had read it; and I asked, "Which shall it be? will you invite her here, or shall I go to see her with you?"

She blushed, laughed, and then said, "I had like to have been caught in my own trap. I have always gone veiled, and so dressed that I would not have been known from dozens of others; though one reason for my doing so was, I feared I should meet and be recognized by Robert Crandall."

"There is no such fear as that in my case," I said.

"I do not know about that: if he should meet and recognize you, and see you enter there, he would be sure to use it against you, if he ever found it for his interest to do so," was her reply.

"Well, I do not see but we shall have to go disguised after all, Rose."

"Wait, I have just thought how we can fix it. I will send Minnie word that we are coming to-night; and she will let us in by a private way leading from another street, the servants' entrance."

"Do so," I said. And that night, for the first time in my life, I stood within the house of one whose steps, according to Scripture, "take hold on hell." But there is another declaration which says of publicans and harlots, "They go into the kingdom of heaven before you," which indicates that steps may take hold on hell, and yet be really nearer heaven than are the steps of many who think themselves almost there.

What kind of a people are we? What manner of country have we?

The word of "the Master" is on the lip, the places in which they say to worship him point heavenward from valley and hilltop; and yet I have known a Christian woman, so called, pay five dollars for a toy to amuse her child, while Christians in the same city were hungry for bread; yes, and her Christian husband, to keep peace in the family, felt it his *duty* to give his wife that money for that foolish object, when it would have been his pleasure to have given it to that poor, toiling woman whose child had not enough to keep it comfortable.

"I will not be a woman's slave," said a man in my hearing not long since. Men *are* slaves, as well as women, under the present order of society. Eben Rockman's words are true, for I find the proof everywhere.

Yes, I went to the house of Minnie Morris. I saw her boarders in their rich attire, saw the luxury with which they were surrounded, and I thought of the toiling seamstress in her garret, of honest poverty and its reward; and I felt that a nation calling itself

Christian ought to be damned for permitting such things to exist.

But I must cease moralizing, and come to practical work, relating first, however, that I had promised the ladies of the church I attended, that I would go with them the next day to visit some poor families who were in need of aid. I told Minnie this; and she promised me a donation from each of the ladies, if I would pledge them to expend it myself, instead of giving it into the hands of any committee.

I gave the required pledge, and she collected for me thirty dollars. It was expended to good purpose, I assure you, dear reader; and I took good care also, that those who were benefited knew who the donors were. Perhaps I was a little foolish in this, but I like to see justice done even to the Magdalen.

But, coming to business, Minnie had been to the capital of the State, and had made arrangements to spend the time there during the session of the legislature; and she wished myself, Rose, and Mr. Rockman to be in the city also. "My girls are all going," she said: "they begin to get some idea of Rockman's plans; and they say that they will aid in furnishing means, so that it will cost you nothing but your time."

"I do not see how I can leave for so long," I said; but the fact was, I rather shrank from taking such a step.

"Oh, yes, you can! shut up your house, or let it to some one; I will take it, and pay you well for it, if there is no other way. No," she replied, reading my thought," I do not wish to put any one into it;

and it need not matter to you, if I keep it shut up, so that you are paid."

"I shall not consent to that," I said; "and it seems to me that this is like handling edge-tools."

"Well, we must handle edge-tools, if we would learn how to use them; and they are capital in severing bonds. If it is information that you need to aid in changing this cursed state of things, you will never have a better opportunity for obtaining it; and as Rockman is your uncle, and Rose your sister, you will have nothing to do but board them; that is, when my *lover* and *errand-boy* are absent."

"Rose does not look enough like me to pass for my sister, Miss Morris."

"Well, half-sister, then, or sister's child."

"I should like that," said Rose, "it would be easy to call you aunt."

"You, madam," continued Minnie, "need know nothing of that infamous creature Minnie Morris; and Rose and your uncle will be other parties altogether when with me."

"Don't," said I, for it hurt me to hear her speak so of herself.

"That is what the world counts me, madam, and it were well to look things squarely in the face; but, when infamy meets infamy, 'then comes the tug of war;' and Robert Crandall will be there as one infamy, for he has been elected representative from this district."

This last decided me, for I hated Robert Crandall as the Devil is said to hate a Christian; and, if I could in any manner aid in bringing home to him

what he so richly deserved, I should be more than repaid. I am ashamed to own that personal feeling had more to do in the matter than the thought of the ultimate good to be brought out of all this; but, nevertheless, it is the truth.

Rockman and Minnie were both above me in this respect; for Rockman was moved only from the plane of principle, and Minnie had caught the inspiration of the idea that even such as she might aid in bringing in the universal good.

And so things were arranged in accordance with Minnie's planning. In a quiet street, away from the bustle of business, a few furnished rooms were found, of which Mr. Rockman and his "*niece*" took possession, a younger lady being with them a portion of the time, and, when absent, was supposed to be away from the city.

In another portion of the city, Minnie Morris the courtesan opened a boarding-house for ladies, which was soon filled with an array of beauty, such as senators, representatives, judges, and others of high position, are not likely to pass unnoticed. True, there are exceptions to all rules; but I am speaking in general terms.

Remember, kind reader, I am not writing to please, but to illustrate life as it is; for, only as we see it thus, can we judge of it correctly, and of what steps to take to make it better.

It is folly for us to think that our sons and daughters can be saved from the evils which threaten, by keeping them in ignorance of what exists; for ignorance is the poorest of all safeguards.

The home of the quiet, staid citizen, and the home of the courtesan, — who of all the thronging crowd imagined that there was any connection between them? Not one.

Little does that fine-looking senator dream, as he pays court to the beautiful woman to whom he has just been introduced, that she saw him only the night before in the spacious parlor of Minnie Morris.

"One-half at least of the most popular of the gentlemen here, I have seen there," Rose thought as she looked over the crowd.

Rose had been into society but little, for she knew that Robert Crandall and his proud wife were there, and she did not wish to meet them where he could recognize her; at least not till her stay in the city was nearly over.

Several times during the winter she had seen him at Minnie's house, and had the dates, with the record of much that she had heard him say, and to whom, in her possession. She wished to give him a lesson; but it would not do to have it suspected that there was a spy at Minnie's house; for every visitor would be warned, and the money upon which they depended to carry out their plans would be withheld.

"Man controls the purse, and through it controls us," said Minnie one day, when discussing this question. "True, we handle a great deal of it; but we must submit to his terms, one of which is, we *must not betray him.* He can betray us. We must be public property, and objects of public scorn, in consequence; but he, oh, no! he must not be exposed; we must not even speak to him on the street."

"But woman is beginning to fill places of trust, and to command better pay," I said: "I see many of them here and elsewhere acting as clerks; and I find them in telegraph-offices and post-offices, where I am told they get good pay; sufficient, at least, to maintain them comfortably."

Minnie's eyes flashed. "Yes, and who has control of such appointments? Men, to be sure; and do you think that they forget their pockets in this? I tell you no! A man in office who supports a woman for her company can get her a place where she can earn her own money, and yet be subject to him. He thus saves his money; and, if she dares to refuse him, he gets her turned out of her position, and another takes her place.

"Oh, this cursed money-power!" she continued, getting up, and walking back and forth like a caged tigress.

"But all women who hold such positions are not of that class," I said.

"True, they are not; some of them are daughters or sisters, whose fathers or brothers have the influence to secure them a place. But what of that? They thus lessen their own expenses, and save money to spend with us. This is the rule. There are exceptions, noble ones, I admit; but, so long as men have the disposal of places where money can be made, the tendency is to give them to men, or to women, who will serve them, — will serve them by doing the same work for less pay, if in no other way."

"I do not see how things are ever to be any better," said Rose sadly; "for, if what they tell us is true, it must go on from bad to worse."

"If what is true?" asked Rockman.

"If it is true that the condition and surroundings of the mother before the birth of the child determine its character so far as this life is concerned."

"If that is true," said Minnie, "I can not see who is to blame for any thing."

"Conditions are to blame," laughed Rose, and at the very absurdity of the idea she had advanced.

"Conditions have no moral character," I remarked.

"Then why should those acts have, that are the result of conditions?" she asked with a puzzled expression upon her face, as though she hardly knew whether to treat the matter seriously or not.

"But we make the conditions," I persisted.

"And they in turn make us," said Rockman; "still we, as individuals, do not make the conditions which control us; they are made for us; and we must adapt ourselves to them, be ground to the dust by them, or overcome for ourselves and others, by making better conditions.

"The masses of the people never think beyond the law of adaptation, that of adapting themselves to conditions. Of these but few can succeed; and the others are ground, become grist, are tributary to those few. This is because conditions are such that the success of one is the failure of half a dozen, perhaps more. This of necessity."

"But what are we going to do about it? that is the question," persisted Rose.

"That we are trying to learn," he said; "and to do this it is necessary to get behind the scenes, to learn the working of the ropes; in fact, we must find the principle upon which the machine moves, learn the natural tendency of that principle; and, if the evil of its workings is the result of ignorance of its proper application, then we must set that ignorance before the people in such a light that they will see and remove it.

"But, if the principle itself is wrong, then we must seek a principle, that, when applied, will produce no such results, and reconstruct accordingly."

"A big job, Mr. Rockman," said Minnie.

"Yes, but we are big folks; the powers within us have but just begun to unfold as yet. As a man thinketh, so is he, or she, if it is a woman who thinks; and the first step toward doing a thing is to think that we can do it, — to believe that we have the power. The next is to look the ground all over, within and without. Then, having learned what is to be done, and how to do it, we must go to work with a determination to accomplish the result sought.

"I have become satisfied that man grows, progresses, mentally and spiritually, in the realm of mind as applied to matter, and in the realm of mind as applied to the moral and the spiritual, *just in proportion, and in the direction, that he believes in himself*. It is the most pernicious of all doctrines, that which teaches mankind that there is one single thing necessary for the happiness, the perfection of the race, that it has not within itself the power of attaining to."

"Would you put God out of the universe?" I asked.

"Indeed I would not, madam; but we shut him away from the race when we claim that he has not the power to work out their perfection through themselves. God worketh in *us*, is in *us;* but *we* do not believe it, do not believe in him, in the *I am* within *us*, in ourselves: so we fail."

"I do not see but you make yourself and God one and the same," I said.

"Then there is at-one-ment, reconciliation; and I am at peace with him."

"That is not what I mean."

"And what do you mean, madam?"

"I — I — well, perhaps I can not exactly express it; but it seems to me that one does not quarrel with one's self; and if God is in us, is our essential life, then there is, has been, no need of reconciliation."

"But we do contend with ourselves; there are the fiercest of conflicts right here within our own beings; and when we find, become reconciled to ourselves, then we are at peace with God. No use in talking, madam; I know that you do not believe in Jesus in the sense that he has been taught to the people; neither can I say that I do; but there is a deep meaning in the words, 'I and my Father are one.'"

"Emmanuel, God with us; this must become true of every soul, — of the race."

"It seems to me that we have left business to talk theology," said Minnie.

"No, Miss Morris, you mistake: we are only preparing the way for business. Faith is necessary to works; and we said in the commencement that we progress as we believe in ourselves; and it is true. Suppose, now, that you, when Crandall forsook you, had had no faith in yourself, had not sensed that, though condemned by the world, you could live as pure a life in the midst of vice, as others could when surrounded by the protection of that society which cast you out, where would you have been now?"

"Heaven knows!" she replied, as the tears started.

"Look over that life for the years that you have been thus condemned, and tell me if you know of a single soul who has been made worse because of you?"

"Not one," she replied with brightening eye, "not one, but many are better. I have held more than one back from the path of sin, who would have been destroyed but for my watchfulness; I have given many a dollar to the sick and suffering; and I have counseled those who have boarded with me to be as good as conditions would permit; and never have I urged a poor girl to submit to one whom I knew was hateful to her because the rules of business would have given me an extra dollar thereby; and the only lover I have had since (except yourself, and you are bogus) I accepted in the interest of others, but could not endure it, so gave him up."

Rose and I laughed at this joke on Rockman; but he continued, "And you have learned that which, if you will use aright, will yet bless the whole world; you have gained a knowledge of the under-currents of society."

"Oh, Mr. Rockman, if I could only believe it!"

"I told you we had not forgotten business," he continued; "and now I must go on showing that self-belief is faith in God, that only in the direction in which we believe in ourselves do we succeed. Self-belief, that which is genuine, compels belief from others."

"This is quite contrary to the teachings we have received," said Minnie thoughtfully.

"And what have our teachings brought us? Look about you, and see the condition of society. In the direction in which man has believed in himself, in the promptings of the God within, he has succeeded. Our achievements are grand; our steamboats, railroads, telegraphic lines, telescopes, our wonderful machinery that takes the place of handwork, all tell the same story. We send our messages under the sea, we go through the hearts of the mountains, we measure the stars, we chase up the comets in their flight, — all this, and much more; and why?

"Simply because we have believed that we had the power to do it. Jesus said, 'All power is given me.' He was our *brother*; remember that, — *our brother*.

"I say we have succeeded gloriously in the direction that self-belief has compelled action. Not one of the achievements we have named would ever have been accomplished had there not been a belief in its possibility first. I do not say that all believed: far from it; the masses did not believe; they opposed. They could not believe till the idea was made manifest, actualized, born into matter. Only those to whom God had whispered the idea could believe without seeing.

"And they must work it out for themselves; the God who whispered it to the ears of their inner consciousness working through their own powers."

"Any one would know, to hear you talk five minutes, that you had been a preacher, Uncle Rockman," said Rose, with a smile and manner which showed her interest in what he was saying, and at the same time indicated a desire to catch breath, to rest from the weight of the thoughts that were being expressed.

"And you thus make me remember, little Rose, that there is another side to this question, — the side in which man has not believed in himself; and that is the moral, the spiritual side. We have been taught to believe that on this side of ourselves we were totally depraved; that we could not do a good deed, or think a good thought, without God's help. God must do this work for us; *we* could do nothing.

"What has been the result, friends? What has been the result, Rose, Minnie, and you, my fair monitor, who in your goodness of heart have so often tried to soften and polish my rough, hard, abrupt ways? Just what might have been expected under such teachings. We are so mean, so low, so hypocritical, so utterly false as a people, that it sometimes makes me blush to think that I am human.

"GREAT GOD!" he exclaimed, rising, and walking rapidly back and forth, his tall form stooping, his hands behind him, and his head dropped forward

upon his heaving chest, as though grief and shame were well-nigh crushing him. For several minutes he continued his rapid motion, till finally his step grew slower; the look of shame and agony disappeared, giving place to one of the proud consciousness of power, as he added, —

"But God, the Lord God of Eben Rockman, has whispered it to his soul, that these things need not be; that the complicated machine called society is constructed upon a false principle; that it must be replaced by something better; that there must be a new heaven and a new earth, in which shall dwell righteousness, or right conditions; and to this end, Minnie, Rose, all of you, are aiding me to investigate the present structure, that its weak points may become apparent; for, *by the Eternal!* it must die; the sinful, the accursed thing! it must die, that the reign of righteousness may commence."

The terrible earnestness with which he uttered these words thrilled, awed us, till silence seemed the natural expression of our feelings; but at length Minnie broke it by saying, —

"We have come to business, at length."

"And enough of it," I added.

"And time enough to do it in," said Rockman.

"I do not know about that; it seems to me that one short life is hardly sufficient for the commencement of such a work, to say nothing of completing it," I said.

Rockman turned upon me a luminous, questioning gaze. "What do you mean by one short life?"

"The few years that we can remain here on earth, of course."

"And where are you going then, pray?" he continued, with the same look.

"I do not know, sir; wherever God sends me, I expect."

"I expect to stay here," he said slowly, — "here upon the earth upon which I came into mortal existence. It is my home; and I intend to spend some part, at least, of eternity in making it beautiful. Those who have left our sight, and those who are here, are yet to be one family, to be re-united, — made one; the at-one-ment for which we all pray. I shall stand at the latter day upon earth, '*and in my flesh*,' says Job."

"You do not believe in the literal resurrection of the body?" I asked.

"I believe in resurrection of all things, my friend; all things that go down come up again in some form. A recent poet says of one who was called dead, —

'Look for blossoms with fairer hues,
When earth shall smile into bloom once more;
Search in the bright-eyed pansy's face,
For richer tints than ever before.
Stars will bud in the sober moss;
For Nature will stretch her floral laws,
And add new links to the primitive chain
Of producing forces, only because
Of all this brightness gone to the ground.

. . . . . .

The beauty that faded into a blank
Must burst into blossom again, somewhere, —
All this beauty gone to the ground.'

"And I believe it, feel, know, that it must be so.

Why is it that we die, so they call it; why is it that we drop these bodies? I will tell you. It is because there is no harmony between them and our spirits; the matter of which they are composed is not fine enough for us. They are better adapted to the outside coarseness; but that is too coarse for them; we must protect ourselves from without; and yet this double friction, that from within cutting away the links, as the diamond severs bars of steel, or scratches the hardest glass, and that from without filing and grinding like sand, — these two steal away the forces, the strength of the body, like two thieves; and between them it bows its head, and gives up the ghost, or spirit.

"But 'our God is a refining fire;' matter submitted to this refining process gives us

> "Blossoms of fairer hues,
> Richer tints than ever before;"

"And finally matter will become so refined that the spirit can draw to itself a body suited to its needs. Then there shall be no more death; for the former things will have passed away, and all things will have become new."

"And you think when time comes, that we can clothe ourselves again with material bodies, and hold them?" asked Rose.

"We can not help it," he replied: "it will cling to us as the magnet attracts steel, will clothe our spirits in forms of eternal beauty, will give us eyes whose luminous depths are like stars; lips

> 'Full to wasting with honeyed bliss, —
> Lips that it were never a sin
> For anybody to wish to kiss.'

"Why! the gray-haired earth will herself grow young again, when the work to which we, acting in harmony with the divine within us, — the work which we have set ourselves to do, — is completed."

"Don't," said Minnie, drawing a long breath: "you will carry us so far away that we shall never get back again."

"No danger; business will bring us back. We must help to refine a great deal of matter yet, in the way of eating, drinking, and wearing. The practicalities of life hold us to the actual while they still carry us forward toward the ideal."

"If wearing has any thing to do with the work we have undertaken, I can come to the practical without the least difficulty," said Rose; "for I must decide what to wear to the next and last ball of the season."

"From immortal bodies to a ball-dress!" I exclaimed. "Well, I have heard people tell of going from the sublime to the ridiculous, but I never saw it exemplified before; and it has shocked my breath nearly out of me, the transition was so sudden."

Rose laughed, and sang, —

> "One more unfortunate
> Gone to her death,"

and then, "Minnie, what shall I wear?"

"Let me see what you have, and then I can tell you if you need any thing new," she replied.

"Come, then, and I will show you;" and Rose run off to her room followed by Minnie, while I turned to Rockman with,—

"Are you going to leave here without confronting that villain?"

"To what villain do you refer? there are so many here, one needs something more definite."

"You know very well that I mean Crandall," I replied, nettled at his coolness; for I cared more just then to humble Robert Crandall, than I did about what seemed to me Rockman's chimeras.

I liked his enthusiasm, it is true, and especially when I saw it manifested in any practical work of to-day; but his plans and anticipations for the future were all too vague, too dreamy, for me. I could wish they might come true, but I saw no way to make them so, and I could not puzzle myself over them; but I did see a way to strike a hard but just blow at the one who had so wronged Rose, and I ached to do it.

Rockman smiled, as he read my feelings from my telltale face, and said, "We will try to gratify you, you desire it so much."

"To gratify me!"

"Yes, you seem to take more interest in his particular wickedness than in that of any other single individual."

"I do not understand it," I said, "how Rose and Minnie can keep so cool about him."

"Minnie's boarders have a right to choose their own company, and so she can not very well avoid meeting him frequently; and Rose has borne her part

like a martyr. It has not been considered politic to attack him. Rose, as you know, has not been to any public gathering but once since she has been in the city. She would not have gone then, only she heard Crandall say, the night before, that he could not attend, as circumstances made it necessary for him to be absent."

"Yes, I know that too; but how about this ball? Will he be there, and will she confront him?" I asked, my impatience getting control.

"She will not shrink from meeting him."

"Then I shall go too, for I want to see them meet," said I, starting up as though I must commence getting ready that very moment.

"Would you like to have me attend you, dressed in the disguise of Minnie's lover?" he asked.

"I—I do not care; any way, so that I can see him abashed."

"I am going with Rose in that character, and we can all go together then," he said.

The ball came off according to notice, and was counted a brilliant affair. I took Mr. St. John's, to wit, Mr. Rockman's arm; and Rose made the rounds of the room with Senator Dillenough. We, St. John and I, managed to get very near to where Robert Crandall was standing, when I asked loud enough for him to hear me,—

"Who is that beautiful lady with Senator Dillenough?"

"Some new face, I think," said St. John, after a moment: "we shall find out presently; let us get nearer to them."

I saw Robert Crandall's eyes follow mine as I indicated Rose. He did not seem to recognize her, but yet he could not keep his eyes off her. "Where have I seen that face?" he said to the gentleman to whom he was talking.

"It is well to pretend that you have seen her before; it serves as an excuse for your evident admiration: but it will not do; I must seek out Mrs. Crandall, and tell her to be on her guard," replied the gentleman, laughing.

"And thus give her to understand that you think her hold upon me so weak, it may possibly break; you dare not insult her thus," retorted Crandall in the same playful manner; and then his eyes turned again toward Rose. A set was being formed for dancing, and she and the Senator led. I watched Crandall, and he watched her.

As soon as she was seated, he sought the Senator, and requested an introduction. I was near Rose now, and where I could see both their faces as they met. She saw him coming, and knew that he had not yet recognized her. Her cheek paled and then flushed, while her eyes fairly flashed.

"Miss Barron, allow me to introduce to you the Hon. Mr. Crandall from" —

The gracious Senator was startled out of his polite bow with, —

"Excuse me, sir, I do not allow it," casting at the same time a look upon Crandall, that well might be termed a haughty stare.

I saw by the flash of intelligence upon Crandall's face that recognition came with the name; but, when she so thoroughly ignored him, he was white with rage. He opened his lips to speak, and I saw he meant mischief. St. John laid his hand upon Crandall's arm, and whispered,

"Not a word, or you will regret it."

"I see it all now; you brought her here; you are Minn Morris's lover, and it is some of her doings. I knew them both long ago," replied Crandall in an undertone. There was too much at stake for him to make an open charge against Rose, though in his rage it was what he would have done, had he not been prevented by the words of St. John.

"I am not Miss Morris's lover, never was. Things are not always what they seem," was the reply.

"Who in God's name are you, then?"

"Come this way, and I will show you."

Crandall was only too glad to get away from the questioning eyes around him, and he followed St. John into the ante-room. It was empty: enough of the disguise was removed to show the face of Eben Rockman to the astonished gaze of the Hon. Mr. Crandall.

"You!" he said.

"Me," replied Rockman. "I have long known of the course you pursued toward Rose Barron years since, Robert Crandall; and, if you dare to throw out one insinuation against her, it will be the worse for you. We have planned to some purpose, and we can not allow you to defeat us because you have met with a just rebuke in public."

"We?" said Crandall questioningly.

"Yes, Rose, Minnie, and I. You thought I was

there as Minnie's lover; and you thought it strange sometimes, that she allowed her waiting-boy in the parlor so much. Ha, ha!"

Crandall started. "And was that boy a cheat too? Upon my soul, I believe it was Rose."

Again that "Ha, ha!" from Rockman.

"I will raise hell itself, but I will be revenged," said the now thoroughly excited man.

"You can not alarm me any there," said Rockman; "for I am in league with hell, and, when I find such fellows as you, can deal it out in doses to suit."

"I always thought that you were the Devil's self, notwithstanding your wonderful talk about the world's wickedness, and all of that; but I never expected to hear you own as much," replied Crandall.

"You mistake, young man. I said nothing about the Devil: I simply asserted that I was in league with hell; and so I am with what will make your hell till you change your course of conduct. Fire burns; and our God is a consuming fire to those who will not accept him as a refiner. I am at peace, consequently in league with him, and am ready to accept a little job of scorching when he gives me such work to do."

Baffled beyond the power of words to reply, Crandall turned and left the room; and Rockman replaced his disguise, and returned to the side of Rose, who had already said to Senator Dillenough, "Had Mr. Crandall recognized me, he would not have dared to approach me; for he knows full well that he offended years ago beyond all hopes of forgiveness."

"And do you think he recognized you when you spoke?" asked the senator.

"I think the name and my manner of meeting him told him all; indeed, I am certain they did. But with your permission I will introduce a friend."

"Most certainly, Miss Barron, as I know of no one who has offended me beyond the power of forgiveness."

Rose colored, but took no further notice of the remark, and quietly introduced Rockman as Mr. St. John.

Senator Dillenough received him as though they had never met before; and Rose wondered if the cool self-possession of the man of the world would forsake him if he knew that she saw them in conversation at Minnie's house the week before.

Rockman smiled a quiet smile as he thought of the time when Crandall would tell this same senator, and others who had been frequent visitors at the same place, of the trap that had been laid for them. He did not expect to keep Crandall's mouth shut long; but he was determined that no breath of scandal should touch Rose that night, and the next day they, Minnie and all, would be far away.

I was to return to my old home; but the others had other plans laid, other work to do.

CHAPTER IX.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES.

I WAS at home again, and alone. Rose, with her sad smile, was not there; Minnie never tripped up the back stairs disguised as the poor seamstress whose children needed the bread that her hands could earn; and, when the bell rang, I had no hopes of seeing my eccentric friend Eben Rockman. I dreamed of them often at night, and the mail brought me frequent letters; but this could not supply the lack that I felt, or only in part.

What should I do to occupy my time, to quiet my restlessness? One day, for want of I knew not what, I took up the big Bible. Years before, I had read it much; but there came a time when I felt that I must lay it aside. I could not understand why, but I could take no interest in its contents. I grieved that it was so; and then a something made me feel that the time would come when a new light would be shed upon its pages, and that till then I must rest content to have it closed against me.

In time, I lost my reverence for it as a sacred book. That there were grand truths therein, I did not doubt; and so there was in other books. I would accept truth wherever found; and so years

had passed in which I had seldom looked into the Bible. But now, as I turned its pages, I saw a new and deep meaning to much that I found there. But one thing more than any other impressed itself upon me, and it was this: the texts, passages, many of them, that I had been taught to understand as referring to another life, seemed to me now to belong particularly to this; and still another point was, much that had been supposed to refer to the individual man, that man being Jesus, the Christ, the Son of man, &c., seemed to me now to refer to collective man, to nationalities, forms of government, &c.

I confess to a difficulty in separating that which is literal and that which is symbolic in its meaning; but it has been my fortune in my search after knowledge to meet with some of the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg, for whom his followers claim a wonderful power; and he compares the human family to one grand man, the atoms of which are individual men.

It is as if a pyramid were constructed of stones, each of which was in pyramidal form.

I am certain of this, however: whatever interpretation may be given to the symbols and mysticisms of that book, there is no one thing so well calculated to stimulate the religious mind to mental action as is this very mixing-up of the literal and the symbolic. Indeed, much therein seems to be double in its meaning, presenting first a literal, and then a symbolic or representative side.

I might go still farther, and say that we have the individual, the national, and the world meaning; and

these repeating themselves throughout the realms of the universal.

Recognizing this law in scriptural interpretation, I found it the same old book, and yet a new one.

Perhaps there is no one book of the Bible that has been studied so much within a few years, in reference to its prophetic significance, as has the Book of Daniel; and, true to the spirit which has induced others to do this, I began to study it also. While doing this, I came across an obscure publication, which professed to give some new ideas in reference to what is written in that book.

