

The Way It All Ended:

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NOTYIM

A NOVEL.

Richmond, Va.

AUTHOR'S EDITION.

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The Way it all Ended.]

CHAPTER I.

THE WAY IT ALL BEGAN.

— “And since that time he has been my most inveterate enemy,” continued Harry Bennington, in a despairing tone. “He is ever crossing my path with a sneering smile or a dark frown; and what is still worse, is constantly making me the subject of his ridicule and disgraceful epithets in the presence of those whom I would have regard me with some degree of respect at least. Now this is too much! and ’fore Heaven he had better beware, or he may have to pay the forfeit with his life, if —”

“Lucky was it for you, Lewis Weston, that this sentence was not completed; for upon its continuation, the small fibre which was soon alone to divide you from eternity would have been broken, and the verdict of the jury would have been—“Guilty!”

This conversation was interrupted by the speaker's companion, as the two young men promenaded on the lawn in front of the University of ——. They could not be said to be alone, for they were constantly passing some of their fellow comrades, a portion of whom, like themselves, were strolling along the numerous pathways that intersected each other at every turn, while many lounged upon the green sward, or on benches, some reading, and others collected in small groups, here and there, engaged in the numerous and varied pursuits, which college boys, or (for fear I may offend their dignity) *young men* will seek out to while away their leisure hours in these (too often) gloomy prison houses.

And Walter Langdon listened to his friend's remarks, not because he attached any real importance to the threat which *seemed* to be implied in them; oh no! but he listened with a degree of interest only because it was Harry Bennington who spoke. He had not noticed—had not thought if any one had overheard their conversation, but he interrupted his friend only because he deemed it a hasty and idle threat in the way he had understood it; for, had he permitted him to continue, he would have discovered that he had misunderstood him; and that he had intended to say, that if Weston should continue to pursue the same course of conduct towards others, who would perhaps forgive

less than he had done on account of the friendship which *had* existed between them, *then* some danger might result to him from it, and not, as it was afterwards understood, that he himself had any designs on the life of the person of whom they spoke.

Yet Walter Langdon little thought that the remark which had just been made would ever be recalled to his mind again, much less that it was to be repeated before a judge and jury, and was, in a great measure, to decide a question of life and death.

"It is indeed remarkable," replied Langdon, "that a person with that sense of honor which I once supposed him to possess, should continue to pursue such an unaccountable and disgraceful course of conduct."

"Yes," replied Bennington, with a sigh, "ever since I first discovered that Weston was about to be led off into that great gulf of dissipation which is here laid open to all, I have been laboring, night and day, to rescue him; for I cannot yet believe that he is already beyond redemption; but you see what has been my success, thus far. I had first hoped that I might be enabled to induce him also to embrace a Christian's faith and hope; and, though never weary with laboring, I was, at length, compelled to abandon that thought, for the time, and only besought him that he would become a

steady, sober man, not only on his own account, but also that of the many others whom his example was but encouraging in the path of ruin; but he has ever continued to hoot at both my precepts and example, and make my 'sudden change' and 'canting hypocrisy,' as he termed it, the subject of ridicule for an insolent herd of scoffers, somewhat worse than himself."

"I must again confess," said the other, "that his conduct has been anything but gentlemanly: I think he might, at least, have been grateful to you for your interest in himself, had he been self-willed enough to decline obedience to your requests. I almost fear he is beyond redemption, and I can but think that it would be a great blessing to him were his relatives to take him home. Are his parents still living?"

"Only his mother, poor woman! and a beautiful young girl, his sister. I know them all very intimately, and it is a great blessing that they are immensely wealthy, for it would take the fortune of a modern Lady Croesus to support his prodigality here. One year ago, the boy's greatest ambition was to become a thoroughly educated and useful man, and his mother was induced to send him here, in order to gratify his desires. I sometimes think of writing to her, and apprising her of his great danger, that she may take him home, but am deterred by the thought of the excessive grief that I

know it would cause her; for her love for her son borders upon worship; and I have told you that she has only two children."

"Poor woman, I pity her, for she must soon necessarily learn the extent of his corruption. But I had forgotten that I have not yet been apprised of the subject for debate in our next meeting. And as we have already strolled out of sight and hearing of all of our companions, I think we had best return."

"No, my friend," replied Bennington, "I do not at this moment feel inclined to mix with that crowd, and join in their disputes. I will rest here under the shade of this tree and continue the perusal of this volume."

"Be it so then! but as I am compelled to return and see Henderson, I must leave you alone for the space of half an hour, when I will rejoin you here, and we can then determine what course it is best to pursue, in this affair." So saying, Walter Langdon turned his steps, and was soon out of sight of his friend. The half hour had already elapsed, and as he still stood on the lawn in earnest conversation with a chum, the report of a pistol in the direction in which he had left his friend, reminded him of his promise, and in a few moments more he was wending his way towards the same spot, and as he drew near he saw many persons

pressing forward with anxious faces, and earnest inquiries. Breathless with anxiety, he rushed forward.

"What has happened, my friend? Is ——?"

"Yes! yes! Bennington has been shot by Weston, while engaged in a dispute with him. They are both here."

"Heavens! how did it ——?"

"Harry Bennington asks for you, Mr. Langdon," said a young man, pushing forward. "You had better make your way quickly, or he may not be able to speak. Some one go for Dr. ——."

Langdon pushed forward and saw his friend lying nearly in the same spot that he had left him, pale as death, and a dark stream of blood already flooding the soil beneath him. He knelt, and assisted in raising him. At that moment, Dr. —— came forward and also bent over him.

"Poor young man! of so much promise too, and alas! so fatally wounded. Gentlemen, see that Weston escapes not, and is instantly put in close custody. This thing must be closely looked into."

Popular indignation ran high, and a hundred voices echoed, "Let the *murderer* move if he dare." But the unhappy Weston, with a look of blank astonishment and horror, or perhaps deeply stricken with remorse, crouched before the victim, and Harry Bennington's mild eye was fixed upon

him, as he said falteringly and almost with a smile, "It is not yet too late, Lewis. Remember your poor mother and Nina."

Langdon bent over him in agony.

"Walter, I am dying. Try and console our poor Flora, and say to my friends that I died trusting in a Redeemer's blood. And—that poor misguided youth! Walter, as you have made law your profession, try and defend him. Save him for the good he may do—for the sake of his family. And you, Langdon—dear friend, endeavor to—, but I am going.

They held him in their arms—his head on Langdon's breast, and his eyes fixed on the clear blue sky above him.

"Lord for—forgive him—he—knows not what he does."

Thus died Harry Bennington.

CHAPTER II.

ANOTHER LINK TO THE CHAIN.

The hack halted. An elderly gentleman and lady and a young girl ascended the steps of the building, rang the bell, and were ushered by an obsequious lackey into an elegantly furnished parlor.

"Is Mr. La Fontaine in?" asked the meek-looking gentleman, in a feeble voice.

"Yes, sir—he's in his library, I think. Do you wish to see him?"

"Of course I do. We have not come all this distance for nothing, I hope."

Satisfied with having elicited this querulous remark, the servant left the room. And we will take this opportunity to describe two of the strangers. The elder of the two ladies was a tall, stoutly built woman, with strong, masculine features, a shrill, disagreeable voice, and hair once of raven blackness, but now smartly silvered with gray; yet age had not in the slightest degree tended to soften the glance of that fierce black eye, which appeared to create an uneasy sensation in all upon whom it rested, particularly the pale, nervous looking gentleman—her companion. But for fear

that the gentleman of the house may intrude upon us ere we have concluded, we will proceed, at once, to give the reader a hasty description of the young lady who is to figure as the heroine of this work.

Imogen Avory, at the time I first saw her, was one of the loveliest young girls my eyes had ever rested upon. She was perhaps of some sixteen or seventeen summers, as she now came amongst us to be a school-mate; and never shall I forget the emotions which I experienced when she first entered my presence. I could not withdraw my fixed glance from her until I had examined every feature closely, in spite of the reprimand from my teacher that I had enough to do without staring vacantly about the school room. She was quite tall, and her figure was slender, though finely developed. Her hair, of a beautiful golden color, fell in long and graceful ringlets over a pair of shoulders that alabaster could not rival in fairness, nor a Grecian statue in symmetry. Her complexion was of almost transparent whiteness; and the forehead, neither too high nor low, with the beautifully pencilled brow, bore a strong impress of a superior intellect. Her eyes were very large; but of the darkest hazel, and shaded by long silken lashes, which gave them a soft, Madonna-like expression. Her cheeks were always tinged with a warm, and bright flush, and the lovely dimples were displayed to the best advantage, particularly when her perfectly cut mouth,

with its beautiful set of pearly teeth, was relaxed into a smile; and her graceful, affectionate manners, and sweet, winning voice seemed always to say: "Bow before me, and love me, for I deserve it;" yet no action of hers ever indicated that she considered herself superior in any respect, to the humblest individual with whom she was compelled to associate.

As the strangers seated themselves, a young lady, practicing an Italian solo on a piano, turned suddenly, and with a look of surprise and curiosity, as the voice of the elder lady reached her; but as if by no means pleased with the scrutiny, her glance was as suddenly averted and fixed with a look of much greater interest and admiration upon Imogen. She was not, however, closely observed; her back being turned towards the travelers; and at that moment the door opened, admitting a slenderly formed, but remarkably fine looking gentleman, with very black whiskers and hair, and a very pleasant smile. "Mr. Ivory! I had despaired of ever having the pleasure of seeing you again, you have postponed coming for so long. How are you now, sir?"

"Quite well, I thank you. I would have visited you earlier in the season, as I contemplated when I met you at the springs last summer; but as we were traveling during the early part of the fall we could not make our arrangements sooner. My wife,

Mr. La Fontaine! and Imogen, this is your tutor, child."

"I am happy to welcome you in our midst, Miss Imogen. Resume your seat: you appear fatigued. Have you traveled far to-day?"

"Just two hundred miles, sir," responded the elder lady who seemed to be the leader of the party."

"Indeed, Madam! I hope you are not much worsted; but we had better proceed to business, at once, as I am so often interrupted. What do you desire your daughter to study, Mr. Ivory?"

"She has been in New York, sir, for three years, at school," again interrupted the woman, "and they said her education was finished; but Imogen has taken it into her head, that she does not know enough; and we have gratified her whim by bringing her here."

Mr. La Fontaine moved his seat a little uneasily. The young lady at the piano, looked around, but Imogen only smiled very slightly.

"Hem! Is there any particular study to which you wish to devote most of your attention, Miss Ivory?"

"I believe, sir, that I have, in a measure, neglected my own language," and her manner was much sterner than usual.

"You will find her very hard to manage, sir," said Mrs. Ivory in a still rougher voice. "She

is as stubborn, and self-willed as she can be, and her temper is perfectly ungovernable." Again, Imogen's slight smile and the expression of the soft hazel eye, said, "Madam, you know you are uttering a falsehood," but she did not speak. Mr. La Fontaine winced, and only saying "I hope not," again turned to Imogen.

"I dare say, Miss Avory, that the English language is the most difficult study that you could pursue: but I suppose you will again resume Music, French and Italian, perhaps; by way of an ornamental education?"

"And an employment: Yes, sir."

"I suppose you have commenced the exercises for the new year?" queried Mr. Avory, in an uneasy tone; as if to say something, he did not know or care what.

"Yes, sir. Punctual to the day, we began Thursday." Mrs. Avory arose, and prepared to depart.

"Well, sir, as we leave Richmond to-morrow, we will return to our hotel. Imogen, good bye." Mr. Avory escorted his lady to the hack. "Oh! I had forgotten to ask Mr. La Fontaine about the—the—" and he returned a moment into the parlor.

"Imogen, write to me often; and you, Mr. La Fontaine, be kind to my child; and you shall have my eternal thanks."

"Never fear, sir; Miss Avory and myself will soon learn to be the best of friends;" and the gen-

tleman smiled pleasantly. With that Mr. Avory hurriedly rejoined his lady.

Imogen sank back in her seat, and, quickly brushing the tears from her eyes, prepared to respond to the questions of her future tutor.

"I suppose you have visited Richmond before, Miss Avory?" said Mr. La Fontaine, by way of breaking silence; for twilight had now approached; and the young lady at the piano had ceased her banging, and left the room.

"I have passed through it, frequently, sir; but never remained more than a day or so at a time."

"You will find it very different from New York, in many respects."

"I suppose so," and after many other equally unsuccessful attempts to engage her in a conversation, the gentleman lit the gas and was about to take up a book.

"Oh! I beg your pardon, Miss Avory, I presume you would like to divest yourself of your bonnet and cloak. Here, Mana, (to a young lady who at that moment passed the door,) show Miss Avory to your room, Miss Falkland: for I believe it is the only one not fully occupied at present. Henceforth, Imogen, you must not consider yourself slighted, should I not pay you all the attention that may be necessary; for I have a great deal to do, and I treat all my boarders as my own children."

"I thank you, sir," somewhat stiffly. "I shall endeavor to give you as little trouble as possible," and the stately figure swept by him in pursuit of the young lady whom he had appointed as her escort. Mr. La Fontaine gazed after her with a look of surprise, as she left the room. "What does the girl mean? I hope she does not intend to be airy. I fear I shall have some work with her, in reality, for that mother of hers is enough to ruin her disposition." In the meantime Imogen and her companion had reached a small room, furnished with two beds, some four or five trunks and other articles necessary for a lodging room at a boarding school.

"You are a Virginian, are you not?" asked Miss Falkland, a lovely little black-eyed girl.

"By adoption, yes; for my father has resided in Virginia for many years."

"You will soon be gratified that you have selected this school. There is none in the State more extensively patronized or more justly so. Mr. La Fontaine is a great favorite with all of his pupils, and yet he is very strict in the discharge of his duty."

"He is a foreigner, I believe?"

"Yes, by birth; but he has only enough of the Frenchman left to render his manners most agreeable, and his voice a little accented, and at the same time he understands his own language most thor-

oughly. He came to America while yet a youth; but there is the bell. Will you go down to tea?"

"I thank you, no. I feel much fatigued by travel, and prefer retiring. Will you present my excuses?"

"Certainly. I am sorry that I shall be compelled to leave you alone for so long; but we have to repair to the school-room immediately after tea, to study until ten o'clock. Good night! Shall I request that something may be brought up to you?"

"I thank you; but I think I shall rest better as it is." And the girl left her, singing merrily, until she had descended the stairs.

"I shall not like him, I know" thought Imogen. "I can see at a glance that he is a petty tyrant, who thinks to sway an undisputed sceptre over a multitude of unsophisticated school girls, by insinuating himself into their good graces; for it is certainly to his interest, to try and court their favor."

And with this opinion, thus hastily formed, Imogen retired more out of humor than I ever afterwards knew her to be.

She lay in bed for several hours, without sleeping. She was very restless, and would have thought it near midnight, had not the striking of the town bells now told her that it was just ten. She soon heard many voices below, and in a few moments some one entered her room, and lit the

gas.. The person seemed to step very cautiously, for fear, perhaps, of waking her; yet Imogen saw without moving that it was Mana Falkland—the young girl who had first shown her the room. She tripped cautiously towards the bed, and believing her to be asleep, seated herself quietly beneath the light; but she had scarcely done so, when the door was pushed rudely open and some one bounded into the room—a rough voice exclaiming—

“What! you are not going to sit up again to-night, Mana?”

“Yes, but do be less boisterous. My lesson in trigonometry is very difficult, and Mr. Clayton has threatened to keep us all in, to-morrow, if we do not know it.”

“Are you going to burn the gas?”

No, I shall light my candles as soon as you and Flora retire.”

“Well, I’ll warrant, if my lessons are not known, until I furnish my own lights to get them by, Master Clayton, La Fontaine and the whole set of them, will never have another perfect one from me.”

“You can study by mine, if you will.”

“Thank you, Mana, for your liberality. I did not mean that I was unable to furnish candles to get my lessons by; but I despise to see people so close: but to digress, we have a new room mate, I see.”

“Yes, she is such a beautiful girl: but do speak lower.”

“Is she asleep?”

“Yes, but she will not be long, if you continue to bluster in that manner.”

“I don’t care. I’m not going to hold my tongue for any one, much less that puny virago.”

“O Lydia! do hush! what do you know about her!”

“More than necessary. I was in the parlor when they came this evening, and heard every word they said. Her mother is an old one, I can tell you; even Mr. La Fontaine appeared frightened, when she talked; she flew out into such fits of passion, that she made the girl’s father tremble like a leaf. He is henpecked, I know! and then this girl got in her tantrums too, and answered Mr. La Fontaine as short as pie crust; so that made the old lady break out in a fresh place; and she told him that he would find Miss Imogen a perfect shrew. I mentioned to Flora Langdon that she was here: and she says that they are near neighbors, in ——— county; but have had no intercourse with each other for several years, and that since that terrible tragedy at the University, rather more than a year ago, this girl’s father has sued her brother for a large amount of money; and that all of the Avory family have continued to persecute them in every possible manner.”

"Did Flora say *that*? It does not sound as if it came from her."

"Of course she did, and allow me to express my great thanks for your very kind and polite doubts of the veracity of my statement."

Imogen did not speak; but changed her position a little, that she might have a glimpse of the stranger. She saw, standing at a little distance from her bedside, a girl of medium height, weighing, at least, a hundred and seventy-five pounds; with a large, full face, a broad, ugly mouth, and a very dark complexion; so that with all Imogen thought she had never seen a more disagreeable looking person; yet she had scarcely had time to observe her closely, when a third person joined the party whom she immediately recognized as Flora Langdon, the girl of whom the other had spoken. As she entered, the person whom Mana Falkland had termed Lydia drew back a little; and as the light shone fully upon her, Imogen saw that Flora was indeed all that report had said of her concerning her supernatural beauty.

"Well, Mana, I hear we have a new school-mate, in my neighbor—Miss Ivory."

"Yes, are you acquainted with her?"

"I cannot say that I am. We were very intimate, when we were both small children: but some unhappy difficulties, that have sprung up in the interim, between our families, have entirely estranged

us. I hope she will not cultivate that ill-feeling if we are to be school-mates. I see also that she has chosen my bed, and as it might be unpleasant for her to awake to-morrow, and find me her bed fellow, I will beg of you, Lydia, to exchange places with me, for the night."

"Certainly, if that young lady will not scratch my eyes out for snoring in my sleep."

"Hush! Lydia. Do not be so ill-natured."

"Well, if her mother says she is such a vixen, I'm sure she must be. Mr. La Fontaine says he knows he is going to have work managing her."

"Ah! Lydia, that was only her *step* mother," said Flora sadly.

"So," murmured Imogen, "*he* has been speaking of that which should have been kept secret, before strangers, has he. I know I shall not like him."

CHAPTER III.

DIVING DEEPER.

Imogen had been several months with Mr. La Fontaine ere the erroneous impressions that she had at first adopted concerning him, were entirely eradicated; for, studying his character as closely as she did, she found him totally different, in every respect, from what she at first anticipated. Instead of being flattering and *cringing* towards his pupils, particularly the wealthier and more influential portion of them, as she had been induced to believe by her ill-natured, but loquacious companion, Lydia Lee, she often heard him throwing out the most cutting remarks and strong abuses, indiscriminately, upon every one that proved themselves deserving of them by their ignorance and laziness; and though she sometimes thought him stern, even to rigidity, in the discharge of his duty, this was more than atoned for by his courteous, nay, affectionate, manners in the home-circle, when the labors of the day were ended; and she saw, with much sorrow, that the strict discharge of his wide field of duty was constantly causing him the greatest amount of trouble imaginable; so that her dislike for her unprepossessing

acquaintance, Lydia, was doubly increased, when she observed how much real annoyance that young lady was repeatedly causing him, in addition to his many other crosses. Even Mr. La Fontaine had long since seen that her indomitable spirit was neither to be intimidated by threats nor subdued by persuasions. If he endeavored to explain any branch of science which he knew to be too difficult for the comprehension of many superior to herself in point of intellect, Lydia invariably hummed a tune, in an under tone, or disturbed others in such a manner, by whispering or giggling, that he would frequently be compelled to order her to leave the room; or, if during the momentary absence of the teacher, a portion of the throng arose in rebellion, and on his return the rigors of the law were executed in all their force, in order to quiet the turbulent, while many were trembling beneath his sharp glance and cutting rebuke, Lydia's face was invariably poked from behind her desk, her small black eyes twinkling, and her broad, ugly mouth screwed into a horrible grin of defiance. There was one occasion, particularly, on which Imogen feared that her impertinence might force the superior to expel her, even before they were apprised of the circumstances which so soon afterwards compelled him to do so.

It was during the month of May, and in the meanwhile Flora Langdon and Imogen had become

very intimately acquainted; for, notwithstanding the old feuds that had existed between their families, she could not help loving the former, for her great superiority of character and her amiable, affectionate manners, while she frequently learned by accident that Flora would often make great sacrifices to herself in order to promote her interests and happiness. Thus they had become staunch friends, when Imogen had the great sorrow of beholding this lovely young creature prostrated by a severe spell of sickness; and then came the intelligence to Imogen, bringing astonishment and inconsolable grief, that the fell destroyer, consumption, had given unmistakable evidence of its presence in her system; and though the physicians stated that this was, perhaps, but a premonitory symptom, from which she might recover and live many years, even that was scarcely any alleviation to her great sorrow. But Flora was in high spirits during her convalescence—nay, so much so, that Imogen was frequently induced to believe that it was all assumed, though she could not divine the cause, and she so far exerted herself as to remove all fears concerning herself from the mind of Mr. La Fontaine, who at length agreed, after her most earnest persuasion, that he would permit her to remain with him, as a pupil, until the end of the session, and that he would not alarm her brother by any useless account of her sickness. Thus it

was with heart-felt delight that Imogen at length saw her slowly recovering, and at the request of her friends, the hired nurses were discharged; and though Flora had been removed to a large, airy room, with no other occupant than herself, and she could now sit up in bed and talk quite cheerfully, yet her friends had determined that they would yet a while longer take it by turns and sit up with her, in spite of all remonstrance from Flora that it was not at all necessary, and that they would be unfit to discharge the duties of the day. And even Lydia readily acquiesced in, and consented to share their undertaking, for Flora was universally beloved.

On the occasion to which we have previously alluded, Lydia had sat by Flora until twelve o'clock at night, when her place was supplied by Imogen and Mana Falkland, and she retired, and snored away profoundly until morning, as Imogen knew, for she frequently entered the room during the remainder of the night, and left it without seeing her move; yet when morning came, and the bells sounded for the girls to resort to the school-room, in order to prepare their lessons previous to the general calling-in, she stoutly refused to arise, declaring that she had sat up all night, and that she would not make herself sick by rushing down stairs before day, if she never saw another book. So, finding all remonstrance in vain, the girls left her

to the enjoyment of her slumbers, well aware of the disturbance that it would create.

Imogen thought, from the moment she entered the room, that Mr. La Fontaine appeared in a very bad humor. The roll was being called as she entered, and she knew that her name was marked absent, and when he reached Lydia's, and found that no one responded, his brow became more contracted, and continued so until he had finished; and as she sat at her desk, with book in hand, she could not study, but kept looking anxiously towards the door, in hopes that Lydia would enter; and her anxiety was momentarily increased as the time flew rapidly by, and yet she did not appear. Then sounded the first breakfast bell, and Imogen sighed in despair as she thought that all hope of saving Lydia from a very severe reprimand was over—but she might still be saved. Mana Falkland passed her and whispered:

"Lydia is not down yet, is she?"

"No—and I fear the consequences of her laziness; for I can call it nothing else."

"Perhaps Mr. La Fontaine will not observe the exchange if I go down in her place; and surely she will be here in readiness for the second table."

"Try it, by all means, and I will endeavor to have her in readiness by that time. I shall not go down with you myself, as my drawing lesson is not completed."

Imogen remained with several others, and again the moments flew by, and yet Lydia was absent; and she was in despair. She would endeavor to gain permission to go to her room on some pretext, and she sat thinking what it should be without her being compelled to tell a falsehood until she was admonished by the drawing-master, Mr. C——, to proceed, when she discovered to her great gratification that she had left her pencils in her room, and of course she would have to go for them, although she would scarcely have time to return before the second bell would ring for breakfast. In great haste, therefore, she ran up to her room, and found Lydia still snoring away.

"For Heaven's sake, Lydia, get up, or you will be too late for breakfast!" she exclaimed hurriedly, shaking the other violently. "Get up, Lydia, the first bell has rung long ago, and it will be our time in a minute. Mr. La Fontaine is in a worse humor than I have seen him for weeks."

"Well," replied the other slowly, opening her eyes, and in a rough voice, "you need not shake my arm out of place for all that. Did you say it was time to get up, or not?"

"Yes," replied Imogen, somewhat hurt at the other's ungrateful return for all her kindness. "If you do not get up instantly you will not be in time for prayers, much less breakfast."

"Well, I'll warrant I don't enter the school-room

until I have had my breakfast. Why did you not awake me this morning, then? you knew I was fast asleep when you got up. And how could you expect me to be ready when I did not sleep a wink until day-break?"

Her manner and words were goading to an extent which even Imogen, with all her good nature, could not patiently brook; and while Lydia was sullenly but hastily attiring herself, Imogen turned in disgust to leave the room, when she perceived a sealed letter lying on the floor. Picking it up she perceived that it was Mana Faulkland's handwriting, and that it was addressed to a young gentleman, whom she believed to be an admirer of Mana's. Imogen herself had been apprised of this correspondence a short time before, and had threatened her friend that she would disclose the whole affair to Mr. La Fontaine if she saw anything more of it. She had learned to love Mana devotedly; and both on account of the impropriety of this correspondence—which Mana herself did not fully understand at the time—and also because she knew it to be an infringement of the rules of the school: she had earnestly desired to persuade her to desist from pursuing this hazardous step. Yet Mana persisted in an amiable, good-natured manner, that "she did not see any impropriety in her writing a few lines to her cousin occasionally, since Mr. La Fontaine would not allow any personal intercourse

between them; and she at the same time confided to Imogen that she was betrothed to the young gentleman, and though her father had commanded her that she should hold no intercourse whatsoever with him while she remained at school, she had thought proper to disobey his commands, because she did not see any earthly reason for him to have made such an unreasonable request; yet if Imogen thought there was anything immoral or indelicate in the simple act of her writing to a gentleman, she would certainly desist, for she had never written anything that she would not be perfectly willing for any of her friends to see, and Imogen might read any of her letters to him if she would."

"No, Mana," Imogen had said on that occasion, "I do not wish to make *my* propriety scruples a pretext for prying into your secret correspondences and learning your private history, and I cannot say that I see any indelicacy or *strict* impropriety in this intercourse; yet, if my father had requested any such thing of me, no matter what might have been the connection between myself and any young gentleman, and I knew that it was also against the rules of the school into which I had entered, and by that act bound myself to submit to them—no matter how exacting they might be—I would not do it for the world. I would think it *unprincipled*."

On that occasion Mana had burst into tears, and while Imogen confessed that perhaps she had ex-

pressed herself too strongly, Mana, at the same time, promised that henceforth she would hold no communication whatsoever with her lover, if she could possibly avoid it; and if circumstances should afterwards force her to continue the correspondence, she would then apprise Imogen of it. Thus the subject had been dropped at the time, and Imogen now thought, as she glanced over the direction, that Mana had indeed proved herself unworthy of her esteem and friendship, in thus violating her promise; and with that thought she descended the steps with a heavy heart, perplexed as to what course it was best for her to pursue, and, upon the whole, very deeply grieved. While she thus stood, with a vague sense of uneasiness, the cause of which she could not exactly divine, the crowd ascended from the breakfast-room and passed her on their way into school. She beckoned to Mana, and, waiting until most of the girls had passed them, walked with her to the door, and finding that they were unobserved, she handed her the letter, saying, in an upbraiding tone:

"Mana, you have caused me to perjure myself, for I find it incompatible with *my* notions of honor to play the informer *now*—but my confidence in you is greatly shaken." She then left her without glancing into her face to see what impression her words had made, and descended into the breakfast-room.

Mr. La Fontaine's voice greeted her:

"Come to the table, Miss Ivory. Breakfast has been waiting, I don't know how long. You all seem to be beside yourselves this morning."

And as the girls arranged themselves—

"Ah! who is missing? Where is Miss Lee?" looking at Imogen.

"She is in her room, sir."

"And will you be kind enough to inform me what she is doing in her room? I reckon she has gone back to take another nap."

"She has not been down this morning."

"What!" striking his fist violently on the table, "not been down to-day?—not in school during study hours? You are all going mad! Daniel," to the dining-room servant, "take that plate from the table. Not one mouthful of breakfast shall she have. Can you inform me what plea she intends to advance in order to cover this unpardonable laziness, Miss Ivory?"

"She sat up a *portion* of the night with Miss Langdon, I believe, sir."

"*A portion of the night, you believe!* Speak more positively, if you please, or not at all."

"*I know* that she did then," replied Imogen very quietly.

And at this response you might have seen a slight smile on his lips, for the moment, in spite of his ill humor.

"A most abominable excuse for her laziness, I know. How long did she sit up?"

"Until twelve o'clock, sir."

"Ah! and she remains in the school-room every night until ten. It is as I thought. Good morning, Miss Lee," in a sarcastic tone, as that young lady entered the room. "See that you are fully awake, and do not upset the table. Do not come near it, either—you are not to have a morsel to eat this morning, by my consent."

"And may I ask why, sir?" she said, in a raised and impertinent tone.

"Your conduct is a sufficient answer, Miss."

"Then I think I shall write to my father, and ask him to take me home, where I can get something to eat, if I am to be starved to death because I was compelled to sit up with a sick friend all night."

"Have a care, Miss," and his eyes flashed fire as he spoke, "and do not add falsehoods to your impertinence, or you will be at home sooner than you might anticipate. You come down here, and, with an insolent assumption of independence, tell me that you sat up all night, when I am positively informed by others that you retired at *twelve*—just *two* hours later than you do every night?"

The girls at the table trembled when they saw how his eyes flashed and his brow darkened, and many a voice was heard, in an imploring whisper:

"Hush, Lydia! for my sake."

And fearing herself to 'beard the lion' farther, she passed around the table and seated herself in a chair near the fire-place. The rest of the meal was passed in comparative silence; and still Lydia sat there gazing into the blazing fire. Many of the girls feared that this disturbance was not at an end; for they knew from Lydia's general stubbornness of character that she would not tamely submit to the punishment about to be inflicted upon her, although they could but acknowledge that she richly deserved it; so that when the time came for them to leave the room, they did it very reluctantly, naturally desiring to witness the end of the affair. Yet the whole of the list passed out, and yet Lydia had neither moved nor spoken.

Mr. La Fontaine arose, called for his papers, and then drew up his chair opposite Lydia's, and sat reading paragraph after paragraph without once glancing towards her, or raising his eyes at all.

Mrs. La Fontaine still sat at the table, and while repeatedly casting inquiring glances at her husband, she saw with much satisfaction that all traces of indignation had passed from his countenance, though she could still plainly perceive that his resolution remained unshaken; and her anxiety was greatly increased as a full half hour elapsed, and yet he sat there reading, and Lydia looking into the fire.

The hum of a vast multitude of noisy school-

girls, as they were constantly coming in and crowding the yard without, aroused him; then looking at his watch, he arose:

"I have a little writing to do before calling in." Then to Lydia: "You have twenty minutes to sit here, should you feel disposed to do so; but I shall require you to be in the school-room in time for prayers." Then turning to his lady, he said to her in as mild a tone as he could assume, while wishing her to be impressed with a knowledge of his own seriousness:

"Et vous aussi, Madame, voyez que vous exécutez mes ordres. Il faut que je fusse positif avec cette demoiselle." *

So saying, he turned and left the room.

When Imogen ascended to her apartment, previous to going into school, she saw Mana leaning out of the window, facing the street, and apparently making signs to some one below; but she immediately drew back, quite confused, and Imogen reached the window, after Mana had left it, just in time to see a young gentleman turn the corner.

"Mana, come with me. There is the school bell, and we must be down in time for prayers. I will tell you afterwards what I think of your conduct, and what measures I intend to adopt." She passed

* And you, Madam, see that my orders are executed. I must be firm with this girl.

hurriedly down into the school-room, and Lydia was one of the first persons whom she met.

"That old gentlemen yonder thought I was not to have anything to eat, did he? But Mrs. La Fontaine had to give me my breakfast after he left, for she knew that I would not budge unless she did."

"Hush! Suppose he were to know it, he would be doubly offended with both you and her."

"I won't hush; and I had just as lief tell him as not."

Imogen trembled, for she believed, from the manner in which Mr. La Fontaine glanced at them, that he had partly guessed at the cause of Lydia's appearance, and had determined to inquire into the matter after school.

During the forenoon, and while Imogen was thinking with much seriousness of the results of Mana's conduct, should the master get a clue of it, a note was passed to her desk, and, opening it, she read:

"IMOGEN—The remembrance of your rebuking glance and voice, as you addressed me this morning, has haunted me ever since, and I cannot study—cannot collect my scattered thoughts—until I have implored your forgiveness, and assured you that I had never for a moment designed permitting the incidents of the morning to pass without apprising you of them; but having no time nor opportunity then, I had resolved to disclose all to you

this evening. Therefore, dear Imogen, suspend your judgment until you hear my defence, which, I hope, will at least palliate my offence a little in your eyes; and in the interim, believe me your devoted, if—

ERRING MANA."

Imogen could not refrain from shedding tears as she read this note, which still induced her to hope that she might be able, in a measure, to justify her conduct. Thus she passed the earlier part of the day, in great anxiety for the evening to come, that she might have an opportunity of conversing alone with Mana; but to her great annoyance the drawing-master called immediately after dinner, to take them out on a sketching expedition; and it was nearly dusk when they returned.

Imogen thought that everything wore an uncommonly quiet appearance, as she, Mana, and a few others, passed through the passage and up the stairs; for she neither heard a human voice nor saw a single individual. She had scarcely had time, however, to divest herself of her bonnet and cloak, when Mrs. La Fontaine entered the room, and saying, in a very grave voice, to Imogen, that Mr. La Fontaine wished to see her, Mana and Lydia in the parlor, she turned quickly and left them.

"What *can* he want?" thought Imogen, as she went below. "And what is the meaning of Mrs. La Fontaine's long face?" They entered the back parlor, and Imogen drew back with a shudder as

she glimpsed Mr. La Fontaine. He was standing in front of the fire-place—his face was as pale as death, and yet, oh! so stern looking—while every side of the room was filled with his pupils, who all sat silent and trembling.

Imogen and Mana advanced and stood before him. A moment of awful silence ensued, when, slowly raising his eyes, he fixed them with a piercing look upon the latter, while she cowered beneath his glance; then taking a letter from his pocket, he handed it to her, at the same time, sternly demanding if it was her own composition. She did not answer, but at the first glance which she cast upon it, gave a faint scream, and leaned, pale and almost insensible, against Imogen for support. Very deliberately he demanded a chair, and having placed her in it, continued:

"Young ladies, I call you all together on an occasion, which I call Heaven to witness, has caused me more trouble than the death of one of my own children could have done. And you, Imogen and Lydia, I demand of you, under penalty of being expelled, that, as room-mates of this unfortunate girl, and, therefore, most likely to be in her confidence, you will disclose all that you know concerning Miss Falkland's correspondence with her cousin, Mr. ———. For I have this day learned from several sources that she has been holding interviews with him on the street, while walk-

ing with Miss Lee, and that letters have been exchanged, every Sunday, between them, in shaking hands at church. As for you, Miss Lee, I shall immediately acquaint your father, who is now in town, with the circumstances, and inform him that you must immediately leave my roof; for any one who could be so totally devoid of principle as to abet such a thing in cold blood, and without being interested in either of the parties, is a far worse criminal than the unhappy offender, and therefore a most unworthy associate of the young ladies whom I have taken under my charge, and whose moral as well as mental education I have bound myself to overlook. And I wish you, Imogen, and all of you, to speak, if you know anything in her defence, for I can think of nothing to justify her conduct, which has become the popular topic of conversation amongst every one with whom either of us is in the slightest manner acquainted."

With great commiseration for poor Mana, who crouched before Mr. La Fontaine, Imogen then related all that she knew of the unhappy affair—with the extent of which the reader is already acquainted—but stated that she hoped if he would question Mana herself, that she might be able to justify her own conduct; and on his turning and questioning her, she appeared for a moment to be unable to speak; but at last, nerving herself with a desperate effort, she replied faintly:

"I have *nothing* to say."

"Then I *must say to you*," and his voice was broken as he spoke, for duty and commiseration for the poor girl were struggling in his bosom, "that you can no longer remain with us. You have been with me for four years now, my poor child, and your perseverance in study, your amiable, affectionate deportment, have won the hearts of all, and have so wrought upon *my* feelings that I have learned to regard you as one of my own children; and this blow has stirred up a sorrow in my bosom as deep as I can ever feel—yet I have a great duty to perform towards others equally dear to me, and whom I, as their sponsor for the time, am bound to shield from all evil examples and communication. I now appeal to you all, young ladies, (and I can well feel for you, in the tears that you are shedding,) if you think I am acting too harshly, speak—but let it be from the dictates of justice, and not from prejudice or sympathy—and if any of *you* think that the sentence is too severe, I will revoke it." Feeling the justice of his remarks, no one answered, while he continued:

"That note which she now holds in her hand, was found this morning by one of the servants, on the pavement, in front of her window, and given to my wife. Not knowing what it was, or to whom it belonged, *she* opened and *read* it. I myself have had it in my power to do the same, but I

would *not*. I feel myself above prying into the silly romances of a school-girl; but when they are carried so far as to be liable to injure herself as well as my school, I then feel it to be time for me to interfere."

A short period of silence ensued, when Mana arose from her seat, and, pale with terror, fell on her knees before him.

"Oh! recall that cruel sentence, and do not send me home to my father, for he will kill me. Have mercy upon a poor, motherless orphan, who kneels to you, and who has been compelled, all her life, to depend upon her own weak judgment for that moral training which may have been inculcated into you, and so many others, by a loving parent. Oh! spare me, for the sake of that dear lost mother, and I will ever bless you as the kindest, best of human beings; and my word and honor shall be pledged to you that my conduct shall be entirely changed for the future."

She ceased; and the man of such iron resolution, when he thought it might be necessary, touched at this appeal to his mercy, in the name of a dead mother, turned away his head for a moment, while tears trickled down his cheeks; then raising her from the floor, he said, in broken accents:

"Young ladies, receive her back into your confidence, even as I do now, and let this affair be forever banished from your memories. This interview

has been too affecting to be repeated, and made a topic of conversation for the cold and callous; therefore, let it be sacred, and do not mention it even to one of your school-mates."

At his request, they all left the room, leaving Mana alone with him and Mrs. La Fontaine, when they both, in as gentle a manner as possible, endeavored to impress upon her mind the impropriety of her conduct, and the necessity of an entire change in it; and on her renewing her promise of obedience to their directions, they dismissed her from their presence, and the subject was dropped.

From that time Imogen's conduct towards Mana was even more affectionate than formerly; but she had never alluded to the cause of the disturbance, and the poor girl herself had never appeared to have had the heart to mention it.

As for Lydia, no persuasion could induce Mr. La Fontaine to retain her longer; for he had said that besides her aiding and abetting Mana in her romance, she was constantly compelling him either to act with a degree of sternness which was repugnant to his feelings, or else his authority was set at naught by her bold violation of it. No change whatsoever had been remarked in his deportment towards Mana. He was equally as kind and polite as ever. Yet Imogen saw with much displeasure that there were many amongst her companions who, either offended at the great kindness, or, (as they

considered it,) partiality, which Mr. La Fontaine had manifested for Mana, or else, in reality, envious of the many amiable qualities which she possessed, yet professed to have a most sovereign contempt for any one who could have acted as she had done, and even sought out every opportunity for slighting her, while many actually refused to speak to her; and though Imogen marveled at the wonderful degree of patience manifested by Mana, she saw with much anxiety that she had never recovered her former vivacity, but continued her school duties uncomplaining, and with but little to say to any one.

It was, perhaps, a fortnight after the incidents above related, and as Imogen sat in her room, late one Friday evening, looking out into the street, and gazing listlessly at the passers-by, while her thoughts were very busily and differently occupied, she was attracted by the appearance of two persons at some distance from her, and on the opposite side of the street. They were a gentleman and lady, and as they paused for a moment, and seemed to look anxiously around, Imogen, to her great surprise, recognized Mana Falkland. Rooted to the spot with a kind of dread, she still watched them, but soon saw the gentleman turn a corner of the street, and disappear from her sight, while Mana walked rapidly towards the gate; but she had not time to ascend the steps when Mr. La Fontaine also came up. Imogen sat spell-bound, and her

dread was doubly increased as many moments elapsed—and yet Mana did not come up, as was her custom, to remove her bonnet and shawl; but at length the door opened, and her unhappy friend fell, weeping, into her arms:—

“Oh, Imogen! I am lost!”

“Then it is by your own ingratitude and baseness,” she said hoarsely, as she pushed her from her.

“Imogen!” replied the girl, with more hauteur in her manner than she had ever manifested, “do you also turn against me before you have heard anything in my defence? Well, be it so. Yet listen to me patiently for a few moments. I was innocent of any grievous offence in the first of this affair, except a violation of the rules of this school, and the manner in which that was first discovered you, perhaps, have already surmised. On the morning on which you restored to me the letter that you had picked up in our room, I knew that —— would pass here, and in attempting to throw that letter out of this window to him, you surprised me by coming into the room, and I did not have time to observe whether he perceived it or not, but I suppose he did not, as it was afterwards picked up by one of the servants and given to Mrs. La Fontaine. I had not had an opportunity of explaining to you my intentions and motives that morning, and that was my reason for not wishing you to observe my

actions *then*; but you will do me the justice to believe that *I had* resolved to explain all to you at the first opportunity.

"I met with —, a distant relation of my mother's, during the vacations last summer. He professed an attachment for me, which I could not help returning, as much on account of his unhappiness at the great misfortunes from which he had just been extricated, and with which every one is acquainted, as for his many amiable and noble qualities; for no matter what might have been his character previous to that sad affray, which came so near costing him his life, I now know that he has undergone an entire change. Yet my father positively refused to sanction our engagement, and all on account of the past, while he would listen to no terms of present or future amendment. I shall ever consider his conduct, in that, as unworthy of a man of his intelligence. When he again placed me here, at the commencement of this session, he requested of Mr. La Fontaine that no one might be admitted to see me. Some weeks since my relative came to Richmond. He attended our church, and placed a letter in my hands while exchanging ordinary salutations, and I answered it. Lydia Lee read that letter; and I afterwards met and conversed with him, on the street, in her presence. He insisted that I should abandon this place, and marry him, at all hazards; but this I most positively

refused to do. I would have confided in you, but I knew that you would disapprove of my conduct, simply because it was an infringement of Mr. La Fontaine's rules, if nothing else, while I did not then see any impropriety in the course I was pursuing, until you told me that it was wrong, and I promised you to stop all intercourse with —; but that promise I was afterwards compelled, by circumstances, to break, as I *had* intended to tell you. I have never blamed Mr. La Fontaine for the course which he then pursued. I think he has acted with more real kindness towards me in this affair than my own father. But it was the insolence of this miserable set of girls here that nearly drove me mad. I had given Mr. La Fontaine the same promise that I had made to you, with a resolve never to break it; but when I discovered the meanness and baseness of these heartless beings, in whose power I had unfortunately placed myself, and saw that many of those whom *I* had looked down upon, began to *treat me* with disdain and contempt, I resolved to do anything rather than brook their insolence; and yet I was afraid to write to my father, for I *dreaded* his anger, when he should discover all that had transpired. I have frequently passed — in the street since my promise to Mr. La Fontaine, but have never addressed a word to him until to-day, when, maddened by the cruel taunts of one of my companions, I sought

him out and consented to leave here as soon as possible with him, and marry him in spite of all opposition; but Mr. La Fontaine passed us on the street. He followed me in, and says that with to-morrow's light he will take me to the cars and home to my father."

Having thus concluded, the two girls wept long and bitterly together, and as Imogen assisted Mana in packing her trunks and preparing to leave, the latter constantly repeated, "Oh! I *dread* meeting my father." For she knew that nothing could deter Mr. La Fontaine from his purpose when once firmly decided; and she requested, that on account of the affection which she had ever felt for him, Imogen would endeavor, after her departure, to make her offence appear as light as possible to him and Flora Langdon, which Imogen promised to do.

And, true to his word, a hack drove off from his door, for the depot, the next morning by light, containing Mana Falkland and Mr. La Fontaine.

CHAPTER IV.

JUSTICE AND JUDGMENT.

The day was quite warm; and the thick clouds of dust that arose behind each buggy and horseman, as they came up, were suffocating in an extreme degree. The court green was already crowded with a vast multitude of human beings, as the sheriff and jailor came forth from the prison, locking the doors behind them, and proceeded towards the court, while the accused walked on between them. A casual observer, unacquainted with the circumstances, would hardly have imagined that this individual was now entirely dependent on the fiat of twelve men, for his very existence; for he glanced neither to the right nor left, as he passed along; nor did he give the least indication that he would think of making his escape, were the best of opportunities afforded him; and though the crowd partially gave way as they moved on, he did not once glance towards them; but his step was as firm and erect as that of the two officials who walked on either side of him.

In the mean time, Walter Langdon and a group of his companions stood on the court green.

"You do not know, Langdon, how I wish to see yon fellow strung up by the neck, when I think of our poor friend, and his early doom," said a young man, with much emotion. "Yet, after all, I do not know what to think, when I hear Allen Avory's statement, and I suppose it must be true; for he could have no motive for making up such a story. Some one had told me that they had expected you to volunteer in behalf of the prisoner, as it was Bennington's dying request; and I think you might very well do it, for the sake of mercy. Even if this fellow were more guilty than I suppose he is, I could never reconcile it to myself to bring down retribution upon his head; for I can never believe in capital punishment."

"Yes, my friend," replied Langdon, in a melancholy voice. "Bennington, in his natural nobleness and kindness of heart, did request of me that I would try and defend his murderer, or save him from the gallows, at least; but I cannot do it. Shall I act in direct violation of every feeling of justice within me, and labor to save the man from his too richly merited punishment, who has feloniously butchered my own bosom friend, and all because that friend, in the charity of his heart, had wished to save him from the ruin into which he saw that he was plunging, headlong. Then, too, I find

it difficult to believe Allen Avory's statement; for it is in direct opposition to the whole tenor of Bennington's life; but even if the latter was the first aggressor, should that justify this fellow in brutally blowing out the brains of a fellow-being? for I know that Harry could never, for a moment, have entertained any designs on his life. No; I should be compelled to sully the memory of the dead, in order to rescue *his murderer from the gallows*. I should be compelled to represent him as noble, and high-toned in principle, when in every transaction of his life he has manifested the blackest ingratitude; and though I would willingly cut off my right hand, if it were necessary, in order to gratify Bennington's last wishes, I cannot thus act against my conscience, in this matter, for I would feel as if the blood of the murderer were to be required at my hands."

