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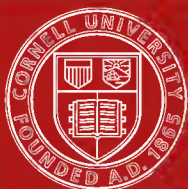
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MADGE;

OR,

NIGHT AND MORNING.

By H. B. G.

Talcott Hannah Elizabeth (Bradbury)
Goodwin.

"And now abideth Faith, Hope, Charity, these three; but the greatest of these is *Charity*."

"Many great souls are baptized in tears."

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TO THOSE

WHOSE GENEROUS ENCOURAGEMENT

HAS BEEN MY INSPIRATION IN WRITING,

This Volume

IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED BY

THE AUTHOR.

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MADGE;

OR,

NIGHT AND MORNING.

CHAPTER I.

THE PAUPER'S FUNERAL.

"Tenderly, humanly, over the stones!
Though a pauper, she's one whom her Saviour yet owns."

"TAKE her away, Collins; I can't be pothered any longer. It's a good three miles to the graveyard, and we haven't more than an hour of daylight."

"What shall I do, Tim? I have tried coaxing, and I haven't the heart to take her away by force; she's such a young thing, without a friend in the world."

"Well, I have followed the business too long to have any heart about these matters; but if yours is still made of flesh, call in the women folks, and see what they can do."

"Judith has got worn out with the child's sobbing, and has hid away somewhere to be rid of this scene."

"So there's nothing left but for me to hush the brat."

Well, I'm used to it. Look here, child! I'll give you a cent, to go off like a woman, and stop your noise."

The child seemed unconscious of the import of his words, and still hung sobbing over the white pine coffin, which had been placed upon the floor, that this one little mourner might gaze upon its tenant. The lid of the coffin was thrown back, and the wet cheek of the child was pressed to the cold face of the dead. She had remained thus during the clergyman's prayer; and when he paused by the plain box, arrested by the low sobs of the little mourner, there was a tremulous huskiness in the good man's voice, as he repeated: "The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

Three or four women in lowly life, who had dropped in to the almshouse to hear the burial service, followed the clergyman from the room with their face hid in their kerchiefs. They were mothers.

And now this pale little child, hardly four years old, the stern-faced undertaker, and the almshouse overseer, are alone with the dead.

"Come, child; if you're too obstinate to listen to reason, I shall take you off by main strength;" and the undertaker raised the slight form in his arms, unmindful of her passionate screams.

"Mamma! my own mamma! carry me back to mamma!" cried the child; but the man strode rapidly forward to the kitchen, and flinging his burden into the lap of Judith Collins, harshly exclaimed: "Take care of the little pauper—she's half stunned me with her screaming—and see that she

don't come to the front room till I've got the coffin into the hearse."

Judith Collins passed her strong arms around the child, and made a few ineffectual attempts to hush her cries; but she did not understand the child's tempestuous grief, and there was little enough of tenderness in her efforts to soothe it.

"Hush, Margie, hush! 'Tis no use crying for what can't be helped."

"I want my mamma!"

"Well, I dare say you do. 'Tis a thousand pities she should die now, and leave you alone in the world."

"I want my mamma!"

"Hush, child! My mother died when I was a little thing, not much bigger than you; but I knew better than to scream so about it."

"I want my mamma!"

"Did ever anybody hear of such an obstinate child before? Well, at any rate, I can't hold you any longer; for there's supper to be got, and the clothes to fold, besides a deal of running and tending. I'm going to tie you in this little chair; and mind, your screaming hurts no one but yourself."

The child's puny efforts availed nothing with the strong woman, and she was soon safely secured in the low rush-bottomed chair by a coarse towel, passed around her body and tied at the back. Her little strength was soon spent in vain struggles to free herself; and then her screams dwindled into low sobs, and at length even the sobs ceased,

and Judith saw that the little head, with its wealth of tangled curls, swayed heavily to and fro in the blessed forgetfulness of sleep.

"I declare, John, I hate to wake this poor motherless thing; I can't endure her screaming."

"A few smart applications of the birch will stop it; there's no other way."

But the overseer and his wife gazed at the sleeping child, both equally reluctant to waken her to a consciousness of her great grief.

"Do you know whether she has any relatives here?" asked Judith, after some moments of silence.

"None that will ever claim her, I reckon. Tim Jones told me, this afternoon, that her mother was the daughter of old Judge Norris, who used to live in Hayden, and died some ten years ago. She married Dick Foster against the old man's wishes, and he would have little or nothing to do with her after that. Dick was a jolly, good-natured fellow, but was mightily provoked because the old Judge wouldn't give Kate a marriage dower, and by and by he took to drink and gambling, and all sorts of wild follies, which came nigh breaking his wife's heart. She was a proud thing, and couldn't endure living where her old friends would see her disgrace, so she teased Dick to move away somewhere to the West.

"They went off a year or more before the old Judge died, and nothing was heard of 'em till last spring, when Kate came back with this child. Dick, it seems, had run off, and left her years ago; and when the poor thing found she must

die, it was natural-like for her to want to bring her child back to the old place. Some say she begged her way clear from St. Louis, but I can't say as to that. She found her relatives all dead, and old friends turned a cold shoulder in Hayden; so she wandered over to our village, hoping to get a little sewing, but she took worse, and was sent to the almshouse. It's an awful pity to leave such a young thing as that alone in the world. I only hope she'll fall into kind hands when the time comes to bind her out."

"I don't believe she'll ever be strong; she's so pale, and slenderly built," said Judith, gazing sorrowfully at the sleeper, and wiping away large drops with her coarse apron.

"Well, that's no concern of ours," answered John; and he marvelled that women were always finding something to cry about.

Little Margaret was so exhausted with the violence of her grief, that the overseer's wife found little difficulty in removing her from the chair to a crib in the large, common sleeping chamber of the almshouse children. After a few weeks of pining and teasing for her mamma, she grew silent and moody. Judith said she was a strange, sullen child, never caring to play, like other children.

When chance brought strangers or neighbors to the asylum, they exclaimed: "What a queer-looking thing—so pale and sallow! Such remarkably large eyes, too! Why in the world don't you cut off her hair, Mrs. Collins? It will be sure to give her a headache."

At such times, little Madge would throw her apron over her curls, and run off somewhere to hide until the visitors

were gone. What pleasure it would have given a fond mamma to comb out this abundant hair! But now the dark, neglected locks were no ornament to poor Madge; they only increased the ugliness of the little pauper, whom nobody owned. *Nobody owned!*—was not her life of more value than many sparrows? and not even a little nestling falleth to the ground without our Father's notice.

CHAPTER II.

MRS. HARDY'S BENEVOLENCE.

"The love of gain had choked from out her heart
 Its tenderness and grace;
 And smiles but seldom lit her eye, or chased
 The shadows from her face."

"ROBERT, I've been thinking, as we've no girl of our own, and I shall need a pair of light feet to run of errands, when Maurice goes away to school, that we had better take poor Kate Foster's orphan from the almshouse."

"She will not be strong enough to wait and tend for several years, Sarah. Hadn't you better hire a grown girl, who can take the larger part of the work from you?"

"And waste more than she earns, besides being saucy and untidy! No, Robert; I want to bring up a girl to work in my own way. And then, Kate and I used to be friends, before she married that drunken Foster, who ran away, and

left her to shift for herself. She was a silly goose to die of grief for the miserable wretch, and leave her child in the poorhouse; but I'll be glad to show the poor thing some kindness, for the sake of its mother. What say, Robert?"

"Do as you like, Sarah; but a motherless child needs gentle training, and your quick, impatient disposition is poorly fitted to govern a sensitive, delicate child, who has none of the claims of kindred upon your sympathies. I wouldn't like to see her young spirit chilled by harsh treatment, neither would I like to make a servant of Kate Foster's child."

It was very hard for Sarah to restrain the unkind, angry retort, which rose to her lips, but harder still to give it utterance, with the mild eye of her husband bent upon her; but she was so intent upon taking the orphan child of her friend from the poorhouse, that she checked her rising indignation, and only said:

"Somebody will make a servant of Kate's child, and I think she will stand a poor chance of finding more interested friends than we shall be. I shall teach her to do all kinds of work neatly, and send her to the village school in the winter. If she has any aptness to learn, she will get all the education which will be of use to her."

"Well, Sarah, I'll say again, Do as you like; but try and carry a patient, gentle hand with the child, for her happiness depends entirely upon you."

And so Kate Foster's orphan was brought to the farm—a tender, delicate child, nearly five years of age, with nothing particularly winning in her appearance. Her features were

tolerable, but her complexion was pale and sallow, and her long, abundant hair was unkempt. Mrs. Hardy pronounced her eyes "a deal too large," but Robert said they were very expressive.

These hazel eyes of Margaret's looked very beautiful, when Maurice Hardy, a lad of fourteen years, led her around the fine old farm on the first day of her arrival, and showed her the flower garden, orchard, and bee houses; but on the next day, when Mrs. Hardy called her from the garden, and told her she must only go there with permission, for she was now quite large enough to learn some useful work, then the bright, sparkling light which made Margaret's eyes beautiful, suddenly faded, and her little lips were thrust out in a way which she intended should be very expressive of displeasure.

Poor Kate Foster had been so ill and dispirited for some months before her death, that her little girl had grown wilful and perverse, without wholesome restraint, and the tender mercies of the almshouse, where she had spent the last year of her life, had not tended to uproot the weeds which were fast choking out the germs of good from the tender soil of her heart. After a few months' residence on the farm she seldom gave way to violent anger; for Mrs. Hardy's punishments had been so severe, whenever she had attempted to rebel in this way, that she had found her passion of no avail, and soon her most habitual expression was one of sullen, passive obedience.

"Strange, that the ugly child couldn't have been more like her mother!" Mrs. Hardy would exclaim, as she gazed

at Margaret's pouty face. "I don't believe I can ever make anything of her."

It was a sad day for the little bound girl, when Robert Hardy walked forth for the last time over his broad fields: the crops which he had planted in the joyous springtime another hand would harvest, for Robert was gathered to his fathers. He was a man of quiet temperament and secluded habits, rarely leaving his old farm, unless business called him to the neighboring city, and few would miss the honest, open face, which seemed to feel so little interest in the noisy hustle of everyday life. Sarah Hardy would miss the gentle, humanizing influence, which had so long restrained her impulsive and overbearing temperament. Maurice would miss the firm but tender hand which had led him for fourteen years; and the little bound girl would miss an encouraging word and smile, which she had already learned to prize.

But Sarah's tempestuous grief was soon swallowed in the cares of her cottage and farm; the boy's sorrow was soon drowned in his passionate fondness for books; and little Madge had quite enough to do in combating the evils which surrounded her.

Years passed away, but their glorious summers brought no sunshine for Madge. Even the remembrance of kindness had grown dim and shadowy in her mind; and if the little bound girl found time for tears, they were only drawn forth by some act of harshness.

CHAPTER III.

THE BOUND GIRL.

"My cup was filled with wormwood; and it grew
Bitter, and still more bitter, day by day."

"POOR MADGE!" You might well have said, "Poor Madge!" if you could have followed in the little bound girl's footsteps from sunrise till sunset.

"Madge, you lazy thing, come down this minute!" was her morning salutation, uttered in a sharp, wiry voice, never pleasant, even when softened and modulated by kindly feeling; and when Mrs. Hardy addressed Margaret, the kindly emotions of her soul were never called in action.

Margaret was sometimes wilful and pouty; sometimes sleepy, and wonderfully inclined to take her own time for descending from her little attic, although she knew full well that delay would only bring down upon her a double portion of the vociferous eloquence of Mrs. Hardy.

Not that Madge liked the sound of Mrs. Hardy's voice, and therefore liked to provoke her to use it. Oh! no; but she had become so used to the harsh tones, and cross, ill-natured language of the woman, that her young heart had grown callous, and now angry looks and words made but little more impression upon her than moonbeams make upon ice.

On the bright May morning which began a new era in the life of Madge, the voice that aroused her from slumber

sounded particularly disagreeable to her, and she determined to take another doze; but she had hardly secured a comfortable position for enjoying this forbidden luxury, before the cheerful notes of the robin in the old apple tree, whose limbs she could reach from her attic window, fell upon her ear, and it seemed as if the loud, joyous gushes of his song were expressly intended to coax her out into the glad sunshine; so, springing from her straw mattress, she threw up the sash of her window.

She might have remained a long time listening to the robin's song, inhaling the fragrance-laden air of the spring morning, and plucking the half-blown buds from the old apple tree, had not Mrs. Hardy's voice again called from the kitchen:

"Madge, if you're not down here in two minutes, I'll know the reason why!"

Madge's toilet was quickly made, and, with a step which had none of childhood's buoyancy, she presented herself in the kitchen.

"So you've come at last, Miss Laziness! 'Tis well you didn't wait for me to bring you. Go drive the cows to the back pasture before you taste of breakfast, and see if you'll come quicker the next time I call."

The child took her calico bonnet, and, with careless, indifferent, sullen obedience, passed out of the kitchen door, along the garden path, to the cowyard.

Her little hands could hardly reach the fastenings of the great gate which separated the cowyard from the narrow lane through which the cows must pass; and then the strength of

her puny arm was hardly sufficient to draw the wooden bolt which secured it ; but this was her morning task.

She had no fear of the gentle cows, that patiently waited her movement, but softly patting their smooth, glossy necks as they passed through the open gate, she followed them down the lane, past the orchard and corn field, over the tiny little brook, so swollen now with the spring rains that the mossy log bridge swayed as the waters rushed against it, through the maple grove ; and now her morning's task was finished.

She had nothing to do but loiter back to Mrs. Hardy's uninviting kitchen, there to await, in readiness to perform all sorts of light work. If Mrs. Hardy was baking, "Bring me the biscuit cutter," "Carry these pies to the pantry," or, "Draw a pail of water—quick, child, quick!" was constantly ringing in her ears.

Margaret felt like prolonging her walk as far as possible on this particular morning ; so she turned aside to gather May flowers on every sunny knoll, played with the waters of the brook, and, as she bent over it to see the effect of the evergreens which she had twisted in the dark, thick locks of her uncombed hair, she almost forgot the great gulf which separates a bound girl from other children.

The sullen, pouty look which she almost always wore in Mrs. Hardy's presence, had quite disappeared ; and yet, at twelve years of age, we find her personal appearance but little improved. She is very small for her years, pale and sallow, clad in a faded calico frock, and slipshod shoes. Had you met her at the brookside, you would have thought the

depth and brilliancy of her large eyes made some atonement for the ugliness of her general appearance ; but in presence of her mistress, there was no brilliancy in her eye, no grace in her movements.

Hunger at last reminded Margaret that her morning walk had been a long one, and that further loitering would only bring upon her a shower of passionate words, and, perhaps, blows ; so she turned her unwilling footsteps homeward. Entering the kitchen without raising her eyes, her calico bonnet hanging from her neck, and the evergreens still in her hair, she was not aware of the presence of a stranger, until the tones of a pleasant, musical voice fell upon her ear.

“Is this your child, Mrs. Hardy ? I thought you had but one, as I’ve only heard you speak of Maurice.”

“Mine ! no, indeed, Mrs. Kempton. Margaret Foster is no child of mine. I took her from the poorhouse when she was hardly five years old, and trouble enough I’ve had raising her. Why, ma’am, the idle thing has been gone at least two hours, just to drive the cows a short distance to pasture ; and only see how like a crazy fright she has come back ! One might as well put decent clothes upon a wild Arab, as to think of keeping Madge neat and tidy.”

Poor Madge ventured to raise her eyes during this complimentary introduction, and, instead of the cold look of displeasure which she expected to find on the stranger’s face, she met a kind, sympathetic glance from a pair of sunny blue eyes that were fixed upon her. This one kind look had so strange an effect upon Madge, that her eyes were instantly filled with tears, and a quick blush dyed neck, cheeks, and forehead.

Mrs. Kempton did not appear to notice her agitation, nor Mrs. Hardy's remarks, but, rising, said: "I'm glad you can supply me with milk. Can Margaret bring it? or shall my husband come for it?"

"Oh! don't trouble him; the child has nothing in the world to do but little odd jobs. Can't you sit longer, Mrs. Kempton?"

"Not this morning, thank you; but I shall be pleased to come again; for I like your cottage and farm."

In passing out, Mrs. Kempton laid her soft hand for a moment on Margaret's head, and took one of the flowers from her uncombed hair.

Poor Madge had no appetite for the cold breakfast which awaited her. Many times during the day, when her spirit was provoked by the harsh language of her busy, bustling mistress, and she was just ready to make an indignant reply, or assume her usual sullen air, she fancied the light pressure of that gentle hand rested on her head, and half-forgotten memories of a pale, thin hand, that long ago rested on her dark curls, eyes that looked tenderly and mournfully into her own, floated dimly before poor Madge.

Who was Mrs. Kempton?—Margaret was constantly wondering, but dared not ask Mrs. Hardy. If Maurice was at home, she might venture to ask him, for Maurice was sometimes kind to the bound girl. He had taught her to read, and furnished her with a few books. What a debt of gratitude she owed him for this blessing! But Maurice had been seldom at home for a long time. This was his last year in college, and Margaret had heard her mistress tell a

neighbor that he was going South to teach, after he graduated.

Perhaps the sweet-voiced, amiable lady, who had looked so kindly upon her in the morning, would be her friend when Maurice was gone. This thought budded into hope, and hope blossomed into certainty, as she turned the matter over and over in her mind, and recalled again and again every look and tone of the lady.

The day wore slowly away with poor Madge, but, on the whole, more pleasantly than any day since her remembrance, when Maurice was not at home; for the monotonous sound of its toil was enlivened by a hope, vague and undefined, to be sure, but still a hope, of meeting Mrs. Kempton on the morrow.

Mrs. Hardy had said she would carry the milk, and *that* would be such a pleasure as she had not anticipated for many months. Did not the first gray tint of light already herald the dawn, which might in the hereafter break upon her night of bondage?

CHAPTER IV.

LIGHTS AND SHADOWS

*"The fountain of joy is fed by tears,
And love is lit by the breath of sighs ;
The deepest griefs and the wildest fears
Have holiest ministries."*

THERE was no need for Mrs. Hardy to call Madge a second time, when the hope of performing a pleasant duty animated her.

"Bless us ! what has happened, Madge ?" exclaimed her busy mistress, when Madge presented herself the next morning after her introduction to Mrs. Kempton. "Down the first time calling ! Well, child, you can eat your breakfast now before going to the pasture ; but be quick, for I want you to go over to the parsonage, and carry this can of milk to Mrs. Kempton. I wouldn't like to trouble the new pastor to come for it."

Margaret needed no second bidding. She only lingered long enough, in returning from the pasture, to gather a bouquet of fragrant wild flowers for Mrs. Kempton, which she hid by the garden gate so that Mrs. Hardy might not forbid her taking them. Her quick return brought forth another ejaculation of astonishment from her mistress : "Well, now, the child has turned over a new leaf."

Never had May morning dawned so brilliantly upon poor Madge before ; never had the blossom-scented air seemed

half so fragrant, the matin song of birds half so joyous, or the walk to the old parsonage half so short.

She had taken a by-path through the fields, to avoid the village street, and the rabble of boys who sometimes followed her, and shouted, "Poor Madge!" and "Pauper Madge!" and this path led her to the garden of the parsonage, through which she must pass to the back door. Here her courage failed. How could she meet the gentle, graceful lady, and what should she say?

Perhaps a servant would take the milk, and then she would not meet the clear light of those blue eyes, or hear the music of that sweet voice, which had haunted her since yesterday, and this day would pass like all others, unblessed by any look or word of kindness.

While she lingered under the old apple tree by the garden gate, hesitating whether to walk up boldly to the door and present her milk, or creep softly up and leave it on the steps, and then dash quickly back to Mrs. Hardy's, the well-remembered voice called pleasantly from the garden: "Good morning, Margaret. You are an early riser, I see. Walk in, my little girl, and Cynthia will take care of the milk, while you show me how to plant these lettuce seeds. I dare say you are quite a gardener."

Madge advanced with a shy, bashful air, her eyes bent on the ground, and the flowers concealed beneath her faded calico apron; but Mrs. Kempton's hand rested again upon her head, and again the sweet hope that she had found a friend thrilled her heart and inspired her with confidence. Drawing the fragrant blossoms from behind her apron, and thrusting them into the lady's hand, she said:

"I gathered them by the brook, for I thought you liked flowers."

"And thought rightly, too, my little girl; but did you go to the brook on purpose to gather flowers for me?"

"Oh! no, ma'am; I go past the brook every morning to pasture the cows."

"It must be a long walk for little feet like yours. Are you never afraid?"

"Not on bright mornings like this; but sometimes at night, when I loiter till dark, and the whippoorwills cry, I'm frightened; and late in the fall, when the flowers and nuts are gone, I don't like the walk."

"Do you always go alone?"

"If it storms badly, or I hide away till dark, Mrs. Hardy will sometimes send the gardener; and when Maurice is at home, he often goes."

"Maurice must be a pleasant young man, I think, from what his mother said of him. But we forget our gardening. You must show me where to plant these seeds."

Margaret was very skilful, for a girl of twelve years, in the mysteries of planting, hoeing, and weeding, and very soon had given Mrs. Kempton all the assistance she needed.

"I must not allow you to help me any longer, Margaret, or you will be late to school."

"I never go to school, ma'am."

"Never go to school! But can you not read and write?"

"Yes, ma'am; Maurice taught me reading and writing, and gave me a few books, so that I've studied a little by myself."

"But has Mrs. Hardy never sent you to school?"

“Yes; twice in the winter I’ve tried to go, but the scholars made so much fun of my clothes, and laughed because I was so duncelike, that I gave it up. Since Maurice went away to college, I haven’t had any help.”

“Well, Margaret, we will not talk of these things now, for if I keep you longer, I’m afraid Mrs. Hardy will scold. I shall expect you again to-morrow.”

“What in the world has kept you, Madge?” exclaimed Mrs. Hardy, as the child entered the kitchen, and placed her empty can upon the table. “I hope you haven’t been loitering around the parsonage with that torn and dirty frock, and your hair in such a frightful snarl! Come here, child, and I’ll cut off enough to stuff a saddle, and then see if you’ll take care of the rest.”

“Oh! ma’am, don’t cut off my hair! I’ll certainly remember to keep it combed!” But the screams and entreaties of poor Madge were of no avail; for in one strong hand the irritated woman held the long, beautiful curls, and with her scissors, which were always suspended from her apron string, in the other she severed them close to her head.

The effect of Mrs. Hardy’s ill temper upon Margaret had latterly produced only sullenness; now she was thoroughly enraged, and violently resisted her mistress, who attempted to subdue her with blows, and finally succeeded in thrusting her out of the kitchen door into the garden. Calling to the gardener, she said:

“Here, James; set this wretched, idle thing to work. She’s the plague of my life, and I’ll not have her noise in the house. Keep her planting and weeding till dinner time.”

“An’ shure, mem, she’ll not be afther finding a minute to scrame or pout while my eye is on her,” answered the man; and Mrs. Hardy, thinking Madge would be sufficiently punished for her long delay, returned to the kitchen, while Madge fled screaming down the garden path, and threw herself upon the grass under the thick branches of an apple tree, which had often listened to her mournful sobs. Poor Madge! Whose hand had drawn the thick veil between her and the glorious, happy light of this May morning? and against whose name did the recording angel write the sin of unbridled passions and soured temper?

Jem O’Harry had not been long in Mrs. Hardy’s employ, but long enough to enlist the warm sympathies of his Irish heart in behalf of the child, whom he had heard unreasonably scolded for trivial offences; so when Mrs. Hardy closed the door, he resumed his spading, whistling “St. Patrick’s Day in the Morning,” and wisely concluding to leave Madge for awhile to herself. But when her screams and sobs ceased, and she still lay with her face pressed upon the soft grass, he went up to her, and laying his rough hand upon her shoulder, said, kindly: “Come, Margy, darlint, where’s the use o’ this sobbing and fretting? You’ll be fra from the sound o’ the old leddy’s voice for three whole hours; and I’m blessed if I wouldn’t bear a dale o’ beating and scolding for the sake o’ working out here, with the bright sun overhead, and the grane airth beneath.”