I did not know as to the validity of the writer's claim, but I did know that I had never seen the same ideas elsewhere. This writer's name, strange to say, was Daniel also; but he had the addition of the uncommon title of Jones, which, I believe, is not a Bible name. This man Daniel had also an initial T. between the first and last division of his name, and he does not tell us for what it stands; but as he claims to be a theocrat, or God-sent man, perhaps that is the significance of the T.

But there is another strange character mixed up with this publication; one the last portion of whose name analyzed would make him the son of *Nick*, instead of God.

Well, these two men claim that the following passage from the Book of Daniel, —

"I saw in the night visions; and, behold, one like to the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven," &c, — these men claim that the one like to the Son of man, above spoken of, is a nation, a government.

The preceding kingdoms, or nations, they claim, are spoken of as beasts; that step by step the nations have progressed till our United States stands upon its feet as a man; has a man's heart, a man's body, but its head is that of a beast.

Or, that the people, the body, have progressed beyond the government, or head. Well, thought I as I read, whatever these two men may be, — and one of them says of himself that he lay in the tomb, to wit, a lunatic asylum, three months instead of days, — whatever they may be in and of themselves, their interpretation of scripture looks as reasonable as that of any D. D.; and, as to the governmental head of this nation, if it is no better, so far as the men of which it is composed is concerned, than are the men I found at the capital of the State, as its representative head, then the beast-interpretation is certainly very applicable.

I studied a while longer over the theories of these men, but finally concluded to wait and get Rockman's idea of their views; going on, the while, with my Bible-reading, and thinking my own thoughts in reference to the meaning of its different passages as they particularly impressed me.

One day, I was honored with a call from the minister, the Rev. Mr. Berrian. For four successive years he had been the pastor of the church where I generally attended, if I could be said to *attend* any church; for I will own I did not go very regularly. There were two reasons for this: one was, I could see no harmony between preaching and practice; and another was, I did not believe in the

prevailing theology, and, being quite combative, it was not pleasant for me to listen to what to me was error.

I do not wish the reader to class me as a barbarian, however; for I believed in doing justly, and loving mercy; and, as to walking humbly, I am not so sure about that, and especially if humbly means submissive. I was rebellious in my feelings. I was not content with things as they were, nor very patient under the workings of what the most of people thought could not be cured.

The fact was, I did not then, do not now, believe in "I can't." I believed that the difficulty lay more in the lack of will, than in the lack of power.

I was surprised, and rather pleased, to see Mr. Berrian; for, since I had been deprived of my combats with Rockman, I was, to use a vulgar phrase, "spoiling for a fight." The Bible was lying open before me, and he made it a point from which to commence conversation.

"I am glad, madam, to find you reading that blessed book."

(Perhaps the reader would like to know who I am. I am a woman who has loved and lost, and that is all I choose to tell you.)

"I was looking over it to pass away time," I replied.

"I am sorry to hear you speak so lightly of it; I had hoped that you found it a source of consolation," was his very grave comment.

"I find consolation, sir, in whatever helps me to pass my time profitably."

"Yes, if it helps you to pass your time profitably," he said; "but to read the Bible simply to pass one's time hardly indicates profitable reading."

"Perhaps not, Mr. Berrian; but I could not pass time, unless obliged to do so, with that which did not interest me; and, if a thing interests me, there is a good to me in it."

He seemed surprised at the turn I had given to what he intended as a clerical reproof, and said, "Your reasoning is quite conclusive, and, when applied to things in general, is admirable; but it seems to me that the Bible, the book of books, God's holy word, should be treated somewhat differently."

"And I, sir, regard all that can bless me, whether in or out of the Bible, as God's word, God's blessing to me. Can you tell me, sir, why it is that people intrepret the Bible so differently?"

"Because they bring their own human knowledge to bear upon it, instead of waiting for the Spirit of God to shine upon its pages," was his ready reply.

I laughed. "Excuse me, sir, I do not wish to be rude or trifling; but, so far as my experience goes, of all self-sufficiency, I have found that which claims to be taught of God, the most so," I said.

He colored at this, but asked, "How can man understand God's word, unless God's Spirit teach him?"

And I replied by saying, "How can God teach man except through the powers he has given him?"

"You mean carnal reason, I presume," he said.

"Is not God all and in all?" I asked.

To this he could but give assent; and I contin-

ued, "Then he must touch creation at all points, have a supply for all needs. This being true, each individual will find in the Bible that which corresponds to his own needs, his own degree of development; and he would do this if any other book were given to him as God's word, he having been taught to look to it for instruction and consolation in the same way that he has been taught to look to that book; and why? Because God is in all things; and, wherever we look for him, there we find him.

'The heart of the rosebud pineth
In darkness yet a while, —
Pines till its own expanding
Catches the sunlit smile
That gladdens everywhere;
No more, no more in darkness,
For light is everywhere;
Then pine, soul, till you learn it,
That God is everywhere.'"

His face had expressed his dissent from my positions very strongly, till I came to the poetry; and then another chord of his nature seemed touched, and his first words were, "Where did you find those lines?"

"In the scrap-book of one the world calls infidel," I replied.

"Selected?"

"No, sir: original."

"'No more, no more in darkness,
For light is everywhere;
Then pine, soul, till you learn it,
That God is everywhere,'"

he repeated; and then added, "I care not what the world says: the one who wrote those lines has been taught of God."

The man, the soul within, had for the moment got the better of his theology. He had come in a minister; I had made a man of him, and the man was the best of the two. I sometimes think I was born to be on the opposite side; had he come to me simply as a man, a friend, I should probably have done something to have thrown him upon his ministerial dignity; but, as it was, I had accomplished just the reverse.

After this, I got along "*beautifully*" with him; no more ministerial tones to provoke my opposition, but the friendliness of a brother. Together we turned the pages of the Bible, and discussed the meaning of the different passages, sometimes agreeing, sometimes differing; but, as there was no more assumption on his part, there was no occasion for self-assertion on mine.

He called frequently after that, and one day we took up the Book of Daniel for discussion. I had just pointed to the passage that says, one like to the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, when I was surprised by a visit from Mr. Rockman. I had not expected him for several weeks yet.

"Haven't forgotten your old uncle, child?" he said as I met him in the hall.

"Not at all; but the minister is here, and we are studying the Bible together. Come in and be introduced."

"Will wonders never cease? of course I will."

"Young man," said Rockman as soon as the introduction was over, "I used to study that book, and preach to the people; but I have laid the book of printed matter aside, and gone to studying God's word as written in the human heart; and, the more I learn, the more I find I don't know."

"Have laid the Bible aside, Mr. Rockman?" said Mr. Berrian in surprise.

"Yes, as seed sown upon good ground that must have time to grow. Many of its passages enlarge upon me as I go in and out among the people, like to wells of water springing up into everlasting life; passages that have taken root, sir, and do not need to be reset and tended continually."

"But here is a passage, uncle, that I want you to look at," said I.

He read it, and asked, "What of it? I have preached from that very text scores of times."

"But did you ever think that the one like unto the Son of man' was intended to represent a form of government?"

He started as though a new thought had struck him, and forcibly too: "No. Where did you get that idea?'

"No matter where I got it; tell me what you think of it."

"Think? why, I do not know; yes, why not? The term 'beasts' is used to represent earthly governments that perish; and why should not 'one like to the Son of man, represent a form of government that shall endure? I will think of that."

"But I have something more, uncle; the writer

who suggests this idea says that governments have progressed till we have here in our own country one with the body of a man, the people being the body, and the head of a beast, the government being the head."

He looked at me a moment in silence, and then said, "I must think into this matter; I may here find the key to what I am seeking."

Mr. Berrian seemed equally interested, but was inclined to give it, the government, into the hands of the saints of the Most High, or to the church.

"Pretty saints we find in the church," said Rockman.

"But they are not all bad, Mr. Rockman," said the minister.

"No, they are not: many of them are most excellent people. But I have found outside of all churches, outside of the pale of society even, better saints than I ever found in the church; yes, Jesus told the truth when he said, 'Publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of heaven before you.'"

"I believe that, Mr. Rockman."

"You say that you do, sir; you think that you do: but with God in the Constitution, as you church people are working for, such would have little chance here on earth."

"They would have the chance to repent and be saved the same as now, Mr. Rockman."

"We are not talking of a salvation that fits for another state of existence, but of a place in this that will give us a chance for life. I tell you, Mr. Berrian, God never transcends the governing law;

and, were he to take possession of a beast's head, he would be forced to act through a beast's head and in a beastly manner.

"I believe the man this lady speaks of is right. Our national head is constructed in the form of a beast's head. We have the animal, the lower brain organs represented in our national structure; but the higher organs are not there, in organized form I mean."

"And is that the sense in which your author means that governments are formed after the pattern of the beast?" asked Mr. Berrian, turning to me.

"It is, sir, though I had not thought to speak of it; and now it is not necessary, for Uncle Rockman has caught the idea, and I am certain that he will follow it to its legitimate conclusion," I replied.

"And I shall be glad to share in that investigation. I am heartily glad that I have made your acquaintance," said Mr. Berrian, bowing to us both; "for you have given me more food for thought than I have gathered from my entire congregation for the last two years."

"You will not find the goats all on the outside, nor all the sheep inside, of church walls," said Rockman.

"I presume not," he replied, "but I must bid you Good-day."

And I was glad to have him go, for I wanted to ask after Rose and Minnie.

CHAPTER X.

FURTHER ADVENTURES.

HAT brought you back so soon?" I asked, as soon as Mr. Berrian had gone. "I was not expecting you for a month yet; and how are Rose and Minnie?"

"One question at a time, please: the Lord told me to come."

"The Lord told you to come! Now, Mr. Rockman, will you please tell me what you mean by that expression? I have heard you use it before, and I can not understand why you say it."

"You, with the Bible open before you, do not know any thing of the God within? have you never yet been still enough to hear his voice, or her voice?"

"Her voice?" I repeated.

"Why do you repeat my words? Yes, her voice. The book says God made man in his own image, male and female; now, why is it not just as proper to say 'her voice,' as 'his voice'? Indeed, in my case, I think it would be her voice; in yours, perhaps his voice."

"I wish you would tell me what you mean," I said in an impatient tone.

"I mean this, my child: there is a side of us which is related to, touches the unseen world; a side so different in its action from that which connects us with this busy, bustling life, that we hardly know of its existence. Now, if we are in God's image, double, male and female in our very natures, then this internal self will be opposite in this respect to the external; and this internal self is, or should be, the controlling power, the focalizing center, of the infinite as our God."

"So it is an inner feeling that prompts you to do or not to do a thing, for which at the time you can give no reason, that you call the voice of God."

"Precisely," he replied, and then asked, "But what about Rose and Minnie? have you forgotten them in your search after my God?"

"You said one question at a time, sir; and I thought I would get at the bottom meaning of this one before I took up the other; unless, indeed, it is like a certain pit we read of, bottomless; but, if you are ready to tell me, I shall be glad to hear about Rose and Minnie."

"Sharp for a woman who has been visiting with the minister," he retorted.

"Yes; but what about Rose and Minnie?"

"Oh! I left them well."

"But when am I to see them again?" I asked.

"That I can not tell you, little woman."

"When and where did you leave them?" I continued, for there was a look of mischief in his eye which showed me there was something that he was waiting to tell.

"I left them about an hour before you saw my genial face, and about ten miles from here, at a little railroad village called Iris. There! I have answered two questions, and without stopping: have you another to propose?"

"Yes: how long do they remain there?"

"That I can not exactly tell;" he glanced at the clock as he said this, and I exclaimed, —

"They are coming here!"

"How do you know that?" he asked.

"Oh, the Lord told me!"

"Well, I guess he has told you the truth this time. I believe they intend to come up on the evening train, and that will be here about seven o'clock."

"And you have kept this back all this time," I said, going to him and shaking him, in the exuberance of my joy.

"Don't be too much elated," said he; "for if your new acquaintance, the minister, should learn that the notorious Minnie Morris visited you, he might faint at the thought of such contamination; at least, he would never turn the leaves of the Bible with you again."

"Hang the minister!" said I. "Minnie is worth a dozen of him, is nearer the kingdom now than he is."

Rockman laughed. "You are really improving, child; but I wouldn't hang the minister; that is the poorest use to which a man can be put."

"It is strange, uncle, that you can not hear more correctly. A man who shows so little of the infirmi-

ties of age ought to understand better than that." I said this with the utmost gravity, and then laughed heartily at the surprised look upon his face.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"I said nothing about hanging the *man:* it was the *minister* I spoke of. Did Eben Rockman die when he crucified his ministership?"

"Why, puss!" said he, a light breaking over his face: "I will own up; you have the start of me this time. No, Eben Rockman did not die then, but became a thousand times more alive."

"Well, sir, that is just what I intend to do with Mr. Berrian, kill the minister to find the man; and, if finding that Minnie Morris is my friend will do the work, all the better."

"Little woman, I am delighted: you are progressing rapidly," said he, rising and walking back and forth, as he generally did when under the influence of strong feeling,—yes, always when conditions would permit.

"Don't," said I, "or I shall be sure to spoil it all; and then— Would you like to hear the darky's definition of progress, uncle?"

"Certainly: better than any minister could give, I presume."

"That is what I thought, sir, when I heard it; it is this; If, when I'se little feller, I crawl up through a little hole, and stays there till I get big, I can't get back agin. Now, Uncle Rockman," I continued, "I's the little feller; I's crawled up through the little hole; but I haven't got big enough yet, but I might be frightened back; please give me time to grow."

"The best sermon I ever heard! the best sermon I ever heard!" he exclaimed. "O Father, I thank thee that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes! Child," he continued, turning to me after this ejaculation, "that little story has done more to convince me that I must adapt myself to people's conditions, if I would benefit them, than all that you have ever said. I am not in the least afraid of frightening you back; but there are others who have crawled up, who do not really know where they are; such need time to grow."

"Here at seven," I said, glancing at the clock: "well, make yourself comfortable, and excuse me, for I must put things in readiness to give them a right royal welcome."

"But I have not told you all," he said: "Minnie has one of her boarders with her."

I must confess that I shrank. Minnie I had learned to love: circumstances had placed her where she must take advantage of them, or be crushed. But she only boarded the girls; she did not sell herself. True, I had been at her house, and talked with the inmates; but that was quite a different thing.

Rockman was watching me: "Take care there, and not slip"—

"Down the hole," I laughed: "no, I will not: I will welcome all who come with Minnie and Rose; the inner life, the God within, may be untarnished, no matter how defaced the external."

"Amen and amen." The sound followed me down the stairs, as I went to make the desired

preparation for my expected guests. As I moved hither and thither, the words "made subject to vanity, made subject to vanity," kept running through my mind; but I could not place, could not tell, where I had heard them.

"Uncle Eben," I called from the foot of the stairs, "is there a passage in the Bible that speaks of being made subject to vanity?"

"There is, little woman; and I have quoted it to you in the past."

"I knew that I had heard the words somewhere," I said, "but I could not remember where: will you give me the entire passage?"

"I will, and tell you where to find it too. It reads thus: 'For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who has subjected *the same* in hope,'—twentieth verse, eighth chapter, of Paul's Epistle to the Romans: a very good passage to think of if you wish to be charitable to Lina Brown."

"Is that the name of the lady who is coming with Minnie?" I asked.

"Yes, and sister of our old friend John Brown, the carpenter."

I was all interest now; no more shrinking, but an earnest desire to meet this to me new face, as well as those I knew and loved. "What a difference a little knowledge of one's history makes! If we could look into the inner life of all, could see and feel their joys and sorrows, as the 'dear God' does, we should no longer be cold or uncharitable." It was thus I mused, as I tripped to and fro; but there

came a voice, I can not tell from whence: I only know that it reached my inner consciousness, and it asked,—

"What of Robert Crandall?"

I struggled to inclue him in my charity, but it was a hard task.

"Slipping back?" the voice still questioned. I rallied, and replied, "Only holding on, give me time to grow," when the bell rang, and I knew that my friends had come. Forgetful of every thing but the joy of the meeting, I rushed up stairs; and having clasped both Rose and Minnie to my heart, I could do no less than press a kiss upon the white brow of the little figure who turned her eyes so appealingly toward me, as I was introduced to "Miss Brown."

Uncle Eben was watching me; and the blessing his eyes flashed upon me was a real benediction.

"We have been to tea," was the response to my invitation to the dining-room.

"And why did you do that when you knew you were coming here?" I asked.

"Only hear her!" said Rose: "she would have had us gone hungry for two mortal hours just for the pleasure of feeding us herself."

"If it is two hours since you have eaten, I shall not excuse you, miss; for, whatever the others might do, I know that, with the prospect before you of seeing me so soon, it was but precious little food that you swallowed," I said.

"I guess there is but little to choose between us on that score," remarked Minnie; "but our Lina's cousin (glancing affectionately at Miss Brown) would not let us leave without a cup of tea."

"Come then, uncle, you too: no excuses," and we were soon seated around the table, and if we did not eat, we talked; and a portion of what I had prepared disappeared somewhere; that is certain.

"Now, Miss Morris, we will adjourn to the parlor, and listen to your plans," said Rockman, when tea was over.

"Not till these dishes are washed," replied Minnie. She had noticed that I had no girl. "If we are to be independent, self-sustaining, we must lay no extra burdens upon others."

It was in vain that I protested: she would have her way. "You take care of the food," she said to me, "and, Rose, you put away the things, while Lina and I wash and wipe the dishes;" and without a moment's delay she pinned back her skirts, stepped into the kitchen, took the dishpan from its place, and went to work. I fell into the line marked out for me; and in about as little time as it has taken to tell it the work was done.

"There," said Minnie, "that is something of the system that I intend to have in my 'Home of the Sisters.' Come, we will go to the parlor now, and talk about it."

"'Home of the Sisters,' an appropriate name," I thought as I led the way up stairs. Once seated, Minnie glanced around upon us, and began, —

"There have been many efforts made to assist the Magdalen; good, well-meaning people have talked, prayed, and worked to this end: but what have they accomplished? Nothing, so to speak; and why? Simply because they do not understand us. They

label us, hold us up before the public as those who need aid; but we must receive that aid humbly, thankfully, with our faces in the dust. It does not suit us; we rebel, and are cut off from sympathy.

"Now, I propose an entirely different plan. I propose that there shall be no Magdalens, no outcasts, but simply honest, self-sustaining women, who will yield their love only as love is given in return.

"How will I make them self-sustaining, do you ask? That is easy enough if there is a money base to start with, and a determination to succeed. The money base we have. There are ten of us combined; enough to make a beginning. We have planned for this end. The girls who were with me at the capital, and those I have won over to work with me since we left there; and that which was raised by a tax on the people to pay senators, representatives, and other State officers, has added largely to this money base. They paid it to the girls for their pleasure, and the girls saved it to free themselves.

"We have sold our jewelry, the most of it; also our rich clothing. I have put all I have saved for seven years into the fund, and we have fifteen thousand dollars. Ten thousand of that is on interest at ten per cent, which will bring us one thousand yearly, as income."

"Using the money-god's weapon, interest, to cut the lust-god's throat," I remarked.

"Yes, or in other words to sever the chains of his victims," she replied, and then continued, "We have five thousand to commence work with. We

might go into some business like keeping store, a fashionable millinery, or something of that kind; but I do not choose it. We want something that will bring us into respectful social contact with men. It is not good for man to be alone; it is not good for woman to be alone. God never intended that they should be separated; and he has planted a law of life in woman's heart, that followed, free from the money pressure to warp it from its legitimate action, followed thus, will never lead to really evil results."

"Your standard of morality would not be recognized by the world," I said.

"Neither do we recognize theirs," was the response. "We know theirs to be false, one which they can not, and but few of them try to live by. But we need say nothing of our standard, till by its fruits we have demonstrated its value.

"But we ourselves can not live fully up to our standard at first: we may so far as the spirit is concerned, but we shall be obliged for a time to conform somewhat to the letter of the old."

"I do not exactly understand what you mean," I said.

She turned to me with, "Do you believe that the legal tie without love constitutes marriage in any true sense of that term?"

"I can not say that I do," was my unwilling reply; for I saw where the logic of her reasoning was leading me, and I did not like to follow.

"'Love is the fulfilling of the law;' do you remember that sermon?" asked Rockman.

"I shall not be very likely to forget it, with you before me, sir."

He smiled: "Don't fall through, child."

Minnie looked as though she did not quite understand, and I gave an impatient toss of the head; while she continued, "It is love, and not law, that constitutes marriage; but in order to make ourselves secure, should any of us find love's bonds upon us, we shall demand the legal tie, or no public recognition. So, you see, circumstances force us to put a chain about our necks; will for a time, but not always. The time will come when the world must learn that love is the fulfilling of the law."

"But you have not told us yet what your plan is," I said.

"True; well, it is this. My girls, all but Lina here, are to be scattered through different portions of the State, learning some useful trade. Some of them have already found places; and others need but little training, having been taught to work in early life. This done, I intend to find some inland city, one not intimately connected with the great thoroughfares, and hire a double house for the double purpose of having a place for my girls, and a place to keep boarders.

"Lina and I will take charge of one-half of the house, and we will board and lodge gentlemen, single gentlemen. Rose here, and Uncle Rockman, — and they would like to have you join them, — will take the other half, and make it a lodging-house for ladies who take in sewing, teach music, or some other employment that may present; and I will board them all.

"You see, the ladies will lodge in one house, and the gentlemen in the other. My girls are attractive, and can make a home so agreeable that I shall have no difficulty in keeping an equal number of gentlemen; and I will invite them all into my parlor twice a week, to spend the evening, and Rose will do the same; so that four evenings will be used for social life; and this, with what sociability we have at the table, will so equalize the magnetic forces between the sexes that there will be little or no excess, and the lives of those who have existed on excitement will be made tolerable; whereas those Christians who attempt to save them make their lives intolerable."

"But how will the girls live when your money is gone?" I asked.

"I do not intend that our money shall be gone," she replied. "I can, or *we* can, get such a house as I have named for eight or nine hundred dollars per year; and ten boarders at five dollars per week, — those who had the best rooms more, and the poorest ones less, but average that, — ten boarders at that price would be twenty-six hundred per year. I should expect the girls to do the work, washing and all."

"For the gentlemen too?"

"Yes, if I could get it for them, and I know I could; and many hands make light work. A healthy, industrious woman would think it no great task to cook, wash, and sew for herself and husband; and where the work is done for twenty, instead of two, the work will not be more than half as much in proportion; and the girls can earn something outside of doing their own work, and still have time for study and recreation."

"Study!" I exclaimed.

"Yes, why not? We intend to keep well informed as to what is going on in the world; but, to the money-question. We will suppose that the girls, in various ways, earn fifty dollars each beside doing the work I have named. That would be five hundred dollars, or ten dollars a week. Now we will suppose the rent nine hundred, fuel and food bought at wholesale prices twelve hundred, two hundred for loss on board-bills, and that would leave eighty each to the girls for clothing; and recollect that we have a thousand income beside, so I do not see much danger of the money's being gone."

"There is only one thing about it that hurts me," said Rockman, "and that is the thousand dollars interest-money. Who earns it? In the last analysis it is the laborer."

"I know it," said Minnie, "but remember that we are studying how to do away with this system of interest; how to supersede it with something better. It is not prostitution only that we are aiming to destroy; that is but one branch of the tree of evil."

"We first make a platform of that which we aim at destroying, in order to get a footing somewhere else, before we kick it over," said Rose.

"Yes, yes; well, I do not know as it is well to ask too much at once, but I wish it could be otherwise," said Uncle Eben sadly.

Miss Brown — Lina, as Rose and Minnie called her — said nothing, but her expressive face showed the interest she felt.

"This is all very nice," said I, "as far as it goes;

but what are ten girls saved, to the whole number that need saving?"

"Do not imagine that I shall stop with ten; that is only the beginning. Remember that we are a band of sisters, each and all pledged to stand by one another. There is heavy work to be done by and by, and we shall be preparing for it. Do you suppose there will be no thought in our parlor-meetings, no questioning of the tendency of the present order of things, no searching into the causes which produce this hungering after stimulants, &c.?

"I shall go out and bring in others as these get the working of things, and shall see to it that two or three of those best fitted to take the lead go into another house, and take gentlemen to board, they lodging elsewhere; and I will soon have ten girls in the house, and ten gentlemen who only come to their meals, and to the parlor-meetings once or twice a week. Then I will start another upon a little different plan, but giving woman the controlling power of the home every time; and seeing to it that man provides the means for both, while she does the work for both."

"That is the way it is in society now, Minnie," I said.

"Yes, but with this difference: man controls the purse; while, in the plan I propose, woman does it, or enough, at least, to make her independent of him."

"But suppose, Minnie, that your boarders fall in love with the girls: what then?"

"If the love is mutual, it will be legitimate."

"Marriage will take them out of your band of sisters, however," I urged.

"Legal marriage will; but, realizing that love is marriage, there need be no legal bonds unless the parties desire it," she said.

"And what kind of salvation would that be?" I asked.

"It would be exchanging a condition in which one was obliged to sell her person for bread, for one in which mutual love was the only sanction for such union; and, if you think that is no salvation, try both," she replied with a bitterness in her tone, which showed that she had some comprehension of the difference. "No," she continued, "I have never sold myself, but I have seen enough of it. I have witnessed the anguish of those who have been forced to it, and I know what love without legality is. It is purity itself compared to the legal sales termed marriage, which are consummated every day."

"But society will never recognize such unions," I continued.

"Society need know nothing about it, if we are true to each other; not at present, at least, and remember, we are not dealing with society's members, but with those whom she has cast out. We are aiming to save such from utter degradation, and society from the curse which such degradation brings to it."

"And society will not thank you for snatching its victims away from its capacious maw," said Rockman.

"But the victims will, Uncle Eben," said Rose.

"Yes," added Minnie; "and when we have enough of them saved, and they are taught to act in concert, society will be glad to notice us."

"How will you make them do it?" I asked.

"By proving that love is the fulfilling of the law; by showing that justice, love, fraternity, and equality form a fourfold cord that will protect its members from outward assault," was her response.

"By their fruits ye shall know them, and the fruits of love will be lovely; judged by such a rule, are one-half the children we see upon the streets the fruits of love?" asked Miss Brown.

It was the first remark she had made since we commenced upon this subject; and I looked up in surprise, while Mr. Rockman remarked, —

"If you do not say much, Miss Lina, you think to some purpose."

"Judged by your standard, Lina," said Rose, "too many of the children we meet on the street and elsewhere would be counted the children of tiger-cats, from the way they scratch and bite when angry."

"They teach me," said Rockman, "that human nature is made of pretty good stuff: they are so much better, the most of them, than I should think they could be, considering conditions and surroundings."

"And I," I said, turning to Minnie, "must be excused from joining in your plan, though I will throw no impediments in your way, and will give a home to any girl who really desires to reform; but I want no half-way work. I was persuaded into going to the Capital with you, but I can not consent to this."

"You did not go to the Capital with me, my friend; you went with Mr. Rockman and Rose," was her quiet reply.

"But you were the master spirit in the planning, Minnie."

"And I am able to be the master spirit in this: I shall not shrink because some of my friends do not see the work as I do."

"Stand by your colors, Miss Morris: I am with you," said Uncle Eben; and then there was silence till another subject was introduced, or, rather, another branch of the same subject; to wit, woman's relation to labor and capital, and the causes which make her so dependent.