"I cannot blame you; but now the dead cannot be recalled, and I hope this man's life may be spared, at least."

"I have *no wishes* upon the subject, except, indeed, that full justice may be administered to him, whether favorable or not; but come, let us go in and hear the evidence." And Walter Langdon little thought, at that moment, that he would, at no very distant period, learn to think that the pursuance of that course, which he now believed to be

in direct opposition to all rules of justice, would have been the happiest act of his life; but he could not see into the future, or know correctly the history of the past, and therefore he was justifiable. He entered the court room, already thronged with a vast crowd. The prisoner sat within the bar. The judge was taking his seat, and the other officials were arranged in their proper order, when the twelve men, who had been summoned, were called in, and the oath taken as to whether their opinions were formed, or not, in regard to the case before them; and being sworn as to their ignorance concerning the evidence, both *pro* and *con*, they were requested to take their seats, when the witnesses were called in, and the examination began on the side of the Commonwealth. Little was, at first ascertained, except, indeed, that the accused had shot the deceased; for he had been arrested by the side of the body, at the time, with a discharged pistol in hand; when the prisoner's counsel requested that Mr. Allen Avory might be brought forward. Mr. Avory, in giving in his evidence, stated, with much clearness and precision, that, on the day in which the accused had shot the deceased, he, Avory, had overheard the deceased, Bennington, threaten the life of the prisoner, Weston, in a conversation that had been held between the deceased, and Mr. Walter Langdon, which statement, Mr. Langdon

could then and there corroborate, (to which Mr. Langdon was forced to assent,) and Mr. Avory then went on to assert, that, on the evening of the difficulty, he had been promenading on the lawn at the University, when he had seen Bennington and Weston engaged in a desperate struggle, and as he rushed forward, he had seen Bennington, who, apparently, had gained great advantage over the other, draw a pistol from his, Bennington's, pocket, and while he, Avory, had expected, every moment, to see Bennington fire at Weston and shoot him, ere he, Avory, could reach them, he saw Weston suddenly leap backwards, as the other relinquished his hold, and a pistol was instantaneously fired by Weston, and Bennington had fallen to the earth, and he, Avory, had seized the accused, and secured him until the crowd came up." Mr. Avory stated, at the same time, that the prisoner had told him, at the time of the arrest, that as he, the prisoner, was passing through the lawn at the University, the place of assault, he was accosted by Bennington, who demanded an explanation of his, Weston's, former conduct, and on his refusing to give it, he was struck by Bennington, who threatened to take his, Weston's, life, if he did not retract something that he had previously said; that he had refused to do so, when Bennington had engaged in a long and very severe struggle with him; but, as Bennington was a larger and stronger man than him-

self, he had gained much the upper hand of him—when seeing that Bennington was in the act of drawing a pistol from his pocket, and being himself nerved to desperation with the thought of death, *he* had fired, when in an instant more it would have been too late, and Bennington had fallen—that he, Weston, did not wish to kill the other, at the time; but not having a moment to take aim, in order to produce only a temporary effect, his ball had pierced Bennington's breast, producing almost instantaneous death."

Cross examinations then ensued, but with the same success, when the Commonwealth's attorney began a most powerful and eloquent discourse, which lasted several hours.

Langdon sat in moody silence, closely observing the prisoner; and though he had remarked, with some surprise, that not the least anxiety had been manifested by him during the giving in of the evidence, he turned very pale and seemed much agitated, as the attorney spoke most pathetically of the known virtues of the deceased, and of his high standing amongst all who had known him yet this did not move Langdon to sympathize with the unhappy prisoner. He even felt a kind of gratification, as the attorney called up all the evidence that could possibly be obtained for convicting him, and gave it a double significance, by the powerful and convincing language in which he clothed

it; for Langdon believed that things were but going as they should: and in the conclusion he felt his ill-will towards the prisoner doubly increased, as the eloquent lawyer wound up his discourse with a most touching allusion to "the bereaved connections of the deceased, who had been robbed of the brightest ornament in their home circle, and the Commonwealth deprived of a man whose far-famed intelligence and integrity had given many promises of the great good to be reaped from them by mankind. Yet the *murderer* still sat before them, while the blood of such a man as he had described, cried aloud from the earth for *vengeance*."

And Langdon had now so firmly sealed his heart against all farther conviction, that, at first, he barely listened to the no less powerful speech of the prisoner's counsel; but, as the able lawyer proceeded to speak of the prisoner's extreme youth, and the punishment worse than a thousand deaths which he had already endured—for he said that every individual whose hands were stained with the blood of a fellow-being, no matter how aggravated the circumstances might have been, must, in his calmer moments, have his conscience to clamor most importunately within—Langdon felt that it would be a most fearful thing for one so young and so full of life, to be compelled, with the flush of health and vigor upon his cheek, to feel that within a few short weeks the scaffold would

be awaiting him, where he must be led and made to pay the penalty of his fault. And when the speaker mentioned "that widowed, broken-hearted mother, and desponding sister who awaited without, and that it was within the power of the jury to confer one of the greatest blessings that could possibly be conceived of, by allowing them to clasp again in joy to their bosoms one who had been torn from them under the most harrowing circumstances; or that they must else be instrumental in having the *dread intelligence* trumpeted to them, through the lips of the cold and callous, that the *son and brother was condemned to die upon the gallows the death of a common felon*," Langdon felt a thrill of horror run through his frame, at the mere mention of *gallows and death*. He *did* think of the mother and sister without, and his heart melted within him, at the thoughts of the agony they must be enduring. He was spell-bound; he had never thought before, what a *fearful* thing it was to be *condemned to be put to death* by a few fellow-beings collected together in mock form, and appointed to act the judge and *executioner*. And while the Commonwealth's attorney was delivering his final address, he sat gazing into the face of the prisoner, and heard not a word of all that passed. He was, as it were, riveted to his seat by some invisible power; and he felt as if he would give worlds to say something, he did not know exactly

what, but his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth in mute agony, for he knew that he must be silent. There was the judge seated in awful grandeur before him, the counsel around the table, and the jurymen in their boxes, with their thoughtful, earnest looks, and that vast crowd with gloom and anxiety blended in their faces; and there, oh! there was the prisoner, with a face so serious and pale-looking, and that same calm and steady eye—and Langdon felt, he knew not why, that this must be innocence placed as a bloody sacrifice upon the altar—and he shuddered as he thought. He became aware that there was a momentary silence around him. The attorney had finished his discourse and taken his seat; and now the jurymen were requested to retire and decide upon a verdict. It was already dark without. A half an hour elapsed before the return of the jury, and breathless and appalling was the silence that followed their departure. Such intense anxiety pervaded every mind, that no one dared question his neighbor, in a whisper, as to what he thought the verdict would be. Perspiration stood profusely on every brow, and many actually held their breath as steps were heard entering the court. Slowly the jurymen approached the clerk's stand and passed the paper. The verdict was read and the judge arose; and pale and trembling the prisoner arose, as he was command-

ed—heard the words “not guilty,” and fell back in a swoon.

“Oh! I thank God that *this* life is spared,” murmured Walter Langdon, as he moved on in front of many of Weston’s friends who had crowded around him, and were now bearing him out in triumph, in their arms.

CHAPTER V.

A CLOUD PIERCED BY A RAY OF LIGHT.

Brilliant was the glare that flashed from every window of Mr. La Fontaine’s dwelling as hack after hack drove to the doors, and were emptied of their fair-flounced and perfumed charges, while equally as many moustached and bearded faces issued from those happy contrivances for the wealthy and lazy, until each parlor and the school-rooms were thronged. Proud, indeed, might Mr. La Fontaine be of the vast amount of beauty and skill displayed amongst his pupils on this evening; for it was one of those annual concerts given by him in

order to show the advancement and final perfection attained by them, in both vocal and instrumental music.

It was a most exciting time to many of the young ladies, who could now display their beauty and acquirements to the best advantage before the *ton*, and the professed critics of the city. Many of them had performed the most difficult pieces with the most perfect nonchalance; but it was with perceptible agitation that Imogen at length ascended the platform, and seated herself at the instrument; but having once commenced, all reserve and hesitation was at once gone, and her rich, melodious voice rang forth, filling each hearer with a thrill of delight, while many an eye was bent with an expression of the deepest admiration upon the almost angelic face and figure, and the graceful attitude of the performer. Yet Imogen protested that she felt the most heartfelt gratification and relief when her piece was over; and she descended and took her seat at some distance from the platform.

It was while she sat thus, partially absorbed in her own reflections, that, on chancing to look up, she perceived the eyes of a handsome young stranger fixed with a melancholy expression, and at the same time with the deepest admiration, upon her. Observing how entirely his attention was absorbed by herself, and feeling by no means flattered that

she should thus be observed by one entirely unknown to her, she arose and mingled with the crowd. Afterwards, feeling tired and sick of the motley assemblage, she resolved to abandon the room, and seek some quiet and retirement in one of the parlors which she supposed, at the time, to be deserted, so that she had fairly entered the room, and was partially reclining upon a sofa ere she had observed that there were two persons seated on the opposite side of the room; thinking, that perhaps, she might be an unwelcome intruder, she had arisen to leave again, when the lady called to her, and as she turned towards the couple, Flora Langdon took her by the hand.

"Dearest Imogen, may I presume sufficiently upon our intimacy to introduce to you one who has long desired to form your acquaintance, and yet has almost feared to make the request—my brother?"

"I am very happy to make Mr. Langdon's acquaintance," was the unhesitating response, "and you have done me but justice, Flora, in believing that I am above entertaining any hereditary prejudice against one, whom I must ever have thought of with respect and kindness, at least, on your account?"

"Thank you, dearest, thank you. I felt that it would be thus; but as another couple has now entered, and neither of you need feel embarrassed, I will return to the concert room as it is near my

time to perform." So saying, Flora left them, and as Imogen usurped her seat, and glanced up at the young man beside her, she immediately recognized the person whose attention she had attracted in the earlier part of the evening.

"Miss Ivory will excuse me," said the gentleman, in a deep and rich-toned voice, "if I abandon the justly popular topic of the evening—the concert—and question her concerning one very dear to me, and I do not think she will be surprised when I say that my sister's appearance has filled me with a degree of surprise and unhappiness, from which I find it impossible to recover. She had informed me that she had had a *slight spell* of sickness; and, therefore, I had not dreamed of seeing her thus pale, and haggard looking. I must blame Mr. La Fontaine for this."

"Believe me, it will be unjustly; for when she was at the worst stage of her attack, and he had resolved to apprise you of it, she implored him so earnestly not to alarm you, that he could not refuse her; and since she has been able to leave her room the doctors state that she is much less seriously affected than they had, at first, supposed; and she now says that, with the exception of her strength, she feels entirely recovered."

"But think you her *statement* is true?" And his eyes were fixed earnestly upon her. "I can see that she is scarcely able to move about from excess-

ive weakness, and yet she will go yonder, and sing as one possessed of stentorian lungs; and has arrayed herself in a costume which I would consider it imprudent in any one in excellent health to do on such an evening as this. She is the only relative now known to me on earth, and you must know how anxious I feel about her. Has she ever told you, or have you guessed what is the canker-worm that is thus secretly eating away her inner life, while she mixes with the gayest and most light-hearted of her companions, with a cold, heartless, smile and laugh, oh! so different from the Flora of other years?"

"No, I have never heard her breathe it; but I have had the whole of her heart's history from another—a true and valued friend of hers; yet I have never known how to believe the story of her engagement, since I have been an eye-witness to her conduct here, since that time."

"Ah! that is the great cause of my anxiety. I know that she was betrothed to *him*, that she loved him madly, devotedly, yet when I came to tell her *all*, she shed not a *single* tear. I believe her very heart *was at the moment turned to stone*: and there is *now* a never dying worm nourished in her heart of hearts, that will soon wear away her very life; and yet I must sit still. If she had ever mentioned the subject at all, had breathed his name only once, I would not think so strangely of it, and might

have some grounds to hope that time might heal this great wound; but now I *can* not, *dare* not mention it to HER." Silence ensued for many moments, as Langdon bowed his head upon his hands. Imogen felt very deeply for him in his distress, and after waiting for his first gloomy reflections to pass away, she endeavored gently to divert his thoughts from a subject so disagreeable, and spoke of the music which now again arose, as a new piece was begun by the performers.

"Oh! is not that *splendid*? Are you fond of music?"

"Yes, when it comes from the *heart*, as I have heard one piece sung to-night; but not that fashionable screaming which seems to constitute a good vocalist in the eyes of modern critiques."

"Then you have been criticising, also. I am very happy that I shall not, this evening, be again compelled to lay myself liable to elicit the cutting remarks of so many auditors."

"Believe me," he replied, (and that withering, stern expression that too often rested upon his exquisite mouth, and was inclined to chill and awe those in his presence, vanished now as he smiled pleasantly,) "could you have *heard* the *many* compliments *passed* upon your performance, and known the still greater admiration *felt* by others, you would consent to try again, I think, if you are like most ladies."

"I am not, in that respect," and Imogen laughed one of her sweet bewitching laughs. "I hope you will believe me when I say, that I care nothing for that admiration which so many *ladies*, as well as *gentlemen*, are constantly laboring to obtain."

"Then you are an anomaly; for I have ever found it to be the prevailing weakness amongst your sex; but, if I may so far digress, does not the master require of you all to be present, *under his eye*, at the performance."

"Not so strictly, *this evening*; for I hope he would not inflict the terrible bore upon us, of *compelling* us to listen to that almost monotonous banging, whether we would or not; but this recalls to my mind that I may be detaining you here longer than you had desired."

"You are doing me a great injustice."

"How, if I may inquire?"

"By supposing (although the performance in yon crowded hall may be as skillful and entertaining as anything of the kind could be) that I was not a gentleman of sufficient taste to prefer the much sweeter music that is now ringing in my ears, as you speak, and to have such agreeable company as yourself, than to return into that crowded room to be elbowed by the audience and made dizzy by the deafening noise of so many instruments going at once."

"Although not professing to be a person of very

deep penetration, I think I understand you very clearly, and see that you were only consulting your own gratification and comforts in remaining here, while you were heaping such pretty compliments upon me."

"'Gratification,' yes," he replied, smiling again, "but not in the selfish manner that you suppose. However, to return to Mr. La Fontaine, he does not allow any of his fair charges to engage in *les affaires du cour*, which often occupy the time, and hearts of young ladies in society; from what Flora wrote me word, some few weeks since."

"No," and Imogen sighed at the remembrance of Mana.

"I have understood from various sources that he treated Miss Falkland very unkindly by breaking open her letters and making them the subject of fun for her companions while he forbade any of them to speak to her."

"It is all false," replied Imogen, somewhat provoked at the injustice done to Mr. La Fontaine, and which he so little deserved; "for he treated the young lady with more kindness after he had forgiven her first correspondence with her lover than he had ever done before, and requested of the girls that they would do the same; and as for *his* ever reading a line of hers, I *know* that to be unfounded. I have since received a letter from Miss Falkland, and she states that on her arrival home her father had

clasped Mr. La Fontaine's hand in tears, and told him that he thanked him for bringing his daughter home, as it was both the wisest and best course he could have adopted in order to silence the voice of slander that might have been raised against her here. She also says that her father has now consented to her union with her lover, which he had before very violently opposed, when the young man shall have remained with him long enough to prove his worthiness."

"A happy result, and no doubt she is highly delighted that Mr. La Fontaine discovered the matter; but, as I see you desire it, let us go with the crowd." When Flora saw Imogen soon afterwards, and inquired of her, with a smile, what she thought of her "princely brother," she laughingly replied: "I am perfectly charmed; but I think I should like him still better if you would only try and cure him of one very bad habit that he has."

"And what is that, dear Imogen?"

"He is such a *desperate* flatterer." And when Flora jestingly told him of the impression that he had made, he replied very seriously, "*I* would give worlds could I be in her presence and converse with her every day!"

Ere Langdon left Mr. La Fontaine's that evening he again requested to speak with Imogen, and he implored of her that, should she observe the least unfavorable change in Flora's condition, she

would but drop him a *single* line, to inform him of it and he would be indebted to her the longest day he lived. * * * * *

Hark! was not that four o'clock? and yet he sat there in his room at the Exchange, reflecting upon the events of the evening, and still he felt not like sleep. Oh! what a child—nay, fool, he was, in his own estimation, as in spite of all his efforts to the contrary, he still thought of that fair-haired lovely girl! What! should a man of twenty-two summers be thus bewitched by a child—mere baby's face? and he could but be angry with himself. Why had he seen her? Why had Flora introduced her? Oh! forsooth he was to fall madly in love with this school-girl, and then clasp hands with the proud and false Allen, and bow the knee in humble submission, imploring a *patronizing* smile from that contemptible father who had heaped wrong upon wrong on every member of his father's family, and now, after he, through some malignant motive, had caused his indulgent, thoughtless parent to squander away half of his possessions, Mr. Avory had married *their* house-keeper in some manner to secrete his guilt, and was now trying to turn the injured man's children *beggars* upon the world's cold charity, while he would revel in the ill-gotten wealth, out of which his *avarice* had persuaded him to cheat *them*. Oh, how he despised himself! for these reflections ought

to have been sufficient to cause him to think the otherwise lovely face of that young girl hideous; and yet he must be introduced to her, and by that act be compelled to converse pleasantly, and pour empty flattery into her ears, when he should have been almost drawing daggers against her father and brother."

Ah! young man, happy would it have been for you, could you have always preserved that same good will towards *all* men, for which you were then upbraiding yourself! But again he could see that radiant smile, and the same musical voice was ringing in his ears. "Were I not haunted," he muttered to himself, "by the remembrance of that girl's irresistible charms, I could easily forgive myself for having gratified my poor sister's whims by chatting good humoredly with her for a few moments; for, after all, *she* is innocent; but, then, to think that I should again be compelled to encounter that bad woman, whom I most blame and abhor of that whole party, with the contemptible puppy Allen—bah! the absurdity of the thought makes me laugh," and dashing away his cigar, he arose and paced the room. Daylight peeped in at his windows and found him still awake and *thinking*. Then he extinguished the gas and threw himself upon his bed, where, in a short time, he sank into a troubled slumber, from which he did not awake until the sun had long been up; and he was then

aroused by a knock at his door. On opening it, a servant inquired if that was Mr. Langdon's room, and replying in the affirmative, a note was placed in his hands, which he opened carelessly and read—

"MR. LANGDON:—

For Heaven's sake come. Flora is *very ill*.

IMOGEN AVORY."

"My sister! oh, my sister!" The note dropped from his hand; his brain was in a whirl; and he staggered forward and dropped into a chair; then, with a desperate effort, he arose, seized his hat and rushed from the room. He reached Mr. La Fontaine's dwelling. That gentleman met him at the door. Tears were in his eyes.

"Miss Langdon was *ill*—had been taken during the night with a *very severe* attack of pleurisy, and had coughed incessantly until morning, when she had had two or three hemorrhages in succession. She was now almost insensible, and the doctors feared she was sinking *very fast*." Mr. La Fontaine led the way up stairs, and Langdon hurried breathlessly after him. A door was thrown open. The physicians moved a little to one side, and a pale, weeping figure arose from the bed-side. One paler still, and more unearthly in its glorious beauty, lay apparently lifeless in that bed. A wild, agonizing scream—so piercing that each one trembled as he

heard it—was uttered by the almost broken-hearted brother, as he knelt beside the dying one. That scream aroused her, though her spirit was even then hovering on the verge of the eternal world, and she unclosed her eyes.

“Brother—dear brother!” in a *very* feeble voice, “I am glad you have come. I told dear Imogen to send for you. I did *not expect to die so soon*; but God’s ways are wise. I *know* you will feel lonely and forsaken when the lovely summer comes, and yet your Flora will not return to you; but be comforted with the reflection that she will be much happier; for you know, dear brother, that the spirit world contains all that she holds most dear, and she has no regrets at the thought of going, save that of giving you pain. Where is Imogen? Aye, near me as usual. Dear friend, when I am gone, do try and console my dearest Walter; and ~~be~~ friends to each other, for *my sake*. Let the world take its course, Walter; yet, while Imogen Ivory lives, I know you will always have a friend. Something tells me that I shall be happy, though some of you may think that I have been inconsistent, for I feel that I shall soon be with HIM. Dear ones, try and meet me in heaven. Tell Mr. La Fontaine good bye. He has been very kind to me; and say to all my friends, that in my last moments I did not forget them. Brother—dear, I am growing very weak;—and, Harry! I hear thy gentle voice, which

I have so long sighed in vain to hear, summoning me to thy happy home, and I come, yes, I *come*.” Langdon felt the hand that was clasped in his, tremble and grow more cold, and those eyes that had long shed light and happiness into so many souls, were now closed, never again to look upon the face of the living. Bent in heart-rending agony over the frail, but still radiantly beautiful figure of his sister, Langdon knew not at what moment her gentle spirit sought its brighter and happier abode; but he did *know*, when he arose, that he was *alone* and miserable upon the wide world. * * *

Slowly and mournfully was the coffin borne out at Mr. La Fontaine’s door way, into which, but a few days since, such a lively and gay assembly had entered, and now tears and loud sobs broke forth, as they bore from the sight of her companions and laid in her narrow prison house, the last earthly remains of one so much admired and beloved; but soon their grief was hushed, and *they* could think of that scene with calmness; yet they saw not that white tombstone which towered above the rest, in a far off country church-yard with the simple and touching inscription, “My sister,” written upon it; nor saw they that sad and lonely figure, which sought that tombstone’s side, as each day passed by, and wept over the early grave of one who had been the brightest, the most beautiful, and once the happiest and gayest amongst them. Yet the

lone mourner refused to be comforted, save when, at times, the image of one first seen in *her* presence, and lastly weeping over her dead body arose before his mind's eye, and a voice, the remembrance of which was still, through all his sufferings, secretly treasured in his heart, seemed to whisper from her distant abode, to which he not unfrequently found his fancy reverting, "Be comforted, lone mourner, for thy great loss for her death shall ——" but it matters not *now*, gentle reader, you shall see the prophesy that was contained in the latter part of that sentence.

CHAPTER VI.

THE LIVING USURPS THE PLACE OF THE DEAD.

The session was at an end, and Imogen prepared to depart for her home, with many mingled emotions; and when she listened to the expressions of joy, uttered by her companions, at the thoughts of being once again restored to old scenes and dear kindred faces, she sighed as she wondered why her home should not be as dear to her as that

of many of her friends was to them. She desired much to see her father and brother, too, but still there were other bitter reflections that poisoned the desire of gratifying this thought, as she found herself once more set down before her father's old castle-like mansion; and she almost fancied herself transferred into a frigid zone, although it was yet mid-summer, as she was conducted by a servant (the first—nay, the only one, who appeared to welcome her back) along the solitary, dismal-looking passages, into the old sitting-room. Her father, even thinner and more broken than when she had seen him last, arose from his easy-chair, and, in a few broken and hurried words, welcomed her home. Then that dark, forbidding-looking, detested *step-mother* slightly touched Imogen's brow with her lips, to which she could with difficulty submit. When she seated herself in a chair, and once more found herself in the midst of old scenes, which soon caused the remembrance of things long passed to rush back in rapid succession through her mind, until, in the place of the disagreeable looking, scowling woman—*her father's wife*—who sat opposite to her, she almost fancied that she could now see the image of *her* dear, sainted mother.

A few questions and remarks had been exchanged, and a most disagreeable silence had ensued, when another person sauntered carelessly into the room, and kissed Imogen:

"How are you, sister? I am glad that you have returned; but you will find it even duller about here than ever. I hope Mr. Grey brought you safely home, for I could not go for you as I partly promised when I was down."

"Thank you, Allen; but I am here safe, as you see."

"Yes. And by the way, Imogen, I think this girl—I mean that rascally Langdon's sister—died while you were at school. I could not help feeling a momentary regret when I heard of it, and remembered my old, boyish passion for her, in spite of the disdainful airs that she used to put on around *me*, but now I am glad of it. I hope she can be re-united with that fanatic Bennington's ghost—for I know that that would have been her dying wish. I heard that some of the young ladies at your *institute* were very much *distressed*, and kept up a great fuss at her decease. Of course you knew nothing about her. But I suppose you were a silent spectator of *all the proceedings*."

"Yes—I was there, and *saw* her." Her voice was changed from its usual tone. "She had a great many friends, and they were much distressed at her death."

"Oh! no doubt! Many of them heard she was rich, I reckon, and had an only, and *handsome* brother, and thought that they would remain wealthy, and that some one of them might entrap

this puppy Walter; but they will *all* be so nicely caught."

Mr. Ivory turned a little pale, and moved uneasily in his seat, while he said in an agitated voice, in which he *endeavored* to blend rebuke:

"How often have I requested of you, Allen, not to mention those people in my presence. I never wish to hear that name called again."

"Well, father, I am done. But you have no more cause to detest them than I have; for I can assure you that I have a most profound contempt for a low, unprincipled scoundrel, who unblushingly refuses to allow any of his property to be sold in order to pay the debts contracted by his old spendthrift father. But, Imogen, I promised Dick Grey to ride over this evening, so I shall see you again to-morrow." Saying which, he turned and left the room, humming the air of some popular ditty as he went.

"And is this the way that my own brother welcomes me home?" sighed Imogen.

"Yes," grumbled Mrs. Ivory, as if continuing some topic of conversation, or else pursuing an unconnected train of her own thoughts, "your father says, Imogen, that had he known that any of that set were going to be there, he would never have permitted you to go."

"What set?—be where?" asked Imogen, in a voice smartly elevated from its usual gentle

tones, for she felt really provoked at their annoying questions. "Please explain yourself, Madam, for I am at a loss to comprehend your meaning."

"I mean the Langdons, and you know it," was the ill-natured and quickly responded remark, "at your great Mr. La Fontaine's."

"I have always considered my going there as of my own option, Madam." But, as if ashamed of her hastiness, she paused abruptly.

"Do hold your tongue, Imogen, or—or—you will provoke your mother."

"*Her mother!*" At the bare thought, Imogen grew sick; and, rising from her seat, she requested the servant to go with her to her room. She entered the apartment which she had always been accustomed to occupy, and at the sight of objects old and dear to her, in spite of all present associations, she could not refrain from bursting into tears. She sat down near her window and looked without. There was the old winding road down by the piece of woods, and yet a little farther on, the dwelling of (those whom she now felt assured were looked upon by her father's family with the most deadly hatred) the Langdon's.

The green fields, too, those haunts of her childhood, were all spread out there before her; and, as she gazed, she almost fancied herself a child once more—a happy, careless child—roaming about amongst them in search of wild flowers, or gay-

winged butterflies, and then hastening to return at the close of day, in order to receive the fond caresses of a loving mother and father. Then she remembered that sad and dismal day that came at last, when they told her that her mother was dead, and that she should never see her more; and she thought, too, of how she had cried to see her father so much distressed. But then she had missed her mother less than she might have done, for her father had appeared to love herself and Allen more than ever, and he would follow them about in their ramblings, and often join in their childish sports; until, at last, a grim, bad woman (oh! so different from her mother!) had come to take that mother's place—when all at once her father had become so changed, and *acted as if he were* almost afraid of this woman, while she had caused him to treat his children, or Imogen more especially, as if he cared nothing for her, though often, when she could but see that a father's heart was yearning towards her, he would sit silent, and apparently out of humor with her, while *she was present*. But as for Allen, her father's wife had always been most *polite* to him; and Imogen had believed this to be done because she had supposed that the other had seen from the first that his turbulent disposition was not to be governed by a *fiend* in woman's shape, and, therefore, she had blinded him by flattery and mock courtesy, while she had ever labored to heap

the whole of her malignity upon her. Allen, too, frequently took sides with her against his sister, until, alas! poor girl, she, as well as her step-mother, had long looked upon him with much more dread than they had ever felt for the husband and father. But of late Imogen could not help thinking, at times, that Allen must possess the secret clue to some hidden intelligence, in order to exert such a masterly influence over her as he seemed to exercise. Yet she herself had always, from the very first, treated Mrs. Avory's taunts with the most dignified contempt, though locks and bolts had, not many years back, often been resorted to as a punishment. But Allen, rough and unkind as he generally was, had always taken care that she should not be maltreated by Mrs. Avory, since she had become a woman, except indeed by abusive language, with which he had never thought proper to interfere.

And Allen was (as far as one of his selfish, sordid nature could be) proud of Imogen's intelligence and beauty; and when he was in a good humor—which was not often—and was pleased to be communicative, he would occasionally make some such remark to her as—

"Well, I'll hang up my hat, Imogen, if you are not, after all, one of the prettiest and most sharp-witted girls in all these diggins, and I intend, some of these days, to marry you off to one of the

richest men, and the best catch, any where to be found."

But Imogen never lacked for admirers, for almost from the very day of her return young gentlemen—the wealthiest and most accomplished in that whole vicinity—were constantly calling upon her; and though she always received their attentions with the utmost civility and good spirits, she still felt the most utter indifference towards them all. She observed at the same time, with the greatest astonishment, that Mrs. Avory always appeared remarkably sociable and good-humored whenever she *appeared* at all on such occasions. Imogen could only account for this by supposing that she desired her to marry as soon as possible, and be out of her way.

One evening, however, as Imogen walked restlessly about the house, at a loss for something to do, she thought of the manse down on her father's farm, and the good old parson and his family, whom she had not seen since her return home, and as the pathway was unobstructed and short, she put on her bonnet and went forth, resolved to pay them a visit.

The good man and his lady were much pleased to see her, and spoke so pleasantly and freely to her, that Imogen really felt happy once more. With tears in their eyes, Mr. Mason (for that was the minister's name) and his wife inquired of Imo-

gen concerning Flora Langdon's death. "For," said the latter, "the dear child was always a great favorite with both Mr. Mason and myself. From the days of her early girlhood she had been the support of many of the poor on her brother's estates, and they always had it to say of her that she never visited them empty-handed."

Imogen then very touchingly related the manner of her death, and the hopes that had sustained her in her last moments, and also made some inquiries relative to her brother.

"Ah! poor young man, we have not seen him for many a day; and he used to be here so often. Although his father was so wealthy he never thought himself above poor and honest people; but now they say he has turned to be a perfect hermit, and never goes anywhere, except to the old church-yard where his sister is buried." Imogen could not help feeling for him in his loneliness, and it was not without a tear that she listened to this story of his unhappiness, and his renunciation of the world. She sat until the evening was far advanced, listening, with secret pleasure, to the many encomiums that were equally bestowed upon the dead and living one, of whom they spoke, by this worthy couple; so that it was with much regret that she arose and took leave of them, when the time arrived for her to depart. The steeple of an old church arose before her as she pursued her way

homeward, and she resolved to visit it, although a little out of her way, and leave a beautiful bouquet of flowers, that had just been presented to her, at the foot of her lost friend's tomb. As she approached the somewhat dilapidated and quiet looking building, she requested the girl who had walked with her, to remain outside of the enclosure; while she, with a soft, noiseless tread, and a saddened expression of countenance, wended her way amongst the many lowly mounds around her, while here and there, a tombstone, marking the resting place of the wealthier dead, might be seen rising above the rest.

As Imogen approached a corner of the church-yard most remote from the entrance, she saw beneath a tall old oak a white monument, apparently fresher than the rest, and on drawing nearer, she could trace the name of her old friend, and beneath it, the simple inscription, "A Brother's Tribute," while on the end she saw "My Sister!"

Imogen turned the corner to view the opposite side, and place her flowers upon it, when she was much startled by perceiving within a foot of it, and close by the tall old oak, a person reclining upon a low, granite-covered grave, with his head also bowed upon it and his face covered with both hands. She thought, at the instant, that perhaps it might be the sexton, enjoying the cool of the evening beneath the shade; but in another moment she saw that the

figure was that of a young man, and his dress, though very plain, was of that superior order that plainly indicated that the wearer was not one to perform the menial offices of a sexton. Imogen was taken so much by surprise, that for an instant she was incapable of motion. She heard a groan:

"Oh, how lonely and wretched I am!" Imogen's tread upon a rotten twig of the tree that snapped with a slight report beneath her feet, partially aroused him, and he raised himself upon one elbow, his head still resting in his hand. A very faint smile, for a moment lit up his face.

"Imogen Avory, do I, in reality, again behold you; or is it only your image sent by the spirit of the departed to remind me of her dying request?" Imogen's eyes were full of tears. She forgot the words of her brother, and the dislike of the families—she only felt that the mourning, distressed relative of her dear, lost friend was before her.

"Mr. Langdon, I am so glad to see you, but not *thus*;" for she saw that he had been shedding tears. He got up hastily and extended his hand.

"I am truly thankful, Miss Avory, to find that one individual, besides myself, has *once* more thought enough of the dead to visit her grave." Imogen's eyes filled with tears at the sight of a sorrow so inconsolable, and she replied softly:

"I have not only once, but often—very often—

thought of *her*, and I have sympathized much with you."

"She was a friend of yours," he replied, in a dubious and somewhat harsh tone of voice, "and you may have grieved for her; but I do not believe you have ever thought of me. Why should you, when we have scarcely ever seen each other? and I know that no one else has."

"It distresses me very much to hear you speak in this manner," said Imogen in a kind voice.

"And why should you be interested in one, with whom you are barely acquainted?" he asked, fixing upon her an inquisitive look; "but I suppose you are like most women, fair and full of pretensions: yet totally devoid of a heart." Imogen, a mere child in the knowledge of the world, acted only upon the impulse of the moment; for she felt a keen sympathy for one who should have been left alone to his own dark thoughts, until he had almost become a misanthrope, and it was the extreme artlessness with which she spoke, that induced him, in his present unsociable humor, to listen to what she said.

"You do me injustice," she replied, somewhat hurt at his almost rude reponse. "You ask me why I am interested in you, and I can tell you why I would be had I never seen you before, or known and loved any one related to you. I am a philanthropist, and love all my fellow-creatures, in

spite of the miserable samples of depraved human nature, which are daily under my observation, and this would make me desirous to see *you* and *all* happy."

"You say that *now*, and I suppose I must believe you; but live only *one year longer*, and let your family circumstances be such that you will be compelled to turn to the cold world for some one to love you; and when you shall then find the hearts of *all colder* and harder than this marble—as I have done—you will discover that you are forced to detest the whole human race."

"When I see all this, perhaps I shall; but that I can never do. Believe me, there are *many* of our fellow-creatures—*many* with whom you are acquainted, who have warm, kind hearts, and would care for you, and feel a deep interest in you, if you would but take the proper course."

"And how shall I begin?" He appeared to be much less desponding than when he had first spoken, and was apparently interested in the conversation. "Shall I go forth, and kneeling, implore those who care nothing for me, to receive me into their friendship, and feel an interest in me?"

"No; but I would have you mix with your fellow-beings—treat them as your equals, in whom you might place confidence, rather than as enemies whose every fault you were endeavoring to find out and sneer at that you might despise them

but the more; and you will find many to be your friends."

"Friends! yes, I too, when a college boy, talked of friendship; and thought I *had* friends—but that is passed. They can forget you in a day. Tell me how it might be possible for me to win the affection of *one* single individual, who could care for me as did that gentle being who, but a few months since, was so cruelly torn from me, and the prize might merit *the* effort to gain it."

"Find one whom you believe capable of loving as she did. Cultivate her acquaintance. Convince her that you humbly bow before, instead of rebelling against Him who has thus afflicted you. Give her to understand that you desire to win again, and *merit* such affection; and she will care for you as did that sister."

"Or rather, she would be a *friend*, you would say," he replied sneeringly. "And now, Miss Ivory, let me give you *my definition* of *friendship*. Our families, almost from our earliest recollection, have entertained the most inveterate hostility against each other; and now, around your fireplace, and at the board, you hear me, the last remaining scion of my house—I, who have never injured them, even in thought—constantly made the subject of rebuke and insulting epithets. Still *you*, who, as you say, entertain this world-wide love for *all* of God's creatures, and for this reason

would like to see me happy, "*though you might never have seen me before,*" may not have imbibed any of this hatred; and when you see me as you do now, you *might* wish that I could be contented and happy. This is the essence of *friendship*.

"Again you misrepresent me," said Imogen, seriously. "Not having imbibed the least of that prejudice to which you allude, and which I know, full well, does exist, I met with one very near and dear to you, and I loved her for her many virtues. She was taken from us, and when I have felt, from my own deep sorrow, how much *you* must have suffered, I have thought of you very often, and with the same deep interest in your welfare that I could have felt for one who had been upon the most intimate terms of friendship with *me*, and every member of our family.

"Then teach me how *I* may merit such friendship as this," he answered, and the stern, incredulous look vanished, and those large, soul-searching eyes, that had so long languished in sorrow, were rekindled, as he spoke. "Teach me, and I will obey cheerfully."

"Do not come here so often," she replied, unhesitatingly, "and waste away so much precious time in vain regrets. The dead cannot be re-called to life; and you are rendering yourself unfit for the practical duties of life, and are squandering away the precious talents that were given you to benefit

mankind, and to promote the Giver's glory. Be kind and liberal to the poor, who once reaped the advantages of the lost one's bounty, and do not permit your fortune to be disposed of at the pleasure of those who should have nothing to do with it; and then you will have richly deserved all of the esteem, that not only myself, but all who know you will feel for you."

"Then may I forfeit my wealth and the common respect of my fellow beings," he said with fervor; "if I do not merit the interest which you say that *you* may feel for me. Those flowers in your hand were brought to decorate the grave of the dead; yet suffer me to extract this little bud," (and he broke one as he spoke,) to remind me of this interview, and my resolves."

"Be it so," she replied, at the same time scattering the rest of the flowers over her friend's tomb; she then arose and held out her hand to him. He pressed it for a moment, then it was withdrawn, and when he looked up she was gone. On his way home that evening the little rose-bud was still held in his hand, and often raised to his lips, while his thoughts were occupied with the bright, golden curls, the fair face, and soft, musical voice of Imogen Ivory: and shall we say that she thought *no more* of *him* when she had left that old church-yard? No; for she felt much happier

that evening than she had done for many days, with the reflection that she had been an instrument for doing good, by turning one capable of doing much himself from idleness, and pointing out to him the path of duty and the road to happiness; and at the same time she could but remember that he was young—and so *handsome* and gifted, and that she, in her own estimation, a weak and powerless girl, had exerted such an influence over him as to induce him to make such a promise to her as he had done, so that, for many days, when others would be complimenting her and paying her the most devoted attention, her thoughts would be wandering back to the church-yard, and to the young mourner whom she had there seen and conversed with.

CHAPTER VII.

THE BETROTHAL.

The dwelling was large and magnificent, yet everything around wore an uncommonly quiet—almost deserted appearance. The enclosure was so thickly studded with tall, shady trees, that the sun scarcely shone upon the grass underneath, during any portion of the day. The leaves, fanned by the gentle breezes of evening, were now rustling overhead, and the birds were singing sweetly upon the boughs. Yet all this was unheeded by Walter Langdon as he reclined upon the grass, at the close of a sunny evening, holding some splendidly bound volume in his hand; but we must do the author, a very distinguished one, the justice to say, that he was not reading, for in a few moments it dropped listlessly by his side; and his eyes had a vacant, dreamy expression as he glanced around at the different objects in view.

“Why is it,” he muttered to himself, “that this girl should exert such an influence over me? It now seems as if I had but needed the sound of her gentle voice in order to restore me to the thoughts and occupations of the busy world again, and I be-

gin to fancy that I could see but little happiness, if my actions were not approved of by her. After all, why should the sins of the parent be visited upon the child? I might possibly win her at last, unless this suit of her contemptible father goes against me. But, pshaw! here I am fancying myself in the act of making love to one, whose family are my worst enemies, when I have scarcely ever seen her, and know not that she has ever thought of me, save as a friend, as she expresses it; but truly to speak, the girl possesses most wonderful attractions. Such transcendent beauty, linked with intelligence so uncommon, is not to be resisted; and then there would be something so romantic in an attachment between us, and I could but enjoy it for that old hag and her husband to discover that *their daughter loves me*. So let me see! I think I shall go down to the church to-morrow, and by way of trying her I shall not let her see me glance towards her; for if I were, I know I should either encounter that old fiend's, or master Allen's eye, and neither of the two would tend to put me in a very amiable humor with Miss Imogen. What a pretty name she has too! Oh! I wish she were only my overseer's daughter, instead of belonging to that insolent set;" and then a cloud passed hurriedly over his brow, and he spoke, as if pursuing a different train of thought:

"My poor lost sister! if I have promised thy

friend to grieve less for thee. I can never forget thee, and I feel that couldst thou know how desolate and lonely I am, thou wouldst rejoice to behold this great vacancy filled by one whom thou didst love so well." Such thoughts as these were constantly flitting through Langdon's mind on the night after his interview with Imogen: and even his domestics were much surprised and gratified in their rude, but honest way, to learn that their young master was up the next morning, and preparing with his old accustomed pains for church. His *vâlet de chambre*, who related the story to his gratified companions, went on to say, that "he thought Mas' Walter wa'nt never goin' to git over the death of young mistis. He had kept grievin' and grievin' 'till he had hearn folks say that every thing was going to ruin on the place; for he hadn't taken no account o' nothin' since old master's death; but I sposen," he continued, "that I must git out the new carriage, where he bought for Miss Flora, and take him down to the meetin'."

"And Ise warrent you," said another, "that Mas' Walter is not goin' to ride in the carriage by hisself, and the meetin' house right here in sight. I wonder what put him in mind o' goin,' any way, all of a suddin'."

"As for that," replied the first speaker, somewhat indignantly, "I don't know what he's agoin' for, unless it be to look him out a wife, 'mung them

rich and pretty gals where goes there; and I won't blame him neither, for it's awful lonesome here; but does you suppose I would let him go walkin' up to church and all them Avory's and everybody comin' in their fine carriages? No, I won't do it! It would be a shame."

Providence church was generally crowded. Many of the fair and bright-eyed girls of the neighborhood had watched every Sunday for the handsome young gentleman who had formerly occupied one of the most conspicuous pews; but as week after week had passed by and yet he did not again appear, they had resolved to give him up, "for after all he might not be as handsome as they had at first thought him when he returned from college, so that all were very much surprised, and many gratified, when Walter Langdon entered, and even Allen Avory felt a momentary touch of pity, when he beheld the care-worn, melancholy face of him who had been his companion in childhood, and saw the sombre badges of mourning that encircled his hat and arm; but in a moment more he resumed his usually towering gait, and passed on up the aisle, without once glancing around until he had led Imogen to a seat, and then, as services had not commenced, he turned and left the church. Walter Langdon glanced towards Imogen, and catching her eye, a smile played, for an instant, upon his lips; but immediately resuming his old, half-defiant

expression, he turned his face from her, and she did not know that a thought of her crossed his mind again; for he did not glance towards her, as she could observe, while in the church. But he, in truth, saw all that passed. Mrs. Avory was present; for, as he knew, she came occasionally, merely to keep up appearances and make a dashing display of her husband's wealth. But she did not appear to be so easy and self-important when Langdon was present; for she frequently averted her glance when she *felt* that he was looking at her, and, sometimes, even trembled if he happened to be near her. But not so Allen; he would walk immediately by him, and when out of church talk incessantly and make rude jests to his friends as if to treat Walter with contempt, or else lead others to believe that he was not even aware of his presence. But all this only tended to amuse Langdon; for feeling his superiority of *character*, and certainly his *equality* in point of birth, he only laughed at Allen's airs.

When the congregation was dismissed and Langdon saw Imogen looking, if possible, more beautiful than ever, he felt a strong desire to walk up and speak to her, and thus have an opportunity of hearing her gentle voice again; but pride forbade his making the least advance in the presence of the other hated members of her household, and he saw her immediately surrounded by a score of other young gents, all eager to be at her side, and be

foremost in paying her attentions, while she, bowing and smiling, passed on down the aisle without once glancing towards him. He felt a little nettled at this—for he had hoped that she would again smile upon him. Assuming, therefore, even more than his usual dignity of manner, he pulled his hat over his brows, and without speaking to any one, passed on and entered his carriage. As he was being driven off he saw Imogen still standing somewhat aloof from the general crowd, while several coxcombs, as he then thought them, were busily engaged in talking to her. She glanced hastily around, caught his eye fixed upon her, and slightly waved her handkerchief; but that was enough. He felt proud and happy that she should have remembered him, while surrounded by so many others, and he drove home in a revery. He was more than ever convinced of the insurmountable difficulties that would lie in their way, should he ever win Imogen's affections; and these thoughts wearied and perplexed him for many days. He did not even see how he should ever be in her company again, especially if he continued in the unsociable humor, in which he had indulged for many months; and he resolved, by degrees, to mix more with his immediate neighbors, as he might thus, in the course of time, be enabled to hear her voice again: for he felt more forcibly, as each hour passed away, that there was no peace for him unless in dreaming of her. Mr. Ma-

son, the minister, had expressed great gratification at seeing him resume his old place at church. And one evening, nearly a week afterwards, as Walter was strolling by the manse, he encountered his old friend in the road.

"Mr. Langdon, or rather Walter, I am so glad to see you. Do come in, you do not know how anxious Mrs. Mason is to behold the light of your countenance once more. She has almost requested me to go over and bring you down by main force, if you would not come otherwise."

"I thank you both," replied Walter, clasping his hand with much warmth. "How is your lady? I have not forgotten her."

"Come in now and tell her so. You will find her well, and Miss Avory is also with her; but you need not mind that. You young people might be friends." Langdon's heart beat and his face flushed.

"Miss Avory and myself are upon very good terms. I shall be happy to see her also."

"Well, let us creep in, unannounced, and see how agreeably they will be surprised."

The old gentleman noiselessly led the way into the house, and Walter followed him quietly into a snug little sitting-room. The "good woman" sat in a large arm-chair, with her back towards the door, and Imogen stood beside her.

"I am so sorry," said that sweet, silvery voice,

in reply to something said before, "to learn that the poor woman is so sick. I must call and see her to-morrow."

"I knew that Imogen would join you in all charitable expeditions," said Mr. Mason, smiling, "but my dear, here is an old friend who has come to see you."

Walter walked up to the old lady. "Do not get up to welcome me, I feel all that you would say."

Tears were in her eyes, now dimmed by age, as she glanced up into his face.

"Walter Langdon, I knew your voice before I could distinguish your face. Ah! how the sight of you unnerves me! for it reminds me of old times." Langdon's lip quivered. It was the first time he had seen her since Flora's death, and he knew that she was thinking of her. He then turned to Imogen. "You must thank *her* madam, for it was through her gentle persuasion that I was once more induced to mingle with my old friends." He took her hand, as he spoke, and after a silent greeting, dropped it. He talked much of Flora to the good old lady during his visit; and Imogen often joined in. Though all were solemn, yet he appeared comforted, and when Imogen arose to depart, he left also, promising to call again very soon. She was alone, this time, and he would accompany her as far as the church.