“Oh! Jem, I didn’t mind the whipping, for I’m used to that; but my hair—my beautiful hair!” and the child removed her apron, which she had thrown over her shaven locks.

“An’ shure, the divil timplted the ould baste to do the like o’ this; and I wouldn’t mind if a rope was made of the curls for her neck, and I was the man to draw it! But cheer up, darlint, for I can make it grow again twice as bonnie as before.”

“Make it grow again! How, Jem, how?” and the eager child rose, and looked intently in the man’s face.

“I’m thinkin’ now how my ould mither used to say—pace to her sowl!—that the marrow from the lift jawbone of a pig, mixed with a leetle swate crame, and a dráp o’ the best brandy, would make hair grow like a blade o’ corn in the blessed June, and soft as silk:”

“Jem, can you get me the marrow and the brandy, for I can get the cream?”

“Sartin as my name is Jem O’Harry. I’ll bring both the marrow and the brandy to-morrow; for Micheal Flanagan killed a nice pig this very morning, and there’s plenty o’ brandy to be had at the Corner for the like o’ that;” and thrusting his hand into his pocket, he drew forth some small silver pieces, which he exhibited to Madge.

“Come, now, Margy, let me show you how to trim these flower beds, and pull up the weeds; there’s nothing about it like work.”

Margaret was pacified, willing to do anything, if Jem would make her hair grow again, and she bent patiently over the task he had assigned her. But where was the buoyant hope which brightened her dark eye when she left the parsonage two hours before? And where was the resolution, which she had formed as she lingered in the shady lane on

her homeward way, to perform quickly and neatly every unpleasant task which her mistress assigned her, to conquer her sullen temper, that she might be worthy of the kind looks which Mrs. Kempton bestowed upon her?—Poor Madge! is there no angel commissioned to remove from thy path the stones against which thy weak and faltering foot stumbleth?



CHAPTER V.

THE PASTOR'S WIFE.

“A perfect woman, nobly planned.”

“COME, Lucy, sit by this western window, and watch the glorious sunsetting. We left nothing in the city which would equal this. I have often longed to see the sun's last, lingering smile resting upon our own New England hills. But I forget, Lucy, when I say *our*, that you are from the South, and our New England hills can have no peculiar charm for you.”

“Not the charm of early associations, dear Horace; but your presence would make the most barren landscape beautiful for me. And, then, I think the scenery from this western window would be beautiful, even if the light of love did not rest upon it.”

“Lucy, do you think you can be happy in this quiet country town?”

“Certainly, Horace; happy in any place with you, if we can serve our great Master acceptably.”

The pastor seemed hardly satisfied with his young wife's reply. He had taken her a long way from the sunny South, and he watched anxiously lest a shade of pining for loved ones left behind should dim the light of her glad heart. Drawing her a little closer to his side, he said :

"But, Lucy, there must be something chilling in this old parsonage ; or perhaps the elms and willows throw too deep a shade over it. Shall I have them cut down ?"

"Cut down the trees ? No, indeed ! What could put such a thought into your heart ?"

"Nothing but the look of sober thought that rests upon your brow. What has thrown this tinge of sadness over you ?"

"I shall tell you, Horace, though I'm afraid you'll laugh at your silly wife. You know I told you about that neglected-looking child which I saw at Mrs. Hardy's, where I went for milk. She brought it one morning, and I met her in the garden, and tried to draw her out a little in conversation, for I felt a strong interest in her the first time my eyes rested on her face, which has none of the light and buoyant hope of childhood. She seemed so bashful and friendless, that I hoped I might do her some good ; but she only brought the milk once. Mrs. Hardy's Irish gardener has brought it for a week. I went to the door this morning, and asked James if Margaret was sick. 'Niver a bit, your leddyship,' he replied ; 'but Mrs. Hardy has forbidden her to leave the farm for a month. She has angered the owld leddy, and is obliged to pay dearly for it.' I did not dare question the man further, but I'm afraid the poor child is being pun-

ished very severely for her fault. She looks as though she had been long used to harsh treatment."

Mrs. Kempton ceased speaking, but the pastor seemed too busy with his own thoughts to make any reply; and after a few minutes of silence, his wife again addressed him:

"I've been thinking, Horace, that I might do the work very nicely with the help of this little girl. Now don't shake your head so ominously till you've heard my plan. Your salary of five hundred dollars, besides the parsonage and garden, I think, will defray all of our necessary expenses; but you cannot be making any additions to your library, or laying aside anything for a journey, or sickness. If I should dismiss Cynthia, the seventy-five dollars we pay her might be expended in books every year; and then, if Mrs. Hardy would give me this little girl, whom she seems to consider such a burden, we could have the pleasure of instructing her, and seeing her grow up a useful woman."

"You are a noble, generous, and thoughtful woman, Lucy, and your plan seems most excellent; but let me show you some of its impossibilities. In the first place, if Cynthia should be sent away, you would find no time for reading, practising music, &c. Then, in a country village, you will be expected to visit a great deal, not only the sick and unfortunate, but you must take your sewing and run in sociably at the deacon's, drink tea with the doctor's wife, and go shopping with the lawyer's lady. There will be sewing circles, prayer meetings, and maternal associations, and my wife must be president and directress of the whole, and will need a pair of strong Irish hands in the

kitchen. The Rev. Mr. Kempton may neglect his sermon sometimes during this warm summer, and Saturday afternoon will find the last 'head' only roughly drawn out in pencil, while he receives an unexpected call to attend a funeral eight or ten miles from the village. His Reverend lady must copy neatly the last head, and add a few earnest appeals, which she cannot do, if her hands must be employed in finishing the week's ironing and baking. Be patient a minute longer, my dear, for I see you have an answer ready for me. Now, about taking this little bound girl, Margaret: I dare say Mrs. Hardy spoke as though she would gladly be rid of her; but she is a money-getting, miserly woman, I'm told, and the child's services are already of considerable importance, and every year but makes them more so. Moreover, should the new minister's wife manifest much interest in the handmaiden of one of her parishioners, she might be accused of mean and selfish motives; and a more trifling thing than this has seriously affected many a pastor's influence. Deacon Simpson told me, a few days ago, that Mrs. Hardy was a strong-minded, overbearing woman, loved by very few, but feared by everybody on account of her babbling tongue. He says many of the villagers are dissatisfied with her treatment of the bound girl; but what is everybody's business is nobody's, and therefore no one interferes. Have I convinced you, Lucy, that your plan is impracticable?"

"I'm afraid it is. What a blundering pastor's wife I should make, if I didn't have your strong judgment and clear head to direct me. But, Horace, from the little I have been able to gather, it seems to me this child's bondage is nearly

or quite as unjust as our Southern domestic slavery. Why are New Englanders so bitter against us, when they have beneath their own roofs an evil of nearly the same magnitude?"

"You forget, dear Lucy, that this is a single instance, although there may be others of equal or greater severity; but New England provides very generously for her poor. When an individual takes an orphan or pauper from the poor-house, he comes under obligation to give the child suitable food and clothing, and the benefit of the public schools for at least three months of the year. Very often the contract is broken, as in Mrs. Hardy's case, but 'tis no fault of the laws. Had little Margaret any friends, they might complain, and her mistress would be subjected to heavy fines. Then again, Lucy, this bondage is not perpetual, like Southern slavery, for at eighteen Margaret will be her own mistress, free to pursue any avocation she may choose."

"Yes, unfitted for anything but a household drudge, and she must be pushed about through life from family to family. I really can see but little about such a lot better than perpetual slavery. It may be owing to the obtuseness of my intellect, or the prejudices of early education."

"Lucy, this slavery is not entailed upon generations yet unborn; and if one mistress is disagreeable or oppressive to Margaret, she may seek another at pleasure, and all the while she is animated by the blessed hope of bettering her condition. I have known bound children to be carefully trained by the families who took them in charge, and treated with great kindness and lenity. But, Lucy, we will not discuss

the question further. It is very evident that Margaret is unkindly and unjustly treated, and we will seek every opportunity to scatter flowers along her rough pathway, and in some way, also, try to soften the flinty heart of her mistress. But we must work gently, and in no way let Mrs. Hardy suspect at present that the neglected soil of her heart is becoming mellowed by the dews of Christian charity."



CHAPTER VI.

TOIL MADE PLEASANT.

"Full oft the tares obstruct our way ;
 Full oft we feel the thorn ;
 Our hearts grow faint—we weep, we pray,
 Then hope is newly born."

MARGARET was disappointed, and yet not very much surprised, on the morning after her first visit to Mrs. Kempton's, to learn that she was not going there again at present. She had returned from her morning walk to the back pasture, and was eating her cold and scanty breakfast in the kitchen, when Mrs. Hardy addressed her :

"James has carried the milk to the parsonage, and you can go directly to the garden, where he will show you how to transplant the strawberries. I'll not insult anybody, especially my minister's wife, by sending an untidy, awkward almshouse beggar to loiter around her premises for an hour or more. You tear out your dresses so quick, that I can't afford

to keep you decent to appear in the street. This gown will do very well to work in with Jem, and you are fit for nothing else. You are not to go from the farm for a month."

An earnest, pleading look was Margaret's only reply. The look was unheeded, and angry, rebellious thoughts struggled in her heart for utterance, but, choking them back, she passed out to her work.

"Sullen as ever," muttered Mrs. Hardy; "but I reckon this summer's out-door work will humble her pride a little;" and the strong woman, conscious that no one dared advocate the cause of her little bondmaid, went on moulding her golden balls of butter, and calculating the products of her dairy for one week. "If this year is a fruitful one," she mused, "the products of my farm and garden will be at least five hundred dollars. I shall put it in the Merchants' Bank, for I would rather be sure of a small percentage than invest my money in a speculation, which might fail, and swallow up my capital." And while she is proudly calculating how soon she may reach the pinnacle of earthly happiness, which her sordid soul covets, while she is deliberately closing up every channel of her heart against the gentle entreaties of charity, does she think her gold will buy a passport into heaven? Has she forgotten what a strong tide of happiness one generous deed might bring to her heart?

"Good morn'g, and the bish o' luck to ye, my swate honey!" called out Jem, as Margaret slowly and tearfully entered the garden. "I have brought ye the brandy and marrow, and Bridget—kind sowl!—put them baith in this bottle with the crame, well shuck together. She says 'twas a

lucky thought o' mine, and ye've only to try it, and in a month or so your hair will be long and silken as meadow grass. Bless us! salt water on your cheeks, when the sun shines so bright, and the birds sing so swate? Has the owld woman been bating you agin, Margy, darlint?"

"Oh, no! I never cry for whippings, Jem; but she says I'm to work in the garden a whole month, without leaving the farm. I shouldn't mind it, if I could carry Mrs. Kemp-ton the milk, for there's no one else I want to see."

"Well, niver mind it, honey; it's an ill wind that blows nobody any good. I'll see that you are not overworked out here, and the swate air of this garden will be better for the pace of your sowl, and the hilt of your body, than the owld woman's hot kitchen and eternal scolding. Chare up, Margy; we'll have fine times out here, and the owld heretic will only be spitin' herself."

Margaret loved gardening—loved almost anything that kept her out in the open fields. Jem O'Harry was kind and talkative. He made her work as light as possible, taking upon himself all the heavy jobs which Mrs. Hardy had given her to do; and before the end of her first week's gardening, she had become more than reconciled to her new mode of living. If she could only have felt the influence of Mrs. Kempton's warm, sunny smile, for one minute each morning, she would have thought herself almost a happy child.

Nearly two weeks of her confinement to the farm had passed, and June, with its wealth of roses, was gladdening the earth. Margaret had seen her morning's charge most contentedly cropping the clover blossoms in the back pasture,

which skirted a beautiful little pond, where she often lingered to pick curiously-shaped pebbles from the smooth, sandy shore, or gather water lilies, which floated on their long stems so near that she could reach them by venturing out upon the fallen trunk of a pine tree, whose topmost branches extended several yards from the shore. She turned to walk back by the narrow lane to her daily toil, when her name, pronounced in the clear, musical tones which she so longed to hear, arrested her footsteps. She looked around, and saw Mrs. Kempton approaching her from the little sandy beach by the pond, and beckoning her to wait.

Margaret's first impulse, when she remembered the brown tinge which constant exposure to the sun had given her sallow complexion, the torn and untidy gown which she had worn in her gardening, was to run and hide in the tangled bushes of the hedge; but while she was hesitating, the voice called again :

“Margaret, I'm glad to see you. I did not know I was on Mrs. Hardy's grounds.”

What a thrill of pleasure did the kindly pressure of that hand, which again rested on her head, send through Margaret's soul !

“I've taken a long walk this morning, but the air is so sweet, and everything so beautiful, that I couldn't help lingering by this pond. It is lucky I did, for now I have your company home. But, Margaret, you seem hardly glad to see me ; I thought we were friends.”

A quick, impulsive caress of the hand, which Mrs. Kempton had withdrawn from Margaret's head, was her only reply ;

but the lady saw that her little frame was violently shaking with emotion, which she vainly tried to suppress; and with woman's true and delicate instinct, she tried to interest Margaret in subjects foreign from the one which made her so wretched. She told her of the fair and sunny home she had left in the South, the many-colored and fragrant flowers which were almost always in blossom, and the little sister, who had wept so passionately when she left her beautiful home to find a new one in the brown old parsonage in Clyde.

Margaret soon forgot her own sorrows, and was quite surprised at the freedom with which she could converse with Mrs. Kempton. She showed her where the May flowers blossomed earliest; the clumps of old oaks and chestnuts where she gathered her nuts, and the hedge where the mulberry and wild rose were just beginning to put forth their delicate buds.

When they reached the orchard, which lay just below the garden, Margaret paused, and pointing to a path across the fields, said: "This path leads directly to the parsonage, and 'tis a great deal nearer than to go by the street."

"Thank you for telling me, Margaret; and don't be surprised if you often meet me here, when the weather is fine. I sometimes like company when I walk, and Mr. Kempton studies in the morning, so I shall depend upon you. But I thought you were going to bring my milk. Why did you disappoint me?"

"Oh! I did want to bring it, but Mrs. Hardy thought I loitered around your house, and she says I'm not fit to be seen by decent folks. I wear out my gowns so fast, that I cannot have another for a long time."

"What are you doing now?"

"I'm working in the garden and on the farm for a punishment, and that is what keeps my gown so torn and dirty."

Mrs. Kempton saw, by the deep blush on the child's face, and the painful working of her features, that pride was having a sharp contest with truth; but wishing to test her courage a little further, she asked:

"Will my little girl tell me why she is punished?"

Margaret hesitated a moment, but glancing up at the clear, truthful eyes that were bent upon her, and seeing nothing but kindness and encouragement, she answered:

"Because I screamed so loud, and struggled, and called Mrs. Hardy names when she cut off my hair."

Madge was weeping violently, but the lady saw that her tears were not occasioned by anger, only grief and shame because her misfortune must be exposed; and, though unwilling to probe the wound any deeper, she rightly judged that a few more questions, truthfully answered, would prove a healing balm, and she continued:

"Why did Mrs. Hardy cut off your hair?"

"I didn't keep it nice, but let it hang over my shoulders."

"And Mrs. Hardy, being a very tidy woman, had grown tired of seeing your long, uncombed curls," added Mrs. Kempton. "Well, Margaret, I think you are quite old enough to be taking a little care of your personal appearance, and I think I can aid you a little. Does Mrs. Hardy gather strawberries from the back pasture where we've been this morning, for the market?"

"Oh! no, ma'am; she has a large bed of English strawberries that we pick for the market."

“Do you think you can rise early enough every morning to pick me a quart before Mrs. Hardy will want you, and send them by James, when he brings the milk?”

“Yes, indeed; I could do anything in the world to please you, Mrs. Kempton.”

“Well, Margaret, when you have sent me ten quarts, I will give you a pretty calico gown; or, at least, I will give you the cloth, and teach you to make it.”

Margaret made no reply, but her childish gush of tears assured the lady that she was deeply grateful. Somebody has said, that “wet eyes are better critics than cold words.” May we not also add, that tears are the heart’s most eloquent language?

CHAPTER VII.

THE NEW GOWN.

“Ah! well for us all some sweet hope lies,
 Deeply buried from human eyes,
 And in the hereafter angels may
 Roll the stone from its grave away.”

THERE was no need now for the old robin in the apple tree by Margaret’s window to pour forth a loud and persuasive song before the little girl would throw open her sash to greet him; no need for Mrs. Hardy’s “Quick, Madge, quick! or I’ll be up there;” for Margaret’s light foot had brushed the beady dew from the long meadow grass a full half hour before her bustling mistress had arisen; and the first golden

rays of the sun kissed her brown cheek as she stooped to gather the red, luscious berries from their dewy bed.

"Something has bewitched the child," muttered Mrs. Hardy to Jem, when he told her how industriously she worked, and that he believed her little hands were made on purpose to pull up weeds, cut the delicate rosebuds and geraniums, and gather strawberries for the market man, who drove daily to the city. "Something has bewitched the child," muttered Mrs. Hardy in reply, "for she is up as soon as the day dawns, strolling off somewhere in the woods or pasture; but I care nothing about her morning tramps, if she only does all the work I lay 'out for her."

"Shure, indade, the swate honey is bewitched," muttered Jem to himself, as he bustled about his daily toil, "and Jem O'Harry's the man what's afther knowin' what has bewitched the child; pleasant words, and light work in this blessed air, are enough to take a cartload of grief from an older heart than hers. But here comes the bright sunbeam. What have you there, Margy?" he asked, as the child approached, cautiously hiding a bundle beneath her apron.

"Look here, Jem," said Madge, as she drew him behind a grape trellis, which shielded them from the kitchen windows, and disclosed her small parcel. "Mrs. Kempton gave me this beautiful calico for the strawberries which you have carried her. Aren't it a beauty, Jem?"

"Fit for a queen, Margy, dear; and may the holy Virgin bless the swate leddy for her kind thought of a mitherless orphan."

"But the gown isn't all, Jem. Look at this nice ging-

ham apron, which will cover me nearly all over, and this little bag, with scissors, thimble, needles and thread; these are all mine. She says they are to pay for the flowers I have sent with the strawberries; but flowers aren't worth anything. Now, Jem, you must give me a stint, and see how fast I'll work, for I want to gain time to make the skirt of my gown this week, and Mrs. Kempton is going to make the waist and sleeves, if I'll send her some wild flowers every morning for Mr. Kempton's study. Maurice comes home next week, you know, and my new gown must be finished before he comes. Oh! if I only had a pair of shoes!" she added, thrusting out her torn and slipshod shoe, and gazing sorrowfully at its untidy aspect. "Don't you think Jem, Mrs. Hardy will give me a pair, if you tell her how well I've worked in the garden?"

"May be so, honey; at any rate, I'll storm her owld withered heart for ye. But now we must clare away them vile weeds from the ingyuns, and loosen the airth round the parsnips afore the sun gets bilin' hot, so that we can work in the shade when 'tis scorchingest."

Margaret's bundle was quickly hidden in the hollow trunk of an old tree, which was the deposit of all her treasures, and she was again patiently bending over the flowers and vegetables.

The magic influence of love had so sweetened the toil which her stern mistress had intended should be only a task and punishment, that it had grown to be a pleasure to the child, and she would have regarded it a severe misfortune to be recalled to the kitchen. The discipline of the last few weeks

had wrought a great change in Margaret. A deeper and more hopeful light beamed in her dark eyes, which were now rarely clouded with ill temper. She had learned to make her scanty clothing as neat and tidy as possible; and the short, thick locks of hair which curled around her broad forehead, were neatly kept. In short, she had been taught self-respect and self-reliance, and the jarring, discordant tones of her mistress were scarcely heeded. The day that placed in her hands a new gown, the product of her own industry, saw registered upon the most secret tablet of her heart the firm and unwavering resolve to do something to free herself from bondage so harsh and oppressive, which she knew was crushing out the best energies of her nature. *How* she was going to accomplish this, was a question which she hardly dared ask herself, so dim and misty did the great future look, as she gazed through its shadowy portals.

But one thing Margaret dared attempt, and she felt sure of accomplishing her purpose. There was a great abundance of wild fruit growing upon Mrs. Hardy's farm. Strawberries, blueberries, and blackberries grew luxuriantly upon its hedges, and in the back pasture. These she would gather, and get the market man to take them for her to the city; and she trusted the golden harvest gathered from the sale would enable her to obtain clothing sufficiently respectable to appear in at church.

Mrs. Hardy considered a large, uncouth black bonnet, which she had worn herself for three years after Robert died, quite good enough for an almshouse beggar; and the effect of this, combined with a faded shawl, which had been an

heirloom in the family for many years, produced such a shout of merriment, when Margaret appeared, from the rabble of village boys who always gathered around the steps of the old meetinghouse, that the timid, sensitive child preferred staying at home to braving their cruel ridicule.

Her stubbornness in this, Mrs. Hardy said, "was only another proof of her wicked and depraved nature. For her part, she didn't know who could be blamed, if the child grew up a perfect dunce, for it was more than she could do to drive her to school or church; and as for instructing the lazy thing at home, she'd no time to throw away upon her." Her eloquent account of the child's obstinacy was usually closed with the devout wish, that "if anybody has any doubts respecting the doctrine of *total* depravity, I only wish they would take Madge in hand."

Jem O'Harry did not fail to describe Margaret's diligence, when Mrs. Hardy called him in, Saturday evening, to pay him for his week's labor. He held the bright silver in his hard, rough palm, and with one hand nervously twirled his ragged straw hat, without making any movement to depart.

"What is the matter, James?" asked his mistress. "If you aren't satisfied with the price I pay, you must leave, for I can't afford to pay more; but I should be sorry to lose so good a hand in the middle of the season."

"I wasn't thinking of myself, mem; for Bridget is a great worker, and we are laying aside something for a rainy day, seeing as we niver taste of a drap o' the creether; but I was thinking—no offence to you, mem—that I would jist spake a word to ye about the little gal. She's mightily ashamed of

her shoes ; an' shure, mem, the holes are big enough to let in stones as large as robins' eggs. I thought ye might be afther giving her a new pair, considering how faithful she's been in the garden for a month or so."

"Can't afford it, James ; she's torn out her shoes in her morning tramps, and now she may go barefoot, for all of me. When I gave them to her last March, I told her they must last till fall ; and she should have taken care of them."

A dark, threatening cloud rested on the woman's face, and, as she ceased speaking, she opened the door for her gardener to pass out.

Poor Jem's kind heart was swelling with emotion, which he did not dare clothe with language. Further pleading for Madge, his quick perceptions told him, would neither benefit the child nor himself ; but reserving a bright silver dollar in his hand, when its brothers dropped down in his capacious pocket, he walked round by the garden, where he was sure Madge would meet him, to learn the effect of his eloquence upon Mrs. Hardy.

"Her heart is like a millstone, Margy, dear, and I believe she'd tear out her own finger nails, if they'd sell for a penny—the stingy owld heathen ! But I couldn't ontrate the Holy Virgin to bless Bridget, and me, and the childers, if I should go home with that sorrowful look still on your face ; 'twould haunt me like old Blarney's ghost, that makes faces at him over the footboard ; so here's a dollar for the shoes, Margy, and Jem O'Harry'll never be the poorer for it."

"Oh ! Jem, how good you are ! But I dare not take your dollar. I'll wait till I can pick berries enough to buy

them. Do you think Mr. Parsons will take them along in his wagon, and sell them for me?"

"Take them? Indade, darlint, he'll be glad to give ye a lift. But if ye won't take poor Jem's dollar as a gift, let him lind it to ye, and wait till ye 'arn it for his pay."

Margaret hesitated a moment, but a peep at her ragged shoe, and the thought of Maurice's return, decided her, and, holding out her hand for the dollar, she said:

"Somehow, I can't help taking it, Jem, you're so good; but I'll be sure to pay it back."

"I know it, darlint, I know it; but niver a bit do I care if ye don't;" and the generous son of Erin shambled off through the gathering twilight, with tears on his sunbrowned face, but an angel guest in his heart.



CHAPTER VIII.

THE SON'S RETURN.