But the hour was getting late, and we soon separated for the night. I went, however, to a sleepless pillow. All night long, I turned over in my mind Minnie's plans; and, the more I thought, the more repulsed I became. 'Deception, hypocrisy all the way through,' I said to myself. If they were only willing to come out and own what they have been, and promise to do better, I would help them; but now" —

"You want them to confess," said the inner voice. "And why should they not be willing to appear in their true colors?" I responded.

"Are you a Catholic?" the voice questioned again.

"Of course not."

"Don't believe in confessing to the priest, but only to God?'

I was silent; and the same inward monitor continued, "Then why ask these girls to make the great public their priest, yourself among the rest?"

"But what would become of society if marriage was ignored?" I urged, not liking to yield the point.

"Who would marry these girls?" was the response.

"But some one might marry one of them, if they go under false colors."

"And what of the men who have associated with these girls? must they come out and give the world their history to keep from marrying under false colors?"

So the conflict went on, till I could almost imagine that an unseen presence, a distinct personality, stood by my bed, arguing the cause of the outcast with me. In the morning I was worn, haggard almost; and Minnie remarked it.

"I could not sleep," I said, "for thinking of your plans. You know that I object to this underhanded work, was not satisfied with it while we were in the city, but the rest of you overruled me."

Miss Brown looked at me with shy brown eyes as I said this, and asked, —

"What kind of prayers do you believe in?"

"What kind of prayers? I do not understand you."

"If I was hungry, and you had plenty, which would you do, — ask God to feed me, or do it yourself?"

"I should do it myself," I said.

"You believe in doing your prayers, then, instead of saying them; well, that is the kind Miss Morris believes in. But Jesus said, 'When thou prayest enter into thy closet, and, when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seest thee in secret shall reward thee openly.'"

I looked at her wondering why she should quote that text of Scripture, and what application she could make of it, when Rose came to my aid by saying, —

"Lina means that Minnie's plans are her prayers."

"And she expects to be rewarded openly; perhaps she may, but I can not see any blessing to come out of an effort to destroy marriage," I said.

"God ordained marriage, and man can not destroy it; though he has tried very hard by insisting that the legal shall supersede the real, whenever they come in conflict," said Minnie with a quiet solemnity that silenced me for the time.

CHAPTER XI.

A CONSERVATOR OF PUBLIC MORALS.

N hour or so after the conversation referred to in our last chapter, Minnie, Rose, and Miss Brown made preparations to go out, and then I was in trouble; for Minnie was so well known in the city, that I feared she would be recognized, and the neighbors would learn that she was visiting at my house.

I had been very brave when Mr. Rockman told me she was coming, and was ready to "hang the minister" or any thing else that came in the way; but now the actuality of facing the public as the friend and associate of such a woman appalled me. "Such a woman," said the same inner voice that I had contended with the night before: "is she not really as worthy as the most, if not all, of your acquaintances?"

I could but acknowledge that she was; but then, *people did not think so.*

"People would not think it amiss, should you be seen on the street with Robert Crandall: would you think that a sufficient reason for associating with him?" questioned this persistent invisible.

"No, indeed! nothing could induce me to give him the least countenance," was my indignant response.

"Then why not decide for yourself in one case as well as in the other?"

But my trouble about the matter came to an end by Minnie's appearing so equipped and disguised that even I myself should not have known her, had I seen her elsewhere. Her tall, straight form had given place to a stoop; her hair had changed its color; and her face, by the aid of cosmetics deftly put on, looked at least fifteen years older than when she left the breakfast-table.

I could only look my surprise; while she laughed, and said, "You had all your trouble for nothing, didn't you?"

I could not see my own face; but, judging by my feelings, I must have flushed to the hue of scarlet.

"Never mind," she said, seeing my embarrassment: "it was only natural that you should wish to save yourself from the fangs of Mother Grundy, for she is a terrible creature; but we are so accustomed to her blear-eyed criticisms that we can stand the ordeal without flinching."

I turned to Rose; she was her own natural self. "What if you should meet Robert Crandall?" I asked.

"Indeed, aunty, I should rather like it. I put him down so nicely last winter, that I think he will be glad to let me alone."

"Don't be too sure of it," I said; "for he has the impudence of Satan, and the malice too. He will make you suffer for that yet, I fear."

"I will risk him, with Minnie by my side," she replied.

"But where are you going, if I may ask?"

"Lina has a brother in the city somewhere, and we are going to help her to find him."

"Well, I hope you will be successful; but, oh, dear! this state of things that requires constant deception," I groaned.

When they were gone, I turned to Mr. Rockman, and took up the subject of Minnie's plans. "What do you think of them?" I asked.

"I think, child, that, when a class that has been so wronged and trodden under foot get the idea that they can help themselves, it is a hopeful sign."

"True; but do you think that she will be able to accomplish any thing?"

"I do not think that her plans are perfect, but she will learn by experience. She is made of the right stuff, and when she undertakes a thing she will not be likely to yield readily," he said.

"But what good will it do, even supposing that she makes a hundred or two self-supporting, outside of the miserable traffic in which they are now engaged? they will be but a drop to the bucket compared to the entire number. If one could only put a stop to the thing itself, it would amount to something."

Eben Rockman looked at me without speaking, till I fairly shrank into myself to get away from his gaze. At length he drew a long breath, and said, "If one of that number was your sister, or your child, you would not say that. Do you know, have you any idea, what prostitution is?

"I am a man, and can not be supposed to know

what a woman feels; but I have seen women who were so repulsive to me, — not ignorant, dirty, degraded ones, but well-dressed, well-behaved, — I have seen such, that, were I obliged to lie down in their arms, I believe I should curse God and die to escape such a doom. It is not so terrible a thing to associate with one we love, one whose touch is pleasure to us; the woman who believes she is legally married is as happy as though she was really so. It is the hated association, the repulsive embraces, that make the curse of prostitution, — *is prostitution*, for nature knows no other."

"I believe I should curse God and die to escape such a doom." With what terrible earnestness he uttered these words, and what a picture it presented to my mind! I was a woman, and I knew what this utter shrinking meant when felt towards the legal mate, when felt where we are taught that it is duty to yield; yet, strange to say, I had never before looked at the Magdalen's life from this stand-point. Not that I had never heard it spoken of, but I had never been made to feel, to realize it. I shuddered at the thought of such a fate for me or mine; but somehow I had not sensed that the poor outcast was of the same flesh and blood.

"Nature is true to herself," he continued; "and that which she so repels is, must be, destructive. It is this that kills those poor girls, fills them with disease, makes them at last objects of loathing to themselves and others. Suppose you were compelled, day after day, to take the most loathsome food into your stomach, or starve; mixed, perhaps,

with that which was agreeable, but still the repulsive must be taken; how long do you think you could remain healthy?"

"Don't," said I, "the picture is too terrible; but why will they remain there? it seems to me that there must be some means of escape."

"Could you live wholly separated from your kind?" he asked.

"I should not like to, certainly."

"Would you like to live among people who looked down upon you, making you feel that you were only tolerated through their charity, their gracious generosity?"

"I do not think that I should stay among such people long," I replied.

"And especially if you felt that you were just as good as they were, but with this difference: they had stolen a thousand dollars, and you knew it, though you had no means of proving it on them, and the world believed them honest; while, on the contrary, you had stolen but a hundred, but had been found out in your theft. Would you accept a lower place beside such people, if they would consent to tolerate you?"

"Indeed I would not. I might be content to humble myself before the really good, but before such hypocrites, never!" was my indignant reply.

The man seemed determined to put the case before me from every possible standpoint; for he continued, —

"You would feel more at home as an equal among recognized thieves, than you would as a penitent among unrecognized thieves?"

"I should, yes."

"Madam, you have answered your own question, as to why those poor girls stay where they are, why they accept the condition and make the most of it. Change the word thieves to violators of the marriage-law, and the analogy is perfect.

"The world, the great pretentious, hypocritical world, will never receive such as Minnie Morris as an equal. It demands that they remain where they are, or that they keep at its feet as penitents, begging for the mantle of forgiveness, of charity, to be thrown over them. And yet, were Minnie to go into society, she would meet at almost every turn those who had been her guests; who had used their influence, their power, so far as their money and their presence went, to hold her where she was. And do you suppose that she will bow and stand back before such?

"There is no hope for that class, for her and such as she mingles with, only as they take the matter in their own hands, and fight it out with the world; for there is one thing that always commands respect, and that is grit; the cool, persevering self-assertion that refuses to submit to the wrong. I repeat it, Minnie has started on the right track. She will respect herself, and teach those who join with her to do the same; and, the movement once started, others will take it up; and in combination they will be a power, one of the powers that will aid in changing our present imperfect system of things to something higher and better."

As I followed his argument, I felt that he was

right; and yet I found myself rebelling against every practical step in the direction indicated, till he finally said to me, —

"Child, your good name stands in your way: you will never be an efficient worker till that is taken from you. You look on and sympathize with the wounded, but are so very much afraid that their touch will stain your white robes, you dare not come near to aid. When a sword pierces your own soul, and the blood streams from thence, you will then know that your garment is not *yourself*."

Prophetic words! but I did not think that I was so soon to test them.

Minnie and her daughters, as she laughingly called Rose and Lina, were gone about three hours. Lina had succeeded in finding her brother, but he could not invite her home on his wife's account: so he would be here this evening, with my permission, and talk with her a while.

"Certainly," I said; "your brother seems like an old acquaintance to me, though I have never spoken with him. I used to watch him at work when he was building the house next me."

"And did he build that house?" she asked, giving it an affectionate look, as though his touch had endeared it to her.

"The very embodiment of womanly trust and love," thought I as I looked upon her.

"By the way," said Rose turning to me, "we did meet Crandall, and he looked as though he would annihilate me; but I do not think he had any idea who Minnie was; for, just as he passed us, Lina called

out, 'Mother, isn't that beautiful?' pointing to an oil-painting which hung in a show-window of a large picture-store.

"Oh! it was rich to see the black cloud which settled down upon his honor's countenance; only he makes me shudder when I come near him, as if I had come in contact with some slimy reptile."

"I wish he had not seen you, Rose," said Rockman quietly; but I detected an undertone of anxiety.

"Why?" I asked, looking up quickly.

"Look there!" said he, pointing across the street.

"He has tracked us home," said Rose.

"He means mischief," said I.

"Nonsense! what mischief can he do?" exclaimed Rose; but yet she did not look quite satisfied.

"I am not so certain that he did not recognize Minnie," said Rockman: "he knows her too well to be readily deceived," glancing at the same time at me in a way which showed that he had not expressed his whole thought.

It was not necessary that he should, for I felt it all through me. *My good name was gone!*

Minnie as yet had said nothing, but her look showed that she was thinking. "Did Robert Crandall get an idea, last winter, that Rose had ever been at my house in disguise, Mr. Rockman?" she asked at length.

"I think he did: he accused Rose to me of being your errand-boy the night I confronted him at the ball; and I only laughed at him."

"Oh! I am sorry you did not tell me, uncle; for,

had I known it, I should have taken care to have kept her, as well as myself, entirely out of his way, or have so disguised both, that neither would have been suspected because of being with the other."

"Disguised! disguised! disguised!" I exclaimed in a tone of vexation. "I am sick of this disguising: one would think we were all a set of criminals."

"And so we are," said Minnie. "In the first place, it is a criminal offence that we were born to be women; in the second place, we were born slaves, and have no right to our own bodies, only as the law directs; consequently, a part of us have offended in this direction; and, in the third place, it is against the law for a woman to dress in male attire.

"Crandall knows this, and he holds a grudge against us because we dared to deceive his honorship: so he will make us trouble if he can. Rose, we must get out of this."

"How, what?" said I, hardly knowing what I did say.

"Lina can stay here: it is Rose and I that he is angry with, and we must leave the city immediately. Were I at my own home, and in my own proper colors, I would meet and defy him; but, for your sake, we must leave."

I was about to remonstrate, but she put her hand upon my lips with, "Not a word;" and in a few minutes she and Rose sped out of the back way, and, hailing a passing hack, were soon at the depot and aboard the train, which, had they been a moment later, would have left them behind.

Rockman, after they left, did as he usually did

under strong excitement, — walked the room with rapid strides; and I sat down, and cried with anger. Could I have had the handling of Crandall for a while, I think he would not have been treated very tenderly.

"Possess your soul in patience, little woman: 'the wicked shall not always triumph,'" said he at length, coming and placing his hand on my head.

"But why need they triumph at all?" I asked.

> "God moves in a mysterious way
> His wonders to perform:
> He plants his footsteps in the sea,
> And rides upon the storm."

"I have heard you repeat that before," I said in no amiable tones.

"And you may hear me repeat it many times more, for that old hymn of Watts's is one of the grandest things in the English language."

"It may be grand to you, sir; but I prefer less mystery and more justice." I had dried my eyes; but the indignant blood was coursing through my veins at unusual speed, and the look I wore was any thing but that of submission; that is, if feelings are any indication of looks; I did not consult the glass. Just then the door-bell rang.

"It is Crandall with an officer," Rockman said.

"How do you know?" I asked.

"God told me."

"I think God had better have told you before," I snapped out.

"His ways are not like our ways: shall I go down?"

The bell rang the second time with an impatient jerk.

"No," I said. "I will go," for I ached to give Crandall "a bit of my tongue," as an Irishman would say. I descended the stairs, and went quickly to the door. I did not find Crandall, but a gentlemanly looking man stood there.

"Is there a Miss Barron here?" he asked.

"There is not, sir."

"Has there been no such lady here?"

"There has; but she left in company with a lady friend, about an hour since."

"Can you inform me, madam, where she went?"

"I can not, sir: she did not know herself just where she should stop, but said she would write and let me know."

He stood back a moment as if in thought, while I drew back as if to close the door. "Madam," said he, "I am sorry to trouble you, but I have a warrant for the arrest of Miss Barron; she was seen to enter this house, and has not been seen to leave it."

"You can search the house, sir, as thoroughly as you like; but I must first know of what my friend Miss Rose Barron is accused."

"She is accused, as you will see by this warrant, of wearing male attire at different times, and in public places."

"By whom is this accusation made?" I asked.

"By the Hon. Robert Crandall, representative from this district." I drew back.

"You can search as much as you please," I said.

"But Robert Crandall will find that his prey has escaped him this time; and he will not have the opportunity of drugging her, as he did years ago."

I felt a warning touch, and, looking up, found Rockman standing by me. "Be careful what accusations you make," he whispered in my ear: "you may be called upon to prove them;" then aloud, "Crandall is out the back way watching," and for reply, I said, —

"Will you please show this gentleman over the house?"

Of course the search was fruitless; but I could not sit quietly down and wait while the officer was going over the house: so I walked out the back door, went to the fence from whence I could look into the street, and confronted Crandall with, "Are you at the head of the moral police, sir?"

He looked at me with a sneer upon his face, but made no reply. "Because if you are," I said, "I can tell you where the nearest drug-store is, if you are not supplied with that kind of moral suasion."

"Madam, if you think to divert my attention, and so give your accomplices a chance to escape, you will fail," he said with a lofty air of severity.

"And, if you think to set eyes on her you seek, you will fail, for she is beyond your reach," I retorted. "A nice law-maker you are! a splendid conservator of public morals."

"Rail on, madam: the tongue of a woman of doubtful reputation is no slander," he said, with a leer that so fired me with indignation, that, had I been in reach of a pistol, I should have tried my

hand at ridding the earth of his presence. I felt that I would be willing to die, could I look upon his dead body first. Wicked, was I? wait, whoever you are that read these lines, — wait till you have been tried in a similar manner, before you condemn.

I controlled myself, however, for he should not see that he had moved me; and the next words I uttered were as calm as intense hate and intense pride could make them.

"With you, sir, reputation is every thing; you have no character to defend; honor, manhood, all that is valuable, went long ago; poor fellow, I pity you!" and, turning upon my heel, I left him looking the image of concentrated rage.

"Pride and hatred, — poor weapons these to vanquish an enemy with," I often think as I look back upon that time. How much I needed growth! How little I realized the spirit of the words, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do"!

That evening I sent for the Rev. Mr. Berrian, and, upon his arrival, sat down in company with Eben Rockman, and gave him the whole history of my acquaintance with Rose, told him of her school-days, of finding her afterward in the street in the condition I had; of my acquaintance with Minnie, — in fact, told him all without reservation; Mr. Rockman supplying many links that I could not, he not having told even me.

The looks of horror, the tears of sympathy, that he gave to my recital, convinced me that, whatever his prejudices as a minister might be, as a man he had a heart that was true and tender. One week

before, I could not have looked him in the face, and told him all this; but the experience of the last few hours had swept away, and for ever, all the barriers of false modesty; and now the truth was of more value to me than all else.

It was a terrible experience, but it brought me eventually the richest boon of my life.

"And is there no way to reach this man?" asked Mr. Berrian at length.

"None that I see, sir: he is rich and honorable, and who would believe the story, were it given to the public? a woman's word, if there can be even a shadow thrown upon her character, no matter how unjustly, is counted of but little worth."

"God help us to bear the bitter wrong, then!" he said; his indignation, and what he believed to be Christian submission, struggling for the mastery.

"God help us to do away with the causes which produce such wrong!" was Rockman's response.

The reverend gentleman looked at him in surprise. "How can we reach the causes?" he asked.

"By giving woman her rightful place beside man as his equal, sir: she is a slave, now, is under man's control, subject to his will. Man stands in the place of God to woman, and what an idea he gives her of the divine! Oh, heaven! I sometimes blush that I wear a man's form!" and again the rapid strides back and forth across the room.

Mr. Berrian's look said, "What kind of a man is this?" and Eben, turning as though he had read the thought, replied, —

"I am one whose soul is linked to the souls of

the suffering; so linked, that there is no rest for me till their wrongs are righted. Their cause is my cause; and neither hight nor depth, things present, nor things to come, can separate me from them."

"Do you not use Scripture lightly, my friend?" questioned Mr. Berrian.

"If God has written in my heart the same language that is found in the book, I shall not give preference to one over another, sir," was Rockman's reply. And Mr. Berrian, finding a character that he could not handle, made no further attempt to do so, but, turning to me, said, —

"Madam, I thank you for honoring me with your confidence in this matter; and rest assured, that, whenever it is in my power to serve you, I shall be only too glad to do so," and then retired, and left us to ourselves.

"You were right, little woman," said uncle, as soon as he was gone. "Hang the *minister*, and there will be a splendid *man* left; but, while the minister lives to take the lead, the man is cast into the shade."

"What is that you say about hanging ministers?" asked Lina, coming into the room at the moment.

I laughed: "Uncle Rockman thinks that Mr. Berrian is more of a man than he is a minister, and he does not like the idea of the professional title taking the precedence of the one who wears it: that is all."

"And enough too. Why will men who profess to follow Jesus take to themselves titles, allow themselves to be called rabbis, masters, reverends, when Jesus directly forbade it? The Rev. Mr. Rockman, the Rev. Mr. Berrian: away with such nonsense!" said Eben.

"Men should be tender of babies, or cripples, Mr. Rockman," said Lina in response to this outburst. "Because you are strong, and do not need a title, a staff, it does not follow that those who are weak should be denied the support of one."

"A great support it must be to carry a title. Why not say Carpenter Smith, Ditcher Brown, and Ploughman Leslie? I am sure it is quite as honorable to work at the trade that Jesus did, or to search the bosom of mother earth, as it is to pore over the pages of a book, about the meaning of which no two can exactly agree. We know that a God-power was necessary to the existence of the earth and her products, but we are not so certain about the other."

"Fie, fie, Uncle Rockman! I thought you believed in the Bible."

"And so I do, Miss Lina; but, if I find more of God outside of it than I do upon its pages, what then?"

"I expect, uncle, that we must all take him where we find him and as we find him," was her reply.

"Well answered, little one: thou art not far from the kingdom. Flesh and blood gave not to thee the wisdom of that reply, but our Father in heaven."

After a few days we heard from Rose and Minnie;

and, as soon as it was practicable, Mr. Rockman and Lina went to them.

"We need a man with us," wrote Minnie, "to aid us in our plans. Men are dreadful beings, but a woman needs one as a protector; that is, if she is within the pale of respectable society; but if her reputation is dead, and she is cast out of the temple, then men, like carrion crows, become her dissectors, while women stand afar off and hold their noses.

"There are exceptions to this, as you, my friend, and Eben Rockman, have proved to be true of your own selves; but, if the buzzards do not tear you somewhat before this thing is through with, then I am mistaken. By the way, one of the ladies who will be with me when we get settled is now in Omaha; and I mailed her a letter yesterday inclosing one to Robert Crandall, and asked her to re-mail it from there to him. Wouldn't it be funny if he should start for California soon?"

"Crandall is too old a bird to be caught in that way," said Rockman as he read this; "and they must not stay where they are another day."

"Why?" I asked in surprise.

"Crandall, I have no doubt, will get either the postmaster or the carrier to give him the post-mark of our letters."

I settled back in my chair with a gasp. "Are heaven and earth combined against us?" I managed to say at length.

"No; but hell is; and hell rules this earth just now, while God's kings and queens must hide from the face of him who sitteth on its accursed throne. Get me pen, ink, and paper."

I did as he requested; and, hastily dashing off a letter, he took his hat, and went out. "Look for me when I come," he said as he closed the door after him; and I did not see him again for two weeks.

At the end of that time, almost to the minute, he walked in again. I then learned that he had gone five miles on foot the night he left, mailed his letter to Minnie, and then had taken the midnight express, and gone twenty miles in the opposite direction, to the point at which she was to reply. And so for the entire time he had been changing here and there, giving no clew by which he could be traced.

"Is all this necessary?" I asked. "One would think you were a criminal hiding from justice."

"And so I am, — from the justice that pursues my criminal folly. I made a very great mistake, when, for the satisfaction of seeing Crandall's chagrin at being deceived and defeated, I took off my disguise; and through that he learned the part Rose had been playing.

"He swore then that he would have his revenge, and he is a perfect bloodhound on track."

"I could wish you had not done so," I said, "but that would not change matters now; and I think I should have done the same; indeed, if I remember right, I urged you on. I felt as if my winter at the capital would be wasted, if I could not see him put to shame."

"Vengeance is mine, and I will repay, saith the Lord," he repeated to himself.

"I believe it," I said; "and if I had left him to God, instead of trying to take his punishment into

my own hands, I should have saved myself a great deal of trouble."

"Well, do not grieve over it; good will come out of it somehow. The wrath of man shall praise him, and the remainder of that wrath he will restrain. Minnie has found a place to locate, — a much better one she says, than where she stopped first; and I shall go to her next week; but I must not write to you here, neither must she; and how shall we communicate with you?"

"I think I can manage it," I said. "I will ask Mr. Berrian to let you write me, and inclose it to him; and when I write I will direct to Lina as Mrs. L. W. Brown, and mail it at some other office."

"That will do for the present," he replied; "but are you not presuming on Mr. Berrian's kindness?" casting upon me a look that brought the blood to my cheeks.

In the mean time Robert Crandall had called upon Mr. Berrian, stating that he had the pleasure of listening to him the sabbath before, and expressed a desire for a better acquaintance. Of course, the *minister* could do no better than to treat him kindly. The *man* would have shaken him off like the slimy serpent he was; but the minister ruled the man as yet.

Not a word of Rose Barron, nor of Minnie Morris; though he had learned from Minnie's letter that it was she that had defeated him by taking Rose out of his reach. The next sabbath Crandall attended Mr. Berrian's church again; and this time I was there. Mr. Berrian came, at the close of the service,

and shook me warmly by the hand, asking after my health, and saying that he had missed my face.

Robert Crandall, with his haughty wife, stood but a few feet away, and not a muscle of his face showed that he saw me; but, as the minister moved on, he stepped forward, and introduced Mrs. Crandall, and together they passed out of the church. Mr. Berrian looked back to where I was standing, and his face showed, to me at least, that he was not pleased with his company; but Crandall managed in such a way that he could not break away without being rude.

There was a flutter of pleasure in the congregation, for Mr. Berrian was deservedly popular, and his people liked to have him appreciated; and the Hon. Mr. Crandall and lady were quite an accession to their ranks. Of course it was their minister who drew these notables. Simple souls! they had no thought that there could be any other reason.

The next day, but quite late in the day, as though he had put off a disagreeable task as long as possible, Robert Crandall called upon the Rev. Mr. Berrian again; and after discussing the weather, the sermon, &c., there was a pause: finally Crandall remarked, —

"I see, Mr. Berrian, that you are acquainted with the lady who lives next house to what is called Wellby's Row; nothing more than a speaking acquaintance, I presume?"

"I have called there a few times," Mr. Berrian replied quietly.

"Indeed! I am not surprised at all, for I met her in society last winter several times, while at the cap-

ital, though she does not seem to go out much here: yet I have always supposed her to be a respectable woman; but we never know who we are going to meet in this world of sin."

"Please explain yourself, Mr. Crandall."

"I feel it my duty to do so, sir, though I should be glad to avoid it if I conscientiously could; but you, as a minister, ought to know of this matter. Well, to make the disagreeable story as short as possible, years ago I met with a beautiful, and I supposed at the time an innocent girl. It was before I was married, and I was quite attracted to her.

"Fortunately, however, I learned her character before it was too late. Well, last winter, just before the close of the legislature, I met this same girl at a public ball, and under the care of the lady we are speaking of. I was surprised, shocked, that our wives and daughters could not go into company without meeting with such characters.

"But this is not all. I learned afterward, and from reliable sources, that this same girl had spent the most of the winter at the house of a notorious character by the name of Minnie Morris: she is well known in this city. Well, only two or three weeks since, this girl and this woman, with another one of the same style, and an old man who spends a great deal of his time with them, came to this city, and stopped with the woman in question several days. Indeed, I believe that the man and one of the girls have but just gone."

"And you know these things to be true?" asked Mr. Berrian, looking Crandall full in the face.

"If I did not, I should not come and tell you, sir," was the reply.

"It was all I could do," said Mr. Berrian to me afterward, in talking about it, "to so restrain myself as to keep from revealing to the smooth-faced hypocrite the fact that I had some previous knowledge of what he was telling me; only that it bore quite a different light to what he had given it. As it was, I sat for a while as if in troubled thought (which was true), and then rising, I said, —

"'Mr. Crandall, it is well that you have told me this: it is not pleasant work; but, as a servant of Him who was the friend of publicans and sinners, I feel that he brings to me such as he desires me to benefit, and I shall try to do my duty.'

"He looked as though I had not taken the subject quite in the way he hoped, but was too politic to say so; and, with a hope that I should be able to accomplish the good I desired, he bade me good-evening."

"How did you feel," I asked, "when he was telling you all this?"

"I felt as though I was in the presence of Satan," was the vehement reply.

I laughed in spite of myself, and he looked up inquiringly; so I told him of our conversation in reference to the man and the minister, and —

"You think the minister is growing weak," he interrupted, and laughed so heartily that I joined in his merriment without restraint.

The next sabbath, Crandall and his wife were again at church; and again they made an effort to

monopolize the minister, but did not meet with quite as much success as on the previous Sunday. Mr. Berrian took even more pains than usual to show me the friendship and respect he felt; which was of course gratifying to me, or would have been but for the fear that he was injuring himself.

I knew, by the cold looks cast upon me from other quarters, that the poison had begun its work; the minds of the people were being prejudiced against me. And as the choking, smothering atmosphere thus generated inclosed me round, I thought, —

"If, with conscious rectitude to sustain me, this is so hard to bear, I do not wonder that the wronged and forsaken woman shrinks from contact with, or hardens herself to defy, when forced to meet it."