"You do not know how thankful to you, I was,

when I saw you last, for the slight token that you gave, that you had not forgotten me."

"I never forget my friends, yet I feared much, at the time, that I would not have an opportunity of manifesting my gratification at seeing you out."

"I thank you, and I think I understand your full meaning. You knew the bitterness of feeling that existed towards me in every member of your family, and you wished to make the world believe that you participated in it." His voice was reproofing, and she felt it.

"I *feared* the anger of my father and brother, as I am now entirely in their power; and so deadly is their dislike for you that I know not what measures they might resort to, should they even discover that I had ever spoken to you."

"Excuse me, then, Miss Ivory. I did not know that you *feared* any one, or that any of your family could blame you for your slight acquaintance with me, formed under such circumstances as it was. I cannot, therefore, ask you to continue it, as I might be leading you into unnecessary difficulties. Henceforth, then, it will be best for us to be as strangers; but let us part in kindness, at least." He held out his hand as he spoke, and she took it without speaking. He looked up, and saw tears glistening in her eyes. He trembled, and his voice faltered, as he spoke:

"Dear—friend, on my knees, I implore your

forgiveness. I shall, from this moment, ever know how to appreciate your slightest smile. I cannot—*dare not—say more to you now*, for I will not detain you; but *we shall meet again.*” So saying, he turned abruptly and left her.

I wonder why he should have felt so much happier, as he walked back home and thought of her tears? But he did. He believed, from that moment, that Imogen *might* learn to love him; and, abandoning himself to this sweet belief, he dreamed only of her.

And Imogen trembled, when she remembered his impassioned glance, and the yet more significant words: “*I dare not say more now; but we shall meet again.*” Poor girl, she did not then know how much misery those meetings were, one day, to cost her. She did not know that her sympathy for Langdon had already caused her to think far too much of him. But she only thought that she would be very happy could she ever win the love of such a man—so noble, so talented, so handsome—and, thinking thus, she was happy.

Alas! poor Imogen!

Walter Langdon attended church regularly, and he saw *her*—that was quite enough for him; and though they exchanged no tokens of recognition, he felt that he was one day to see her and tell her *all*. In the meantime weeks had passed by. Langdon visited the good old parson regularly, and *once*

again he had met Imogen there, and they had talked together upon the common subjects of the day. But when she departed he did not accompany her, for she had other attendants. He still visited the old church-yard and Flora's grave, but not with the same bitter thoughts as he had done when he first *met her* there; for now he would carry books to the sacred spot, and, reclining where once she sat, would frequently while away whole evenings in reading. But Imogen had never again met with him there. She still carried flowers to Flora's tomb, and Walter would guess at the fair hand that had culled and left them, though he saw her not, and Imogen felt as if she would like to meet him on that spot once more; but still she feared that meeting—though she could not exactly tell why. At each of her visits to this place she dreaded, in going up, lest she should again behold him, seated in the same spot at the foot of the tall old tree; and yet when she would arrive and find him not there, she would often sigh, and, standing for several moments, in deep reflection, would then place her offering of affection upon the cold marble, and depart; until her spirits at length began to droop, and Allen would often scold roughly that she did not receive his wealthy visitors with more gayety and apparent interest; but it was all in vain.

“Alas!” she murmured to herself one evening, as she once more opened the wicket gate that led

into the old church-yard, "I fear that I am doomed to much unhappiness. Poor Flora, I sometimes fancy that I almost envy you your quiet repose in this cold ground."

Aye, Imogen! could you have felt the full force of your remark *then*, what must have been your emotions but a few weeks later? She had reached her journey's end, and was preparing to take her old seat, when she started back with an exclamation of surprise! Walter Langdon was again before her, seated at the foot of the old oak tree, with a volume of poems in his hand. She knew not why she blushed and trembled when she recognized him, for he got up, with something of the old, saddened expression, shook hands with her, and pointed, with a kind, gentle smile, to a seat.

"I am so glad you have come this evening, Miss Ivory. I was beginning to think that, perhaps, you, too, had forgotten my lost darling; but I see that you have not, (for she still held a bouquet of flowers in her hand.) "I sometimes think of late that I feel my great loss more deeply than at first; and it seems to me as if my burden were too heavy for me to bear, and I can but wish that I, too, could join her in her blessed abode."

"I cannot reprove you for speaking thus, with a clear conscience," she replied sadly, "although it grieves me much to hear it, for I myself not unfrequently harbor such sinful thoughts."

"And yet you have no earthly reason for entertaining such sentiments. You have every thing to render you happy—fond and admiring friends, and those of your family who are most dear to you, while I am entirely *alone*."

"I often fear that I justly merit punishment for such rebellious thoughts, when, as you say, I have so much for which to be grateful. But I only mentioned this to convince you that none of us are happy. What have you been reading, if I may thus digress?"

"Byron's Poems. I regard his works as an invaluable treasure: for the gloomy sentiments of the author, as expressed in many of his meditations, accord with my own bitter feelings; and thus, in experiencing a kindred sympathy, I doubly appreciate his works. I have just been more impressed than I ever was before with those beautiful lines written in the 'Church-yard of Harrow.' Two of them are particularly applicable to me now, where the author, while reclining in a hallowed spot like this, goes on to say:

'Here might I sleep, where all my hopes arose—
Scene of my youth and couch of my repose.'

"At this moment I feel all that is contained in those two lines very deeply, and I could almost wish that I now slept in that tomb, could I know that some sorrowing being like yourself would come

and scatter those love-tokens above my lowly bed. Might I flatter myself that you would spare even one of those blossoms for me?"

"Why do you speak thus? You cannot mean what you say." And a shadow passed over her fair brow. "Can it be that you have nothing in life to hope for?"

"Much! And still my hopes are as yet but shadows."

"Then live on, and continue to hope, and the shadows may brighten into living realities."

"Would that I might but think so, and my existence would, from this moment, become as a bright dream."

"Does your ambition then soar so high that you could only be content with something unattainable by man?"

"It does soar high, indeed—but yet the object *might be* obtained." And as he spoke he fixed his eyes steadfastly upon her. "Imogen, I have had a dream, and I cannot rest until I relate it to you. May I do so *now*?" And as she did not reply, he drew yet nearer to her, and went on: "I thought that there were once two very young persons left alone in the cold world; and they—the brother and the sister—lived apart to themselves, *hated* by many, though they were innocent of all offence. And thus, with none others to care for them, I thought that they became all in all to each other;

and soon they were compelled to part, for a time, as they supposed; but, alas! for eternity. The brother at length went to seek the sister, when, lo! to his agony, he found her hovering upon the verge of the grave, though he did not then know all; and while with her, he saw a bright and glorious Hour, whose first glance called forth his whole soul in admiration. When he learned that this radiant being was closely allied to those who had been his most bitter enemies, for the moment he was disheartened; but when he learned that she had been noble enough to love the sister, he spoke to this bright angel, and her first words assured him that he, too, might be her friend. Yet even in that moment he felt that her *friendship* was not enough for him. He was called to the dying bed-side of that sister, and he there again saw the lovely vision which had haunted him from the first moment that he had heard her silvery voice and seen her radiant eyes. That sister pointed to the angel, saying that she must be her brother's comforter, for her mission on earth was done; and she expired. Overwhelmed with grief at his great loss, the brother believed that all other desires were swallowed up in mourning for her; but anon, this angel again appeared before him, but to arouse him from his slumber, and make known to him that *her image* had been secretly treasured in his heart of hearts. In vain pride whispered to him that he would have to

make so great a sacrifice in humbling himself before his enemies, and wooing the hand of their daughter; for he found that unless the love of this angel filled the great vacancy made in his heart by the death of the sister, he would be doomed to endless misery." He paused, and his face was very pale and his low voice singularly musical; but as Imogen spoke not, he continued:

"And now, speak to me, dearest Imogen! Say that you have interpreted my dream—that in him who now kneels before you, you recognise the hero of my story, and feel yourself to be the *angel*. Turn not those bright eyes from me, but, oh! say that though my ambition has soared high, indeed, with the hope of winning your love, my object may yet be attained; for here, in the presence of the silent dead, whose spirits I call to witness the truth of what I say, I swear to you, that come what may, my heart is wholly and *forever yours!*"

O, invisible spirits! heard ye that vow? For then ye know full well how strictly it was kept even years after, when he had sworn to love another, and would have given worlds to have banished from his mind all remembrances of the sacred promise that he had called upon you to seal; but even in the *dying* moments of *another*, his thoughts were wandering back to the old church-yard and the lovely being to whom he had there dedicated his *whole heart*.

Recollections crowd upon me. I cannot go on. Reader, let it suffice thee to know that when Walter Langdon arose from his knees that evening, by the still graves of his dead relatives, he was the accepted lover of Imogen Avory.

CHAPTER VIII.

A REVELATION.

Walter Langdon and Mr. Clark, the gentleman who had been appointed as executor on his father's estate, during the minority of his sister, sat in close consultation, in the library of the former. A deep shade rested upon the brow of both gentlemen, as paper after paper was handed by Mr. Clark to Walter, who appeared to be very deeply absorbed, while the former sat watching the varying expression of his countenance. He uttered a deep groan at last, and turned to his companion.

"Good heavens! Mr. Clark, I had not the slightest conception of all this! Were it not for the money that my father left in bank, I would remain insolvent after the sale of my whole estate."

"It is true, sir," replied the other, "and yet sixty thousand dollars is a pretty good sum to draw upon, and I suppose you still have a good deal of the interest on that, as it has all been placed in your hands since your father's death."

"Not a dime, sir. I have spent it all in gratifying the wild notions of my superintendent, which have never turned out anything, and for other purposes equally vain."

"Then, your case is indeed bad, Mr. Langdon, for there will scarcely be enough to settle up every thing. Your father's creditors, at our earnest solicitations, and knowing that the money was safe, had agreed to wait a few months longer; as your sister would then be of age, and before a division of the property all of the debts could have been paid; but now, you know, they insist upon a speedy settlement. I suppose you now intend to take everything into your own hands, and you had better notify the — bank, that you wish to draw the money as soon as the time expires."

"No, sir, I wish you to retain the management of my affairs until every cent is paid. I find here, too, that my father has gone security to the amount of twenty thousand dollars for these men, who, you say, are now entirely bankrupt. That money is due, and I shall have that to pay."

"Yes, sir. Your father, as you can see, was one of the worst managers that ever lived. He knew

that he was rich, but he seemed to be entirely ignorant of the fact that it was possible for him to run through it all. I have scarcely ever known a man of his intelligence to involve himself so heedlessly in debt. He was too liberal, sir; that has ruined him. He would not have refused to go security for any man, although he might have known at the time that he would have the money to pay."

"Well, it is too late for me to complain now, Mr. Clark, had I the heart to do it; I only wish you to draw the money as soon as possible, and settle everything with those men. I cannot bear to entertain the thought, for a moment, that I am indebted to any one."

"And suppose this suit of Avory's should be decided against you, Mr. Langdon, you would be left, so far as I can see, without a home or money."

"Yes, as many a man has been before me; but I hope there is no chance of *that*," and he fixed upon his companion an anxious and enquiring look. "Do you know whether the case will be taken in hand during the sitting of this court or not?"

"Mr. Avory is making every effort, and we must all be at court to-morrow, as he seems to think the evidence will be examined then."

"Have you examined *all* my father's deeds and papers? and can you find *nothing* to show that this money *has been paid*?"

"*Absolutely nothing, sir* ; and, to speak plainly to you, I must say that, although I feel very confident that there is some great rascality at the bottom of this affair, unless something is revealed, that is now hidden from us both, I think your chance of success very small ; and, Mr. Langdon, between you and myself, I believe as confidently as I am living that your father *did pay the money for which Avory is now suing*. You know that when your father purchased this estate of Reuben Avory, he became his debtor for the amount of forty thousand dollars, for the surety of which, Avory only required a bond signed by your father, as they were then upon the most intimate terms. That bond, Mr. Avory, as you are aware, *still holds*. Your father was very negligent in the management of all his possessions. Soon after his return from Europe, and settling here, I *heard* him tell Mr. Avory that he hoped, ere many months, to be enabled to pay him the money due. Mr. Avory was immensely wealthy and did not need the money at all. He said that he did not. Seeing this, your father did not concern himself about it, and thus a year or so passed on. *Sometime* after Mr. Avory's last marriage, I chanced to be here, and heard Mr. Langdon say that in a *few weeks* he intended to settle up all his affairs with that gentleman. Whether he did or *not*, I do *not know* ; but I *firmly believe he did*. About this time your father

was compelled to sell much of his property to pay off enormous debts, in which he was constantly and heedlessly involving himself. I know Mr. Avory to be a man of no decision of character whatsoever ; and if he has ever had a distinguishing trait, it was his avarice and greedy love of gain ; and when he, with all his love for money, saw his creditor's wealth constantly diminishing, (and I have since heard him say, that had your father lived five years longer, he would not have been worth a cent,) would you not think it the most reasonable thing on earth for him to have demanded a settlement ; particularly, as he was not upon friendly terms with your father at the time ? Yet, he says now, that as he believed the money to be safe, and knowing your father to be in a rapid decline, and that he was greatly annoyed by his debtors, he resolved not to trouble him in his last moments. Others may credit this statement, if they will, but *I* do not believe the man to have been capable of entertaining such refined feelings himself, and can have no reason to believe that he was actuated to do it by any member of his *family*. About this time Mr. Langdon told me that he was determined to sell off all his property with the exception of this estate ; for if he endeavored to keep up others, with his miserable management, he knew that he would be ruined ; for, he said, that when he first came here he was worth upwards of two hundred thousand dollars,

but had been constantly incurring enormous and useless expenses, until he was almost a ruined man. He afterwards told *me that he had paid off all his old debts*, by the sale of some southern property that he possessed; and having sixty thousand dollars left, was determined to place that in bank, live upon the interest, and leave the amount, together with his property here, to his children. Mr. Langdon lived one year longer, incurring many more debts, as you have just seen, and going security for several men, who are now unable to pay one cent, and you are required to do it for them. You may then judge of my surprise, when, soon after your father's death, Mr. Avory brought forward this old bond and required a settlement. I advised you to refuse paying it until we might examine your father's papers and make a division of the property; when, I confidently believed, that I should find something to prove that this money had been paid: though I did not suppose Mr. Avory to be fool enough to enter a suit against you while knowing that your father possessed his receipt. I was disappointed; for I could not discover a line in which any allusion was made to the matter, and Mr. Avory had already brought suit against you. Yet, I still assert to *you*, that I confidently believe the money has been paid, though *what has become of the receipt and the manner in which it disappeared*, is—will, in

all probability, ever remain a secret to us. Then, may I ask of you, what is to be done?"

"Nothing," replied Langdon, gloomily, "as nothing can be found out: yet, I will say to you, also, that Mr. Avory's marriage with that woman, a relative, although a very distant one of my father's, whom he had taken to his house only because she was poor and destitute of a home; and then the sudden and bitter hatred which she has since manifested towards us, has created dark suspicions in my mind which I find it impossible to banish. Yet we could not advance our *suspensions* in court, as you know, when we have not a shadow of a proof, against a man of much less standing and position in society than Mr. Avory. So we have only to await the issue passively: yet we must closely observe every transaction."

Walter arose from his seat, and the gentleman, taking the hint, soon left, when the former slouched his hat upon his head and rushed from the house. He wandered about for some time in moody abstraction; when, changing his course and gait, he hurriedly repaired to the dwelling of his old friend, the parson, which had now often become a place of meeting for Imogen and himself. He entered with a forced smile, and was warmly welcomed by all; yet Imogen soon saw that he said very little to any one, and his eyes were constantly wandering about the room with a vacant expression, while he

seemed dead to everything that passed around him. Feeling very much alarmed, lest something serious had happened, she arose much earlier than she would otherwise have done, and prepared to depart for home; for she knew that it was Langdon's custom to accompany her as far as the church-yard, when she was not otherwise attended. They had walked on for several minutes in silence, Imogen with her arm passed through Langdon's, and her hand gently retained within his own.

"Why do you appear so abstracted?" she at length inquired anxiously, finding that he did not seem inclined to speak. Has anything very serious happened, or are you sick? You are looking so strange. I cannot bear to see you thus." He turned suddenly and gazed with a melancholy look upon that sweet, sorrowful face—

"You ask me why I am thus serious, and I will tell you," he replied, in measured accents. "It is because I begin to fear that I must soon leave you, and forever."

"Walter, you delight in *torturing* me, and you succeed most admirably, for you would not else speak to me thus."

"Torture you, my own cherished one? None but a *fiend* incarnate could do that, and I would not cause you a moment's anxiety for the world, if I could avoid it. Imogen, you know that we can not always live thus. You would be incurring

danger, and circumstances may transpire at any moment, that shall force me to leave my home; but I am miserable because I feel that you do not love me as you should; for if you did, you would not leave me alone to suffer the misery and suspense which I now endure. You tell me that your father and brother are unkind—nay, cruel towards you—that your brother is now trying to force you to marry one whom you can never love; and yet you say that there is no escape for you, and that you are compelled to remain and endure their ill-treatment, and are constantly causing me to fear that each time I see you may be the last. Imogen, you can never know how this tantalizes me. I find it impossible to stand it, and I have, this evening, sought your presence to say to you, that you must soon come to a positive decision—whether you will continue to remain with your unnatural relatives, and be treated most cruelly by them unless you marry some one whom you cannot love, or whether you will come, in spite of all opposition, and dwell within the heart and home of one who must ever love you devotedly, and who would desire that his home might become a *paradise* for your sake. You say that you cannot leave your father, in his old age, entirely in the power of his hated wife, who is constantly wearing away his life by her conduct; but, then, tell me what this father has ever done for you, save the bringing of an un-

natural and detestable wretch into his house, who has proved a continual scourge to you all? While *your brother* is endeavoring to gratify his inordinate love of mammon, by revelling, for a time at least, alone in his father's wealth; and yet you speak of the *gratitude* that *you owe them*. Imogen, here again, if it is necessary, I assure you, for the thousandth time, of my undying love, and beg that you will decide whether you will come to bless my home and render me the happiest of men, or whether you will bid me leave you forever; for I now tell you, in all the firmness of a resolve, solemnly taken, under the most unpleasant circumstances, that unless your determination is soon made, we must inevitably part. You know not how extremely humiliating it is to me to be continually coming thus, I may say, almost in the very teeth of my enemies, and to think that I am dependent on one of their name and household for my happiness, while (by far the worst feature of the whole affair) my intercourse with you is compelled to be secreted from their eyes, as if I were some low culprit sneaking up almost to their very doors to enjoy a privilege to which my character had not entitled me." He ceased speaking, but Imogen's sobs were his only answer.

"Your tears affect me much," he said in a voice more softened, but yet choked with emotion, "almost to madness; but they cannot shake my re-

solve. I do not require an answer of *you now*, for reasons which I may explain hereafter, and I must leave you here; but I demand of you that you will meet me, if but once more, on the third evening from this, in the church-yard by my sister's grave, where I first plighted to you my love, and that you will come firmly determined whether you will share my fortunes, and abandon those who should have loved you, but who do not; or else that you prefer remaining with them. Fail to come, and this shall be *our last meeting*; and now, (may I say,) for *the present, farewell*." So saying, he pressed her hand, turned hastily, and was gone.

Poor Imogen! what a conflict was raging in her mind and heart from that moment. She reached her home and found her father alone in his room.

"Come in, my child. Why is it that you leave us so much of late? I almost fear, Imogen, that our good parson and his wife are beginning to win your whole heart from us by their kindness. You must not think too hard of me, my child, if I am often compelled to speak harshly to you, in order to gratify your mother. She has a very quick temper, Imogen, and you have provoked her dislike by your boldness and independence of character; but, then, as you know her ungovernable disposition, I think, my child, that you might yield a *little* to her, and treat her with rather more respect, especially, as she occupies the place of a mother towards

you, and then she would not force me to speak so harshly to you; which, Heaven knows, I most sincerely regret to do. There—there child,” looking anxiously around, as Imogen burst into tears. “Go along now to your room, Blanche would be very angry were she to come in and learn all that had passed between us. Go to your room, my child;” and Imogen did go, but it was only to throw herself upon her bed in a flood of tears. Could she leave her dear father forever, who, she was convinced, would ever love her as he had formerly done, but for her step-mother? But, then, she must give up him whom she had learned to love so passionately—the only being on earth who was constant in his manifestations of affection towards her. Oh! she almost wished she had not seen her father when she returned, for then he would not have spoken those few words of suppressed affection, and she might have formed a determined resolution of forsaking *all* for him who was most dear to her. As she lay, thus agonized with doubt and indecision, a message came for her that Allen and a young gentleman were in the parlor, and her brother wished her to come down. She arose, much alarmed; her eyes were red and swollen with weeping; and she was in such a state of mind! But she felt that she was *compelled* to go. Allen looked very much displeased at her appearance, and Imogen was silent and abstracted. The gentleman had

called to see if Miss Ivory would not ride out, and if so, he would be pleased to accompany her?

“No,” she thanked him, very reservedly. “She had taken quite a long walk that evening, and did not feel as if she could enjoy going out again.” A portion of her coldness and reserve seemed by degrees to creep over all present, and the gentleman soon left.

“I’ll swear, Imogen,” said Allen roughly as soon as they were alone, “you do behave most unaccountably. Instead of talking and making yourself agreeable, you come in with your eyes as red as coals of fire, and exactly as if you had been crying all day, and then you mope without opening your lips. Any one, at seeing you, would declare that you were madly in love with the overseer’s son, or some low vagabond; and that some of us had chastised you on account of it. I think it a most unaccountable circumstance that you should thus manifest such total indifference to the attentions and admiration of men, young, *amiable*, talented and rich, and treat them as if you thought it a most surprising piece of impertinence in them to speak to you. My father has permitted you to prance down to that rascally preacher’s, every day, until you do not appear to desire to see any one else, or go anywhere but there. If I did not know that you had too much sense, as well as pride, I would believe that it was a rendezvous, where you

had met and fallen in love with some beggarly loafer; but, 'fore Heaven, I would shoot such a fellow down sooner than I would a dog." Imogen left the room without speaking, but very much provoked at Allen's rude and insulting language. Should she remain here all her life (for marry any one else she would not) to be thus treated by every member of her family? She could not stand it; and then she knew if she were to marry Walter, that she would never have a word spoken to her save in kindness—for he had promised to devote his whole existence to the promotion of her happiness—and who would do all this at home? Yes, Allen's ungentlemanly language had aided more in making her form a determination in favor of Langdon's request than anything else, and she now *firmly resolved*, that nothing but a direct interposition of Providence should prevent her from seeing him on the appointed evening, and telling him that she was prepared to follow him at any time that he should appoint.

Poor girl! she knew not what was to intervene and thwart all her resolutions! and perhaps it was well for her, for let every event come in its season, and we may yet endure misery enough. Imogen stood in constant dread of Allen, and as he seemed to observe her more closely during the whole of the ensuing day, she resolved to try and assume more gaiety of spirits, in order, if possible, to divert

any suspicions that he might have entertained concerning her; and accordingly, on the evening appointed for her interview with Langdon, Allen ordered his buggy and grays to be brought out, and to her great satisfaction, she saw him drive off. A little later, and with trembling steps, Imogen wended her way towards the old church; but when she arrived, Langdon was nowhere to be seen, and she sat down, too weak to stand, and with a great degree of uneasiness. Had he been, and finding her absent gone again, resolved to see her no more? But no! The sun had not yet set, and he would certainly have waited later for her; but time passed, and at length she arose, feeling that it would be improper for her to remain there *alone* any longer. She walked slowly towards the gate. Oh! what had happened that *he* did not come? but hark! she heard a step as she passed out, and looking up, Walter Langdon stood before her. Why did she start and give a scream of anguish as she glanced at his face? Oh, earth! it was so pale, so *rigid*, and he *looked* the picture of agony.

"Speak! speak!" she cried in a low but eager voice. "What—what has happened?"

"Imogen Ivory, I have come to bid you a last adieu. I stand before you *now* a *beggar*—yes, a *beggar*—do you hear? and I have been robbed of my *possessions by your father*." Slowly, as one intoxicated, he hissed the words into her ear. Pale

as death, and almost breathless, she staggered against the railing that enclosed the church-yard.

"Walter Langdon, before I leave you forever, tell me what grounds you can have for making this *false* assertion?"

"Imogen—"and his voice was broken, for his heart was touched at the sight of her suffering. "I have, perhaps, spoken hastily, and I implore your forgiveness. Yet, we must part. The suit between your father and myself has gone against me, and, were I to drop dead this moment, I could not command six feet of ground in which to be buried, and it is needless for us to *dream* of each other longer."

"Be it so, then. Farewell! but you will surely be accountable for all the misery you have cost me." Both Walter and Imogen turned suddenly and uneasily in the direction of the road. A buggy drove up almost upon them before it was seen. Imogen gave a loud scream and fell senseless to the earth. Allen Ivory leaped upon the ground, scowling upon Langdon, with fire flashing from his eyes, and he returned his fixed gaze with a look of bold defiance and disdain.

"So, I am avenged at last," said Walter in thick accents. "See her!" pointing with a shudder to Imogen, as she lay, apparently lifeless, upon the ground.

"And the mystery is now disclosed," said Allen,

scornfully, gazing coolly upon her motionless figure. "You, sir, I suppose, have been the cause of all her tears and melancholy looks; and think you that I shall not demand satisfaction of you, base coward, that you are, who have stolen the affections of a silly girl, and then sneak, like a thief, to some silent, unfrequented spot to hold meetings with her, whom you have been afraid to look upon in the presence of her relatives?"

"Allen Ivory," and a fearful smile played upon Langdon's lips as he spoke, "nothing that such a contemptible puppy as yourself could say would offend *me*; and yet we both shall have an *opportunity* of obtaining satisfaction, though not *here*, and without a witness to the act; for I do not wish to run the chances of having the word "Murderer" stamped upon my brow, in the eyes of my fellow-beings; but let us meet fairly and with an *appearance* of honor upon both sides, at least."

"Be it as you say, then," replied the impetuous Allen, who, with the many and mighty evils that defaced him, could not be termed a coward; "but understand, however, that *I* present the challenge. It only remains for you to state the terms."

"Then hear me! Virginia is an anti-duellist State. *I* have never transgressed any of her laws, and I do not wish to do it *now*. A few miles from us lies the Ohio river, and by crossing it we can be free to fight until one of us falls. To-morrow, then,

at sunrise, I request that you will meet me at — ferry on the western bank of the river, accompanied by your friends and furnished with pistols. I have no home to which I can return, and shall cross the ferry to-night. Until *we meet again*, then, *adieu!*” With mock humility, he raised his hat, turned and rapidly disappeared from sight.

Thus coolly and deliberately did this man plan the means of combat and death, with a jeering smile upon his lips.

CHAPTER IX.

THE COMBAT.

Blow! blow! ye winds, and twinkle on, ye shining, dancing stars; for ye wot not of the deed the morrow's sun shall witness. And thou too, silvery moon, can it be that thy pale face shall in future appear to a mortal's eyes as bathed in *human* blood? Oh! no; it cannot be! * * *

Two men stood upon the margin of Virginia's soil. The moon-lit waters dashed against the shore

and rolled on at their feet; but they were regardless of them. One stood in moody silence, his eyes fixed in the direction from whence they had come, as if anxious to peer through the misty veil of night upon some dear object left behind. At length he spoke:

“My friend, may you never know what it is to feel that you have severed the last remaining tie of affection that binds you to your home, and that you are forever banished from the scenes of your youth, while the remembrance of the happy hours that you have spent amongst them crowd heavily upon you.”

“Believe me, I feel no less sad than you, when I reflect, that after the morrow, I shall see you no more; for you say, that let the issue of this affair be what it may, you will not return to Virginia.”

“No. I have left nothing that could require my return, and I shall have (should I see to-morrow night) every reason for leaving it as far behind as possible.”

“Perhaps, this difficulty may be settled amicably on the field, and then——”

“It cannot be, Philip. I feel strangely this evening, and darker thoughts oppress my spirits than have ever done before. I hope I may not face death to-morrow with the same bitter feelings that I now have. Yet I tell you, I will not flinch, nor shall my hand tremble. I know the stock

from which my antagonist is sprung; and so deadly is their malice, when once excited, that their blood would boil at the thought of encountering an enemy in open combat."

"Yet it is said that the elder Ivory is ruled by a woman."

"For all that, he has never been known to *want boldness and nerve* in his dealings with *men*; and I cannot account for this, unless by supposing that that woman possesses a secret knowledge that may act upon a guilty conscience, and thus she has tamed him to be a mere child in her hands. There was a time when he was a very different man; but 'conscience makes cowards of us all.' I only hope that the clue to this secret influence may one day be discovered." There were a few moments of silence, and the other spoke:

"They say this ferryman has gone to take another party to the opposite shore. Why may we not rest here in his lodge all night, and get him to take us over by light in the morning?"

"That cannot be. It suffocates me to breathe Virginia's air, and I would not be in ~~the~~ State a moment longer than I can help. I suppose, too, my antagonist will be on here by light to-morrow, if not to-night, *and I do not wish to encounter him before the time appointed*. My friend, I have one request to make of you, and I may as well do it now as ever."

"You have but to name it, Walter, and it shall be granted."

"I knew that your promise could be easily obtained. My request is, then, that *should I fall to-morrow*, you will see that I am buried in the old church-yard, near my *former* home, where lie entombed the last remains of all those who were once very near and dear to me."

"My promise is already given, and I will most assuredly comply, if it is as you say; but may God and victory be with the right!"

"Amen!" replied Langdon, solemnly. They then sat down upon the shore, and many moments of silence elapsed, when the plying of oars was heard, and in a few moments more the ferryman pushed up his boat to the bank, and Langdon and his friend leaped in, and were being borne rapidly to the opposite side.

Virginia, farewell! With but comparatively few regrets at the time, the feet of a lone wanderer ceased to press thy soil; but, oh! in after years, how that heart yearned towards thee! when, in those calmer moments that followed the tempest, he reflected upon his boyhood's days and the happy hours spent on thy shores.

A lone man paced the floor of the small room, which had been consigned to him for the night, in a dilapidated old tavern in Ohio. Oh! how slowly did the moments pass, as he walked hour after hour

waiting for the dawn, and yet the night had not passed. Ah! poor lone one, couldst thou, in after years, have recalled those swiftly-flying moments how precious would each one have been to thee! but thou couldst not anticipate, and we *will not*.

Day-light came at last, stealing slowly and softly in at the old, curtainless window, and it was welcomed as a blessed relief from the still, conscience-awing hours of the night. Langdon felt that he was rushing madly upon his fate; yet an invisible hand seemed to lead him on, and he *yielded*.

Day-light came at last, and two men stood at the ferryman's lodge, on the Ohio river. One of the persons advanced, and knocked loudly at the door, when he again returned to his companion.

"I tell you, Grey, I fear we shall be too late. I long to be at our journey's end, and see that impudent rascal's blood flood the soil. Let us tell this fellow to be ready to take us back as soon as the *expedition* is finished," with a low, unnatural laugh; "for I know that they will be uneasy about me at home, should they guess at the cause of my absence, which it is more than probable they will be apprised of before my return."

"I feel that you will be successful, Allen; for you can have no great cause to inflame your anger, and make you fire at random. Only be cool, and you will be sure to hit the mark; for I have never known you to fail."

"Ha! ha! no; but here comes this fellow. Good morning, Mr. Ferryman. We have been trying to knock you up for the last hour. I wish you to take us over the river as soon as possible."

"You Virginians must be all emigratin' to Ohio," said the fellow, with an attempt at humor; "and all of you is in pairs. I had to row two gentlemen over late last night, and they 'peared to be goin' on some curious expedition; for they never spoke a word the whole way."

"Ah! well. We will make up for all that. We are going on a little pleasure excursion; and as we may be running into some danger, we had best make merry while we can. Random shots may sometimes hit; eh! Grey?" And thus did Allen Ivory leave the State in which he had so long dwelt, with a reckless, dashing spirit, soon to return; *but how?* Day-light had come; nay, the sun was beginning to peep above the horizon, and the two men stood in the bar-room at the old tavern.

"I must quaff a heavy bumper, Grey; for my nerves seem to be sleeping this morning, and my hand is not so steady as I could wish it. After all, it is not so funny to be engaged in a difficulty, in which you must either kill or *be killed*; but the victory is not *always with the just, is it?*"

"Not always; but, I'll declare, you asked that question as if *fearing* that it would be."

"Ha! ha! did I? Well; but I think the sight of that poltroon, Langdon, will serve to arouse my spirit, if there is any in me."

"I should think," replied the one called Grey, drawing his shawl more closely about him; "I should think it time that the other party were making their appearance. I hope the fellow is not going to back out."

Langdon was still up, as the sun began to show his face, absorbed in the bitterest reflections, and walking rapidly up and down the floor.

"My friend, the time has come for us to go forth, and yet the evil spirit possesses my heart. I have never felt fear at the thought of encountering 'aught of woman born;' but I am proud to say, that I tremble to think that, in a few moments, I may be made to appear before my Creator; and, still more, to think that I may be the means of *hurrying* another soul into eternity, with all its grievous weight of guilt unpardoned; and yet I could not ask that mercy for another which I will not implore for myself. Think you, Arlington, that were this fellow, though base and contemptible as he is, to fall, I could ever rest in peace, or obtain pardon from my God for the deed? No; for He has said, 'Thou shalt not kill.' And is it not the greatest piece of presumption in me to stand in the very face of Omnipotence, and say, '*I will try to do it?*' yet the evil spirit says, '*do not turn back;*' and I

cannot, though I feel that, should I be the survivor, this fellow's blood will be required at my hands. Ah! it takes a much braver man to *refuse to fight a duel*, than to engage in one. It is the desperation of the weak, nerved up to an imaginary state of calmness, (and men can nerve themselves to do anything,) to walk up to another, and let your actions say, 'Now, sir, I am brave enough to shoot you down like a wild animal; because I know if I do not, you will certainly have no mercy upon me;' but it is the soul-struck terror of a wise and strong man that begins to invade our spirit, when we can say with truth, 'I do not, and *have never* blanchèd before the face of mortal man;' but I, a puny worm, will not go madly into the very face of Omnipotence, and say, 'I defy you,' when I know that He can destroy me by His tremendous fiat. Would that I had this bravery, but I have not;" and he bowed his head in solemn silence upon his hand. "Arlington, the other party has arrived. See if the conveyance that you have provided is ready;" and, as the other went forth, he took a small miniature case from his pocket, and opened it. "Imogen, once more farewell," he muttered. "Though I fall, my last thoughts shall be of thee: and even should I be spared, it is meet that oceans should separate us; for the *blood of a brother* must ever flow as a dividing channel between us. And, oh! if she should live to see *that*, how the gentle

heart, that once *loved me*, will curse and *abhor* all thoughts of me—the murderer of her peace and happiness.”

Philip Arlington again entered, and took Langdon by the arm :

“Walter, the time has come, and *all things are in readiness*. Is there, then, anything that you would request of me before leaving here?”

“I thank you, my kind and only friend; but I have nothing to say; and I now have but one wish, and that is, *that both shots may take effect, and each of us fall a corpse upon the field*.” In silence the two passed down into the yard. An old carriage stood at the door. They entered it, and drove rapidly off, while another followed but a few paces behind. In a tall oak forest, about a mile from the place from whence they had started, a small and level circle of land presented itself. The first carriage halted, and its two occupants got out. The other did the same, and the gentlemen leaped upon the ground. The friends of the principals met in consultation. Allen Ivory stood aloof, conversing with the surgeon, and endeavoring to manifest as much indifference as possible; but, notwithstanding, it could be clearly seen that his face was much paler, and his hand far less steady than usual. Langdon stood in moody silence, gazing upon the ground, with an expression of the most determined resolution upon his countenance.

The seconds finding that neither of their friends would propose an agreement, at length measured off the distance, and returning to their principals, placed a pistol in their hands, and drew off several paces. The word ‘Fire!’ was to be the signal for a discharge. A moment more, and the utterance of that death-knell was heard by all. A single and clear report rang through the air. The mist was in an instant swept away by the morning’s breeze. Each one glanced hurriedly around, and beheld Allen Ivory stagger and fall forward. The gentlemen rushed to him. Langdon also came slowly up, with a fearful smile upon his lips. Allen’s pistol had *only snapped*. Verily the hand of Providence had directed and wisely ordained that act.

“Heavens! I am dying!” groaned the fallen man, in agony. “Doctor, stop this stream of blood, or I *shall die too soon*. Oh! my God! I feel that it is *only blood-for blood*! Walter Langdon, my heart in death relents more towards you than I had ever believed it could. Oh! agony, I am going. Walter, I have a dark secret to communicate to you. Bid those gentlemen retire, for they should not hear my story, and it is not in the power of mortal man to do me any good.”

Great was the amazement manifested in each countenance; but at Langdon’s earnest request, they retired beyond hearing, for Ivory refused to speak while any one was near; and then, being

somewhat raised from his recumbent position, he spoke, as if forced against his will by some invisible power:

"Walter Langdon, you may despise my memory, but I must lighten my conscience of its great weight of guilt ere my lips are forever closed. You still remember Harry Bennington, and (oh! just Heaven, I am growing chilly,) you remember the scenes of his death, and the arrest of Lewis Weston, his *supposed* murderer. But I must go back to an earlier time. Langdon, in early youth, when we were professed friends, I always despised you, because of your haughty, self-important bearing—and principally, because it was through your influence that Flora learned to look upon me with disdain. Thus, long before the hostility that sprung up between our parents, I had entertained a most deadly *hatred* for your *whole* race. But I was not the villain *then* that I afterwards *became*. Walter, you have long since known of the malignity of my *step-mother's* nature, and of the never-dying enmity that she had learned to entertain for you all after her marriage with my father. Hers was a hatred that knew no bounds; and it was with the most unwearying efforts that she at length accomplished the great aim of her life—your *ruin*. She it was that led your father on, until at last he was overwhelmed with debt. She it was that caused you to be cheated out of the entire sum that you lost in

the suit with my father. But she made me the instrument of your *ruin*. After causing Mr. Langdon to throw away as much of his property as she could do, she determined to *take* the balance. She knew of my hatred for you all, and pointed out to me the way in which you might be made a *beggar*. She promised me that if I would do the deed, I might have the entire sum of money at my disposal, and my avarice made me consent; but it was not until after the act was perpetrated, that I began to relent, and found that one secret crime invariably led to the committal of others far worse. When the irrevocable deed was done, and the money that should have gone to my father was spent, we found that there was a living witness to the fact, and that as soon as he should discover that the money had never been paid to my father, he could testify that it had been placed *in my hands*. I was overwhelmed with terror when I discovered this; but again that mysterious, guilty woman pointed out to me a way of escape, though it was such a *bloody* one. She told me that I must either go to *my father*, and tell him that I had *committed forgery*, and cheated you out of your lawful inheritance, or else be accused by this witness when the old bond should be presented to you, and that I would have to die, perhaps, and rot in the State prison, if I did not forever seal his lips in death—and I swore

to do it. Walter Langdon, that witness was Harry Bennington! and *I it was that murdered him.*"

"Loathsome reptile!" hissed the excited Langdon, between his clenched teeth: "can it be that you were the murderer of *my sister's* happiness, and finally the cause of *her* death, also? Then, verily I have been justly selected by Heaven as the avenger of our manifold wrongs!"

"It is needless for you to curse me now," continued the dying man, "for you are already avenged. But I must hasten on to tell you of the manner in which the *deed* was done. Immediately after I discovered that Harry Bennington was cognizant of the manner in which I had defrauded you out of your property, you returned with him to college, and I followed you; for I was resolved that he should die before discovering that my father had never been paid. On my arrival, I found that Lewis Weston was one of Bennington's warmest friends, and I determined to make him an instrument in my hands: and I found it necessary to make them enemies, which was no difficult task, for Bennington's moral lectures had already become very unpleasant to him; and I soon poisoned Weston's mind with regard to all virtue, by leading him on into the greatest excess of vice. But I found that I was laboring in vain to produce any difficulty between them; and though they continued to have

strong disputes, Bennington always refused to fight, and Weston could only vent his displeasure in abuses. I had been waiting long for an opportunity, when, at last, it came. I was dogging your steps on the day of Bennington's death, when I heard him make use of that idle threat against his former friend's life, and I felt that my time was come. I was near by when you left him alone, and was about to do the deed, when Weston came up. I secreted myself, and listened: a fierce dispute ensued; but at last Weston became so terribly inflamed at Harry's contempt of all his threats, that he turned and walked hurriedly off. He was out of sight of the other, but still very near us, when I fired my pistol at the innocent victim, who had again opened some volume to read, and he fell, completely stunned and almost dead at the time. I threw the weapon, which I had taken from the supposed criminal's room, and which had his name labeled upon it, over by the body, and again hid myself, when Weston, who had heard the report, turned and rushed back. With surprise and horror written on his countenance, he saw his old friend lying, bleeding and almost lifeless, before him. He stooped and raised *his* pistol, when at that moment I rushed forward and seized him; still holding it in his hand, and cried "murder!" You know how a crowd then gathered around us, and how the infuriated mob refused to listen to a word from the unhappy man,

who had at first been so completely overpowered by my singular charge that he was deprived of the power of speech; and poor Bennington, on being aroused for a moment, and having but a confused recollection of what had passed, died, believing and confessing that Weston was his murderer. You remember how the supposed criminal was hurried off to prison; and I felt that I was safe. But I was not so entirely inhuman as to be willing to see an innocent man die for a crime which I had committed. I had a letter conveyed to him—for he had continued to protest his innocence—and I told him that every one was satisfied that he had committed the deed, but that as I had been an eye-witness of the difficulty that had taken place between them, I could attest that he had shot the other in self-defence if he would not lead every one to suppose him more guilty than he really was, by denying it. He knew that all the circumstances were against him, and, with a cowardly fear of death, he confessed *the lie*. And you know all the rest. Langdon, I would tell you all—how that—that receipt was taken, and I spent the money, which my father afterwards sued for and obtained, for he knew not that it had been paid. But I am almost gone. Poor Imogen, she will now shudder at the mere mention of your name, and you, the—the—but, Walter, I die. Lord, have mercy on my—my——.”

His voice died away in a gurgling sound. He fell back, his limbs grew stiff, and thus, with his tale but half told, Allen Avory's soul was with his God.

Verily retribution cometh even at the eleventh hour. Ah! how different to the beholder was the death of this blood-stained wretch from that of the noble, upright Christian hero, who, some two years since, had fallen by his hand!

Reader, contrast the two, and draw a moral.

CHAPTER X.

THE SCORPION'S STING.

Oh! how miserable and agonized with fright she was, as she sat by that window, hour after hour, amidst the lone watches of the night, peering out into the darkness, and yet he did not come. Sleep! No thoughts of rest could enter her troubled soul then; for she felt that, like him of Syracuse in the olden time, a sword was suspended above her head, but by a single hair; and, writhing in agony, she

looked each moment for it to fall, and pierce her very heart. She felt as if she were irrevocably condemned, and, with that thought, every trembling fibre of her gentle heart seemed wrenched asunder, and every sentiment of admiration and tenderness for him turned into gall; and she felt as if she could have torn out her own heart, as she thought: Oh! why had she thus *madly, madly* devoted herself to the worship of one who would now relentlessly, and without a thought of *her*, *slay her brother*, in his vindictive malice, or else cause that brother to stain his hands in *her lover's* blood, and she must know that she had been the cause of all this."

Royally beautiful, in her queen-like majesty, was the silvery moon, as she pursued her walk amongst the stars, shedding abroad that calm and holy influence which tends so much to excite the purer and loftier emotions of our souls. You who have turned your backs upon the gilded floors of this mighty creation, and have fixed your steadfast glance upon the blue serene of heaven's ethereal vault, and whose wishes and aspirations are ever and only tending onward and upward—her chaste face may prefigure to you another and a better existence; but not so was it with Imogen. She felt no awe and dread in regarding the grand, the sublime, the mighty works of creation, as they lay before her in their silent grandeur, nor did she yet blend

with them thoughts of the Creator. Her mind was filled, and her heart wretched and torn, by the things of this world; and it was in vain that the voice of Nature—the murmurings of that something righteous and holy implanted within us—invaded the inner citadel of her heart, and spoke in soft-wooing tones: "Come unto me, *all ye* that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." She tried to calm the troubled torrent that was raging within, but all in vain; for a vague fear—*dread* of something, she did not know what—pervaded her whole system; and when she tried to commit herself into the hands of Providence, and say, with hopeful, trusting resignation, "Thy will be *done*," the very breathing of the words seemed to choke her. She did kneel by her window, and vow most solemnly that should Allen return to her in safety, and with his hands unstained with the blood of her *former* lover, she would gladly, thankfully renounce all thoughts of him, and tamely submit to whatever punishment they might inflict upon her; but even this did not calm her.

Night waned, and, at last, a faint light began to spread itself over the horizon, and she tried to think that she was but tormenting herself with vain and idle fears. It was true that Allen had suddenly appeared before her, while she was conversing with Langdon, and had advanced towards them in great anger; but, then, she had fallen insensible from

fear, and did not *know* what had passed. "Oh! why had she not tried to stand *all*, that she might have heard what had been said between them, and known whether she had any grounds to fear as she did or not; but she had only awoke from the swoon into which she had fallen just before they reached her father's door. She only knew that Allen had led her in grim silence to her room, telling the servant to let his horses stand, as he would start again in a few moments, and when she, on her knees, had implored him to tell her that he was not going to see or speak with Mr. Langdon, and that she alone was to blame, he had only turned off with a sneer, and said, that "she would know when he came back," leaving her *knowing nothing*, but *fearing everything*. And, then, the worst—yes, by far the worst of all—was that her father knew nothing of all that had passed. He did not even dream that she had ever seen or spoken to Langdon since they both were children. Then how great would be his *agony* and wrath if Allen were to return home, but to be arrested for *killing one*, whose death *she* had caused by her folly; and they should then learn who had been the object of *her love*; or, worse than all that, if aught *could* be, suppose Allen, whom they all, of course, believed to be visiting some friend, were to be brought home *dead—murdered*—before they had heard one word of the difficulty; and then they should discover that

all the blame ought to rest upon her. Oh! how chilly the bare suspicion made her feel; but as the bright, cheering sun began to rise, and shed his radiant light into her room and upon all nature without, as it seemed to bask and revel in his gorgeous rays, she thought that every thing seemed too happy and cheerful for her to be condemned to such maddening woe; for she was an unoffender in thought, at least; so, calming herself with this reflection, she at last arose, and threw herself upon her bed, where, in a few moments, she fell into a troubled sleep. Many were the confused visions that passed, in quick succession, before her vivid and excited imagination. She saw that pale, stern face before her, just as it had appeared the day before. She heard him, in solemn tones, bid *her* a lasting adieu, when, lo! Allen came upon them, his eyes glaring in almost demon-like fury; but Langdon seemed only to treat him with silent and sovereign contempt; when suddenly, and to her great horror, the person who had appeared to her, at first, as her brother, was now transformed into a hideous serpent. She stood, as she thought, transfixed, when she saw Langdon turn pale, and shudder as he gazed upon the serpent, which slowly advanced towards him; but he did not move; and, at last, she screamed aloud, as she saw it begin slowly to coil itself around him; yet Walter still

stood motionless, until the head of the venomous reptile had reached his breast; and suddenly its poisonous fangs were buried in his heart, when, standing for a moment more, he slowly fell, and fixing his large expressive eyes mournfully upon her, he said, in dying, "This is your work."