"Oh! Thou, who lookest
Upon my brimming heart this tranquil eve,
Knowest its fulness as Thon dost the dew,
Sent to the hidden violet by Thee."

THE little parlor of Mrs. Hardy's cottage was rarely opened. Visitors seldom came to the farm; and the careful housewife considered her tidy kitchen quite good enough for any neighbor to sit in, who chanced to call. No wonder, then, that children stared, as they loitered home from

school one summer afternoon, to see the blinds thrown open, and the climbing roses peeping in at the old-fashioned furniture. One bright sunbeam, more daring than his fellows, frisked and coquetted with the prim-looking figures of the carpet. But Maurice had returned, and even the sunlight rejoiced in his coming.

Poor Madge, from her covert, behind the hedge, had caught a glimpse of his pleasant face when he alighted from the coach, and redoubled her efforts to finish her work at an earlier hour than usual, that she might array herself in the new gown and shoes, which she had not yet gained courage to exhibit to Mrs. Hardy. She had waited for Maurice's return, knowing that his presence always had a softening influence upon his mother's temper; and she would not like to show her unwillingness for Madge to appear in respectable clothes before him.

"Shure, indade, an' 'tis your own swate self, Margy, dear! I hardly knowed ye, in the new fixin's," exclaimed honest Jem, when Madge presented herself before his admiring eyes, clad in the new gown and apron.

"'Tis nobody else, Jem; but I hardly knew myself, 'tis so long since I've been tidy. If you do not want me to work any more in the garden, I'm going now to the pasture to gather blueberries for myself. I think I can pick enough to-night, and to-morrow, after I've done work, to finish paying for my shoes."

"Bless you, Margy! but don't be 'after working too hard. You've done enough already for one day."

"Picking berries for myself is nothing but play, Jem,"

answered Margaret, and she disappeared with a quick, animated movement, down the narrow lane, hope gleaming in her dark eyes, swelling in her heart, and beckoning her on to a future which, to the child's vision, has changed from a bleak, wintry waste, to a golden-hued, blossom-wreathed land.

"'Tis so comfortable being at home, mother," exclaimed the student, as he drew a chair to the neat and bountiful supper table.

A smile—not a genuine ray of flashing, sparkling pleasure, yet nevertheless a smile—did actually ripple over the stern, cloudy face of the mother, and she looked *almost* tenderly upon her only son.

"I'm glad to see you, Maurice; 'tis nearly a year since you went to Cambridge."

"A year next September, mother. This college life has passed very quickly, and I can hardly realize now that I'm a graduate."

"How soon will you go to Tennessee?"

"In about three months. But I don't want to think of leaving home again, so soon after my return. I believe I have a foolish fondness for this old farm. By the way, mother, where are gipsy Madge and old Ponto? They've usually been very eager to greet me."

"Ponto—poor fellow!—died early in the spring, of old age; I thought I wrote you about it; and Madge is off somewhere in the woods or pasture. She's a strange child, so sullen and obstinate, that I came nigh sending her to the almshouse last spring; but I've kept her at work in the gar-

den through the summer, and she's grown more obedient and industrious."

Mrs. Hardy did not understand the look which rested on her son's face, when she ceased speaking; but as he asked no more questions about the little bondmaid, whom his intercessions had so often saved from punishment, she concluded he had forgotten his boyish whims.

In fact, Maurice was very quietly disposed on this his first night at home, and had no wish to irritate his mother by discussing any topic upon which he knew they would differ; for he had seen at once, by the knitting of her brow and the fading of her smile, when Madge was mentioned, that her feelings had not changed toward the child.

Maurice inherited his father's quiet temperament and love of ease, but his intellect was more active and vigorous, and his sympathies more widely extended. He was a son of whom both parents would have been proud, had Robert lived. Sarah was proud of his fine form, handsome face, and noble bearing; proud that *her* son had brought from old Harvard its first honors, and proud that a professorship in a Southern college had been offered him, when he was only twenty-one. Robert would have been proud of his son's correct deportment, fine scholarship, and honest, manly dignity, and would have rejoiced that an earnest Christian faith had taken deep root in his heart, which promised an abundant harvest of glorious self-sacrifice for the future.

Maurice was genial and social; praised the biscuit, cream, and preserves; told his mother many an amusing incident of college life, and asked her a score of questions about the gar-

den, the neighbors, and the new minister. Then he helped her remove the tea things, and playfully asked for the old apron, in which he used to wash dishes before he went from home.

“So you haven’t forgotten old times, Maurice; but you needn’t mind about the dishes, for Madge will wash them after she drives up the cows. I must go down to the milk cellar now, to prepare the cream for an early churning; and I dare say you’ll like to see what improvements Jem has made in the garden, while I’m busy.”

“Never mind about me, mother; I’m old enough to amuse myself.”

What prompted the young graduate to direct his footsteps toward the little pond which formed the western boundary of his mother’s farm?

Oh! this had been a favorite playground of his early years, and perhaps pleasant memories of a quaint little boat, fishing lines and painted flies, haunted his brain; or perhaps the scholar might pine for a nosegay of the delicate pond lilies, or long once more to see the sunset rays linger lovingly around the pond. Some stray thought of the little maiden whose rights he had often gallantly defended in days gone by, at the risk of incurring his mother’s displeasure, and a half-formed wish of meeting her, might have drawn him here.

And yet a young man, flushed and elated with college honors, even if he had a gentle, sympathizing nature, could hardly be expected to have a thought of his mother’s bondmaid.

But it would be useless speculating upon the probable

motives which drew him to the pond. The golden sunset found him there, and by his side, upon the mossy trunk of the fallen pine, sat poor Madge.

"You haven't told me yet that you are glad to see me, Madge."

"But you know I always am."

"Then why did you run away here, without first coming to speak to me, when I've been gone nearly a year?"

"I wanted to pick these berries before dark."

"Are they for breakfast?"

"No; I'm going to sell them."

"But my mother didn't send you here alone to pick berries for the market?"

"No; she doesn't know that I'm here. I'm picking berries for myself, and Mr. Parsons takes them to the market for me."

"What will you do with the money?"

Now here was a question that Margaret feared to answer. If she told Maurice the whole truth, he might blame his mother, and she had no wish to bring upon him the displeasure which she feared so much; and, then, Maurice might think a bound girl had no right to steal time to earn money for herself. Margaret was silent.

"What will Madge do with the money?" The tones of the young man's voice were gentle and kind, and, as he repeated the question, he removed the calico bonnet which she had drawn over her face.

"I'm paying for my shoes."

"Does not mother furnish you with clothes?"

“Oh! Maurice, you know I always tore out my shoes and gowns quicker than anybody else, and your mother has grown tired of giving me them so often. Now I'm quite old enough to earn them for myself, after I do the work she has laid out for me.”

There was an honest blush of pride upon the child's face when she ceased speaking; and as Maurice turned away with a careless whistle, she concluded that he would soon forget the subject. Taking up her basket of berries, and calling the cows together that were grazing near, she started for home.

Maurice soon overtook her, and, before they reached the garden gate, he had drawn from her, by skilful questionings, the whole of her little history for the last year.

She related very artlessly her acquaintance with Mrs. Kempton, the loss of her hair, her occupations in the garden, and the history of her gown and shoes.

The excitement of talking with one who had cheered her desolate life with a little kindness, caused her to forget her proximity to the house, and, before she could turn, if she had desired it, Mrs. Hardy, followed by Jem with the milk pails, appeared.

Margaret had no choice but to stand and brave the anger which she saw gathering in a dark cloud upon her mistress's brow, when her eye rested on the new frock, worn this evening for the first time; but, although the child's cheek suddenly paled, and her slight form trembled, she had still the pleasant consciousness that an interceding voice would be raised in her behalf.

Mrs. Hardy's flashing gray eyes rested for a moment on

Margaret's shrinking form, and at once taking her emotion for guilt, she stepped aside, and broke a stout apple twig from a young tree, and, pointing with it to the dress and shoes, asked, in a hoarse, husky voice :

“Where did you steal these, thief, beggar?”

A blush of angry resentment rushed to Margaret's face ; but, raising her dark eyes to Mrs. Hardy's, she only said : “I bought them.”

“Bought them ! You know better than to tell me such a lie. See if this will bring the truth out of you,” and sharp, heavy blows fell in quick succession upon the child's neck and shoulders.

Maurice sprang forward, and laying his hand upon the woman's arm, exclaimed :

“Wait a moment, mother, till Madge can explain.”

“Explain ! Yes, I dare say the little thief has patched up some likely lie. Out with it, child !”

But Margaret had sunk down upon the grass, and, with her face buried in both hands, answered only by low, choking sobs.

“What do you know of this matter, James ?” demanded Maurice, turning abruptly to the gardener, who had made no movement toward the milking yard.

“Jist this, plaze yer honor : a month since or thereabout Margy met me right airly one morning, jist at this very gate, as I was taking the milk to Mrs. Kempton, and she says, ‘Look here, Jem ; I've picked these strawberries and posies for the swate leddy at the parsonage, and you're to take them along with the milk.’ How should I know, may it plaze yer

honor, that my mistress wasn't afther sindin' them herself? And ivery morning, for two or thra weeks, she met me at the same place, with her little basket and bright smile; and then, a week ago—I'm thinkin' 'twas jist a week this blessed mornin'—she showed me this nice caliker, and said the leddy sint it for the berries. An' shure, this is all I'm afther knowin', yer honor."

"Tell about the shoes, Jem." Margaret's voice was choked and stifed with sobs, and her head was not raised from its pillow of grass.

"Indade, an' I will. I came nigh forgettin' 'em ontirely. Ye may be afther rememberin', mem, that I spake to ye last pay-day about the gal's ragged shoes, and how she was sot upon a new pair; so I lint her a dollar of my own airnings, and she's e'enamost paid it already, by picking berries afther her stint is done. She's the quickest-motioned crather that iver I laid eyes on."

"Quick enough, when she's stealing time to work for herself, I dare say," muttered Mrs. Hardy.

"An' shure, mem, beggin' yer pardon for my bowldness in sayin' the same, she's done all the work ye've laid out for her;" and James gathered up his pails, and shuffled off to the milking yard.

Mrs. Hardy could not doubt the truth of Jem's simple story; but, ashamed to show anything like a softened or relenting spirit before the child whom she had wronged, she said, in the usual harsh tones with which she addressed her:

"Get up, Madge, and go to your room. I'm going over to see Mrs. Kempton, and if I find you've told me a lie, I

shall keep you in the attic a whole week on bread and water."

Madge rose, and, without removing her apron from her face, walked quickly toward the house, and Mrs. Hardy proceeded toward the milking yard.

Maurice hesitated for a moment which to follow; but concluding that Madge had better be left alone until her feelings of mortification and grief had subsided, and that any act of sympathy on his part now, before his mother's anger had given way, would only increase her severity, he, too, went to the milking yard.

Poor Madge! The little rill of happiness which has been flowing gently into her heart for the last month, has been checked, and turned from its course by a rude hand; and the dark shadows which a deepening summer twilight throw upon her attic walls, are light and brilliant when compared with the heavy cloud which folds itself around her young spirit.

Yet, alone in this little room, where she has spent so many tearful hours, almost crushed by the mingled feelings of anger at her unjust punishment, and grief and shame that any one should think her guilty of deception, she still sees a faint glimmer of that hope which has buoyed her up for the last month, and, 'mid tears and darkness, registers anew upon her heart the resolve to free herself from bondage so harsh and oppressive.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DAWNING GLIMMERS.

"Happy is your grace
That can translate the stubbornness of fortune
Into so quiet and so sweet a style."

It would be needless to say that Mrs. Hardy left the parsonage parlor apparently much softened toward her bound girl. She was altogether too crafty and cunning to show the depth of her ill feelings before Mr. and Mrs. Kempton; neither did she wish to differ with Maurice during his short stay at home; but her proud spirit rebelled against the delicate manner in which Mrs. Kempton had assisted poor Madge. What right had the new pastor's wife to meddle with her family affairs? None at all, as she would quickly find out. The withdrawal of her yearly subscription of ten dollars should be the first rebuke; and then, a few dark hints cautiously dropped where Mrs. Thorn and Miss Allen would be sure to pick them up, and which, she knew, fostered by their fertile imaginations, would soon assume a gigantic size—these are the weapons with which the vindictive woman will stoop to seek revenge.

Madge was quite too happy, when Mrs. Hardy condescended to visit her little attic, on the morning after her visit to Mrs. Kempton, telling her that she was satisfied with her way of obtaining the frock and shoes, and, while she continued diligent and faithful, she might spend her leisure in

earning something for herself. Madge was quite too happy with this permission, and she had been too long accustomed to Mrs. Hardy's harsh, stern ways, to notice the look of increased bitterness and dislike with which the cold, proud woman uttered these words.

The grateful child had for a moment a fanciful idea of expressing her emotion by a caress, or at least by giving utterance to some words of gratitude, which struggled in her heart; but Mrs. Hardy had never encouraged her to show any affection, and something in her manner, this morning, forbade any unusual demonstrations; so poor Madge, with a timid "Thank you," followed her mistress down the narrow flight of stairs, silently swallowed her simple breakfast of bread and milk, and went out to her daily toil.

Margaret was not surprised to find Maurice at the bottom of the lane, sitting upon the fallen trunk of a tree, and apparently absorbed in a book; for it was an old custom of his, when at home in vacation time, to make a study of the shady nooks about the farm; and she was not sorry that he closed his book when she approached, and walked along by her side to the back pasture.

True, her brown face and neck were dyed for a moment with "eloquent blood," when her eye first met his, for she remembered that he had witnessed the whipping in the garden the evening previous; but his kind manner and pleasant "Good morning" assured her that one person, at least, thought her innocent. Half of her wretchedness on the last evening was caused by the fear that Maurice would think her guilty; for Madge had the same instinctive desire to appear

truthful and honest in the eyes of one whose good opinion she valued, that older and more experienced persons have.

Maurice made no allusion to the previous evening, but asked a score of questions about the farm, garden, &c., and delicately managed to keep her thoughts upon things in which she had a pleasant interest. Poor Madge had few pleasures, and the memory of this walk to and from the pasture by the side of Maurice, would be laid away in the sunniest spot of her heart. It seemed a pity that this pleasant memory should be so companionless, for childhood should gather a large stock with which to refresh the winter of life.

Maurice had noted the animated glow of pleasure which had made the child's brown face and common features look almost beautiful during the walk; and he saw the light fade from her eye, and the glow from her cheek, when they neared the garden gate.

“Do you like working in the garden, Madge?”

“Yes.”

“And Jem O'Harry is kind to you?”

“Very kind.”

The young man's hand was upon the gate, but he seemed in no hurry to allow his little companion to pass through. He stood for some minutes looking intently at the grave and sunbrowned maiden before him, and then continued his queries:

“You never go to school, Madge?”

“No.”

“But you would like to learn; you are fond of books?”

"I like to read when your mother will allow me to, or when I can find a book, and hide away from work."

"How many hours do you work in the garden?"

"If I'm very quick, I can almost always finish my stint by four o'clock in the afternoon."

Again Maurice was silent, and so wrapped in thought, that he seemed unconscious of detaining Madge, until she attempted to open the gate against which he leaned.

"Stop a minute, Madge; I'm going to ask mother's permission to help you in the garden, so that you can gain time to study with me in the afternoon, if you will like it."

The tear-filled eyes and quivering lips of the child were her only reply; but the young man seemed well pleased with the answer, and allowed her to pass.

Poor Madge! Her hopeful heart sees the bridge across the dark gulf which separates her from the rest of humanity, and she almost presses with her eager, trembling foot, the rainbow-hued portal.



CHAPTER X.

WHAT PEOPLE SAID.

"Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things."

"A wholesome tongue is a tree of life; but perverseness therein is a breach in the spirit."

"Is it possible!" exclaimed Mrs. Thorn.

"True as gospel," answered Miss Allen. "I never liked her from the beginning. It was an unheard-of piece of folly,

for our pastor, who must be thirty years old, to marry a boarding-school Miss, who doesn't look a day more than eighteen. And a slaveholder's daughter, too! As I was saying to Deacon Simpson yesterday, she had better show her philanthropy by going South, and teaching her father's negroes, and not trouble her head about Mrs. Hardy's Madge."

"Do tell me what she's done; I haven't heard a word about it."

"You don't say so! Well, the story came to me quite directly from Mrs. Fairfax, who has always been a friend of the Hardys. It seems that Mrs. Kempton took a great fancy to the child, who carried her milk, and encouraged her to steal time from Mrs. Hardy, and pick strawberries and flowers for her; and then she bought her a calico frock to pay for them. She has been seen to meet Madge frequently at the bottom of the lane, and walk with her to the pasture. In my opinion, she'd much better be doing her own work, than tramping through the dewy grass and bushes. And besides, people say she's been teaching Madge grammar and arithmetic, and I don't know how many fine things."

"How does the child manage to get the time? Sarah Hardy has no drones about her, and she has generally kept Madge running from sunrise till sunset."

"Oh! Madge had grown so pouty and disagreeable, that Mrs. Hardy wouldn't have her in the kitchen, and kept her weeding the garden, and preparing flowers and vegetables for market; but the sly little thing got on the right side of the gardener, and he helped her. I've heard say that Mrs. Kempton wanted to bring her black waiting maid North;

but Horace Kempton knew better than to allow that, and I dare say she thinks that Madge is brown enough to make a genteel servant, and, by skilful managing, hopes to get her away from Mrs. Hardy."

"It will take an older head than Mrs. Kempton's to get the better of Sarah Hardy; but I'm really glad that somebody is trying to teach poor Madge. It has always seemed to me a great pity for her to grow up so ignorant and uncared for; but I never dared say anything to Sarah about it, for she cannot endure any interference. If Robert had lived, the child would have been treated very differently."

Mrs. Thorn had some generous and womanly traits of character, but many a noble instinct was stifled for want of moral courage. And then, alas! she loved to talk. Not that she ever intended to harm her neighbors, by retailing every bit of gossip which floated to her ears; but it was so very delightful to be agreeable. Her fancy, too, would trick out and furbish up a commonplace affair, making it almost as entertaining as railroad accident, lover's quarrel, or the slightly discordant tones that echo in our Senate chambers. She didn't mean, when she garnished up Miss Allen's story, adding several fancy touches and embellishments of her own, and told it to the members of the sewing circle before Mrs. Kempton arrived—she didn't mean to injure the quiet little woman, who had striven so modestly to uproot the weeds in her new field of labor, and scatter, instead, the seeds of kindness, charity, and love.

Good Deacon Simpson's wife heard Mrs. Thorn's version of the story at the sewing circle, and listened gravely to the

idle, curious remarks of a few prating women, and then she begged the privilege of speaking :

“Because she happened to know more of Mrs. Kempton than many of the parish did,” she added, as if an apology were necessary for throwing cold water on the fire which was beginning to crackle and glimmer so merrily. “She’s been brought up very tenderly, and one would know, just to look at her, that she wasn’t strong enough to do much hard work. I don’t believe she’s ever thought of getting Madge for a servant, but her benevolence has prompted her to try and make something of the neglected child. Now, as to her idling away her time, I know she visits Mary Tilden two or three times a week, and she carries a bowl of gruel every day to Mrs. Flanagan’s sick child. She has made over dresses of her own for three of poor Mrs. Baker’s little girls, and every day she’s to be seen in the houses of the poor and sick. Her pretty furniture, and the piano that you seem to think so unnecessary, were the gifts of her father, who, I’m told, is able to give his daughter presents. Do be careful, ladies, how you misjudge our pastor’s wife, and throw stumbling-blocks in the way of her usefulness.”

Mrs. Simpson ceased speaking, and silence reigned for the space of——well, not many minutes, when Miss Allen, who sat by the window, exclaimed :

“La! here comes the model lady herself. How extravagant to wear that blue silk gown so common! None of us can afford to dress so.”

Pretty, modest Mrs. Kempton entered the room with a

graceful but timid air, smilingly recognizing all, and shaking hands with those who sat near the entrance.

She selected a piece of work from the basket, and drawing a chair up by the side of an old lady somewhat hard of hearing, asked after her rheumatic husband, and how her daughter's children were getting over the measles.

It was well for Lucy Kempton that her gentle heart had no suspicion of the envious, unkind feelings which a few harbored against her, else she might not have gone on so heroically in the performance of right.

Many natures need something more than the approval of conscience to buoy them up 'mid the stern duties of life, and to such the commendation of friends is a sweet inspiration.



CHAPTER XI.

TEACHER AND PUPIL.

"She's apt to learn, and thankful for good turns."

"I HAVE your consent, mother?"

"You can do as you like, Maurice, for I've no wish to be at variance with you during your short stay at home; but I would advise you not to fill the child's head with any hopes that can never be realized."

"Do not the indentures binding Madge to you until she is eighteen require you to give her a good common school education?"

“But if she’s too obstinate to go to school, and too idle to study, what am I to do? I’ve had trouble enough with the child, and can scarcely endure her in my sight; still, if you wish to try teaching her, I’ve no objection; only don’t let her think she can ever be anything more than a servant, if she does learn a little grammar and arithmetic.”

“Why not, mother? I think I’ve heard you say that Kate Foster was well brought up, and well educated; and I see no reason why her child, if some one will lend a helping hand, may not break through the shackles of poverty, and become a useful and honored woman.”

“I’ve told you many a time, Maurice, that the child is all Foster. She inherits all of her father’s idle, vicious ways. If I’d ever discovered in her any likeness to Kate, I should have tried harder to make something of her; and, mark my words, you’ll only get your trouble for your pains, if you attempt to teach her.”

“Still, mother, you give me permission to try?”

“Certainly, if you wish; but not because I find my heart drawn one whit more tenderly toward the child. ’Tis only to please you, that I grant her this indulgence; and you’ll soon be tired of the sullen, lazy thing.”

Sarah Hardy had never tried the effect of love and kindness upon the bound girl. She did not know how joyfully a bright light would kindle in her dark eye, when words of common kindly interest were addressed to her, nor how quick and buoyant her step, when beckoned onward by the hand of love. She had never folded her arms around the little orphan, and drawn her to her bosom with a gentle, motherly

caress; never cheered her with words of praise and encouragement, when her childish tasks were well done; but the invariable "Quick, Madge, quick!" hurried her little feet from one task to another, during the years when her pliant nature should have been nourished with the dews of tenderness.

Margaret had quick perceptions, and more than ordinary perseverance. When cheered and encouraged by Maurice, her young spirit never faltered, never gave up, till she had overcome all obstacles. The young man found that his pupil, without aid, had gathered a very commendable stock of knowledge in the odd bits of time which she had stolen away from work. He was delighted and astonished at the rapid progress which she made during the three months of his vacation, when his mother allowed her to spend three or four hours each day in his study. And poor Madge—oh! she was garnering a rich store of fragrance and happiness for the cold, wintry hours which must follow.

"Madge, the study hour has passed, and I suppose 'tis time for you to go for the cows. I will meet you in the lane, and walk to the pasture with you." Maurice held the door of his room ajar for his little pupil to pass, with as much deference as if she had been his equal in social position.

He had frequently taken this walk with Madge in the early morning and lingering summer twilight in years gone by; but never so often as this summer, although he still continued his old custom of meeting her in the lane or pasture. He knew this walk was eagerly looked forward to by Madge; and, had he started with her from the kitchen, his mother

would soon have found some excuse for depriving Madge of the pleasure of walking with him.

"Madge," said Maurice, when he joined his pupil in the lane, "there will be plenty of time to take the cows to the milking yard, if we walk very slowly to-night, and I have a great many things to say."

Madge at once slackened her pace, and walked slowly by the side of her friend. There was a happy, grateful smile upon her face, as she glanced timidly up, for she supposed Maurice was going to continue the afternoon's lesson in his pleasant conversational way; but his grave and sober look puzzled her. Although Maurice had so much to say, he seemed in no haste to begin; and Madge rarely addressed him first, so that some little distance was walked in silence.

"I'm thinking, Madge," said the young man, after a little hesitation, "that it will not do so grave and sensible a little girl as yourself any harm, if I talk very plainly—so plainly that some girls would feel quite vexed at a part of what I shall say, and quite proud and flattered at the rest. But you are not like other girls, for, though only a child in years—you are not yet twelve, Madge?"