The next sabbath Crandall came in alone; and a party near me said loud enough for me to hear, glancing at him as he took his seat, "He says he can not bring his wife here so long as that woman comes."

I knew very well who "that woman" was; and but for Crandall's presence I should have left the house then, such a crushing sense of injustice came over me. Fool that I was, to make him of enough account to have it affect my course of action!

I was too proud, however, to let him see that I was in the least moved. I did not see then that I was belittling myself: I had not grown big enough for that. I did not wait, though, to speak with Mr. Berrian; and I thought then that it was on his account. I would save him; but I am now satisfied that it was on my own. I could not have met his kindly gaze without tears.

Upon going home, and thinking the matter over, I resolved that I would leave the city; for I saw, that, let what would come, Mr. Berrian would stand by me; and I felt quite sure that such a course would result in his losing his place, and that I did not wish. I knew where I could sell my house; for Wellby had tried to buy it when building the last house on his block, and he had asked me to let him know if I ever wanted to dispose of it.

So the next day, when Mr. Berrian rang my bell, I was out on business; and he got no response. "I guess he would have rung all day, if I had not told him you had gone out, madam," said the Irish girl from the next yard on my return.

"And sure he's a fine gentleman, if he is a Protestant priest, and more's the pity," she continued. I thanked her for telling the gentleman I was out, and hastened to my room to have a good cry. This luxury over, I commenced to pack my trunks, and to get things ready generally for removal. It was a hard task, but it had to be done. The next morning I was off again to complete the sale of my house by getting the papers all ready for the signatures; but I told Wellby that I had particular reasons for keeping matters quiet, and that I would not sign the papers till the last minute; and, if he told any one of the matter, I would not sign them at all.

He seemed a little curious to know why I desired this, but I did not enlighten him; and he was only too glad to get the place, to spoil his chance by talking about it where I did not wish. When I came home this time, Bridget handed me a note

over the fence; and upon opening it I found these words: —

> Mrs. ——, This is the second time I have called, and you away. You need not think to escape me thus; and, if I do not find you to-morrow, I shall wait on your doorstep till you return. Gossip does not frighten me.
>
> Respectfully your friend,
>
> A. Berrian.

"Well," said I to myself, "I will meet you once more; but, as to remaining here to test your friendship, I will not. I can suffer alone, but I shall not stay and drag you down."

He came; and we had a long and pleasant talk, each avoiding that which was most on the mind, to wit, Crandall and the slime of his oily tongue; but on leaving he said playfully, and yet I knew that he meant it, "Now, don't run off next sabbath, till I have time to speak with you; for if you do I shall follow you home."

"Then if I am there, I will wait; for that would never do for a minister," I replied.

"If you are there?" he repeated, looking at me questioningly.

"Yes," I laughed, for he must not suspect, "if I am there; something might happen to detain me."

I remained at home that day, and the next till toward evening: then I called on Wellby, had the papers all properly signed and attested, told him that I should go on the midnight express, but would leave the keys with the hackman to be given to him the next morning. I then had a drayman take what I wished to sell to the auction-rooms, and, instead of

going on the train I had named, took the one half an hour earlier, and went in the opposite direction.

Thus was the home of years broken up; thus did I flee away by night like a criminal, and for what? Simply because my heart had ruled my head in my course toward the wronged ones that circumstances had brought me in contact with. Woman's reputation is so delicate, that if she dares to befriend a sister who has been deceived, betrayed, she, too, must be branded with the mark of Cain.

Robert Crandall, under pretense of caring for the public morals, had raised the indignation of the neighborhood against me to that degree, that, had I remained, I should have been subject to indignity if not violence; for it had been represented that I kept a decoy-house, was in league with Minnie Morris, aiding in furnishing victims for her use.

Of course their daughters were in danger, and their sons liable to be led astray: why should they not be aroused, indignant?

Still I should have staid, and faced the storm, but for the minister. He would stand by me; and he must not suffer on my account. You will say that Mr. Berrian was a man, as well as Robert Crandall; and why could not one man compete with another? A minister is supposed to have a great deal of influence.

I thought of that; and the only answer that came to me was, "Ministers, like women, are owned. The church, the congregation, own the minister, support him, and, so long as he comes up to their standard, it is well. There is a higher type of moral-

ity required of him than of the masses, and a higher morality required of woman than of man: consequently both the woman and the minister are enslaved; for, if the people can be made to believe that the standard has been marred, there is no hope for them."

So the woman fled to save the minister; and the man of the world, the smooth, politic, hypocritical man, prevailed.

"You are too excitable," said a friend to me years ago; "you need to be more cool, calculating"—

"Devil," I burst forth; and in my mind the three words have become so associated, that, where I find the two first in any great degree, it makes me fear that I shall find the last also.

The continued, persistent self-possession of a friend distresses me.

CHAPTER XII.

FIVE OF THE TEN.

AS the reader will doubtless infer, I went, when driven from my home, to the home that Minnie had prepared for herself and friends,—another evidence, those I left behind me would have said, had they known of it, that I was just what Crandall represented me to be.

I found, upon reaching the place, that Minnie had changed her plans somewhat; and, instead of leasing two houses together, she had bought two, one on one side of the town, and the other nearer the central portion. She had found a thriving inland town of some ten thousand inhabitants, where property was not unreasonably high; and by doing this she could secure a greater degree of variety for the girls, each home forming its own circle of acquaintance, and then intermingling with each other as visitors.

It gave, also, a better opportunity for remunerative employment. The reader will recollect, however, that their interests were one. They were a band of sisters, pledged to stand by each other, to divide the last crust, if need be; so that the doom which society accorded them, that of wearing sackcloth the rest of their lives, or selling their bodies for bread, might be escaped.

I purchased the third house, and then we each had a threefold home. They boarded gentlemen only, and lodged no one outside of their own. Their boarders were generally those who neither drank, chewed, nor smoked. (This was not made an absolute condition, but they were given to understand that such were preferred.) And those who were the victims of these habits either left them off or went elsewhere.

But they (I did not take boarders, but aided otherwise) made things so pleasant that but few left. It was understood at each home that all, inmates and boarders, were invited to spend an evening each week at each of the other homes; so we went out twice, and received company once at each place. Music, select readings, games, and whatever else we could think of that was either instructive or amusing, filled up the time.

Sometimes we would all join and go to some place of public amusement, which gave subjects for comment or conversation afterward.

I had been there some three months when I said to Minnie that I should like to know the history of those girls, to hear what it was that first led them to the brink from which society had cast them down.

"They will tell you," she said; and so, the next afternoon, five of the original ten gave me their stories, a short history of the steps taken to bring them where they were when Minnie came, and, like an angel from heaven, whispered the word "Hope" in their ears.

The names of the five were Irene Bradley, Dora Fenn, Sarah Blackman, Helen Myres, and Mary Bliss.

Irene was tall and fair, and, as poets would say, had blue eyes and golden hair, though her hair was too dark for that appellation. She was as graceful in her movements as the willow, and looked as pure and sweet as the lily. And yet she had walked in the paths of sin, and the world had counted her lost.

She began with, "I was the youngest of seven children, and the place of my birth a lovely valley between two of the highest of a range of hills in old Vermont. Three of us died in childhood; and the two oldest, both sons, married and settled in the neighborhood; leaving only myself and my sister Julia, two years older, at home.

"Deacon Bradley, my father, was noted for his stern rectitude of character, and his orthodox views. It might be said of a truth that he feared God; but, that love and trust are compatible with such fear, I do not believe. The frown of an angry God seemed ever before him, and mirth he regarded as a sinful mockery of the awful majesty of heaven.

"My mother, I think, was naturally the reverse. In a different atmosphere, I doubt not, she would have been a sunny, happy woman; but this had long since been crushed out of her, or, at least, so suppressed that it never manifested itself in my father's presence. But this element, so repressed in my mother, took its revenge by giving us, Julia and I, a double portion. Mirth, laughter, song, was as natural to us as the air we breathed.

"Poor mother! how hard she strove to keep us from manifesting it in father's presence! and how often and how severely she was reprimanded because

she failed! As we grew older, we saw how much trouble it made her, and we were more careful when father was by; but it was like damming the flowing stream: when the waters rose high enough, they would overflow. We used to talk about it nights after we went to bed; we could not, we would not, stand it so; we would break this bondage, or do something desperate.

"Finally Deacon Smith's only son, and only child also, asked father for permission to address Julia. He was very pious, and, being the heir, would, when the deacon his father concluded to step out, be rich; and, of course, father was pleased. It was a greater blessing than he had ever dared to expect for his sinful child.

"'I do not love him one bit,' said Julia to me; 'but he is not bad looking, and I suppose I must marry, or always remain cooped up here; so I guess I'll take him. I wish, Irene, that you could live with me, and get out of this.'

"I said nothing, but I intended to get out of this. I had met a handsome city youth down at Aunt Mabel's a few months before, and he was coming soon to ask me of my father; for so he had promised. I had not whispered this even to my sister, for there was a possibility of his being false; I had heard of such things, and, in that case, I could not bear even a sister's pity.

"But he came, and my father questioned him as to his religion. If that was right, why, all else was supposed to be. Oh, horror! his parents were Methodists, and he was not a member of any church. 'Give my

daughter to the son of a Methodist class-leader! Never! I would rather bury her.'

"Henry told me the result of this interview with my father, and begged me to elope with him. This I did not like to do, and probably should not have done, had not my father heaped reproaches on my head for encouraging 'such a reprobate,' as he was pleased to call Henry.

"This so aroused me that I resolved to be free from the tyranny I was under, let what would be the consequences; so I went with my handsome lover to the neighboring State, and we were married. This done, Henry plead for a few months of secrecy, so as to get his business in a little different shape, telling me the whys and wherefores, till I was convinced it was for the best, and so consented.

"Aunt Mabel, mother's only sister, lived close to the State line; and under the excuse of visiting a young friend some three miles distant, and a 'perhaps I shall stay two or three days,' I stole away to meet Henry. I remained away two nights, and then returned to aunt's alone, with the pledge that in three months my husband would claim me openly.

"Henry had a sister some three years younger than himself, to whom he confided his secret; and she came to see me the day before I returned to my father's, and we talked the matter over. She seemed well pleased with me, as, indeed, I think she was; but the love of money makes fiends of people, I sometimes think.

"About a week before I was expecting Henry, she came again, and stole my marriage-certificate from

me, at the same time telling me that Henry was not very well, and I need not be surprised if he did not come for me quite as soon as I expected.

"No, he was not much sick, she said, but was not able to get along with his business as fast as he had hoped to do.

"The very next day after she left, I learned that he was dead, was buried the day before she left home. There were three of the children, another brother and this sister, beside Henry; and, when he found that he was going to die, Henry had told his brother also of his marriage. The business that he sought to accomplish had been completed; and he had secured a certain portion of his father's estate to himself by signing away all claim to any thing further at his father's death.

"This made him independent, though it gave him much less than would have been his had he waited to share equally with the other children. His brother knew that if the marriage was proven, and I should bear a child, that child would hold his father's property; otherwise it would go back into the family, his father being the next heir; so he sent his sister down to find out if there was any prospect of my becoming a mother, and, if so, to get from me the proof of our marriage.

"When I heard of Henry's death, I fainted. My father was present, and, I think, began to suspect that there was something that he did not understand. When I came to, he questioned me; and then, for the first time, I missed my marriage-certificate. In my desperation I told him all, for I felt a wild hope,

that he would take some step to prove my marriage, and thus save me from the disgrace that would otherwise come upon me; but I was mistaken.

"I had disobeyed him, and there was no pity in his heart for me. He refused to believe that I had been married; said that, if I would deceive in one thing, I would in another; and calling me a reprobate, a child of the Devil, he turned me from his door, and bade me never to enter it again. I think my mother believed my story, and I know that Julia did; but neither of them dared to defend me, though they did for me what they could in secret.

"Well, I will not dwell upon the agony, the shame, of the next few months. Suffice it to say that my baby died, and I in my desperation took to the only life that seemed open to me; everywhere else I was treated with scorn, but with the world's outcasts I could meet on equal footing; and, if there is a hell upon earth, it is to be surrounded by and obliged to mingle with those who scorn or pity you, or both; I mean the pity that is born of scorn, a scornful pity. It is terrible."

"Religious prejudice, and heirship of property," said Rockman at this point.

Irene looked at him as if to gather his meaning from the expression of his face.

"They were the two forces that caused your woe, and both accursed," he continued.

"I can not see how the heirship of property is wrong," she remarked.

"And yet if Henry had not been worth a cent, or if at his death his property had gone into a public

fund to be used for the support of all fatherless children, there would have been no inducement for his sister to have stolen your marriage certificate, and you would thus been saved all the disgrace, except that which arose from religious prejudice."

"Mr. Rockman, I never thought of it in that light before," she replied; "but you are certainly right so far as the effect was concerned."

"To be sure, I am; and by what right are relatives who have enough and to spare, made heirs of the property of those who chance to be of their blood, so said, when widows and orphans without number are needing it? The selfish right of family clanship, and among those who claim to be Christians too. Let those Christians who are so anxious to have God honored by this government honor him themselves by making it obligatory upon church-members, that all who are worth above a given sum shall not hold inherited wealth, but put it into a common fund for the benefit of the widows and orphans in the county where they reside.

"Let them do this, being no respecters of persons, but, like the God they say to worship, share this fund equally with all who need it of the classes named; and then see how many children would become bitter enemies in quarreling over a dead parent's money. See how many lawyers' fees would be paid to decide who should have it; see how many sickly children would be left to die of neglect, or murdered by slow poison, or killed by accidents done on purpose, that rich relatives may become richer thereby.

"Why, I sometimes think that such a change in our laws, or even in church policy, would do more to abolish crime than all that all our ministers are doing now. Society, as it is at present constructed, is one great tempting machine; and if single men, or men with wives and without families, knew that what they gathered together would go, in case of their death, to all the needy women and children within their town or county, such knowledge would lead them to take more interest in such as were liable to become their heirs; it would be a bond of love between them, that would bless all concerned."

"Uncle Eben, I wish you could be our law-maker for a time," I said.

"And I would prefer that people should make just laws for themselves. The Lord's Prayer teaches us to say, 'Lead us not into temptation;' and I would not like to try how much temptation, in the shape of power, I could bear; I am but human."

"Well," said I, "we will talk of this matter more fully at another time. I want to hear Miss Fenn's story now."

"I have not much to tell," replied Dora, "and yet you may think it considerable. My father was an Episcopalian minister; and no Presbyterian or Baptist of the old school could be more strict. I had no childhood in any true sense of that term. When fifteen years of age, I met a man much older than myself, that I fell desperately in love with. I think my manner toward him must have shown him the state of my heart; for he said to me one day,—

"'Miss Dora, I would not wrong you for the

world; and your father with his strict ideas of things would never give you to me.'

"I think I must have been what the world calls reckless; for I looked him in the face, and asked, 'And would you have me if he would give me to you?'

"He looked surprised, but replied, 'It would not be hard to love you; indeed, I hardly know how one could help doing so.'

"'Then I will be my own mistress long enough to give myself to you,' I said.

"'But you are under age, dear child, and I can not marry you without your father's consent, unless I steal you, and leave the State.'

"'I will steal myself, and leave the State, then,' I said, 'even if I have to steal the money to go with, for I will not stay here; I had as lief be in prison.'

"He sat for some time in silence. I think he must have been weighing the chances of my doing something desperate if left to myself; at length he asked, 'Do you love me, Dora?'

"'I do, sir,' I said.

"'Come here, and let me take your hands in mine; now look me in the face, and tell me why you love me,' said he.

"I did so, and replied, 'It is because I can breathe freely where you are. I feel free and light as a bird.'

"He bent his dark eyes upon me, and I shrank abashed beneath their gaze. At length he said, 'It shall be as you say, little one,' adding, as if to himself, 'it will be the only way to save you.' I was

too happy to take in the full import of his words; and that night I left my father's house, and became the wife of Arnold Greyson. He was old enough to have been my father, but I did not care for that. I was as as happy as the day was long."

"What of your mother? did you never think of her?" I asked.

"Oh! I forgot to tell you," she said, "that my mother died when I was but ten years old, and I had a second mother who had one child of her own by a previous marriage, and one by my father; and she seemed to care but little for me further than to complain to my father of what she called 'my waywardness.' So you see, I was not missed much at home. My husband was not a man of property, and at the end of a year he was killed by an accident; and I was left penniless.

"I was but a child, only sixteen years of age, and had never been taught to work; and I was helpless. The lady with whom we boarded wrote to my father stating the condition I was in, and asked him to take me home. This he refused to do, saying that I had made my bed: I must lie on it. This cold reply aroused the lady's indignation; and she told me to stay with her till something better could be done, uttering at the same time an invective that was neither polite nor elegant against ministers in general and stepmothers in particular.

"After a little, an opportunity offered, and I studied for the stage; there temptation beset me on all hands, and I did not try very hard to resist; so I was soon counted an outcast; but I do not think my-

self so much worse than thousands of others whose only advantage over us is in not having been found out. I think a woman who, as Irene's sister did, marries just for a home, is just as much of a prostitute as one who sells herself otherwise; it is a sale in one case as much as in the other. The difference is only the Government stamp upon a counterfeit marriage."

"Yes," said Irene; "and the woman who thus sells herself in marriage is very likely to have a lover outside of marriage. My sister would not dare to invite me to her home, or to speak to me on the street in the presence of her husband or any one who knew who I was; and yet I have often helped to shelter her and her lover. For my part, I should prefer to live an outcast and done with it, to being in constant fear of detection."

"Those who have no character have none to lose," said Rockman.

"And none to worry over," she continued: "so whatever of goodness one has is natural, spontaneous."

"Why, then, did you leave the life you led, and come with Minnie?" I asked.

"Oh! to help her carry out her experiment. I wanted to see if the world, and especially the Christian world, would let us be *respectable*. I am satisfied in my own mind that it will be no longer than they get some hint of our past."

Miss Blackman here remarked, "You call both of these ladies Miss, while, according to what they tell, they should both be Mrs."

"How is this, ladies? You both gave me your maiden names, and I have called you by them," I said. They both laughed.

"We have neither of us given you our real names, neither do we intend to do so. We are not anxious to have people trace us out, and connect us with those who would be ashamed to acknowledge relationship; some of them do not even know that we are living, and would much prefer that we were dead, even if, according to their theories, we were in hell: they would prefer even this to having us around to disgrace them."

"And for that very reason I would be around and disgrace them all I could," said Sarah Blackman, her eyes fairly flashing.

They all looked up, and Minnie said, "You are a spunky piece, Sarah."

"Yes, I am, and I am glad of it. It was revenge that drove me to a life of shame; and, if my father was living, I would be there yet. If I had a thousand bodies, I would lay them all upon the altar if I could by the means kill, and forever, that kind of respectability that is preferred before human happiness."

"It seems to me a strange kind of revenge," I said.

"I know it, but it was all that was left me. My parents were rich and proud, and more especially my father. I was their only child, and they desired to make a brilliant marriage for me. The man of their choice was rich, handsome, talented, and ambitious; the man of my choice was poor. My father

knew that I would never marry Edward Remmington so long as Herbert Stanton was about; so he and Remmington planned to have him sent to England on business for them under so good a salary that it was an inducement for him to go; for he hoped that, with what he could save for the two years he was to remain away, he could furnish for me a home when he returned.

"Father knew of our attachment, and had said that, if I chose to marry him, I could do so, but if I did I should never have a cent of his property; so, when Remmington offered him the position, he had no idea that it was a plan to get him out of the way, for Remmington had only spoken to my father, and neither Herbert nor I knew of it. Soon after he left, however, I began to find that Remmington was my father's choice, and that he desired to marry me.

"I told him plainly that I was engaged to Herbert Stanton, and should never marry any one else. He professed great sorrow that I could not love him, but said that he accepted his fate, and only asked the privilege of being a friend and brother. In that light I accepted his escort when I needed one; and nearly a year had passed when I began to miss, in Herbert's letters, the warmth that had hitherto characterized them.

"I had no suspicion of foul play, and it grieved me very much. Several months passed when one day I was startled by a letter from him upraiding me in the most bitter terms for my falsehood, and announcing, that, as he would as soon die as live, he had enlisted, and was on his way to the Crimea. He had

addressed me by my old name, he said, as he could never call me by any other. I took it to my father, and asked him what it meant?

"'It means,' said he, 'that he is false to you, and takes this way to get out of it;' and then he showed me a letter purporting to come from a cousin of Remmington's, stating that Herbert Stanton had married an English girl who was both beautiful and wealthy. This letter, he said, had come to Remmington the week before, and they were studying how to break the news to me; but now this letter of pretension showed that he was so unworthy, he hoped I had pride enough to forget him as he deserved.

"I noticed that father avoided looking me full in the face while he was telling me this; and I felt as sure of it as I do now that I know it, that there had been treachery.

"'Father,' I said, 'look at me.' He did so; but he could not look steadily and with a clear gaze.

"'It is false, all false,' I said; but I said it so calmly that I wondered at myself.

"'False: what do you mean?' he stammered.

"'I mean that you and Edward Remmington have been plotting together. But I shall never marry any one but Herbert Stanton; I will find some way to let him know of this,' I replied.

"'There is not much chance for that, for he will not be very likely to live to get back to America,' he said, throwing off all reserve when he found that he was defeated in his plan to finally marry me to Remmington.

"'Then I shall never marry,' I said.

"'Well, I have saved myself the disgrace of having you throw yourself away on Stanton,' he replied, 'for I will see to it that you never marry him; girl, if you think to foil me, you will find your mistake.'

"'And, if Herbert Stanton does not live to get home, I will show you, sir, that I have yet the power left to disgrace you,' was my calm but firm reply, as I turned and left him. I succeeded in undeceiving Herbert; but his reply to me was written by another, for his right arm had been shot away. The next news was of his death; and, to have revenge upon my father for taking away the brightness of my life, to save himself the disgrace of having a son-in-law who was poor and the son of poor, hardworking people, I disgraced him by deliberately taking up the life of degradation to which the pride of a hypocritical society consigns so many of my sisters."

"How is that?" I asked: "how is it that pride consigns them to such a fate?"

"Because pride, their own or that of relatives, will not permit the sons of the rich to marry poor girls; yet there is a freshness, a womanliness, about such girls, that attracts these rich young men powerfully; and, as they can not marry them without running into the face of almost insurmountable obstacles, they lay plans to get them without marriage, use their time and their money to accomplish this. To ruin a poor girl, is, in the eyes of the rich and respectable, a venial offense for a rich young man to commit; but to marry her, an unpardonable one. Out upon such respectability!"

"It is damned respectability," said Rockman.

"But not respectable to call it by that name," I added.

"I could not respect myself if I did not call it by its right name, madam; and

> 'One self-approving hour whole years outweighs
> Of stupid starers, and of loud huzzas.'"

"You must have a fund of poetry laid by to use when argument fails, you are so ready with your quotations," I said, laughing.

"This poetry is truth, though not all truth is poetry," he retorted; and I turned to listen to the next story.

"Mine," said Helen Myers, "is different from any of yours, and I think rather a peculiar one. I lived till I was twenty-five years of age as virtuous a life as the world need ask for; but, after I was twenty, my health began to fail. I was very miserable most of the time, gloomy, despondent, had but little strength, and medicine seemed to do me no good. I suffered on till I was nearly twenty-five, when I was advised to go to a water-cure, or not altogether that, but a sort of eclectic institute, where various agencies were used, water and dieting being among the principal agencies. Here I grew to be better; but I felt a strange attraction to the physician who had charge of the institute. I had never met any one who affected me as he did. No word passed between us upon the subject; but I knew without words, that the feeling was mutual, and something that neither of us could help.

"He had a wife and two children; and he paid me no more attention than he did the other lady patients, and yet I knew that he cared more for me; and I felt, too, that there was no love between him and his wife; and I afterward learned that she said she never cared for him more than she did for any other man, but he was good-looking, intelligent, and could give her a good home; and she married him because she could take him away from all the other girls, and she thought it such a triumph.

"'Do you think he loved you?' asked the one to whom she told this; and she replied, 'Oh! he would make a fool of himself if I would let him, and I had quite a trial with him for a while; but I finally taught him that I was not going to have a man all the time kissing and petting me.' But, like most women of this class, she liked to exact all the attentions from him that she considered her due as a wife.

"She wanted people to think that he was devoted to her, and she honored him by allowing it. I had been there some weeks, and was getting better all the time, when one morning he came into his room, and found me there. I supposed that he had gone out for the day, as he left with his wife and children about half an hour before, and was not expected back till toward evening. I hardly knew why I went to his room then, though I was assisting some about the house, and I sometimes swept out his office.

"I had done so that morning before he left, while he was visiting the patients who were not well

enough to leave their rooms. But for some reason, or without a reason, I had gone in there and sat down after he had driven away. I was surprised to see him, and started to leave the room; but he caught me in his arms, and I had no power to resist him.* It seems that he had forgotten something that he needed, and, leaving his wife to make a call on a friend some three-fourths of a mile away, had come back to get it.

"I staid there about ten days after that, and was so far cured, that I went to my brothers, with whom I made my home. The doctor and I never passed a word about what had occurred that morning, but I never felt so well in my life. I soon found, however, that something must be done, or I was ruined for this life; so, to save my reputation, I, with the help of a friend, a lady much older than myself, succeeded in destroying the result of that embrace. But it all came out in spite of what I did to prevent its being known; and that through a letter I sent him when I first learned my condition, asking him what I should do. This his wife got hold of, and took pains to tell what she could of it that would injure me, and at the same time keeping his name back, claiming only that I had consulted him as a physician.

"I, of course, could not make things any better by giving his name; but it would, in reality, have been the worse for me had the public known that it was a married man with whom I had been intimate; so I

* This girl's story, as was the preceding one, is taken almost literally from real life.

kept still, and baffled their curiosity. But my health was not as good after that, and my friends turned their backs upon me; and I left them to go where every face would not flash scorn upon me, and that is my story."

"Such purity, and such respectability! Heaven help us!" exclaimed Rockman. "The crime that you did, Helen, was the one that respectability forced you to, to save yourself from the natural result of a natural attraction; and the woman who took care to impale you upon the hook that *saints* are always barbing for *sinners* was as much worse than you are as the Devil is worse than an angel. 'Ye hypocrites, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?'

"*Make clean*, MAKE CLEAN, the outside of the cup and platter; but think not that the filth within will escape the all-searching eye!"

I had expected some such outburst from Mr. Rockman, and so made no comment, but turned to Mary Bliss with, "And yours last."

"And the worst, I presume you will think," she replied.

"I hope not," I said.

"Well, I have no plea to make other than that I naturally loved men's society, and felt that I had a right to it. I did not make myself; and, if such desires make me vile, then my Creator is responsible; I am not."

I must say that I was astonished; but I tried to show as little of it as possible, and simply asked, "Why, then, did you leave the life you were leading?"

"Because I did not like it. I do not want what I do not like, neither will I have it," she continued, her eyes flashing; "and if I had staid there I should have murdered somebody before this."

"Must take more than you want of men's society, and such as you do not want, or you shall live entirely alone; for the men are all so *pure* that they will never marry such as you, Miss Mary," was Rockman's comment; and she replied, —

"We will see about that."

"You had better keep your eye on that girl, or she will make you trouble," I said to Minnie aside.

"And she will be sure to make me trouble if I attempt to watch her," was Minnie's reply.

I retired that night earlier than usual; not that I expected to go immediately to sleep, for I knew that I should not; but I wanted to think. And this was the story of five out of ten; and in every case but the last the evil had been induced, or made worse, through fear of the world's frown, — in all except the last; and she, well, even she, rejected by the world, cast out, she had to fight the deeper degradation which sought to force itself upon her.