Imogen awoke with a shudder and a faint scream, and found her maid bending over her.

"Lor'! Miss Imogen, get up! You has been tremblin' and talkin' in your sleep, jist like you was scared to death. Breakfast done over long ago, and mistis says table shan't wait any longer."

"Leave me alone, Alice, and tell your mistress that I do not want any breakfast. I feel too much indisposed this morning." The girl left her. No one had been up to see her on the previous evening, when Allen had brought her home. A servant had come up to know if she wished any supper; but she had pleaded the same excuse as now, and had been troubled no more; for Mrs. Ivory had not been near her, as was always the case, when *she* was sick; but Imogen found that she could not now stand the loneliness. She arose and dressed, looked at her watch, and found it was *ten* o'clock. He had not come yet; but she would not, at any other time, have thought that strange; for he often left home, and remained away several days at a time. Perhaps, he had gone out of the immediate neigh-

borhood visiting, and would do that now. She took her seat at the window, keeping her eyes steadfastly fixed upon the road.

Eleven! Twelve! *One* o'clock came, and yet she had not moved. See that common horse cart coming slowly, slowly over the distant hills, with several men riding after it. "O, God! what is it? But it may not be coming to *her* father's house. Pshaw! how silly she was!"

On, very slowly on, comes the cart and riders. They reach the old church-yard, and, O, agony! maddening agony! they come—on still into her father's enclosure. She looks down now, and sees the old man standing in the yard under a tall, shady aspen tree, his eyes fixed in wonder and amazement upon the slowly-approaching party. He does not move! She would scream out, and tell him that they brought home the *body of her brother*—murdered by herself; but her tongue clove to the roof of her mouth.

On! yet nearer on they come! and who is that tall, foremost rider, who now canters slowly along in front to where her father stands, and, dismounting, hands him something? It is a note. Can it be some piece of intelligence so dreadful that the man's delicate feelings would prevent him from giving utterance to it in words? Her father reads! By this time the cart has drawn up to where he stands. He appears petrified! The note drops

from his hands, and his eyes seem fixed. Several gentlemen dismount from their horses, and slowly lift something from the shabby old conveyance. It must be a *human body*, though a covering is spread over it. They advance a few paces, and reach the spot where her father stands. He bends forward. What is he going to do? Surely, it is nothing serious, or he would have given an exclamation of horror.

Behold!

Slowly the old man raises the covering. O, righteous Providence! why was she not made blind, ere she beheld that sight? Yes, there was a human body, the clothing all bedaubed with gore, and the face, oh! so ghastly looking! He was dead—*dead*; and yet she sits and sees it all, though the icy coldness of the frigid zone seems to be curdling her blood.

She yet looks on! She sees her old and gray-headed parent fall upon the body, exclaiming in all the heart-rending agony of King David:

"Oh! my son! my son! Would to God I had died for you;" and she knows no more.

Imogen awoke at last. Several alarmed-looking domestics were standing around her, but they were *all*.

"Oh! tell me that I have only had a terrible dream, and that Allen is here safe." Bowed heads and loud sobs were her only answer.

"Ha! ha! I see that you *all* are leagued together to drive me *mad*, and you will succeed. Let me go." Down the stairs, like one mad, indeed, she flew. Some one stood in the passage.

"Where is *he*?" she inquired, in a voice fearfully calm. They pointed to the parlor. The work had been done quickly. There stood a table in the middle of the room, with a white pall over it. She raised Death's veil. Yes, it was Allen's face thus covered with that hateful mantle. Oh! what a ghastly smile rested upon his lips. She heard a groan, and looked up. There lay her father extended upon the floor, and she had caused him to suffer thus. She bent over him.

"Father, I have *murdered* him. Kill me, and be avenged."

The story had been told him from the lips of others. The old man raised himself slowly, and looked at her.

"Girl, leave me! The sight of you maddens me. I curse you and his *murderer—your lover*. May Heaven heap its worst wrath *upon him*. May he roam the world through, begging bread from door to door, and only receive sufficient to sustain his miserable life—that he may be spared to *old age*, and suffer, every moment, all the woe that he has inflicted upon me a hundred fold. May the blood of *my son* be continually before his eyes, and may the remembrance of this deed be constantly

piercing his heart more keenly than a two-edged sword, and at last may——”

“Cease, cease!” cried the girl, wildly. “God *will* assuredly bring him to an account; but you heap your rebuke upon me. Banish me from your house, if you will; only do not let a father’s lips breathe a curse against his daughter, who now suffers all that he has hoped would be the lot of the innocent destroyer of our peace.” She ceased. The aged parent’s sobs broke forth, and he clasped her in his arms.

“Verily, my daughter, I deserve the wrath of Heaven for the wickedness that I have uttered in my madness; but I am, indeed, miserable, and my punishment is greater than I can bear.” Thus were this father and daughter, who had for so long been estranged, now drawn closely together by this heavy affliction; at a time, too, when the girl had felt that she mostly deserved his wrath; and so much overcome was she by this sudden outburst of long pent-up affection, that, in spite of the terrible weight of affliction that had befallen them, Imogen felt a momentary thrill of happiness; but another hated figure intruded itself upon them, and marred this touching scene, while she, laboring under a terrible degree of excitement, exclaimed:

“Aye, old dotard! clasp to your heart the reptile that has stung you, by murdering your *son*, and hurrying his guilty soul into eternity. You all

deserve this heavy affliction, or it would not have befallen you; and now, sir, let your beautiful Imogen go and fall madly in love with some other vagabond, who shall take you out and send you home a bleeding corpse. Do not interrupt me, miss; nor you either, sir. I will speak what I have to say; and I shall torture you both enough yet. You do not know, do you, *that your son*, and *your brother*, Miss Imogen, has been the means of cheating his *murderer* out of the *money* that he has just lost in this suit—that if he were now living, and others knew what *I* do, he would soon be languishing in the State prison, convicted of the crime of *forgery*? Aye! does this startle you? I thought it would; and now you both may live with the pleasant reflection, that he has been hurried into the presence of his God without a moment’s preparation. You would like to learn *what proof I can give* of this, would you? But *that is my secret*. You may doubt the truth of what I say, if you will; but the thought will *often* haunt you, that you have wrongfully turned your *old friend’s* only surviving child a *beggar* upon the face of the world, while you live with your hoarded mass of ill-gotten wealth rusting in your coffers. *Your hearts may be tender enough* to suggest to you the thoughts of making a restitution; but I do not think you will ever find out how to set about that, sir; for you can never learn in what manner the deed was per-

petrated, and you know the Langdon race sufficiently well to be aware of the fact, that should you desire to restore to this boy all of his possessions, he would *rather beg every morsel of bread that he is to eat for years, and then die of starvation*, than accept a *single dime* from you, unless he clearly understood your reasons for offering it, and the nature of the injury that he has sustained at your hands; but I do not think any of you will ever discover *that*; as I believe I am the only person now living cognizant of the fact. Aye! you need not stare at me in that manner. I think I can now be sufficiently avenged on you, Miss Imogen, for all of your bold impudence, by *occasionally* recalling to your mind that you *once loved* the man that *murdered your* brother, and that by this means *you have caused his death*."

"Woman," said the old man, overcome with sorrow and many different emotions, and now, for the first time in many years, addressing his wife in a stern, commanding voice, "cease your fiendish and unnatural harangue, and leave us alone, amid scenes too solemn, too awe-inspiring, to be intruded upon by aught so hateful to our sight as yourself."

"Aye! my old gentleman, sorrow makes you bold; but I shall remember *this*; and now, as I have nothing more to say, I *will* leave you, for a time, to your own reflections." Thus speaking, this most unaccountable woman gazed for one mo-

ment on the pale face of Allen Ivory, and then hurriedly left the room.

Reader, need I go on with this? I do not like to expose the character, whose good and noble qualities I have been endeavoring to portray to you, in all the overwhelming agony and weakness of the first moments of her *great trials*. I would fain have you sympathize with her still, but regard her griefs as sacred, and so I will pass on to after-scenes.

Let me speak of her after the first mighty outburst of the storm had abated, and when, in the solitude of her chamber, she could reflect, still with the deepest sorrow, yet with a degree of calmness, upon the dark cloud that had overshadowed her life. She would throw the entire blame upon herself, and she felt as if Providence had but dealt justly with her; for she feared that she had done very wrong in first entertaining a single thought of abandoning her weak and aged father to the mercies of a *relentless fiend*, for one who should have had no claim upon her affections; and thus, while constantly told that she had loved one so "degraded, so entirely unworthy of a lady's love," she *tried* to forget him; yet I will not *here* say that she *did*. Let the sequel show for itself. As time passed on, Imogen became yet purer and better, by the sadness that she and all around her had felt; and the more seriously she reflected, the more her

heart was softened to take pure and lasting impressions. In the first moments of her great agony, the demon of rebellion gained the ascendancy in her heart, and giving utterance to her thoughts, she said that cruel fate had dealt this heavy blow upon *one* of her household, in order to behold the sufferings of the innocent; for she knew that her father had done no great evil in the sight of his Maker to merit this retribution at His hands; but even while entertaining these rebellious thoughts, she knew that she was committing great sin, and she could not obtain peace. Then, in her calmer moments, she began to reflect, and a still, small voice seemed often and audibly to whisper, "What is it to thee, if I should choose to reclaim my own?" Yes, He had but reclaimed his own! She had not thought of that at first; but, oh! what presumption it was in *her* to murmur! In answer to this thought, her heart sent back the response, "Verily, I have sinned against Heaven!" while the reflection filled her soul with secret dread and sorrow. She would gaze upon the vaulted sky, hemming in all inferior creation in its awful immensity; and she would read in all this, that the Creator of this mighty work was a living, loving, *just* God—the Father of all; and that He, perhaps, with His strong arm of justice, had come quickly to avenge some great and secret sin committed by her brother; for, in allusions made by her step-mother to

this fact, she remembered that the Lord had said, "Vengeance is mine—I will repay;" and thus, in contemplating the mighty works of Omnipotence, Imogen's soul was filled with awe and reverence, and her heart's cry, each day, was—

"Before the Chastener humbly let me bow,
O'er hearts divided, and o'er hopes destroyed."

Thus Imogen learned to enjoy that calm of conscience which the things of this world can neither give nor take away; and with tears and a brave heart, sustaining her through all, she would read, "Those whom I love, I chasten. Be zealous, therefore, and repent." Oh! had the great and mighty God thus afflicted her, only that she might flee from the wrath to come? and she, at last, acknowledged her transgression, and His tender mercies, with humbleness and a truly contrite spirit, while her heart's prayer and cry to God was: "Lord, deal not with thy servant according to her iniquity; but, in *Thy tender mercy*, blot out all her transgressions." And "I know, O Lord! that thy judgments are right, and that Thou, in thy faithfulness, hast afflicted me. Let thy loving kindness be for my comfort, according to Thy word, unto thy servant."

Calmly now did she look forward into the dark and uncertain future. There was nothing that could again so agonize her once proud heart; for "she

knew in whom she believed." Life, it is true, might have nothing to gladden her heart; for he whom, of all the outer world, she had most loved, had left her alone, and had, perhaps, forgotten her; yet she looked forward anxiously to a still brighter hope. Strange and most touching was it to behold one so lovely, so young and pure, thus awaiting, almost with anxiety, the great change, when she should be released from all her cares and trials. She now bore no dislike to the mysterious and most-forbidding woman who was constantly crossing her path; but, when almost ready to murmur under the great burden that she was called upon to bear, she would remember that He, who once died for all, had said, "Blessed are they that shall be persecuted," and she was comforted.

CHAPTER XI.

"NOT YET."

It was twilight, and yet he walked onward. His steps were, perhaps, a little accelerated, as he saw that the sun had already set; yet there was the same wearied, heavy tread, and his face was even more pinched and hungry looking than ever. He seemed to have traveled a long distance, for he was very weak, and almost breathless; yet he had no baggage with him—nor would the thin, thread-bare trowsers, nor the coat, worn entirely out at the elbows, have led any one to suppose that he possessed *much* anywhere. Then, too, there was such a strange expression about the man's thin, pale face—such a stern, rigid contraction of the muscles about his mouth—a look so miserable, so hungry, so wild in his large, dark eye, that one could almost have mistaken him for a *madman*. He appeared to look forward anxiously into the distance, and as he reached each gentle rise, and turned each corner in the road, and still saw nothing but the great river rolling onwards, the low shrubbery on its banks, and the fields as they lay

spread out before him; he would often utter a most heart-piercing groan. At length he sat down upon a large stone by the road-side.

"I think," he said, aloud, "that *I must be near the city*, for I hear the busy hum of the immensity of human beings there congregated; but still I *cannot see it*. Oh! that my strength may last me until I reach it, for I feel that I am *starving to death*. Yes, I *must push on*."

Onward he went. At a short distance from him he could see many vessels going up and down the great Mississippi river, but he must *walk*, for he was a beggar, without one cent of *money*. Twilight deepened, and yet clearer and nearer was heard the busy hum of New Orleans, like the confused murmurings and roaring of some mighty water-fall; still the sound did not appear to bring much joy to the poor wanderer, though he had listened for it and watched for the town for many hours. He could still hear the twittering of birds and the buzzing of insects amongst the shrubbery around him, and again he paused.

"How harshly," he muttered, "does the confused murmur of that vast concourse of *human beings* grate upon my ear, as I stand here now in the quiet of Nature's own solitude. Yonder is the rush and storm of man's existence, and his boasted inventions. Here are the still but beautiful works of Nature, unsullied by the appearance of a despi-

cable human being besides myself; and how much better for me, how much more imposing would this scene be if the earth beneath my feet would only open and swallow me up from view: for I must to yonder city, and banishing *all pride*, cry Charity! begging the inhabitants—miserable cumberers of the earth, like myself—for *bread* to maintain my life, while many a low, indolent churl, lounges about and revels in his ill-deserved—perhaps, ill-gotten wealth. Yet moralists would tell me that a just Ruler presides over us."

Reader, would you like to discover what it is that has rendered this man so wretched? Then let us think.

Could it be that gaunt Poverty had overtaken him in the midst of great wealth, and had pointed with its lean finger to the doors of some rich and princely dwelling saying, in mocking tones, "Go forth! for you have revelled here long enough, and leave all behind you, for it is another's;" and then he had gone forth, like Abraham, though only in this, that he knew not where he should rest? And had he applied to the cold world for charity, asking from door to door for bread, and yet been turned from by many—nay, often his calamities mocked at, while a voice had still whispered, "Onward! for thy rest is not yet?" Yes, all this had happened; and yet the cause lies not here. Is he some murderer or highwayman, fleeing from the

clutches of the law; and now wearied and breathless, sinking down almost in insensibility, while the cry of the blood-hounds, and the victorious shout of the pursuers are sounding in his ears, and he feels that he is lost forever?

Glance at that firm, noble brow, though sorrow, *wretchedness* and *great poverty* have placed their brand upon it, and the general bearing of the man will tell you.

"You have not guessed yet."

Had the wild impetuosity and rash waywardness of youth led him on and on into the depths of dissipation and folly, until he had become dead to all honor and humanity—led him on to the committal of some deed, to the dread consciousness of which his slumbering soul had been aroused, *but too late*, and had then started up, as if from a death trance, gazing in agony and conscience-awing guilt upon his most miserable, and irremediable condition, while he had heard a voice hissing in terrible mockery, "*It is too late to return; for the deed is done?*"

"Look into the man's heart—read that, and you will say, '*This is not the cause.*'"

Know then, gentle reader, (for I fear that I have wearied you already with vain surmises,) that this man had done nothing that many virtuous and high-minded individuals would not only have considered themselves justified in doing, but actually called

upon to do by the very laws of honor. Then what was this act? Patience, gentle reader, and we shall learn.

The wanderer entered the suburbs of the city of New Orleans with tottering steps, for he was momentarily growing weaker, and at last he sunk in utter exhaustion upon the steps of a low, dismal and miserably dilapidated hovel.

"Verily retribution is at hand," he muttered faintly. "I shall die of starvation in this great city before morning, and there is *no one* to help me." Night had cast its gloomy vail over the place, and in the very outskirts of the town there were no street lights to relieve the pitchy darkness, and those within the few dwellings around did not appear to be lit, if they were inhabited; but a step was heard approaching, and it came yet nearer up.

"By St. Patrick! what is this?" grumbled a coarse voice, in not very plain English, as the individual trod upon, or rather stumbled over something like a human body. "Who are yer that lies down at folks' doors to be trod upon in this manner any how? Up and away, I say."

"Bread! bread! Give me something to eat, or I shall perish—*starve to death at your door.*"

"And that's ixagly what many a bitter person en you has done my good feller; but let's git a light firs' and take a peep at one another."

"Oh! for God's sake, do not leave me here to die."

"Niver does you mine that. I reckon as how I'm a comin' back some o' these days." So saying, the individual pushed by the man lying on the steps and entered the hovel. A faint light soon appeared within, and a low, chunky youth again came to the door, with a dirty lantern in one hand and a stick in the other. He bent over the man, holding the light low and peering into his face.

'Fore gracious, I believe the feller is right hungry, sure enough. He looks orful white. Here I say, my man, (giving the other a smart chunk with his stick,) can't you crawl in here awhile, and I'll gin you somethin' to ate; but ye'd better make er powerful 'urry, and git out agin 'fore the old man comes 'long here, for yer might not fare so well then;" and with various other exclamations the youth at last succeeded in assisting the stranger into the room, and drew up a chair, into which he fell rather than seated himself, when a third person—a tall, thin, dark-looking ruffian—entered.

"Well, boy, who's this here feller ye've gat in here now, eh? How many times shall I tell ye about draggin' sich creeturs as this in my 'ouse?" and the man advanced with a dark scowl towards the stranger and the youth who stood beside him.

"Ah! Master Pétrone, I ax yer pardon, sur;

but this here poor man was lyin' at the steps, almost dead fur somethin' to ate, and I jist let 'im in here, to gin him a pace o' bread, so he might git on away, and not let folks think we had let a man die at yer doors, or else that we 'ad murdered him."

"Well, master Guillame, I'll pardon ye this time, but ye are niver to do the like agin. Let this man eat what ye've got there for him, and then let 'im be gone. 'As Monsieur Gregoire been here this evening?"

"No, sur; but there's he now," as another man entered the house, enveloped almost wholly in a long cloak.

"Ah! Mr. Pétrone," said the new comer, to the man of the house, "I am glad to find you in. I have just called to tell you that I have got the money for you; but you have a new comer here, I see."

"Yes, sir, some drôle that this boy has let in here, to give him somethin' to eat. Guillame is too kind, I shall make him know. And I say, Mr. stranger, yer had jist as well be gittin' on out uf here yerself;" for the young man who had just entered, was turning as if to depart.

"Oh! sir," replied the stranger, in a weak voice, though he already felt much relieved by the coarse repast of which he had partaken, "I know of no place that I can go to to-night, and I shall have

to remain in the street until morning, if you turn me out. Let me remain here during the night, at least."

"An' pray, w'at am I to git if I do, an' ye not worth the salt ye've already ate in yer bread? Git on out, I 'as no use for sich as ye in my 'ouse." The stranger arose from his seat. You would hardly have expected to see such a proud, almost defiant expression upon the face of a beggar; and yet his lips were curled in the most disdainful manner, as he advanced towards the door and spoke:

"I am thankful to you, sir, or rather to this youth, for the means of continuing my life, for a few hours at least. *Farewell.*" He turned abruptly, and left the house. The young gentleman also followed him.

"Poor fellow! his manner bespeaks one born in better circumstances; I should like to know what great misfortunes have befallen him, that he should thus be reduced to this miserable condition. I must see that he finds a resting place somewhere to-night." So saying, the gentleman continued to walk leisurely on a few paces behind the stranger, who often paused and sighed as he continued his wanderings. The young man had followed him for some considerable distance, when seeing at least that he appeared to have no object in view, he drew up and laid his hand upon his shoulder.

"I think, friend, that you are a stranger in this city, and perhaps without money. Know you, then, of any place where you can rest for the night?"

"None, sir. I am, as you have surmised, a perfect stranger in this city and State, and without a single friend or a penny. I shall remain in the streets to-night, and to-morrow *try again* if I can get any employment worthy of my labor; for work as a *common menial*, I will not. I have sworn to starve, in the midst of *my wealthy countrymen*, rather than disgrace my family, once so proud and boasting of their ancestry, by any unworthy employment."

"Excuse me, friend; but I would kindly remind you, that persons in such reduced circumstances should not be so choice in the selection of an employment."

"Or, in other words, sir, you would recall to my mind the old adage, that 'beggars should not be choosers.' I thank you for the hint, *yet my resolve is taken*; but who are you, that you should speak thus kindly to a poor stranger?"

"My name is Gregory—Richard Gregory; and although poor myself, I yet have a home, thank God! and as you may not be able to do better to-night, you shall rest in my humble lodge. I will trust you, implicitly, for I could see that you were honest."

"Honest! and where have you ever seen me, that you should be thus willing to admit me, a perfect stranger, and in circumstances in which all must look with suspicion upon me, into your dwelling? You do not know but that I am some night robber."

"Well, that suggestion would satisfy me that you are not; but did you not see me when I entered yon Pétrone's hut, a moment ere you left it? I then saw you, and heard the men speak harshly to you; but come with me. It is chilly out here, and you need rest, as I doubt not, for you look haggard."

"May God reward you, sir, for your charity, for James Mortimer never can; but if a lifetime of gratitude can possibly repay the debt, it shall be yours."

"Never mind the gratitude, Mr. Mortimer. I shall not require that. I am a poor man, as I have already told you, and could exercise little or no influence here; but I will do the best that I can for you. I am collector for some companies and individuals here, and in this manner I manage to support myself. It was on business of this description that I called in at yonder ruffian's hovel. Come this way?" The man called Mortimer followed Mr. Gregory for some considerable distance, when the latter paused before an humble dwelling, and knocked at the door.

"I fear you are much wearied, Mr. Mortimer; but come in. You shall first have a hearty supper, which I see is already prepared, and then you may retire as soon as you think proper. You have come a considerable distance to-day, I think, you said?"

"Yes, I have walked thirty miles since morning. Last night I applied for lodgings at a large country house, but *they refused* to admit me, because I was without money, and I slept out in a farm-house yard all night, and have scarcely seen a mouthful to eat for three whole days; and early this morning I resumed my journey, though then weary and hungry, to this place, often asking on the way for something to eat, but as often told that it was *not the time for meals*, and that I could not get anything; and though I had had nothing to eat for so long, I would not *beg* them for a morsel of bread; but, to-night, when I saw darkness and starvation closing in upon me, I trembled, and grew humble; for I felt that it would be a fearful thing to die with all my *weight of guilt* unpardoned. I would soon have expired, methinks, when I sunk almost insensible upon the steps of a low hovel, had not that rude, but kind boy taken me in, and provided me with something to eat, which you saw me occupied in devouring, when you came into that rude man's dwelling."

"Well, I cannot wonder at it, since you had

walked so far, and had seen nothing to eat for so long; but may I ask what it is that brings you here? for it would seem that you had some certain object in view—as you say that this is not your native State, and that you have no acquaintances, and I can see that you have not always been accustomed to wander about in poverty.”

“You are correct in that supposition; but I am too weak and weary to begin to relate any of the incidents of my troubled and rather extraordinary life to you to-night, as, I think, your kindness requires; but you shall hear more of me anon, should you desire it. My principal—nay, only—object in coming here was to seek out a family by the name of ——. Have you ever known ought of them; for they once resided here, and that but a few years since?” and Mr. Mortimer glanced anxiously into the gentleman’s face as he asked the question.

“Well, no; and yet, when I reflect, it seems to me that I once heard of them here; but I think they have left the city; for it has been some three years since I last heard of them.”

“Surely, I shall be able to ascertain their whereabouts; for I have communications of great importance to make to them; and, then, my only object in life will be accomplished, and afterwards I care not how soon that may be ended.”

“You should not speak thus,” replied Gregory.

“Yet I see that adversity, in a pecuniary point of

view, is not the sole misfortune that has befallen you. However, as our supper is over, and I see you need rest, I will show you your room; and, tomorrow, we will talk of other things, and look out for some employment for you; but you must remain with me as long as you are homeless.” The young man pressed his host’s hand, while tears were swimming in his eyes, and retired for the night.

Poor, way-faring, homeless youth! almost entirely excluded from all association with his *equals*, on account of his poverty—how grateful he felt towards this kind stranger, who had thus nobly taken him under his roof, and how bitter were his reflections, as he lay and thought that, perhaps, it would never be in his power to repay the great obligations, which he felt that he was under, to this hospitable man! Deep sighs of disappointment escaped from his bosom, as he thought over the many fruitless days that he had spent in endeavoring to obtain employment, and how often and coldly he had been refused; but, then, he would hope that, with the assistance of his new friend, he might be enabled to make a support, at least, until he could learn some tidings of those of whom he was in search; and then he might be made independent of the whole human race; but, instantly banishing all thoughts of the kind, he would mutter, in a choked voice, I hope against hope: for *my rest is not yet*; and, at last, being overcome with fatigue, he sank

into a profound slumber. Poor fellow! how soundly he slept in that plain, little room, upon the neat, but by no means luxurious bed; for many a night of late had he slept in the open air, with no covering but the starry sky, and no bed but the cold, hard earth.

The sun was already shining in at the little window, when Mortimer awoke, and found his host standing by him.

"I fear, Mr. Gregory, that I shall put you to some inconvenience by having overslept myself; but, indeed, I do not believe that I have stirred since I first dropped off to sleep."

"I expected not," replied the other, with a kind smile; "and, therefore, I did not wish to disturb you until breakfast was ready; but my business calls me off from here very early, and I did not wish to go before seeing you, so you can get up now, if you feel sufficiently rested."

"I thank you. I shall be ready in a moment;" but Gregory saw that the man hesitated, and seemed desirous that he should leave; so he went out, guessing at the cause of the other's embarrassment, and returned, in a moment, with a very plain, but neat suit of clothing in his hands.

"I know, Mr. Mortimer, that you are a man of too much sense to be offended at my offer; and as we are about the same size, and, I think, this suit of clothing would fit you, you had better wear it, if

you wish to obtain business; for, you know, that the generality of men are not willing to employ a person in their services who cannot come well recommended; but they are particularly apt to regard a person of your education and stamp with suspicion, when they behold you in such abject circumstances;" so saying, he laid the clothing on a chair, and turned to leave.

"You can come down as soon as you are ready. Breakfast will be waiting." So the young man was left alone. Ah! how his proud heart (yes, proud, in spite of the abject poverty against which he struggled) was humbled, as he thought that he was dependent upon another, not only for food and a home, but even the very clothes that he wore. Thus, with feelings by no means to be envied, he lifted up his hands, and vowed most solemnly that he would labor, labor, until he could, finally, look down upon many of those who had spurned him from their doors, and say, in triumph to the whole hated race of humanity, "I despise you, and I ask you nothing."

Mortimer descended into the lower room of the little dwelling, and found his host awaiting him, while a warm breakfast was smoking upon the table. They took their seats in silence. Mr. Gregory was very kind, and Mortimer felt that he had, at last, met with one individual who had performed a noble act, simply for the sake of doing good, and having

the approval of his own conscience, while this reflection induced him to regard the man with much more interest and respect. He sat absorbed in a very gloomy reverie. Mr. Gregory seemed touched and interested.

"Perhaps, you are still suffering, Mr. Mortimer, from the recent fatigue that you have undergone, and do not feel sufficiently well to be walking to-day: then would it not be best for you to rest quietly here until to-morrow, while I make inquiries, and see what I can do for you in the meanwhile?"

"I thank you most warmly, sir; but I also must be up and going; for I have a great mission to perform, and the sooner it is ended the better."

"At any rate," replied Gregory, as they took up their hats, preparatory to going forth, "you will rejoin me here to-night, and we can compare notes, and see what we have done. You must make my house your home, (though I cannot promise you many comforts,) until you can procure a better." Thus did the two separate. The one with high hopes and a cheerful, brave heart, to fight against the ills of life, and thus to overcome many of them; while the other was doomed to wander, in moody abstraction, about the streets, from day to day, and to return each night with the desponding exclamation, "My day's work, as it will ever be, has been of no avail;" and, though Gregory would sympathize greatly with him, and converse with him, as

he would have done with an intimate friend, he still saw, as day after day passed by, the same melancholy, miserable expression on Mortimer's countenance, and the same dread of *solitude*, which he could not account for; yet all this only tended to arouse a more lively curiosity within his breast, to learn the history of this singular man's life; but so great was the respect which he had been compelled to feel for him; that he could never summon courage enough (while Mortimer himself remained so silent) to question him concerning the past.

Whenever an opportunity presented itself, Gregory would endeavor to procure an honorable situation for his friend; but on each occasion he had been unsuccessful, and would return home at night to meet his guest, and learn that his labors had been equally fruitless. Day after day had passed in this manner, and Mortimer's spirits seemed, if possible, to sink lower than ever. One evening particularly he returned to his friend's house a good deal later than usual, and, finding himself alone, threw himself, almost in a fit of desperation, in a chair:

"O, God! how long is this heavy curse to rest upon me? Have not the moments of anguish—the unutterable woe that I have endured for two whole years—this beggarly state to which I have been reduced, and the *physical* suffering, worse than a thousand deaths, that I have experienced—been

sufficient to atone for *that deed?* and yet I feel that the atonement is not completed. Oh! that I might but see *him*, for a few moments only, to tell *him* all, and I would then gladly embrace death!"

Gregory entered, with a smile, as usual, and a kind, cheerful voice:

"Well Mortimer, my friend, what have you done to-day?"

"Nothing! and I *have no hope of ever* doing anything, as I have often told you; for I know that a curse rests upon me. So I have resolved, Richard, to impose upon your hospitality no longer. To-morrow, I shall leave your house, in no event to return a dependant on your bounty."

"Come, do not give up. Remember my old motto, '*Nel desperandum*,' and take it for your own. I was pretty confident, at one time to-day, that I could obtain a good situation for you. I met with a man here, of Jewish descent I believe, and apparently in very moderate circumstances, but I knew that he was not. He told me that he had three small boys to educate, and wished to employ a teacher; but I soon discovered that he was a mean-spirited miser, who expected to employ some one who would require little or no salary besides his board. I spoke to him of you, and told him of your high qualifications, hoping that he might be induced to afford you a good salary; but he persisted in saying that, as you could furnish no tes-

timonials as to your character or qualifications, (except through my recommendations,) he would not give more than seventy-five dollars a year and board. So I was compelled to abandon that hope; but I am confident that I shall be able to do something much better for you in a short time."

"I thank you, my kind friend, but I will accept of the situation that you have mentioned, with heartfelt gratification; for I do not mean to leave this city until I can learn something of the family of whom I have spoken to you; but I must have a home where I can consider that I have some right to remain. Yes, I will accept of this man's offer; but when can I see him?"

"You cannot mean what you are saying," replied Gregory, with much surprise. "I can never hear of your undertaking to labor a whole year for the pitiful sum that I have mentioned, especially as neither of us know anything of this man's family; and, to speak plainly, I like him not, nor would I recommend his house as a home for you; and I think you know me well enough to believe that I had much rather you would remain with me until you can obtain some employment worthy of your labor."

"Yes, I know that, Richard; but still I cannot live here with the thought that *you* are supporting me, while I am doing *nothing*. *It would kill* me. I must really accept of this offer."

"Then it is needless for me to say more; for you know all that I would say; but if you are *determined to leave me*, I can present you to this man, and you may then settle with him to suit yourself."

"When may I see him?"

"As this is Saturday night, we cannot go around until Monday. So in the mean time, I hope that you will remain satisfied with me." And, in reality, Gregory thought that his guest's mind seemed much more relieved that night and the next day, than he had ever known it to be; and the two friends seemed to be drawn much closer together, by the thought that they should soon separate.

* * * * *

It was late Sunday evening, and Gregory brought out his hat and cloak, in order to take a walk, as he often did.

"Will you join me, Mortimer, or do you prefer remaining here? for I shall soon return."

"I will go with you, by all means," and he took his friend's arm, as they went forth. They walked on in profound silence for some moments, when Mortimer again spoke in a melancholy voice:

"How the few lights that every now and then spring up, as it were, in these dwellings, while so many remain unilluminated, remind me of those few more fortunate human beings, that appear here and there, in the pages of man's history, shining as a

bright star and shedding their light and glory upon those around them. While so many remain in squalid poverty and darkness, they are revelling in their ill-gotten wealth, and wot not, *care not*, for the wretched beings who are so often starving around them; or else, are forced to resort to dishonorable and unlawful means to support themselves. Here, we see towering, in princely splendor, the dwelling of some bright star, such as I have first named; and could we but glance within its richly adorned and painted walls, we should, perhaps, behold an old, hoary-headed miser in his closet, which is his world, sitting, with a ghastly and a greedy smile upon his thin lips, counting over his hoarded coins. Then look into that gorgeously furnished parlor, and you will find, seated on a luxurious ottoman that almost seems to move on magic springs, a puny doll, in common parlance, *called a young lady*, who is arrayed in all the magnificence and voluptuousness of oriental splendor, and has no wish, no thought beyond the moustached coxcomb who sits beside her, and pours into her ear a stock of flippant, flashy compliments, stolen, verbatim, from some antiquated novel full of romance and nonsense, which he has repeated, over and over, at least a hundred times, to such pieces of insipidity as herself, while she in wrapt admiration and enthusiasm, murmurs to herself, 'Oh! how eloquent!'

"Look, again, at this prodigal son, who comes

forth with the few pieces of base coin that he has at last extorted by protestations of obedience and affection first, and then some dark threat, from the old, miserly father, and you will say, as the last anchor at which drowning hope could catch, 'let us see, for if he spend *this* worthily, then of a truth they have not prospered in vain;' but let us follow him. See him enter into the blackest scenes of dissipation. Hear him arouse the dull ear of night with his revelling and drunkenness, while squandering away his filthy lucre at a gaming table; and then turn to these low, dilapidated, dismal huts, where but a few kind words and *shillings* from that son or father might have shed many a ray of sunshine into a darkened gloomy cell, where no sunshine ever comes. See there that pale, thin, hungry looking mother, clasping a dying infant to her bosom, soon to return it (when, perhaps, it might not have been called for) to the God who gave it, simply because she and it had wanted the common sustenance of life; and then tell me, Richard, if you think that a wise, *just* and omnipotent Power presides over the affairs of human beings."

"Really, Mortimer, you remind me most forcibly of the great skeptic Voltaire. You come down upon us with your highly colored and (if I may say it) falsely drawn conclusions in such a bold and self-convinced manner, that your argument remains, for the moment, almost unanswerable. But now

that I have rallied a little, let me show you the better and brighter side of the picture that you have drawn, and tell you, that where you may find one such household as you have described, you will again look in at the dwelling of another equally as wealthy, and you will find there a charitable, God-loving, people-loving family, whose highest and dearest wish is to comfort the afflicted and sorrowing, and feed the poor and hungry. While, if that wealth were distributed among the husbands, fathers and brothers of those poor wretches, it might all be squandered away in no time, in drunkenness and prodigality; so that even we, with our finite understandings and knowledge of the mysterious dealings of Providence, may trace the work of a wise and *just* Creator in many of the smallest transactions of life.

"Look up, Mortimer! Look up at the clear and beautifully serene sky, already studded with her night gems. See the holy, heavenly calm that pervades all. Then listen to the mighty hum of this great city, giving forth a soothing harmony that dispels the otherwise too solemn stillness: and tell me if a sense of *awe* and dread—a knowledge of the existence of an omnipotent God, terrible in majesty, yet just and loving—does not pervade your being? Look up at yon pure silvery orb suspended in the blue measureless space of immensity! Think of the hand that fashioned it, and of

Him as He sits upon his throne, in all His glorious majesty, while myriads and myriads of archangels are singing loud and joyous anthems to this 'Lord of Lords,' and which, methinks, you might almost hear echoed back by the mighty voice of nature, if you would but listen; then, surely, a sense of the terrible majesty and omnipotence of the Creator must strike you with a tremendous force, which no human heart can resist; and you will see what beneficence—what loving harmony and divine tranquillity pervade the whole heaven and earth; and you must wonder at their extraordinary beauty. Have you never felt all this?"

"Never! or, to speak more truthfully, I have not seen, have not thought of all this for what seems to me to have been an age, but which has in reality, been but a few years. My heart is dead—dead to all things, save a sense of its own never dying misery, and to that it is still as widely and fearfully awake as when fate first frowned upon me. I feel—I know that my doom is sealed, and it seems to me as if all the elements are combined to mock and hiss at my calamities. When I cry (as I have often done while upon its bosom) to the water and say, 'swallow me in your depths,' when I say to my mother earth, 'open thy bowels and hide me from the face of man,' a voice seems to echo back continually, in mocking, taunting tones—'Not yet! Not yet! for thy rest is not yet.'"

CHAPTER XII.

SHADOWS STILL.

"Really I see no cause," replied Gregory, in a kind, soothing voice, "now that you have finished your story, why you should thus afflict yourself with a vain impression of your own guilt. I, or any one else, would have acted and felt exactly as you did on the occasion which you have mentioned, and though I might have felt some remorse at the thought of having hurried a guilty soul (if such a piece of vile clay, as that which you have caused to moulder into its original dust, could have possessed one) into the presence of his God, I would readily console myself with the reflection, that I had happily rid the world of a vile nuisance, and so you might now regard yourself as the humble means chosen by Heaven to execute its vengeance, while your own wrath and anger weighed no more than a grain of dust in the balance."

"Ah! my kind friend, that is very good logic, indeed, and would do well to scare away the vain spectres that might flit before a silly boy's imagination; but mine is the fear of a self-convicting soul. I tremble in thinking of any mortal man, so full of

the world and its idle pursuits, being called hence so suddenly, his body to moulder in the cold grave, and his soul to go—where? Aye! that is the appalling question!”

“But he would, in all probability, have died in his sins, had he lived to the age of Methuselah; for I believe such degraded wretches to be beyond redemption.”

“And, therefore,” replied Mortimer, shuddering as he spoke, “I feel that I am lost; for my *eleventh hour is passed*; nay, I will not ask for mercy. Blood! blood! is on my hands, and years of contrite repentance cannot serve to wipe it off; for, though I did rid the earth of a wretch unfit to live, still his *great crimes* were unknown to me at the time, and who had required this vengeance at my hands?”

“You should not speak or think thus, my friend. Remember that there is, in truth, no sinner so vile, that his transgressions may not be blotted out. Think, too, of her whom you have loved, and, if she be in reality such an one as you have described, she will not learn to forget you by all this; for when her first great and overwhelming sorrow has had time, in a measure, to wear off, her fancy will return again to you—her early love—though she herself may not be aware of it at first; and all of her old love may return in full force, when she learns the cause of your quarrel, and that you were not so

much to blame, and when she thinks of you, and the great suffering that you must have undergone;—this cause of your sorrows will but serve to bind her heart yet closer to you.”

“I thank you, Richard, for your kind intentions; but my hopes have been *dead* too long, now to be aroused by a mere breath. No! were all this possible with her, I feel that fate has decreed no such bliss for me. But you do not know her: she is a person of too noble a character to entertain and cultivate any unjust prejudice; but, at the same time, she would always look with too much horror upon this bloody deed, even though the victim might have been unknown to her, ever to entertain a sympathizing thought for one so brutal as to commit homicide, under any provocations whatsoever. No! no! I have never entertained a single thought of ever beholding her again on earth.”

“I fear, Mr. Mortimer, that much of your present unhappiness is brought on by your own desponding temper. Half of the ills of this life, that many of us actually suffer, are only in our own imaginations.”

“It has now been two years, Richard, since I left my home and the land of my adoption. My cup of woe was then full to the very brim, and I have since been wandering about, in vain, seeking some employment and some balm for my great sufferings, but I have *found neither*. I am an object

of Nature's wrath, doomed evermore to poverty and wretchedness. I have applied for various kinds of employment; but *my fellow-beings* have all turned from *me*, saying that they were *unwilling to trust me*, because I could not furnish the proper *credentials as to character and qualifications*, and I sometimes think that I cannot blame them, when they would see me in the miserable condition in which you first beheld me."

"But could you not have written back to some friend in your native State for such testimonials?"

"I see that you do not know what *pride* is. I still entertain such a dislike for every individual whom I ever knew there, that I would rather *die a thousand deaths* than ever let *one* of them know the extent of my poverty and wretchedness, or have them think that I am still dependent on them for *anything*. You may think this unworthy of me; but it is so. I have called down the wrath of Heaven upon my head, and I must, of a necessity, bear the brunt of its indignation, until the Chastiser shall say, in pity, "Let him alone; for his punishment is sufficient."

"You know not how gloomy your narrative has rendered me; but come—it is already very late. Let us return to our home." Gregory felt irresistibly drawn towards his guest; and it was, therefore, with unfeigned sorrow that he discovered, on the ensuing day, that he had made all arrangements for changing his place of residence.

Mortimer called on Mr. Mordecai, (the gentleman whom Richard had mentioned as wishing to employ a teacher.) A middle-aged and by no means prepossessing-looking man met him at the door of a *very* ordinary dwelling, on the exterior, at least; but his surprise was very great when he saw how magnificently many of the apartments of this dwelling were furnished. He started back, in blank astonishment, when he entered the parlor, and saw his image reflected by large and beautiful gilt-framed mantle and pier glasses. He sank upon a velvet ottoman, almost abashed by the striking contrast between his shabby apparel and the elegance of every thing around him. Mr. Mordecai, with a slight Jewish accent, proceeded to question the young man on his qualifications, stating that he would employ no one who was not thoroughly educated; and when he, in his turn, requested of him upon what terms his services were to be employed, he was so thoroughly disgusted at the low, miserly disposition of the fellow, that he was several times in the act of getting up and leaving, without further debate.

"What, sir! Do you expect me to remain with you a whole year, and teach your children four languages, for the pitiful sum of seventy-five dollars? I cannot do it."

"Well, then, Mr. Mortimer, our consultation had as well be at an end. If you think you can do bet-

ter, you had best try; but I should think you would find it a rather difficult matter to get in another genteel family in your present circumstances. Although I am not of your race, sir, (and the lean, fierce, little nonentity grinned and winced as he spoke,) I yet feel for you very deeply in your present condition, and would gladly do all in my power to assist you; but, then, if you do not appreciate my kindness, in offering you what I have done, why, then, you can leave at once."

How the blood mounted to the face of the poor, young man, at this insulting language; and he felt, for the moment, as if he would glory in striking the miserable wretch before him to his feet; but, then, he remembered that he was entirely homeless and penniless in the wide world, and that he *must* bend his proud head, if he wished to succeed.

Ah! how a proud and noble heart bleeds at the thought of being compelled, by gaunt poverty, to crush the glorious dignity of truth and self-assertion, and practice a subservience detested all the while, but which it is compelled to do, for fear of injuring its own ultimate interests. So, at last, Mortimer was compelled to accept a home, (with an appearance of gratification,) which, in his heart, he detested; but, then, he remembered that he had been living all the while, inactively, upon the bounty of a comparatively poor stranger—and anything was preferable to *that*! With these disagreeable

sensation sblending and rankling in his breast, he returned that night to the abode of his friend, Gregory—thanked him, in a voice half choked from emotion, for the great kindness that he had shown him, and bade him an affectionate farewell. On the ensuing day, he began his labors at Mr. Mordecai's dwelling, and but a few hours' stay served to convince him that he had no easy task in hand. He felt a certain degree of uneasiness, which he found it impossible to account for, whenever he was in the presence of his host, and this disgust was doubly increased when he saw the greasy, dirty, ill-natured mistress of the mansion; nor did she seem at all prepossessed with the stranger's appearance; for she often went about muttering, that "She did not know what Leopold had brought a hated Gentile there for, any how; to teach his children, she supposed, to depart from the creed of their fathers; and, if he could not get money enough to employ one of their own tribe to teach their children, he had best let them remain unlearned."

But Leopold had felt no such scruples as these. Though by descent of the Israelitish tribe, he had never felt any more reverence for the religion of his fathers, or, indeed, any at all, than did Manasseh or any of the most depraved of the heathen-god worshipers of the olden time. He consulted his interest alone in almost every transaction of his life, and he believed it to be to those interests to em-

ploy, in his services, that man, whether, Jew, Turk or Gentile, to whom he would have to pay the least money. Thus Mortimer pleased him exactly in that respect, though he did not, at all times, seem exactly pleased with his views upon a great many subjects. They often held long conversations and disputes together, and Mortimer soon perceived that his host was a person of no ordinary, though rather a strange order of intellect, and, at the close of each discussion, he could not tell whether to admire or despise him most. He was a bold infidel, ever expressing his opinions to all without reserve, and occasionally even *kind*, in some respects, to *some* persons, while he would often be actually brutal to others. On one occasion, Mortimer had accompanied him to a public auction of some man's property, and he was much struck with and puzzled to account for his conduct. He had heard Mordecai making inquiries about the owner of the property, and, on being informed that he was a bankrupt Gentile, had expected to see him leave; but he did not.

Nearly all of the best property and furniture had been knocked out at a very low rate, and yet Leopold had bid for nothing. When some time-honored, but *splendid* paintings and old family portraits were put up, the owner, a very young man, appeared to be much agitated, saying, in the presence of many of his acquaintance, that he had rather part

with his life than a particular one of those portraits, as it was that of one of his nearest and dearest (though now dead) relatives. They had purchased all the rest, and the young man was bidding as high as he could possibly go for that, hoping that no one would oppose him farther; but the singular beauty of the picture made many a lover of the fine arts desirous to possess it; and thus the owner had been forced to give up in despair, for others had already bid far above him, and it was about to be knocked out to some one else, when Mordecai stepped forward, advanced a much higher sum, and received the portrait, exclaiming, at the same time, in a loud, but sneering tone, that "he, a Jew, had thrown down his fifty dollars as a present for the young Gentile, since he had been so much struck by the *kindness* of the young man's friends and all those of the same nation, who had bid against him for the last family relic that remained to him."