"Almost thirteen."

"Ah! time flies so quickly, and you are so small. Well, as I was going to say, you've had a great many sad experiences for one so young; and I dare say so much contact with harsh persons has soured and embittered your temper. Now, as you've no relatives to be interested for you, and no beauty to attract, you should be particularly anxious to cultivate an amiable and obliging disposition, and make the most

of the faculties which God has given you. Instead of the beauty which your sex prize so highly, He has given you very quick perceptions, and you have manifested great perseverance in overcoming obstacles. Have you ever thought what you will do when you are eighteen, Madge ? ”

“ I have cared so little about living, that I’ve hardly thought anything about the future, until this summer, and now I cannot see my way clearly ; but I don’t want to be a kitchen servant. Do you think it possible for me to be anything else, Maurice ? ”

“ Certainly, Madge ; but you must never grow weary of patient, persevering effort ; for I do not know of any one but Mrs. Kempton and myself who has any interest in you, or will aid you in rising above your present position. When I am gone, Mrs. Kempton will help you over the hard places you may find in your studies, and at all times she will be able to advise you much better than I can. You have one Friend more potent and willing to aid you than either Mrs. Kempton or myself. Promise me, Madge, that you will go to our merciful Father daily for strength, and earnestly entreat Him to make your life pure and blameless.”

Poor Madge ! Her faltering tongue and quivering lips could not fashion the promise into words ; but her companion seemed quite satisfied, for he took away the little sunbrowned hand that shaded her eyes, and retained it in his own with something near akin to earnest, brotherly tenderness. How often Madge had wished for a brother, and wondered if she did not like Maurice nearly as well. It had often seemed strange, almost cruel, to the child, that she should be left

alone, without the natural claims of kindred upon any one.

“Come, Madge, you must brush away these tears, and let me see the happy light in your eyes, that becomes you so well, once more. Do you know that I start for Tennessee to-morrow?”

“So soon?”

“Yes, Madge; has the time seemed short since I came home?”

Madge seemed to be making a great effort to answer, but sobs came much thicker and faster than words, and for some minutes Maurice allowed her to weep in silence; but they were approaching the yard, and Jem had already secured the cows, whose lazy pace was faster than that of their keepers on this evening, and he knew there would be no time to say anything pleasant or soothing to his companion after his mother appeared with the milk pails; so he drew her very gently aside, where the thick branches of a tree hid them from view.

“Madge, wipe away your tears, and say good-by cheerfully.”

“Oh! Maurice, can't you take me with you? I'm so wretched here when you are away.”

“God knows, Madge, that I would gladly take you with me, or provide you with a happier home, if the thing were possible; but you must endure patiently the troubles and vexations which will surround you. Try and do very quickly and neatly everything mother requires of you, and in time you may win her love. I shall expect to find you very much

improved in three years from now, if I live to return. You could do a great many unpleasant things for me, couldn't you, Madge?"

"Anything in the world you should ask of me."

"Well, I believe you. Now remember that, in trying to be good and amiable, you are not only pleasing me, but you are pleasing God. I shall not see you in the morning, for Jem takes me over to Hayden, to be in season for the first train. When I am gone, you will find, in the hollow trunk of the apple tree, a little present I shall leave for you. Say good-by, now, Madge."

"Good-by, Maurice."

The young man held for a minute the trembling hand that was extended to him, while he noted her passionate grief and fast-rolling tears, as if doubtful whether to bestow a more affectionate caress; but, with an earnest and tremulous "God bless you, Madge!" he turned, and walked rapidly toward the house.

The moon was looking down compassionately, and the damp night dews were weeping upon her grassy couch, when Madge arose, pale and shivering, and crept softly into the house, and up to her little attic.

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CHAPTER XII.

LEAVING HOME.

“Thy farewell had a sound of sorrow in it.”

“A double blessing is a double grace ;
Occasion smiles upon a second leave.”

“You are quite sure that you have not forgotten anything, Maurice?” said the careful mother, as with her own hands she locked the well-filled trunk, and handed him the key.

“All’s right, mother.”

“I will put these bits of sponge cake into your portman-teau, for you’ve scarcely tasted of breakfast, and one can’t get anything decent to eat at the way stations.”

“Just as you like, mother ; but ’tis four o’clock, and the train leaves Hayden at six. If Jem is ready, we had better start as soon as possible.”

“Yes ; twelve miles is long enough to drive old Brownny in two hours, for she’s getting a little slow. I’ve put a bottle of camphor, and an excellent remedy for chills and fever, in the left-hand corner of your large trunk. Take care of your health, Maurice, and don’t fail to put on your winter flannels, even if the weather is warm.”

“Never fear for me, mother ; but you must be careful for yourself. One thing more : try and be as lenient to poor Madge as you can. I know she is faulty ; but, for my sake, try the effect of kindness upon her.”

“You had always a strange liking for that child, Maurice. But Jem is calling. Here’s your portmanteau and pocket Bible. Write often, and don’t forget to tell me about your boarding place.”

“I shall remember, mother. Good-by!” and as Maurice stooped to receive a caress, which his cold, proud mother rarely offered, he felt sure that something like a tear glistened in her eye; and, dashing the large blinding drops from his own, he hurried out, and soon the old chestnuts, which shaded the carriage path, hid the cottage from his view.

There were no signs of day yet visible, but the soft rays of the full moon bathed the old farm in its mellow light, so that Maurice could see distinctly every familiar object, as the carriage rolled down the path, and past that portion of the farm which was bounded by the road. How lingeringly his eye rested upon the brown cottage, the old orchard, the corn field, and the maple grove, which formed a dim and shadowy background as they faded from his sight. Every inch of the farm was dear to him, for the blessed early associations that were gathered there. He was leaving it now, to act his part in the great drama of life; and though his heart was strong and courageous, still a moisture would gather in his eyes.

They were leaving the boundaries of the farm, and Maurice had just told Jem to hasten the speed of old Brownie, when the slight form of Madge rose up from her hiding place by the hedge, and, springing forward, she exclaimed:

“Stop a minute, Maurice. I couldn’t let you go without one word more.”

“Bless us, Madge! where did you come from?” asked Maurice, holding out his hand to the child, who sprang lightly into the wagon, and was folded in his arms.

“Oh! I couldn’t sleep, and I thought, if I could see you once again, it would do me so much good; so when I heard Jem lead up Brownie to harness, I crept softly down the stairs, and ran across the fields to this hedge, for I knew you would pass here; but I didn’t mean to speak, till I saw the wagon pass, and then I couldn’t help calling to you.”

“But, Madge, you are pale and trembling, and wet with night dews. You must jump down, and run quickly back, and dry you by the kitchen fire;” and, while he spoke, he drew her more closely to him, and tightened his clasp around her trembling form.

For one minute the sobbing and fondly passionate child was held to his heart; and then, with a womanly effort to control herself, she raised her head, saying:

“I can bid you good-by a great deal easier now, Maurice.”

“I’m glad to know it. Strong angels will guard you, if you pray for help. And now, good-by!”

“Margy!” called Jem, as the young girl slowly returned by the hedge; “don’t be afeer forgettin’ to dry ye by the kitchen fire; and if ye had a dhrap o’ brandy, ’twould do ye no harm, darlint.”

The wagon moved rapidly away, and soon a bend in the road hid it from Margaret’s straining eyes. As she retraced her steps through the dewy grass, before the dawn of that October morning, many an earnest resolve to do exactly as

Maurice would desire her to do, was registered in her heart. Merciful Father, make it a strong fortress, which shall resist the attacks of vice.

"She's an uncommon womanly sort of child, and, if she had half a chance, would make a fine leddy," said honest Jem, as Madge disappeared; and his rough hand brushed away the moisture from his eyes.

"Be kind to her, Jem, and make her work easy when she is with you, and you'll never want a friend while I'm living."

"Trust Jem O'Harry for that; and when he forgets the mitherless orphan, may the blessed angels forsake him ontirely!"



CHAPTER XIII.

MARGARET'S PRESENT AND LETTER.

"I shall the effect of this good lesson keep,
As watchman to my heart."

MADGE had not forgotten that the hollow trunk of the apple tree contained the parting gift of Maurice; but the first gray light of the October dawning did not find her peering into its bosom in search of her treasure. She was not deficient in the spirit of inquiry and curiosity natural to her years, but she liked the anticipation of her pleasure, and she wanted sufficient time for its enjoyment. Margaret knew nothing about presents. Mrs. Kempton had considered her berries and flowers an equivalent for the favors she had be-

stowed, and the child had never experienced the delight which a present gives.

A fond mother had never prepared a glad surprise for, poor Madge on Christmas morning; a proud father had never decked his dark-eyed girl with ornaments; and brothers and sisters had never filled her stockings with paper dolls and sweetmeats.

No matter what the old apple tree contained, there was no one but Jem to share her pleasure, and he would not return from the city till near noon. Then, in addition to her morning walk, she must prepare the market basket for Mr. Parsons, and carry her milk to the parsonage. Oh, no! her nimble feet and hands must not tarry this morning for presents, even though her eye did rest longingly upon the old tree, for she had promised Maurice that every duty should be promptly performed.

A new motive prompted Madge this day, or, perhaps, the old hope had only been tinged with deeper and more gorgeous dyes. She could do anything to please Maurice; and he had told her that persevering effort to conquer the difficulties that beset her path, and earnest endeavors to be amiable, truthful, and good, would secure his friendship; and then he had reminded her of a stronger reason than pleasing him, which should govern her daily life.

During the night of agony which she had spent after parting with him, she had tried to lift her heart meekly and humbly to the great Father; and though she was painfully conscious that each hour was but increasing the distance that separated her from almost the only person whom she cared

to please, still a happy cheerfulness, and a childlike reliance upon the assurance of Maurice that God would now be her Father and Friend, buoyed her spirit and animated her heart.

She even enjoyed her solitary walk to the pasture, when only last evening she had passionately affirmed that she could never go there again, everything reminded her so forcibly of Maurice ; and when she returned from her walk, and entered the kitchen, even Mrs. Hardy noted with surprise the bright and cheerful look upon her face, for she had supposed that, with her son's departure, the old look of sullenness would return to Madge.

"You may take this can of milk to the parsonage this morning, Madge," said Mrs. Hardy ; "and mind that you don't loiter by the way. Mrs. Kempton seems to have taken a great fancy to you, and for the life of me I can't tell why, for, in my opinion, you're an awkward, disagreeable child ; but that's nothing to the purpose now. She told Maurice that she would like to help you along in your studies, and I promised him that while you remained attentive and obedient you should go there once a week to spend the evening."

The stern mistress had hardly glanced at Madge while addressing her, nor for one moment turned from the work which occupied her at the table ; but when the child, with trembling voice, attempted to express her thanks, she paused, and bending upon her a chilling glance from cold gray eyes that seemed fit windows for an icebound soul, said :

"You needn't thank me, Madge, for I only allow you to go there because Maurice desired it. You have been too

self-willed and obstinate to attend school, and now, as far as I'm concerned, you might grow up an ignorant dunce. Mrs. Kempton will tire of you long before she has seen as much of your obstinacy as I have; and you need not hope to be rid of one hour's work, by pretending to study. I shall not hire another hand during the harvesting, and you are to help James gather the apples and potatoes, and then knit or sew till eight o'clock, when, if you take a fancy to study till nine, I've no objection. But mind that you don't put on airs, and fancy yourself a lady, just because Maurice and Mrs. Kempton show this want of common sense by wasting time upon you; for if you do, I'll send you back to the almshouse, without an hour's warning. Go, now; I've nothing more to say."

Madge waited no second bidding, and, thankful that Mrs. Hardy's harsh tones had drawn from her no angry retort—thankful that for the larger portion of the day she would not be within sound of her voice—thankful for the *one* hour each day to study, and for the permission to spend one evening in the week with Mrs. Kempton—thankful, above all, for the friendship of Maurice, and the protection of Heaven, she tripped over the fields with her can of milk almost as gayly as if her heart had only been shadowed by the light, fleecy clouds that usually flit across the sky of childhood.

It seemed to Madge that Mrs. Hardy had never required so much of her in one day before, and she almost feared her treasure must remain in the apple tree another night before she could find time to examine it; but Jem had assisted in gathering the last basket of grapes, which her mistress had

desired her to pick, and she found time to steal away a few minutes before the twilight came on.

How the light deepened in the eyes of Madge, as she drew forth from the dear old trunk a square package. Hastily tearing off its wrapper of brown paper, she held in her hand a plain but neat box, covered with dark morocco, and on its lid, in gilt letters, she read, "Writing Case."

"Maurice must have read my thoughts, else how could he have known that I wanted a writing case exactly like his; and then, such a nice lot of paper and pens—more than I could use in a year, if I wrote all the time! Did you ever see anything so beautiful, Jem?" asked the delighted Madge, when Jem came up to share her pleasure.

"A perfect jewel, honey. May the young gentleman be blessed for his kind thought of you! And by the holy St. Patrick, here's a litter for ye that has lain all day in my pocket, jist becuse the whirl and rattle of the big city has been dancing in my crazy brain;" and he handed her a carefully sealed letter, directed in the clear, manly hand she had so often copied. How odd and strange the "Miss Margaret Foster" looked—so unfamiliar, that for a moment she thought there must be some mistake. Young lady, this was Margaret's first letter.

There was no time now to break the seal, for the cows must be yarded in season, or the punctual Mrs. Hardy would find an excuse to scold; and thrusting the letter into her bosom, and concealing her writing case in the hollow trunk, she ran quickly down the lane.

Mrs. Hardy never allowed Madge to carry a lamp to her

little attic. "The careless thing might break it," she said; "or, worse still, set the house on fire;" so when poor Madge found herself in her own room, she could only press the letter to her lips, and lay it beneath her pillow; but the first rays of morning found her eagerly devouring its contents.

She paused not to pick up the bright gold coin that rolled upon the floor when she broke the seal, even though her young eyes were unused to its strange glitter; but more precious than gold, yea, than fine gold, was each word upon the page already blistered with her happy tears. We, too, will read Margaret's first letter:

"DEAR MADGE:

"In the hurry and bustle of packing and leaving home, I forgot to speak of several things which I intended to talk with you about. Now I have a few minutes, while I am waiting for the cars, and old Brownny is resting, so I will send you a line by Jem.

"You will find a gold coin worth ten dollars in this letter, Madge, which you will not need to spend now, but it may be of great use to you before I can come North again. I have left on the table in my room all of the books you will want at present, and have requested mother to allow you to go there for them.

"I shall write to you sometimes—not often, for my life will be a very busy one—and your letters will be directed to Mrs. Kempton, for safety and secrecy. You, too, will write sometimes, Madge? Direct your letters to Uptonville, Tenn., and tell me what progress you make in your studies, and how you and Jem get on with the harvesting.

“You must not forget to read a chapter in your Bible every morning, and humbly entreat God’s blessing for the day. Try and live purely, truthfully, and blamelessly, that when you arrive at woman’s estate you may be worthy the name of woman. You cannot find a better example of modest, womanly character, than in your friend, Mrs. Kempton; therefore you would be safe in taking her for a model, always remembering that in a higher, nobler sense, Christ is our great example, and we should all strive to imitate Him. Dear Madge, the whistle of the cars which are to take me far from home, warns me to close this hasty note. I need not ask my young friend, my best of pupils, to remember

“MAURICE P. HARDY.”

Remember Maurice! Poor Madge did not need this new token of kindness from her friend to make his memory sacredly dear to her. Was not a prayer for him her first morning thought? Did not bright visions of her summer’s happiness cheer the dreary months of harvesting, and even the leaden-colored clouds of November look warm and sunny, bathed in hues from her own cheerful, trusting heart?

CHAPTER XIV.

AN HOUR WITH THE PASTOR AND HIS WIFE.

“Oh ! how full of briars
Is this working-day world !”—SHAKESPEARE.

How pleasant the little parlor looked, before the lamps were brought in. Perhaps the ruddy blaze of the wood fire helped to enliven the scene, and its mellow light softened the colors of the carpet, added depth and richness to the pictures upon the wall, and played coquettishly upon the grave, solemn-looking portrait of a Quaker preacher.

Now the fitful rays rested tenderly upon the bowed head, and gentle, thoughtful face of the pastor's wife, who was sitting upon a low chair by the hearth ; and anon they frisked around an odd volume of sermons that lay upon the table, as if challenging “the dim religious light” bound up in the dusky covers, to come forth for a frolic. Not a whit did the firelight care for the rattling of the sleet upon the panes, or the moans of the November blast, which the old elms echoed and prolonged ; but they rather rejoiced in the warring of the elements, and seemed the more merrily to rally their forces for a good time.

The young wife listened anxiously to the storm, and, by her frequent visits to the window, and the earnest gaze with which she peered into the gathering twilight, seemed to be expecting the arrival of some one. She did not watch long, for soon a well-known step falls upon the gravel path, and a well-known figure rapidly approaches the door.

"I'm glad you are come, Horace; the storm whistles so mournfully in the old trees. Why did you stay so long?" asked Lucy, as she placed her husband's chair by the hearth.

"I've been to see poor Mary Tilden, and returned by the lake road, to call on Brother Ellis; the old man who hobbled over here on crutches to see us last summer. You remember him, Lucy?"

"Oh! yes; and I've thought of asking you to take me over to see him. He was such an agreeable old man, and so unfortunate."

"Unfortunate! Ah! yes; if only in this life he had hope, he would be the most miserable of men; but he hovers on the brink of a glorious immortality. Oh! 'tis a blessed privilege to sit at the feet of a dying Christian, to whom heaven's glories have already been half revealed."

"How did you find Mary Tilden?"

"She's a poor, rheumatic, complaining woman, and it will take all the light and warmth of the celestial world to melt her natural iciness. By the way, Lucy, I told her you would make her a flannel wrapper. Was I right in saying so?"

"Yes, indeed; I shall be glad to contribute something to make her winter comfortable. But you must be wanting supper after your long walk," added the young wife, as she left the parlor, and quickly returned, bearing the tea urns, followed by Cynthia with a tray containing their light supper, and assisted to arrange it upon the small table which she drew near the hearth.

"I do not like to see you performing so many of Cynthia's duties," said Horace, when the servant had left them

alone again. "You've never been accustomed to such service, and, more than all, you are not strong enough."

"Horace, do you not know, if I were to indulge in the habits of luxury and idleness which made up my early life, that our people would blame me very much, and that I should in this way seriously retard your efforts for good? Even now, rumor brings to my ear a great many harsh and unkind remarks. Mrs. Thorn says I've been trying to get poor Madge, thinking she was brown enough to make a genteel waiting maid; and that I oblige Cynthia to dress my hair, and run constantly to attend to my simple wants; while Miss Allen confirms these stories, by saying that I do little else than loll upon the sofa, and play the piano from morning till night."

"How unjust and provoking, when you've taken such unwearied pains to visit the poor, and sick, and afflicted, and to scatter sunbeams in the path of every one. But how did these stories reach you, Lucy?"

"The last time I visited Mary Tilden, she was complaining bitterly because she had no food that she relished; and when I offered to make her some gruel, or prepare some sago that I had carried to her, she expressed the greatest surprise, and told me that she thought I couldn't even wash my own hands. I laughed heartily, and asked the poor woman where she got her flattering opinion of me; and then she told me how that Mrs. Thorn, Mrs. Hardy, and Miss Allen never give me credit for having good motives in the performance of anything. I was prepared to learn a great many unpleasant things, for several of our ladies uniformly maintain a cold

and reserved bearing toward me ; but still their injustice surprised and pained me."

"And, with this knowledge in your heart, you have been going on from week to week, without abating for a single day your self-sacrificing efforts for our ungrateful, unappreciating people ! Dear Lucy, how could you be so heroic, and why didn't you come to me with these stories ? "

"You have quite enough troubles of your own, without having your spirit vexed with these trifling matters. I didn't mean to tell you at all, but somehow I couldn't help it to night. I expected all of these little trials when I decided to become a pastor's wife, and I have earnestly sought for strength to endure them with meekness and patience."

"Have you not sometimes faltered, and sighed for the ease and luxury of your father's home ? "

"Never for an hour, dear Horace. I freely chose my life-path, and the hand to guide me through its windings, and I'm confident our Merciful Father will send us no trials that are not necessary for our spiritual good. Even now the pleasures and blessings of our life far outweigh its evils. You know clouds are often needed to soften and subdue the sunlight."

"Lucy, you are worth a mine of gold. Your slender form, almost as frail as the lily's stem, contains a heart strong and heroic enough to combat any difficulty ; but you must allow me hereafter to share all your petty annoyances."

The young wife replied only by a quiet, happy smile, for at that moment the door opened, and Madge was ushered in with her satchel of books.

CHAPTER XV.

MADGE IN THE PARSONAGE.

“From chilling blasts and stormy skies,
Bare hills and icy streams,
Touched into fairest life, arise
Our summer dreams.”

“BLESS us, Margaret! I had no idea you would come out in such a storm. You are wet as a mermaid!” exclaimed Mrs. Kempton, as she drew the little maiden to the hearth, and with her own hands removed her drenched hood and shawl. “Did you come alone?”

“Jem came with me as far as the corner; but I wouldn’t let him come any further, for he’s had a hard day’s work.”

“Are you not afraid to be out alone on such a night?”

“No, indeed; I had the lantern for company. What should I fear?”

“You are a brave girl, Margaret, and deserve much better instruction than I can give, to repay you for this long walk.”

“Don’t say so, Mrs. Kempton. You never can know how much good it does me to come here, nor how grateful I feel for your instruction.”

Mrs. Kempton drew Margaret to her side, and affectionately stroked the short curls from her forehead.

“So you will banish me to the study, Lucy, while you are teaching Margaret?”

"You can stay, if you wish; I don't think Margaret will be afraid of you now."

"Oh! no, Mr. Kempton; I can recite before you now."

"You haven't given me half an invitation to stop, and I see plainly that my little friend does not very earnestly desire my presence, so I will finish my sermon. Let me say, before I go, Margaret, that your perseverance and improvement are very commendable, and you will always find us ready to aid you with books and instruction."

There was much more of deep and grateful emotion in Margaret's face than her simple "Thank you" expressed; but the pastor seemed to want no other demonstration, and left the room.

The study table was drawn up to the hearth, and Mrs. Kempton was soon busily occupied with her pupil.

"This is our evening for History, Margaret; where do you commence, and what is the extent of your lesson?"

"I begin with the fourteenth chapter, and can recite twenty pages."

"Twenty pages! You must have been very diligent, if you can repeat half of that. Let me hear how much you have learned."

Madge stood before her fair teacher, and in a low voice began the recitation; but as page followed page, the tones of her voice became louder and more earnest, the light of her eye deeper and more brilliant; and when she had finished, and dropped upon the low stool at her teacher's side, there was a look of conscious power upon her face which Mrs. Kempton had never noticed there before.

“Bravely done, Margaret! How did you find time to accomplish so much?”

“I get up early enough every morning to read four pages very carefully before Mrs. Hardy wants me, so that I can think it over while I’m at work; and then I have some little candles in my room, that Jem’s wife made me, and sometimes I study two or three hours at night.”

“What are you doing for Mrs. Hardy now?”

“James and I finished the harvesting last week, and since then I’ve been helping Mrs. Hardy preserve the apples, pears, and quinces. I knit sale stockings in the evening till eight o’clock, and then Mrs. Hardy lets me study till nine, when she says ’tis time for me to be in bed. Do you think it is wrong for me to study two or three hours after she thinks I’m asleep?”

“Why do you ask, Margaret?”

“Because I do not wish to deceive Mrs. Hardy, and she does not know that I have candles or books in my room.”

“What does your own conscience say, my dear?”

“It tells me, after I have performed faithfully every duty that Mrs. Hardy requires of me, that she has no right to inquire how I spend my time; but I remember Maurice once told me, that a person’s conscience may sometimes become injured for want of use, or proper cultivation; and I suppose in that case it would not be a safe guide.”