Family pride, religious pride, and prejudice, — the letter of the law held to be of more value than the spirit. O God! who should solve the problem? who should find the key that would unlock and bring to our knowledge the reconciling law which would harmonize these discords, right these wrongs? And I too: what was it that had brought me to be the companion of the Magdalen? By no deed of wrong had this been done; and yet, in the eyes of

the great world, I was counted as one of them, yea, even as the most vile of all; for Robert Crandall had made it appear that I was a sort of procuress in the disguise of respectability.

True, I was not suspected here, neither were the others, and we all were trying to live rightly; but, if the past were known, how soon those young men who boarded in those families, — the two into which Minnie had divided the girls, — how soon they would refuse to be *seen* going there! how soon all support, all patronage that could aid them in earning an honest living, would be withdrawn! And even if this were not so, if there were those who would stand by them in their efforts to lead an honest life, the air of suspicion that would envelop them, the constant espionage to which they would be subject, would be enough to drive them wild.

Yes, I lay there hour after hour, and thought of all these things, till my agony became so great that I bit my tongue, lips, and fingers, till I nearly brought the blood, to keep from screaming outright.

Finally, I dropped into a troubled slumber; and in it I saw a vast multitude of women, who were divided into three companies; but, as I looked closely, I beheld that they were all chained.

One company stood alone, and claimed that they always intended to stand thus; but still they looked longingly toward a company of men who walked hither and thither at their will. This company of women were chained by the State; for the law of the State said, "Thou shalt not come close to man unless thou first compliest with the terms laid down

in the book of ordinances; to wit, thou shalt be freed from the State bonds only on condition that a bond, a chain just long enough to bind two as one, take its place; and, if thou darest to do otherwise, thou shalt be stoned in the market-place; not with literal rocks, but with the scorn that is even of a more unyielding material." And all the people, as this command was uttered, lifted up their voices, and said, "AMEN."

The second company stood behind a long row of men, though I noticed that now and then a woman had stepped to the front, and placed the man behind her; but this was a rare occurrence. Now and then a man had also put his arm around the woman standing behind him, and brought her up to his side; but this was unusual, and she could stand thus only as he held her. The rule was, that a man could take a woman from the State, if she chose to go with him, upon condition that he bound her to himself; and, because woman had this right to the choice of masters, I heard a song of rejoicing, the burden of which was, "Freedom."

Now, it seemed to me in my sleep that this was a strange kind of freedom; and, when I spoke of it, those standing by pointed to the third company of women, and asked me if I would prefer such freedom as theirs. Then I looked, and beheld that these women, who were called free women, were in a most terrible condition; for the women who belonged to the State hated them because they stood in the way, oftentimes, of their getting individual masters; while those who stood behind the men hated them because

the eyes of their owners often turned toward these, instead of looking lovingly over their shoulders upon those who were legally theirs.

And I further saw that these women who were called free were really in the power of the State when it chose to oppress them; and of not only one, but of all men who chose to claim them, indirectly at least; and that, more than all this, both of the before-named companies of women were combined against them; so that, in reality, instead of freedom, they were in the most abject of all bondages. They were the scorn of all, and had the rights of none.

I grieved in my sleep that this was so, and wondered if there was none to help, when a voice from one that I could not see said, —

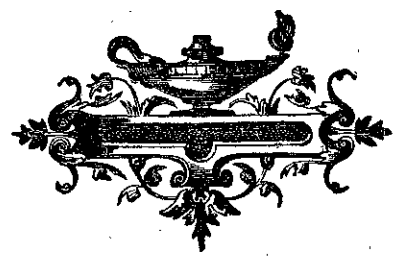
"I looked, and there was none to help, and I wondered that there was none to uphold; then my own arm brought salvation."

"What does this mean?" I asked of one standing near. He looked at me as though he did not comprehend; and I said, "Did you not hear the voice?"

"I heard nothing," was the reply; and again the voice said, "Having ears they hear not, neither can they understand. I am that I am, and I reside within each and all as the power that can bring salvation, when they will turn to me: then I assert myself in them both to will and to do; and they are made to feel a self-reliant strength, which they know is not of themselves, and still is one with them."

"God within," I murmured under my breath; and the response was "God within."

When I woke to outer consciousness, the sun was shining full in my face, and the sound of the words "A new heaven and a new earth," were lingering in my ears.



CHAPTER XIII.

LIKE UNTO THE SON OF MAN.

THE next evening after this singular dream, or vision, Minnie, Rose, Rockman, and myself were sitting together at my home; and I told them of what I have already told the reader, adding as I finished the relation, "It is strange how Bible-scenes and the application of Bible-texts seem to mingle in with all that we think or do." As I concluded, Eben looked up and asked, —

"Why, in what sense is truth like God?"

"Because, like God, it is eternal," said Rose.

"Eternal in its essence, but continually changing its form," I added.

"You mistake in saying that truth changes its form," said Rockman: "it never does."

"I do not see how you can say that?" questioned Rose.

"Can that which fills all forms change one form for another? The change is in us, — in the growth which takes us through one form into the next. We say that truth changes its form, and we say the sun rises and sets; both of which are apparently so, but really not so. It is in this sense that truth is like God; it is infinite in form, and a unit in essence."

"But what connection has this with what I remarked about Bible-scenes?" I asked.

"Simply this: the inner life, the form of truth in such as constantly use the Bible as illustrative of life, is in harmony with the form of truth as there expressed."

"And, if not really in the same form, they see it so," I said.

"Yes, Truth is in reality naked; we clothe her to suit ourselves. I have somewhere read a story of a man who read a Bible-text wrong, but he deduced a truth from the mistake, and made his application accordingly. The text that he spoke from reads as follows; "And he maketh my feet like unto hind's feet;' but he read it 'hen's feet,' and then went on to say, —

"'You see, my brethren, how God protects and provides for us. As the hen can clasp her feet around her perch, and go to sleep without the fear of falling, God having so constructed the muscles that they will not unclasp even while she sleeps, and can not watch for herself; thus she sleeps in safety, for she is in God's care: so we, if we trust in him, shall find that our feet will cling, even when the enemy thinks we must fall; for God holds us, his everlasting arm is round about and beneath us.' You see in this case," continued Rockman, "Truth could bend around a twig with a hen's foot as easily as she could skip over the mountains with the foot of the hind."

We all laughed heartily at Eben's story, and asked him if he was relating some of his own ministerial experience.

"I said I read it," he replied, pretending to be offended that we should doubt his word.

"Never mind," said I, "if he is angry: I have a story to tell that will make him good natured again. I did not read it; but I heard a man tell it who said that a cousin of his was the minister in question."

"That is more definite: let us hear it, aunty," cried Rose.

"Well, it was like this: there is a passage in Revelation which reads, 'And I beheld, and, lo, a black horse, and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand.' The minister, who was cousin to the man who related it to me, read, 'And he had a pair of bellowses in his hand:' then, laying down the book, he proceeded to make the application thus:—

'"My friends, these were not the bellowses that the housewife uses to blow up the fire, nor the ones that the blacksmith uses at the forge, but God Almighty's eternal great bellows to blow sinners to hell with.'"

This story was greeted with peals of laughter, and the declaration that I had beat Uncle Eben entirely.

"But he did not carry out the bellowses to the end: he had to make the word 'bellows' at last," remarked Rockman.

"Oh! that is nothing," laughed Minnie; "he kept up the added syllable till he got far enough away from balances to forget it, and after that it did not matter."

"Neither does it make but little difference whether truth swings in the balance, or is blown through the bellows, I suppose you will say," I added.

"Not in the least," said Rockman. "But this reminds me of some conversation that we had about the Bible, some time since, in which the idea was advanced, that the 'one like unto the Son of man,' spoken of by the prophet Daniel, was a government that was to come upon the earth, which in its construction should correspond to the human constitution."

"And the writer who broached the idea further declared, if I recollect aright, that this nation is now, as to its form of government, like to a man's body with the head of a beast," I added.

"Yes: and I have thought very much of it since, and I believe that he was about right."

"Will you please give us your ideas upon the subject, Uncle Eben?" asked Rose.

"I will try to do so, child. And, in the first place, I will say what you all know to be true; to wit, a beast walks upon four legs, and a man upon two."

"I believe we all know that, uncle."

"Yes, but you have not applied it to this problem, I presume, puss. We as a nation have ceased to bow down before our rulers: we walk upright, like men, like independent sovereigns; we have, nationally, a man's body. Now, what of the head? What is the difference between the head of the man, and the head of the beast?"

"I rather think, uncle, that the man has the most brain."

"In what respect, Rose? more absolutely, or more in proportion to the faculties and powers possessed?"

"More absolutely, I think," she replied.

"And yet the beast has a brain organ for every power possessed, as well as the man."

"You mean, uncle, for every power of thought, of intelligence?"

"I do, Rose; and for every instinctive function also. Combativeness helps it to overcome obstacles, and destructiveness aids in securing its food; alientiveness corresponds to the stomach, and amativeness to the procreative function. These are the names that phrenologists give to some of the organs in the base of the human brain; and they are in common with those possessed by the animal. But there are other powers possessed by the human; and these powers are represented in the human head, the human brain. Each and every one of them are thus represented."

"And you think that this is not true of our national head?" I said.

"I know that it is not; indeed, in that respect, we have hardly the head of a beast, nationally speaking. Our governmental head makes one department do the part of two or three brain-organs, instead of having a department to represent each. Then look at the different classes in society: are they represented by distinct departments in the governmental head? Not by any means.

"We have in this representative district, doctors, lawyers, mechanics, farmers, manufacturers, merchants, &c.; and all these must be represented in Congress by one man; and not a woman there. A one-sided head that, a sort of blockhead.

"Suppose a lawyer is elected from this district; to be true to his constituents, he must represent both the men and the women of every class and trade, of every profession and calling, in the whole district. It would be just as reasonable to expect that the organ of hope in the human head should act for caution, secretiveness, ideality, benevolence, sublimity, conscientiousness, &c., — it would be just as reasonable to expect that this one organ of the human head should act for and represent all these separate powers of the soul, as to expect that a lawyer can fairly represent and act for all these different classes of people.

"But our governmental head has no organ, no department, separate and distinct from, yet acting with, the others, to represent these varying interests. It does not represent all the powers of its national body, its national soul; so it is the head of a beast upon the shoulders of a man, nationally speaking."

"And what are we going to do about it?" I asked.

"Educate the people to see that this is so first, and the rest will take care of itself," was his reply.

"But when this government like unto the Son of man, one that has this harmony between the capacities of its head, and the needs of its body the

people, — when this government is inaugurated, what then?" said Minnie.

"It will break in pieces and destroy all the beast kingdoms, and it will reign over the whole earth; for then the kingdoms of this world, *the beast kingdoms*, will become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ; the entire human family constituting one grand man, with a head so related to the body, that it will provide for all the needs of that body, from the fact that there will be pain in the head, or suffering of some kind, if this is not done.

"If our governmental head was so related to its body that every pain felt by the body was telegraphed there by the nerves of sensation, in exact quantity and quality, think you that the people's money would be used and the people's needs forgotten as they are now?

"But we have a beast's head; and how can it respond to the needs of a body like unto that of a man?"

"And do you really think, uncle," asked Rose, "that the one like unto the Son of man, seen by the prophet, is to be a government so perfect that it will endure for ever?"

"I think, puss, that this is as likely to be the true interpretation as any other. Truth, like God, is large enough to fill a nation, as well as small enough to dwell in a man. I do not see why it can not sway a nation as one man, as well as to sway a nation through one man."

"Oh, dear!" said Minnie, "I am sick of all these various Bible interpretations: what difference does it make, anyhow?"

"You think, if you could find one son of man who would be loving and true, you would be satisfied, I presume," laughed Rockman.

"If he should happen to suit me, I would; otherwise not," she replied.

"What a nice little housewife it would make!" he continued in the same strain.

"You mistake, sir, I shall never marry; but when that Son of man form of government is established, I presume that the kingdom of heaven will be set up on earth, and they will neither marry nor be given in marriage, but be like the angels; and we can then have what love we need without being slaves."

"I wonder if they will put money out upon interest then?" said Rose.

"Yes, when people put a hand out upon interest, and expect two hands in return," I said.

"What nonsense!" she retorted; "when the governmental head becomes perfected, and the national body is joined to it rightly, we shall then be one; and you might as well talk of one hand eating the other hand, or of the heart asking interest of the foot, because it furnished the blood that made it a live foot. Suppose, now, that, for every ten drops of blood furnished by the heart to the foot, it should demand eleven in return?"

Rockman clapped his hands. "Bravo, little Rose: you have given us the best illustration yet, of the one-sided tendency of capital drawing interest."

"Then I hardly think that poor folks will have to pay interest on their debts till they have more than

paid the amount of the principal, when the one like unto the Son of man comes. I wish he would hurry along."

"Of course you do, Rose. I never saw a pretty girl who did not wish that some son of man would come."

"That will do, uncle. I do not relish that kind of joking: my experiences have been too bitter."

"Well, you may forgive me this time, if you think it will benefit you any to exercise that virtue," he said with a mock gravity that made her laugh in spite of her efforts to the contrary.

"I wonder if woman will ever have to sell herself for bread when that form of government is inaugurated?" said Minnie.

"Of course not. What does the book say of it, or of what shall be done when one like to the Son of man comes? If we accept one portion of it, there must be some connection of that which is accepted, with the rest of it," said Rose earnestly.

"What does it say, Rose?" I asked.

"It says that the saints of the Most High, not such as we have now, pretended ones, but real saints, shall take the kingdom and possess it for ever, even for ever and ever."

"Such saints can never defile woman," remarked Rockman: "that is certain."

"If that kingdom is to be set up upon earth, and there shall be no more sorrow nor crying when it is done, let us all work and pray for its coming," said Minnie solemnly.

Amen and amen, we responded; and we were

silent, though each continued to think how a government could be constructed so that it would in reality be as intimately connected with the interests of the people, as is the head with the body.

CHAPTER XIV.

MINNIE'S WORK

PROGRESSED finely. The girls in each home so planned, that, after the necessary household cares were over, they had time for considerable other business; they continuing to keep day-boarders (gentlemen) a number at least equal to themselves, sometimes more. This kept up sort of a balance between the two sexes, magnetically, holding the young men back from questionable places of recreation, and saving the girls from that isolation so common to sewing-girls.

Commencing with two homes and ten girls, she had enlarged the number till there were four homes in that place; and she had added, beside, one girl to each home, and to one of them two; so there were twenty-five girls there who had been counted lost, who were earning an honest living, and as many more in other places; and beside these there were ten others, or, rather, ten that had been in these homes till they had been somewhat tested as to being in earnest in their efforts, who had been placed by Minnie, where they could become skilled in the different trades pertaining to woman's work; and others had taken their places in the homes: sixty

in all, besides two who had married, and gone to the Far West.

"And this in one year," Minnie said to me one day, her eyes sparkling with delight at the thought; "sixty-two in one year; at the same rate, ten years would give six hundred and twenty. That for my efforts; while the others, many of them, will have become helpers long before that time."

I smiled on her enthusiasm, and was glad with her; and yet, somehow, I rejoiced with trembling, for I felt as though they were only succeeding because the public, the great Christian public, did not know their past. I was well aware, that should they join the church, and consent to be watched and patronized, being exceedingly humble and submissive, grateful for all the critical care that would be gratuitously bestowed, then they might be permitted to live if they could support themselves.

But that they would be allowed to retain their independence, their self-respect, I knew could not be; and I knew further, that these girls would accept no such position, and there would be nothing for them but to go back to their old lives.

And even if they would accept all this watching, all this criticism, how were they to live? Would men dare to face the world, and continue to board with them? Would they continue to treat them with the deference and respect that they now accorded them publicly? Would those men, who now went with them openly to places of amusement, continue to do so? would they give them their sewing and whatever other work they could furnish, to aid them in securing an honest livelihood?

They would not dare; and why? Because of those virtuous women who rule society openly. Such women know that men visit these women secretly, and they will not discard them for that; but the *woman*, she must be ostracised. Why are these things so? There is a reason why, but I could not see it then; I only knew that it was so.

The next time Mr. Rockman came, I told him what Minnie had said, and my feelings upon the subject.

"Minnie is benefiting herself, but is doing the world no real good," was his reply.

"What do you mean?" I asked in astonishment.

"I mean just what I say, madam."

"Doing no good! Do you intend to say that these girls are no better off than when living a life of shame?"

"These particular girls may be, but it is only robbing Peter to pay Paul."

I looked at him in a dazed sort of way; for I began to get a faint glimpse of his meaning, and was not ready to admit the conclusion that must come if I accepted his premises.

"The human family is one," he continued, "and its interests are one, though people as yet are not big enough, — have not grown to the condition in which they can see this. That, then, which lifts one up at the expense of pulling another down is no real benefit."

"But I can not see," I said, "how lifting these girls out of their degradation is going to pull others in."

"It need not, if society were not constructed upon

the see-saw principle. I suppose you know what teetering is; have put a board across a log or through the fence, and sitting on one end, with a playmate on the other, have balanced up and down."

"Of course I have; was there ever a child who did not do this some time in the course of their childhood?" and I laughed as I said it at the simpleness of the illustration.

"Yes, it is simple," he remarked, "so simple that you know that it is utterly impossible for one end of the board to rise higher than that upon which it rests across at the center, without the opposite end going down just as far. Society is constructed upon the same principle: only they have loaded one end of the board so heavy that it is all of the time down; this brings the opposite end up, and it is so high that those upon it can not stay there only as every inch is filled till there can be no sliding; this forces those at the lower end to bear the weight of all above them; and it is so great that the lower end keeps sinking deeper and deeper into the mud, while those above rest more and more wholly upon those upon it.

"This being true, no one can manage to crawl up without crowding some one else down. They may not see who it is, may not see the connection between another's fall and their elevation; but it exists nevertheless.

"I do not see, then, as anybody can do any real good," I said, with a despairing sob, a sort of choking, which nearly took my breath.

"The only real good, as I said of Minnie, is to ourselves; it is educational. We try to do good

under the present order of things, and, when we find that we can not, then if we have within us the persevering good, if we do not become weary in our efforts at well-doing, we turn our attention to the principle upon which a better order of things can be constructed, a ladder or stairway upon which the angels can descend, and mortals ascend, without one interfering with another."

"But how is the present order to be changed for another?" I asked. "I, for my part, can not see how it can be done when we are so connected one with another, that it takes all our strength to keep ourselves and those others from falling."

"Fall, if there is no other way to get out; even if the whole fabric tumbles in consequence. I know that parents suffer, that children suffer, and that we are counted cruel if we dare to take a step which causes them suffering; and as we love our reputation too well to part with it, and are too selfish to want *our* friends to suffer, we keep on in the same old track. But he that loveth father or mother, wife or children, more than the truth, can not enter into the enjoyment of the blessings which Truth has in store for those who follow in her footsteps."

"Too selfish to permit our friends to suffer," I repeated, my mind fastening only upon that point: "I thought it was self-denial when we refrained from doing what we desired to do, on the account of others."

"It may be that, madam; or it may be the most abject selfishness or cowardice."

"If you will please, uncle, to explain this to me so

that I can understand just what you mean, I shall be very much obliged," I said. I did this because I had learned from experience that he generally knew what he was saying, and, at the same time, I could not in the least see how it could be possible that self-denial could be selfishness; so I put the question to him in as humble and deferential a manner as possible.

He laughed in his peculiar manner, and said, "Certainly uncle will please to do that very thing; and he will take the teeter — the board across the fence — as an illustration. We will first imagine the board to be a hundred times as long, and a hundred times as wide, and the fence correspondingly high; and the whole so inclosed that there was no getting away unless the wall is broken down, scaled, or a hole made through it."

I interrupted him with, "You have made a wonderful supposition now."

"Well, it is a true one so far as its analogy to the present structure of society is concerned," he replied, "for we are in just that condition. Let us look now at our supposed case. All along the bottom line are weak ones and strong ones; and this is true all the way up. All along the bottom line are noble hearts of manhood and trusting hearts of womanhood, as well as selfish ones of each class; and this is also true all the way up.

"All along the bottom line are those who are, who must be, crushed by the pressure; and this, too, is more or less true all the way up; for there is side pressure as well as the pressure from above. Now look at them; see them squirm. What a wriggling mass!

They can not help it; in their child's play, in their ignorance, they have got themselves into this condition, and they can not get out.

"'If I could make a hole in that wall, I could get out of this; and, if I did not have to use my strength to keep my wife and children from being crushed, I could do it,' is the conclusion arrived at by those who stop to consider the situation.

"The selfish man would say, 'Well, I can't stand this: I am going to make a hole in that wall, or jump over it;' and regardless of wife, children, or any thing else, he does so; but wife and children are crushed.

"His neighbor says, 'What a selfish man! I would die before I would do that: if we must perish, dear wife, we will all die together.'

"Here we have a selfish man, and a generous, self-sacrificing man, as we find them at one standpoint. And we will now take a couple from another standpoint; and we shall find, that, so far as immediate acts are concerned, their positions are reversed: the generous, self-denying man doing what the selfish one did in the other case, and the selfish one acting apparently from the plane of self-denial.

"The selfish man says, 'If I could only turn my strength against that wall, I could beat it down, and then these people could get out. But there would be a terrible rush, and many would be crushed. Could I be certain that I could take my wife and children with me, or that I should not lose my own life in the attempt, I would do it; but, as it is now, there is too much risk; and, beside, if I use my strength

to batter down that wall, I can not use it for the comfort of my family, and people will say that I am only selfish in my efforts; and I guess I will stay where I am; but I really wish somebody would do that work, would open a way to escape from this.'

"Poor, weak, selfish coward that he is! and yet he flatters himself with the terms, 'duty, self-denial.' His duty is staying by his family *because* he prefers to work for them, rather than lose his good name; his self-denial consists in saving his own life, refusing even the risk of losing it, though he sees that he might save the lives of hundreds by so doing. The fact of having more light on the subject, the fact of seeing, of feeling all this, is what changes the character of his acts. Has 'uncle' made it plain so far?"

"Uncle has made it plain;" I said, "and he does not need to carry out the illustration, for I can understand now, how that which would look like selfishness to another might in reality be the grandest self-denial, the grandest benevolence; and I never before saw so plainly the meaning of the declaration, 'He that loveth father or mother, wife or children, more than Me, is not worthy of me.'"

He made no comment; and I continued, "Do you think it would be well to tell Minnie what you have told me?"

"No: let her work at the problem a little longer in her own way. The Lord of hosts is preparing a goodly number to blow down the walls of Jericho; and Rahab the harlot must do her share."

"I hope, Mr. Rockman, you do not call Minnie a harlot."

"*Mr.* Rockman does not; but the world has counted her one, and would now did it know all; while many of those that she is trying to save have really been such. Minnie is of the household of faith, for she has actually protected the spies, myself and Rose; and, more, she has faith that she can save herself, and those that she is gathering from among society's doomed ones, or she would never attempt it."

"Uncle, do you really live and move and have your being in the Bible?" I asked.

"Got off your stilts, have you, and can call me uncle again? No, madam, I do not, but I seem to have a great deal of it treasured up, ready for use; and it is in me, instead of my being in it. That it vitalizes and moves me, I do not question; but it does not surround, envelop me."

"You say, 'Minnie believes, has faith, that she can save herself and those with her;' and you said a while since that she was doing no 'real good to the world.' I can not quite understand in what particular sense you mean this."

"I thought I explained the principles involved," he replied.

"Yes, but I want the particular application."

"Ah, you do? Well, do you suppose there is any more sewing or washing done now, than there was one year ago?"

"I do not think there is," I replied.

"Are there any more men who want board, in proportion to those who depend upon that method of getting a livelihood?"

"I suppose not," I was forced to admit, though I could but see that he was making me answer my own question.

"Are the influences that tend to crush woman any less, — the libertine any less determined to secure his victim; parents who are rich and proud any more willing that their sons should marry poor girls; or are ambitious, unprincipled young men any more willing to marry poor but worthy or really lovely girls, — than they were one year ago?"

"I can not see, uncle, that there has been any change in that respect," I said.

"One more question, and then I will make the application if you wish; or you may do so yourself," he said. "Has woman's heart, woman's nature, changed in any particular respect? does she hunger less for love? or is she any less liable to trust where she loves?"

I only shook my head, and he continued, "Then we have the same material to work upon, the same general relations one to another, and the same force to be expended; only the particular relations have changed. Sixty girls have stepped out of the range of these forces, and are doing the work that supported, that went to aid others in feeding and clothing themselves. There is no more work to be done than before.

"No particular sixty girls are deprived of all their means of support; but there is a greater pressure brought to bear upon a large number; and, through this extra pressure, at least sixty will be thrown so much more directly under the influences that made the other sixty what they were, that these will take their places."

"O God!" I groaned, burying my face in my hands, "who shall deliver us from this state of things?"

"God manifest in the flesh," he replied.

"God manifest in the flesh! I have heard that old, old story long enough. We are told that God was manifest in the flesh more than eighteen hundred years ago, and the world is not saved; we are not even taught to expect salvation for the masses, but only for ourselves and a chosen few," I said bitterly.

"All do not teach that: some claim salvation for all," he said.

"Not here; not of the body, not from the evils of this present condition; we are only taught to endure, to be patient, to trust. I want a present salvation, one that will take hold of the whole people, and lift them up."

"And God wants them to grow up, instead of being lifted up. Those who are lifted up must be held up; while those who grow to the same height can stand alone, and, at the same time, aid those who are growing. Poor child, groan away; they are growing pains. St. Paul says that 'the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed' — where? not in Jesus, but '*in us*.'"

"More Bible," I repeated in the same bitter spirit.

"Yes, wormwood and gall for you to drink, while in your present state of mind; but it is Bible that tells where God must be manifest in the flesh in order to salvation, — in us, in the race; and we must grow ere we are large enough to manifest a saving degree thereof."

"But what of those who not get large enough in this life?" I asked.

"God will take care of them; and there is room enough in the universe for them to grow, and time enough in eternity in which to grow," was his reply.

"But that will not bring the redemption of the body, that Paul speaks of," I said.

"I do not see why it will not, if we grow in knowledge till we can resume and take care of them, little woman."

"Only God can give us that power."

"And that is just what I am talking about, — God manifest in the flesh. If we grow till we can hold enough of God to enable us to re-clothe ourselves in the flesh, would not God be manifest in the flesh, our flesh, to salvation?"

"Oh, dear! you are so metaphysical! no, not exactly that, for you make things plain enough; but it takes so long to bring about the result, that one gets tired of waiting," I said.

"If you can find a quicker way, do not wait; I would not." He said this with such provoking calmness, that, to my impatient spirit, it was like pouring oil on fire; and, to avoid the storm that I felt rising, I turned and left him.

Rebellious, was I? I know it; and I am not wholly cured of that fault yet; but I am beginning to learn that there is wisdom at the helm, a wisdom directing things, that is greater than mine.

When I have fully grown to this, when the lesson is learned, then perhaps God can so manifest himself through me as to accomplish what, or a portion of what, I so earnestly desire.

CHAPTER XV.

LOVE'S CONFLICT.

PERHAPS, by this time, the reader would like to hear something more of the Rev. Arthur Berrian. The night that I left my home, and stole away like the guilty thing I was *not*, I had intended leaving a note for the minister, telling him that it would be of no use to try to learn where I had gone, but, upon further thought, had decided that it would look like presuming that he felt quite an interest in me: so I did nothing of the kind.