Mortimer was so much pleased at this act, that he determined to observe his host and study his character more closely; but this observation tended by no means to increase that admiration; for he found that, in many of his daily transactions, he would screw and strive, with all his might, to defraud those with whom he had any dealings of every dime he could get. He was in no business that Mortimer could ascertain; yet he not only re-

mained out all day, but frequently whole nights at a time, while no one knew what for. He seemed to avoid Mortimer out of his house, for they seldom or never went out or came in together, and sometimes of an evening he would remain locked up in a kind of closet and library for whole hours at a time, and no one ventured to go near. Mortimer sometimes thought that he would be compelled to leave the house, both on account of the coarseness and ill-nature of the mistress, and also because he feared that the character of his employer was by no means what it should be; and thus, whenever an opportunity was afforded him, he would endeavor to obtain some other employment; but, failing in every attempt, he at last gave up in despair, and resolved to await patiently the evolutions of fate; but he knew not how soon they were to bring about the most unlooked-for, the most marvelous, and the most *wretched* period of his existence.

CHAPTER XIII.

IN WHICH A DARK NIGHT IS SUCCEEDED BY A MOST
UNEXPECTED—A GLORIOUS DAWN.

"Come in, Mr. Mortimer, come in; I was just wishing that I could have a talk with you."

"I am at your service, sir," with a perceptible curl of the lip. "What are your commands?"

"I have none particular to make at this time. I only wish to have some conversation with you; but, first, I suppose the children are getting on very finely, eh?"

"About as well as could be expected, under the circumstances, I believe, Mr. Mordecai."

"Circumstances! and what circumstances are in your way or theirs, sir? Will you please tell me? I have done everything in my power."

"Oh! I know you have been *very* patronizing, and I am under the greatest obligations to you, sir; but your sons are *rather* unmanageable, and I cannot make them study."

"You must thrash them, Mr. Mortimer—punish them, any way—tell me, and I'll *starve* them. Anything, rather than that I should be paying you

all the money that I can save and scrape for nothing."

"I shall still try and do my duty; but, I cannot see how it will be possible, sir, when their mother interferes upon every occasion with my management. If I undertake to rebuke them, she immediately sets my authority at naught, and makes me an object of ridicule for her—*sons*, by bestowing the most abusive epithets upon me; and where the children neither respect nor fear the teacher, boys younger and more submissive (he longed to say, rather, better trained monkeys) will soon become ungovernable."

"Ah! we will see to this!" and Mr. Mordecai shook his little head, at least a dozen times ere he again spoke. "But, Mr. Mortimer," he again resumed, after a few moments, "I have been moralizing—yes, sir, moralizing, this evening. I have thought over so many strange things that actually happen to men in the course of their existence," and his withered face was even more wrinkled than ever, as he sat with his chin almost resting upon his bosom.

"That is *very strange, sir*," replied Mortimer in rather an unnatural tone of voice. Mr. Mordecai looked up hurriedly, as if to read in the expression of his countenance the meaning of his short exclamation; but the young man's face bore the same quiet, rigid expression as ever, and he went on in

his usual tone. "What incident (if I may make the inquiry) has caused your thoughts to run in that channel?"

"That inequality, which is the principal feature of all of God's works. I was walking along one of the streets, but a few moments ago, sir, and as I saw so many grades of dwellings—some magnificent and almost royal in the display of elegance and wealth, others mouldering into ruin under the hand of time and neglect—and so many different forms and faces around and near them—some queen-like in costliness of attire and beauty, while others were actually pinched with hunger, and clothed in dirt and rags, I could but ask myself where was all this display of Divine justice and mercy that we hear preached to us every day by the great moralists of the world."

Mortimer appeared absorbed, for a few moments, in a deep study. Could it be that the same thoughts that he had so long entertained, though they might have been hard and wicked, now dwelt in the breast of such a man as the one before him, and only such. Where was he a whit better than this low, miserly Jew, and how could he prove himself so? He had seen and held intercourse with many of those whom this man had just termed *moralists*; and what class of individuals did they constitute? Why the best, the happiest and the most respected. There was Gregory, kind and

noble-hearted, whom even the low and depraved of mankind were forced to respect. His conduct had been exemplary in every respect, and he was a man to prosper in the world! but here he found *himself* intimately associated with a man of low character and principles; and discovered that he had entertained many views and sentiments in common with *him*! Bah! the very thought made him detest himself. He tried to convince himself that he had spoken in this manner in the presence of the noble and high-minded but to elicit their sympathies for himself, in his forlorn condition; but a voice seemed to whisper, "No, it came from your heart, deeply rooted there by sorrow, reverses of fortune and disappointed hopes, and you are no better in feeling than this man?" "Had he, indeed, fallen so low?"

Ah! what would those who had once known and loved him think, could they see him thus: and might not evil communication corrupt all the remaining seeds of virtue and honor implanted in him, if there were any now left?

Mortimer shuddered; but, pshaw! what had he to hope for—to live for *now*? Calamities had befallen him, crushed and ground him beneath their millstone weight, when he was in prosperity and could have entertained no thought at variance with the moral and just government and supremacy of a Divine Being, and now why should he care what he

thought or did, since he had no one left to smile or weep at his deeds, whether upright or dishonest? and there was the same old stern, inflexible, skeptical look, and the same annoying, disagreeable smile again.

"I have often speculated upon the same all-absorbing subject, sir," he replied, in a voice so changed, so hollow, that the Jew was startled: he got up and placed his hat upon his head.

"The night is not disagreeable, Mr. Mortimer; let us take a short walk." The two men went forth, side by side, and both were silent for many moments, then Mordecai again spoke, slowly and deliberately; at the same time closely observing how each word that he uttered, was received by his companion:

"How little do the moral laws laid down by man as a code, which they shall not violate, and the observance of which they regard as so essential to virtue and religion, correspond with my views of right and wrong. Mankind in general tell me, that it is all right and proper that some should here revel in pyramids of gold, and stalk amongst their fellow-creatures, committing crimes to support their arrogance and saying to the poor and humble—nay, to all honest men in moderate circumstances, "bow the knee to me and serve me, for you are but reptiles by nature, and to crawl and cringe is your element," while many are crouching yonder in pov-

erty in their miserable hovels, actually starving for a little of that gold which these proud and arrogant worms of the dust have heaped up, while it lies mouldering (if that might be) in their coffers. No, sir, it is this very thing that makes me detest the greater part of my fellow-beings, and glory in seeing their pride humbled. Yon dog of a Gentile, because he has enough gold to weigh down his fat and lazy body, which has neither brains nor heart in it to add one item to the balance, must of necessity meet me in the street, or you either, sir, and say to us, 'Get out of my way, reptiles, and let me pass or I will trample you under foot,' and all because they suppose me to be poor; but the dogs shall find—yes, they *have found*—to their cost, that reptiles when trodden on, can and do sometimes sting. Here, sir, I differ from many others. When I see such a man as this, I feel a burning desire to cut his miserable throat—give his body to the wild beasts to eat—thus ridding the world of a nuisance, and taking his vast amount of wealth, which could never be anything but an injury to mankind while in his hands, distribute it to the vast number of virtuous but starving poor around us; and, sir, I would think that the man who would do this, *to the letter*, would perform a *noble, charitable* deed, and confer an inestimable blessing upon the human race."

Mortimer listened patiently, as the other became more and more excited as he went on; and in the

bitterness and misanthropical state of his feelings, he saw a reason and force in Mordecai's argument which would have failed to strike the happy and people-loving reader.

"You think, then," he replied gloomily, "that men may, without great sin, resort to unworthy means in order to perform a charitable deed, or, in the language of a great man, that 'the end justifies the means.'"

"Yes, that short sentence expresses my opinions *in toto*." The man paused. He desired, if possible, to discover Mortimer's true sentiments before venturing farther; but that young man was silent; the innate virtue of his character was struggling hard against temptation, and the evil spirit at length gained the ascendancy, for the time, in his heart, while the tempter's voice—for certainly it was not his own—said in forced accents, "I cannot say, after all, but that I concur with you in the *main*."

"In the main!" Ah! young man had you the knowledge of the world which I possess, you would readily assent that my opinions are founded in wisdom; but now you see with the eyes of youth, and consequently of folly. Let us pause here before this miserable and ruinous old building, that you would scarcely imagine had been inhabited by a human being for half a century; and now listen to me. An old, white-headed man, now tottering on the verge of the grave, lives here, and has

done so for many years. I know him well. Were you to meet him on the street to-morrow, he would be clothed in rags, and in a most doleful voice would cry 'charity!' until you would feel compelled to bestow something upon him, if you had an atom of that stuff within you called pity. Then follow him home. See him enter this hut, and you would suppose that he had been driven forth by poverty, to beg even the little fuel that he burns in his hearth; but see him as he totters off to you little closet! He opens the door, and there stands a huge old iron chest.

"What can he mean to do? Ah! see that hideous smile as he cautiously unlocks it, and drops in the penny given him in common charity by some poor, but hard-working man, afraid almost to look in as he does so; and hear him mutter with a ghastly smile, distorting his hideous and wrinkled face, 'fools! fools! they had better have kept this money, for they need it more than I do.' Then look for yourself into that iron chest, and you will start back in amazement—your eyes dazzled with the *tremendous* heap of gold! Yet what good is all this to-do? Do you not see that this man is actually starving himself to death, damning his soul by this increasing worship of Mammon, while he has actually injured the poor man who, in his liberality of heart, had bestowed upon him the fruits of a hard day's labor, and the donor will have to

suffer perhaps from hunger for having parted with that penny; while all this man's money is to lie there entirely worthless, during his lifetime, and afterwards to be squandered away by some wild and prodigal successor? Yet they tell me that this is all right, and that *you*, possessed of all the brilliant intellect and natural generosity of heart that I know you to be, and with so many qualifications for doing unimaginable quantities of good, must rest here in idleness and poverty, for want of the means to mingle with mankind and alleviate their wants. Then do you not think that it would be a noble act to enter here, strangle this old wretch as he sleeps and dreams of adding another mite to his vast and useless treasure, and take this money to yourself, with which you can live happily and in affluence the remainder of your days, and at the same time place hundreds of wretches, who are almost starving in the streets, in happy and independent circumstances, thus placing them in a situation to promote the glory of their kindred, their country, and their God? Then come: with but little pressure this door, rotten and worm-eaten from the number of years that it has been standing, will readily give way, and all this mighty means of doing good will be in your hands. Come!" and in his excitement the man paused, and scarcely conscious of what he was doing, seized Mortimer by

the arm, with a grasp so tight that he almost uttered an exclamation of pain.

Why does he shiver, and almost fall to the ground, as he stands there, in the blackness of the night, with the robber beside him? Was he afraid that the man would draw forth a hidden poniard, and, under cover of darkness, stab him to the heart? Oh! no; for he knew that the other was well aware that he had not a dime to be robbed of.

Then why did he tremble?

I will tell you. It was not the fear of the weak and cowardly, appalled at the thoughts of the retribution that might follow the committal of such a deed, that made him shudder. It was the soul-struck terror of a brave heart, suddenly awakened from a fearful trance, and starting back, in terror, to behold the enormity of the sin that he had committed in his heart. Not more miraculous, sudden and self-convincing, did Mortimer consider the light that had suddenly shone around him of Tarsus, as he went on his way blaspheming, nor the voice that spoke to him so as to be heard by all those around, than did he think that fair and shadowy image, which he, at the time, firmly believed arose before his eyes, as plainly and perceptibly as he had seen her years before, while the same gentle, well-known and never-to-be-forgotten voice seemed to whisper, calling him by name, as tenderly as of old, and

saying, "The eye of Providence still looks down in mercy upon you. *Fly* from temptation." Amazed, terrified, he seized the silent Jew by the throat.

"*Fiend*, do you wish to make me stain my hands with blood a *second time*, and all to gratify your base love of gold? Did you think to make me a partner in your diabolical schemes, by the sophistry to which your base tongue has given utterance. Then take what you better deserve." Almost in a state of madness, he hurled the terrified Jew with a supernatural force upon the pavement, and rushed on, he knew not, cared not where, in the pitchy darkness. At length, through excessive fatigue, he sat down. Oh! how he shuddered at the thought of returning to that hated man's house again; but the night was already far spent, and he knew not whither he should tend his steps. The villain Mordecai would, in all probability, drive him from his house on the ensuing day, and he would again be homeless and penniless; but, then, he had been laboring for three months in his family, and the beast should pay him something. He got up. The houses (as far as he could see them in the darkness) appeared familiar to him. Yes, he was near old Mordecai's dwelling. He walked on a few paces farther, and soon found himself in front of his *home*. Long did he knock ere the door was opened, and then he heeded not the mutterings that might have been heard, as he groped his way,

in darkness, to his little room. He then locked the door, threw himself upon the bed, and, after many mingled thoughts and emotions had arisen in his mind, he fell asleep. On the ensuing morning, he arose, and went down into the breakfast-room, expecting to hear the shrill voice of the Jew, in accents of rage, ordering him to leave his house; but not so was it. Mr. Mordecai sat at the foot of the table, his head surrounded by a bandage, but in the best of humors.

"Good morning, Mr. Mortimer. I have a very funny joke on you, man, and, by my faith, one that has cost me very dearly. I do believe that you are subject to fits of derangement. He! he! he!" and he went on, with much fidgiting and a smile, but too evidently forced, to relate what had happened to those around him.

"What do you all think (Asa do not kick me under the table) is the cause of my sore head? Why, nothing but Mr. Mortimer's honesty."

"Then hisen ought to be broken," replied Asa, in a puff of indignation.

"Hush! my son. I shall be prond for you to treat any one, as he has done me, for the same cause. Mr. Mortimer came here a homeless and penniless stranger. I did not know but that he might be some convict, who had straggled off, and come here to impose upon us, poor and honest people; so I thought I would try him. Last night,

we walked out together. I reasoned, and reasoned, that certain dishonest tricks were noble and honorable, and I thought (he! he! he!) that Mr. Mortimer was quite carried away by my eloquence, and that I could easily test his honesty: so I paused before a miserable and uninhabited dwelling, telling him that a vile and murderous old miser resided there, and that we could easily break in at the worm-eaten doors or windows, and bring away all of his treasure to feed the poor and needy, and to make us a little more comfortable ourselves. So, my faith! when I had concluded, and was waiting for Mr. Mortimer to clasp hands with me, and say, 'I am your man, sir,' he seized me with a ferocious grip by the throat, and came near breaking my skull against the pavement. Now, that's what I call honor pretty well defended."

Mortimer blushed crimson at the conclusion of this tale. Oh! what a fool he had made himself in this man's eyes, and now, instead of receiving a just rebuke for his folly, he was rewarded, for his honesty, by a kind smile. He arose, with the only smile that had been seen for many days upon his lips, and shook Mr. Mordecai by the hand. After which, that person left the room. Mrs. Mordecai began to mutter and scold, as usual:

"I think Mr. Mordecai is poorly paid for his kindness to you, sir, if you are to treat him in this manner, and then let him come here, all bleeding

and bruised, for me to have all the trouble with him; and I may as well tell you now, while we are talking, that I don't want you to be staying out of nights until midnight, and then come home, like you were going to knock the house down, waking us all up, and making *me* walk down to open the door for you. I can tell you, if I had not thought that it was Mr. Mordecai, you should have staid out all night."

"I did not know, madam, that it was part of the arrangements for you to dictate to me, when I should go out and come in—therefore, to my ignorance you must impute my disobedience."

Very much out of humor, Mortimer called in the boys to recite their lessons. Asa, the youngest, walked up, with an insolent swagger, book in hand.

"Take your seat, sir. You do not know a word of that lesson."

"Well, I reckon, I shan't study it any more, Master Mortimer, and I shall tell mother."

"To the deuce with your mother, and yourself also, you young scapegrace."

"I don't know who is a greater scapegrace than you, sir," grinning maliciously, and walking up still nearer. "You had better look here at your old coat, all out at the elbows," pointing to the worn and thread-bare sleeve. Fire flashed from Mortimer's eyes.

"I will chastise you, sir, for your impudence, if I starve for it."

He raised his arm, and with a blow, the force of which he was not aware of, he sprawled the young urchin on the floor. Asa arose, uttering threats, and screaming at the top of his voice. His mother rushed into the room.

"Why, Mr. Mortimer, what have you done? Oh! my; he has killed the child. Just see how his nose is bleeding. I wish to know, sir, if you think we intend to put up with every thing. Charley, go for Mr. Mordecai, and let him put this man out of our doors at once."

"Do not be alarmed, madam. I have taken much more of your insolence and that of your children, already, than any gentleman is required to do with patience. As soon as your husband pays me for my labor, I shall depart with pleasure." At that moment, Mr. Mordecai entered, pale and trembling with rage.

"Pay you, sir?" Yes, I'll set you up to that. I employed you by the year, and, if you are now forced to leave by your insolence, you shall do it without one dime of mine."

"Have a care to what you say, sir," replied Mortimer, foaming with rage, "or your gray hairs shall not protect you in your cowardly impertinence. I now leave your house, sir, before giving *you* another opportunity to order *me* from it, and

my only regret is, that I have not done so sooner. If you are base enough to avail yourself of this miserable excuse for not paying for the time that I have been laboring to tame and instruct these young wild animals, *then that is not my fault.*" So saying, he made a bow of mock politeness, and rushed into the street.

Poor wanderer! homeless and penniless again! but, perhaps, the time is not far distant, when—but it matters not *now*.

All day was Mortimer wandering about the streets, absorbed in the most gloomy reflections. He wanted to go somewhere, and be doing something. The want of occupation would kill him; but what could he do when every one refused to employ him?

Where should he go? He had no place, however humble, that he could call home, where he might rest for a night. It was true, Gregory might be willing—nay, glad—to receive him again; but then he could not go back *there*, to make that his home *now*. He was yet too proud for that, and, besides, he did not care to see any familiar face at all.

And so he wandered about all day. Evening came on at last. He was in a strange part of the city, where he had never been before, and he felt quite hungry; for he had had nothing to eat, since morning. The moments passed by, and darkness became more intense. At last he paused, in utter

exhaustion, and sat down, near the enclosure of a building, at the corner of a street. He could not help shedding tears, as he sat thus excluded from all intercourse with his fellow-men, and in the open air. Many of the old bitter thoughts were beginning to return.

"Of what advantage," he muttered to himself, in a hoarse voice, "has my honesty ever been to me, when people turn from me, and seem to shun me, as if I were a night-robber, or a murderer; and yet it is better to die thus than on the gallows."

He sat thinking where he would be, if alive, in one year from that time. Surely, not a beggar, as he was *then*. Ah! young man, had the hand of fate lifted the mystic veil that shrouds futurity, and permitted you to behold yourself, as you would be but one year hence, how appalled, surprised and doubly unhappy you would have been!

Leaning against the railings that surrounded a dwelling, he was becoming drowsy and almost oblivious to his unhappy situation, when he was aroused by the sound of voices, as two men came up, conversing in a very low undertone. Perhaps it might be the owner of the mansion, near which he sat, and, if so, he could again beg for something to eat; but, hush! the voice seemed familiar. He stooped yet lower, and listened. A well-known voice spoke.

"To tell you the truth, Monsier Pétrone, I did not feel easy, by any means, when I had concluded, this morning, to keep the fellow in my house. You remember, I have just told you, that I thought I would try him last night, and see if his beggarly condition, and his proud spirit (a very poor companion of poverty) might not induce him to try and obtain money in any *manner*, and I thought he would be such an excellent hand to help us in our job to-night. So I made up a very pretty story about an old, miserly dotard and his heaps of gold, to see if the fellow could be tempted; but, luckily, I discovered, before it was too late, that he is as firm as adamant, for he came near taking my life, by way of thanking me for my proposition: so I was in a great bother this morning. I felt a burning desire to throw the impudent rascal head foremost out of my windows; but I knew that, if I should send him off, without alledging some excuse for my talk last night, he would be convinced that all was not right. Forced to adopt the course which I pursued, by these motives, I received him this morning with such a hearty smile, and an appearance of so much sincerity, while relating the pretty story of which I have told you, that he, with all his quick wits, was entirely bluffed. Now, the old lady has never fancied him, and she put at him in such a manner because he slapped one of the boys in

school to-day, as to provoke him to reply, and taking his justly angry replies as a happy excuse, I ordered him to leave my house."

"Ha! ha! très bien fait!"

"Yes; but had we not better get out of the city before we are noticed by the police, and be in our place before light, for I heard him say, to-day, that he would leave town before sunrise to-morrow morning. He has quite a large sum of money, I can tell you, for I saw him dispose of his tremendous cotton crop this morning. He will be alone in his carriage; so, after we have sent Mr. Driver running for his life, we can easily master the young man, and force him to hand over the spoons."

"Oui; mais parlez plus doucement."

"Perhaps it would be more prudent; but let us have none of your French. I understand English much the best, and only wish you to hurry on, for it is late already."

"So, Mr. Jew," muttered Mortimer, "I have found you out at last, have I? and I do not think I shall be so easily bluffed again. I must follow you to your proposed rendezvous, and then meet you again, when you will feel less pleasantly towards me than you have ever done." So saying, he got up very softly and walked rapidly on after them, keeping but a few paces in the rear, while the pitchy darkness served to screen him from their view. He continued to pursue them for a consider-

able length of time, until he was almost exhausted; but they seemed, at length, to have arrived at their destined point; for they both paused when they had left the suburbs of the city about a half a mile behind, and had reached a little ravine surrounded by a good deal of shrubbery and lofty bushes.

"I think," said the voice, which Mortimer readily recognized to be that of the Jew, "that this is the best place we could select. It is immediately under this little hill, which screens us from the view of the city, and any one, a hundred yards off, could never see us."

"Well," muttered Mortimer, as the two men paused amidst the bushes, "my business with you is ended, for the present. I must now hasten back to the city, or I may be too late." So saying, he turned, and began rapidly to retrace his steps. Several hours had passed, and the sun was almost up, when the robbers stepped forth on the roadside.

"By my faith, Pétrone," muttered Mordecai, "I do not believe the young man is coming; for I know this to be the only road that he could take in going home; but get up, man, and have your pistols in readiness. Here is the carriage almost upon us;" and, in reality, one drove up.

"Hist, Pétrone, you must open one door and I the other, to prevent this fellow from thinking of an escape; for I would rather not hurt him if we can

help it. Now is your time." The man leaped up to one side of the driver and presented a pistol to his head—

"Hark you, sir!" he muttered, in a low voice. "Get down and run for your life, or we will blow your brains out in an instant; do not breathe a word, or your life will be forfeited." The man jumped down with alacrity, and started off as requested, while a gentleman's voice was heard from within.

"I say, driver, what are you standing stock still here, in the middle of the road for? Hurry on, will you?" The two robbers glanced at each other for an instant, then springing to the doors of the carriage, they opened them almost simultaneously, exclaiming, in an exulting tone:

"Now for the money!"

"Not so fast as you think, gentlemen. It may be, perhaps, a painful duty, but we are required to demand your pistols and liberty of you. The villain Mordecai's presence of mind was banished only for an instant; then discharging his pistol hastily, he was in the act of turning to rush off, when Mortimer, with an exclamation of pain, leaped out upon him, seized him by the throat, and prostrated him on the earth, while an officer of the police assisted in securing him. And what had become of Monsier Pétrone? Of, by far, a more cowardly nature, than the daring villain Mordecai, he

remained rooted to the spot, trembling with fright, from the instant he opened the door. He then neglected to avail himself of the only moment of time that he could call his own; for in an instant more a quick-witted officer, with pistol in hand, and prepared to leap out upon him, as soon as he should appear, seized him by the throat, while another hissed in his ear:

"Villain, is this the *honorable occupation* in which I find you engaged?" The two gentlemen from the opposite side now led around their prisoner, already bound, and placed him in the carriage.

"Mortimer," said Richard Gregory, in an indignant tone of voice, "come and see the dastardly coward and villain, who once spurned you from his doors, when you were poor and homeless."

"Yet, Philip," he replied, while the man looked timidly up into his face, "I have not half the loathing for this contemptible puppy, that I feel for yonder bold scoundrel of a Jew, who appears as if he were trying to annihilate me with his curses and frowns; but let us place them both in the carriage, and I then wish you to assist me in binding up my arm, for that fellow has wounded me."

"It is nothing serious, I hope; but here is another carriage, no doubt, containing the very person for whom these ruffians were lying in wait." The other vehicle drove up, but seeing one already blockading the passage, and its occupants standing

on the ground, the driver halted. A gentleman put his head out of the window, and on seeing that some kind of difficulty had evidently taken place, he opened his hack door and leaped out.

"Gentlemen, I fear that you have had a disagreeable engagement, as I observe that one of your number is wounded: can I be of any service?"

"We are officers of peace, sir, and have just this moment arrested two villains who were stationed here to commit a robbery on some person (and we doubt not, but that you are the one) who was to travel along here this morning in a hack. This gentleman, Mr. Mortimer, who, last night, overheard the proposed plot of the thieves, and informed us of it, has been wounded." The stranger then walked up to Mortimer, who was occupied in bandaging his arm.

"As this gentleman has been wounded on my account, and as you have more than a hack full, let him get in my carriage with me, and I will take him back and have his wound attended to." Mortimer looked up, hurriedly, at the sound of the other's voice, and advanced eagerly towards him.

"Am I laboring under some strange mistake, or do I, indeed, behold before me, a companion of my youth? Yes; and well may you look surprised, Lewis Weston, for you would hardly recognize the Walter Langdon of old, in him who now stands be-

fore you. Verily, Providence has at length heard and answered my earnest petition." So, saying, Walter Langdon (the Mortimer of our few last chapters) overcome with the excitement and loss of blood, fell fainting at the feet of Lewis Weston, who bent over him in deep commiseration.

CHAPTER XIV.

REMINISCENCES.

"I have suffered much—very much since that time, Walter, yet my principal regret has been, that I should ever, for a moment, have been sufficiently overcome by a lamentable weakness, to confess the awful falsehood that I had been guilty of homicide; but even when the dreadful thought was in my mind that, perhaps, I should have to die upon the gallows, my greatest sorrow was on account of my darling mother and sister. Of course, I knew that *I* was innocent; yet even they *at first* refused to believe it, and implored me to *confess* the deed, or else to say that I was *mad*, and knew not what I did. I, myself, have always firmly be-

lieved that Avory was the murderer; but being unable to prove any thing, I could tell nothing that would appear plausible. And oh! to think with what assurance that hardened villain boldly asserted to *my face*, and afterwards *swore* in the presence of so many witnesses, that *he* had *seen me* do the deed! I was a wild boy then, my friend, upon the very brink of the great gulf of dissipation and ruin. Yet I thank God that he did put forth his arm to rescue me, even in the startling manner that he did."

"We have both suffered much—yes, very much, Lewis," replied Walter, in a trembling voice, "but you have never experienced the bitterness of feeling that I have. When, on the court green, I refused to take your proffered hand, or congratulate you on your acquittal, you know that I not only believed you to be guilty of *murder*, but had many proofs of your past conduct to show your unworthiness, besides having manifested the *blackest ingratitude towards your friend*, by trying to heap all the blame upon him, and I did not feel as if I could ever take your hand in friendship, while I supposed you to be Harry Bennington's murderer. We were all terribly deceived; yet the thoughts of my injustice to you, and of what your family must have suffered, have troubled and haunted me every hour since the first moment when I discovered that you were innocent."

"Well, our trials are all over *now*, and we must forget *them*, and be comforted with the reflection, that they have made me a better and a purer man. I had believed myself vile and unprincipled, until that man charged me with murder; but when I remembered the horror which had entered my soul at the bare thought of having committed such a deed, I felt that there must be some virtue still left within me, and vowed that, if God would spare my life, I would try and follow Bennington's noble advice, which I had so callously neglected during his lifetime. Poor fellow! how it will ever grieve me to think that he died firmly believing me to be his murderer! We have since left the city of New Orleans, and moved to a quiet retreat in the country, where I would not come in contact with so many of my fellow-beings, who all looked upon me with suspicion; yet I do not now value the opinion of the world, since I am acquitted by law, and it would be needless to sully the honor of Avory's family, by bringing up this affair afresh, and exposing his guilt, while it would do me little or no good. I knew, when at college, that your families were at variance; but I did not suppose that that poor wretch would seek a quarrel with you after your return home, when you remained there for so long together, without coming in contact. I have heard my wife say that Miss Avory was a girl of noble character, and that she was uncommonly

beautiful. They were school-mates together in Virginia."

"Ah! I did not know that," replied Langdon, with a quick start, and in a very low voice.

"Oh! yes; Mana speaks of her very often. They once kept up a correspondence, I think, and she abuses Miss Avory for neglecting to answer her letters; but, I now believe, she ceased writing to her about the time of your—of her brother's death. It is very singular that I never heard of your unhappy engagement, as, I suppose, that and the results were noticed in the papers. Have you ever seen Miss Avory? Mana will be anxious to find out whether she is married or not, as she supposes her to be, from the insinuations in the few last letters that she received."

"Yes, *I have seen her*," with a desperate effort.

"She also knew of the romance of my courtship, and of Mana's forbidden correspondence with me while at school; for my wife made a confidant of her. I reckon you heard, perhaps, of our romantic love affair, and how my lady was sent from the school for having written to me. I met with Mana, who was my fourth cousin, or somewhere about that, the summer after my dismissal from confinement. The dear child—for you will hardly look upon her as anything else—fell in love with me, she says, on account of my unhappiness. Her father—peace be with his ashes—was very much

opposed to our match, on account of that unhappy affair and my reported character at college, and I could not blame him much; for he did not know what a great and thorough change had taken place in my heart. He was very much devoted to his daughter, though he was cold and stern in his treatment of her, and I had to promise him, (as I was very willing to do, after her dismissal from school,) to remain with him on probation, as long as he might require, to prove my thorough reformation; but he died rather more than a year ago, and my darling, thinking me good enough at the time, married me soon after. The dear girl and my mother and sister are the only persons now living who would believe me, when I assured them that I was innocent of the bloody deed imputed to me at college, and how happy I shall be when we arrive, for you to prove to them that they have not trusted my word in vain."

"I heard of Miss Falkland's love affair, and the disturbance that it created in school, from my—poor sister—and—and Miss Ivory," replied Langdon, in a hesitating voice; "but I did not know that you were the hero."

"I suppose not; for Mana says she carefully avoided all allusion to my name to any one but Miss Ivory, and, I presume, she never mentioned it to you, as she knew how intimately you were connected with Bennington, and also that your

sister believed me to be guilty, and she thought it would be painful to her to have the unhappy transactions at the University and the sad fate of her lover recalled to her mind; for I have heard that she and poor Bennington were betrothed."

"Yes, Lewis; and it was *that very* fact that made me think so hardly of you, after my Flora's death, when I remembered how much she suffered, and was forced to believe that you were the cause of it all. I went directly from the University, the moment after that dreadful affair, that I might be the first to apprise her of it. She was at Mr. La Fontaine's, in Richmond, at school, at that time, and I went there. She had suffered much since the death of my father, some months previous to that, and I was afraid to break the dreadful intelligence to her; but she *did not shed a tear*. Lewis, her heart was completely withered by this blow, I know; yet she *never murmured*. She was even very cheerful afterwards, and no one, but myself, could discover that it was *all assumed*. O, Lewis! she was once so beautiful and peerless, and I was so proud of her, that it was *hard* for me to give her up! She died, as you know, only a few weeks after your wife left school, and some fourteen months after poor Bennington's death."

"Yes, Mana heard of it, and was *very deeply* distressed, for a long time, on account of it. I only want you to see her, Walter; for I know you

will like her so much; but you can never know what an angel she is. To show you what a gentle, sympathizing creature she is, I will tell you that, when I first met her here after my acquittal, the dear creature used to leave the gay company in which she was often mixing, and seek me out, to talk with me and comfort me, because she saw that I was unhappy, and did not care to mix with society. I know that you will spend your time very happily with us at our sweet country home, though we are very quiet there. I have never mixed much with the world since—since our great affliction; for I could not bear to have people think of me as I know every one did, and, therefore, I have staid quietly at home. Mana will be so happy to have you added to our little household, especially as she can hear of her friend, Miss Ivory, through you—but, Walter, I am afraid you are still suffering very much—you are so pale.”

“No!” he said, hastily, almost wildly; “I am well—too well. Only do not mention that name to me again. It maddens me to hear it called, after all that has passed.”

“Excuse me, Langdon; but you know that I would not willingly cause you a moment’s suffering, and I see how foolish I was not to have remembered that this subject must be very painful to you.”

“Say no more, my friend; if you would see me

look contented once more; but it is all over now. And when I consider how wrongfully I have suspected you, and what an example of innocence and self-sacrifice you have been, I feel my own selfishness and coarseness of feeling most powerfully, and I could not have blamed you had you spurned me from you, when you saw me yesterday, though I was homeless and starving.”

“Hush! You must not say you would not blame me for making a brute of myself, as I would have done, had I acted in that manner. I or any one else would have believed as you did, had I been in your place; but here we are at ‘Rural Shades.’ Is it not a happy, quiet-looking retreat? Come, get out and follow me. I am anxious for you to see my wife, and how grateful she will be to you. This way.”

Walter got out of the carriage with much less alacrity than his friend, and followed him on into a lovely and most beautifully adorned yard. The tall and massive dwelling presented a most magnificent and, at the same time, a most bewitchingly simple appearance; for, while the architecture of the building was of the most expensive order, the thickly-twining ivy, that nearly enveloped one side, and the great variety of flowers here, at all seasons of the year, gave the place a quiet, rural, simple appearance that is very seldom to be seen about the massive, lofty edifices of the wealthy.

Langdon almost felt as if he were entering some enchanted bower, as he passed into the portico, and heard the mocking birds singing merrily overhead, in their handsome cages, suspended from the tremendous and beautifully-carved pillars that supported the roof of the porch. He could but draw the contrast, even in that moment of time, between this place and the low, dilapidated hovels where he had been accustomed to reside in the city for several months.

You, gentle readers, who remember Walter Langdon in his happier and more prosperous days, as he lounged, in a costly and luxurious attire, upon the green grass, beneath the dense shade of the tall, old aspen trees that surrounded his parents' happy old dwelling in Virginia, or else, as he was often seen in parlors, crowded with young, gay and gifted persons—yet himself presiding as master of grace, humor and elegance over all—would have passed the thread-bare, emaciated beggar, Mortimer, in the streets of New Orleans, and have exclaimed, with great contempt, "why, surely, this fellow does not belong to the same race of beings!" Then come to this beautiful and happy-looking villa, some thirty miles from the city, and not far from the Mississippi river. See the man now entering in at its doors, with the same old proud bearing of the head, the same style and elegance of attire, and, but for a certain melancholy shade upon the lofty

and gloriously handsome brow and a yet sterner, more withering look about the mouth, you would have clasped him heartily by the hand in a moment, exclaiming, "This is the man."

Weston's foot was hardly placed within the door, when a very young-looking and beautiful girl bounded, with a radiant smile, through a side door, and into his arms, while he bent his tall figure, and tenderly kissed the beautifully-rounded cheeks and the rosy lips.

"Oh! my darling Lewis, I am so glad that you have come. We have all been so much alarmed about you, and mother especially. Why did you not return yesterday, as you promised me when you left?"

"Because I could not possibly come sooner, my jewel; but here, Mana, you must bid this gentleman, Mr. Langdon, welcome to our house. Had it not been for his kindness, I fear you would never have seen your Lewis again alive. Go and tell him how grateful you are to him; for he has been badly wounded on my account."

"I hope I need not express my gratitude to Mr. Langdon, in order to convince him of the warmth with which I welcome him, as my husband's deliverer, to our house. But, I hope, sir," addressing Langdon, "that you have not been badly injured, and all on Lewis' account? Yet you have not told me how it all happened."

"Your husband may do that, madam, at his leisure; but let me assure you, thanking you at the same time for your anxiety in my behalf, that I now experience little or no inconvenience from the slight wound that I have received in my arm, from the man who would have robbed him."

"Never mind, my love, I will tell you all in good time; but we must attend to Mr. Langdon first; for I fear that he suffers much more than he is willing to confess to us. Where is dear Nina and mother? Why do they not come to welcome us? but show Mr. Langdon into the parlor and I will seek them out." Walter was shown into a magnificently furnished room; but he could not take time to observe all this; for he was so much fatigued by his long ride, and the great excitement which he had recently undergone, that he sank, with a feeling of the greatest relief into the first sofa that he reached. Lewis soon returned, leading in an elderly and benevolent-looking old lady by the hand.

"Mother, this is an old and *very* particular friend of your son's, who was very kind to him in his troubles many years ago, and whom he has not seen for a long while, until yesterday, when he again saved him from falling into the hands of some daring robbers who would, perhaps, have taken his life."

"Oh! sir," taking Walter's hand, while a warm

tear fell upon it, "you can never know the amount of gratitude and kindness that I feel for you at this moment; for we will never be enabled to repay the great debt that we all owe you."

"Do not mention it, madam, I beseech you," replied Langdon, with no little emotion; "for your son has already doubly cancelled the slight obligation that he might have been under to me, by his kindness to me in a moment when I most needed it; for I am but a poor, homeless wanderer, whom your son has taken under his roof for a time, in order to manifest his too great appreciation of the slight service that I have been the means of rendering him."

"Then, sir, you must make our house your home, and feel that your noble conduct and the injury that you have sustained on my son's account, have richly entitled you to all the privileges of one of its members." They then requested him to relate to them the circumstances under which he had fallen in with Lewis, and the manner in which he had contrived to rescue him from the hands of the robbers, while he had incurred so much danger to himself; but being entirely too weary, he left the task to Lewis, who went on to relate the circumstances to his weeping wife and mother; and when he had concluded, by bestowing much praise upon his friend for his heroism, Walter saw that Mana's eyes were full of tears, and that she ap-

peared as if she were desirous of speaking to him and telling him how much she owed him, but her voice failed her. As for Mrs. Weston, she arose from her seat at the conclusion of the story, large tears streaming down her cheeks, and walking across the room to Langdon, who was reclining upon a sofa, again took his hand, telling him again of her great obligations to him, and how much he would pain them all by thinking of leaving their house, when he had said that he had no home, or kindred in the world. And as Lewis had told them that he was a professional man, why should he not make that his home, and afterwards qualify to practice law, if he wished to support himself! In this manner his scruples were silenced for the time, at least; but Lewis, seeing that his friend was much fatigued, led him off to a large and luxurious apartment, where he was left alone, and laying down on the bed, he sank into a sound sleep.

CHAPTER XV.

VARIOUS TRIFLES, WHICH ALL LEAD TO SOMETHING OF IMPORTANCE.

Lewis had, in the meantime, related to his family the circumstances of Walter's and Allen's duel—the death of the latter, and his dying confession, in which he had cleared him from all blame, and while Mrs. Weston, Mana and Nina all heard with the deepest concern of Allen Avory's criminality and bold deceit, and while they thanked God for the means of establishing Weston's innocence, they could but feel the greatest distress at the thought of any human being having died so sunk in guilt. And after all, poor Lewis, in spite of all his sufferings, thought that he was amply repaid for it, when he heard the many tender protestations of affection uttered by those few loved ones around him, and when his peerless Mana bowed her head upon his breast in a flood of tears, assuring him of the firm belief that she had always entertained of his innocence. The noble young man's lip quivered in praiseworthy emotion, as he bent down his lofty head, and kissed her as he whispered:

“Well, it is all over now, loved one, and we can

be happy enough to ourselves in the future. I have only wished—only prayed that I might one day be enabled to establish my innocence amongst you all here; and now that wish is granted."

Lewis told Mana of Walter's enmity to the Ivory's, and, at the same time, cautioned her to avoid all allusion to any of the name, as it would certainly produce a very unpleasant train of reflections in his mind. Walter was aroused from his sleep by Lewis in a very short time, as he thought; but when he got up he found that the sun was almost setting. Weston assisted him in bandaging his arm, and told him that he wished him to join him in a stroll upon the farm. Langdon soon rejoined him below, feeling much refreshed by the rest that he had taken, and compelled to be in a much better humor on account of Weston's lively conversation and happy disposition.

Lewis had supplied him with a handsome wardrobe, silencing all feelings of delicacy and pride, by saying that he would one day be worth enough to pay it all back; and then they might think of a settlement: Nor did the young man perform this act of kindness and then make it, as many would have done, the topic of conversation with his family. Walter himself had told them that he was poor, and therefore Mrs. Weston, in her kindness of heart, had offered him a home for the present; but they had not dreamed of the extent of

his poverty, nor would it have influenced them, in their opinions of him, in the least.

Thus each one was forcibly struck with the young stranger's handsome and elegant appearance, when he came down in the evening, and the great seriousness that seemed to pervade the whole tenor of his conversation, served, in a measure, to enhance the admiration that every one felt for him.

Langdon started back in surprise, when he walked out on the portico that evening, and beheld a radiantly lovely and fairy-like girl, walking arm in arm with Weston. Could that be the sister of whom he had so often heard? Yes, it must be, and yet he thought she was very different from what he had expected to see her, or rather he had not thought about seeing her at all; but he was altogether very much surprised. He knew that she was there, for her name had been upon her brother's lips at least twenty times, in his hearing, since their meeting the day before, and yet no conjectures about her appearance; or, indeed, scarcely a thought of her at all had ever crossed his mind.

Walter walked up towards Lewis, as he saw them, standing on the portico, expecting, of course, to be formally introduced by his friend; but the girl did not wait for that. The moment she glimpsed him coming out at the door, she left her brother's side and walked (rather hastily, to be graceful, as Wal-

ter thought,) towards him with a playful, childish air.

"You are brother's friend, I believe, or he is yours anyhow, and I am very glad to see you! But it is getting late, and I haven't time to stand here exchanging the idle compliments, thanks and congratulations which very dignified persons like yourself might think necessary on the occasion—so won't you come out and engage in the much more sensible (or, at any rates, the much more useful) occupation of assisting me in feeding my Canaries? Lewis declares that he will not, under any considerations, and I am very much provoked with him." Langdon smiled.

"I did not think young ladies ever confessed they could be provoked; no matter how great the provocation, Miss Weston. Did you forget yourself?"

"'Forget myself!' No! Why, to tell you the truth, he almost teases my very life out of me, sometimes. But if you are brother's friend, do not call me Miss Weston. I don't like it. My name is Nina, and that's not very pretty; but you can remember it."

"Oh! yes, Miss Nina, and I was just beginning to be very forcibly impressed with the beauty of it, when you interrupted me."

"'The beauty' of what? myself, or my name?"

"Particularly yourself, if you will allow me to say so; but I spoke of the name."

"Ah! that does very well indeed, for your first compliment; but here comes my awful brother to put at me again. Lewis, what do you interrupt us for? I was about to make Mr. Leghorn set to feeding my birds; but you must not let any of them get away, sir."

"No, and if I do, I will try to catch another, much prettier than any that *you* now have; but I should be afraid that it would soon droop away if caged."

"You intend that for me, I suppose, but you are very much mistaken. No one has ever tried *me* yet."

"Walter, you must not mind Nina's nonsense," said Weston, as he came up laughing. "You will find her quite an oddity, I can assure you, for she always behaves in this manner."

"There, Lewis! I am sure you are not speaking the truth now; for you sometimes say that I behave myself very badly, and I appeal to Mr. Walter if my conduct has not been exemplary this evening."

"So far as I have observed, yes."

"Or, in other words, you would insinuate, 'but I would not answer for her many moments at a time.' I shall remember this. But I must go in and drag out Mana to take a walk with us. Wont you go too?"

"With the most exquisite pleasure, if you will allow me;" and off she ran. "She is indeed an oddity," mused Langdon, as he followed her retreating figure with his eyes. "I must confess *that she has taken me quite by storm.*" She soon returned and singled Langdon out as her companion in a promenade, though he would greatly have preferred going by Lewis' side; and after conversing with her for some length of time (if her childish prattle might be called a conversation) he could not tell for the life of him, whether to be amused at her frivolity, or fretted at the perfect want of dignity in the woman. "I think she could muster quite an amazing amount of nonchalance," he muttered, more willing to be provoked than amused with her, "since she can rush up to *me* and chatter away such an awful amount of nonsense; for I do not think there is anything *very* quizzical looking about me to induce her to believe that I would relish it." And, in truth, it had cost him quite an effort to carry on the conversation with her in the style in which she had begun; but he had concluded that it would be very impolite in him to listen to her without a smile, and as if he were either offended or perfectly indifferent to everything that she said.

"I see that she is to annoy me greatly," he muttered to himself, "for there is so little attractive, or really entertaining about a woman, when we see them so entirely devoid of all dignity." As they

walked on, he talked with her about home—birds and flowers and nonsense, until it appeared to him as if every idea of his own were exhausted, and he himself was completely worn out. Yet the girl still rattled on, and in spite of the prejudice which he found that he had taken up against her at first, and the shadow which *she* frequently called even to *his* brow, he was often forced, against his inclination, to laugh at her witticisms. Yet it was with much gratification, that he at last found himself left alone upon the verandah with her brother. He warmly congratulated Weston on the possession of such a wife as he had—complimenting Mana's excessive beauty, amiability and information of mind in the highest style; but he did not mention Nina at all; for, in reality, he spent very few thoughts of a pleasant nature about her, and he supposed, that night, that Lewis had told her that her course of conduct must be disagreeable to any dignified stranger, for she looked across the table at supper, saying, with a merry, childish laugh:

"And I understand, Mr. Langdon, that you are not at all pleased with me; but, very well, I shall bear that in mind." He smiled very quietly, just enough to display his perfectly-formed mouth and teeth to the best advantage, as he said:

"Perhaps Miss Nina *thinks* she does not *merit* my admiration; for I am quite sure that she could not have drawn the inference that she has in any

other manner." Langdon returned with them to the parlor after supper; but he again appeared dejected.

"Nina, give us some *sentimental* music," said Lewis, in a low tone, as she advanced towards a splendid piano. "I think my friend would like to hear it."

"Yes, brother, I am ready to obey your commands now," humming a lively ditty as she spoke; "but what will you have? Oh! I've got it. I am sure he would admire the pathos of—"

'Jollie Joe was a merry lad,
And he loved a blue-eyed lass;'

and again she laughed out most provokingly.

"Come, Nina; will you not discard this silly levity for one moment, just for my sake, and play one of my old favorites." He appeared to be a little provoked, and the girl's love for her brother was such, that she could not bear to entertain the thought that she had cost him a moment's pain. So, in an instant, the wild, merry, laughing expression had left her countenance, and Langdon was much surprised to behold the almost pensive look that overspread her face. She commenced singing, and he was startled. She certainly had a most exquisitely rich and melodious voice; and how little he had expected to hear her sing so softly and touchingly. He had thought that she might have

had a good voice, or, at least, what the world might consider such; for it should have been loud, strong and redolent with life, to have accorded with her general character and actions.

Langdon got up, and went across the room to the piano. He seemed almost spell-bound, listening with the most profound attention, until she had finished; but then her voice grated coarsely on his ears; for she burst into another wild laugh.