“If we neglect for a long time to listen to the dictates of conscience, evil passions will spring up in our hearts, and almost or quite stifle its voice. But I have not answered your question, Margaret. ’Tis my opinion that you are doing

perfectly right ; but you must not take so much time from your rest as to injure your physical constitution ”

“ I'm very strong, Mrs. Kempton ; I don't think I have ever been really sick a day in my life, and I have never been tired since I have known you, or rather since you and Maurice have taken pains to teach me. I shouldn't want to live, if I couldn't study.”

“ May God bless you, Margaret, and strengthen every pure and noble desire of your heart. Have you found anything in arithmetic, this week, which your patience could not conquer ? ”

“ There is something about Interest, which troubles me a little. I don't think I quite understand Partial Payments.”

The difficulty was soon removed, and, with many kind words of encouragement and commendation from her teacher, Margaret gathered up her books, and prepared to depart.

“ I do not like to have you go out in this storm and darkness alone, Margaret, and I do not want to call Mr. Kempton, for he has walked up to Mary Tilden's this afternoon, and home, by the lake road. Can you not stop with us all night, and return in the morning, before Mrs. Hardy will want you ? ”

For a moment Madge glanced hesitatingly at the face of her friend, and then at the cheerful fire upon the hearth ; but, bravely tying her hood, and wrapping her shawl closely about her form, she answered :

“ It would be very pleasant staying with you, Mrs. Kempton ; but if it should happen to displease Mrs. Hardy, and she should forbid me to come here again ! Oh ! I would

rather walk twice as far in a worse storm than this, than provoke her anger. I shall walk very swiftly, and the light of this lantern will be company for me. Good night, Mrs. Kempton."

"Good night, dear Margaret."

Mrs. Kempton stood for a moment in the open door, gazing through the rain and darkness at the retreating figure of poor Madge, and praying God to bless her persevering efforts. Angels registered the prayer.



CHAPTER XVI.

SPRING'S FADED FLOWER.

"The air is full of farewells to the dying."

THE huge masses of snow which an unusually severe winter had left upon the fields of Clyde, were slowly melting beneath the April sun. Everybody was tired of winter. Bold, hardy schoolboys had grown weary of coasting, skating, and snowballing; while little girls, having exhausted their winter's stock of amusements, were impatiently waiting for the flowers of May.

Invalids drew aside their thick curtains, that the warm sunbeams might rest upon their shrunken, shivering forms, and gazed gratefully out upon the brown patches of earth which the fast-fading mantle of winter had left bare. Poor Mary Tilden gathered hope, when the currant bushes and

garden hedge appeared above the sinking snow, although she constantly complained of the tardiness of spring, and scarcely believed its warm breath would rejuvenate her rheumatic limbs. Sunbeams rested on the fresh sods of good Mr. Ellis' grave, and on the little mound where Mrs. Flanagan's dead baby slept.

Margaret rejoiced in spring's coming—now so changed from the poor Madge of one year ago, that you would hardly recognize the sallow, sunbrowned, shrinking, and untidy child, in the little maiden before you.

True, the large, dark eyes were still the same, only beaming with a deeper and more hopeful light; but a healthful, animated glow, had displaced the sallow tint upon her cheeks; while the long, thick curls, so obnoxious to Mrs. Hardy, were neatly and becomingly kept. She was considerably taller, too, although her light and graceful figure scarcely gave promise of attaining the medium stature of woman. Margaret rejoiced in spring's coming. Not that she had grown weary of the dull old kitchen, and her monotonous round of toil, or that she longed to revisit the pasture and pond, and share Jem's labors again in the fresh, fragrant air. The prospect of a careless outdoor life was not her only reason for the glad welcome which Margaret extended to spring.

Her kind benefactress—her sister Lucy, as Mrs. Kempton had desired Margaret to call her—had taken a severe cold when the winter first set in, and every attempt to brave its rigors had only increased her cough.

For many weeks the young pastor and Margaret had looked anxiously for spring, trusting that a healing balm,

more potent than balsam and cough drops, would be borne upon its fragrant wings ; and Lucy, clinging trustingly to her earthly love, prayed that the new, joyous life, budding in the old elms, bursting from the brown earth, and gushing in the rain-swollen brooks, might infuse strength into her languid limbs.

Yet, with all her hopefulness, she could not conceal from herself the fact, that each day, so richly laden with life and beauty for the outdoor world, was stealing from her weakened limbs the little strength which now hardly sufficed to bear her about the rooms of the dear old parsonage.

Horace watched with painful anxiety the languid step and fading color of his young wife, but would not acknowledge to his own heart that the shadow of death had already fallen upon his own threshold. Spring, and the invigorating mountain breezes of New England, he trusted, would bring back the glow of health, the "delicate sea-shell pink," to her faded cheek. The twilight of a warm, sunny day, found him resting his head upon his study table, and musing upon the changes of the past year.

"I wonder if Lucy remembers that to-morrow is the anniversary of our bridal? What a fearful tale this terrible winter has told upon her slight frame! That cough! Ay, yes; I hear it now, stealing stealthily up from the parlor, as if mocking my hopes of happiness. That cough has made her thin and pale, but it has not dimmed the glorious light of her eyes; it has not changed the glad, happy smile which she always wears for me. How her love has cheered and sustained me through the labors of the year, and how bravely

she has borne its trials! I did not think my shy, modest little bride, had so much womanly strength—that cough again! Lucy must go South. Strange that I haven't thought of it before. I'll ask Deacon Simpson to-morrow to secure some one for my pulpit for a month or so, and that will give me time to take Lucy to her father's."

Animated with this thought, the pastor sought his wife with a quicker step than had echoed upon the old staircase for many weeks, and, bending over the low couch, told her of his plan.

Lucy listened eagerly, the bright flush of hope tinging her cheek, and gleaming in her eye.

For some minutes after her husband ceased speaking, she remained silent; but Horace knew, by the trembling lip and clasped hands, that strong emotions were struggling for utterance.

"I am not strong enough to travel now, dear Horace."

The pastor had waited long for an answer, and, while watching the varying expression of his wife's truthful face, he had seen the flickering light of hope flush there for a minute; but it had faded, leaving in its stead the subdued and submissive light of faith.

"We will travel very gently, Lucy—only a few hours each day."

"Oh! I long to go. I've wished and prayed to see father and Alice once more; but I should only go to the old home now to die, and I would rather die here, Horace, in your arms, and then you could bury me in the corner of the churchyard that comes up close by the garden fence, and death will not separate us so widely."

"Lucy, my own wife, death cannot part us now. You are weak to-night, and have been nourishing foolish fears. Tell me that you spoke of dying only to test my love."

"I have wanted no new token of your love; it was because I reposed so happily in its strength, that I refused so long to believe God was calling me home." Lucy held out her thin, white hand, and, taking her husband's, placed it over her heart, that he might note its quick, uneven throbbing; and before he removed it, a severe fit of coughing shook her slight frame, and Horace needed no other answer.

An hour later, when Cynthia brought a lamp to the parlor, she started to find the pastor upon his knees by Lucy's couch, his face buried in her pillows; but she guessed full quickly the meaning of his low, agonizing sobs.

"Poor soul!" she murmured sadly, as she moved about the old kitchen, "he's guessed the truth at last; and if he hadn't been moping over his books from morning till night, he'd a knowed it long ago. To think such a cough, and such weakness, would melt away with the snow! I should have told him myself, only I couldn't bear to see his great grief. He's reason enough to sob now, goodness knows! A sorry place this old parsonage will be, when Lucy Kempton is carried away; and many a one besides the pastor will miss her sweet voice and bonny smile. Poor Miss Margaret will be after breaking her heart, I'm sure;" and Irish Cynthia raised her coarse apron, and wiped the large drops from her face, praying that the Holy Virgin would intercede for the heretic soul of her sweet mistress, and watch over the twice-orphaned Madge.

CHAPTER XVII.

LUCY'S DEATH.

“ Even for the dead I will not bind
 My soul to grief ; death cannot long divide !
 For is it not as if the rose had climbed
 My garden wall, and blossomed on the other side ? ”

“ THESE flowers are beautiful, Margaret—just such as you used to gather for me a year ago. Where do you find them ? ”

“ On the sunny knoll just beyond the brook.”

“ Margaret, raise me a little on my pillows, and let me lean against you—there, that will do ; thank you, dear. I can see the sunset now. How rapidly the spring is coming forward, and how soft and green the grass looks in the churchyard. I used to think, last spring, that the white tombstones looked reproachfully up at the freshly-budding flowers, as if they had no right to rejoice in their new life, when the glad voice of spring had no power to awaken the pulseless, inanimate forms which they guarded. But everything seems different now, and the tombstones look so hopefully to heaven, I can almost fancy the windows are open, and they see the fadeless flowers of a never-ending spring. Margaret, dear, I thought you promised to be brave and strong, and not distress me by weeping again.”

The young girl's heart was full of tears, but she struggled bravely to check their overflow, and at length succeeded in speaking with tolerable calmness.

“When will you expect your father, dear Lucy?”

“He cannot possibly come before Saturday, and this day is Wednesday. I shall never see him again, Margaret, until we meet in heaven.”

“Oh! I hope—I think you will stay with us several weeks, Lucy.”

“No; do not be deceived. I'm much weaker and fainter to-day than yesterday; and to-morrow—well, we will not talk of it, dear, for I've other things to say to you, and I must say them to-night. You have been a sweet, docile pupil, a tender, warm-hearted sister, and I would gladly live a little longer for your sake, as well as for dear Horace; but God knows what is best for us. ‘He doeth all things well;’ and I can safely leave those I love in His care. I'm so glad to know that you've given your heart to Him. Live near to God, dear Margaret. My illness has broken up your study for several weeks, but I hope the hours you've spent by my couch haven't been profitless. Horace will be glad to help you when I'm gone, and it may divert his thoughts from too close thinking of me. Bring him flowers sometimes, Margaret, and try and make his lonely life pleasant. The love of his noble, generous heart, has been a rich blessing to me.”

Another fit of coughing so exhausted the strength of Lucy, that for some minutes she lay in Margaret's arms, too weak and faint to speak; but, rallying again, she continued:

“I have given Horace messages for father and Alice; but you may take the locket, which contains mother's hair, from my toilet-table drawer, and with your own hands give it to Alice. This ring (and she drew from her finger a plain

gold one) my mother gave me when she was dying; ask father to wear it for my sake. You must wear my chain, dear Margaret; but let it remind you only of my love, and the pleasant study hours we've had together."

Again Lucy sunk upon her pillows, so exhausted, so motionless, so pale, that Margaret asked if Mr. Kempton had not better be summoned.

"Not yet; let him rest a little longer. He's so worn with watching, Margaret; will you sit with him by my couch to-night?"

"Yes, indeed, if you wish me, dear Lucy; but I must go home first, and get Mrs. Hardy's permission."

"Tell Cynthia to go and present my love to Mrs. Hardy, and ask her to allow you to remain."

Margaret sought Cynthia in the kitchen, and tearfully delivered Mrs. Kempton's message.

"Indeed, I'm glad to go, Miss, for it's not many times more I'll do my sweet mistress' bidding, though I'll stand by her as long as the breath of life is in her. But you aren't fit to watch, Miss, for you're e'enamost as pale as my lady this minute."

"But I am very well, Cynthia; and Mr. Kempton is going to watch with me."

"May our Holy Mother be with you; and if the angels come to take her away, Miss, please call me, for I want to see if so gentle and loving a lady cannot die easy, without the priest, the holy oil, and the masses."

"She will need no arm but Christ's to bear her through the dark valley, Cynthia."

"I'm glad to hear you say so, Miss ; and since I've seen her sink away so gentle-like, so happy and peaceful, too, I have been thinking 'tis no great good, after all, the priest can do for the dying soul."

"You are right, Cynthia ; nothing but Christ's great love and sacrifice can help us in the last hour."

Margaret returned to the parlor, and, finding Mr. Kempton watching the painful and labored breathing of his wife, she withdrew to the window farthest from the couch. So very rapid had been the progress of disease upon Lucy's delicate constitution, that, when her husband's fears were aroused, she was already hovering upon the brink of the great unseen world. While her physician held out any hope that spring would bring her a healing balsam, she had been unwilling to summon her father ; and then, the letter which carried the tale of her illness to her old home was carefully and tenderly dictated by herself.

It was a tardy messenger ; and although Mr. Crosby had made all possible haste after the summons, he could not reach the village of Clyde before Saturday.

The death-angel could not wait. He had hovered an invisible guest in the old parsonage for many hours, and, with the dawn of another morning, he must open for Lucy the gates of endless day.

Margaret sat long at the window, and, though her eyes seemed fastened upon the garden, the old elms, and the churchyard, sleeping in the soft moonlight, her thoughts were with the patient sufferer within ; but her native delicacy forbade her to approach the couch, where Horace, in low whis-

pers, communed with his dying wife, until her services seemed necessary.

“Is Margaret with us?”

“Yes, dear Lucy, standing by your couch,” answered the girl, gliding noiselessly from her seat by the window to the bedside of her friend.

“I cannot see you, Margaret; but there's no night, no shadow of death, in the mansion which our Saviour has prepared for those who love Him.”

Again the lids sunk heavily down over eyes in which all light save that of love was quenched, and only the painful breathing assured the watchers that the silver cord was not already broken. Hour after hour wore away, and every breath of the sleeper grew fainter and feebler; deeper and broader grew the shadow upon the thin face.

Once more her lips move, as if to utter another message of love; but neither of the watchers can gather the broken syllables into words.

“Say that you love me still, my own blessed wife,” said Horace, bending his ear to catch the faintest sound.

“Death cannot take from you my love.” It was distinctly spoken, but the watchers vainly held their breath to catch another word.

“'Tis death,” groaned the stricken husband, pressing the pulseless heart to his own, as if the warmth of his love must melt the frozen life-current.

“'Tis life, eternal life,” softly whispered the bound girl; but a vision of her own desolation, the bleak, wintry waste of her orphaned heart, rose before her, and, burying her face

in the pillows of the couch, she abandoned herself to the most passionate and violent grief.



CHAPTER XVIII.

IN WHICH MRS. HARDY APPEARS.

“Whither is fled the visionary gleam?

Where is it now—the glory and the dream?”—TENNYSON.

“COME, Madge, I’m tired of this moping and sulking. You’ve made Mrs. Kempton’s illness an excuse to get rid of work quite long enough; and now you needn’t pretend to be breaking your heart on account of her death. There’s a deal to be done in the garden, and James wants another hand; but I’d rather have you there than any one I can hire, when you’ve a mind to work; so you need not stop to wash the dishes, but go out and trim the rose bushes, and tie them up, and then ask Jem to set you to work.”

Margaret slowly took her sunbonnet from its nail, and advanced to the door; but she lingered hesitatingly, with her hand upon the latch.

“Out with it, Miss, if you’ve anything to say, and be quick, for I’ll have no loitering.”

“Mrs. Hardy, did not Mr. Kempton and his father call on you last evening?”

“To be sure they did; but what is it to my help who called, and who didn’t?”

“I supposed they would tell you the proposal which Mr. Crosby made me yesterday.”

“How did you know anything about the matter, Miss Impudence?”

“The gentlemen and Miss Alice overtook me when I was returning from the pasture yesterday, and Mr. Crosby said that his daughter wanted a companion—one who could instruct her in the common English branches, as Miss Alice is only eight years old, and Mr. Kempton had recommended me.”

“And what else, child?”

Never had Margaret seen a hotter flush of anger in Mrs. Hardy's face, or a ray of light from her eyes more piercing; but, conquering the timidity which she always felt in her presence, she simply answered: “He said that, in return for my care of Miss Alice, I should be neatly clothed, and receive instruction from her masters in music and the languages.”

“You believed him, simpleton?”

“Why not, ma'am?”

“As if a purse-proud Southerner would take an almshouse beggar, and treat her like a lady, making her his daughter's teacher! I tell you, Madgè, he only thought of the dollars and cents which your black eyes, brown skin, and curly hair would bring in a Southern market. A pretty mulatto you'd make, in good sooth; and I admire the sagacity and cunning which tempted him to make a cool thousand or so out of you, and I told him so, too. But he'll have to go farther North than Clyde for a genteel-looking nigger this time, as sure as my name is Sarah Hardy.”

“ You told him I could not go ? ”

“ Indeed I did, without any mincing ; and I told him, too, that four years more of faithful service on your part wouldn't half pay for the trouble I've had in raising you ; and I plainly hinted that, however popular slave-stealing might be in the South, he'd better not meddle with my property again. Go, now ; I've wasted time enough, and I'll not hear another word of your impudence.”

Margaret raised her eyes to Mrs. Hardy's, and her lips opened in self-defence ; but a passage of her morning lesson seemed written in lines of light before her : “ Charity suffereth long, and is kind.” She raised the latch, and Mrs. Hardy was alone.

Alone ! Were there no gently-accusing spirits, bidding her call back the bound girl ?

“ It all comes of my foolish indulgence,” she muttered, as if excusing her weakness to the prime minister of his Satanic Majesty, who might be listening at her elbow. “ Just because I allowed Maurice and Mrs. Kempton to notice her a bit, she fancies herself a fine lady, fit for a governess. What a bold thing she's grown ! But I dare say she's quickwitted enough when she chooses to be ; and Mr. Kempton says she's learned wonderfully during the year. Well, I'm glad I've given Kate's child a chance to make a scholar of herself, for her poor mother's sake ; but she'll put on no fine airs in my presence, I'll warrant. I'm vexed that old Crosby should pretend to cover his craft and cunning with the cloak of philanthropy. As if he cared a whit more for the welfare of Madge, than for his blackest negroes ! I should be a

pretty fool to send her away now, when she just begins to earn me a trifle, and into the very neighborhood where Maurice is. I've seen her shy, bashful tricks practised upon him under my own roof, till I could scarcely keep from shaking the minx before his eyes. A governess, indeed! She'll weed and tend my garden four years more, and then old Crosby may make a lady of her, if he chooses."



CHAPTER XIX.

MARGARET'S DECISION.

"Time, Faith, and Energy are the three friends God has given to the poor."—BULWER.

MADGE went to the garden with a slow, mechanical step, trimmed the rose bushes, as her mistress desired, and then sought Jem, to know where her services were most needed.

"Shure, now, you ain't goin' to work out in the sun as you did last summer, honey?"

"Mrs. Hardy says so."

"She does, indade! I'll work o' nights to make your stint aisy; but, by St. Patrick, it's a wicked shame for so bonny a lass, with such wee bit hands, to be pullin' up weeds, and the likes o' that. It might be right and proper enough for the owld woman, with her big hands, tough as leather, to handle stones and dig in the dirt; but you was born for a leddy, Margy dear; and if I was a rich lord, you should

have a grand house, a nice pianny, and plenty o' books, all to yourself."

"I'm sure of it, Jem, for your heart is kind and good; but as you are only a poor man, with a large family, I must try and help myself. Tell me, now, what I must do to-day."

"Well, these beans must be planted first; and then, if you've any more time, you may take the tomatoes from the hotbeds, and put them in the large bed on the sunny side of the grape trellis. It takes the spirit all out o' me to see you workin' so hard, and growin' so thin. If Maurice was at home, there would be different works, I'm thinkin'."

The mention of that name brought an eloquent blush to the pale face of Madge, but it was soon displaced by the grave seriousness of earnest thought.

Four years more of bondage, with a mistress so harsh and exacting as Mrs. Hardy! The very thought was agony. She could dig, hoe, weed, pasture the cows, run of errands, or perform almost any rough, menial service, if the hope of meeting Mrs. Kempton in the evening had sweetened her toil; but the kind heart which had thrown so many pleasures and blessings around the last year of her life no longer watched for her coming; the soft voice which had cheered and instructed her, she could only hear in dreams; and the strong, womanly hand which had guided and supported her was cold and pulseless. Even the books which Mrs. Kempton and Maurice had supplied her with, she had been forbidden to touch.

Four years more of merely vegetable existence! Did her Maker require this precious time to be given to a miserly

woman, who had never blessed the orphan's bondage with one word of love; who had grudgingly clothed her in cast-off garments, and, with a sparing hand, placed before her just enough of the plainest food to satisfy the cravings of her physical nature, without a thought or a care for her intellectual wants? Had she not already performed service enough to compensate for the shelter of Mrs. Hardy's roof?

Madge sincerely believed she had, and that not one day more of her service was due to the woman who had planted so many thorns in the path of her young life. She had often thought of escaping; but whither could she go? Not back to the almshouse; her heart recoiled from again coming in contact with so much vice.

Until the last year she had never been taught to rely upon her own strength; and since she had become conscious that her own exertions might procure for her the necessaries of life, her relations with Mrs. Kempton had so changed and blessed her lot, that she had almost forgotten the chains of bondage with which she was shackled.

One day of calm, serious thought, of earnest prayer and anxious inquiry, and Madge had decided. She would go forth alone, relying upon the orphan's God for protection.

The day's work was finished, and Jem was gathering up his garden tools, when Madge approached, and, looking up into his sunbrowned face, asked if he was too tired to walk with her to the pasture.

"Too tired? Bless ye, honey! and ye've worked as many hours as poor Jem, and now are askin' if his strong limbs can tramp as far as ye can. Ye're a queer bit of a

thing, niver takin' a thought of yerself, and ye look jist reddy to faint. Go in, Margy, and tell the owld woman that I will bring up the cows meself."

"Thank you, Jem; but I will go too, for I want to tell you something."

They had cleared the garden and entered the lane, before Madge spoke again, and then in a husky voice:

"James, I'm going away."

"Going away, darlint! Shure, ye've no home but this, bad as it is. What can ye be thinkin' of?"

"Just this, James: that I cannot stay with Mrs. Hardy till I'm eighteen, working on the farm and in the garden, without an hour's time to read or study. Such a life will kill me. If Mrs. Kempton was only living, or Maurice was at home, I'd try to stay; but it's no use thinking of that now. I must go away."

James drew his shirt sleeve across his eyes, to be sure that nothing obstructed his vision, and gazed at the tearful face upturned to his.

"I've been afear'd it might come to this, honey. But what can a young lass like yerself do in the big world, without a sowl to care for ye? It's agin human nater to bear up under the owld woman's onkindness; but ye'll always find Jem ready to spake a kind word, and lind a helping hand. Ye'll be afther takin' the blessed light of day from his owld eyes, if ye go now."

"Don't say so, Jem; I'm sorry to part with you, almost the only friend I have in the world; and I should have stolen away without saying good-by, only I wanted you to help me."

I belave 'twould have killed me ontirely, if ye had gone without a word. But tell me, honey, how I can sarve ye."

"First, Jem, you must promise not to say a word of what I'm going to do, until I'm out of Mrs. Hardy's reach."

"By St. Patrick, niver a word will she get out of me, until she has drawn me in quarters. Spake out, darlint."

"I can trust you, Jem, for you've always been kind to me. Do you think Mr. Parsons will carry me over to Hayden in his market wagon?"

"Jist for the aşkin'."

"What time does he start in the morning?"

"As soon as iver the day breaks, to be in the market with his vegetables as airly as any one."

"Now, Jem, after Mrs. Hardy is asleep, I shall make up my bundle, and, before daybreak, I shall creep softly out of the house, and come over to your cottage to wait for Mr. Parsons. You must see him to-night, and ask him if I can ride."

"Ay, ay, Margy. But what will you do when you get to Hayden?"

"I shall not stop there, lest Mrs. Hardy should find me, but go away a long distance to a manufacturing town, where girls as young as I am are employed in the cotton mills."

"May the angels guide ye, darlint! But ye've no money, and yer little feet would soon give out; besides, it's mighty onpleasant beggin' one's bread. A sorry time Bridget and me and two swate childers had, when we arrived in New York, without a penny of our own; and

when we asked jist the loan of a crust of bread, the hard-hearted furriners pratinded not to understand."

"I shall not be obliged to walk, or beg my bread, for Maurice sent me ten dollars in that letter you brought from Hayden, last fall, and I've kept it till now."

"Ten dollars is better than nothing, but it will not take ye far, Margy; and then, if ye could not find work to do, and should get sick! Oh! Margy, hadn't you better rest aisy where ye are, till the young gintleman comes back?"