Neither did I leave any clew by means of which he could trace me; and the first thing I did after reaching Rose, Minnie, and the others, was to impress upon them the absolute necessity of holding no communication whatever with any one in B——; "for," said I, "if you do, Robert Crandall will be sure to trace us."

I had been there but a few weeks, when Rockman received a letter from Mr. Berrian, inquiring how things prospered, and asked if I was with them; saying that I had left B——, and he presumed I was aiding in carrying out the good work that had been planned. Rockman did not reply then; but, having occasion to go to an adjoining town a few weeks afterward, he replied from there, saying,—

"Your letter has reached me, sir, but I am alone. I know where the others are, and the work they have undertaken is prospering; but you know, sir, what the prejudices of society are, and you know also that there is one at least, whose malice would lead him to pursue them to the death; therefore, though appreciating your kindness, I know that I speak their sentiments when I beg that you will leave us all entirely alone."

Months elapsed before we heard any thing further, and I had concluded that he had given us up; but I was mistaken. He had heard something said, it seemed, when away from home, that, in connection with what he knew of us, led him to believe related to us. As near as I could learn, it must have been one of our boarders, who, while on a visit home, had entered into conversation with a friend about his business, and was trying to persuade the friend to return with him, and among the inducements offered spoke of his boarding-place, and mentioned a name which Mr. Berrian only partially understood, and yet, taken in connection with what else he heard, he decided to be Morris.

Knowing what Minnie Morris was trying to do, he made another effort to learn where I was, and this time he wrote to her. She did not reply. A few weeks after, he wrote to Rose with the same result; and in each letter he inquired for me.

"He is in love with you," said Minnie. I laughed at the supposition, but will confess that I had half suspected as much, and that it made my heart beat more quickly to have my suspicions thus strengthened.

A month or six weeks more elapsed, and I received one myself. I did as the others had, took no notice of it. But he was not to be put off thus. In less than a month I received another; and in this he said, —

"I am determined to find you, if I have to write to every post-office in the United States. I have written the postmaster, that, if this is taken out, to let me know immediately: so if you are there I shall know it, and, if I do not get a reply in a reasonable length of time, I shall come myself."

"Love is more persevering than hate," was my comment when I read this; for I no longer had any doubt of his love. I had suspected it before; I knew it now. How was it with myself, do you ask? Ah, there was where the difficulty lay. I loved him so well, I felt that I had rather die than bring the shadow of reproach upon him.

But what should I do now? Could I stay and meet him? for if he came to the place he would be certain to find me. If I did not write he would come; and if I did, and forbade it, would he heed my commands? I felt that he would not. Then my mind went to Robert Crandall. I thought of all that he had done, of the respect in which he was held by the world, of the malice which had prompted him to misrepresent and defame me under pretense of caring for the morals of society. I thought how but for this I might have remained in B——, and have accepted the love that I so hungered for, without the danger of blighting the usefulness of him I loved: I thought of all this, till, if there

was ever murder in a human heart, there was in mine.

True, had Robert Crandall been present, and in my power, I could not have carried out the feeling: I had neither the nerve nor the courage; but, could I have seen him dead at my feet, I should have rejoiced. Then I recoiled from myself as the thought of Mr. Berrian, of Arthur, came to me. What would he think of such wickedness? Was I worthy of a true man's love, of the love of an earnest Christian man, if such feelings could find place in my heart?

No, I was not; and it was well, perhaps, that circumstances had shown me this: otherwise I should never have known how wicked I was. And yet I might have known it; for had I not turned with impatience, if not with contempt, from what seemed to me a too constant reference to the Bible? But why should I see this now as wickedness, hardness of heart, any more than at any previous time? was it because I was so in love with Mr. Berrian that I condemned myself from what I thought would be his standpoint of judgment?

My pride rebelled at this: I would be myself or nothing; and thus the conflict went on through the livelong night, and in the morning I was no better prepared to take a definite step in any direction, than before. However, I must do something; and in my desperation I dashed off the following note: —

MR. BERRIAN.

Rev. Sir, — I am fully conscious of the honor you do me in the interest you take in my whereabouts, and as conscious that a further acquaintance can be of no benefit to either of us. The Hon. Mr. Crandall drove me from B——, and the Rev. Mr. Berrian now drives me from this place. You can come if you choose; but I shall not be here, neither shall I leave any clew by means of which I can be found.

Respectfully yours,

———.

"There!" said I to myself as I sealed and directed it, "I guess that will settle the matter."

But the difficulty was not over yet. I had said that I would leave the place, and I intended to do so; but where should I go? Could I get things settled so as to leave before he would get there? I was haggard with the loss of sleep, and the effect of the mental struggle through which I had passed, I was going to say; but that would not have been the truth, for it was not yet over. I saw this as I looked in my glass, and said to myself, "A pretty looking object I would be for Mr. Berrian to see now."

Rockman came in soon after, and, as he saw me, started back in surprise. "What is the matter, woman? have you been struggling with fiends of darkness? the grip of old Apollyon himself could not make you look worse!" he exclaimed.

I had not intended to say a thing about the matter to any of them; but somehow I was not myself. A something, I know not what, constrained me to act contrary to my intentions, and I placed Mr. Berrian's letter in his hands.

He read it, looked at me, and then read it again, and finally said, —

"Why should this distress you?"

I was not prepared to tell him why, and I blushed scarlet.

"Lest haply ye be found fighting against God," he repeated.

I was about to burst forth with an indignant protest against this persistent quotation of Scripture to meet every case that came up; but the remembrance of what I had suffered the night previous calmed me, and I simply asked, "What do you mean by that?"

"I mean that love, real honest love, is God, and woe to those who crucify him! Love has taken possession of your heart; and you are determined to cast out the heavenly guest."

"True love will never knowingly bring shame to its object," I replied.

"Oh! there is where you have given the Devil place, is it? What would you think of the man, who, having won a woman's love and confidence, would murder her, because he so loved her that he would save her from disgrace?"

"I can not see what bearing that question has upon this," I said.

"Stop," said he sternly. "You may deceive yourself in your pride, but you can not deceive me. You do see the bearing of my question: you know that Arthur Berrian loves you; and you further know, that, to such a nature as his, love is no light thing. You love him also, and you are trying to kill his love, to render it hopeless, and at the same time endeavoring to crush your own heart, — a double murder; and all because you are too proud to allow him to decide whether he is strong enough to let your love cost him something.

"If you could feel, that, in the eyes of the world, you could bring honor to the man you love, there would be no difficulty. You pay small compliment to his manhood, when you thus practically say that he is not strong enough to meet and battle down unjust reproach. Oh, pride, pride, what a subtle devil thou art!"

I can not describe the contending feelings that possessed me while he was speaking; and I made no reply to this outburst. Presently he continued, —

"Fight away; you need the discipline; God's chosen ones must be tried as by fire, and you will find yourself at length."

I looked at him inquiringly.

"Yes," he repeated, "you will find yourself; and then you will overcome the world, will cast it out, and its smile or its frown will no longer influence your decisions. What if the world does demand that a minister's wife should be above reproach? does he serve the world, or God? Was the Master who overcame the world free from its reproach? His heart has gone out to you, yours has responded; and through that double voice God has spoken, and declared that ye are one: will you, at the world's command, try to put asunder what God hath joined?

"No man, no woman, can bless the world till, like Jesus, they are lifted above it; hold themselves, or are held by the power of God, and their faith in him; are thus held where they can draw the world upward and" —

"But I am not fit to be a minister's wife," I burst forth.

"Do you know what he wants better than he does?

'If you tarry till you're better,
You will never come at all.'

"So says the hymn of invitation, and it tells the truth. When God sends the blessing of a great love to the human soul, it has no right to reject the gift."

"One would think you were pleading for yourself, you talk so earnestly," I said at length.

"That is because I love my neighbor as myself," he replied; and just then the door-bell rang.

"I will go," he said, "and give you time to put on a company face: you do not want to meet any one with such a dubious-looking countenance as that."

I left him to do as he suggested, while I went and washed my face and hands, brushed my hair, and tried to bring back my natural look; for, as before said, I was haggard with the loss of sleep, and with the mental struggle that was upon me. When I returned to learn who had called, I was confronted with the Rev. Mr. Berrian himself. He came quickly forward with the assurance of a man who loves, and feels that he is beloved. After getting his note announcing his determination to find me at all hazards, the thought of meeting him had almost taken my breath; but my sense of personal right, when once roused, was very strong; so that instead of being confused, flustered, at this unexpected meeting, I was politely self-possessed.

"I replied to your letter, Mr. Berrian," I said as soon as we had exchanged greetings, "but I hardly think you could have received it as soon as this."

The coolness of my manner did not disturb him in the least; or, if so, he did not show it, but replied, —

"No: I decided not to wait, but started immediately upon receiving the postmaster's dispatch."

"Dispatch! he telegraphed, then?"

"Yes: did you suppose that I should tolerate any unnecessary delay when I had once decided that a thing must be done? neither was I desirous of raising any needless obstacles, so I dodged your letter; for, being ignorant of its commands, I could not be censured if I disobeyed them. Why did you steal away like a thief in the night, and thus spoil my well-laid plans?"

"I left," I replied, "because I did not wish to raise a conflict between you and your people."

"How, in what way, would you be likely to do that?" he asked.

"Because of being placed in a false position. That wretch, Crandall, had scattered his slime among them, so prejudicing them against me that I could feel it in the very air, as I walked the streets; and I thought I knew you well enough to be assured that you would defend the right at all hazards, so I took myself out of the way."

"Thanks, fair lady, for your good opinion of me; and yet I wish it had not been quite so good, in one particular at least."

"How?" I asked in surprise.

"One's intentions, motives, may be good, and pur-

pose to do, strong; but the power to execute may be weak. It seems that you had so much confidence in my ability that you thought I needed no assistance, so left me to fight the battle alone."

"You have placed the subject before me in a new light, I will acknowledge," I said; "but I see no reason why there need to have been a conflict after my leaving."

He smiled, and replied, "You will pardon me, please, if I point out what seems to me as evidence of quite a different estimate of my humble self than you professed a short time since; and I am sorry to find that you really have so poor an opinion of me."

"Poor opinion of you!" I repeated in a tone that I had not intended, but which would have betrayed to the most careless observer the state of my feelings toward him. The look he gave me told me what I had done.

"Yes," he replied without seeming to notice my confusion: "had the case been reversed, would you have kept silent, and have heard me unjustly blamed? I know that you would not; you would defend the absent when wronged, no matter who it might be: and yet, though declaring that you knew I would stand by the right, you coolly tell me, that, if you left, there would be no necessity for a conflict between my people and myself."

"I certainly never thought of it in that light," I said at length; "I supposed, if I left, the subject would be dropped, and nothing further said about it."

A hearty laugh was his first response to this, and

then, "Little you knew of the world as found in the church, if you imagined that so rich a bit of scandal would be dropped so readily; people are too hungry for a sensation for that."

Rockman had sat quietly by, making no comment, but now he remarked, "Your leaving was taken as conclusive evidence of guilt; and Mr. Berrian had so much the harder task to defend you."

"They might come to what conclusions they chose about me, if"— I stopped in confusion; for, in my impatience at being defeated with my own weapons, I was on the point of making an admission that I did not wish to.

"You did not care if they would only let me alone," he said, finishing the sentence for me. "Thanks for that admission; it opens the way for me to hope that you will allow me to take the same interest in yourself, only with this difference: instead of running away to induce them to let you alone, I will stand my ground; and they shall let you alone, so far as this or any other scandal is concerned, or I will make them give a reason why."

"How can you do your people any good," I persisted, "if you so arouse their prejudices that they will not listen to you?"

"And how can I do them any good, if I allow a cruel wrong to go unrebuked because I am too weak or too cowardly to speak?" he asked in reply.

"It is of no use for me to contend with you two," I said, "for, what one can not think of, the other will."

"I am glad to hear that," said he, "for it embold-

ens me to make a proposition to which I feared you would not give your consent; but, if you acknowledge that it is of no use for you to contend further, it gives me a hope that you will go back to B—— with me, and help me to fight this battle to the end."

"Oh, I can not!" I said.

"I want you to go as my wife," he continued without heeding my remark. "As such, people will know that I believe in you; and together we may be able to unearth this man Crandall, to show him in his true character to those who now believe in him, and condemn an innocent woman because she has befriended his victims."

He had used the best argument that he could have brought to bear. I do not mean that the simple fact of his proposing to try and show Crandall's real character would have induced me to marry him or any one else, or that I would have married one man for the purpose of being revenged upon another. No such motive could have influenced me for a moment where love was wanting; but the reader will remember that I loved Arthur Berrian, and that he loved me; and they will remember, further, that Robert Crandall, in casting suspicions upon my character, had placed me in a position, that the more I loved Arthur Berrian, the more reason it furnished me for refusing to marry him, judging of pure love, self-sacrificing love, from the standpoint I did.

I felt that he was a useful man, and that, to do the good of which he was capable, his reputation, and that of all connected with him, should be stainless. It would be my happiness to be his wife, but my happiness must not come between him and the good that he might do. But if I could secure my own happiness, and, in so doing, aid him in accomplishing greater good, could aid him in unmasking a most consummate hypocrite, it placed the subject in so different a light, that my objections were robbed of all their weight.

Still I would not yield readily: so I asked, "Have you reason to think that you can do that?"

"With your aid I think I can."

"And if you should fail?"

"I shall have saved myself the worse failure of losing my self-respect because I did not try. Do you not see," he continued, "that it is a test of strength between my congregation and myself? Shall I be able to lead them beyond the sphere of narrow prejudice, to the open sunlight of fearless investigation? or shall I permit them to hold me to their present standard?

"Now, if I can prove to them that this man, who pretends to have such an interest in the moral welfare of the community, is a hypocrite, and that those acts which they look upon as evidence of the blackest of crimes were only prompted by the human love, the Christian charity, which, if more were exercised, the world would be the better for it, then I have gained an advantage which will enable me to lead them into fields of open conflict with the prevailing sins of the age: otherwise I shall show that I am not strong enough to lead, and must be content to serve."

"You desire to test your strength?" I said.

"I am called upon to test my strength; and, as you have been made the occasion, I want you to aid me by coming to my side, instead of standing off like a dead weight with a long string attached."

I laughed at the quaintness of the illustration, and asked, "Why not show your valor, test your strength, by cutting the string, and letting the dead weight go?"

"Because my heart is with the dead weight, and refuses to return to me; and a heartless minister is of but little account," was his prompt response.

"But I am not a Christian," I persisted. "I do not believe in the divinity of Jesus, nor in the infallibility of the Bible; and a pretty minister's wife I would make."

"Tell me that you do not believe in the divinity of the love he manifested, of the sweet charity that he was ever showing toward the weak, the unfortunate, the erring ones who thronged his path; tell me that your heart does not respond to these characteristics of his nature; and tell me, further, that you do not love me, can not return my love; tell me all this," said he, looking at me with a gaze that held me, "and then I will urge no more."

"I did not mean to say that I had no sympathy with the character of Jesus," I replied.

"Well, tell me that you do not love me, then, and I will urge no further."

I was silent. Mr. Rockman left the room; and he came close to my side, took my hands in his, and said, "Do not, oh! do not, with your false reasoning, so

wrong yourself and me as to refuse what I ask! We have a right to be happy, and, in being so, shall be doubly able to bless others."

I was still silent; and then he drew my head to his breast, for I had no power to resist him: he had conquered.

When he returned to B—— the following day, he carried with him my promise to be his in three months; and thus ended my attempt to run away from love, from duty, because the path that I was called to walk in must be cleared to let in the sunshine.

Minnie and Rose were jubilant, and Rockman behaved more like a boy of fifteen than any thing else; while I, now that I felt I might, listened hourly to the music with which the singing birds of gladness were filling my soul.

My head and my heart were reconciled, and I was more than glad, — I was happy.

Yes, I was happy; and I felt like modifying the poet's words, and making them my own, for —

"Such an aurora of halo resplendent
Seemed to the world and the universe given,
That earth was enwrapped in a glory transcendent
Close in the tender embraces of heaven."

"O love, creating love! thou sweet connecting link
Between the human and divine! through thee
The poet evermore walks in a world elysian,
And life becomes a sanctity, and earth a sacred shrine."

CHAPTER XVI.

KEYS AND FINGERBOARDS.

DON'T believe it."

Arthur came to visit me once during his probation; and such were the words he used one day, after Minnie had been discussing her plans, telling her experiences, &c.

He had been sitting as if in thought for some minutes after she left, and I was surprised to hear him speak out so abruptly.

"Don't believe what?" I asked.

"In the doctrine of total depravity."

"Be careful, sir, or you will lose your ministerial caste, and I shall be blamed for it," I laughingly replied.

He looked at me a moment, and then said, "What put that idea into your head?"

"What idea? I expressed two, I believe."

"That you could be blamed for any honest conclusion to which experience or investigation might lead me."

"Simply because 'Eve did it' has become ingrained into the very life of the race; so I guess the idea got there without being put in; it came as Topsy did; it growed."

"Suppose I should tell you that you really are at the bottom of my heterodoxy, little woman."

"I should say, sir, that I had not tried to exert any such influence over you, but had sought to conform my religious views to yours."

He looked up archly. "You haven't promised to obey me yet, have you?"

"Indeed I have not; neither do I intend to. I mean to have the ceremony performed by one who will leave that part out, sir."

"We shall see, we shall see how that will be; and, to test you, I am going to lay a command upon you now; and I want you to promise to obey, and implicitly too."

I was going to retort playfully, but he looked so serious that I only asked, "What is it?"

"No, I will not command, but rather entreat, that you will never *try* to conform to my religious views again. I want a woman who thinks for herself, and not one who only reflects my ideas."

"Ah, indeed, my good sir! that sounds nicely," I said, my spirit of mirth returning; "but you hardly acted upon it when you was here before. You strove hard enough to make me think as you did."

"So I did, and so I shall continue to do, my dear; but you were not trying to think as I did: you were trying right the reverse, and only yielded when convinced."

"I understand you now," I said; "and I will make the promise; so look out for some mighty conflicts, and it may sometimes be yourself that will be convinced."

"And, when I am, I shall yield, and be happy in so doing; but I have not told you in what sense you have been the means of changing some of my ideas. There is something in your presence that acts, well, I will say, as a key to my intellect, unlocking chambers of thought before unexplored. It seems as though my being was quickened with a new life, a new light."

"I hope the latter will not prove an *ignis fatuus*," I said.

"No danger; it is a living, not a dead, element from which it springs, for it brings life with it. And, as to this total depravity doctrine, how can I believe it, when I see such a woman as Miss Morris, one whom the world counts as degraded, and the church looks upon as belonging to the vilest of the vile, — when I see her planning and sacrificing for the good of others with an earnestness that puts my efforts to the blush?"

"Is there not a passage of Scripture," I asked, "that speaks of being ignorant of Christ's righteousness, and going about to establish one of our own?"

"That may be true in some cases, but not in this," he replied. "She is not thinking of herself, of gaining God's favor, or of evading his anger: these motives do not seem to influence her at all; but simply to do good for the love of doing so, to bless and save others, is her object."

"I believe you are right in your estimate of Minnie," I said; "and, as you repudiate the doctrine of total depravity, I will give you some insight into my ideas upon nature's laws."

"I really wish you would," he replied.

"You, sir, have called my influence upon you a key. I believe that nature's protests, as expressed through the human soul, are nature's prophecies."

"How is that?" he asked.

"I believe that nature's protests are nature's prophecies; to wit, nature protests against the violation of her laws; she does this in various ways, but it is sure to come in some form. Now, would this continue to be done from generation to generation, and from age to age, if such protests were of no use? — if it were not a declaration that we have the innate power to fulfill, and a prophecy that this power will yet be so unfolded that the knowledge will come through which the power can and will be applied."

He opened his blue eyes wider and wider as I proceeded; and, when I ceased, he burst into a hearty laugh. I could not quite see what I had said that was laughable; and I think my countenance must have expressed as much, for he hastened to say, —

"A nice piece of work you would make, trying to conform to some one else's religious views, with such clear, well-defined ideas of your own; but please go on, and I will try and not be so rude again."

"I do not know, sir, as I can say any more now; for you have scattered my ideas as completely as the report of a pistol would a flock of birds."

"I suppose I shall have to wait, then, till they collect again; but you may be sure that I shall be on the watch."

"Yes," I added, "I have one thought left; nature's promptings are nature's fingerboards, pointing the way to the fulfillment of her prophecies."

"And, with such ideas, you have tried to conform to my religious views. Do you not know that your fingerboards point directly the other way, or, as the darky said to his questioner, would spoil all 'de feology' in the world?"

It was my turn to laugh as I said, "If you do not use the key, nor go as the fingerboard points, they will neither of them harm you, sir."

"But the key is self-acting; and, if the fingerboard should be of the same nature, what is a man going to do?"

"Keep entirely out of the way of both," I said.

"Ah, but I can not close the chambers of thought that have been unlocked; I can not quench the light with which they have been illumined; and, as one of nature's promptings has led me to your side, I shall not fear to go where the next fingerboard points."

"Follow, then, at your own risk; but here comes Rockman and Rose," I said, as I ran down to meet them.

"I have a suggestion for you from Minnie, Mr. Berrian," said Rockman as soon as they were seated, "and I think it a good one."

"I shall be happy to hear it, Mr. Rockman."

"Well, we have been talking of the position you occupy in reference to Robert Crandall, and the difficulty there will be in counteracting the prejudice he has raised against our friend here; and she wished me to ask you if you had stated to any one any of the circumstances of his life as you know them from us?"

"I have not; there has been but little said to me

on the subject that he excited the people's prejudices over; and, when it has been referred to, I have simply said, that there was another side to that matter, which, when known, would put things in quite a different light; and, when questioned as to what I referred, I have replied that I should wait till I knew something more before I said any thing further than to declare that I knew the inferences that had been drawn in reference to at least one of the ladies were entirely unjust."

"Well, then, my way is clear for the suggestion. Minnie says, that, if you approve, she will prepare in substance what she knows of Robert Crandall, connecting it with Rose, herself, and aunty here, but so wording all that persons or places will not be suspected; she will make it short, put it in circular form; and you are to take them, and see that they are well distributed through your congregation, telling them that they were given you by parties that you have recently met; that they purport to be, and you have reason to believe that they are, a statement of facts."

"I will think of this," said Arthur. "Has she any particular time when she thinks that they should be circulated?"

"She thinks that the sabbath before your marriage will be the best time, and that it would be well to state that you have been informed that one or more of the parties named in the circular will be there on the following sabbath."

"Give me an hour or two to decide, and then I will tell you what I think," he said, taking his hat

and leaving the house; but, before doing so, he came around to where I was sitting, and stood at least five minutes, making no remark, but, taking a portion of my work in his hand, seemed intent upon its examination.

"Is it well done?" asked Rose.

He looked at her, then at me, smiled, and walked out of the door. I understood him. I knew that he was seeking that which he had called the key, to wit, what Swedenborg would designate as the influence of my sphere; and I can not tell you what a thrill of pleasure it gave me.

He returned in about an hour, and brought Minnie with him. We discussed the pros and cons for perhaps another hour; and then Arthur said, "We will move along in our own path, doing what we think is right; and, if occasion requires, we shall find means to defeat the enemies that rise up against us; till there is need to act, we will not plan to meet or to forestall the evil. God will take care of it."

"Perhaps you are right," said Minnie; "and any thing that I can do to put down that hypocrite will not be wanting, you may rest assured."

"And if we proceed against him in a spirit of bitterness we shall certainly fail," was his reply.

"I wish I could put away all bitterness out of my heart, and for ever, Mr. Berrian," she replied as the tears started; "but when I think of the wrongs to which thousands, yea, hundreds of thousands, of my sex are subjected, I feel sometimes as though I would like to spit wormwood and gall upon such a

condition of things, till it was sunk to the depths of hell."

"You speak strongly, Miss Morris, and I do not wonder at all that you feel these wrongs intensely; but remember that this life is not all," Arthur replied with a deep sympathy in his voice that set the tears she was endeavoring to suppress rolling in streams down her cheeks.

These were followed by choking sobs that seemed to rend her very soul. I had never seen Minnie weep before; and now it was as though the pent-up agony of years had broken through and would not be stayed. We could not help it, we all wept with her; and those tears did more to bind our hearts in one, than all else that had occurred. I resolved then and there, that, let what would come, I would under no circumstances shrink from recognizing Minnie Morris as a friend and sister; and when I told my husband of that resolve, one week after our marriage, he blessed me for it.

"It may be hard to do;" he said; "but we must overcome the world, or it will overcome us; and, when it has done this, it will bind us hand and foot, requiring the most abject submission to its commands and demands."

"The very words that Mr. Rockman used when contending with me for holding out against your love!" I exclaimed. "Not exactly the very words either; but he said that when I had found myself I would overcome the world, I would cast it out, would so renounce it that its smile or its frown would no longer influence my decisions."

"Well, I guess you have found yourself," he responded.

"I have found you," I answered, "and that is more than finding myself."

But I have digressed, have left myself and friends in tears, to tell what occurred weeks afterward. I will return now, and find that the tears have been wiped away and calmness restored.

Rockman was the first to speak. "Do you not think, Minnie, that you will yet grow strong enough to overcome all this, — to meet and defy the world, so respecting yourself that you will command the respect of others?"

"I shall never stoop to win the world's approval," she said.

"That is what I would not ask, but I fear you are doing so now."

"How?" she asked.

"By keeping your present work covered: you stoop to hide."

"Not for myself, Uncle Rockman: were only myself concerned, I would defy them all; but these others, I can not bear that they should be driven to desperation."

"And here," I said, "we find one of nature's fingerboards."

"Nature's fingerboards! what do you mean by that?" she asked.

I looked at Arthur, and he laughingly said, "She has been talking natural theology to me, and perhaps she will now explain some of it to you."

"Oh, dear! every thing is theology with a minister," said Rose.

"Give us the explanation, and never mind what they call it," said Minnie; while Rockman gave me a look that seemed to ask if I, too, had become a preacher.

"Yes, Saul is among the prophets," I replied to his look, and then tried to give them an idea of what I had meant by speaking as I did of Minnie's covered work.

"I believe, Mr. Berrian, that my theology, or a tenet of it, was that nature's promptings are nature's fingerboards pointing the way to the fulfillment of her prophecies." He bowed, and I continued, —

"Well, now to the application. You, Minnie, do not feel happy in being obliged to cover your track, to hide your past. In that unhappiness, Nature protests against a wrong; it is not necessarily a wrong in the one who conceals, but a wrong somewhere. If in the individual, it needs to come to the light to be righted; if the community ignorantly or selfishly represses the individual, making him or her hide that which should come to light, but dare not for fear of unjust condemnation, then the ignorance that thus represses honest effort should have the lamp held firmly before its face, till it sees clearly the law of justice, and becomes willing to accept the new truth, or is forced to shut its eyes.

"The wrong of ignorance must be educated; that of guilt, exposed. Nature, in protesting against secrecy, prophesies that the time will come when there will be no need of concealment; and, in the spying propensities of the race, we have the fingerboard that points the way to the fulfillment of her prophecy.

"Crime must be made so unhappy in concealment, that it gives the clew to its retreat by its very efforts to turn people's attention in another direction; and Ignorance must be made so restless lest there should be something concealed, that she must inevitably stumble upon any light that is under a bushel, and uncover it."

"Who now is quoting Scripture as an illustration?" asked Rockman.

"I am, sir: what else could you expect from one who is so completely under a minister's influence?" I replied very demurely.