"Well, Lewis, I kept up a most awfully solemn look the whole time that I was singing, though I came near laughing out at your and Mr. Langdon's long faces—so you ought really to reward me for the great undertaking."

"I will dear," he replied, playfully, as he advanced towards her, and imprinted a kiss upon her fair cheek. Langdon turned off, with a feeling approaching to disgust. What! Was she then gifted with such a soul-stirring voice, without appreciating the value of it herself? for he had just heard her say that she could hardly refrain from laughing, while singing one of the most sentimental and touching things that he had ever heard. "What a great pity it is," he muttered to himself, as he glanced towards her, with a frown on his brow, "that such a lovely casket should be so empty and worthless; for I'll wager all my hopes that it does not contain a heart large enough to be seen with the naked eye."

He retired to his room entirely out of humor. He did not see how Lewis and Mana—gentle, kind and dignified as they were—could stand this girl with patience. He knew, if he were to stay here any time, she would not let him see a moment's peace; but then he supposed that they were proud of her beauty, and, therefore, blind to her faults. "Yes, he did think she would be very lovely—nay, beautiful—could she be but transformed into a statue, and not be enabled to laugh and talk, and roll those large black eyes of hers, as she did, for all this rendered her extremely disagreeable to him, and she was so affected that he could never admire her; but he must try and put up with all this, on account of Lewis and Mrs. Weston and Mana, who had all been so kind to him, and he would study her character, and, perhaps, find one redeeming trait in it, at least," and so he fell asleep.

Many days passed away, and he was almost constantly in her society. He at first thought that he would try her, and see if she possessed any information, or could converse seriously and sensibly, upon any subject, for a moment at a time.

He introduced books and writers, and he was astonished, when he found that she had read so many works and learned the history of the lives of so many great men; and she spoke very correctly, and even fluently, of the many chivalrous and noble deeds performed by prominent characters in the

pages of history, which he had almost forgotten, until they were recalled to his mind by her, and then he was much amused at her cutting criticisms upon many of the light and popular works of the day,—opinions so correct, that he could not, at first, believe them to be her own. She would, at such times, speak with sufficient gravity and dignity, although she frequently interrupted *him* in his statements with a laugh, and then, if he would appear to be the least provoked, she would instantly return to her usually light and flippant remarks again, and turn every word spoken by him into the most cutting ridicule, and provoke him to such a degree that he would often be heartily ashamed of his rudeness; but, then, when she would see that his feelings were really hurt, she would walk up to him with the most child-like grace and frankness, and, with tears in her eyes, beg him not to mind anything that she could say, for every one knew how silly and undignified she was, and in this manner he would often be forced to laugh, and get in a perfectly good humor, while he would talk to her as he would have done to a little child. Another feature, that he regretted to remark, was an excessive waywardness and stubbornness of temper; for he would often observe that, upon very trivial occasions, she would fly out into a fit of passion, and scold every one around

her; but, then, every one seemed to look upon her as so much of a child, that they did not appear to take any notice of this at all; or if she stated her determination to do any little thing, though the whole household might oppose her, she would invariably carry every thing her own way.

Walter was much surprised to discover that she was in a very delicate state of health. He had found her, on his arrival, perfectly well, and willing to follow her brother in the longest rambles, when he himself declared that he was almost entirely broken down; yet she would appear as light and unfatigued on their return as when they had set out. Then, in a few days, her spirits would become much depressed and her strength gradually fail her, until she would be almost as helpless as an infant, and they would be compelled to carry her from one room to another. On such occasions, Lewis would be her principal nurse, and he appeared most untiring in his attention and devotion. During these attacks, her manners and conversation would be of the most touching and gentle nature, and she would be constantly saying to those around her, that she knew that she was fast drawing near her end; but, in the course of a few days again, she would begin gradually to recover, and finally become as well and gay as ever. Walter was greatly provoked to see what little influence even her mother had over her, and he would tell them

that "he knew that those attacks were brought on by her own imprudence and over-exertion; for, while her figure was rather frail and delicately formed, she did not appear as if she could be a very unhealthy person; yet she could not undergo the exertion and fatigue which he could hardly do with impunity, and it was in this manner that she would over-exert herself, and then become entirely helpless." But Nina would listen to no persuasion, saying that she knew she did not have long to live, and she was determined to enjoy herself while she was well.

Lewis would entreat her, on his knees, to remain quiet and prudent, and try to preserve her health, for his sake and that of their aged mother, if she did not value her life on her own account. On such occasions, she would burst into tears, declaring that she would remain locked up in her room for whole days at a time, if they wished it; and the family, who all seemed desirous only to promote her happiness and enjoyment, at length ceased to persuade her, when they saw how much trouble it occasioned her. So, in a very few days, she would be taking long rambles with Lewis, just as she had done before, and talk and rattle away in the same old style. One evening particularly, Lewis brought out a very handsome couple of pistols, and requested Langdon to go with him out into the park, at the back of the house, and

practice shooting. It was something that he had not done for several years, yet he readily acquiesced, if it would afford his friend any pleasure; but, then, Nina declared that she must go with them, and be permitted to look on, and Lewis would consent for her to do so, though Langdon felt strongly inclined to remain in the house, and thus break up all the sport; but Weston would not hear of that, and so they all went forth. A glove was tacked up on the body of a large tree, and they were to try which could first pierce the thumb of it. Lewis had the first fire, and missed it; his ball taking off the front finger. Langdon's time came next, and he tried to have better success; but he came so far off the mark, that Nina laughed outright, and he turned away, much provoked.

"Well, Mr. Langdon! only permit me to stand a few paces farther back, and you may fire at me, at least a half dozen times, by way of getting your hand in a little?"

"Persons often laugh, Miss Weston, at those who undertake to perform a difficult action, and fail; but then they should always be made to try for themselves, and see how much better they could do."

"Ha! ha! ha! if you intend that for me, I am perfectly willing to make a trial myself. Give me your pistol, Lewis, as you have re-loaded it, and then stand out of the way."

"Bang!" went a loud report through the air, and Walter looked up, almost expecting to see even Nina drop the pistol, and burst into tears; but not so. The mist disappeared in an instant, and she came running up to them with the thumb of the glove in her hand.

"See here, Mr. Langdon and Lewis, what good-for-nothing creatures you both are. I have hit the thumb, and severed it entirely from the glove. Well! I think I have cause to laugh." Lewis walked up, and kissed the heroic little creature, with an appearance of the most perfect amiability and good humor.

"My brave little sister, I believe, after all, you would have made a much better man than many of us."

Walter's face flushed. He really had not fired a pistol for so long that he had almost forgotten how, and, unworthy of him as you may think it, he walked off, really out of humor.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE BLISSFUL DREAM AND THE FEARFUL
AWAKENING.

We have said that Langdon spent but few thoughts about the lovely, but eccentric Nina, unless when in her presence, and it was strictly true. He would much prefer having a quiet conversation or walk with no one but Weston; yet she would go, and, of course, he could say nothing; but when he would be compelled to leave him, as he often was, he would go into the large and well-filled library, and remain there several hours at a time reading, and at first he would generally be alone; but now, Nina would come in occasionally, as she, herself, was sometimes fond of reading, and, singularly, their tastes and selections would frequently fall upon the same volume, when she would promise to sit very patiently, and never speak, if he would only read aloud to her; and this he frequently did. His voice was rich and deep, and at the same time perfectly distinct, and Nina, almost unconsciously to herself, became so much attracted by it, that she would frequently sit for whole hours at a time, listening to him with the most wrapt attention; and,

at times, when some deep tragedy was rendered doubly interesting by the manner in which he read it, she would be melted into tears, and in the conclusion could repeat whole passages of what she had heard to him, saying, that it had been doubly impressed upon her mind by the deep accents of his voice. In this way, they were often found employed, and frequently they would be joined by Mana, when Lewis was absent; but a greater part of the time they would be left alone together.

And had not Walter changed, in his opinions of her, in all this time? Yes, and I will tell you how.

He soon saw that he could exert an influence over her, which her family had failed to do, and he exercised it; but we must, at the same time, confess, that this circumstance served, in a measure to excite his vanity; and I am quite sure that every one will agree with me, when I say, that never lived a young man, whatever might be his character and circumstances in life, who did not possess his full share of this amiable quality. Although Walter had as little as any one could have had, yet he was bound to know, if he had ever looked in a glass, (and most persons are not averse to doing that, at times,) that his face and person were prepossessing in the extreme; though we will not lower him so much in the estimation of our readers, as to say that he ever manifested the least cognizance of this fact in his conversation or actions: for vanity,

as Cowper expresses it, is certainly very low, unworthy and disgusting in a woman; but it is to be detested—*abhorred* in a man.

Walter had often been told that his talents and acquirements were of a superior order; and while the knowledge of this fact always led him to hold himself above the weak-minded and mean-spirited men of the world, yet he was by no means spoiled or desirous of receiving flattery from others. On the other hand, he took it all with the most perfect indifference, particularly from those of his own sex; but every young man, I am sure, will acknowledge, that there is nothing that adds so much to the attractions of a young and lovely girl as the knowledge of those attractions, having the assistance of her appreciating his own sweet self, even according to the modest estimate which they are apt to place upon that person. And so, perhaps, influenced by this consideration, Walter began to confess to himself, that he had learned, in reality, to admire this childish woman much more than he had ever expected—and it is, perhaps, true that she deserved it more, for every one could but see that she had become much gentler and more submissive; but this was not the only cause. Langdon felt that his influence had been the moving spring to this change in her habits; and this fact made him much more interested in her, though he did not look upon her in any particular light.

Had he ever entertained the suspicion (as most young men would have done in his case) that this influence extended beyond that which any person, of a higher order of character, can exercise over another inferior being? No, he had never yet dreamed of such a thing. He knew that his heart was dead to all emotion of *love*; and he believed that he could now be thrown constantly into the society of the most beautiful—the most intelligent woman on earth, and never entertain a single thought of her, beyond the simple fact, that she was, perhaps, very *pretty*, and, therefore, he had never entertained a thought of eliciting Nina's admiration towards himself. He had seen her sit quietly, for hours at a time, when he would read or converse with her, and appear very deeply absorbed—nay, often of late shed tears. And he continued to exert this influence over her only because no one else could, and thought that it would be a most happy achievement, could he ever succeed in taming the girl's wild and frolicsome disposition; for he was so much soured—so stern and melancholy, that he could not tolerate a lively spirit of fun in others. And he considered this to be the only very *disagreeable* trait in Nina's character.

Thus he labored until his object was finally completed, and he saw Nina becoming almost as gentle and affectionate as Mana; for it was only occasion-

ally that her fun-making spirit returned, though even then, to his great annoyance, it was invariably directed at him. If he ever appeared very melancholy or deeply absorbed in his own reflections, that was the very time that the provoking creature would disturb him with her silly questions and laughing. One evening, particularly, Walter was very much disturbed at the close of one of their usually cutting conversations in thinking of Nina's conduct.

They were both in the parlor, Langdon reclining very dreamily and sulkily (as Nina thought) upon a sofa, refusing to reply to her many questions, except in monosyllables, and then in apparently a very unwilling manner. She had been occupied for several hours on the opposite side of the room with a piece of drawing, in which accomplishment Langdon knew that she could attain great perfection; and as he lay dreaming of things very far removed from the scenes that surrounded him—and Nina, she walked over to him, telling him, with one of her old laughs, that she had just sketched a very natural, but lovely picture, and that she wished him to pass judgment upon it.

"I will do so, if you desire it, Miss Nina," he replied, slowly rising from his reclining position, with much dignity, "but I fear I am a very incompetent critic of such things."

"Oh! I only wish you to look at it, and tell

me if you think it is natural," and she placed the paper in his hands, and unbidden, took a seat beside him.

"Now, let me describe to you, exactly, what I wished to portray here; but I know you will immediately recognize this handsome young gentleman lying there (placing her finger, as she spoke, upon a most grotesque and hideous figure) as a faithful representation of your worthy self; and all these *flighty* and confused medleys off here, are only a faint type of your own thoughts, as you have been lying ruminating for the last hour."

His first inclination was to laugh out heartily; but in an instant his quickly wounded feelings and excitable temper would have induced him to throw it at her, could he have so far abandoned his usual dignity and politeness of demeanor.

"Don't you observe the similitude, Mr. Langdon?"

"I can say nothing, Miss Weston, that would not be inconsistent with my character as a gentleman, and therefore I am silent."

"Then tell me if you can give a more definite description of your own thoughts than is here given in this representation?"

"Perhaps not, for I was probably thinking of you at the time; but may I ask you one question?"

"As many as you like, and I shall try and be

more polite than you have been, and answer them to the best of my abilities."

"You will not find it very difficult to do, I presume. I only wish you to tell me your age, if you will pardon the impertinence of the demand?"

"Not informing you whether I shall do that or not, I will answer your question. I am just twenty-one."

"I cannot doubt the truth of your statement; but from any other source, I should have pronounced it to be a great exaggeration."

"Why? but I suppose you would have concluded that I was at least ten."

"Hardly that, if your size had not tended to confirm the idea," he replied, roughly, and with an appearance of the greatest earnestness. She did not laugh this time, nor did he notice to see whether she did or not; for from the moment that her voice had died away upon his ear, he had ceased to remember both her and the incident, though she still sat beside him, and the drawing was yet in her hand; but his eyes were fixed upon the floor, and he heaved a deep sigh; when, as if recalled by something to the remembrance of what had just passed, he again glanced at the sketch, but this time with a slight smile, and placed it in her lap.

"I dare say it is a very faithful representation. Take it." She lifted it in silence to her face, when

thinking it somewhat singular that she did not have some answer in readiness, he looked up and drew the paper from before her face.

"What, Nina! You, the invulnerable, in tears! and all on my account!" he seemed to be really touched—pained. "Believe me, dear friend, I would sooner have torn out my tongue than have uttered anything, intentionally, to wound your feelings thus. I had supposed you to be more hardened, or ——"

"Hush!" she said, smiling faintly through her tears, and holding out her hand to him. "You have not said half of what I deserve. This is only one of my foolish and numerous weaknesses, and it will all be over in a few moments." He endeavored to make her sit down by him, again, and tell him what he had said to offend her; but she seemed anxious to get away. "She could not tell exactly;" and drawing her hand forcibly from his, she left the room. Walter's eyes followed her retreating figure until it disappeared from his sight, and he then sank into an unpleasant reverie.

"Could it have been any unguarded expression of mine, that has thus caused those tears to flow from her lovely eyes! It must be, and yet I can think of nothing that I have said—and this is not the only time that I have seen her shed tears of late; when she used to be so hardened that I could say anything, in the way of rebuke to her,

with impunity. I have seen the time when I thought that Shakspeare, in his 'Much Ado About Nothing,' had this girl before his mind's eye, when he drew his character Beatrice; for Nina appeared equally as disdainful and cutting at first; but, then, methinks, it would cost me quite an effort to represent Benedick—and Nina does not sustain her character far enough: but I hope we may not work out the same finis as did that worthy pair. Let me see! but, pshaw! I am a fool. This girl (if she were capable of loving) would not entertain a passing thought of me, we are so entirely opposite in temper and tastes; but even if she were to love me, I could not return it. So I must be more guarded. I have already remained too long in her society. Perhaps the silly child might entertain a passing fancy for me (unworthy as I am) and it would only end in her unhappiness. 'Tis true, I am penniless, and might do well to marry a beauty and a great heiress, but I could not do that—could not marry merely for money, when I have no heart to offer as a recompense. That must ever be another's, whether I marry or remain single; but, pshaw! Am I dreaming, even in the abstract, of marriage and affluence? No! no! My heart is still with the lost one, and so shall my plighted hand never be another's. Ah! what a striking contrast between the lofty, heavenly mind of the one, and the wild, fretful childishness of the other—bah! the

latter's weighs no more than a grain of dust in the balance with *hers*, though many might admire this girl. I hope, at any rate, that in endeavoring to take away the thorns, I have not crushed or bruised the flower."

He got up, and walked about—left the house, and promenaded in the shady grove. He wondered what had put such a silly train of thoughts into his head; and yet he found it impossible to banish them, at that time. He wished to see Nina again that evening, that he might observe, if possible, if there might be any change in her conduct towards him; but she did not appear at table that night, and it was told him that she was sick. He was troubled—much troubled. What if this girl were to waste her affections on him? Yes, what? But he would not think of *that*. He thought that she appeared to be much more silent—more reserved and melancholy than he had ever seen her, on the next morning, and for several days, he rarely ever heard her wild, merry laugh. Could it be that his influence had also checked her mirth? Oh! he almost wished that she would again become as she was when he had first seen her! But no, if she sat in the parlor, as she often did, she could not be induced to rattle away as of old; but would sit pensively for many moments at a time, often sighing, and then looking uneasily around as if in hopes that no one had observed her. And Langdon was

not the only one that appeared to notice this great change in the girl's habits and disposition. He saw that though Lewis was as kind to him as ever, he appeared to observe Nina more closely, and became more silent as he did so. Once she would join them in their morning rambles and ride with them in the evening; but now, she appeared to prefer the quietude of her room.

One evening, as Lewis sat out on the portico, Langdon, who was near, and had appeared for some time to be deeply absorbed in the contents of a book which he held in his hands, looked up suddenly, and began to address his friend though in a half hesitating voice:

"Weston, I have been thinking that I have been living here idly upon your hands, but too long already. Now don't interrupt me, my friend; for I know all that your kind heart would prompt you to say, about your preferring my staying here with you; and though I have been as happy as it is possible for *me* to be, yet my conscience tells me that I have not been doing my duty, and that there is work for me elsewhere. I have learned that there is a good opening for me to obtain business, about thirty miles from here, and I find the practice of law, rather a slow work, for one in my circumstances. So, I think I shall go and offer myself as an applicant."

"Well, Walter, if you think that you would be

happier, I advise you to do so by all means; but you must know that, under the circumstances that have existed between us, I would consider your scruples as a mere shadow of a pretext in which to cover over the plain truth that you are tired of us. And my mother has so learned to look upon you almost as one of her children, that I fear it would give her much pain to give you up. But, Nina, my love, you are looking pale and badly. I fear we have teased you ~~so~~ much about your wild and sportive freaks, that you have become averse to taking even the necessary degree of exercise. What secret influence has wrought this great change in your sentiments, my sweet sister?"

"Nothing," she replied, smiling faintly, "only I think that a young lady of *twenty-one* should be more dignified than to be racing about with her brother over the cotton-fields, and through the woods, hunting. I appeal to Mr. Langdon if I am not right."

"Yes," he replied, playfully; "but I really think you now need a little exercise, and will absolve you from all blame if you will accompany your brother this evening, in the walk that he proposes taking."

"May I, Lewis?"

"May you!" Yes, child," he replied tenderly; "but unless you go with the same spirits as of old, we do not want you. Methinks, you

were not formerly accustomed to say, 'May I, when a walk was proposed; for I could not then persuade you to remain behind. However, I am glad to see that you are getting so gentle and obedient. So come along, and Langdon with you.' They walked forth, talking pleasantly, as they passed along; but Nina had scarcely opened her lips, and they had been on their way for some time; nor was she even listening to them.

"My sister will agree with me, I know," said Lewis, laughingly, to something that the other had remarked, but which she had not heard. "Do you not, Nina!"

"You must really excuse me," she replied, in a feeble voice, and blushing very deeply; "but I am so much fatigued that I could not pay attention to what you were saying."

"Certainly, darling, for you *do* look very tired; perhaps we had better turn back with you."

"Oh! no. I can very well return by myself, as we are at no great distance from home; and I heard you say that you wished to go at least a mile farther on a little matter of business."

"Yes; but then Langdon will accompany you back, as I am not afraid to go by myself, and I should be to let you do so." She protested that she had much rather go alone, as she did not wish to force Mr. Langdon to turn back against his inclination; but, of course, Walter declared that he

much preferred returning with her; and so Lewis proceeded on his way, leaving them to retrace their steps. Langdon endeavored to engage her in conversation, and he felt somewhat hurt that he did not succeed, and then he almost wished to hear her old, merry laugh again; but he said to himself, that she was nothing to him, nor could she ever be, and yet he found himself wondering if she would grieve at his departure: but, no, he knew that she would not. She would only shake hands with him very coldly, and tell him, perhaps, with her old roguish laugh, that "she should see some peace then."

He at length spoke to her, and found that she answered him very shortly and abruptly. "Ah!" thought he, a little out of humor with himself, "I have been saying something to wound her feelings again. No wonder she despises me," and he begged her earnestly to tell him what he had said, or done to offend her; but she only answered—"Nothing," and again relapsed into silence.

"I know," he said, with something of tenderness, blended with sorrow in his voice, "that you are offended at something that I have thoughtlessly uttered. Will you not be rejoiced, Nina, when your tormentor leaves you, as he intends doing in a few days?" Langdon was thoughtful; he did not know how much interested he had become in the childish woman with whom he was so often left alone.

"No," she answered, briefly, in reply to his question.

"I thank you for that little 'no,'" he said, somewhat seriously; "for I can now leave happier than I have felt for a very long time, with the reflection that I have, in each member of your family, a warm friend. I came to your house a very poor and miserable wretch, Nina, and until I met with your brother, I did not believe that I had a friend on the face of the earth. I have been with you all for several months now, and have been treated with a kindness that I cannot easily forget. I may have appeared very singular, cross and soured, in temper to one of your innocent and cheerful nature; but you can never conceive of the many and great disappointments and afflictions that have befallen me in the last few years. And in remembrance of this, will you not forgive my otherwise unpardonable conduct?"

"I am *very* sorry that you are going to leave us, and I have nothing to forgive." He felt her arm trembling in his, as she leaned more heavily against him. Heavens! she was fainting. He passed his arm around her waist to support her already senseless form. He looked down, with much agitation, upon her pale face; her eyes were closing.

"Nina—loved one, what is the matter? Speak to me, and tell me that it is not about such a base,

senseless creature as myself, that you are thus powerfully agitated." He leaned over her with intense agony written upon every feature. "Oh! how lovely her pale face looked as the color fled from her chiseled features, and what an insensible brute he had been, not to have guarded against all this; but he had gone on in his thoughtless folly, until now it was too late to return; for he could not sacrifice this lovely being, who now lay insensible in his arms, to the hard fate that had so long been his own, namely, that of loneliness and separation from the loved object. Oh! no, she must be saved at all hazards from *that*." And as he looked upon her pale, insensible face, pity and admiration were mingled in his bosom, until, in the excitement of the moment, he forced himself into the belief that he loved her, and with this thought, he forgot himself—forgot everything but that beautiful and marble-like face before him. "Nina, beloved, open your eyes upon me, and tell me if my fond hopes are true; but she does not hear me. Oh! if she were to die *now*!" again he stooped over her, and again he pressed his lips to her pale brow; and as he gazed upon her with the deepest anxiety, the warm life's blood seemed slowly to return, under his caresses, and at last she opened her eyes.

"Ah! you have not left poor Nina yet?"

"No, dearest, and I never will; only cast off this terrifying stupor, and speak to me once more

in your old voice. Oh! how blind and miserably senseless to all that is pure and lovely, I have been, not to have seen that you were more attractive and radiantly lovely than all other women, even in that wild sportiveness, which I once considered so unbecoming to you!"

"But you cannot, do not love me! you, so noble, so gifted—while I have been so childish, so unworthy?"

"More than life itself!" Ah! well might you pause abruptly, Walter Langdon, as you were startled to think that, for the instant, you beheld in your arms, the loved—the far away—the never to be *forgotten one* of former days! How was your fiery ardor excited merely by the stirring circumstances of the moment, and soon to be so fearfully chilled—*now* dampened, as your thoughts flew back to the old Virginia church-yard, and the peerless being there wooed and won! and how inferior did she, upon whom you now bestowed such fond caresses, appear to you, when compared with *her*; but she belonged to the things of the past, and what business had the remembrance of her to intrude upon you now; but you did not know all *yet*, and again the present alone occupied your mind.

"And my own Nina, has your tender heart been given to such a worthless animal as myself, and I did not know it?"

"Yes—oh! yes; but I am so unworthy of you?"

"Much more than worthy, *my* Nina! Oh! I did not know there might be so much happiness in store for *me*, in this life;" and again he paused abruptly, as if some severe and secret blow had been given him, while a dark cloud passed over his brow. "Nina, listen to me, and let me tell you why it is that I have so long remained insensible to your charms; for I would not have you say that you love me, until you hear *all*. I cannot tell you, truthfully, that you are the *first* and only woman that has ever won my admiration. I cannot offer to you a heart in the first fullness and freshness of undivided love; for years ago, when in far distant scenes, and long before my eyes had ever rested upon you, I loved—and was beloved by another in return, a noble, a gifted and a beautiful woman; but we were afterwards separated—separated without one faint hope of a re-union, yet her image has haunted me until now, though several years have passed since that time; and I believed that my heart was wholly hers, until I saw you and found that your love could fill the vacancy left in my heart, when the hope of one day calling her my own had departed. I now love you as I had never hoped to love another, and you tell me that this passion was returned, perhaps, before I was aware of the existence of my own; but let that

pass. I can now say, that should you be willing to accept me as a lover, (for I could not permit you to do so until you had learned *all*,) the remainder of my life shall be devoted to the promotion of your happiness; and I promise you that the kindness and unwearied attention of the husband shall more than atone for the early love of the *boy*."

"The early love of the *boy*!" Would that it could have proved such to you, in reality, poor, misguided youth; but the marble tomb-stone and the old church-yard were not to be forgotten *yet*.

And Langdon almost bore that frail, delicate creature to her mother's house in his arms; for she was too feeble to walk without his assistance. And oh! how sweet and innocent was the lovely smile with which she received every word that *he* uttered; but he did not, could not appreciate all *her* beauty. How could he? Nor did he repeat his expressions of love with the fervor that he had done in the first moments of his avowal, though she wept as she said, "She thought how little she had deserved such a noble heart as his, when her conduct had been so silly—so provoking; but she would be a *woman* now—she would be serious and dignified like others, and try to merit his love."

"No, dearest, you must be my wild bird still, and it shall be the pride of my life to try and tame

you by the magic of love, whenever you soar too high."

Poor girl, she *never* knew how little of that love she possessed; for he was ever noble—he was kind—he was attentive as he had promised; but the vow in the presence of the dead could not be forgotten, or annulled.

When Nina returned home she threw herself into her mother's arms and told her how happy she was, and how different she would be in future—told her *all*; and then that loving, gray-haired mother, with tears streaming down her cheeks, clasped Langdon's hand, saying that she believed him to be worthy of her treasure, and that she would resign her without a fear into his hands, whenever he might claim her, feeling that he would watch over and cherish her as she had done.

Aye! rush to your room, unhappy man, hoping to find happiness there; then close and lock your door, and sink into a gloomy reflection, but to awake and discover that you are again most *woefully* deceived, and all by your own folly, while there is but one path before you, and in that one you are bound to go, though it should lead to *madness*. You may think, but in vain, of the superior loveliness of that fair young face, and sum up every little attraction in order to make the prize appear more valuable; yet you must feel that there is

a something wanting, and a voice must be constantly whispering in your ears, "You love her not!"

Verily, they that sow the wind, must reap the whirlwind!

CHAPTER XVII.

THE DIE IS CAST.

Lewis Weston shook him warmly by the hand. "Walter, my boy, I know of no one on earth whom I would sooner take by the hand, and call brother, than yourself; yet I must congratulate you on the treasure that you have won, and you will find her an invaluable one. She may have faults; but she is flexible, and can be easily moulded into any form that you wish by the gentle hand of love, and I know that she will make it the study of her life to please you, and gratify your slightest whim. She will be as happy as I could wish her. I had long feared that she had devoted her heart to you, and the thought has cost me much suffering:

for I did not once dream that you could ever care for her."

"I thank you, my kind friend," replied Langdon, with no little emotion, but the nature of which the other did not understand, "that you should thus compliment me, by stating your willingness to confer the high honor of your sister's hand upon me, when there are so many on an equality with her in point of wealth, at least, that would be proud of the gift. I think I fully appreciate her good qualities, and I shall endeavor to prove myself worthy of her." And he did, poor Langdon; but no one ever knew what a sacrifice he had made!

Mrs. Weston believed him to be anxious for the time to come, when he might call the beautiful Nina his bride, and no thought of his poverty ever entered her noble mind, in the light of an objection.

"My son," she had said, tenderly, when he had spoken of deferring their union until he could place himself in better circumstances, "if that is your only reason, you need not defer your marriage another day. Nina will have enough of her own, for both of you to live in affluence; and believe me, though you might be entirely penniless, yet as long as you have proved yourself so worthy of her, in every action, and the loftiness of your mind, I should feel proud to call you my son."

"You know best, madam, how to arrange the matter, and I leave everything in your and Nina's

hands, knowing that your decisions will be as you think them to be in accordance with my wishes;" and so he would leave her, muttering as he did so, "Well, the irrevocable step is taken, and I suppose, the sooner the sacrifice is made, the better it will be."

In the solitude of his own room, he endeavored to persuade himself into the belief that he would be a happier man; and when he would fail in this, he would seek out Nina, and sitting quietly in her presence, would gaze upon her lovely, innocent face, and murmur to himself, "Surely, I cannot fail to love a being so attractive." But then he would look into his own heart, and be startled to behold the great and aching void *there*, as he seemed to hear a solemn response from within, "Yes, tremble at your fate, for you love her *not*." And he would again try to console himself by the reflection of his former misery, and by repeating to himself, that "he knew he should never be as unhappy as he had been, even when *his doom was sealed*; for if he could not love his wife, he would, at any rate, be made independent of all the rest of mankind; and his proud and lofty spirit would not then be wounded as it had been, when he was forced to cry "charity," in the ears of a low robber. And, with these reflections, he at last nerved himself, sufficiently, to appoint a fixed time for *his marriage*.

Time passed on, as on it must, until, at length, the day arrived when his destiny was to be sealed. And he *lived* to see it all. Weston, Mana and every one saw that he was laboring under a terrible degree of excitement; but they did not think of attributing it to its true cause. They were very kind to him, and attentive to his every wish; but he only desired that he might be left alone, all that day. Immediately after breakfast, of which he did not pretend to partake, he walked hurriedly out of the house, and continued to wander through the grove, until he came, at last, to a tall old oak tree, near the roots of which, ran a babbling brook, where he laid himself down beneath its shade.

Oh! what a destiny was staring him in the face!

He took out a small and beautifully wrought miniature case, and opened it. Aye! look again, but once more, upon that proudly beautiful and noble-looking face, and then shut your eyes as if dazzled by the lovely vision, for well might you wish to shut it out from your mind and eyes now!

He gazes upon it again. Oh! he wished those soft, large eyes had not been so well taken, for now they seemed to be fixed upon his face, as if to read the secret workings of his soul, with the same mild and angel-like expression he had often seen in those of the original, as they would be fixed upon him in days, alas, long gone by.

And there, too, was the same perfectly cut mouth, that almost seemed to him to relax into one of the old, gentle, loving smiles as he gazed upon it; and in the fair, rounded cheeks were the same lovely dimples that he had so often admired. And there, too, around that alabaster neck hung those golden curls, one of which, he now had next his heart. And this peerless being had once loved him! Oh! how unworthy he felt that he had ever been of her pure heart!

He had never felt exalted—flattered by Nina's professions of attachment; but he remembered now how his heart had once bounded and throbbed tumultuously, at the slightest token of affection from her.

Any one could plainly observe the high and noble order of intellect stamped upon that faint representation of her features. And when he thought of her noble, loving heart, and the towering mind that had soared so high above the ordinary people and things of this world, he could not help drawing a comparison between this, his first choice, and her who was now destined to be his bride. 'Tis true, Nina was very lovely—amiable at times—and loving; but how did she stand the contrast when placed by her side?

Why badly enough!

They were preparing—busily preparing, in his home, not far distant, for his *nuptials* that evening;

but his thoughts were not with them. They were roaming back to the old Virginia church-yard, and his early—yes, his *only* love.

"Imogen," he muttered, as he gazed upon the likeness. "My fate is about to be sealed. Since our parting, now nearly three years, I have cherished, with a miser's care, this last memento of thee. In my lonely wanderings, when hunger was wasting away my body, this served as a sumptuous repast for my otherwise starving soul. I have continued to preserve it as food for my imagination, though all hope has long since died away. *My wife* will be lovely and gentle and pure; but oh! would that I could but regard her with half the affection I have felt for you. Yet I feel this to be impossible. Never—*never* can my early vows of love, the too noble object and the solemn scenes in which our troth was plighted, fade from my mind. Oh! thou faint and lifeless resemblance of her charms!" he wildly exclaimed, as he gazed upon the likeness, "awake to pity! witness my *maddening* misery, and restore to me my heart at least, all bleeding and mangled though it may be, or else my life must be one of *unutterable woe*."

He looks in silence upon it for one moment longer, then he arises to his feet. Slowly and carefully he extracts the substance upon which the representation of her face and figure was impressed. He takes out his handkerchief, and stooping down,

moistens one corner of it in the waters of the brook: "I cannot, in honor, *wed* another," he muttered with surprising calmness, "and preserve this; for it has not been *guilt* before. Thus perish all thoughts of her (as he entirely effaced the likeness) from my mind and heart, *now* and *forever*;" and he casts the remnants into the murmuring waters. "And now this *must go* also." He takes out a long, sunny curl from his bosom, presses it once to his lips, then parts it one strand from another, as he rushes madly from the spot.

Comparatively easy was it, for you, Walter Langdon, thus to destroy these frail tokens of your early love; but were the image and remembrance so easily torn from your heart?

He was alone in his room that evening, arraying himself in *his wedding* costume, and as he looked at himself in the mirror, he smiled bitterly, as he muttered, "Oh how hateful this dress is to me. Would that it were only my shroud." He at length sat down in a chair, and a waiting man (the only person that he would admit into his room) was dismissed. It was already growing dark, and he heard the many carriages as they drove up, and the voices of those who were assembled below, and yet he did not move.

"Before I arise from this chair," he muttered in thick accents, "I *must* banish the past from my mind, or there will not be on the face of the earth,

a greater criminal than I. 'Tis true, I may, in future, experience an undying restlessness and longing after something I know not what; *but*, then, I *must never* think of *her* and the cause of my misery. My every thought and attention must ever be devoted to the gentle being who loves me, and God grant that I may never murmur in my dreams and arouse the hateful passion, 'Jealousy,' in her bosom. Oh! be still, my aching heart! and perish every thought of the past." He buried his face in his hands, and sat thus for some time. He almost fancied that he could see a host of evil spirits grinning maliciously upon him, as they hissed in his ears, "It is too late to return." Ah! what a destiny was staring that man in the face; but the iron will again conquered. Steps were heard approaching his room. "They come," he muttered, hoarsely, "to lead me to the sacrifice. And oh! Imogen, could you see what this has cost me, you—yes, *you* would weep in pity; but it is *all* over *now*. I am *nerved* for *anything*, and could plunge a dagger in my own bosom, were it required, without blenching."

"Are you ready, Walter?" Lewis Weston looked in. "There is nothing wanting but your presence."

"Only a moment more; but come in, Lewis. I am afraid I am so much agitated that I cannot put on my gloves."

"Pshaw! man," and Lewis gave him a slight slap on the shoulder as he came up. "I had thought more of you than this. Why, if I had to be married over again a hundred times, I would never tremble so. Come on;" and he took his arm and led him down.

"This way, Walter! Brother Tyrel is in the back parlor." Walter lifted his hat from his pale brow, with a smile and a bow, as he saw the groom's men standing around him. He walked up to the parson's seat, and gave up his license with the most surprising calmness.

"Now, Mana," whispered Lewis, "you can bring Nina and her attendants in here, for the sooner the ceremony is over the better it will be."

A few moments more, and a white robed party of some six or eight young ladies swept into the room. Lewis advanced towards Nina as she entered the door, took her gently by the hand, and walking up to Walter, consigned her to him. He pressed her small, white hand in his own, for a moment, then drawing her arm through his, as the bridal party arranged themselves in order, he passed into the well-filled parlor.

The parson arose before him, as he paused, with one hand pressed tightly upon his heart, while the other clasped hers, as her arm was passed through his. He bowed his head in silent reverence to listen to the vows that he was called upon to make,

until his raven hair almost touched that of his lovely bride. Yes, "her face was fair, but was not that which had made the starlight of his boyhood," and he felt this, even as he stood there, in all its bitterness; yet,

"He stood calm and quiet, and he spoke
The fitting vows, but heard not his own vows;"

For

"He could see, not that which should have been,"

But the old church, the tombstones and the radiant being there wooed and won; and then he looked down upon her, who was beside him. She had no business there!

"Walter Langdon, do you take this woman to be your wedded wife. * * * * Do you promise to love and cherish her, cleaving unto her and her only, so long as ye both shall live?"

Aye, well might that question startle him; but his silent answer in the depths of his heart, was, "To the best of my abilities—Yes." * * * *

"My sweet sister," and Lewis Weston bowed his tall head and kissed the bride, as he spoke, "I can congratulate you upon the noble selection that you have made."

"And can you not do the same with him?" smiling roguishly.

"I can, at least upon the masterly influence

that he alone has thus far exerted over your little, ungovernable self."

"Ah! well," looking up tenderly into the pale, but handsome face of him who sat beside her, as he returned her glance with an affectionate smile, "it was a very long time before I could abandon all of my old habits to please him; but when I saw that he would not come over to me, I just thought that it would be best for me to yield to him as my lord and master."

"And did it cost you a *great* struggle, dear Nina?" asked the groom with a smile; for he was *calm then*, and he must be happy.

"I fear she will find a difficult task to acknowledge and perform the great responsibilities that will now rest upon her," said Lewis, laying his hand affectionately and gently upon her head.

"Hush!" and again Langdon looked up with one of the old, quiet, bewitching smiles. "Dissatisfied with myself I may often be, but you shall never make me so with her. I have no fears for you, my own, (addressing Nina,) for I know that you will do *your duty*. It only remains for me to study, and struggle to discharge mine faithfully.

Yes, almost radiantly beautiful was she as she sat beside him, happy in the belief that she was beloved by one so intelligent, so noble-minded, and that he had made her the object of his choice.

Choice! The irrevocable step had been taken in a moment of blind infatuation, and he had been forced to push onward; but he must not *now* look back. * * * * *

CHAPTER XVIII.

She saw her last earthly ties and hopes consumed, as it were, by a devouring flame; and yet she walked upon the ashes, an immaculate and regenerated being.

Sweet Imogen! how gladly do we return to thee from following the forlorn and unhappy destiny of a poor child of fate, forsaken even by his mother Nature, in a far-off distant land! We feel a spirit of tenderness, not to be experienced amidst any other scenes, as we breathe thy soft name o'er, and turn to the old, quiet Virginia residence, thy home.

And how hast thou, lone, but dear one, stood the lapse of time? Has the space of nearly three years wrought no material change in the course of thy existence? or shall we find thee the same as when we left thee?

Let us see.

Twilight was beginning to envelop the earth in its mystic grandeur, and the stillness of night to pervade the glimmering landscape now fading from the view, as Imogen stepped forth from the dismal, old, castle-like mansion of her father, and seated herself in one corner of the portico, beneath the overhanging foliage of a thickly twining ivy, and in this manner she was screened even from the pale light of the moon, which soon arose in the heavens. So deeply absorbed was she in her own reflections, that she heard not a step upon the gravelled walk, nor saw our old friend Philip Arlington as he stood beside her, until he leaned forward and breathed her name:

"Miss Imogen, I should have passed you, and my heart would not have told me that I was in your gentle presence, had you not heaved that sigh. May I ask you why you seem so depressed this evening?"

"Alas! Mr. Arlington, I fear that my father is much worse to-day. He does not complain, but I fear he is almost exhausted. Oh! how changed! how much more lonely would everything be here, were I to lose him; for now I am constantly occupied in watching by his side, and supplying his every want, and I fear that I have great cause to upbraid myself, when I reflect how intense has been his sufferings since—for the last three years. His affliction, at this moment, is equally as great as when

my poor brother was brought home a corpse; and then he was so much distressed at the unhappy state of his family affairs, that I fear he cannot stand it much longer." She leaned her head against the railing, and the gentleman knew that she was in tears, though he heard no sob.

He seated himself at her side.

"Imogen, (aye! let me call you by that name; for our acquaintance, formed in sorrow, and continued through all your great trials, entitles me to that privilege,) I have something of great moment to myself at least, to tell you. Others might think that I should defer what I have to say until another time, when your mind may be less burdened with the troubles that now surround you; but it was in the agony of your first great affliction that I, for the first time, beheld you, and your beauty and heart-rending sorrow enlisted my deepest sympathies in your behalf. And the remembrance of you was so indelibly impressed upon my heart, that, though I knew it not at the time, I felt unhappy, until again, many months after, I found myself in your society and learned that happiness was for me only under the bright and hallowed influences of your smile and conversation; and now it seems to me as if I were drawn yet nearer to you on account of your present sufferings, and can speak to you more plainly while your kind and noble heart is most softened to lis-

ten to the voice of persuasion, and to sympathize with me on account of the many doubts, fears and tremblings that I have experienced when I have reflected upon the uncertain—nay, *very* doubtful foundation upon which I have built my hopes; and yet, Imogen, I have hoped through all.

“And now let me endeavor to tell you all that I have felt for you. In the first place, I will tell you that I was, from the beginning, apprised of your early love, and the *worthy* object of it. Yes, Imogen, (but do not be thus agitated at the mention of his name,) I knew him intimately before his sister’s death, and though he afterwards seemed, in a measure, to abandon all his friends, yet I was apprised of his admiration—nay, devotion for you, though I had never seen you. On the night previous to his encounter with poor Allen, I was with him, and heard him, in all the terrible agitation of those moments, when he knew that he was then forced to abandon all thoughts of you *forever*, speak of you in terms of the highest praise and admiration; and, Imogen, I will now tell *you*, that *he was, in every respect, worthy of your love*, and that it cost him the greatest efforts to pursue that course of conduct towards your brother that he felt called upon by the laws of honor to do; and yet the man’s nature was of that firm and decided character, that he would have acted as he did, had he known that he would have been required to

tear out his own heart, as a recompense. Yes, he loved you, Imogen; and I learned that you loved him in return, and for this reason, as well as for the friendship that existed between us, I must say to you, that he was noble and true, though this very acknowledgement from me, might cause you again to look upon him in the same light as you once did; and might prove the very means of upsetting my slender hopes. I first saw you here, now, nearly three years ago, and I tried to remember that your heart was bestowed upon another; but all this could not abate my admiration for you, *and I determined, as the only way of success, to let time pass on, that the great wound in your heart might be healed, and I have done so.* I have been waiting very patiently, and I will not now ask of you the first freshness and ardent love of your warm heart. I know that it is not in your power to grant me that; for it has long since been bestowed upon another; but I will request of you that you will think as favorably as you can of my suit before answering me. Remember the long while that I have waited to tell you all this, and if you can now respect me and feel kindly towards me, it is all that I can ask, for the present. Perhaps, in time, (and I will wait patiently for years longer if you wish it,) you may learn to look upon me in the light of a lover; and at last come to make my home a paradise for me by your presence.

Will you do this, Imogen? And I would have you consider, also, that your father is now a very old man, bowed down under a heavy weight of years and affliction; and you may, in a very short time, be called upon to renounce him. Then think how cheerless—nay, miserable, this house would be for you with no other companion than that unhappy woman whose evil name is the constant topic of conversation for the whole neighborhood. And then, Imogen, will you not give me at least an uncertainty to hope upon?"

She was weeping bitterly.

"You fear to wound me," he said, tenderly, but in a choked voice, as he endeavored to take her hand, "by affirming that even my slender hopes have been in vain; but speak out, I shall endeavor to bear *it all*."

"I must, indeed, tell you," she replied, in an agitated voice, "that I can never look upon you in any other light than as a friend. I would feel as if I had committed the greatest sin that I could do, were I to accept of your noble heart, and think of wedding you, when I can never feel anything but that common respect and admiration for you, such as your talents and superior virtues are bound to call forth, even from those of your own sex. Not only the 'first fresh emotions of love,' (as you expressed it,) but all that I could ever have been capable of feeling for any human being, in

the light of a lover, was bestowed upon him of whom you have spoken; and since Providence has seen fit to decree that we should be separated on earth, I have resolved to devote the remainder of my life and affections to a higher and better cause. No, Philip. Instead of rendering your home happy, I should make you wretched; for a deep melancholy must ever overspread my spirits, and when you would be forced to reflect that another had been the cause of that gloom which you would be unable to dispel, you could not be happy. Believe me, it is much better that I should live as I am, and should Providence see fit to remove my dear parent from me, I will still remain here, contented—yes, happy, in the discharge of my duty to those that are placed under me."

"Be it as you say, then," replied the young man, as he arose, and bowed his head over the hand that he held. "Since this is your choice, I *must* abide by it; but, oh! Imogen, believe me, when I tell you, that to be with you always, though you might be constantly in tears, would be far preferable to the brightest smiles of all other women."

"I respect you too much," she said, in a gentle, soothing voice, "to think that you would utter anything untruthful, even in such matters as this, and you may look upon me in this light now, and feel as you have said that you do, from the excitement of the moment; but you will soon be

thankful that I have spoken as I have done, and left you unfettered by the weak promise of, one day, partially returning your affection. Believe me, such a noble heart as yours richly merits the affections of a young and devoted being who has never loved another; and I hope, Philip, that I may live to see you, one day, thus happily rewarded."

"Never! *never!* But, Imogen, alleviate my wretchedness, by making me one promise, will you not?"

"Speak, and I will say and do all in my power to promote your happiness."

"Then promise me, that should you have the misfortune to lose your father, you will stay with my sisters—live anywhere, rather than stay *here* to be persecuted by this wretched woman who despises you. Her heart can never be won over by kindness; and all your efforts and patience would be exhausted in vain. Promise me this, will you not?"

"I do not think that I have it entirely in my power to comply with your requests; for this poor woman may not wish to live here so entirely alone; and it may be my father's wish for me to remain with her; but let me assure you, Philip, if it will afford you any gratification, that I shall never suffer again from unhappiness on earth; for no matter how gloomy and disagreeable my short stay

here may be, I shall be cheered by the reflection that, in a little while, I shall go to my bright and happy home on high, where no sorrow ever intrudes."

The light through a distant window was reflected upon them as she spoke. She had arisen, and was pointing with her small white hand towards the starry sky, while a heavenly smile rested upon her countenance, and thus Philip Arlington left her. He rode slowly home, and early on the ensuing morning his room was found empty, and a note addressed to his parents, stating "that for causes which he did not then, and perhaps never should have the heart to explain to them, he was compelled to leave Virginia, for several years at least, as he knew he would be very miserable were he to remain. That they would know he had not left thus hastily to avoid the disgrace of any evil action of his own, as some might be led, at first, to suppose; for he hoped that there was no ill-will harbored in the breast of any human being towards him; and if so, he was not aware of it." No one could surmise a cause for his departure, supposing that it was only a sudden freak of his, that he was bent upon carrying out. But Imogen felt that *she* knew why he was gone, and many a time, when the huntsman was roaming over the wild woods of the West, did she think with bitter tears of him—gone, a voluntary exile from his home and friends;

but, she said to herself, that it would have been far worse for him to remain on the conditions that he had proposed.