"I shall trust in God, and something tells me that He will guide me, and raise up friends for me. I believe it's right for me to go."

"Maÿ the Lord go with ye! Ye've a brave heart, Margy, and I'm sartin ye'll live to be a great leddy."



CHAPTER XX.

MARGARET'S DEPARTURE.

"Look not mournfully into the past."

THE bandbox, neatly covered with old calico, which contained the earthly possessions of poor Madge, could be easily carried by her own hand. The packing of it had cost her many tears, for every little treasure deposited therein reminded her of Mrs. Kempton or Maurice. First came the writing case, containing a few precious letters from the donor, and her only gold coin. This she took from the writing

case, and, tying it in one corner of her handkerchief, placed it in her pocket for convenience.

Then her Bible, and a small volume of Mrs. Hemans's poems, gifts of Mrs. Kempton, were carefully stowed by the side of her writing case; and the few articles from her scanty wardrobe which she dared to take, made a small, a very small bundle for poor Madge.

Her best gown—a drab merino, which she had bought with her berries the year before—a cape of the same material, and a gingham sunbonnet, composed her travelling dress.

When the first gray tint of morning became visible, Madge, who had been long waiting its appearance, took her bandbox, and crept softly down to the kitchen. Her light step did not disturb the heavy slumbers of Mrs. Hardy; and, raising the latch of the kitchen door, she paused for a moment in the garden.

Ah, Madge, do not stop to cry now. The great world, with its throbbing, human heart, is all before thee; and, no matter how thickly encased it may be in a crust of selfishness, there is a deep fount of kindness beneath. Press hopefully forward; for, although the roof thou art leaving has been almost the only shelter thou hast known, yet beneath it there is for thee only harshness and oppression—no hand to guide, cheer, and solace; but, once afloat on the sea of life, and thine own brave heart will garner its sunshine and resist its storms; thine own delicate hand shall ply the oar, when resisting waves would impede thy progress. Press forward!

Only for a moment did Madge hesitate. When her eye

rested on the brown gable of the parsonage, dimly seen in the gray light through the blossoming apple trees, and she remembered that Lucy's voice no longer welcomed her to its little study table, she choked back the tears, and, springing over the garden hedge, ran quickly across the orchard to Jem O'Harry's cottage.

Mr. Parsons' team was reined up on the greensward in front, and James, standing beside it, was holding an earnest conversation with the market man. The light step of Madge made no noise upon the soft turf, and her hand was laid upon Jem's arm before he was aware of her presence.

"Jist in time, honey, though I was e'enamost hopin' ye'd not come at all, for my heart misgives me for the part I'm takin'; and yet, for the life of me, I can't bid ye stay. Mr. Parsons is a bit airier than usual, for I tell'd him he might as well be clare of the village afore any one was astir to put the owld woman on yer track."

"Oh! you are so good, Jem! If ever I'm able to pay you back——"

"Not a word o' thanks, honey. Give me yer bundle, while I lift ye to a seat. Now may the Holy Virgin, and all the saints, be with ye! Poor Jem has nothing for ye but good wishes; but should ye ever come to want, let him know, and he'll work his arms off to his elbows to sarve ye."

Jem's hearty shake of the hand, his warm "good-by," and "God bless you!" are the only farewells which Madge carries into the great world.

Mr. Parsons was a man of very few words, and, having learned from Jem why Mrs. Hardy's bound girl took such an

unceremonious leave of her mistress, he wisely decided not to interfere in any way, excepting to give the girl a lift in his wagon.

He made no attempts to converse with his companion during the ride. Perhaps respect for the tears which began to flow, as soon as Madge lost sight of the farm and the parsonage, kept him silent; and perhaps he was too busily occupied in calculating the worth of his vegetables, even to notice the tearful face of his passenger. Madge, thankful that fortune had favored her escape thus far, and glad that she was not obliged to choke back her tears to give a reason for their flowing, did not speculate upon the probable cause of Mr. Parsons' silence; and not until they entered the city, and she saw him drive up to a long, narrow building, and prepare to alight, did she venture to speak.

"Can you tell me where I shall find the cars that leave for Springfield?"

"I brought you here on purpose; this is the depot."

Lifting her from the wagon, he led her into a small room, labelled "Ladies' Parlor," and bade her remain quiet until he returned. Madge sunk timidly into the first vacant seat, and gazed at the women and children, who were hastily swallowing gingerbread and coffee, looking after handboxes and bundles, and making, withal, as much confusion and clatter as possible under the circumstances. Madge had hardly time to wonder where all these people could be going, and if there was any young girl like herself, who was stealing away from a harsh mistress, when Mr. Parsons appeared, with a piece of pie and a cup of steaming coffee.

"We are just in season for the first train of cars. You must eat this lunch as quick as may be, while I go and buy your ticket."

"Wait a minute, sir," and Madge drew from her pocket the handkerchief which contained her gold coin, and placed it in Mr. Parsons' hand.

"No, child, no; keep your money. You'll have need enough for that small sum, I take it. The tickets to Springfield are only two dollars, and my purse will be none the lighter, in the long run, for helping you over the road."

He was gone before Madge could thank him; and, swallowing her coffee, while struggling to keep back her tears, she thought, if everybody was like Jem O'Harry and Mr. Parsons, it would not be very bad, after all, for a young girl to go forth alone into the world. A loud whistle, and the hurry and bustle of men, women, and children, as they rushed past her, caused Madge to look around anxiously for her friend. He was quickly by her side, and, bidding her take care of her ticket and handbox, keep up a brave heart, and trust in God, he hurried her into the nearest car, and turned away, to hide, behind one of the large posts that supported the roof, any traces of unmanliness that might escape from his eyes. Mr. Parsons was a stern, matter-of-fact man of the world, but he was a father.

CHAPTER XXI.

A CLOUD WITHOUT SUNBEAMS.

"What's become of Marguerite,
 Since she gave us all the slip,
 Chose land travel, or seafaring—
 Box and trunk, or staff and scrip,
 Rather than pace up and down,
 Any longer, this old town?
 Who'd have guessed it from her lip,
 Or her brow's accustomed bearing,
 On the night she thus took slip,
 Or started landward, little caring."

BAOWNING.

"WHAT on earth can Madge be doing? 'Tis past seven o'clock, and I haven't seen her face this morning. This is the last tramp she'll take for more than one month. James!" called Mrs. Hardy from the step of her kitchen door; "James, where's Madge?"

"Shure, mem, I thought yer leddyship would be afther knowin'; and, indade, she's not been to the garden, or else bad luck to me eyes for not seein' her."

"The lazy thing! She's not back yet from the pasture. I'll cure her of this strolling habit. Mind that you send her to me when she comes."

"Ay, ay, mem; but the cows are still in the yard. I should have driven them down the lane meself, seein' 'tis past their time, but I waited yer leddyship's orders. Maybe the child is sick, for she was uncommon pale and serious-like last night."

“She’s not sick, but tramping after flowers somewhere. Drive the cows to pasture, and most likely you’ll meet her. If you don’t, then turn out of the path, and call her.”

James leisurely took the path to the pasture, and Mrs. Hardy returned to her butter-moulding. A fearfully dark cloud had gathered upon her stern face, and its blackness increased with the long delay of James. Woe to the defenceless head of poor Madge, should this tempest break upon it! But, whizzing fast over mountain and plain, woodland and field, now rushing triumphantly past a little hamlet, and anon startling the echoes of some deep ravine, the mighty steam horse bears in its train the maiden, already far removed from the storm which she knows full well must be gathering beneath the roof she has left.

The golden product of Mrs. Hardy’s dairy is carefully packed in a stone jar, and placed in the cellar, and again the stout figure of the woman may be seen upon her kitchen steps, while her gray eyes are turned with more indignation than anxiety toward the pasture, and her eagle glance discovers the form of her gardener, just issuing from the woodland into the open fields. James is alone; but Mrs. Hardy, unwilling to show any emotion, pretends to busy herself in tying up the climbing roses while he approaches. She even allows him to stand a moment in silence by her side (for James always waits his mistress’s permission to address her) before she pronounces the words which unloose his tongue—
“Well, James.”

“Indade, mem, there’s nothing to be seen of the child betwane here and the paster, and I’m hoarse as a crow with callin’ and scramin’ for her.”

“Very well, James; maybe she’s gone over to the parsonage. You may go and inquire, before you return to hoeing; and if you think of any other place where she would like enough be loitering, you may as well hunt her up.”

Again James departs in search of Madge, without any expression upon his face which would lead Mrs. Hardy to suspect that he knew anything of her whereabouts. She did not even imagine herself, until he returned from his fruitless search, that her pale bound girl, usually so stupid and spiritless, might have summoned courage to throw off her oppressive yoke. When first the thought flashed upon her mind, she started for the attic, which she had so rarely visited, almost hoping that she might find Madge ill upon the straw couch; for, with the fear that she might be gone, came the remembrance of her valuable services. How desolate the little chamber looked, with its low bedstead and three-legged stool, and the old trunk which had been sent with her from the almshouse!

There was a broken pitcher, filled with faded wild flowers, standing upon the window sill, and even these seemed to look reproachfully at Mrs. Hardy, as if she was the cause of their neglect; but had there been any fount of tenderness in the woman’s heart, it would surely have found vent when she raised the lid of the trunk. There lay the faded brown calico frock, the very one Madge had worn but yesterday, and, by its side, her half-worn shoes. The drab merino, which Madge had procured with the effects of her own industry, was gone, and something seemed to say, “Madge, too, is gone.”

‘Gone! there’s no doubt of it,’ muttered the woman;

“but it’s not a long way she’ll get before old Brownny will overtake her. I’ve lost two precious hours by not coming here first.”

James was whistling and hoeing very composedly, when his mistress, with flushed face and flying cap, again appeared.

“That troublesome imp is gone, sure as fate, James, and we must lose no time in the pursuit.”

“Gone! Saints forbid!” ejaculated the true son of Erin, dropping his hoe, and holding up both hands in pious horror. “Such a delicate bit of a thing! Where can she be gone to, mem?”

Now here was a question which Mrs. Hardy had not asked of herself, and it was very hard to determine what course the child would be likely to take. She had never been five miles from Clyde during her residence with Mrs. Hardy, and the most probable course that suggested itself to Mrs. Hardy’s mind was that Madge had returned to the asylum.

This was nothing more than a large, substantial, well-guarded farmhouse, about three miles from Mrs. Hardy’s, and not upon the road to Hayden; so, when she suggested to James the probability that Madge had returned to her early quarters, she did not discover, in the eager promptness with which he proposed to take a bypath across the woods to the asylum, the joy that almost leaped in words from his tongue, as he thought to himself, “By St. Patrick, the divil’s not true to his own, else he’d have put the owld heretic on the right track.” She only saw his readiness to serve her.

“No, James; I’ll go myself, and you may harness Brownny while I’m changing my gown.”

Old Brownny was as well-disposed and serious a beast as any nervous, fidgety old lady could desire—quite too slow and sober minded for his bustling mistress; and yet, for old acquaintance’ sake, she tolerated his old-fashioned ideas.

There was only one person who could beguile old Brownny from the even tenor of his ways, or induce him to forget the dignity which so well became his mature years; and this was Jem. By a few inimitable chirrups and whistles, he could send the old veteran neighing, galloping, and careering around the pasture, with all the frolicsome forgetfulness of his unbridled, coltish years. Notwithstanding the departure of his little friend, James seemed in remarkably fine spirits, and not at all disinclined to enjoy a bit of fun at the expense of Brownny’s dignity, apparently unconscious that he was thus delaying Mrs. Hardy, and that Brownny’s active exercise was unfitting that worthy beast for the nimble trot which his mistress would require of him. At length, after a good half hour’s sport, Brownny was bridled, and James, with an air of triumph, rode up the lane to the kitchen door.

“Why, James, I’m all out of patience, waiting! What on earth could keep you so long? and what has happened to Brownny? He’s as wet as a drowned rat!”

“Jist this, mem: the owld baste. as if he knowed our hurry, and wanted to disoblige us, the very moment I came up, and went to throw the bridle over his head, what should he do; mem, but kick up his heels, and race from one eend to t’other of the paster, as if a hull legion of evil sperrits was

charing him on, and I after him, mem, shoutin', and hollerin', and ontratin' him to stop; and at last I got him, but not-till ivery rág on my back was wet with sweat."

The air of injured innocence with which James proceeded to harness Brownny, after wiping the copious drops from his brow with a cotton bandanna, forbade further questioning; and, giving him some simple directions about the care of the house during her absence, Mrs. Hardy seated herself in the wagon, and drove briskly down the carriage path.

She was quite too proud and independent in her neighborhood relations, to appear much disturbed or anxious about the missing girl, when she arrived at the almshouse. Finding that the overseer and his wife had not seen Madge for several years, only as they had caught occasional glimpses of her in the garden and fields, Mrs. Hardy affected great indifference as to her fate; and, in reply to the anxious inquiries of the overseer what she would do now, coldly answered:

"Leave her to chance. She's been the plague of my life for nine years, and if she's taken herself off, well and good."

"But, ma'am, she's young, and I'm told she's uncommon slender-like and delicate. If ill should happen to her, or she should take sick, who's responsible? Who's to pay her bills?"

"Not I, sir! No, never a dollar of my money shall be wasted on the jade. If she had worked faithfully four years longer, she wouldn't have half paid for her raising. She's always been a sullen, obstinate, impudent child, and I should have sent her back to you long ago, if she hadn't been Kate Foster's child, and my son hadn't over-persuaded me to try

and make something of her. But time and money have been wasted on her, sir. She's all Foster—not a drop of Kate's blood in her veins; and I'm only too thankful to be rid of the idle thing."

Sarah had turned her horse's head during this short speech, and, with a very business-like air, gathered up her reins, and drove rapidly away, leaving the overseer somewhat in doubt as to what course he had best pursue.

"Well, well," he mused; "if the girl comes back—and it's not at all likely she will—I reckon Judith will find some way to make her earn a living; I'll trust her for that, anyhow."

Mrs. Hardy often said of herself, "I never allow the grass to grow under my feet, when I set out to do a thing;" and her characteristic promptness did not desert her in the pursuit of Madge.

Before she arrived at the farm, she had decided to go immediately to Hayden, and, in all probability, she would overtake Madge upon the road, or at least find her loitering around some public house; for, notwithstanding her indifference in presence of the overseer, and her apparent thankfulness to be rid of the bound girl, Sarah Hardy did not wish to lose her valuable services; and, above all, she could not brook the thought of being outwitted by the stupid, spiritless girl.

Stopping at the farm only long enough to coax old Brownie into good humor with a lunch of oats, and to make some slight additions to her wardrobe, that her own personal appearance might command for her due respect in the city,

but little time elapsed before Brownny's head was turned toward Hayden, and his mistress's encouraging chirrup and admonitory touch of the whip kept his motion very much more in accordance with *her* ideas of propriety than his.

Mrs. Hardy drove briskly around the city, inquiring, at the hotels and public places of amusement, if "a pale, slightly-built girl, about fourteen years old, dressed in a dark merino gown, and cape of the same," had been seen during the day. Finding no trace of the "ungrateful beggar," she went to the railway stations, and made inquiries of the ticket masters and conductors; and, returning from this fruitless search, she espied the cumbrous market wagon of Mr. Parsons; as its worthy owner, having sold his last turnip and cabbage, and pocketed the money, was just turning his face toward Clyde.

"Hulloa, neighbor," he called, as Mrs. Hardy drove up alongside his cart; "business in the city to-day?"

"Well, none of much account, Mr. Parsons; only my bound girl, Margaret, was missing this morning, and I thought I would ride over to the city, and make some inquiries about her. You have not seen her on the road, or round the market, have you?"

"Margaret? Margaret? Ay, I have it now: you mean Madge Foster, the little brown-eyed girl that I sold so many berries for last year—an uncommon smart girl, ma'am. 'Tis strange, now, that I haven't thought more about it; but when I came in by the depot this morning, just as the first trains were leaving, I halted a bit to see them off, and I do remember of seeing a young girl, that looked mightily like

your Madge, dressed in a sandy-colored gown and a greenish sunbonnet, getting into the cars. Like as not 'twas she.

“Are you sure about it?—and what train did she take?”

Mr. Parsons looked down upon the ground, up at vacancy, rubbed the organs of memory, and seemed vainly trying to make sure of some point in his own mind.

“Well, neighbor, I can only say the girl reminded me of your Madge; but how can I tell what train she took, when the cars are leaving for so many ways?”

After some hesitation, Mr. Parsons's unconcerned and stupid air convinced Mrs. Hardy that he had seen little aside from his load of vegetables, and she wisely concluded to go to the intelligence offices, and, if a girl answering Margaret's description had not been seen there, to make the best of her way back to Clyde; for the lengthening shadows and hurrying steps of the busy throng told her that night was approaching. We will leave her to the enjoyment of her solitary drive and comfortable reflections, while we visit Madge, in the dreary loneliness of a strange city.

CHAPTER XXII.

MADGE IN PURSUIT OF LODGINGS.

“Oh it was pitiful;
Near a whole city full,
Home she had none.”—HOOD.

“PASSENGERS for Preston!” shouted the conductor, as the long train of cars whizzed into the depot. Madge caught up her handbox, and sprang quickly down the short flight of steps. A minute’s delay for men, women, and children to flock out of the cars, and their seats to be filled by newcomers, and the train was again in motion. Madge gazed after it, unmindful of the tumult and clamor around her. It seemed as if the departing train, bearing with it the faces which had grown familiar during the day’s journey, severed the last tie which bound her to Clyde.

A hackman’s hand upon her shoulder, and his sharp voice, “Have a hack, Miss? Eagle Hotel; take you there in a minute,” roused her to a painful consciousness of her new position. She had thought of several plans during the day, all of which seemed to her inexperienced heart proper and advisable for her to pursue upon arriving in Preston; but now the novelty and strangeness of her new situation demolished the fanciful castles she had framed.

Where should she go? Oppressed with the thought, she seated herself upon a long bench, and tried to mature some plan of action. She would gladly have leaned forward to

hide her face upon her little bandbox, that a few natural tears might flow unseen; but Madge had no time for tears. Twilight was creeping on, and she must find a place to sleep in. Summoning up all her courage, she ventured to approach a man who seemed to be marking boxes, trunks, and packages, in the farther end of the depot, and timidly inquired if he could direct her to cheap and respectable lodgings for the night.

The man glanced hastily up from his work. "Third house from that corner, Miss; left-hand side of the street, first tenement—Mrs. Haskins."

Madge was quickly there, and her door-bell summons was answered by the lady herself, a little fidgety woman, with dark, piercing eyes, that seemed to read whole volumes of poverty, probably disgrace, in the faded calico cover of Madge's bandbox, while the girl was framing the simple question, "Can I get lodgings here to-night?"

"All full," was the curt reply; and the decisive slam of the door which accompanied the words was intended as a sharp rebuke for the shame which the woman saw in the maiden's timid blush.

Oh! it seems a pity that life's noon should learn to be so distrustful—should so far forget the guileless innocence of its morning, as to mistake the blush of timidity for that of shame. Madge sank upon the doorstep, frightened by the woman's harsh, suspicious air, and buried her tearful face in both hands.

The twilight crept on apace. The busy, jostling throng swept past, and their rude jests and coarse remarks fell heav-

ily upon her sensitive ear. Oh for the seclusion of her little attic, and the sweet companionship of the apple bough, that leaned tenderly toward her window! Even old Brownny's stall, and the loft of soft meadow hay, Madge thought, would be a welcome retreat. But there is another figure in the panorama of home which floats before the maiden's vision; the stout figure of Mrs. Hardy rises before her, and the light of her cold gray eyes is more chilling than the deepening twilight of this strange city, and her harsh "Quick, Madge, quick!" more repulsive than the coarse remarks of the rabble. The last touch of fancy's pencil has given Madge new strength to combat the difficulties which surround her, and, rising to her feet, she again takes up her handbox, to search for lodgings. While she is hesitating, doubtful which street to take, a young lad is jostled by the throng so heavily against her handbox, as to send it several feet upon the pavement, to the imminent peril of its flimsy pasteboard sides; but, springing nimbly after it, the boy was returning it to Madge, with a regret for the accident, when her low voice arrested him.

• "Will you be kind enough to tell me where I can get lodgings for a few days, or even for to-night?"

The lad paused. He saw, by the young girl's manner, that she was from the country, and friendless. Why should he not perform an act of kindness, when it would take him only a few minutes? "Come this way, and I reckon Mrs. Green will take you in."

He turned two or three corners with her, walked past several long blocks of buildings, and, pointing to a respect-

able-looking tenement, very like its neighbors, touched his cap, with a manly effort to be respectful, and sprang away into the darkness. Why did Madge think of Maurice, and why did thoughts of him send a warm blessing after the boy?

This time Madge was successful. It might have been because she showed Mrs. Green the gold coin which had remained tied in her handkerchief, to assure the lady that she would pay her bills; and it might have been because Mrs. Green's experiences had not taught her distrust. After partaking of supper, which was made very palatable by the kindly interest which her hostess seemed to manifest, Madge asked to be shown to her room, and Mrs. Green said she would go up with her, to see if everything was in order. They went up two flights of stairs, and she ushered Madge into a small, neat bedroom, and bustled about to see if the quarters were comfortable.

"You are from the country, I reckon, miss," half suggested, half queried Mrs. Green, who seemed unwilling to leave her lodger without some clue to her history.

"Yes, ma'am; from Clyde, twelve miles beyond Hayden."

"You must be tired, after so long a journey. Did you have friends with you?"

"No, ma'am."

"Never have been in this city before, I take it."

"No, ma'am."

Again there was an awkward pause, and Mrs. Green watched the opening of the handbox. Madge took out her

nightgown, and laid it upon the bed, and then drew forth one of Mrs. Kempton's precious gifts—her Bible. Mrs. Green had a great reverence for this book, though the black morocco covers of her own were often covered with dust; and the sight of it, in the hands of so young a girl, only tempted her to question her a little more closely.

“Did you tell me your name, miss?”

“Margaret Foster, ma'am.”

“Did you come here to spend any time?”

“I want to get employment in the cotton mills.”

“Dear me! so young and slender! What could your mother be thinking of, miss?”

“I have no parents.”

“There, now; I might have guessed as much; but I'm a blundering old thing. Don't cry, dear; I know how dreary-like you feel, for I lost my mother when I was just about your age. Come, now, don't cry, and I'll go with you myself to-morrow to see the mill agents, and I'll tell them you must have light work, for you aren't used to it.”

Mrs. Green stooped, and kissed the girl's check, patted her soft curls, and hoped she would rest well. The closing door hid her kind, motherly face, and Madge was alone—alone, with a quiet hour for communion with her Maker, and reflections upon the change which one short day had made in the current of her life.

It was a simple, earnest prayer, which the thankful heart of poor Madge breathed that night, and not in her own strength did she rely for the future.

CHAPTER XXIII.

SEEKING EMPLOYMENT.

“When God and the angels labor, why should not man?”

“Praising what is lost,
Makes the remembrance dear.”—SHAKESPEARE.

MADGE was an early riser, and she sprang from her couch half frightened by the strange sounds which fell upon her ear. The hoarse, heavy clanging of bells she at first mistook for Mrs. Hardy's morning salutation, “Quick, Madge, quick!” but, instantly remembering that nearly two hundred miles separated her from that disagreeable voice, she raised the window, to learn the meaning of so much noise.

What crowds of women filled the streets, all hurrying toward the immense brick buildings which Madge could see to the right, above the roofs that intervened! She knew at once these prominent buildings must be cotton mills, and the hurrying crowds of women were probably operatives. Madge gazed, until the clanging of bells had ceased, and the streets were again comparatively deserted. Only now and then a heavily-laden market wagon rolled over the pavements, so like Mr. Parsons's, that she bent eagerly forward, almost hoping to see his good-natured face beneath the straw hat of one of the market men. The sight of one young girl, with a large basket of radishes and lettuce in one hand, and a light flower basket, filled with tulips, hyacinths, and pan-

sies, in the other, brought a gush of tears to the eyes of Madge. She was thinking of the tulip beds that had been so long her own particular charge—the apple blossoms that kissed her attic window—the fields of red and white clover—the hawthorn hedge that skirted the lane; and she wondered if the gentle cows would miss their young keeper—what Jem O'Harry would do with the strawberries and roses. It was well that Madge turned from this home vision, and, taking up her Bible, read a portion of its blessed truths.