This turned the laugh against him; but he only laughed too, and added, "I should think you had been taking lessons of the minister for the last ten years, by the way you talk."

"I protest against taking the credit of that," said Arthur, "for she goes beyond me in natural analysis."

"I do not see where she has got it all, then; for when I have talked with her she has always hung back, instead of going ahead. Why, she has expressed what I have been talking, and she has hitherto opposed, even better than I could have done," Rockman continued, looking as if he could not quite understand why it was so.

I looked at Mr. Berrian, and remarked, "Sometimes people swap keys."

"I wish you two people would stop talking in riddles," said Rose; "now I presume that we shall have to listen to another sermon to learn what swapping keys means."

"Never mind the keys," said Minnie: "they, no doubt, refer to those with which each unlocked the other's heart. I want to talk more about this covering-up business. I wish I could see the way clear to face the world, and defy its cruelty; for this constant fear that something will occur to bring a storm of condemnation upon us, is torture."

"Miss Morris, had you better not prepare a circular giving some of your own experiences, and the motives which prompted you to take the course you have, and be ready, if a storm begins to gather, to scatter them broadcast?"

"Thank you; I will do so, Mr. Berrian," she said.

"You need not thank me, Miss Morris: I should never have thought of it had not your desire to serve me prompted a similar suggestion," he replied.

The next morning Arthur returned to B——, saying as he left, "The next time, my darling, I shall not go alone."

"And then comes the tug of war," was my thought; but I would not, by expressing it, cast a single shadow upon his happiness. When he had gone, I pondered over the remark about the effect that my sphere had upon him, and I felt that there was more in it than a lover's fancy; for though his sphere, magnetism, or whatever it might be called, did not exactly unlock new chambers of thought for me, it seemed to sweep away the cobwebs from much that Mr. Rockman had expressed from time to time, giving me the power to see his idea so clearly, that I could put it in my own language, and tell it, as he

said, even better than he did; that is, more smoothly if not more pointedly.

As to my shrinking from the responsible position of being a minister's wife, I could not entirely avoid it; but I comforted myself as best I could with the thought of what he had said to me, —

"Be your own self; act not from what people will think, but as your nature prompts and circumstances indicate; and you will do well enough."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE STORM-CLOUD BURSTS.

"Oh, then, instead of laurel crown
The world intwined a thorny band,
And on my forehead pressed it down
With heavy hand;
And looks that used to warm me froze."

A. COOPER, *Bristol.*

MINNIE prepared her circular, went to B——, found an obscure job-printer who would do the work and say nothing about it, and had as many struck off as she thought she would need, then returned to find that she had been none too soon in doing so.

One of the girls had been recognized upon the street the day before, and had been obliged to use the utmost caution to prevent being followed home; and this by a man who knew Minnie and at least three of the girls well. "I am glad you came in the night," she said to Minnie; "for he was really in love with Julia Shaw; and, as we used to be together, he will think we are now, and he will be on the watch."

"Did she care for him?" asked Minnie.

"I thought you knew that she did not," Irene

replied. "Don't you remember that rich old fool who used to annoy us all so much when we were at the capital?"

"You don't mean that he is the man you are talking of!" exclaimed Minnie, turning pale.

"He is the very man, and I would rather have met old Splitfoot himself; the contemptible, disgusting puppy!"

Minnie sank into the nearest seat, and groaned aloud, "Great heaven! how long must we be crushed by men, the vilest and lowest of whom can go where they please if they happen to have money, while we must hide away, must steal the chance to get an honest living, or be held to what we hate?"

The girls gathered around her with white, anxious faces. "Go," she said at length, "and gather them all here: those that this wretch happens to know are here now, and the others can manage it so as to come without attracting attention; but the most of them had better come in the back way. When we are all together, then we will decide what is to be done."

I was summoned with the others; and now let the reader imagine a midnight hour, and a room with closed blinds, and so guarded that not a particle of light could reach the eyes of those without, and in that room about twenty women taking counsel together as to how they can secure bread to eat, and clothes to wear, without being subject to the lusts of the men of a Christian community.

Think of these women as holding the secrets of hundreds, yea, of thousands, who went whither they

would, and were respected, honored, because their acts were covered; think of the alternative placed before these women, of going before the public as humble suppliants, taking the place of sinners at the feet of these very men and women; think of their being obliged to do this, or be driven back to dens of shame, to the gilded hells that they loathed. Why are these things so?

Men control the staff of life, bread, or that which brings it; and woman is everywhere dependent. Men do not realize, many of them, what they are doing, I know; they do not intend to be the tyrants they are; neither do they have a true appreciation of woman and her work, of what she could do for the race if permitted to make conditions for herself. They do not, they can not as yet, see this; but the results of the present order of things are none the less to be deplored, because people are blind to causes, and deal unforgivingly with effects.

But the night waned, and each one of this company must be in their respective places in the morning; and what should be done?

Minnie had caught the spirit of the idea advanced by Rockman, — that of overcoming the world by a firm self-respect, and a refusal to obey its dictates, or abide by its decisions. She tried to impress the girls with this idea, and to inspire them with the hope that there was a possibility of demanding, and finally obtaining, what they might plead for in vain; to wit, the respect of the public.

"We can at least retain our own," said she, "by this course; while if we yield to their demands, or

allow ourselves to be driven back to where we were before, we can not do even that."

Some of the girls were silently defiant, and others wept and cursed by turns; wept as they thought of their condition, and then cursed the injustice that would push them from the footing they had obtained.

"I will never again walk with bowed head and shame-facedness before a hypocritical society!" exclaimed Dora Fenn. "Nor I, nor I, nor I," was repeated from lip to lip.

"I would not mind the old life so much," said Helen Myres, "if I never had to receive company that was repulsive to me, or when I did not wish it."

"That is not a curse to which the Magdalen alone has to submit," I remarked.

"You have been married, and your life as a wife was not a happy one?" said Minnie.

"It was not," I replied. "It is what I never like to speak of, and would forget if I could; but, had the man who called me wife lived, I should not have been here now. He was, to all appearance, all that a woman could desire, — fine-looking, affable, gentlemanly; and, though I sometimes felt a sense of shrinking while in his presence, I attributed it to maidenly modesty. I was young, too young to marry; but my parents desired it, and I, without knowing what love meant, consented to become a wife.

"It did not take long to open my eyes to what I had done; but I thought it was woman's fate, and that it was my duty to submit in silence. I did so, trying to do the best I could; but Heaven was kinder

to me than mortals, and death broke the bonds for me."

I had never said as much before; but now my sympathy for these girls drew from me what I should otherwise have continued to keep concealed within my own breast.

Minnie had not yet told them of the circulars, for she did not wish to annoy them with the thought that there might be a need for them; but now she spoke of this, and explained her idea in reference to their use, and then said, —

"We call ourselves a band of sisters, and, let what will come, I will never forsake you; so long as I have a dollar you shall share it. How many of you feel like abiding by this compact?"

There was not a dissenting voice. "Clasp hands, then," she continued. All did this, even to Rose, though she did not necessarily belong to them. I looked on with tearful eyes, and said, "I will do all I can consistent with my duties elsewhere."

Minnie smiled sadly, and said, "Marriage is our natural enemy, and you can not serve two masters. We are bound together in the bonds of affliction; will those who have clasped hands rise?" They did so; and she stepped into the middle of the room, telling them to complete the circle around her.

"My sisters, my children, we are henceforth and inseparably one; and may God in heaven help us, for mankind will not!" They all bowed their heads as if receiving a benediction; and then, when they were reseated, she unfolded her plans.

"We will never humble ourselves to what society

demands," she said; "but we will make it impossible for them to say with truth that we are deceiving them. I have set forth in this circular our past; declaring that we were not alone to blame, and that we are making an honest effort to lead a life of rectitude. I have alluded to the feeling we have about being humbled or set aside because of that for which those who aided in placing us in the condition we were are not condemned; and declared that such treatment tended to drive those who had been wronged to desperation; and asserted that we only desired the opportunity to earn an honest living, and if they would not allow this, if through the public frown our customers were driven from us, thus depriving us of the means of gaining our bread, then the sin would be upon their own heads; and God would require it at their hands.

"Now, girls, we are in danger of having the people's prejudices aroused through the influence of this degraded creature in the form of a man; this creature that any of us would die sooner than marry, and yet society accepts him, for he is a man, and has money; and I propose to forestall him with these circulars. Every minister and every minister's wife must have one; every boarder we have, and every one who furnishes us with sewing, must have one; and we will watch the effect.

"If we are utterly forsaken, or so nearly so that we see no hopes of continuing in our present work, then we will not bow to the public demand of humiliation; but we will seek a large city, establish ourselves in different parts of it, and receive such company as is agreeable to us, pledging ourselves to each other, that under no condition whatever shall a money consideration induce us to accept that which is repulsive. That kind of degradation we will never consent to. And thus we shall not be utterly crushed; for with cleanly habits, and the exclusion of liquors from our table and the house, we can remain healthy, and maintain our self-respect.

"Remember, now, this is not to be of choice, but as a last resort, when we find that a Christian society will not allow us any other resource, only as we kiss Mother Grundy's big toe, and remain content to lie at her feet. Who approves of this?"

"We will do or die; we will defeat the world by refusing their terms on either hand; we will not kneel to our equals, or to those who are beneath us, so far as the reality goes; neither will we be prostituted to the lusts of those we hate, so help us God!" was the hearty response given to Minnie's plans.

"Then let there be no more hiding after this night; let each go home as quietly as possible; and from this time forth let each go where it is necessary, without shrinking from the face of man or woman. Good-night, and let the morrow take care of itself."

The excitement that filled the place the next day was something wonderful. You would have thought, had you heard some of the people talk, that the plague had broke out in their midst, or that an earthquake was imminent. The boarders were questioned upon every corner of the street, —

"Did you know who you were boarding with?"

"Never had the least idea till this morning," was the prompt response.

"How have they behaved?"

"Like ladies: we have never seen the least thing immodest or unladylike."

"What did they tell on themselves for, the fools?"

"Some one came into town, I understand, who used to know some of them, I believe."

"Are you going to continue boarding with them?"

Different answers were given to this. Some said, "As long as they continue to behave like ladies." Others asked, "Would you drive them to desperation by withdrawing all means of support?" and still others would reply, "Not longer than till my week is up;" and one or two said, "Yes, if they will let me sleep with them."

The most of the boarders were young men, and were inclined to stand by the girls; and one of the very best among them urged Irene Bradley to marry him; but she said, "No, I will not forsake those I have pledged myself to: we are a band of sisters, and we stand or fall together."

Some ten of the young men were at work in the foundry of which the dissipated old Crœsus who had recognized Irene was proprietor; and, when he found that he was defied, his rage vented itself by demanding that those ten should board elsewhere, or be discharged. True, he had no direct right to hire or discharge any of the workmen, as he had leased the property to another for a given length of time; but the man who held the lease was financially in his power, and so was obliged to do his bidding.

He resided elsewhere, and had not been in the

place before for nearly two years; and this was why the girls had lived so long in peace. The most of the ten submitted, and changed their place of boarding; though they assured the girls that they did it of necessity, not of choice. Three of them, however, refused to yield to such arbitrary dictation, and found employment elsewhere. In three days' time, there were but seven of their twenty boarders left; and six out of the other thirteen had offered to pay the same that they had paid for board, and even more, for the privilege of coming secretly, and staying with some one of the girls once a week.

Ministers and their wives came together, and consulted as to what was to be done, and decided, that if they were only humble, repentant, it would be proper and right to stand by them; but that with the proud, independent spirit they manifested, it would only be encouraging sin to countenance them.

Some two dozen of the most pious ladies in the place called on them in a body, and told them that it was not proper for them, under the circumstances, to receive men into their homes unless accompanied by their wives or mothers, and that if they would dismiss the rest of their boarders, and would work at reasonable prices, they would furnish what work they could, and use their influence to aid them getting more elsewhere.

Men, merchants, lawyers, physicians, and others whose business gave them money to spend on pleasure, these to the number of at least a dozen, during the first ten days sent them notes through the office, or dropped them in the yard, offering them money if

they could be allowed to visit them under cover of darkness; but these notes were always so worded, that there was no certainty as to who sent them, and specified some sign by means of which they might know if their offers were accepted; and so the conflict went on.

Eben Rockman went upon the street in his old disguise, and listened to the comments made; learned the decision of the conclave of ministers and wives, heard Minnie's report of the proposition of the pious women, read the notes making offers to the girls, noted the pressure brought to bear upon the young men; and he said it not only once but dozens of times, —

"God damn this thievish Christian nation!" and, with all I saw and heard as an illustration of the general Christian character, I could not find it in my heart to reprove him; for I felt, that if some strong, determined soul did not speak, the stones beneath our feet would cry out in agony.

Minnie wrote to Mr. Berrian, telling him how things were going, and sent him some of the circulars she had distributed, and also some that she had prepared for him to use, if he should need them. This she had done from her own promptings, we not knowing of it till afterward.

The three months, that I had stipulated for had expired with the exception of one week. Arthur had secured a substitute to fill the desk for one sabbath, and had written to the minister here, that he should require his services to perform a marriage-ceremony. The sabbath before leaving B——, he had preached from these words in the morning: —

"Man looketh at the outward appearance; but God looketh at the heart;" and in the afternoon he had taken, "Judge not, that ye be not judged."

That he spoke of the deceitfulness of appearances, of the plans of the hypocrite to cast his sins upon others, of the necessity of care lest we should condemn the innocent, the reader will doubtless not need to be told. At the close of the discourse, he announced that he should be absent the following Sunday, and, that, upon his return, he should bring a wife to be the sharer of his labors among them.

"And still another subject," he said, "I wish to present; or, rather, to state, that some circular pamphlets have been sent to me recently, in reference to some facts that illustrate the text of this afternoon. These circulars do not name the parties concerned; but I have reasons to believe that they are a statement of facts. Those reasons I will give you at another time; but the circulars will be given to the brother who officiates here next sabbath, and he will hand the package to Deacon Barnes to distribute.

"I desire that you read them carefully, and, when I return, I shall have something to say in reference to them."

This excited the curiosity of the people, as he expected it would; and the next sabbath every one was desirous of getting hold of a circular, and Crandall with the others. Minnie had stated the facts, but she had so worded the entire relation, that no one, unless acquainted with some of the main features, would have suspected the parties or the place; and every one inquired of his neighbor, "Who is this

smooth-faced hypocrite? Who are those women who were so wronged?"

Crandall knew who was intended; but he was shrewd enough to see that there was nothing in the circular to point to him: so he joined in the general expressions of indignation and pity with as much earnestness as though he was really the righteous man that he appeared.

Upon reaching C——, Mr. Berrian talked with Rockman and myself, as to what course to pursue toward Minnie and her friends.

"The public are connecting Rose and myself with them," I said, "although Minnie has expressly stated, time and again, that we were only incidental acquaintances, who had become friends through sympathy with their resolution to leave the old life and begin a better one."

"Never mind," said he: "we will turn that tide. I shall ask the privilege of speaking in the morning; and, though not very much used to speaking without previous preparation, I feel that through the help of my God I can do so, and do it well too. The spirit of my Master is upon me, and I shall love to tell those who fear contamination that the publicans and harlots go into the kingdom before them.

"Mr. Rockman and Rose will be with you, of course; and I want Miss Morris and all her friends to be there, and to be among the first to give us greeting after the ceremony is over. You can go to church as usual in the morning; I will stay at Brother Weston's to-night, and no one need know who the bride is to be till she is called for."

His courage inspired me, and all was arranged as he had planned. in the morning he occupied the pulpit in company with Mr. Weston, the regular minister; and after singing and prayer he announced to the congregation, that, as the Rev. Mr. Berrian from B——, was with them, they would have the pleasure of listening to a discourse from him.

Minnie and the girls were all there, quiet and well behaved, and paying no attention to the scornful looks directed toward them. Mr. Rockman, Rose, and myself occupied our usual places, and were treated to our proportion of condemning glances.

Mr. Berrian arose, and, looking slowly over the audience, announced these words as the text from which to make a few remarks: "or as the Spirit giveth utterance."

"If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

Pausing till he had the attention of every one in the house, he again repeated the words, "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

He then proceeded to show, as illustrated by his life, what that spirit was; and it seemed to me, as I listened, that, like the prophet of old, his lips had been touched with a live coal from off the altar.

"Jesus shrank not from speaking the truth because it touched the rich, the great ones of earth, but showed that, like his Father in heaven, he was no respecter of persons. Do we do this? Oh, no! the rich man's broadcloth, and the wealthy woman's silks and laces, so dazzle our eyes that we can not see their sins; so we accord to them the best places

everywhere. Their money pays for what they have; but money will not tempt the spirit of Christ to give them a place in heaven.

"'If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his.'

"He was never heard to thunder his condemnation against the weak and erring among the poor and lowly; he always spoke gently to, and looked kindly on them, winning them with the dew of his love, as the sunlight woos the desolate places of the earth, till, if there is the germ of a flower there, it will open its petals and show its richest hues. The rich, the high and lifted-up, needed severe language to bring them to a sense of what they were; but these, their hearts were bruised and sore already, and they needed the gentle dews of love to revive their drooping spirits. The bruised reed he will not break.

"Do we manifest a gentle spirit toward the same classes? do we win the drunkard from his cups by surrounding him with better influences? do we draw the Magdalen from her wretched life with gentle words and loving deeds? do we?

"'If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his.'

"Do we find Jesus at any time guarding himself from disreputable society lest his character should suffer reproach? do we find him demanding that they should humble themselves and stand afar off, because of the past? did he put them under the surveillance of watchful eyes and suspicious looks? Not at all; but, dismissing them with a smile of blessing and a word of admonition, he sent them about their business, threw them upon their own responsibility.

"Do we do this? Do we not, on the contrary, keep the hounds of suspicion on their track till they are driven to despair by our constant espionage of their acts, and misinterpretation of their motives? do we not demand from them so much humiliation, that their self-respect rebels, and refuses to submit? And because of this, because our burdens are so hard that they can not bear them, because, instead of being meek and lowly in spirit, we are so self-righteous that they can not come near unto us, — because of all this, we turn our backs upon them, and claim that they do not desire a better life.

"'If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his.'"

But no description of mine can do justice to that sermon. It was not so much the words as the manner in which they were said, the looks and gestures which accompanied, that gave them force and power.

The audience could but make the application for themselves; and, long before he sat down, the questioning glance, the cold looks, that had been directed toward Minnie and her company at commencement, ceased entirely. For once they forgot the shortcomings of others in the realizing sense that they themselves had not the spirit of Christ. For my own part, I felt that, with such a man to stand by my side, I need not fear to face the world.

At the close of the services, the resident minister said that he hoped the audience would all be there in the afternoon; for, though he could not hope to interest them as the brother had done, the lack would be made up in part, at least, by that which always interested, — a marriage-ceremony.

This changed the whole current of thought. "Who is to be married?" was the question that flew from lip to lip: no one knew but the minister, and he was bound to secrecy. In the afternoon the church was filled to the overflowing. Arthur sat in the desk as in the morning, while the minister went forward with the usual services. The sermon was ended at last, and expectation was on tiptoe.

Very quietly Arthur arose, descended from the desk, came to where I was sitting, and taking me by the hand led me forward to the altar, while Rockman and Rose took their places on either side of us. I will not attempt to picture the surprise, almost consternation, that was pictured upon the faces of the congregation. Suffice it to say that the effect of that day's occurrences, together with the influence exerted the few days that we remained in town, so smoothed the path for Minnie that she managed to maintain her ground till the reaction came that gave her the real respect she deserved.

True, there were some who never could be made to comprehend that once in disgrace was not always in disgrace; but they were the weak, the cowardly, or the self-conceited ones, whose law was to follow, not to lead. You will say that self-conceit desires to lead. I mean the self-conceit that claims the right to stand beside the leaders, to be first in their notice; those who receive smiles from those who stand above them, to dispense frowns to those they imagine below them. Such are generally too feeble to lead, or too indolent to take the necessary trouble.

When we returned to B——, Rose and Rockman

went with us. We stopped upon the way to visit an old friend of Arthur's, and when we reached home it was late on Saturday night; so that no one saw us, and consequently had no idea who the bride was till we entered church on sabbath morning.

Very calmly Arthur arose in his place, gave out the hymn, and offered up the accustomed prayer, then took for his text, "Deal justly, love mercy, and walk humbly."

"Do we do this?" he asked. "We do not ask if the world at large does this, but do we who profess to be the followers of Christ Jesus do this? First, as to dealing justly, let us test the matter by facts from real life. I once knew two girls of the same neighborhood, who were counted as the most beautiful of all in the country around; but they were poor. These girls were both sought by rich young men; and one of them loved him who sought her society, and the other did not.

"The one who did not was ambitious of place and position; and resolved to marry the man she did not love, for the sake of his money. Remember she had no love for him, consequently it was no trouble for her to keep him at his proper distance till she had so bound him that he could not leave her. She coolly, calculatingly, sold herself to this man under the sacred name of marriage. It was not marriage; there was no union between them; only the symbol of a union which was not, and never could be. She told her friends that she did not love him, but that she could and would marry him.

"They were professed Christians, those friends,

the most of them; but did they turn from her in scorn? did they tell her that a legal sale of herself with perjury upon her lips could not sanction such an accursed bond? Did they? If so, it was with a frown so mingled with a smile that it lost its power to influence; and as to scorning, and turning their backs upon her, they did far otherwise.

"The banquet was spread for her and the man to whom she had sold herself, in many a so-called Christian home; and she in turn entertained them as guests. But how was it with the other one? She loved: she was pure and sweet as the morning in her intentions; the thought of selling herself for gold, for wealth or position, would have been sacrilege to her; but she loved, and he to whom her heart's worship was given succeeded, by arts at which a fiend ought to blush, in accomplishing her ruin. And what was the result? ay, what was the result?

"Did Christians take that poor wounded lamb to their bosoms, and comfort her? did they turn their indignation against her betrayer? Would to God that I could say that they did! but alas, no: the betrayer walked forth unharmed; the woman who had sold herself for gold was accepted, because she had conformed to human law; while she who had loved, had fulfilled God's law, but had been betrayed into neglecting the human, she was scorned, till, driven to desperation, she hid herself from Christian cruelty in a den of infamy.

"Did those who called themselves Christians deal justly with that poor girl? did they love mercy? did they walk humbly when they presumed to judge her?"

Here he paused, and looking directly at Crandall for a moment, added, "And there was another who was betrayed, and then confined in a den of infamy, by him who professed to love her; she manages to escape, and finds refuge with a friend, while he marries another. He professes a great deal of morality, and warns the public against this very girl and her friend; and a Christian public without investigation, without bringing the accuser and the accused face to face, accepts the man's story as truth, and crushes the woman with scorn.

"Is this doing justly? is this loving mercy? is this walking humbly, as in the presence of God who looketh at the heart? Is this an unusual subject for a sabbath morning's discourse? Then the more shame to those who stand upon the walls of Zion. The Lord hath called me to preach the gospel to the poor, to plead the cause of the oppressed; and I shall obey God, rather than man."

The effect of this discourse, in connection with the circulars that had been scattered, and the marriage with the woman upon whom they had set the seal of their condemnation because the "Hon. Mr. Crandall" had warned them against her,—the effect of all this was simply tremendous. Men and women turned pale before the firm daring of the minister. No direct charge was made, but all knew that Crandall was the one intended by the last example given. How dare Arthur Berrian brave such a man, and the whole community with him?

In the evening the text was, "Shall I obey God or man? judge ye." The church was even more

crowded than in the morning; but the temper of the audience was like powder, and needed only a spark to create an explosion. But the spark was not furnished; for, as he proceeded to portray the terrible responsibility resting upon the minister, his tones seemed almost a prayer, an entreaty that they would consider the position he held, and pardon him for the wounds that he felt he must inflict. Gradually, as he proceeded, the clouds dispersed, the atmosphere changed; and when he sat down the man had conquered what the minister had aroused.

Crandall was there with the rest; but from that day he came no more. The tide turned against him, and his power was gone. He was nominated for office again, but was defeated; and, as people began to sense more and more his real character, he was driven by an influence that he could not grapple with, into the obscurity he deserved. And there, with the disappointed woman that he made his wife from no purer motives than those which prompted her to accept him as husband, — there we will leave them to just such happiness as they have prepared for themselves; feeling that, —

"The mills of the gods grind slowly,
But they grind exceeding small."

CHAPTER XVIII.

AS THE ANGELS IN HEAVEN.

ROSE remained with me in my new home as the trusted friend and sister that she had been for years. True, she was pledged to Minnie's band, and, had they needed her, she would have gone to them at once; but for the present she could be of no particular use to them.

Mr. Rockman, as usual, came and went at his pleasure. Some ten days after our marriage, we were all four sittting quietly together one evening, when Mr. Rockman said to Arthur, —

"Mr. Berrian, are we not taught to pray for the will of God to be done on earth as it is in heaven?"

"We certainly are," he replied.

"Can human law ever bring about such a result, sir?"

"Human law is imperfect, and ever must be; but God's law is perfect, and must be obeyed in order to so glorious a result," he answered.

"Is there any need of adding the sanction of the human, the imperfect, when God's, the perfect, is satisfied?"

"I do not see the purport of your questions, Mr. Rockman; but, I can not perceive such a need any

more than John could when Jesus came to be baptized. John objected; but the reply was, 'Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness.'"

Eben laughed. "You have given the only answer that you could have made without condemning yourself," he said.

"How is that?" Arthur asked.

"Love is the fulfilling of the law, of God's law; it is all that he requires in marriage. This existed between you and Mrs. Berrian; yet you added to it the sanction of human law."

"God commands marriage," said Arthur, looking as if he did not quite understand what particular point Rockman wished to illustrate.

"What kind of marriage, — that of love, or that which the State sanctions? It was the authority of the State, and not that of God, by which you were pronounced man and wife."

"Does not Paul say that marriage is honorable?"

"Yes; but is it law marriage, or love marriage? If the first, then love has nothing to do in the matter; if the latter, then we do not need the first; and, if it takes both to complete the bond, then God's law, the law of love, is not perfect till it has man's sanction."

"Mr. Rockman, would you have us disregard the laws that enforce justice and order?"

"I would have those who call themselves Christians consistent. You pray for the will of the Father to be done on earth as it is in heaven; you say that human law can never bring about such a

result; and He whom you call Master said, 'In that world they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels in heaven;' and yet you continue to recognize legal marriage. Now, I want to know how the will of the Father is to be done on earth as it is in heaven, how it is that we are to become as the angels, so long as we continue to act as though God's law of love needs the addition of man's sanction?"

"You are asking hard questions, Mr. Rockman," Arthur said, after sitting some moments as if in deep thought.

"Well, I will put the question in another form: what is it that makes legal marriage necessary?"

"What is it that makes legal marriage necessary? Who would take care of the women and children, if a man was not held for the support of his own children and their mother?"

"You have answered the question, Mr. Berrian; it is property, the law of descent, that which sustains the present order of things, sustains all its injustice, its usury, its extravagance, pride, — all these and much more demand legal marriage, can not exist without it. The law of love, God's law, does not demand it; in that world it does not exist, and they are as the angels in heaven."

"When we become as the angels, Mr. Rockman, we shall not need marriage law; till then, I do not see how we can get along without it."

"When we know how to swim, Mr. Berrian, we can be trusted upon the water; till then it is not safe to go near it," he replied.

Rose laughed; and Arthur looked confused, but said in reply, "I should like to have you explain how it is that legal marriage upholds, sustains, all the wrongs you have named."