Ah! Walter Langdon, could you have seen the meekness and patience with which this young and beautiful girl renounced much of the world for your sake—could you have seen her noble constancy, and how she was forced to send away so many brave hearts miserable, because of you, and then have witnessed the fortitude and resignation which she manifested, when came the tidings that *you were another's*—oh! how different would the history of your life have been! * * * *

“I am glad you have come, dear child,” in a very feeble voice. “Mr. Clark is waiting without until I shall have spoken with you, and gained your approval. Come close to me, Imogen, and close the door—there, softly—Blanche is not in here, is she?”

“No, sir, and you will not be interrupted by her. Have you anything of importance to say to me?”

“Yes, my child, come here and sit down by my side. I can hardly speak out of a whisper. I am afraid my time has almost run out, and I want you to listen to me very attentively, and I know you will approve of what I am about to propose. You remember, child, that your mother—Blanche, I mean—once told us, and has often hinted since,

that my poor lost boy had contrived in some manner, I know not how, to defraud that young man Langdon of all his property, so that I have never been able to rest in peace since. Mr. Clark called to see me a few days ago, and in speaking of the young man, said that he believed, until I sued for the money—which you know I obtained—that Mr. Langdon had paid it. Now, my child, I always thought it very singular that he did not settle with me, during his lifetime, nor speak of it on his death-bed, although I never mentioned it to him. And, as Blanche was with him during his last sickness, I have thought that perhaps he might have given her the money, and she has kept it herself; but, then, surely he would not have done anything so silly! and I cannot see how my poor Allen could have been concerned in the affair; and oh! I hope and pray most earnestly that he was not. Yet, Imogen, the thought that Hethe Langdon's son has sustained an injury at my hands (though Heaven knows that I am free from all blame) has haunted me night and day. And now that I have made my peace with God and all men, I think I should die much easier, were I to know that this young man has never suffered from want. Mr. Clark says, that he has never heard a word of him since—the time of his and poor Allen's difficulty; but I think that I should like to make my will in such a manner, that his father's possessions here,

which were given to me by law, may be restored to him, should he ever return or be heard of again; and you know, that should he never be, or should you ascertain that he is dead, you must necessarily keep all; but I am sure that you would be glad to consign all of that property to him, should he ever return."

"Indeed, I would regard it as the greatest curse of my existence, should I be compelled to keep it, and I have often wondered what has become of him, father, as Mr. Clark says he left without a dollar, to his knowledge, and it *makes me shudder* to think that *possibly* he may be a beggar, or else working hard for his living; while we are unjustly possessed of his property, though you have such a needless amount of your own. Yes, restore everything to him, by all means, and I shall live so much better contented."

"There, I was quite sure that you would speak as you have done, my dear; and now I shall just make a very private, but plain statement of all my fears to Mr. Clark, and let him attach a codicil to my will, to the effect that we have agreed upon; and no one need ever know my motives for acting as I do." * * * * *

Several days again passed on, and Imogen was told that there could be no hope of her father's recovery. She received the intelligence with as much calmness and resignation as she could possi-

bly summon to her assistance; and during the remainder of the time, she rarely ever left his side. He sank very slowly. Mrs. Avory often assisted Imogen in her watches; but she preserved an entire silence with regard to her wishes for the future. She made no inquiries whatsoever of Mr. Avory or the physicians, but seemed to obey their orders very faithfully. Nay, once or twice, when the sick man would groan and writhe with excessive pain, Imogen thought that she saw tears in her eyes; but the woman appeared as if she did not wish any one to observe her; for she always acted as if she were desirous of suppressing every feeling of pity or tenderness that might arise in her heart, and no kind or soothing word was ever spoken by her to the poor sufferer.

The final hour came at last, which Imogen had long and tearfully prayed that she might witness with becoming fortitude. She was by the old man when he sank into a state of insensibility, and she had heard him say, with the full assurance of faith, as hour after hour passed by, and yet he had not received his summons, "Oh! why are his chariot wheels so long in coming?" and when she had asked him, while choaked with sobs, if he felt prepared to go, he had replied, without hesitation, "I know in whom I have trusted; and I would not be again restored to health for all that *the world* contains, for I shall be happy *now*;" and poor old

man, he sank into a state of unconsciousness, murmuring faintly and with a smile resting upon his lip, "I shall be happy *now*—I shall be happy *now*." And when Imogen considered what a life his had been for so many years, she felt that death was, in truth, welcomed by him as a blessed relief.

No fond and weeping partner of his earthly joys and sorrows was there bending over him in his last moments, and imploring him to speak, if but a last *farewell*. His *wife* had left the room, and no one thought of her; but Imogen stood by and knew when the spirit took its flight to a brighter home. She saw him when he was laid out, cold and still in the arms of death, and she could but murmur, as she was borne from the room, in a flood of tears, "He will be happy *now*."

CHAPTER XIX.

DISOBEDIENCE THE GREAT CAUSE OF UNHAPPINESS.

"Now, Walter, will you not lay aside that everlasting book, for this one time?" and Nina leaned over her husband's shoulder, as he looked up tenderly, anxiously, into her flushed and frowning face. "I *do* wish you would not be so provoking. Get up now, for my sake, and shave off that abominable beard, if you wish to look like a human being, and go with me down in the parlor to-night. People do think it is so strange, when we have only been married five months, for me to be left alone to make my way in a crowded parlor at a public place like this, with no one to look after me but a married brother, while my husband remains shut up in his room. I declare, it is too bad! You do not know how wretchedly it makes me feel."

"What are you saying, my love?" and the book was closed as he turned to her with a look of surprise.

"Oh, it isn't worth while to be calling me your 'love' up here, and then leave everybody to think that you do not care an atom about me; and I

am really beginning to think so myself." The peevish little beauty appeared smartly vexed as she went on: "Here you will sit reading, *reading*, and moped up in your own room, when every thing is so gay and merry, and the band is going so beautifully. I *do hate* to see you so stubborn."

"'Stubborn!' dear Nina!" and his mild eyes were fixed rebukingly upon her. "You know, while you are saying it, that such an epithet is wrongly applied to me. When, some weeks ago, you insisted upon coming to the Virginia Springs, I agreed to bring you, although I had apprised you of my great distaste for mixing with society, and particularly for coming to this State; but you would not consider that, and now you cannot say that I have ever failed or murmured in the least, to go anywhere and do everything that you have wished."

"Yes; but then I would almost prefer your remaining behind, if you are to sit up, as you generally do, and not appear to enjoy yourself in the least, as if you wished me to remember all the time that you came out only to gratify me."

"Well, Nina, I do endeavor most earnestly to please you in everything that I can; but I find it very difficult to do so. When we were married, I had hoped most sincerely that you would lay aside that spirit of frivolity, which was then the only objectionable trait in your character; but I

soon discovered that a greater and more increasing evil had usurped its place. I found you becoming restless, and weary of the quietude of that home which you had once loved so much; and the society of those few nearest and dearest to you, which, but a few months since, you had pronounced to be more than sufficient for your happiness, seemed to become most monotonous and tiresome to you. I then consented to bring you here, though it was in direct opposition to my wishes, and yet you complain of me."

"Yes, that is very noble in you," she replied, disdainfully; "very manly, to be constantly singing in my ears your own chivalrous deeds and your martyrdom, while you sum up all my faults, and throw them at me in an upbraiding manner. I did not dream, when I married you, that I would ever be treated in this manner *by you*; but I must tell you, that I am not such an unselfish, self-sacrificing being as yourself. I could not give up everything that added to my comfort only to gratify an idle whim of yours. You had called me too wild and childish, until I came near killing myself by sitting up quietly in my room and acting Madam Dignity, and then because I sometimes wished to see some other human being besides yourself, and desired to come here to restore my health and enjoy myself for a few weeks, you

are constantly upbraiding me and telling me that I think of nothing but rushing blindly forward in pursuit of idle pleasures. Well, I suppose I cannot help all this now, and I do not believe you have ever loved me. You only wish me to remain shut up at home like a caged bird, and then die for want of fresh air, while you will be left with plenty of money, to do as you please, and marry any one that you may choose."

"Nina!" and his voice was more stern than she had ever heard it before, "I am so completely astounded at your singular language, that I am almost deprived of the power of speech. What has put you in this singular humor? As God is my Judge, I have labored most earnestly to gratify your lightest wishes, though I will not tell you how often it has been at a great sacrifice of my interests and feelings; but this I know, and will say, that I have never deserved such language from you. I *may* have been thoughtless—negligent of you at times, though I have never been aware of it; but you cannot say that I have ever been unkind in a single word that I have spoken to you. And Nina, I am a *man*—yes, a firm, stern, *high-tempered* man, and I now tell you, warningly, that if you regard our mutual peace, you *must never* utter such language again, as I have just heard from your lips." He turned from her, and again open-

ing his book, began to read. He did not look up for sometime—not until he heard Nina weeping bitterly, and he was much moved.

"My poor girl, you do not know how *very miserable* it makes me to reflect, that when I first saw you, you were a happy, light-hearted child—in feelings at least—and that now, since your marriage with me, you have become so unhappy. I fear I have never occupied that place in your affections that I should have done, and I often think how unworthy I am of it; but it is very distressing to think that we cannot live more happily together; and I suppose the fault is mine, for I should have remembered that there could be no congeniality of feeling between one of my hardened, soured temperament, and you with your warm, impulsive heart."

"Oh!" sobbed Nina, now relenting at his kind, affectionate language, "it is I that am unworthy of you; and it makes me despise myself when I see how good and noble you are, and how willing to take all the blame upon yourself, while I am the only offender, and I should not—could not complain at any punishment that you might inflict upon me, when I think how fickle, disobedient and heartless I am."

"Nay, love," and he stooped and tenderly kissed her cheek as he spoke. "Do not blame yourself too much, now, for I know that I am full of faults,

and my hasty, ungovernable temper often leads me, perhaps, to speak coldly and harshly to you, when I should remember that your ill health is a sufficient excuse for any little hastiness on your part. So dry your tears, and I will array myself in ball costume, and go with you down in the parlor and laugh and dance, and be as merry as you could wish, only, love, be happy *yourself*. * * * *

"Here, Walter, come here to the window and see what a cargo of passengers has come up on the cars this morning, and all of them seem as if they were going to stop here."

"Well, dearest," smiling gently as he took his seat beside her, "let me see; though I do not think a parcel of strangers, enveloped in traveling costumes, can possibly interest me a great deal."

"Oh! just look here in front, at that lovely young girl dressed in black, by the side of that old, fat, dark-looking woman. Look quickly, now that she has her veil off, or you may not be able to see her. How beautiful she is, and does she not move gracefully along? Oh, I hope she will stay here to the fancy ball to-night. I want to see her again—but, Walter, you are ill; see how pale you are getting—"

"Hush! it is nothing;" and his eyes were wild-looking as he tried to speak. "Nina, you will *kill* me if you persist in staying here another hour. I loathe, and am disgusted with everything, in a

bustling, exciting place like this. Oh! how I long to get back to our quiet Southern home once more."

"Now, just see how strangely you do act again," she replied, as the color flew back to his face. "I do believe, Walter, that you will go deranged yet. You come here to the window laughing and joking, and just because you see a few more persons crossing the yard; and think that perhaps we may have a somewhat larger crowd here, you start up, like one frenzied, and declare that you will die if you remain here another moment. I really should like to know what is the matter with you of late."

"Peace, girl! you know not what you are saying, nor the misery you are costing me by remaining here. Let us leave this place this day, this hour, if you love me, and never return."

"I'll declare, I believe I am the most unfortunate, unhappy creature alive," said Nina, bursting into a flood of tears, and again becoming very angry. "I might as well have buried myself alive as to have married you, if I am to go by every thing that you say. Just as I have gone to a great expense in buying up so many things, you wish me to start up and go off somewhere else; but I can't do it, for I have promised you to leave to-morrow, and I think that is sufficiently early."

"Well, Madam," and he paced hurriedly across

the floor, trembling greatly, and biting his lip, as he spoke, "I will yield to *you* again. You shall never have it to say that *I forced you to do anything* against your wishes; but if you have ever loved me—if you regard my peace of mind, and would save me from going *mad*, let us leave here at once."

"I cannot do it, unless you assign a better reason for your singular conduct than you have yet done. You may leave to-day, if you think proper, but I shall stay until after to-morrow, with Mana and Lewis."

"Be it so, then," he replied, with a bitter smile; "but if you participate in the idle and disgusting amusements here this evening, you will do it without my presence and with my most hearty disapproval." So saying, he turned and left the room, slamming the door violently after him, and muttering in wild agony, "Oh! shall I be compelled to remain under the same roof with *her* for twenty-four hours, and see her *not*? He rushed out into the fields and wandered about for several hours, trying to calm the troubled torrent of his thoughts. "Suppose Nina should persist in attending this ball to-night, and that miserable woman, who has so often crossed my path, should discover that she is my wife, and that I had remained absent because—because I trembled to encounter *them*, would she not rejoice

in the thought that I was yet acknowledging their power over me? Oh! it will be horrible! But I suppose I am *doomed to suffer yet*."

He returned to his room. Nina was not there. She was, of course, with Mana, and he could not bear the thought of sitting alone in that house, for one moment. He sat down and wrote a short note to his wife; then, laying it upon the dressing table in their room, he again went forth to wander in the mountains.

And where was Nina? She had been very unhappy. It was the first time that she had ever sat up her authority in direct opposition to that of her husband, though she had often persuaded him into measures contrary to his inclinations, and she felt that she was doing very wrong. But, "she did not see why Walter should be so curious and tyrannical, as to try and force her to leave the Springs so suddenly, when she had promised him, too, that she would go on the ensuing day. If he had any serious reason for wishing her to start that moment, and she knew it, she would not hesitate to do so; but, then, this was all a silly whim of his. And there was to be such a nice ball that evening, which all the ladies in the house, married and single, were going to attend—so there could be no harm in her being present with her brother and his wife, even if Walter should be unsociable and cross enough to stay away." Thus

did she try to persuade herself that there could be nothing improper in her going to the ball, until she had firmly decided that nothing but his *positive orders* should prevent her. She had gone to Mana's room, thinking that she would tell her of Walter's singular conduct and wishes, and ask her what she must do. But then she knew that Mana would only bid her to consult her husband's wishes; and should she tell her that Walter had insisted upon her going, and that *she* had *refused*? for she remembered how much Mana had always made it the study of her life to comply with her husband's wishes, even in the most trifling matters. Thus, feeling that she would lower herself much in the eyes of her sister, should she discover the course of conduct which she was then pursuing, she resolved not to mention the subject at all. Poor, silly creature! She did not once think how much less he thought of her for all this; nor did she know that he was then wandering about on the mountain's side, thinking of his early love, and how he had been forced to abandon her, while the conviction would flash upon his unwilling mind, that the object for which he had done all this was unworthy of him; and now, instead of rewarding him with her love and obedience, and comforting him for the loss of his early hopes, she had forgotten all his kindness, and was growing every day more callous, and causing him, more

and more, to regret that by-gone days could not return again.

Nina could not help weeping when she entered her room and picked up his entreating note. It was short, but it was written *so kindly*, and without any of those angry feelings which she had been harboring all day. It was simply this:

"MY NINA—I do not believe that, upon consideration, you would do anything to cause me pain; then let me beg of you, earnestly, affectionately, that *if* we remain here until to-morrow, you will not appear in the ball room to-night. Believe me, I have weighty reasons for making this request of you.

YOUR HUSBAND."

She folded the note, laid it down again, and sank into a seat, undecided as to what course she should pursue. "Would she not be much happier on the morrow, to think that she had made, at least, *one* little sacrifice to please him, when he was constantly making such great ones for her? And then he would be so grateful for this token of her cheerful obedience to his wishes—so kind and affectionate—and would not that more than repay her for all the little exciting and quickly passing pleasure that she would see in that crowded room of strangers without him? Yes;" for she still loved Langdon as much as *she* was capable of loving, and

prized his esteem and affection as highly as ever; but the evil spirit again whispered in her ear:

"He will care for you as much as ever on the morrow; for this is merely an idle whim of his. Then, too, think of the admiration that you will excite in your splendid attire, and how proud he will be to hear of it. Mana, the good, the pure, the obedient, will go, and why should you remain shut up in your room with him?"

Yes, Mana was going; for in a short time she came into Nina's room magnificently attired, and looking radiantly lovely.

"Why, Nina! you silly child! What are you sitting here for, still *en deshabille*, when it will be time to go down in a few moments? Where is Walter, too? He must be with us this evening. I am almost inclined to think that he is becoming melancholy of late, Nina; for he appears to me to be really unhappy, and I do not think he has spent a pleasant day since we have been here. But get up, it is high time you were dressing; for I want you to look as beautiful as possible, that you may arouse Walter, and make him proud of you, when he shall come in and find you the cynosure of all eyes this evening; for I think he is growing too indifferent to the great attractions of his lady. But where is he now?"

"I do not know," somewhat sullenly. "He has

been out several hours, and I am undecided whether I shall go down or not."

"Pshaw! my dear! You must not feel hurt that he can have the heart to leave you for a few hours at a time; but get ready, and Lewis and I will take you under our protection; and then your liege will come in, feeling proud and happy at seeing you looking as lovely as I know you will be."

"I do not believe he wants me to go."

"Well, what an idea! He would be nothing but a heartless tyrant, could he think of making you stay away, when all the youth and beauty, married and single, will be congregated below."

Yes, even Mana had said that it would be but a tyrannical freak of his, could he think of making her stay away! And then he would certainly forgive her, when she should tell him how much she had enjoyed herself.

Alas, poor Nina! far better would it have been for you had he been tyrannical enough, indeed, to exercise that authority, which would have been but just, when you refused to listen to the voice of persuasion, and rushed wilfully on to your own unhappiness.

She entered the crowded and brilliantly lit rooms, looking beautiful, indeed, in her splendid and fanciful costume; and her heart beat high when she saw, with unfeigned pleasure, the many admiring eyes that were bent upon her; for even in

that crowded assembly, one of her surpassing beauty could not fail to attract attention, and frequently did the remarks of strangers fall upon her own ears, as she sat off somewhat to herself, for a time, looking on at the joyous dance. Some three or four gentlemen stood in a group very near her, but they were evidently not aware of her proximity to them at the moment, for they were a little in front; yet she soon discovered that she was the subject of their conversation.

"Do you know who she is?" asked one, in an under tone.

"Oh, yes! She is a married lady! and you had better keep silent, for her husband is here, I believe; though he must be a very singular being, for he allows her to come into the ball room every night by herself, or rather she pretends to be under the protection of a married brother and his wife; but, then, she is often left alone in the company of comparative strangers. I say, Jones, if I were married to such a young and pretty woman as that, and one evidently as fond of admiration, I do not think that I would trust her alone in such a company as *this*, as *he* does."

"No; for they are not to be trusted too much anywhere; but I wonder if it is ignorance of the customs here, or can it be indifference in him."

"It is the latter, I can assure you, although it may appear very strange. I have met with her

husband, Mr. Langdon, out—have taken several hunts with him, and know him to be an uncommonly intelligent and interesting man. He appears to be a very unhappy, singular fellow, though I believe he tries to look contented. I have made some enquiries, and have learned that he was very poor when he married her, and as she was *very* wealthy, I should not be surprised if he were some sentimental young gentleman, who has been disappointed in love for some blue-eyed country lassie, and having fallen in with this girl by good luck, has married her for her money, thinking that he could easily learn to love her; but I think the old passion sticks faster than the gentleman could wish; for any one can see that he is very indifferent to his wife, and I don't believe it is thought that he cares a great deal for her, though he occasionally makes his appearance in company with her, as he did last night, and he then pays her the strictest attention. What a striking contrast between his lady and that fair-haired, serious-looking girl, dressed in black, sitting yonder, in the corner of the room, by that old, fat, disagreeable looking woman. I have been trying to find out all the evening who she is, but no one seems to know. There she has been sitting quietly for the last hour. It appears as if she were only here to wait on that old hag; for the girl herself is in deep mourning, and has nothing to say to any one. You do not

know how much she has won my admiration, by retiring so quietly to that corner, as if purposely to avoid attracting attention, when she could easily be the star of the evening. But just look at those long, luxuriant curls, and see what a noble, angelic face she has."

Oh! how bitter were Nina's feelings! and how much ashamed and abashed she felt! Yes, the insulting remarks and criticisms of strangers had been passed upon her, and she *must* bear this patiently; for *he* had brought it all upon her by his neglect. He had either left her to go about alone, or else remain like a hermitess shut up in her room, and because she *could not* do the latter, she was forced to bear *all this!* And *they* had said he cared nothing for her, and how could she believe that he did. Oh! what a fool she thought she had been too, never to have remembered that he *might* have married her *for her money*. These unhappy reflections rendered her so restless and miserable, that she resolved to look about for Lewis and Mana and tell them that she was tired and wished to leave. She could not get a glimpse of Mana in some time, until, at length, she saw her walk quickly across the upper part of the room towards the corner where the old lady and the serious-looking, but beautiful young girl were sitting, and salute the latter with an appearance of such warmth, that Nina wondered who she could be.

They seemed to talk together very earnestly for sometime, and Nina was observing them so closely, that she once or twice caught the old lady's eye, when she saw Mana introduced to her by her companion, and they appeared to have exchanged a few remarks, when the woman again looked towards her and pointed her finger at her, so as to direct Mana's attention to her.

The music ceased for a moment, and Nina drew nearer the party, partly from curiosity, but principally to call Mana as soon as she should drop her conversation with the strangers, and tell her that she wished to retire. She heard the loud and coarse voice of the old lady, addressing Mana, as she drew near.

"Who did you say that young lady was—Miss—Mrs. Weston, I mean," and again she pointed to Nina.

"My husband's sister, madam."

"Humph! Did you say she was married?"

"Yes, madam."

"Ah! I might have known that. All young ladies are, particularly those that are tolerably good looking; but you did not tell me her name?"

"I believe not. Her husband's name is Langdon."

The band again struck up, and Nina could hear no more, but she saw the lady give a start of surprise, when her husband's name was mentioned, and ask Mana several questions in quick succession.

She noticed also the beautiful young lady, the same that had attracted her attention on her arrival that morning, appeared either very much excited, interested, or surprised, she did not know which; and, then, she seemed to be regarding her very fixedly for some time, until at last she saw Mana turn as if to come towards her, and the old lady arose and followed her.

"Nina, this lady, Mrs. Avory, an old acquaintance of your husband's, I believe, desires to become acquainted with you."

Nina was so much surprised at this, that she only muttered something about being "happy to form the lady's acquaintance," she did not know exactly what.

"It doesn't make any difference whether you are 'happy to do it or not,'" replied the woman in a rough, curious voice. "Your husband is distantly related to me, madam, and I wish to make some inquiries about him, as I do not believe he is here."

"No, madam, Mr. Langdon is not in this room, though he is at the springs with me. He rarely ever participates in amusements like the present."

"Then I think it very careless and trifling in him to allow you to be here alone."

"I am not alone," replied Nina, hastily, and with much confusion, "I have a brother and sister present."

"Yes, but that's not your husband. I believe

your brother's wife told me that his Christian name is Walter, and that he was originally from Virginia?"

"Yes, madam; you were correctly informed.

"He is the same, then," replied the woman, with a singular smile. "I have known him intimately from a child. I am *very much* surprised to learn that he is married."

"I did not know that he had any intimate friends here, or any relations at all," answered Nina, hardly knowing what to say.

"Well, I do not know that he would acknowledge me as either. Yet I know all about *him*. He left us some three years ago, and, as I have said, it surprises me *very much* to learn that he has *again* fallen in love, and is now married."

"Why are you so much surprised?" asked Nina, faintly, with a vague dread of something—she did not know what.

"Only because he professed to be so madly in love with that young lady yonder, at the time, and had been secretly engaged to her for many months."

"Is *she* your daughter?" asked Nina in a husky voice.

"No; I have no children. She is only my step-daughter. Of course, you know that your husband *killed* her only brother in a duel, just as he went away from Virginia?"

"Yes, he mentioned to us, or rather to my brother, that he had had a sad difficulty with a Mr. Ivory, and that he was killed in a duel between them."

"A Mr. Ivory. And I suppose he did not say anything to you about Mr. Ivory's sister, Imogen, did he?"

"I do not remember. I—"

"Well, I do not reckon that he did; but let me tell you that, though your husband was related to me, we had not spoken to each other for some length of time, for Mr. Ivory and that family were very bitter enemies—so that no one knew that he and Miss Imogen were acquainted, until her brother discovered that they were engaged. And her lover—I mean your husband now—was challenged, fought a duel with, and killed that only brother, simply because he was so violently opposed to the intercourse between them. Miss Imogen, and every one that knew of the affair, believed him to be lastingly devoted to her; but, just before he left us, Mr. Langdon lost every cent of his property, then killed her brother, and fled from Virginia a *beggar*. Did he tell you *that*?"

"I do not think he did, exactly," gasped Nina exerting every effort to appear calm; "but I knew he was very poor."

"Well, everything that I have said is true. How long has it been since you first saw Mr. Langdon?"

"About nine months."

"Aye; and how long have you been married?"

"Six months."

"Ah! he fell in love with you in a *very* short time; but was Mr. Langdon worth nothing when he married you?"

"Nothing."

"And you were very wealthy, I believe?"

"Yes," in a choked voice.

"Well, that is enough for me. Of course, he could not help falling in love with you, then. Good evening, Mrs. Langdon. I hope you may return his fond passion; but make him appear more with you in society, or persons may *slander* him, and say that he *married you for your money*." Thus saying, she arose and again returned into the corner, where Nina had first observed her, and took her seat by the young lady, her companion.

Nina gazed fixedly for several moments at the girl. Yes, she was, indeed, beautiful and noble looking, such an one as *he* might have loved devotedly, and her brain whirled. *Now* she remembered that he *did* tell her, on the evening of *their* betrothal, that he had once loved another, and that he had been separated from the object of his love, without a hope of *re-union*; but he had promised to devote the *remainder* of his heart to *her*, and had he done it?

He had told her, that when they should be mar-

ried, his unwearying attentions should more than atone for the *love of the boy*; and he had been very kind and attentive whenever he was in her presence. So he had been true in *this*.

Was he worth *anything* when she had married him? Literally *nothing*.

Yet he had often told her that she was innocent, and *lovely*, and loveable. Surely he had not married her for her money alone, and *if* he had—trusting that in the lapse of time he *might learn* to love her—how had she acted that he might do it? Had she studied to please him? Nay; had she not gone in direct opposition to his every wish, and rebelled against his *commands* sufficiently to have made him despise her, even had he loved her devotedly at first? But *now* she suffered for it—suffered as she had never thought to do.

She arose from her seat, and she was then very calm. "I would not have that woman think she *has* pierced my heart with her poisonous arrow; but I must leave this room." She called Mana.

"If Lewis, or any one, inquires for me, be kind enough to say to them that I have retired, I do not feel very well."

"Certainly, love, and you do look pale; but I will accompany you." Mana went with her to her door, and then returned. Nina entered her room. Walter was there, lying across the bed with his face buried in the covering. "Walter, get up, I

wish to retire now, as we will start very early in the morning."

He got up and looked at her with some surprise, for her appearance was most strikingly lovely.

"Really, dearest," passing his arm around her waist, and smiling very faintly, "your beauty dazzles me. I wish I had felt well enough to have joined you below, and witnessed the sensation that I know you created to-night. My love, you must excuse me for my seemingly hasty and unreasonable conduct to-day; but I was very much agitated and disturbed by a circumstance which suddenly reminded me of some *very* painful incidents in my past life, the remembrance of which, I hoped, had been for a long time buried. How did you enjoy yourself to-night, dearest?"

"Not very much."

Oh, how good and noble he was to be thus solicitous about her enjoyment.

CHAPTER XX.

THE FETTERED BIRD LET LOOSE AGAIN.

Walter Langdon returned with his wife to their Southern home. They had left Virginia early on the morning of the events above related. He had told her then, that he would take her farther North, or any where that she might wish; but, "no, she preferred returning to her mother, now," and so they went. Mana and Lewis were very much surprised at the suddenness of their departure from Virginia, as they had heard nothing of it until that morning; and, though Mana regretted that she had not been apprised of it before, that she might have time to prepare, and because she could not see her friend again, to make some inquiries concerning the events of her life since they last met, and to tell her that she was about to leave, they all started together immediately after breakfast.

Langdon soon perceived that Nina's spirits were sinking to the lowest ebb, and he again proposed new scenes; but she said very quietly, that she preferred remaining at home, with no other society than his own, and that of her family. His spirits were much depressed by seeing the unvarying mel-

ancholy that rested upon Nina's brow. Oh! how kind and attentive he was to her when she was at home, and how anxious he was about her, when he saw her strength begin slowly to give way. And his admiration was more excited than it had ever been, when he saw the meekness and patience with which she bore the great degree of suffering to which she was at last reduced. She spoke but very little upon any subject, and in vain did Walter, Mana and every one question her concerning the cause of her mental depression; for she would always say, in a quiet, faint voice, that it was "nothing." Mana had talked with her about Mrs. Avory and her singular conduct; but she knew nothing of the nature of the conversation that had taken place between them, as Nina only said that *she had* made some inquiries about Walter, whom she had previously known. And Mana had told her that, perhaps, she had best not mention the circumstances at all to Mr. Langdon, as she knew the unhappy transactions that had taken place between the families; and Nina answered with emphasis, "Oh, yes! I know *all* that has taken place between them, and I reckon it would cause Walter pain for me to recall any of those circumstances to his mind: *therefore, I shall not mention it.*"

Walter was equally as ignorant of the cause of the great change that had come over her spirits, and could divine no other than that of ill health.

But he looked forward, with much anxiety, to the time when her thoughts and attentions should be occupied in a different manner, by the birth of her infant, when he hoped to see her recover her former cheerfulness of temper; but this was not the case. She received the little smiling cherub tenderly, but without any indications of great joy or gratification. Yet this was supposed to be owing to her increased sufferings—for it was long ere she rallied, in the least, from the alarming fever with which she was seized, and, at last, she was scarcely able to leave her room; but, in spite of this, Walter saw that she was growing worse and worse, as each day passed, and his mind was filled with the most distressing doubts and fears. As winter drew on, he resolved to change the scenery, as it might be of some benefit to her, and a trip to the Island of Cuba was recommended. So the house was entirely closed, as Lewis and Mana were also resolved to accompany them. They, at length, arrived on that bright and sunny island, and Walter was, at first, encouraged to hope that she might there be entirely restored to health; but Nina herself expressed little or no anxiety upon the subject. Her little child was named Imogen. Walter was much startled and disturbed when Nina first proposed it, and he objected very much to it; but she had quieted his suspicions, if he had any, by saying, in an indifferent manner, that she had once seen a very lovely

and talented young lady who bore that name, and she thought it the prettiest that could be selected. Besides, Mana was in favor of it also; for she said that she had once had a very particular friend of that name, and, as he always did, he consented, because she wished it. The child "grew and waxed strong," but Walter's joy was turned into bitter sorrow, as he saw his wife again sinking into a relapse. He exerted his every effort to try and amuse her, and divert her thoughts from her own condition; but it was all in vain. She would say to him—

"I know, dear Walter, that I cannot live very long, and I much prefer thinking of my approaching end, that I may try and be the better prepared."

"But, my own Nina, if you care not to make me happy by your recovery, you should desire that you might be spared for the sake of our child."

"No, Walter! I know that I shall be much happier after death, and I feel that I shall leave my little darling in the hands of those who will care for her, and raise her as tenderly as I could have done. I know your unfeigned devotion for the little creature, and you will love it yet more, after my death, when you reflect that it is motherless."

"I can never regard our little treasure with more

affection than I do now; but oh! how much happier would I feel could I again behold you as you once were, and hear you laugh the same old joyous, happy laugh, as of old."

"I reckon I have had my share of that in my life, dear one; but if it is God's pleasure to take me from you all, I am willing to go. Mana will keep our child for the present, with her own, and mother will also watch over her when I am gone. And, my darling, you must try and comfort my poor mother then. She has already suffered so much on account of her children."

Thus Langdon, bowing his head in tears, upon her pillow, as he sat beside her, would often hear her speak. He *never* left her *now* for anything. "Oh! how good and noble and self-sacrificing she thought he was, to remain so constantly by her side, supplying her every want and watching over her with unwearying devotion each day and night! What a loving, pitying heart he must have, to be so touched by her sufferings that he would often shed bitter tears over her, and this was not *feigned*; she knew it was not. Yes, she now felt that he regarded her with tender feelings; for such a noble being could not have married her for her money alone. He might have admired her for her simplicity, and having discovered that she loved him, have, perhaps, wedded her *that she might* be happy, although at such a sacrifice to himself. And what

return had she made him for all this? She had rendered his whole married life miserable—miserable, she knew, by her ungrateful and rebellious conduct, until she could not blame him if he now despised her; but she had changed in her treatment of him. Since she had first discovered the great sacrifice of feeling and *heart* that he had made in wedding her, she had resolved to reward him as much as possible by her obedience to his every wish, and her un murmuring patience in her sufferings.

Poor Walter! how little he suspected the true cause that was wearing away the life of the sweet, innocent and now uncomplaining being so unfortunately connected with himself! In these, her last moments, he felt that he had never known how much he had, in reality, become attached to her; for her gentle, patient, quiet spirit, and the respect with which she had for many months seemed to regard even his slightest opinions, so touched his noble, generous heart, that he was strongly impressed with the belief that he could never be able to reward her for her devoted attachment for him. And thus was he constantly by her side until his every thought and feeling was engrossed in her sufferings. Often, when he would take his little Imogen in his arms and fondly caress her, and seemed so happy if the little creature

chanced to smile while he kissed and talked to her, he would look up and find Nina in tears. And she would then feel so grateful and wonder how he could consign his child, whom he loved so devotedly, to the nurses, and instantly come and sit down by *her* and try to comfort her.

He did not then think of the Old Dominion, and the one whom he had so fondly loved there. No; for he was too good, too high-minded for that, when his wife was fast sinking into the grave before him. His feelings were *all for her*.

He felt, also, while mourning greatly because of the heavy affliction that he knew must soon befall him, doubly distressed, when he saw the wild agony of that aged and deeply stricken mother, as she witnessed the rapid decline of her youngest, her idolized child—her only daughter—of whom she had been so proud.

The sad and awful day came at last. The agonized, almost frenzied mother was supported in the arms of the weeping brother; but Langdon was by *her* side even in that hour, bending in heart-rending, speechless misery over his dying wife, and supporting her head upon his breast. He saw no one else, he scarcely knew anything.

Ah! why did that old church, the tombstone, and the tall old oak, again fly back to his memory, in that hour, as if they were all there before him,

ready to mock at him, though he felt, in that moment, as if he *hated* the remembrance of them, and banished it, in an instant from his mind.

"My loved Nina, you will not leave me to loneliness and misery again!" Ah! how he shuddered as he pressed his lips to the lovely brow! Was it not very cold? Had not her hand ceased to return the pressure of his? Was not her frail body yet heavier in his arms?

He started up in terror.

"O, God! she was dead."

Yes she was dead with all her cares untold.

* * * * *

CHAPTER XXI.

THE WANDERER'S RETURN.

LIVERPOOL, ENGLAND, May 31, 18—.

MY CHERISHED MOTHER—From my native land, far away, across the deep blue sea, a low entreating voice seems to come to me, as I, a lone wanderer, roam about on a distant shore, whispering in soft wooing tones of a home long left behind, and bidding me again seek old

scenes of a happier by-gone time—the cheerful fireside around which the few loved ones left to me on earth await to welcome back to their hearts and home, the long absent, the mourning, and the lonely one—your heart-stricken son!

Yes, mother! you know not how touchingly that word, “home,” vibrates upon every chord of my heart, when I have been a friendless, homeless wanderer for so long.

For three years now, I have been a tourist through many of the different lands of our globe, seeking rest and alleviation for my great affliction, amidst strange and exciting scenes, and have I found either? I will tell you why in the end.

In the commencement of my pilgrimage, I first placed my feet upon land in Calais, France. There I remained for a short time, and then left for Paris, the great metropolis of that glorious land, but I will not attempt to tell you of my emotions when I reached that world-renowned city.

Shall I tell you with what thrilling interest pages of dull history, conned with great aversion in my school-boy days, long years since, then flashed with renewed freshness through my mind, calling to remembrance, in hurried succession, the chivalrous and mighty deeds of so many immortal men, the recollection of which will ever serve to surround that happy land, the scene of their mighty achievements, with a halo of glory never (in my mind) to be attained by any other?

First, before my vivid and excited imagination, arose great Caesar, and though by birth of a different land, yet his proudest steps of glory were trodden in Gallic gore

upon that soil. Then, in quick succession, came many victorious and undaunted kings, from Charlemagne to Henry the Fourth—many a wise and scheming statesman, ranking upon an equality, in the magnificence of their genius, with the never-to-be-forgotten Richelieu—till, in later days, arose before me, the first—the last to reach the summit of earth’s glory, the man without a model and without a shadow, Napoleon Bonaparte, surrounded by his memorable corps of chivalrous and bright satellites, and himself enthroned in all the majesty of an Olympian God.

Will you then imagine, that in spite of all the dark gloom that overshadowed my heart, that glorious land, where I almost fancied at each step that I trod upon the grave of a hero, must have diverted my mind and chained me, a willing captive, upon its shores for many months?

Then, again, as you already know, I sought the bright and sunny land of Italy—and now fallen Rome once the mistress of the world. And there again, fresh with the memory of her by-gone days, while lay before me her many curious and antiquated buildings, her palace of the Cæsars, her temples and her amphitheatres, and the recollection of her old fabled demi-gods, who had but to plunge their swords into the bosom of the earth in order to bring forth huge trees—all excited my admiration and my interest, and served, as I had hoped, *to calm* in a measure, the torrent of my troubled feelings!

And though my sorrows at the remembrance of the lost one, mourned for now, as she must ever be, seem to me, at least, to be turned into a kind of melancholy plea-

sure, (I know not else how to describe it,) when I think of her many virtues, and the sunshine that she shed abroad in our hearts, making our home happy with the light of her fair young countenance, still I feel that the never-to-be-forgotten deed, perpetrated long before my eyes ever rested upon her sweet and innocent face is *not yet* atoned for. The recollection haunts me still, and I am *yet* unhappy.

I feel very lonely and home-sick again, mother, now that my restless, roving spirit has left me, and I find myself, at the end of my protracted pilgrimage, remaining quietly in Old England. I long to see you all again, and hear the soothing voice of affection once more addressed to me; for long has it been since I last saw a loving, familiar face. Here I am surrounded only by cold strangers, receiving nought but common courtesy, and that from those whose kind acts and smiles are repeated in proportion as they are paid.

And now for my child—my darling little Imogen! I tremble to write, to think of her, lest Providence, in witnessing the fond devotion that I feel for her, should decide that a wretch like myself is unworthy of this last treasure left to me on earth! How has she stood the lapse of time? I left her, three years ago, unable then to lisp her father's name, when she was but a smiling little cherub. And now do you all speak to her of me—of her devoted, but unworthy parent—in a far-off, distant land, whose heart yearns, with a sensation of eagerness almost insupportable, toward her? Is her face like her mother's? Methought, when last I pressed her to my bleeding heart, and left her, because of my wretched-

ness, that the sweet and cherub-like little face did bear a strong resemblance to our lost one—her sainted mother—and now I hope she does. It grieves me much to think that, on my return, she will not know me.

Tell our kind and noble Mana that she can never conceive of the depth of gratitude and love that I feel for her, on account of the motherly care with which she has watched over and reared my darling in its father's absence; but I will soon be with you all once more, and see my little angel again. I shall arrive in your midst in about a week after the reception of this. In the meantime, my mother, let your kind wishes and prayers be with your son while on the bosom of the ocean.

Ever yours, most fondly,

WALTER LANGDON.

* * * * *

Yes, the wanderer was returned. He was again among the loved ones, after a long absence, and he was much changed. His complexion was smartly darkened by his travels in warmer climates; yet he was, if possible, even handsomer than when they had last seen him; for there was not that troubled, gloomy expression resting upon his countenance as in times past—it was now a calm, settled melancholy—the look of a man that had seen and thought much. His manners were more gentle and affectionate than ever, and no one could have witnessed the rapture with which he first clasped his child to his bosom without shedding tears. He appeared to

be in an ecstasy. He would hold her on his knees, and talk to her for hours at a time, and would then bring out more toys—rare curiosities, that he had brought from the different places through which he had traveled—than could be imagined; and nothing could exceed the gratification and delight manifested by him, when he saw how much they pleased her, and listened to her childish prattle.

"You did not know that your papa was going to bring you so many pretty things, did you, darling?"

"No; and cousin Charley's papa," meaning Mamma's little boy, "don't bring him as many pretty things as mine, does he? I'd rather have you for my papa than uncle Lewis."

"That's right, my love; but, then, suppose I should now take them all away from you, and give them to Charley?"

"Then I would not love you at all."

"Now that would be very naughty, my Imogen. You should love your papa, if he did not give you anything."

And thus he would sit and talk to her, with the greatest apparent interest, as long as she would remain quiet, and afterwards would join her in her sports in the yard. Yet he was not happy—he was restless still. He felt as if he were not yet at home. He had never had a separate one of his own since he had first left Virginia; but he did not care before, for Nina had preferred living with the

rest of her family, and for that reason he had been willing then; but now he felt as if he would like to have a place all to himself, where he might sometimes go and be *alone*; for there were many moments of his life when he thought it the greatest annoyance to be compelled to see and talk with any human being. Then came back to his memory the old home of his father, where the earlier and happier portion of his life had been spent, and he wondered how the old place would appear now, and in whose hands it might now be. Perhaps the recollection of himself had faded from the minds of all those who had known him then; but would he not experience a proud thrill of triumph, that he had never felt before, in returning suddenly in their midst, and letting that *hateful woman*, above all, see that he was again beyond want and her influence. Yes, he would go, and show them that he could *purchase* it again, and once more hold his head as high as the wealthiest and proudest of them; but how should he set about it? He thought of his old friend, Mr. Clark, and he resolved to write to him, and make some inquiries relative to the place, and ask him to inquire upon what terms it might be re-purchased, and let him know. He waited very impatiently for an answer, and in about a week he received one, when, to his great surprise, he learned that the old estate was already his own, and had been for several years, as Mr. Ivory had

left it to him in his will, and that Mr. Clark himself had been looking out and inquiring for him ever since, but in vain.

The dear, old place! how often he had longed to behold it, if only for a moment; and now, that it was his own, why should he not return to it again? for he felt a burning desire to tread the long-deserted old halls once more, and sit in the quiet of evening beneath the shade of the trees in the yard. So he again wrote to his old friend, telling him to have the house furnished with all the necessary articles, and that he would settle the matter with him when he arrived, as he wished to come and spend some time there, at least.

And little Imogen was also to go with him; for she declared that her good papa should not go a step without her, and Langdon felt that she would be so much company for him, as he would have little or nothing to do with the neighbors, and thus be compelled to remain so much to himself, that all of grandmama's remonstrances and persuasions could not induce him to leave her behind. She was now four years old, and could, of course, run about a great deal, and, therefore, he could attend to her very easily, with the assistance of the good old nurse, whom they would take with them.

Thus, after every thing was hastily determined upon and arranged, Walter Langdon, with his little darling, once more started for Old Virginia.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE DREAM.

The sorrow-stricken wanderer arrived at his old homestead at last, and I cannot attempt to describe to you the feelings of the unhappy man as he again drew near the old mansion, where his happy boyhood's days had been spent. How familiar every thing appeared to him, though it had now been seven years since he had last beheld them! Tears filled his eyes as he entered the yard, and saw how tall the weeds had grown around the very doors of the uninhabited dwelling. He passed along the winding passages and into many of the rooms. The blinds were all shut and the windows lowered, and the atmosphere was so damp in many of them, that large drops of water stood upon the walls. He entered the old room that had once been his own, when he had lived there before, and he started back, as if he had seen a spectre, when he beheld much of the old furniture just as he had left it. There was his cabinet, and actually some of the books that he had used when at college, while on the wall hung several old family portraits, now

much effaced by time, and entirely covered with dust.

"This reminds me," he muttered to himself, as he stood in gloomy abstraction, "of the man who is fabled to have slept fifty years, and awoke to find all of his old friends dead, and every thing around him mouldering into ruins. Alas! what a sad thing is adversity!"

"Papa, I don't like here," said the child, drawing yet closer to him, and catching him around the knees, as she stood on the floor beside him; "every thing is too dark!"

"Hush! my dear. We will soon have the windows opened, and a fire made in all the rooms, and then every thing will look bright and cheerful; but where is mammy?"

The old nurse entered the room as he spoke, in company with an aged domestic, whom he did not at first recognize:

"Why, Mas' Walter! I had just as soon expected to see old master risen from the dead, and in here, as you. I niver did think to see the day when these here eyes would behold you agin."

He looked up, and recognized Aunt Hannah, the aged domestic who had been at the head of the culinary department during his father's lifetime, many years ago. This was another great surprise for him, and he walked up to her with much emotion, and shook her as warmly by the hand as

he would have done one of his oldest and best friends.

"Yes, indeed, my good woman, it does carry us back to times and scenes long past to behold each other again, and in this *house*; but my surprise is exceeding great to behold you here, and so many old and familiar objects. How happens it? Did Mr. Clark have all this done?"

"Lor! no, sir! He was here the tother day; but he is so old and crippled up now that he couldn't have much done, seppen to have a few beds and things brought! so I'll jest tell you how it all happens. Soon as ever I hearn, at furst, that every thing here belonged to poor old Mr. Avory, and 'at you wus gone clean off, not to come back no more, I know'd, of course, every thing was goin' to ruin; so I was prepared, when the folks came here and took up all the darkeys, and sold 'em. They said I warn't much account, no ways, as I was so old, and so I warn't; but I got Mr. Clark to buy me, and, arter that, my old man, who is free, you know, bought me from him, and I ah' he stayed here in the kitchen, as Mr. Clark told me that the house and every thing here belonged to Mr. Avory, and he would be a tellin' me when I must be gittin' away. But, Lor! sur, after Mas' Allen was brought home dead, Mr. Avory never comed anear us at all, as we had been expectin'. All the family took on so much about it, that they

didn't appear to take no notis o' nothin' tall, seppen the old lady, Mr. Avory's wife, who is now dead and gone."

"Ah!" interrupted Langdon, with a quick start, I did not know that she was dead! And how long has it been?"

"'Bout six months, I think, sur."