She felt strong, cheerful, almost happy, after she had sought, in prayer, protection and guidance for the day, and felt quite sure she might meet a dozen flower girls without a gush of tears, or even a regret. Ah, Madge, keep fresh within your heart the memory of country air, sweet-scented fields, and the song of birds; for perhaps these fragrant memories will shut out the musty smell of cotton, and the harsh clamor of factory life.

"What! already up, and dressed, and looking as fresh as a country rose," exclaimed Mrs. Green, as she opened Margaret's bedroom door, and thrust in her good-natured face.

"I'm used to early rising."

"That's right. 'Early to bed, and early to rise, makes one healthy, wealthy, and wise,' you know, dear. Mr. Green—poor man! he's long since dead—used to say, 'Take time by the forelock;' and he was seldom wrong in anything. But breakfast is ready, and we'll have a cup of coffee before we go to the mills."

"It is very kind in you to go with me, Mrs. Green; but I'm afraid I ought not to give you so much trouble."

"A fig for trouble! 'tis none at all. I always go to the market, in fair weather, to select my own meat and vegetables, and then I know just what I'm paying for; and the market is more than halfway to the mills."

Poor Madge had pictured many an awful interview with stern, hard-featured employers, during her ride the day before. Her timid nature shrank from seeking work among strangers, and she was very thankful that an older and more experienced head would aid her in making the necessary negotiations. Mrs. Green was soon in readiness for her walk; and Margaret, tying on her gingham sunbonnet, stepped forth to commence a new page in her life history.

It seemed, to her anxious, fluttering heart, a long time that Mrs. Green was occupied in catering with the venders at the different stalls; but at length her ample basket was filled, and she drew her timid companion out of the crowded market into the streets beyond, which were now fast filling with the noisy current of human life.

Margaret had scarcely time to wonder where all these people could be going, when her companion halted at the door of one of those great buildings which she had noted from her bedroom window.

"Keep up a brave heart, miss. Like enough they won't want any new hands here, but there are plenty more places," whispered Mrs. Green, as her hand rested a moment on the doorknob. She turned it, and they stood in the counting room of one of the mammoth houses belonging to the Sharonville Company. A middle-aged man, with sharp fea-

tures, glanced hastily up from his writing desk when they entered, and greeted them with a little, business-like nod.

"This young woman wants to get employment in the mills, sir."

"Too young, ma'am."

"But I'm strong, and very anxious to try, sir," stammered Margaret, with an effort to overcome her timidity.

"Sorry, miss; but we've hands enough for the present."

The official drove his pen with nervous rapidity, as if annoyed at the interruption, and Mrs. Green and Margaret walked out, and along the broad, brick walk, to another building, in appearance exactly like the one they had left. Here they met with no better success; but the repulse was so softened with the blandness and polite regrets of the young clerk, that they turned away with fresh courage for another trial. The fourth failure brought tears to the eyes of Madge, but they were quickly brushed away, and her sunbonnet hid them from Mrs. Green, who was talking very glibly about a certain spider that made several vain attempts to fasten his web to a beam, but the seventh effort was successful.

"We'll try seven times, dear," she said "and then, if we fail, we'll go home and see about dinner;" and, while she was speaking, the fifth counting-room door swung open, and the fifth clerk stood writing before them.

"True as I live, it's Samuel Dixon! Why, Samuel, I didn't know you was a clerk for the Sharonville Company."

"Well, no wonder, Aunt Green; it has not been more than a week since I was promoted."

"I declare, Samuel, it does one good to see how fast

you've climbed up! It seems only a little bit of a while since you came here a poor boy, begging for work."

"Yes; times are a little changed with me since then, Aunt Green. Can I do anything for you to-day?"

"I have called with this young miss from the country, and she wants to get employment;" and then she added, in an under tone, "She's an orphan, Samuel, and her name is Margaret Foster."

"Sit down, Aunt Green; and you, Miss Foster, sit down, while I run over the lists." He took up a ledger, or daybook, and glanced at the page before him.

"Here seems to be a vacant place in the spooling room, Aunt Green; but Miss Foster does not look strong enough to fill it."

"Oh! I am, sir; indeed, I'm very strong. Only let me try."

"Well, certainly, there's no harm in trying; and, after all, spooling is not very hard work. When will you begin?"

"To-day, sir."

"You are in earnest," said the young man, laughing heartily; "but you haven't said a word yet about the pay."

"I suppose you'll pay me what I earn."

"Let me see: spoolers usually earn about two dollars a week, and we board them on the corporation; or, if they don't like the corporation boarding houses, and want to board with a friend who lives near, we allow them one dollar and twenty-five cents more for board. I reckon you'd better not commence work till to-morrow, Miss Foster, when you will come to the counting room, and I'll show you where to go."

"To-morrow is soon enough," chimed in Mrs. Green; "for the poor child rode two hundred miles yesterday, in the cars. She'll stop with me to-day. Good-by, Samuel; 'tis high time I was at home, to see about dinner."

Margaret blushing returned the young man's bow, and walked rapidly along by the side of Mrs. Green, who was congratulating herself upon the success of their mission. Her companion was silent, too deeply thankful for many words; and, before they had reached Mrs. Green's door, she had made an estimate of what portion of her earnings, by strict economy, she could lay aside. "If I'm only well, in two years more I can attend school." This thought added a new lustre to the eyes which Mrs. Green thought were beautiful before; and many times, during the day, when her eye rested on the slender figure and graceful motions of Margaret, as she glided about the room, aiding in little household duties, the good woman thought it a great pity for one so young to be exposed to the temptations of factory life, and especially to board in one of the large corporation houses, where girls of all sorts and shades of character were huddled together.

Now Mrs. Green kept what she thought a very genteel boarding house. "Only a few young people," as she told her neighbors; "more for their company, than for profit." Her present family consisted of two young clerks, a dress-maker, and a milliner. "What would people say, if I should take a factory girl into my family?" But she was not long in coming to the conclusion that, no matter what people said, she would befriend the young orphan.

"I was young once, and an orphan, too. I wonder what might have happened to me, if Deacon Woodbury's wife hadn't given me a home!"

Margaret was delighted to learn that, if she liked her present quarters, and thought she could walk so far, she could have a home with Mrs. Green. "I could walk ever so much farther, for the sake of boarding with you, Mrs. Green. Wasn't it fortunate that a boy was pushed against my hand-box last night, and that I ventured to ask him where I could get lodgings, and he directed me here?"

"A wonderful piece of good luck," answered Mrs. Green.

"A kind, blessed Providence," thought poor Madge.

CHAPTER XXIV.

VOICES FROM CLYDE.

"The world's charity, and the world's condemnation."

"All the small wits of society busy themselves upon the eccentricities of those around them."—TIMOTHY TIRCOMB.

THERE was a deal of talking, and wondering, and gossiping in the little village of Clyde, when it became noised abroad that Mrs. Hardy's Madge had actually run away. The most noted character in our New England metropolis might have departed in a balloon in search of an aerial continent, without causing a greater sensation.

"I always thought she was a sly little minx," said Miss

Allen, when she dropped in to talk the matter over with Mrs. Thorn; "but I declare, she's taken everybody aback by her boldness; and people say that Mrs. Hardy is as much surprised as any of us. She drove old Brownny a whole day at the top of his speed, in search of the ungrateful little pauper. See what comes of poor, thoughtless Mrs. Kempton's making so much of her! But we'll bury the follies of the dead with them. The Lord knew what was for our good, when He took our pastor's wife."

"I only hope no harm will come to the motherless child," answered Mrs. Thorn. "It is precious little care or money that her raising has cost Sarah Hardy, and she can find somebody else to keep her cows and tend her garden. I wouldn't wonder if poor Madge should make a fine woman yet."

"I've always noticed that one calamity is always followed by another," remarked Mrs. Simpson to the Deacon; "and when I saw that poor, heart-broken child shedding so many tears over Mrs. Kempton's coffin, I thought like enough the Lord would take her next; and I would rather have seen her buried in the old churchyard, than to have heard of this."

"Hush, wife! You distrust Providence," answered the Deacon. "He who tempers the wind to the shorn lamb, can take care of Madge. Our parson says he's but little doubt that she was freed from the bondage of sin last winter, and she may be the means of doing great good in the world. One thing is certain: she can't be much worse off than she was with Sarah Hardy."

"Poor, little, motherless lamb!" sighed Horace Kempton. "She would never have thought of running away, if my

Lucy had lived ;” and the stricken pastor bowed his head upon his study table, and thought only of the fresh mound of earth close by his garden hedge.

“Indade, mem, the flowers are jist wilting away since Margy is gone, and the sunshine isn’t half so bright.” Poetical and figurative language was the natural product of Jem’s heart.

“Don’t let me hear any more of such trash, James. I’d like to know what possible difference it can make with the flowers or sunshine, whether that little beggar is here or in Joppa? If she had behaved decently till she was eighteen, I should have paid her wages after that, for she was quick and handy, when she had a mind to be. But I don’t want you ever to mention her name to me again.”

“A hard-hearted owld heretic,” muttered Jem, as his mistress moved coldly away.

But while some are wondering where Madge can have flown, and sigh when they think of the snares and pitfalls into which her feet may slip, and others are exulting over their proud neighbor’s discomfiture, Sarah Hardy is not idle. It was a sore grief to her miserly heart, that now she must pay a round sum for a lad to aid Jem upon the farm. “And this all comes of my over-indulgence,” she mused, “and the fine notions she got from her books. I told Maurice how it would turn ; but, thank fortune, she’s where her sly, artful tricks can’t be practised upon him any more.”

This thought was quite a balm to the crafty woman’s chafed spirit. After a letter had been written to Maurice, eloquently describing Margaret’s ungrateful flight, and a

notice had been sent to the "Morning News," published in Hayden, certifying that, "Whereas, Mrs. Sarah Hardy's bound girl, Margaret Foster, had left her without cause or provocation, no bills which she might contract would be paid by her legal guardian," the proud woman moved on in her daily routine; and if ever the vision of a pale little face, and large, tearful eyes upraised to hers in helpless despondency, rose before her, it was quickly banished, and not a single tear for the unprotected orphan dimmed the light of her cold gray eyes.

A selfish, miserly man is a dark, unseemly blot in creation; but when a woman's heart, which should distil only the softest, gentlest dews of Christian charity—which we expect to find a fount of the warmest sympathies, a prompter of the most self-sacrificing deeds—when that is rendered unwomanly by its passion for gold, till it becomes hard and yellow as its idol, then we can only wonder what strange, cold influences were thrown around its cradle, and weep that God's fairest handiwork should have so fallen.

CHAPTER XXV.

REVELATIONS.

“There is no spot so dark, on earth,
But love can shed bright glimmers there ;
Nor anguish known, of human birth,
That yieldst not to faith and prayer.”

ANN S. STEPHENS.

THE harsh, discordant tone of the factory bell was a most unwelcome sound to many a weary, dispirited girl, who reluctantly obeyed its summons ; but Madge was strengthened and animated by a hope to which many of her companions in toil were strangers, which threw a charm around the homely duties of her every-day life, and gave zest to an employment which had else been tame and mechanical.

Sometimes, notwithstanding the glorious hope which inspired her, her heart sickened with the clang of machinery, and often her weary head was pressed to a tear-stained pillow ; but the womanly courage which had sustained her so long, never entirely deserted her ; and when her foot pined for the soft green carpet of the old lane, and her heart ached for the warm salutation and encouraging smile of Jem O’Harry, she resolutely turned away from the few pleasant memories of the past, and looked hopefully into the great future, when her present toil should meet the earnestly coveted reward—books, and leisure for study. Since Maurice had been in the South, Madge had confided to him her

hopes and plans, and had sought his advice in everything, until her sudden determination to leave the farm. Had she not been indignant and excited by Mrs. Hardy's selfishness in refusing to allow Mr. Crosby to execute his benevolent designs regarding her, she would not probably have taken this important step without consulting him. She intended to write as soon as she was fairly established in some honorable employment, and give Maurice a truthful history of Mrs. Kempton's death, his mother's increased harshness, her motives in leaving the farm, and her great and absorbing desire for an education. Many a sheet of paper was spoiled in vain attempts to write something which should acquaint Maurice with her present location, without in any way blaming and implicating his mother; but the effort was finally abandoned. Her sensitive nature could not for a moment endure the thought of sowing the seeds of discord between mother and son; and she knew, if Maurice should have a simple history of the whole affair from herself, his warm sympathies would be enlisted in her behalf, while he would seriously blame his mother.

But Mrs. Hardy's account of the matter would throw such a different coloring over the whole, that Madge thought her old friend and teacher would soon forget the sunbrowned, bashful maiden, whom his benevolent nature had prompted him to befriend. Why did this thought wring such a flood of tears from the heart of poor Madge? And why, in moments of darkness and depression, did she bewail that destiny which had thrown so wide a gulf between her and Maurice? If her childhood had been blessed with a mother's

love, this gushing tide of affection would not have flown forth so early, would not have clung so wildly to one who had only shown a kindly desire to sweeten the servitude of his mother's bondmaiden.

At fourteen, Madge was in heart a woman—loving with woman's blind, passionate devotion, and living over in memory, every day, the few blessed hours of her desolate childhood which had been cheered with the light of his encouraging smile. The young girl's chamber witnessed many an hour of heroic conflict between her love and pride, but this pure and natural passion of her heart was never stifled. It beckoned her toward the future, sanctifying and exalting every noble effort which she made. Ah, trusting, confiding heart of woman! why is the necessity of loving such an absorbing part of thy nature? and, when love's golden threads form thy shield and buckler, why art thou so strong and fearless in the battle of life?

One month of toil has told its tale upon the heart of Madge since she left the farm, and her ear has grown accustomed to the monotonous whiz and whir of machinery. Her quick feet and nimble fingers are always ready to perform their part, and her cheerful alacrity and modest deportment have won for her many a kind word and smile. "Sunny-eye," "Lightfoot," and "Busy Bee," are the names by which she is greeted in the spooling room; but the respectful young clerk in the counting room calls her Miss Foster. Madge, wondering if Miss Foster sounds as odd and strange to everybody as it does to her, half wishes her new friends would call her Margaret, though she couldn't allow them to

call her Madge. This abbreviation was given her first by Mrs. Hardy, for shortness, but it was afterward adopted by Maurice; and how sacred in her memory was the clear, musical tone in which he used to speak it. Oh, no! she could not allow any one to call her Madge; that name must be buried with every other sacred memory of the past, and she will only roll away the stone from its grave in the seclusion of her own room.

One month of factory toil has passed, and for the last time Madge has closed her little writing case, locking up her half-finished letter to Maurice. This voluntary exclusion of herself from the sympathies of the *one* human heart to which she longs to cling, is the hardest self-denial poor Madge has ever practised; but an instinctive reverence for the sacred ties existing between mother and son restrains her impulsive temperament, and the four walls of her little chamber alone witnessed the stifling of this earthly love, and the consecration of her heart to God.

“So wise and good a Being never made a useless thing,” thought Margaret; and, though she often wondered why she was thrown so friendless and unprotected upon the cold charities of the world, still her heart acknowledged that God, in depriving her of every earthly good, had acted wisely. “He has given me health,” she mused; “and Maurice and Mrs. Kempton used to say I had a good intellect and great perseverance. If I had only a few books, now, I might do a little something every night; and, if Maurice never does praise me again for quickness and diligence, God will certainly bless my efforts, and make me, in time, a useful woman.”

For three Sabbaths poor Madge had resolutely drawn the curtains of her window, that she might not see the crowds of church-going people who answered the summons of the bell, and, alone with her Bible and her God, had tried to worship Him in spirit and in truth.

Her drab merino and sunbonnet could not be worn to church at this season, for the bright June roses would laugh at her sombre attire ; but she thought she might now venture to spend the remainder of Maurice's gift, together with the little she had earned, in purchasing a neat and simple wardrobe for the Sabbath.

When she paid Mrs. Green for her first month's board, she told the good lady that she could now afford to buy a summer gown, and asked her advice about the material, and where it could be purchased.

"So you haven't been to meeting all this time, because you have had no frock to wear ! Poor child ! I might have helped you to one, if I hadn't been too busy to think about the matter. Just ask Samuel Dixon to let you off an hour before bell-ringing, and I'll go a shopping with you."

"I like her independent ways ; and then, she's so gentle and winning, I wouldn't wonder if she is a Christian," said Mrs. Green, when her boarder had retired.

CHAPTER XXVI.

SHOPPING EXPERIENCES.

"A beautiful bennet, a beautiful dress, a beautiful brooch, or necklace, are all admirable—and good, because they are admirable."—TIMOTHY TRICOMB.

MRS. HARDY had sometimes sent her bound girl to the little variety store at the "corner" for a spool of cotton, stick of tape, or some trifling thing in the grocery line; but this was the extent of Margaret's knowledge of shopping. Mrs. Kempton had made the important purchase of her drab merino at Hayden, but now Margaret must choose for herself. The great variety of articles temptingly displayed by the polite clerks, almost dazzled her inexperienced eyes; but every gay and expensive fabric was laid aside, even though good Mrs. Green kept constantly suggesting that she needed something a little showy and handsome, to set off her dark eyes and hair. "Pink, dear, is always becoming to pale complexions, and here's a charming piece of pink muslin. What is the least you can say for this, sir?" asked Mrs. Green.

The young clerk looked thoughtfully at the marked price upon the fabric, bent halfway across the counter in a confidential sort of way, and, nodding complacently, said: "We'll give you a bargain, ma'am. This article can't be bought anywhere else short of four and sixpence per yard; but I'll measure you off a dress for fifty cents. How many yards, ma'am?"

"Oh! Mrs. Green, I can't afford to pay half so much," whispered Margaret; but the clerk had caught the meaning of her words, and interrupted her half-finished sentence:

"'Tis for the young miss, ma'am. Well, I reckon, in that case, we'll put it down to forty-five cents, though we paid half a cent more by the web. You'll call that cheap as dirt, I'm sure. Come, now, I'll measure off eight yards for three dollars and a half."

"I don't like pink, sir," said Margaret.

"Not like pink! 'Tis just the color for your complexion and hair. But we've plenty of different colors. Here are blues, and lilacs, and greens."

"I don't want a muslin," answered Margaret, drawing Mrs. Green toward the door, without heeding the remonstrances of the clerk, who assured them that from his large and unequalled assortment of goods they couldn't fail of being suited.

"Why didn't you look at something else, dear, if the muslins did not suit you?" asked Mrs. Green, as soon as they had gained the street.

"Because I didn't want to trade with a man who had told me a falsehood. You heard him say that they paid forty-five and a half cents for the muslin, but would sell eight yards for three dollars and fifty cents."

"Oh! they always talk so, in trade. You must not be too particular."

But Margaret had too much faith in human nature to believe that every man would sell his soul for the price of a muslin gown.

They entered another large store, where a simple wood-colored lawn attracted the eye of Margaret; and, finding that she could obtain it for twenty-five cents per yard, with Mrs. Green's approval, the pattern was cut off.

"Now I must have a bonnet, and some gloves, Mrs. Green, if you aren't too tired to look any further with me."

"I'm not the least bit tired; and we'll cross over Woodmarket to Holly street, where Mrs. Fletcher keeps a fine assortment."

Mrs. Green and the accomplished saleswoman both thought a stylish pink hat, which they persuaded Margaret to try on, exactly suited to her complexion; but, though sorely tempted by the delicate beauty of its buds and ribbons, she turned resolutely away. "I can never go to school," she said, "if I pay five dollars for a summer bonnet."

A plain straw bonnet, adorned only with a white ribbon, which Mrs. Fletcher could sell for three dollars, was finally selected.

"After all, I like the girl's simple taste and good judgment," whispered Mrs. Green to the kind-hearted shopwoman, who nodded approvingly.

After a few more necessary expenditures, Margaret found she had left two more dollars. They were passing a book store, and her eye fell on the tempting display in the window. "Certainly Maurice would be pleased, if he knew that I spent part of his money for a book; and then, I so much want something to read and study."

She turned back. "Mrs. Green, will you wait a min-

ute for me? I'm going into the book store we've just passed."

Mrs. Green turned too, wondering what a young girl, who had so little time to read, and who seemed so careful of her money, could want of a book.

Margaret remembered that Maurice had always thought history a very important study, and she had grown very fond of it while studying with Mrs. Kempton. In Maurice's bookcase there was a whole set of Hume's History of England. Why couldn't she buy it, one volume at a time?

"Can you sell me one volume of Hume's History?" she asked of the clerk in attendance.

"Yes; one volume, or a whole set."

"How much do you ask for a single book?"

"One dollar, miss."

"I'll take it; and this book, too, if you can sell it for a dollar."

The clerk glanced at the book she had taken from the counter—"The Young Christian," by Abbott. "You can have them both for one dollar and seventy-five cents, miss."

Margaret handed him the money; but, noting the look of surprise on Mrs. Green's face, as they left the store, she said:

"I'm fond of reading, and I get a little time to myself each night, so that in time I can read a good deal."

"But most girls of your age like to chat with each other, and form pleasant acquaintances, after they've done work."

"I'm not like other girls, Mrs. Green; and I've never had a companion of my own age. The only persons who have been friendly to me, since mother died, taught me to love books."

Again the memory of Maurice's gentle instructions, his long talks in the old lane, the quiet fireside of the parsonage, and Mrs. Kempton's encouraging commendation, swept across the heart of Madge; and Mrs. Green, whose quick eye perceived the few tears that rolled over her companion's face, remained silent. Much as she wanted to know what sad experiences had made her young boarder so thoughtful and womanly, she had too much delicacy and goodness to annoy her with questions, and the remaining distance home was walked in silence.

Margaret made arrangements with Miss Harvey to cut the dress, and make the difficult portions, while she made the rest. Two hours of sewing each evening, sweetened by the pleasant thought that when the next Sabbath dawned she could join the "well-apparelled crowd," was no task for Margaret. True, her eye rested longingly upon the new books, but they were all her own treasures, and, when this garment was finished, there would be no harsh mistress to prevent her reading. On the whole, it was a happy week for poor Madge. Only one thing had seriously annoyed her, and that was the notice of her own flight from the farm, which she saw in the "Morning News." The paper had been wrapped around one of her purchases, and, noticing that it was published in Hayden, only twelve miles from Clyde, she hailed it as a friend, and glanced eagerly over its contents. "Mrs. Sarah Hardy's bound girl, Margaret Foster," mused the girl. "It surely means me; but what in the world did Mrs. Hardy mean, about paying my bills?"

Poor Madge knew nothing about the liabilities of her late

mistress, or the necessity for this notice. She only hoped that Mrs. Green would never see it. "I shouldn't like to tell her about Mrs. Hardy, and why I ran away. Perhaps she might blame me." And then, Margaret feared that, by concealing a portion of her history from Mrs. Green, she might be deceiving the good lady. "If she knew I was a pauper and a bound girl, she might not be willing to board me. If she questions me again, I'll tell her my whole history, and if she turns me off, Providence will provide me with another home."



CHAPTER XXVII.

GOING TO CHURCH.

"The holy man
 Rose solemnly, and breathed the prayer of faith;
 * * * * * And then the hymn,
 Sincere in its low melody, went up
 To worship God."—WILLIS.

MRS. GREEN had offered Margaret a seat in her pew in the new house of worship in Spring street. "I shall go with you to-day," she said, "though I don't often go to church. The fact is, dear, I get so tired during the week, that I need the day for rest; but I hire a pew for the looks of the thing. Mr. Briarly is a dear, good man, and preaches beautiful sermons."