"Is one child any more worthy at birth than another?" asked Rockman.

"Certainly not: they have done neither good nor evil, and can not be counted worthy or unworthy, having not, as yet, reached the years of accountability."

"What would you think, Mr. Berrian, of a man who would give all his property to one child, and leave the others penniless?"

"I should that he was an unjust, an unnatural father, sir."

"And yet the time was when the eldest son inherited the estate; it is so now in some countries. The law of the land enforced this; and, no matter how much the parent desired, he could not make his children equally his heirs. This was done to perpetuate a titled, an aristocratic class, by keeping large estates undivided. Millions of acres are to-day, in England, laid out in extensive parks, where the nobility can sport at their leisure, while millions of the poor, the landless, are subject to these rich lords, dependent upon them, either directly or indirectly, for the chance to earn their bread; and woe to the luckless poacher who dares to snare a hare or shoot a bird upon these broad domains, if he is caught!"

"But what has all this to do with legal marriage?" interrupted Arthur.

"There is often a contest as to the real heirship of

these large estates; and the fact of an actual, a legal marriage must be established as existing between the parents a sufficient length of time before the birth of the child, to prove its legitimacy, or the inheritance passes to another. Thus legal marriage takes its value from the property basis, and love between the parties is not taken into account. Who ever heard of such a thing as the question being asked as to whether the parents loved one another when the legitimacy, and consequent heirship accruing to a child, were being tried in a court of law?

"The opposing counsel would object in a moment; would say, 'This is not a question of love, but of law. Were the parties legally married? and is this child, this man or woman, the fruit of that marriage?' In this country we have no titled aristocracy; consequently the selfish ambition to stand above one's fellows must find its support in money, and that which money brings; hence the struggle for wealth for *ourselves* and *our children*. The law of descent gives to children who are legitimate, those whose parents were legally married,—it gives such children the property that belonged to their parents. Here again law takes precedence, even when love exists; while love without legality has no rights that the law is bound to respect, and law without love has all the rights that law with love has; so you must see that legal marriage utterly ignores, sets aside, the law of love. And yet the Scriptures declare that 'love is the fulfilling of the law.'

"It may be counted heresy, Mr. Berrian; but, to me, the man or woman who takes upon them legal

bonds casts contempt upon the law of God. I am aware that they do it ignorantly; but they nevertheless belittle the divine law of love, which is all the law that God requires the parties to obey."

"No rights that the law is bound to respect," repeated Rose. "I do not see, then, but love is in the same condition that the negro was under the Dred Scott decision."

"Exactly, puss: you have hit the nail right on the head; and, as the value of the negro was always counted from the money standpoint, so also is the value of legal marriage."

"You mistake," said Arthur: "the negro was often loved and tenderly cared for; and masters, in that case, would part with almost any thing else sooner than with a favorite slave; and legal marriage has a moral value in the eyes of the people, that is above money."

"I was speaking," said Rockman, "in reference to law. The master might love his slave very dearly, but the law paid no regard whatever to that love; for if he was in debt, and could not raise the money otherwise, the slave must be sold. As to legal marriage, the people may get the idea that it has a moral value, and cling to it on that account; but the law itself recognizes no such value, any more than it does a love-value in the person of the slave."

"Can a simply legal act, in and of itself, have a moral value?" asked Rose.

Rockman turned to Arthur, instead of answering her himself, with, "How is that, Mr. Berrian?"

"I don't know as I exactly understand the question," he said.

"Will you repeat it, Rose?"

"Can a legal act, in and of itself, have a moral value? Or, in other words, can legal sanction make an immoral act a moral one, or the lack of such sanction make a moral act an immoral one?"

"Wife, I wish you would come to my aid," said Arthur, turning to me; "or, with two such sophists to deal with, I shall get into deep water."

"Say, rather, that you are already in deep water, and have never learned to swim," laughed Rockman. "You know that we are not sophists; the difficulty is, we go straight from premises to conclusions, and it kindles more of the hay and stubble into a flame than you like."

"Will you please answer my question?" said Rose.

"He can not," interrupted Rockman; "he is in as bad a condition as the Jews were when Jesus questioned them of the baptism of John, whether it was from heaven or of men; if he says that legal sanction can not make an immoral act a moral one, you can ask him why a mother who has not been legally married is necessarily less pure than one who has been thus married; and, if he says that legal sanction can make an immoral act a moral one, then you can ask him why it is that human law does not step in and change the character of all wrong-doing by sanctioning and thus making it right."

"But I did not intend to ask either," said Rose. "I only wished to ask if a legal morality did not really do more harm than good by standing in the way of real morality?"

"If we make the legal take the place of the moral,

it certainly does; but, if we only use the legal as a sign of the real, I can not see where the harm comes in," said Arthur.

"True," said Rockman, "if the sign is never used only where the real exists; but if, as in the present state of society, the sign is used full as often to mislead as otherwise, and when it is once up it must stay there to bind the parties to a false relation, and they are taught that it is their duty to live out the falsehood, what then? I tell you, friend Berrian, the declaration that 'by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified,' contains a grand truth, and one that pertains to more than the ceremonial law of the Jews, or the ten commandments given upon Mount Sinai. The enactments of to-day, the very best of those laws that attempt to regulate the morals of a community, are an utter failure. They tend to produce more crime than they prevent; and of none can this be more truly said than of legal marriage."

"You may be right, friend Rockman; but I can not see, as yet, that you have made good your accusations against legal marriage; and I shall be slow to decide against what, to me, is among the most sacred of all institutions," said Arthur in reply.

"Perhaps I should have said that it was both the cause and result of these evils; but it is certain to my mind that such evils can never be done away with while legal marriage exists. Time was when property was held by the law of direct force. What a man took and was able to hold was his, whether wives, slaves, gold, silver, or whatever else was considered of value; then there were no written codes to regulate the relations of property, nor courts, judges, and lawyers, with the whole power of the government as an indirect force to secure the fulfillment of their requirements. But men and women can never become like the angels in heaven under either of these systems: they belong to the realm of the external, instead of the internal or spiritual life.

"The law of descent of property from parents to children, and the legal marriage system which strives to secure this result, are both the offspring of selfishness. You have acknowledged, Mr. Berrian, that it would be unjust for a father to give all his property to one child, and leave the others penniless: what is a State but a larger family?"

"But the State does not own the property; it has no right to confiscate or control that which belongs to the individual, Mr. Rockman."

"The State has just those rights, in a republican form of government, which individuals give it. It has the right to protect its citizens; it has the right to say that one man shall not rob another. Time was when only the eldest son inherited the estate, and the ruling power was vested in the king: the time is when a man's children inherit equally what he can earn, or get from others directly or indirectly, so that he does it legally; and the power has passed from the king to the people: time will be when the State will be every man's heir, and all children of the State will, at the age of twenty-one, receive a definite sum to begin life with, and, previous to that time, they will be secured equal advantages in every respect."

"Do you mean to say that children will be taken from the parents, and educated by the State?"

"By no means, Mr. Berrian; but I mean to say that children shall no longer be left to suffer from the inability of parents to provide what they need; that, if sickness or death intervene, children shall not be orphaned; and, if parents fail to earn wealth, children shall not be obliged to commence active life under circumstances that will make them, as laborers, the slaves of capital."

"Would to heaven that such a state of things existed now!" exclaimed Arthur with deep emotion; and I could but add a hearty "Amen!"

Rose only sighed, as the contrast between such an order of things and the present one presented itself to her mind.

"Do you think that we could do without legal marriage then?" asked Rockman.

"I should be inclined to think that we could," was the reply.

He then turned to me with, "Mrs. Berrian, is not that one of your fingerboards?"

"I must know, uncle, just how you mean to apply it, before I answer that question," I said.

"If I remember rightly, you said that Nature's protests are Nature's prophecies; does not Nature protest against the present order of things, declare that it is imperfect by the pain and suffering that are irreparable from it?"

"I understand it so," I replied, —

"And even your reverend husband here acknowledges that, in the state of society that he wishes existed, he believes we could do without legal marriage; now I want to know if this does not indicate that this is one of the steps to be taken in order to bring about so desirable a state of things?"

"If I have stated a principle, Uncle Rockman, and you apply it wrongfully, it is not my fault."

"But will you say that he has made a wrong application?" asked Rose.

"And you too?" I said, shaking my finger at her.

"We will not press her too hardly, Rose; she has too recently assumed the bonds to be willing to decide against them; but one thing is certain. We can never have such a state of society so long as the law of inheritance as regulated by legal marriage exists.

"You may think this a strong assertion; but let us suppose a case to illustrate the point in question. Here is a man worth one hundred thousand dollars, and he has five sons grown to manhood; and living in the same place are ten men who have nothing but what they earn from day to day, with perhaps enough for funeral expenses; and these men have also five sons apiece.

"Well, these men all die; the rich man's sons come into the possession of twenty thousand dollars each, and the poor men's sons have nothing. The rich man's sons build each of them ten houses, which, when finished, are worth, with the lots on which they stand, fifteen hundred dollars each, leaving five thousand for a residence for themselves. They then lease these fifty houses to the fifty sons of the ten poor

men, at twelve dollars a month, or one hundred and forty-four dollars per year.

"We will take the forty-four dollars to pay taxes and keep up repairs, thus giving each of the sons of that rich man one thousand dollars per year out of the earnings of the sons of those poor men. Let this continue for fifteen years, and each rich man's son has had the repairs kept up, and the taxes paid on each one of those houses, and has received beside the original cost the fifteen hundred dollars. And who owns the houses?

"Do those day-laborers? No: they have paid for them, and paid the taxes on them, have kept them in repair all these years; and yet they have no home of their own. Their labor, as expended upon the improvements in the town, has increased the value of all the property therein, and those same houses are now valued at twenty-five hundred dollars instead of fifteen; so they must pay a higher rate of rent, or, with an increasing family, be crowded into a smaller space.

"Now the sons of that rich man were no better as boys, are no better as men, than the sons of the poor men; they have not produced by actual labor one dollar in all these years, but have traded upon and lived off the labor of others; they are all equally the children of the State: now, where is the justice in such a state of things?

"Can men and women become like the angels under such conditions? The sons of those poor men, by the necessary action of such inequality, have been all these years the slaves of the sons of that rich man.

"But suppose, after the death of the rich man, it could have been shown that there was a son living by a former marriage, and that he had never legally married the mother of those five sons; then the hundred thousand would have gone to the one son, the one that the law recognized as legitimate, and the others would have had nothing. Does not the value of legal marriage rest upon the property basis? Does not each sustain and perpetuate the other?"

"Do not the poor value legal marriage, make it a standard of honor, or the lack of it dishonor, as well as the rich?" I asked.

"They do, Mrs. Berrian; but even here the rich make the standard, and the poor obey it; and, as in other cases, they make the standard in their own interest."

"I do no not see how you can make that appear," said Arthur.

"Which is it, Mr. Berrian, that stands by the illegitimate child, — the father, or the mother? We all know which; but why is it? Public sentiment curses the mother who will neglect her child, but public sentiment does not thus condemn the father who does not support his illegal child; and, beside, the mother's love is by nature stronger than that of the father's. He is held more by the external pressure than by the internal love. Rich men know this; and they throw their influence in favor of legal marriage and the public sentiment that makes each man support his own, thus perpetuating the property basis for legal marriage.

"The poor man's inheritance, his property, is his

bone and muscle, his strength and skill as a laborer; and these are pledged, become the basis of legal marriage."

"It seems to me, Mr. Rockman, that you are getting into deep water. If it is as you say, what would the poor man find to hold him to his labor, if he was not held to his family by the law and public sentiment?"

"And why should he be held to all the productive labor, the rich man trading upon and living off the results of that labor, but producing nothing himself? There is love enough in the poor man's heart to cause him to stay by the woman he loves, and to look out for the happiness of her and her children; it is the extra load against which he rebels, and he has a right so to do. The extra load comes from the double source of legal marriage, and the law of descent that puts money into the hands of the rich men's sons, and thus gives them the power to enslave the sons of the poor."

"Mr. Rockman, are you not morbid upon this subject? Human nature is imperfect, and has much to learn as yet; but what is more beautiful than the family relation? The love of husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, parents and children, gives us a glimpse of heaven upon earth."

"It is not the love that I am speaking of, sir, but the law. Love enforced by law gains no added charm; and this question of inheritance often causes children to contend over what the parents have left, till their love turns to hatred, and they become the bitterest of enemies."

"If, with the present restraints that are thrown around them, people are so ready to go astray, what would they be without law to hold them in check? I can not, for my part, Mr. Rockman, see how your theory is going to make things any better."

"It is not my theory, Mr. Berrian: I am a student at the feet of Nature and Nature's God; and, if in my researches I discover that certain causes produce certain results, the discovery is mine, but not the law discovered; the truth that I have gathered from Nature's pages belongs to humanity. I have discovered for myself at least, I do not say that others have not seen this before me; but I find, upon investigation of the principles involved, that legal marriage and the law of inheritance as it exists in society to-day stand directly in the way of the fulfillment of the request that the will of the Father shall be done on earth as it is in heaven.

"They can not continue to exist, these two inventions of man's device, and we become as the angels in heaven; the first must be swept away before the last can take place. The conclusion is as inevitable as that two and two make four; and you and I, sir, had as well look this truth in the face first as last. Every time that you pray that the will of the Father may be done on earth as it is in heaven, you ask that love may take the place of, may supersede, law; you ask that the law of hereditary descent may be abolished in the narrow sense that it now exists, and that the State, the nation, the world, may become one great family.

"Every time that you pray for the incoming of

Christ's kingdom, you ask for an entire change in the present order of society. Christians do this everywhere; and yet when God sends disturbers of the peace of society, when he sends those who refuse to obey that which it is their work to unsettle, to destroy, then comes the wormwood and the gall, the nails and the thorns. Well could Jesus say to you all as he did to the two disciples who desired to sit on his right hand and on his left, —

"'Ye know not what you ask.'"

"And I feel like saying, as the disciples did when Jesus declared it to be 'easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven,' — who then can be saved?"

I had never seen so serious, so troubled a look upon Arthur's face as when he said this; there seemed a shrinking, a holding of the breath, as it were, as he contemplated the possibility of the truth of the ideas advanced by Rockman. It was as though one were walking in a straight, smooth path, and a chasm had suddenly yawned beneath his feet. I pitied him; for I knew that he would follow where truth led, and I knew also to what a terrible ordeal the acceptance of such ideas would subject him. I thought not of myself, but only of him; for, wherever he went, whatever he might be called upon to sacrifice, my place was by his side, and my happiness to aid and strengthen his hands in whatever his heart and conscience dictated.

We sat for some moments in silence; but at length I asked, "Do you recollect, Uncle Rockman, when

we were speaking of Minnie's work, and you said that she was benefiting only herself?"

"Most assuredly I do, madam," he replied.

"Will you please tell me in what particular sense she was benefiting herself?"

"In the same sense that any one benefits themselves when they are learning lessons of use. The Lord of hosts is preparing his instruments for the final battle between truth and error, for the great battle of Gog and Magog; and he selects those instruments from among all classes. This army of the Lord is to march in solid phalanx against all the strongholds of error; but, to do this successfully, the leaders must be of those who have had experience in, have been subject to, these very conditions."

"Our government has its military schools, where young men are educated in the tactics of war; and, when occasion requires, these schools furnish the leaders for the nation's army. God sends those who are to be the leaders in his work to school also: he takes both men and women, and he sends some to brothels, some to saloons, some to theological schools of learning, some to schools of science and philosophy; some toil with the slave under the lash of the master, and some go before the mast on the high seas; some delve in the mine beside the toiling sons of hardship, and some spend years at the factory's loom; some beg in the streets, and some fill a felon's cell.

"To every class, every condition, the voice of prophecy saith, 'From among your brethren shall the Lord raise up one to whom you shall listen and

find deliverance; and when the day of fierce conflict comes, those who have been thus schooled will take their respective places as officers, leaders, and those who have been the lowest down may hold the most responsible positions. Rahab the harlot is then counted as is Abraham the faithful, among the worthies. Minnie is preparing for such a position, and so is friend Berrian here. He obeys the legal while remaining in school, has accepted the woman that God gave him from the hands of the law; and she is now conforming to society's demands, recognizing the law of the State, which says that she shall not live with a man without its sanction; but, when the trumpet sounds that calls to action, then both will arise and cast aside these bonds, will stand forth in the liberty wherewith God had made them free. And the one that can wield the heaviest sword, can do the greatest execution among the hosts of the enemy, can deal the surest blows upon the walls of error's strongholds, such, be it man or woman, and coming from the brothel or the pulpit, will take the lead, will wear the insignia of command."

"Do you really look for such a change as will do away with legal marriage, and the law that gives to children the property belonging to parents, Mr. Rockman?" asked Arthur.

"Do you believe in the bible, Mr. Berrian? do you believe that God answers prayer? do you believe that the will of the Father will ever be done on earth, as it is in heaven? do you believe that we can have a new earth, a renewed, redeemed one in which we can be as the angels? do you believe that all this

can be realized? and, if so, can the present order of things, the present human laws, remain in force?"

"I know, Mr. Rockman, that they can not," was the firm reply; and yet it was given in a tone that indicated a soul-shiver at the possible results of such an admission.

"Then, my friend, it only remains to learn how this change is to be brought about, and also, if you and I are to blow the rams' horns that are to demolish the walls of this city of destruction, ere the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, can take its place; or, if we are to remain by the stuff, and let others do this work."

"I shall have to be alone with my own soul and my God, shall have time to look at this question on all sides, before I shall know where my path leads," said Arthur; and, taking the Bible from the shelf, he proceeded to lead the evening devotions.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE VALLEY OF DECISION.

"Choose ye this day whom ye will serve: if the Lord be God, serve him; if Baal, serve him."—BIBLE.

THE months sped by, till they lengthened into years; and Minnie Morris was a welcome guest in homes from the doors of which she would once have been spurned; but the work that she had once been so active in lagged upon her hands. Of the band of sisters who had pledged themselves on that memorable night, not one had failed; but, of those in other places who had been gathered from the haunts of vice, some had returned thereto, some gone to points far West, and married; and the most of the others had scattered she knew not where.

"Why had she grown weary in well doing?" do you ask? She had not; but she had learned that efforts directed toward saving a particular class, while there was no change in the general structure, were thrown away. She had learned that there was a power at work that would not so permit of the readjustment of imperfect conditions as to render them desirable or permanent; and she wearied of wasting her efforts.

She had tested her power to face the world, and obtain justice, so far as she could make them see

what justice meant, but she felt that there was a mightier work still to be done, and one in which she could not hope for the approval of society. She had visited us, and we had discussed these things by the hour. Slowly but surely the conviction was forcing itself upon us, that the time was coming when we should be called upon to decide for or against the opinions that were gaining ground among the thinkers; but we waited the hour, bided our time.

It came at length to Minnie. Mary Bliss, the one of the five who had spoken so defiantly when they gave the history of what had made them outcasts, had a lover from whom she refused to be separated, and she would not marry him legally. "I love him, and he loves me; and that is enough," she said.

"But, if you love each other, why object to marriage?" it was urged by those who desired most sincerely that nothing should occur to mar "the good work that had been done." For, betwixt you and me, dear reader, after Minnie, aided by Arthur's sermon that came in so opportunely, had fought the battle and won the victory for herself and those who stood with her, the good sisters of the church were never weary of pointing to her as an evidence of what might be done, "if people would only have charity for those who tried to reform."

These were anxious that Mary should do just the right thing; but to all their urging she would only reply, "If I can not hold a man without the law to help me, I do not want him."

"But it is wrong, Mary: God commands marriage."

"I can find no other command than that the man

should cleave unto his wife, which he will be sure to do if he loves her, and if he does not there can be no such marriage as God sanctions; and, more than this, I am pledged to these my sisters, and I will not take bonds upon myself that will give another power over me."

"But you will ruin them, or force them to reject you" was urged still further.

"They will not reject me for being true to myself, to my ideas of right; they are not a set of Pharisees; and, if others forsake them, the fault will be with those who dare to sit in judgment upon their acts. Were the Jesus whom you pretend to worship here, he would not condemn me."

"But his command was, 'Go, and sin no more.'"

"I am not sinning; love is the fulfilling of the law: so your Bible says. But you do not believe it: if you did you would leave me in peace. God made me as I am, and he will take care of me; and it is not your business what I do, so long as I do not intrude myself upon you."

They finally gave her up, and demanded that Minnie should do the same. "If you permit her to remain with you, you sanction her course, and are as bad as she is," so they said.

But Minnie had carried the day once, and brought the public to her terms, and she did not intend to be dictated to now; so she steadily refused their demands, and for reward was ostracised by the entire community. The past was all brought up anew; those who had been her warm friends declared that they knew how it would be, that they did not believe that any of them had been any better than they should

be all this time, that there was no knowing how much crime had been carried on underhandedly, &c.

Finally the excitement ran so high that a mob was raised; the house in which Minnie and Mary resided was demolished, and the inmates were driven into the streets, while the others were threatened. Minnie made no appeal to the law against this outrage, but, collecting the girls all together, they held another midnight convocation; and, with the momentary expectation of being intruded upon and driven out, they renewed their pledges to stand by each other.

The lover of Mary Bliss, and Eben Rockman, were both with them; and there, with the calm stars shining down upon them, they listened for one hour to Rockman as he quoted Bible, and pointed to the coming conflict between that which existed now and the better order of society which must take its place; and they wrote out a new declaration of independence, those twenty, for Rose had gone to them as soon as the storm commenced.

There, in the midnight hour, those twenty women wrote out their declaration of independence; in which they asserted their right to their own persons, subject only to the law of love, repudiating the usurped authority of both Church and State, and vowing that they would never delegate that right to any man. To this declaration they pledged all the powers of their being, time, talents, money, strength of body and soul, and life itself, if need be; and then sent forth that declaration to the great public.

"We will test this matter to the utmost," they said; "we will take Freedom, Love, and Truth as our

watchwords; the law that God has written upon the tablet of our hearts, as our guide; and we will wage an eternal war upon all institutions that place the keeping of woman's person in the hand of man, and that make men and women of less account than money.

"We take this position, make this declaration, because we sincerely believe that we have a right to do so under the declaration that all have the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; we also believe that the law of the land has no right to interfere with this our religious conviction of the sacredness of our own persons, and the sacrilege of any attempt to take from us the right of their control.

"We have counted the cost; we have come to this decision slowly, and, through years of bitter experience; and come life, come death, come then what will, we intend to abide by it."

The effect of this declaration upon the community seemed to confound by its very boldness, and people stood as if in amaze; and, in their confusion as to what was best to be done, they did nothing. The idea, that a woman should dare to assert that she belonged to herself, was so tremendous that it took away their breath.

Rockman and Rose put on their old disguises, and passed around among the people till they became satisfied that no further violence was intended, for the time at least; and then Rose returned to me, bringing a report of what had been done, and copies of their declaration. We said nothing; but the news reached B——, and the church over which Arthur was pastor; and then those who had been

overruled, but were not satisfied with his marriage and the course he had then pursued, demanded from him a decided condemnation of the course taken by Minnie and her friends, or his resignation.

"I must think of this a while first, friends," he said in reply. "There are many things that were once accounted as crimes, that are now considered virtues; and I can not decide hastily. The Scriptures declare that God will turn and overturn, till he shall come whose right is to reign; and how do I know but this is one of his methods of overturning? If this thing is not of God, it will come to nought without my frown; and otherwise we can not put it down. Permit me to let it alone, for a time at least, lest haply I be found fighting against God."

But this they would not listen to; when there was evidence of repentance and a better life, it was his Christian duty to exercise charity toward them; but now, when they had come out so boldly in their wickedness, were defying God and man, having defended them then, it was his duty to denounce them now, or his silence would be construed into approval.

This aroused the old fire within him, and he coolly replied, "I shall not speak till I choose; no one has a right to lord it over my conscience. The question lies between me and my God, and, when it is decided there, I will tell you; not before.'

This did not content them; and they declared the pulpit vacant till his decision was brought in.

"And your pulpit would stand for ever vacant, so far as I am concerned, if I recognized no higher authority than yours," he replied; "but truth demands

my open allegiance; and when my decision is made, when I have had time to look at this matter till I can separate truth and error, time to analyze the causes which have led to this result, — then you shall hear from me: I think I can do this in one month."

To this they finally consented, and even went so far as to retract their previous decision, and ask him to fill the desk till then. Such is the power of a soul that, strong in conscious rectitude, refuses to bow to the arbitrary demands of ignorance or prejudice.

My pride had taken umbrage at their treatment, and I did not wish him to accept their offer; but his reply was, "No, dear wife: if my decision is such as I think it must be, we have such a battle to fight, that we can not afford to indulge in mere personal feelings.

> 'We must stay in the beautiful valley
> Where love crowns the meek and the lowly,' —

Even in the valley of humility, — if we would gather the strength that we shall need.'"

"But the poet says that, —

> "This low vale is far from contention,
> Where no soul can dream of dissension,'" —

I replied.

"We will carry the vale in our hearts, then; and the dews that descend from the mountains of power shall refresh and prepare us for whatever we are called to pass through," was his gentle answer.

"That does not sound much like the defiance you gave the church, my dear," I said.

"Well, wife, I am only human, and liable to err; but, had the church assailed no rights but those of Arthur Berrian, I hardly think I should have been so unyielding. I fight for truth, freedom, humanity: when these are assailed, I have no right to yield."

The next month was a trying one; I watched and waited with an anxiety beyond any thing that I had ever felt before. Arthur spent much of his time alone; and I knew that he was wrestling with himself, striving for the firmness, the calmness, that an abiding faith in the truth can alone give; so that, if truth led him into the valley of the shadow of death to his previous ideas of right, he could walk fearlessly wherever she indicated.

"Wife," said he to me one day as the month of probation drew toward its close, "it is easy to talk of renouncing all for Christ's sake, — to talk of declaring the truth you see, when you know that all men will forsake you and flee, but it is no light thing to be counted as vile when your motives are pure, and to be meek and patient under undeserved reproach."

I looked at him with a smile, though my own heart sank within me; for I knew then as well as I do now what his decision would be.

When the month expired he went with firm step but pale face into the desk that he knew he should never ascend again. The hymn that he announced was, —

> "Jesus, I my cross have taken,
> All to leave and follow thee;
> Naked, poor, despised, forsaken,
> Thou from hence my all shalt be."

And then such a petition! it seemed like that of a mother who commends her children to God when about to leave them for ever; closing with the Lord's Prayer, and emphasizing the words, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven;" then, taking for his text the declaration of Jesus, "In that world they neither marry nor are given in marriage," he preached from it a discourse that it seemed to me ought to have convinced the most obstinate; closing with the declaration that he believed love to be the fulfilling of the law, and that Minnie Morris had been disciplined to do a work that would eventually place her name among those who should be accounted worthy of honor by coming generations.

His earnestness, the deep feeling manifested, won for him the sympathy of many of his audience; but they regarded his position as erroneous, dangerous even, and they dare not sustain him.

And thus at length they stood, Arthur Berrian the minister, side by side with Minnie Morris the so-called harlot; he with the woman who loved him, and she with her score of sisters, each bearing aloft the flag of woman's full emancipation, and each feeling, that, with truth to sustain, they, like Elijah of old, were individually stronger than the four hundred prophets of the Baal of error.

As for Eben Rockman, he seemed to grow young in the joy which this movement gave him; and his prayer was, "Now give thy servant strength to live and work till the foundation of the walls of the New Jerusalem are laid upon the earth."