"And heard you no particulars of her death?" as if speaking to himself, rather than the old woman; "or did she die with her dark tale of guilt untold, and must my long cherished desire to learn the mysterious causes that have brought about so many changes in our lives, be silenced without a hope of being gratified?"

"I never heard much about it, sur," continued the woman, "as I was livin' here, at the time, with nobody but my old man, 'seppin that Miss Imogen had put everything over yonder at her father's in the hands of Mr. Clark and the overseer, and had gone to board out; but I was a tellin' you how everything cumed to be left here as it is. Mr. Avory, durin' his life-time never tooked no notis o' nothin' tall as I telled you. He never did come here a single time arter you left, only Mrs. Avory came once, most directly arter you went away, and rummaged over everything and carried off tothers, an' then she locked up the house, and said no one want goin' to live in it, and everything here wus Mr. Avory's, and that if I lived here in

one of the out-houses, I must keep this one shut up and must'nt never let any one come in it, and so I hasn't. I has tried to keep the place from goin' to ruin, as much as I could, hopin' to see you come back some day. And sure enough, Mr. Clark comed here, about a week ago, and telled me to spruce up everything, as you would be a comin' back soon, and the place was yourn agin; but we didn't think to see you so early."

"Well, Aunt Hannah, I shall try and reward you for your fidelity, and am very glad to see everything looking as well as it is. I do not know which has stood the lapse of time best, the old place or myself. I begin to look like an old man now, Hannah! do I not?"

"Well, I sposen you aint as young as you wus; but la, you isn't old now, Mas' Walter!"

"No, I am only thirty-one years of age; but I feel much older than that. I suppose you did not know that I had been married, and am now left alone, with this little darling to take care of?"

"No, sir. I never know'd it until to-day."

"Ahem! what has become of all the people that I used to know about here?"

"Well, 'seppen them where's dead and gone, they is all here now, sir; and I suppose you remember young Mas' Philip Arlington, as you an' him used to be a heap together. He tooked it into his head to go way off, some three or four

years ago, just as you had done, and he is just got back; but he doesn't look like he used to do; he's grown so careless-like, and wears his beard so very long."

"Well I shall be pleased to see him again; but now, aunt Hannah, please open all the windows, and have fires made. Everything looks so cheerless and damp about here."

Thus did Walter Langdon again find himself seated in his old homestead, after the many terrible scenes through which he had passed, and many and varied were the emotions that he experienced on this, the first evening of his arrival. He began to think that he should only be made more unhappy by thus suddenly coming into the midst of old scenes, that now so painfully reminded him of old things that he had hoped were *buried* forever. He could not, at first, speak even in reply to the innocent prattle of his little girl; but, then, fearing that she might become lonesome, he aroused himself, and calling her to him with the old, fond smile, placed her upon his knees, and rattled away to her as he had often done. Then he got up and walked with her through the different parts of the house, explaining why this and that thing was put in a particular place, or what was the need of it at all, in reply to her numerous inquiries, with as much patience and interest, as if he had been speaking to some old and much respected companion; and then,

at the close of the day, he led her out under the shade of the great, tall trees, and sat down upon one of the benches placed beneath them, holding her in his arms, and talking until it was quite dark. How affecting, how very touching it was to behold the devotion of this lonely man for that little child. He had been acquainted with many of the sorrows and sins of this world, and to-night, particularly, they seemed to crowd back upon his memory; and as he pressed his child to his bosom, he felt as if she were too pure and innocent to be so closely connected with himself, and he was almost afraid to release her from his arms, lest she should somehow be taken from him.

When he retired to his room for the night, and had long since seen her laid sleeping upon her couch, he could not rest. He felt a chilling, uneasy sensation, when he extinguished the light and found that he could not sleep. By the pale light of the moon, as it shone in at his window, he could see the dim outlines of the old portraits as they hung upon the walls of his room, and he almost felt as if the spirits of these dead relatives were actually present and about to address him. He almost wished that even the little girl beside him would awake and talk to him, that he might feel that there was another human being in the house alive and awake besides himself; but, at length, he became heartily ashamed of his weakness, and shak-

ing it off as best he could, he at last slept; but his dreams were only a troubled renewal of his waking thoughts. He first fancied that he was a boy again; or, at least, that he was sleeping in his own room just as he had done now more than seven years ago; and he thought that the portrait of his dead mother, hanging on the wall, at the foot of his bed, assumed an appearance of life, looking just as he had seen her many years ago, before her death, and that she was smiling sweetly upon him as he slept; and oh! how happy this thought made him. Then, suddenly, he fancied that he was *alone* and *miserable* in some far-off land, he knew not where, and that he stood by the side of some mighty river, and as he paused, wearied with traveling and thirsty, he stooped to catch the water in his hand and cool his parched tongue, when lo! the whole of that mighty torrent was changed into blood! Yes, it was all *red blood*, and his hand was covered with it, and it was so thick and *warm*! He tried, in maddening agony, to wipe it off; but yet it *remained* as fresh as ever. Then he was wandering about, poor and homeless, on the face of the earth, and once, when he was almost expiring with thirst and hunger, he thought that multitudes of beings arrayed in fine linen and jewels, passed by him, casting myriads of gold and provisions here and there, and crying in a loud voice: "Ho! every one that thirsteth let him come unto us, and

we will give him drink!" and he thought, that as he held out his hand and cried "mercy!" in all the desperation of his deplorable condition, they turned, and with a mocking smile upon their lips, pointed to the blood upon his hands and garments, and said "*that* must be wiped away, and you must be arrayed in garments pure and white, or you cannot drink of our cup;" and he said that they were but sent to mock him, and turned and rushed madly from them. Then, again, his pockets were filled with gold, and he was traveling over the whole earth, stopping at every spring and brook, and trying in vain to wash the blood from his hands; for he thought that there was nought else wanting to render him happy again. And now, at last, when he could find nothing abroad to remove that stain, he was come to his early home, once more to obtain the smile of his long-forgotten mother, and implore her to remove that hated blood with her tears; and so, after long years of absence, he was again in bed in his old room, and the portrait of his mother once more assumed an appearance of life and gazed mournfully upon him. But there was no smile now, for tears were in her eyes; and as he fell on his knees in guilty terror before her, stretching out his hands towards her, exclaiming in a despairing voice, "Mother, wash away these drops of blood, or I perish," she only lifted her hand, and point-

ing to a painting on the opposite wall, said in slow and solemn tones:

"My son, I may not do it; but yonder is the never dying fountain *in which all blood and guilt may be washed away!*" And his dream was ended.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE BLESSED AWAKENING.

Langdon awoke from his troubled sleep, trembling and gasping for breath, with cold perspiration standing on his brow. He started up hurriedly. The sun was pouring with its flashing rays into his room, and getting up in great excitement, he approached the picture to which he fancied he had been directed in his sleep, when he started back amazed, and with a hurried conviction flashing through his mind. It was a representation of our Saviour nailed to the cross, with a stream of blood flowing from His side. What was that inscription beneath it? Ah! the very same that had been re-

peated to him while he slept. "Ho! every one that thirsteth! come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat?" He was troubled, touched—almost convinced. He believed that there was something providential in this! He had been very miserable for many years; but had he not ever sought out *worldly* means to alleviate his cares? He had never been an *immoral* man, in the eyes of the world. Yet this had been *his* greatest danger, for he had never thought *seriously* of the necessity of a *change of heart*. It was true, that he had been very unhappy during the whole period of his wanderings, and had, at times, felt himself very guilty; but then he had thought only of having lowered himself in the eyes of the world, and sacrificing his *self-respect*. Nay, after he had caused Allen Ivory's death, he had felt much *remorse* of conscience; but then it was only because he knew that he had committed an act for which he must ever feel self-condemned, and the chief cause of his remorse and feelings was because he knew that he could not recall the past and revoke the deed; but now he believed that he could plainly see a Divine hand working out a miracle even in the dream that he had had; and all at once he felt an uneasiness that he had never experienced before, not only about the one great sin, but about all that he had ever committed.

He turned to the bed from which he had just

arisen, and there was the little sleeping angel given him by Providence to comfort him for his other great losses; but had he ever felt grateful for this gift? No! He had loved the child with more than a parent's ordinary love; but had he ever asked himself the solemn question, "At whose hands have I received this precious gift?" No! Nor had he thought of it. He had been the most ungrateful of human beings; for when the child's mother had been taken from him and it, and he had reflected upon all the misfortunes and bereavements that had befallen him in his life, he had said in the bitterness of his heart, "This one object, though dearly beloved, is not a sufficient recompense." He had murmured, because he had not had more given to him, and now, with a moment's reflection, he felt how guilty and worthy of severe chastisement he had been. He gazed upon the picture of the crucifix, until tears came into his eyes. Oh! what divine love, that he had never thought of before, was there displayed! and how touching was the invitation: "Ho! EVERY ONE that thirsteth!"

But why should I think of pardon and *peace*?" he muttered to himself, in a despairing tone. "My crimes must be of too deep a dye ever to be washed away."

He felt restless and agitated while at breakfast, and even the lively voice of his child failed to

arouse him, as it always had done. It was Sunday morning, and after sitting quietly for about an hour in the old hall, he thought that perhaps he might be enabled to change the current of his thoughts by taking a walk amidst those old familiar scenes. He passed out at his gate, and looked around. There, at a short distance from him, arose the steeple of the old church, and, oh! how he trembled at beholding *that once more*, as he thought of the many times that he had been there—sometimes to hear the word of God expounded, and often only to sit in the yard by the never-to-be-forgotten tombstone, and listen to *her voice*; but, pshaw! all of that was passed *now*! and he had *smothered* all remembrance of her in his heart; yet he felt as if he would like to go there once more, and he wondered to himself if services were held there every Sabbath now.

He walked on until he reached the little wicket gate that led into the church-yard, and then paused with many mingled emotions. Yes, it was *there*, *there* in that very spot, that he had last seen and spoken to her, and had encountered Allen! The gate was already opened, and he passed quietly in. He would not enter the church until he had again stood beside that tombstone, and invoked a blessing of his gentle sister's spirit. He passed by the corner of the lofty dome. The doors were open, and he heard the sound of many voices within, singing

in deep and solemn tones. He caught the words of the hymn as he passed on—

“There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel’s veins;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.”

Ah! with what a powerful force did those words, heard from his childhood, now fall upon his ears! Was this fountain, where *all guilty stains* might be washed away again, thus early recalled to his mind? Surely there must be some divine power at work to bring about all these coincidental reminiscences!

The careless reader would, perhaps, say that there was nothing strange or worthy of being remarked in this; but Langdon’s imagination being vivid with the remembrance of his dream in the morning, in which the image of his dead mother had appeared to him, and pointed to the shed blood of our Saviour as the only source from whence to obtain pardon and true happiness, he firmly believed that some supernatural power was at work, thus forcibly to remind him of precisely the same thing in so short a time, and from such different sources. So it was, with much trembling and a heart *almost* open to conviction, that this man, whose tender feelings had been so much hardened by misfortune’s chilling blast and a close inter-

course with the cold world, now passed the church, and reached that memorable spot—the grave of his sister. In the present disturbed state of his mind, he tried to change the tenor of his thoughts, even by recalling the memory of his early love; but, instead of calming, this seemed only to agitate him the more. He could find rest in *nothing*.

He had sat there for some time, when suddenly he started up. The singing in the church had ceased, and though the services had, perhaps, begun some time, he felt that he must go in. He passed around to the door, and entered. Old Mr. Mason, the minister, whom he had heard in his youth, was reading the Word of life. Langdon took his seat near the door, and listened—

“For the iniquity of his covetousness I was wroth, and smote him. I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart.

“I have seen his ways, and will heal him. I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners.

“I create the fruit of the lips. Peace, peace to him that is afar off, and to him that is near, saith the Lord. And I will heal him.

“But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.

“*There is no peace*, saith my God, to the wicked.”

He heard, and his heart was melted. Might not

his case be exemplified in these passages of Scripture, where God himself had said that he would afflict him for awhile, and then heal him? And, oh! how much he would give to be at rest once more, and enjoy that peace of conscience to which he had so long been a stranger!

He bowed his head on the railing before him, and listened with breathless stillness. The old man's sermon was most serious and impressive, as he reasoned of repentance and faith, and quoted many passages of Scripture, in which even the vilest sinner is invited to return, and Langdon was so strongly and newly impressed with many familiar passages, that he almost doubted whether he had ever heard them before, or if they were, in reality, from the Book of Life. The minister became much excited as he went on—

"I call upon *all of you*, even as many as are present, in the name of my Lord and Master, whom I am sent to preach unto you, that you will turn unto Him, and believe in the atoning blood of the Lamb. None need stay away on account of the magnitude or multitude of their transgressions; for has not the Holy One said, 'Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.' Yes, my hearers, the blood of the Dying Lamb is sufficient to wash away all sins. Listen to his soft, persuasive voice: 'Come unto me, all ye

that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' Then come, ye that are tossed with tempests and are not comforted, and ye shall find rest, if ye will but believe on the Lord." A silent cry arose from the depths of Langdon's troubled soul, "Lord, I believe: help thou mine unbelief." The services went on.

"Then cry aloud, and spare not," preached the aged minister. "Lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and delight thyself in the Lord, and then thy sun shall no more go down, nor thy moon withdraw herself; for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and thy days of mourning shall be ended."

Oh! what a strange, quivering sensation Langdon felt within. He raised his eyes to the roof above him, and an inexpressible sensation of solemnity and grandeur seemed to elevate his soul. A psalm was then chanted solemnly, and the congregation knelt in prayer, while from the innermost recesses of the poor tempest-tossed wanderer's soul arose a most earnest, devout petition, that God would have mercy upon him, a miserable sinner."

The services were ended, and Langdon arose. He felt comforted and strengthened. The bleeding wounds of his heart were soothed—healed—and he returned home rejoicing. The poor unhappy wanderer, that had roamed through his own and foreign lands, seeking rest and finding none, had come at last, and, in the quietude of his own home, found

that peace and comfort which the world can neither give nor take away. The past was all forgotten, or, if remembered at all, it appeared like some troubled dream that could no more disturb him.

Yes, once more Walter Langdon was a happy man; for he felt that the *blood* of the dead *was washed from his hands*, and that his sun would no more go down—for the Lord would be his everlasting light.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE NARRATIVE.

A few days only had passed, and many of Walter Langdon's friends, on learning that he had returned, called to pay their respects, and beg of him that he would again mix with them, as in the olden time, and he now promised them that he would. He received them all kindly and gently, and appeared as if it were most gratifying to him to be enabled to mix sociably with his fellow-beings; and yet he was equally as happy when left alone

with his darling child, for she interested him as much as ever, and he would run about the yard and laugh as merrily as herself, when he would catch her in his arms, and jump her up in the air, and sometimes he would actually feel heartily ashamed, when persons would come up unobserved, and catch him, while engaged in the undignified sports in which he often joined with her.

One evening particularly, as he sat on the grass in his yard, busily occupied in assisting the child in the arrangement of her toys, according to her own whims, he started up, in some confusion, when he felt a hand laid on his shoulder; but instantly resuming his old, gentle and naturally dignified air, he shook his visitor warmly by the hand:

"Philip Arlington! how glad I am to behold you again. It has been a long time since last we met, and so many changes have taken place since then." His voice was very low, and his lips quivered as he spoke.

"Yes, my old friend, many years and changes have passed over us since we parted; but, thank Heaven! we are both restored to our old homes, with some peace of mind, at least, and are prepared to spend the future in tranquillity, if not in happiness."

"But I am happy, Philip. What more could I ask, unless I were a most ungrateful and exacting wretch? See! I have my old home and friends all

back to me again; and, then, look here at my little comforter, given to me to make my home happy."

"Well, you know, Walter, that it rejoices me most heartily to see it; but I haven't time to talk to you as I would like, for it is getting late. Why have you been so quiet here? I did not learn of your return until yesterday. I heard Mr. Mason say that you had been to see him. I mentioned my intention of calling here, and my father sent a most pressing invitation for you to come and spend the day with him to-morrow, as he will have many of your old friends to take dinner with him, and I was also charged to leave this package with you. It is from an old acquaintance of yours."

"I thank you, Philip, for your kindness, and also your kind father for his invitation; but do you know that I cannot come if my little girl is slighted?"

"Bring her with you by all means. I did not intend to slight the little lady. Come here, Rosa. What is her name, Walter?"

"Imogen."

"Well, little Imogen; I have fallen quite in love with you. May I wait for her, Langdon?"

"No. I can never spare her." And the gentlemen conversed pleasantly for several moments, when Philip departed.

"Come, my love," said Walter; it is getting late. Let us go in."

"Oh! dear papa, how could you talk to that ugly man, with such long whiskers? I hated to look at him."

Langdon took her up in his arms, smiling and kissing her, and carried her into the house. He went to his room, and lighting a lamp, placed it upon a table, and drew up a chair, in order to read the letter that Philip had left. He saw that it was quite a large package, sealed up in a sheet of paper, with the simple inscription, "For Mr. Walter Langdon," traced in a fair and delicate hand upon it. He opened it with much curiosity, unfolded several large sheets of paper that were tacked together, and read—

"This story is designed for Walter Langdon's perusal, and is placed where (after my death) it will fall into the hands of one who is directed, in a note addressed to herself, and lying in the same place, to deliver it to him, should he ever return to Langdon Place, or be heard of at all.

"A CONFESSION.

"Walter Langdon, when your eyes rest upon these pages, should they ever do so, mine will be closed in death. I shall die—as I have lived—unrelenting, unforgiving, and without a confession, save the one contained in these pages; nor do I make this from any sense of fear at the thought of my past life, or with a hope that, in my last moments, I may feel any relief in reflecting

that the wrong that you have sustained at my hands may, at last, be repaired. No! for I do not even know that this will ever reach you; but I write it, willing that you should read it, and learn the many circumstances—known only to myself—that, from your earliest youth, have caused you and many others to regard me with dislike, and look upon me with suspicion, perhaps, divining (and rightly if you did) that I alone was possessed of a knowledge of those circumstances, (so mysterious to you and others,) which have wrought such unaccountable events in the lives of all those with whom I have ever been in any manner connected, simply because I know that I shall then be unable to witness or know ought of your unhappiness myself; and, therefore, I care not whether you be rich or poor, happy or not, and, while I cannot enjoy the mystery, I care not to conceal it. This, then, is my only motive for relating to you what I am about to do.

"I do not suppose that the incidents of the earlier part of my life will interest *you* any great deal: therefore, I shall pass on, with as light a sketch of my youth as I possibly can, in order to apprise you of the manner in which I received my education, and my notions and principles imbibed with it, until I come to the memorable era of my existence, when I first met with your father, and then go on to relate to you my history, which, from that time, is so closely connected with many of the greatest events of your life and that of many others.

"My mother was left a widow in about a year after her marriage with my father, so I was her only child, of course, as she either never took it into her head to marry again, or could find no one to have her, I don't know

which. We lived in the State of Ohio, not far from the town of Cincinnati, on a miserable little piece of land, where my mother and myself had always been compelled to perform the greatest amount of drudgery, in order to support ourselves, and it was that very circumstance that served to embitter the whole course of my early life; for I was proud, and I was ambitious.

"I had been told that I was good looking, and that Nature had endowed me with a shrewd, strong, calculating mind, and that had spoiled me. I soon entertained a burning desire to be made *accomplished*, as many of the wealthier farmers' daughters were, and I wearied and annoyed my mother, until she, at last, consented to send me to a large and popular school in the neighborhood, though she had tried, in every manner, to dissuade me from it, by telling me that she did not know how she could ever possibly defray the expenses, or even support us at home, without my assistance; but I would not listen to all that, and, as she had always spoiled and humored me, she, at last, consented to let me go. I started, and commenced many studies. Many of the young ladies in the neighborhood, who attended that school, appeared very much surprised to find *me* there, and looked down upon me, because of my poverty, and I *hated* them all. I could not bear to see them above me in anything, and, therefore, I undertook as many and as difficult studies as any of them; but, then, I had not half the time to prepare them; for, when I returned home in the evening, I would find my mother performing as much hard labor as any man servant should have done, and I was bound to assist her or *starve*. Yet my teachers flattered me, and

reported to my mother that I made such rapid progress, that she made every effort, in order to let me continue going as long as possible; and my progress there helped also to feed the bitter flame of my passions; for often many of those young ladies, who had, at first, looked down upon me, now flocked around me, that I might assist them in their studies, as they knew that I always had my lessons ready, and I generally did it, though I would have gloried in spurning them from me; but I wished others in the school to see that I had some of the fashionable and wealthy young ladies *to speak to me*, at least; and then, again, I could not stand seeing any of them dress finer than I did; so I brought my poor mother much in debt in this manner also; but I did not *then* think of *that*.

"My education was, at last, finished, and I again settled quietly down with my mother; but I then had to labor even harder than I had ever done, and that maddened me! You can never know how keenly I felt the disgrace, and I could but ask of what avail was my education? for I soon learned that *society* (a miserable, money-loving, heartless herd of huffish animals, many of them inferior to myself,) slighted and despised good looks, education and genius, unless the possessor had wealth to back it all, and, therefore, I was no more noticed than if I had had neither, and this made me learn to abhor the whole human race. But, suddenly, my mother was stricken down upon a bed of death. She had completely worn out her constitution with hard labor, while yet by no means an old woman, and after a long spell, in which she was attended by the best physicians

that our county could afford, she died; and, perhaps, you will say that I had killed her—but I have never blamed myself. I knew that the proud, avaricious, hard-hearted people around us had been the cause of it, and I despised them all.

"My mother's creditors came and sold what little property she had possessed, and, after all her debts were paid, I found myself alone in the world, without a home, and with the pitiful *sum of one hundred dollars* as my inheritance.

"I had a distant relative, by the name of Burrell, who lived in the city of Cincinnati, and, in partnership with another man, kept one of the largest boarding-houses there, and I resolved to apply to him, and see what he could do for me. I went to him, and asked him to try and procure a situation for me as teacher somewhere, though I detested the very thought of going into some proud family, and having them to ill-treat *me*, and look down upon me as a *hireling*!

Thomas Burrell was, comparatively, but a young man, and had just married, and been taken in as a kind of partner by the man who kept the house, and, though far from being wealthy himself, he generously offered me a home in the tavern until I could obtain one elsewhere. Thus I took a little closet-like room there, in order to be as little expense to him as possible, and lived on quietly for some time in this manner.

"I had not been in the house long, when I was peculiarly struck with the style and magnificent display of wealth of a young married couple, who had recently come to board with us.

"Walter Langdon, that couple was *your father's friend*, and, in later days, my husband, Reuben Avory and his young wife. They had been in the house but a short time, before I became very well acquainted with Mrs. Avory. She was a gentle, quiet woman; but she seemed somewhat desirous of cultivating my acquaintance, and, therefore, I soon learned to like her as much as I ever did *any one* in my life. I found out that this lady and her husband intended boarding there for some time, and I did not try to get any employment, for I wished to remain where I was, without spending a thought about the expense I was each day to Burrell, and that he had to be laboring to support me in my idleness; but he was a man, and why should he not have done it? Mrs. Avory, about this time, informed me that she would not be surprised if I had another relation in town, a very wealthy gentleman, who bore my name, and who was an intimate friend of her husband's, and, accordingly, in a short time, I was sent for into the parlor by Mr. Avory, and, for the first time, presented to *your father*, Hethe Langdon, who, after making some inquiries relative to my parentage, told me that my father was quite a near relative of his own, and, of course, we were connected also. *He* was very *patronizing*, indeed, and, after quite a lengthy conversation, he seemed to be much pleased with me, and promised to do every thing in his power, *by way of getting an employment* for me. So after this, we would see each other whenever he called to see his friend Mr. Avory.

"About this time, a coincidence happened in our midst, which will, perhaps, interest you and Imogen Avory more

than any other part of this story, and this was the birth of two children. Thomas Burrell's wife died the next morning, leaving him the father of a lovely little infant; and Mrs. Avory was thought to be in imminent danger for many days. Burrell was in an agony of grief at the loss of his wife, a pretty, amiable, say-nothing woman, and he remained shut up in his room for many days, refusing to see or speak with any one; and, through compassion for his child, which was one of the loveliest I had ever seen, I undertook, because it was neglected by its father, to take charge of it, with the assistance of a small nurse, and kept it principally with me. Mr. Avory had immediately employed a wet nurse for his child; for, besides the dangerous spell of sickness which his wife then had, she was always a very delicate person. So their child—a puny, little thing, that I did not think could possibly live a week—was consigned entirely into the hands of the woman employed, who kept it off in a room to herself the whole time; for Mrs. Avory was so ill, that all of her husband's time and attentions were occupied with her, and I do not believe that he ever saw his child *at all*. I sought out this wet nurse, and she promised me (with a little extra pay to herself) to attend to the child under my charge, and thus we were thrown constantly together on the first day or so of her arrival.

"On the fourth morning after she had undertaken the charge of Mr. Avory's infant, I entered her room and found her leaning over the crib wringing her hands and weeping most bitterly. On inquiring into the cause of this, she told me that she thought the child was dying, and that she was afraid to tell her master, for she

knew that he would kill her. I was very much surprised at the wildness of her manner, and told her that no one would blame her, for the child had always been too delicate to live, when she began to weep more bitterly than ever, and after a time confessed, that as the baby had been crying all night, and she had supposed it to be very sick, she had given it quite a large dose of laudanum some time before day, and she was afraid she had given it too much, for it had been in a death-like stupor ever since. I bent over the child, and raised it in my arms; but it was then quite cold.

"A sudden thought struck me!

"I locked the door, and told the woman to be quiet until I had seen what I could do. I saw that this child must inevitably die. That of my relative was lying in the adjoining room, where I had left it, with the little nurse sleeping beside it. I had been troubled in thinking what was to become of it. The father had never taken any notice of it, and the mother was dead, and I thought it would be a pity for such a lovely little thing to die of neglect. For the first time in my life, I conceived the design of performing an act simply for the sake of charity.

"Mrs. Avory's child was already dead, and that could not be helped. Tom Burrell was comparatively a poor man, and Mr. Avory was an immensely wealthy one; and, perhaps, Mrs. Avory would recover; but even if she did not, her husband would be better able to have a motherless infant attended to as it should be, than the poor tavern-keeper Burrell. Neither of them had ever taken any notice of the children.

" 'Would it not be an act of kindness,' I thought, 'to take the child of my cousin, now lying in the next room, and place it here in the hands of this woman, and let it, in future, pass for Mrs. Avory's, as I knew it would then be properly taken care of, while I could easily take the dead one to my room, and tell Thomas that *his* own had died during the night?

"The nurse was terribly frightened, as she knew that she was to blame, and I told her of my plans, informing her, at the same time, that if she did not help me to carry them into execution, and then keep eternal silence, she would be hung for murder. She gladly consented, as it would be the means of saving her. Burrell heard the news of the little creature's death with apparent composure, saying that it would be much better off; and so it was buried. Mrs. Avory began to grow better, and received *her child*; or, at least, she never knew that it was not her own—but more of that anon.

"Thomas Burrell took to drinking on account of his great grief at the loss of his wife, and entirely neglected his business, and in a very short time he was turned out of employment by his brutal partner, who had cheated him out of every cent that he possessed. He went off somewhere, and I have never heard of him since. The keeper of the house then told me that I must leave, and, in despair, I applied to your father to know if he could obtain any employment for me. He said that he had not done so, but offered me a home, unconditionally, in his family. I went to live with him. You, Walter Langdon, were then a small boy, and your sister was an infant. Your mother was what, I suppose,

the world would call a good and kind woman, but I did *not like her*—for she did not court my society and appear as much interested in my conversation as I would have wished; and I looked upon your father as a good-natured, intelligent, but careless man; but he was like all men, and by flattering him greatly I became quite a favorite with him, and he told me that I should live in his family until his little daughter became large enough to commence her education, and that I should then have the charge of her. I always shall consider that a mean, unfeeling act in him; for he was certainly wealthy enough to support a poor relative and a woman, in his family, for nothing.

“I pass over a period of ten years. Flora Langdon and Grace, your younger sister, were smart, lively children, and I did undertake to educate them; but at that time your mother died, and your father, maddened with grief, broke up house-keeping in Cincinnati, and determined to travel; but being too much devoted to his children, ever to part with them, he employed a very respectable old lady to help me take charge of them, and started for Europe, taking us all with him; and, as you know, while there you lost your sister Grace. A few years passed, and your father told me, that as his old friend, Mr. Avory, had settled in Virginia, he intended to return to America, and make an estate which that gentleman had kindly purchased for him, adjoining his own, his place of residence. So we came to the home where he settled and died.

“And now I will tell you the chief cause of that hatred—a hatred as lasting as time—which I at length en-

tertained for you *all*. I was *desirous of wedding* your father. Perhaps this confession startles you, Walter Langdon; but read on. Though Hethe Langdon was then advanced in life, he was considered by every one a noble, splendid-looking man, and I loved *him*; besides, I was *mad to be rich*.

“Your father had never given me anything but my board and a very liberal salary (I suppose school teachers would call it) for taking charge of you *all*. That was *all*; and notwithstanding my flattery and broad insinuations, I do not believe a single thought of *marrying* again ever entered the old fool's head; and after *wasting* several years of my life in this manner, I at length saw that I would be compelled to abandon all hopes of *him*, and as soon as I was *convinced* of this, my liking for you *all* was turned into the bitterest hate—a hate so deadly that I could have seen the most direful curses of Heaven descend upon you with vindictive joy; but I was forced to conceal all this for a *time*.

“I have not mentioned to you that Mr. Avory had been living, since our return, adjoining us, and that he and your father were upon the most intimate terms of friendship. Nor did I tell you that he also had *some time* since been left a widower with *two children*. I knew that he was a much *wealthier* and a much weaker-minded man than your father, and therefore I formed the determination of entrapping *him*. He was said to be worth half a million of dollars, and as he was, as I have told you, a weak, fickle-minded man, I soon learned to exercise a very powerful authority over him, by making a pompous display of *my* powers of *mind*, and by flat-

tering him. Need I tell you that, as I saw this, I led your father (who also valued my opinions, and was most prodigal in disposing of his money) into headlong ruin, and at the same time that I put on an appearance of the greatest amiability and gentleness when with Mr. Avory, until I had so bewitched the old fool, that he offered to marry me, and I consented.

"Oh! what a triumph there was for me at last! in the anticipations of soon being the mistress of his vast wealth; but at that time your father caused me to redouble the hatred that I already entertained for him and his whole race—a hatred that has never been the least softened, nor ever will be as long as breath is in this body. He was much surprised—astonished—as were many others, when they discovered that the wealthy Mr. Avory was upon the eve of *marrying me*, and tried every means in his power to break it off, and actually told Mr. Avory that he *knew* that I would never make any man a happy wife, or a kind step-mother, and *he*, weak-minded idiot that he was, would have backed out *then*, had it not been for my tears and promises of love. I had always *hated* *foo's*, and so I married him feeling the most sovereign contempt for him, and being resolved that I would continue to exert such an influence over him, as to be enabled to spend his money as I might feel disposed.

"I have said that I never forgave Hethe Langdon, and I never will forget his meddlesome interference. After my marriage I found it necessary to my plans, to set him and Mr. Avory at variance, and they never had anything to do with each other again, though I had care-

fully concealed my instrumentality in producing the difference.

"You remember the bond of your father's which Mr. Avory held, and on which he afterwards sued to obtain your estate. I must now tell you of that; but, first, it is necessary to mention another person, I allude to *Allen Avory*. He had already become a man in years and size at least, and need I tell you, that he, also, most cordially despised you *all*—for, perhaps, *you* know it—you, because you had always looked down upon him, and Flora, because he had loved her, and she had always treated him with indifference because of her preference for Harry Bennington.

"Allen Avory knew of my secret hatred for you all, and also how constantly I was causing your father to run greatly in debt, and we both rejoiced over the prospect of his speedy ruin; for we both knew how careless he was in such matters, and that if he should live but a few years longer, he would die insolvent.

"In the meantime, your father told me that he was determined to sell off all his other property, and settle up all his old debts, for he had been largely drawing on his bank stock.

"Allen, like myself, was a constant visitor at your house. One evening, when Mr. Avory was absent, Allen came to my room and told me that Mr. Langdon had just given him a check for his father, with the privilege of garnisheeing a gentleman who had just purchased a sugar plantation from him in the South, and obtaining the money that had been due so long. I took the check into my hands, and again I formed a deep and hazardous

scheme; but let me here tell you that my avarice did not influence me in this, it was only my deadly hatred for you all that made me wish to see you one day a beggar.

"The physicians had said that your father could not possibly live more than a few months. I knew that you, Flora and Harry Bennington were then absent from home, and if he had only called Allen into his library, where he always sat, and had written this check without any witness, why might not we draw this money, and let *Allen* keep it and forge a receipt, signing his father's name, and I might carry it myself to your father and afterwards abstract it from among his papers, as I always had free access to them all; and then if he did not mention the subject to any of you all, Mr. Avory could easily retain the old bond, and present it again, to be settled, after Mr. Langdon's death.

"I knew that Allen's avaricious spirit would induce him to resort to any means, however dishonorable, to obtain money; for he was prodigal to the greatest excess, and Mr. Avory had refused to support it. I called him to me, found that no one had seen or known anything of the check given him by your father, and told him of my plans, to which he too readily consented. The gentleman who had purchased Mr. Langdon's property was then in the neighborhood. Allen presented the check in his father's name, received the money, and the gentleman paying the residue to your father, returned South.

"Allen wrote the receipt and I took it to Mr. Langdon. I found him sick in bed, and he carelessly requested me to take it to his cabinet in the library, and I went; but I

kept it; for I knew that after he considered the matter settled, he would never think of mentioning it again, particularly as death was staring him in the face.

"One week later I was told that he was *dying*, and again I went to see him. You, Flora, and Harry Bennington had been sent for, from school; he was tortured with much suffering and died in a few days. I then found out, by my hints and inuendos, that *neither you nor Flora* knew anything of the check; and as Mr. Avory knew nothing of the affair between Allen and myself, and did not dream that the money had ever been paid, he was about to present the old bond, in accordance with our wishes, and force you to *pay it over again*—for I knew that that would bring you to the most abject poverty—when Allen came to me, in frenzied terror, and told me that he had just discovered that *Harry Bennington* knew the gentleman who had paid the money, and had heard him mention it. So Allen was cowering and trembling with fear, and said that, unless he should go to his father and tell *him all*, Harry Bennington could readily prove, when he should present the bond, that it had been paid, and that he would certainly commit suicide before he would tell *his father* that he was a robber.

"But amidst all this I was cool and collected, and my presence of mind again saved me. *I told Allen that there was but one way* to rescue us from a fate a thousand times worse than death, and *that was for Harry Bennington to die*; and that I could easily prevent Mr. Avory from presenting the bond until the deed *was done*. Under the sting of desperation, Allen swore that he

should die, and with a fixed determination to *do the deed*, he followed you two, when you returned to college, and was each day awaiting his chance, when Harry Bennington fell by the hand of *another*, and we were saved—for you know how soon our triumph came.*

"There was another whom I detested no less cordially than yourself, and that one was Imogen Avory. I had always despised you from a child, because you never would look up to me and flatter me, and, when you became a man, my detestation was doubly increased, because, after our acknowledged enmity, I never could feel easy when you were near me; but I *despised* Imogen, because of her bold defiance of my authority, and for her canting *virtue*. So you can never know with what joy I learned, after you had sent Allen home a corpse, that *you had been betrothed to her*, and that you both could now never think of each other again.

"Ah! how I now exult in remembrance of the bitter anguish that I have caused *her* to feel, by constantly recalling to her mind, that her only brother had fallen by the hand of *her lover*.

"If possible, I despised her even more cordially than I did you, and there is *one* thought that will make me to rejoice in my dying hour, and that is, that a reconciliation can *never* take place between you; for I would never make the confession that I am doing, did I not now know that *you are now married to another*; but it will be a suffi-

* The reader will remember that Allen had carefully concealed from Mrs. Avory, as he had from the world, the fact of his having killed Harry Bennington.

cient sting—one that will follow you both to your graves, even after all of this mystery has been cleared away—for you to know that you have been forever separated, because you believed yourself to be *her brother's murderer*, when the man that you killed was *in no manner related to her*; for have you not already guessed that this Allen Avory—*Imogen's supposed brother*—is, or was, the child of my poor kinsman Burrell, that I placed in the stead of, and caused to pass for, Reuben Avory's?

"In that, the first important act of my life, I believed that what I did was for the infant's good; but now I feel that, save the fact of his having been the great instrument, in my hands, to bring about your ruin, it would have been far better for him to have died in his infancy; but *that is past*. And now, as you close this manuscript, turn to *your wife*, and ask her if she has never heard of Imogen Avory, and who it was that, several years ago, sent a sting into her bosom, that is I know even now cankering her heart; but, Walter Langdon, you will not do this; for I feel that you *have not yet* forgotten your early love, and you would not like to confess this to the *woman that you have made your wife*. * * * *

"Imogen is with me while I write this. Would you like to hear how often I cause old memories to flash back upon her mind, by speaking to her of you, and of that wife, and asking her to remember the reason why she was once forced to abandon all thoughts of occupying that connection with you? But that is needless. She still remembers you—but with what feelings?

"She has never married, on your account, and she never will, though she has no one left on earth whom she

cares for now. Her old father died, but a few years since, broken-hearted, with the belief that you killed his only son, and I would not undeceive him; for I longed to have the great ambition of my youth gratified, and be left alone, in my old age, to the enjoyment of a great wealth. Yet Imogen pretends that she does not despise me, and in my soul I *abhor* her for the *lie*. She *will live* here with me, when I do not wish it, and assign, as a reason, that she is unwilling to leave her father's aged wife to die alone, even if she despises her. I did not believe this to be her motive, until I had determined to try her; and, accordingly, while she yet mourned for her father, in but a few months after his death, I told her that it was necessary for me to visit the gayest places in our State *for my health*; and, then, I must be present in the ball-room and all the gay and joyous scenes of festivity, in order to raise my spirits; and that I desired her to accompany me, *and she did*, though I know she cursed me in her heart for it; and if she did not, I despise her yet the more for this foolish virtue and *charity*.

"She will read this after my death, and learn all; and I have requested of her to have it conveyed to you, should you ever be heard of again. Once since your marriage, we were both in the same house with you, and you knew it not; but you left ere we could learn from whence you had come, or whither you had gone; but ask your wife, if you will, and she will tell of the work that I did.

* * * * *

"Now, Walter Langdon, my narrative is finished. I

feel that the unrelenting hand of disease is busily at work in my old frame, and soon I must go the way of all flesh—*yet I do not relent!*

BLANCHE AVORY."*

* * * * *

The manuscript fell from Walter's hand. He had read it through without pausing; but now he sat trembling and almost breathless with agitation. Oh! what a guilty, depraved marble heart was here laid open to his view, and yet he thanked God that the great mystery had, at last, been explained. This had been the wild wish of his heart for years, and, though the accomplishment of it was delayed thus long, his heart was filled with gratitude, and he arose and paced the floor of his room, trembling with joy. Oh! how bountifully had Providence rewarded him for all his former sufferings: "I was afflicted, because of my stout rebellion and sin," he murmured to himself; "but now, that I have returned and acknowledged my transgression, peace and prosperity await me on every side. Verily, the words of Scripture have been fulfilled, where it says, 'Delight thyself also in the Lord, and He shall give thee the desire of thine heart.'"

* The reader may consider this character somewhat unnatural, but the author can say, with truth, that it is taken from real life, and, though many of the scenes in which she here figures are imaginary, her portrait is by no means a caricature.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE WAY IT ALL ENDED.

"Come, my love, we must start now, as you know we promised the gentleman yesterday to spend to-day with him."

"O, dear papa, I had *heap* rather stay here, if you would only but let me."

"And I believe I would almost prefer staying myself; but, then, they will expect us, and we *must* go."

And Langdon did feel as if he had much rather stay at home. Now, he would have to sit up all day, and talk to old acquaintances about old things that had happened many years ago; but he would not be able to *think*, and that was exactly what he wanted to do. He had been too much agitated all night to have a single clear and definite thought, and now a wild mixture of recollections and hopes were agitating his mind. That *woman* had left the confession of her dark and guilty life open in Imogen's hands, and, of course, she had *read* it. She had believed him to be married yet, and had hinted that that alone would separate them in future; but

he was not married *now*, and why might they not meet again? But, no! even if he had not killed her brother, as they had at first supposed, Allen had, at least, been raised with her all his life, and she had learned to look upon him as such, and he thought also that she must have been prejudiced against him, and taught to believe that he alone had been to blame in the difficulty that had taken place between them.

"And, then, too," he muttered to himself, as he drove along, "I am not as I once was. Persons would tell me in those days that I possessed a pleasing exterior, at least, and that might have induced her to fancy me then; but now I am a careworn widower, sunburnt by travel, and so much changed in appearance, that I could not expect a young and lovely girl to wed me, and, moreover, she may have that stuff about her called romance yet, and could marry no one who had not been true to her *always*, and, though my heart has ever been too much her own, I can never wrong the gentle being who once wasted her innocent heart upon me, and, perhaps, laid down her life on my account, by telling Imogen of *that*. It must be my secret alone, and one that I am ashamed to acknowledge to myself, and I cannot now spend a thought about another, when I think that my dear lost Nina *died*, doubting my esteem for her."

He reached Mr. Arlington's dwelling. Philip met

him at the door with much warmth, and there some of the young ladies took his little Imogen off to another room, and he was led into the crowded parlor. Tears came into his eyes as he passed in, and saw so many old familiar faces, that he had not seen for so long, and when he had shaken hands with those around him, and taken his seat, others, whom he had only greeted with a bow, walked up, and shook hands with him, and expressed much gratification at seeing him back once more. Then, too, he saw a crowd of ladies on the opposite side of the room, and among them also were many faces that he had seen and known years ago; and as his eye roamed over the group, he gave a sudden start, and grew very pale. Could it be? He looked but for one moment. Yes, Imogen Avory, the object of his early (*he would not say his only*) love, was again before him. How should he act? He did not know whether to recognise her or not. "It certainly was very careless in Philip not to have insinuated to him that she would be there, for he must have known that this would have caused them both many unpleasant feelings for nothing." Then, again, he felt as if he would like to walk up to her, and, taking her by the hand, tell her of the great change that had taken place in his heart of late, and that he felt no ill-will towards any human being, and desire her to tell him that she *had* forgiven him for all the suffering that he had cost her, and that they

should be friends, at least, in future. But, no! he could not do it. Perhaps, she did not desire a reconciliation; for, if she had, she might certainly have sent him a single line of her own with that manuscript, but she had not done it, and he would not now pain her by addressing her at all, and reminding her of the happy past, that could never come again. Thus, though it cost him a great effort, he did not once glance towards her. "For," said he, "if she should desire to recall the past, there would certainly be nothing indelicate in her coming up to me and shaking hands with me, as Philip Arlington has done;" but she did not do it.

Once, in the forenoon, he chanced to be very near her, but he did not look up; and, again, at dinner, he knew that she sat directly opposite to him, though he did not appear to notice it.

Evening was waning, and the gentlemen, having discussed all the topics of the day, political and agricultural, were becoming silent. The conversation among the ladies, too, seemed to lag, when Walter went over, and occupied a vacant chair by one of Arlington's sisters.

"Ah! Mary, how painfully it reminds me of the olden time, and the happy days of my early manhood, to behold your fair face once more; but, as you used to charm us boys by your soul-stirring music, will you not now soothe the evil spirit of

discontent in the heart of the older man, as he comes, like Saul, to have that evil spirit subdued by your angelic strains?"

The idea seemed to take, and many were the voices in favor of music. Mary got up, and walked off a few paces from him, where a young lady (he did not then look to see who) was sitting.

"Come, Imogen, the gentlemen wish to have some music, and as I could never think of performing where you are, you must really be obliging."

"Certainly, I never wait for persuasion." Ah! it was that same never-to-be-forgotten, gentle voice, that had often, in days gone by, caused his heart to tremble as it did now, and a tumultuous thrill shot through his whole frame, as a sable dress brushed against him. He turned his eyes mechanically towards her, as she seated herself at the piano, and he gazed upon that face once more. Oh! how radiantly beautiful she was! He saw no earthly change, save that, perhaps, a rather more pensive expression than of old rested upon her countenance. She looked up, and those lustrous, soul-searching eyes met his, and she did not frown.

No! he thought that her glance had a gentle, rebuking expression. He listened! Oh! how that voice thrilled through his very soul, and caused his heart to leap tumultuously as it had done years ago, and with what force did each line of that old

melody of Moore's, often heard before, now fall upon his ears:

"Come rest in this bosom, my own stricken deer;
Though the herd hath fled from thee, thy home is still here:
Here still is a smile that no cloud can o'ercast,
And a heart and a hand all thine own to the last.

"Oh! what was love made for, if 'tis not the same,
Thro' joy, thro' torment, thro' glory and shame?
I care not, I ask not, if guilt's in that heart,
I but know that I love thee whatever thou art.

"Thou hast called me thing angel in moments of bliss,
And thine angel I'll be midst the horrors of this:
Through the furnace unshrinking thy steps to pursue,
And shield thee and save thee, or perish there too."

The voice died away in an agitated echo. Oh! what more did he need!

"Papa, it is getting late—I'm tired—let us go back." Yes, he would go *now*, for he could not *then* speak to her; but *they* should meet again, when that crowd was not around them.

"Papa, that lady did sing so pretty, and she is so sweet and good."

"How do you know, my child?"

"Because she kissed me up stairs this morning, and gave me such pretty things to play with."

"My love, as we are living so lonely all by ourselves, how would you like for papa to go and find

a pretty and good woman, like that young lady, and bring her home to live with me, and help to take care of you?"

"I should like it so much, if she is good like Miss Imogen, and will help me dress my dolls."

Breakfast was hardly over at Mr. Arlington's, the next morning, when some one had called to see Miss Ivory, and when she went down into the parlor, Walter Langdon, the lover of her youth, stood before her.

"Imogen Ivory, the heroine of the happy boy's dreams—the idol of the lonely man's worship, the same Walter Langdon bows before you an earnest devotee at the shrine of your beauty." He took her hand, and pressed it between his own, as he sat down beside her. He was now silent. In spite of the man's firmness of character, he felt as if he did not know exactly how to begin to address this pure and noble creature, who had been so constant to him through all that had passed.

"Oh, papa!" the little girl ran up to him, her face brightening as if with some happy thought, "ask Miss Imogen if *she* will not go home and live with us, and help me dress my dolls. She is pretty and good, will she not go?"

"Go to her, my love, and ask her if she will not come and live with us, and make papa a very happy man."

"Will you go?" asked the child, in a gentle voice.

"Yes, little darling," replied Imogen, stooping and kissing the child's cheek, while a tear sparkled in her eyes; and in a short time she *did* go, and both she and Walter were very happy.

And, gentle reader, this was—THE WAY IT ALL ENDED.

FINIS.