The kind woman had a great share of respect for other people's eyes, and quite enough reverence for what folks

would say ; therefore it was not strange that her eye rested somewhat anxiously upon her little boarder, when she appeared in the parlor ready dressed for church. There was a satisfied expression on her face, as she turned from the survey, to add a few more finishing touches to her own attire, which seemed to say : "The girl is well enough. Deborah Haskins will never mistrust she works in the mills ; and if she does, I've a right to befriend the orphan ; and I am going to ask Mr. Briarly to find her a place in the Sabbath school." With this benevolent feeling rippling in sunny waves over her face, no wonder Mrs. Green thought that time was touching her very gently, as she gave her mirror a parting glance. In good sooth, Mrs. Green had no reason to be ashamed of the young miss who walked by her side to church. Margaret's new gown looked neat and appropriate with the brown silk mantilla, which had been one of Mrs. Kempton's last gifts ; and her simple straw bonnet shaded a modest, intelligent face. Her long curls, which had been Mrs. Hardy's particular aversion, gave abundant evidence of the efficacy of Jem O'Harry's recipe ; and the eyes which her late mistress had pronounced "well enough, only a deal too large," were beaming with grateful emotion.

Margaret had never heard an organ before, and the solemn, beautiful strains of the anthem thrilled every chord of her heart. She listened to the performance, scarcely daring to breathe, lest a single breath might dissolve the spell. And when the organist ceased, and the clergyman rose to pray, it seemed to her enthusiastic, sensitive heart, that soft, delicious strains were still floating in the air. She tried to

join in the prayer, but her thoughts would wander. She was wondering if Maurice was fond of music, and why he had never described the organ to her. She heard the sound of the wind in the old pines beyond the brook, blended with the cheerful song of her favorite robin, and it seemed strange that those familiar sounds should haunt her just now, when she wanted to listen to the prayer. Margaret was troubled, and thought of what Mrs. Hardy had often said about her being the most depraved child in the world. Her agony at the foot of the cross rose again before her, and again she heard the voice that had hushed the troubled waters of her soul—"Peace, be still!"

Now she could join in the prayer, and the hymn that followed seemed expressly intended for her. When Mr. Briarly rose, she thought of Maurice again. He was much older than Maurice, but he had the same kind and benevolent look, just a shade or two graver, and his forehead was pale and broad. There were a great many lines of silver in the dark locks on Mr. Briarly's head, but Maurice's hair would never look like that; and then, his voice was not a bit like that of her friend—it was much deeper and louder.

Her thoughts had taken so long a journey, that she came near losing the text; but the repetition of it fell on her ear: "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father." The clergyman's theme was God's particular providence. His language was simple and concise. Margaret could understand the whole. He explained so clearly why the minutest object which God had created should be particularly noticed by

Him, and why it was not inconsistent with the majesty and dignity of God's character to believe that He had a particular care over the little, trifling incidents of our every-day life, that Margaret wondered she could ever have doubted His loving-kindness toward herself.

"If Mrs. Hardy hadn't taken me from the poorhouse, I should never have known Maurice or Mrs. Kempton," thought Margaret; "and then, perhaps, no one would ever have told me about Christ so kindly as Lucy did, and taught me to have faith in the blessed atonement which He made for those who believe in Him."

The sermon was finished, and the thoughtless, fashionable crowds swept down the aisles, exclaiming to each other: "How beautiful!" "I do think Mr. Briarly is perfectly fascinating." "What a lovely allusion to the sparrows and lilies!" "Such delightful music, too!" "Mr. Melrose would melt the heart of a savage with his charming execution!" "Did you notice what a sweet hat Mrs. Bland has got?—a perfect love! 'Twas sent her from New York. By the way, I think Mr. Briarly is a little too old-fashioned in his dress for such a congregation as ours; but he gives us such delightful sermons, I suppose we shouldn't mind his coat. I told husband, yesterday, if we didn't grow better under such preaching, God would send another flood!" "That's what I call a sermon, Sister Higgins!" whispered an old lady on the shady side of sixty. "Brother Briarly didn't learn his religion in the modern schools, you may depend on that, but it has all come by experience. I know the difference between fish and flesh; and if this isn't genuine

meat, no matter I should just like to have the learned Doctor hear him, who used to patch up his sermons out of poetry and sentimental nothings. It almost seems as if the good old days were coming back again, now that Brother Briarly preaches and prays from experience." "Rather too pointed, deacon," nods a crafty lawyer. "Well, I can hardly say, Brother Bland. To tell you the truth, I got so used to giving up the reins entirely into Doctor Churchell's hands, and napping it a little while the doctor was talking so pretty, that I haven't got used to the blunt truths of Brother Briarly yet."

The crowd pass on, and the memory of the sermon, which their pastor has prepared so carefully and prayerfully, floats into the dim distance; but one young heart gathers new strength and courage from it, and resolves, however thorny and checkered may be the path of life, to grasp firmly the Hand that guides, and with simple, trusting faith, to lean on the Providence that directs.

Mrs. Green lingers. She always likes to be noticed by the minister, and it takes the good man some time to work a passage through the aisle, for he must needs stop to shake hands with those who are waiting for a word. The children are forming into classes, and Mr. Briarly has a smile for each expectant face upturned to his. But now he is within reach of Mrs. Green, and her hand already grasps his with a hearty shake. She leans over the crowd of little heads, to whisper in his ear: "I brought a young miss to church with me to-day, who would like to join the Sabbath school. She's a little bashful, sir—just come in from the country; but I

reckon she'll not be long in learning our ways. I thought I'd speak to you myself about her, seeing she's an orphan."

"That's right, Mrs. Green; charity becometh everybody. Did you give me the young lady's name?"

"Margaret Foster, sir."

The pastor held out his hand, which Margaret touched with a timid blush.

"I'll take your young friend right along to Miss Johnson's class, ma'am."

Miss Johnson, a fair, intelligent-looking lady, smiled encouragingly upon her new pupil; and the interest which she felt in her modest, truthful face, was not decreased by the respectful, eager attention which she gave to the exercises.

"If you will give me your name and street, I will try and call soon," said Miss Johnson, as the school was breaking up.

"My name is Margaret Foster, ma'am, and I board with Mrs. Green, on Waverley street." Margaret hesitated, and then, in a lower tone, said: "I don't get home from the mills till half-past seven, but I should love to see you then."

"I will certainly come," said the teacher; and the favor with which she regarded the young girl was not lessened by the knowledge she had obtained of her employment. Not so, however, with two or three members of the class, who had overheard Margaret's words.

"She's got beautiful hair," whispered Emily Bland to Susan Lyman; "but, after all, she's only a factory girl."

"What makes you think so, Emily?"

"Why, didn't you hear her tell Miss Johnson that she couldn't get home from the mills till half past seven?"

"No, indeed! but I should think it was mean enough for Miss Johnson to pick up mill girls, and lug them into our class. I know of one girl who'll keep a respectful distance," exclaimed Susan.

"I shouldn't wonder if mother made me change my class. She's very particular about my associates," added the indignant Emily.

Margaret, with a thankful heart, passed quietly from the church, and her meeting with Miss Johnson she added to the list of particular providences which had blessed her thus far.



CHAPTER XXVIII.

MISS JOHNSON'S VISIT.

"Nor hath thy knowledge of adversity
 Robbed thee of any faith in happiness,
 But rather cleared thine inner eyes to see
 How many simple ways there are to bless."

J. R. LOWELL.

"I'm glad to find you at home this evening, Miss Foster, for I find it difficult to leave mother at this hour; and I shouldn't have allowed so many weeks to pass, if I could have seen you at any other time."

"I'm always at home in the evening. You are very kind to think of me, and walk so far to see me."

“It is not a long walk—hardly a mile—and I am used to walking. Some of my pupils live in the outskirts of the town, and I prefer going to their houses to give them lessons, for I need the outdoor exercise.”

“Then you are a teacher?”

“I give lessons in music and drawing. Are you fond of music, Miss Foster?”

“I can hardly tell, ma'am, I've heard so little. I've never heard but one lady play, and never heard an organ till I came here.”

“You lived in the country, then, before you came to the factory?”

“Yes, ma'am; in Clyde, twelve miles beyond Hayden.”

“Did you leave parents, and brothers and sisters, to come so far?”

“I never had a brother or a sister, and my mother died when I was three years old. I can scarcely remember anything about her.”

“You must be very lonely here sometimes, for I dare say you left kind relatives and friends in Clyde.”

“I don't know that I have any relatives. I had one friend in Clyde, but she died last spring.”

“Ah! that accounts for your coming so far to work in the mills.”

Miss Johnson noticed that large tears were slowly dropping from the eyes of her pupil, and, fearing lest she had caused a half-healed wound to bleed afresh, she delicately avoided the subject, and asked how Margaret spent her evenings.

"I've read Abbott's 'Young Christian' since I came here, and now I'm reading the second volume of Hume's History."

"'Tis very strange for a girl of your years to relish such books. You must have been taught with great care by your friends."

"I've never had many friends since mother died; but one lady taught me to love books."

Margaret was weeping, and Miss Johnson, unwilling to increase her pain, remained silent; but an instinctive desire to know more of one who seemed to have such a sensitive and delicately strung nature, occupied her thoughts. After some minutes, she spoke again: "If you feel willing to tell me the cause of your tears, Miss Foster, perhaps I can aid you."

"You seem so much like Mrs. Kempton—and she was so good and kind to me—that I cannot help crying to-night, when I think of her. Perhaps I ought to tell you more about myself, Miss Johnson; for sometimes I feel as though I was deceiving you, and good Mrs. Green, by not telling you that I'm a bound girl, and have just run away from my mistress."

Margaret hesitated, and looked up at the clear, calm eyes of her friend, as if she expected to see a shadow of the dislike and aversion with which she supposed almost every one regarded a pauper and a bound girl; but, meeting only a glance of affectionate encouragement, she related the sad and sunny experiences of her short life, so artlessly, that Miss Johnson hardly knew whether to applaud the girl's heroism,

or weep over her sorrows. Margaret concluded, by asking her teacher if she thought Mrs. Hardy had any right to oblige her to work four years longer, when she was so anxious to get an education.

"I do not know what right the laws would give her, my dear; I'm only sure I should have done just as you have."

"Oh! I'm very glad to know that you approve, for I had no one to advise me, after Mrs. Kempton died."

"What made you so anxious to get an education, Margaret?"

"I never wanted to be a servant; and I knew, if I worked four years more upon the farm, I should be fit for nothing else. I think my mother must have been an educated woman, though I remember but little about her; and I can never be worthy to meet her in heaven, unless I try very hard to make myself a good and useful woman."

"What plans have you formed for educating yourself?"

"I think, by working in the mills two years, if I'm very economical, that I can lay aside enough to pay my expenses at school for a year. I only earn two dollars a week now, but our overseer told me, a few days ago, that he would give me a place in the weaving room as soon as there was a vacancy, and then I can earn nearly as much again. Do you think of any better plan?"

"No, Margaret, no. You have a wise head for one of your years. Persevere, and I'm sure our great Father will provide you friends. Whenever you may want any advice or help in your studies, I will gladly aid you."

Margaret was right in thinking a special Providence had

directed her to Miss Johnson's class. Few young ladies would have known so well how to appreciate the heroic efforts of the maiden to educate herself, and few could so wisely encourage, admonish, and guide.

Miss Mary Johnson was the eldest daughter of a sea captain; and, as her father's business kept him from home the larger portion of the time, and her mother was always delicate, much of the care and responsibility of educating one sister and two young brothers devolved on her.

In former years, Captain Johnson had been very successful, and his eldest daughter had all the advantages of the most popular schools and private masters; but, latterly, the tide of fortune seemed against him, and many of their former luxuries must be dispensed with. These reverses inspired Mary with new life—called forth those latent energies which often slumber in woman's heart till the touch of love awakens them. When her father had been regarded as a prosperous and wealthy man, and they had been surrounded with luxuries, Mary seemed only an amiable daughter and an accomplished young lady, leaving the care of her invalid mother and her young brothers and sister to servants, and giving her own precious time to the fashionable world, that courted her presence; but when she learned that her father was harassed with debts, and that the larger portion of his capital had been lost by injudicious investments, it was her influence that determined Captain Johnson and his wife to change their style of living, to remove from their luxurious home in New York to a small house in the manufacturing city of Preston, where a friend of Captain Johnson's promised to secure for Mary a class of music pupils.

While surrounded by the pomp and glitter of fashionable life, Mary had no higher aim than to be one of the fairest and most brilliant of the circle in which she moved; but when an incentive for action and self-denying effort was placed before her, the womanly fountains of her nature were stirred, and the time which had hitherto been wasted upon the heartless, admiring throng, was now devoted to the education of her brothers and sister. She resolved to make a worthy use of the education which she had acquired simply for an ornament, and that her fine musical talents should be used to eke out her father's small income, and keep her mother surrounded with a part of the luxuries to which she had been accustomed through life. Her friendship was a rich blessing to poor Madge during her two years of factory life; and in many an hour of darkness and wretchedness did the young girl find sweet solace and strength in the sisterly counsels of her friend.

The summer months wore away, and the autumn days grew short. Margaret often thought of the purple grapes, the old orchard with its ripening fruit, the yellow cornfield, and the golden pumpkins, and wondered if Jem O'Harry missed her quick feet and nimble fingers in the merry harvest time. Who would help him strip the pale husks from the corn, and gather the grapes and apples? Who would harvest the brown hazel nuts, and make wreaths of cedar and the rainbow-hued autumn leaves for her little attic?

Brush away that tear, Madge; for see you not in the foreground of memory's picture a stern, cloudy face, that the mellow rays of the harvest moon have no power to soften?

Hear you not the tones of a voice harsher than the clang of machinery, always hastening the motions of your hands and feet, but never rewarding your industry with a pleasant word?



CHAPTER XXIX.

MRS. GREEN'S FAMILY.

"Every family is a history in itself, and even a poem, to those who know how to read its pages."—LAMARTINE.

"ONLY a few young people, just for company," Mrs. Green often remarked to her neighbors. "Quite a select little family, and nobody can say but my house is as genteel and respectable as any in the neighborhood. Young Stanley and Emery are clerks in one of our most fashionable stores; and Laura Thompson is a very genteel milliner, and Miss Harvey is just the nicest and most quiet dressmaker in the city."

We shall not enter into a minute description of the different members of Mrs. Green's family, but take her word for their gentility. Margaret seldom met her fellow boarders excepting on the Sabbath, for her breakfast was earlier and her supper later than that of the family, while her dinner she carried in a little basket, and ate in the weaving room. She had sometimes met young Stanley in the entries or parlor, but the boldness of his gaze, and the efforts which he made to draw her into conversation, frightened her, and the sound of his step, approaching parlor or kitchen, was usually the

signal for her to escape. Stanley had a certain ease and suavity of manners, which in general society were mistaken for true politeness and polish; but Margaret, who compared every new acquaintance with Maurice, and approved or condemned as they harmonized with or differed from him, had an instinctive fear of the self-confident young man. Twice, in meeting her in the common parlor, he had raised her curls in his hand, with an expression of admiration which had offended the young girl. "My curls may be well enough," she thought, "but Maurice never said they were handsome. He always told me I was very plain; and Mr. Stanley only wants to flatter me, because he thinks I'm young and silly."

One evening, late in the autumn, when Margaret had been detained longer than usual in the mills, and was hastening home in the gathering twilight, thinking of the pleasant hour she would have for history, she was startled by a hand upon her shoulder, and a voice, close by her side, said: "Don't walk so fast, Miss Foster; your friends can't keep up. You look as frightened as a young fawn. Not used to beaux, I reckon?"

The last clause of Mr. Stanley's fine speech was in the form of a question; but Margaret did not heed it, and only stammered something about being detained later than usual in the mills.

"Lucky, upon my honor!—a fortunate circumstance, seeing it gives me the pleasure of your company."

Poor Madge was greatly annoyed, and quite at a loss to know whether she ought to make any reply; but the young man rattled gayly on, without heeding her embarrassment.

"You must find it mighty lonesome, staying in your room so closely. Why don't you favor us with a little more of your company in the parlor?"

"I'm not used to seeing many people, and I like to read."

"Oh, yes; I remember Mrs. Green told me you were fond of books. I happen to have one with me, which is perfectly fascinating. I thought of you when I purchased this;" and he smiled very graciously, as Margaret took the book which he held out to her. She glanced at the title—"The Mysteries of Udolpho, by Mrs. Radcliffe." Margaret loved stories, but Mrs. Kempton had often told her of the pernicious influence of most novels; that they gave one false ideas of life, and destroyed all relish for useful books. She thought Maurice would rather she would read history; and, then, she had never seen this book in his library, or Mr. Kempton's. She returned the book.

"Thank you, Mr. Stanley; but I don't care to read it."

The young man looked surprised. "What! not care to read such a charming novel as this? Why, most young ladies would cry all night over it."

"But I shouldn't like to be kept awake all night."

"Ah, I see how 'tis; some pious grandma, or whining old maid, has warned you against such delightful books. Come, now, my pretty dear, you are out of the sight of their rusty spectacles, and needn't be afraid of reading this one, just to oblige a friend."

Margaret shook her head, as he again proffered the book.

"Perhaps you haven't finished Pilgrim's Progress yet, Baxter's Saints, the Bible, or some such old-fashioned thing."

The irreverent, sneering tone of the young man only served to deepen the unfavorable impressions which Margaret had formed of him, and she was glad that their proximity to Mrs. Green's door would obviate the necessity of replying. She sprang quickly up the steps, but he threw his arm around her, to detain her in the entry.

"Let me go, sir, please."

The imploring, tearful eyes of Madge would have daunted a more heartless, wicked man than James Stanley; and he released her, bowing profusely, and begging pardon if he had offended. Margaret did not hear his last honeyed speech, for she had flown quickly up the stairs, to her own room.

"A pretty piece of business, if I've frightened the young bird already, before I've enjoyed the innocent fun of seeing her little heart flutter and tremble at my touch! She's a little prudish now, but 'tis against human nature, or, rather, woman nature, to resist such fascination as mine;" and he stroked his fine whiskers before the parlor mirror, and brushed back the hair from his bold, handsome forehead.

It was an hour later than Margaret's usual teatime, and Mrs. Green's neat supper table was in waiting, while the good lady greatly wondered what could detain her boarder.

"I'll go myself, and see if she hasn't come in, for maybe she's sick." She gave a little tap on Margaret's door, but, without waiting for a reply, opened it, and bustled in. "I told Nancy you must be sick, and I'd come straight up and see what the matter was," she said, approaching the bed upon which poor Madge had thrown herself, with her face buried in the pillow. "Got a headache, dear?"

"It aches a little."

"I knew how 'twould be, yesterday, when you walked all the way from the mills in that soaking rain, without rubbers. Shouldn't wonder if you had a fever;" and Mrs. Green raised Margaret's head, to see if there were any visible indications of the disease, passing her hand gently over her throbbing temples.

"Now, don't cry, dear; like as not 'tis only a bad cold. At any rate, a good strong dose of pennyroyal tea will break up the fever; and while the herbs are steeping, I'll get a bucket of hot water ready to soak your feet."

"Oh! don't trouble, Mrs. Green; I shall be quite well in the morning."

"Maybe so, and maybe not. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, and the hot herb tea will do you no harm. Such a throbbing in your head, and such a flush on your cheeks, bode no good, and I'll lose no time parleying. Put on your night clothes, dear, while I'm gone to see about the tea."

Margaret found she must either submit quietly to Mrs. Green's kind nursing, or tell her the true state of affairs; but, finding it would be very difficult to give a sufficient reason for tears, or clothe her instinctive fears with language, she concluded to drink the tea, and swallow her grief as best she might. So, when Mrs. Green returned with her steaming potion, followed by Nancy with the hot bath, she found her boarder very patient and submissive.

Mrs. Green loved nothing better than nursing a comfortably sick patient, and witnessing the effect of her never-fail-

ing stock of herbs in scattering the first symptoms of disease ; and many a wonderful cure did she relate to Margaret, while she was administering the tea, applying the hot bath, and wrapping her up in some half dozen flannel blankets.

"There!" she exclaimed, when her task was completed, "I wouldn't wonder if you had a comfortable night ; and if I hadn't taken you in season, you'd had a run of the fever. Now, if you'll stop crying, dear, I'll go down and tell Nancy about mixing the breakfast cakes, and perhaps you'll go to sleep."

"It seems so pleasant to have such nice care taken of me, Mrs. Green, that I can't help crying now ; not because I'm sick, though."

"Poor, silly child," murmured Mrs. Green, as she stooped to kiss the small portion of her patient's face which was not enveloped in blankets ; and Margaret was sure two or three drops from her gentle eyes fell down and mingled with her own.

"It's precious little kindness she's ever received, or else my caring for her wouldn't make her so grateful. But I should like to see the person who could treat her otherwise than kindly."

"Dear me, if it isn't raining again this morning!" exclaimed Mrs. Green, as her boarders gathered around the breakfast table. "Miss Foster will be drenched to the skin. I had no thought of her going to the mills to-day, for she was down sick last night, and if I hadn't taken her in season, she'd had a fever."

"Did you say Miss Foster was sick last night?" asked Stanley sipping his coffee with great indifference.

"Yes; poor dear! she'd a miserable headache, and two bright, burning spots on her cheeks. I shouldn't have known a word about it, if I hadn't gone to her room to see why she didn't come in to tea; and I found her sobbing as if her heart would break. She's too delicate, by far, to work in the mills; and if I was only rich, I should love to educate her, she's so fond of reading."

"It's quite fashionable, nowadays, Mrs. Green, for a certain class of young misses to affect a fondness for books," simpered the genteel milliner.

No one heeded her soft words and pretty smile, and she turned to Mr. Stanley:

"You don't like literary women, I believe, sir?"

"Can't say—don't think I do, unless you belong to the blue-stocking army."

Pretty Miss Thompson blushed in the most approved style, and disclaimed all pretensions to such honors.

"But don't you think, Mrs. Green," continued the young lady, "that you'd better advise Miss Foster not to read such trashy novels all night, after she's been fagging in the mills? She'll get sick on your hands, and there's nothing makes me so nervous as sickness in the house."

"I should be sorry, if I thought Miss Foster read novels," answered Mrs. Green; "but I've only seen a history and two or three pious books, besides her Bible, in the room."

"Oh! she's a little Methodist, then? Well, that accounts for her looking so shocked at my harmless fun. But keep a good lookout, Mrs. Green; for the pious books may

be laid out for show, while the novel is hid under her pillow. What do you think, Mr. Stanley?"

"'Pon my honor; Miss Thompson, can't say as I've thought of the little factory girl at all. Stars are never visible when the sun shines, you know."

The complimentary speech, with the heart-demolishing look which accompanied it, was too much for the delicate nerves of the blushing Miss Thompson. She was so delightedly confused, that she came nigh spilling the contents of her coffee cup, and the remainder of her toast was only delicately nibbled and pulled in pieces with her fork. There are some blissful emotions of the mind, which cause us to forget our natural cravings for the meat that perisheth, and Miss Thompson was anxious that Mr. Stanley should be suitably impressed with this fact.

But the young man was not so indifferent about the illness of Mrs. Green's boarder as he would fain have had the breakfast party suppose. "A rare little specimen," he mused, while he lazily lounged away the rainy day; "but I'm sorry she should get ill with crying, for salt water will spoil the magnificent eyes that I mean to see brighten and sparkle when I approach. It's delightful to be thrown in the way of such an inexperienced juvenile; but I'll be cautious how I offend her nice notions of propriety again. If I could only do something, now, to counteract the effect of my boldness yesterday, and make a little compensation for the precious tears shed on my account! I'll send a hack to take her home to-night, so that my pretty miss shall not get another soaking. Capital idea! How this delicate care for her will

send a charming blush over her brown face, and make the lids droop becomingly over her great eyes!"

"Carriage for Miss Foster!" "Hack for Miss Foster!" The announcement was taken up, and echoed by a hundred voices, as the troop of tired girls issued from the mills into the dripping, outdoor world.

"A carriage for Margy! A carriage for you, Busy Bee!" shouted a young girl in Margaret's ear.

"There's some mistake," said Margaret. "I'll go and see for myself."

"All right, miss. Young Stanley sent the carriage, and said I was to take Miss Margaret Foster to Mrs. Green's, on Waverley street," was the driver's reply to Margaret's repeated assertion that there must be some mistake.

There was no time for hesitation, for one hand of the driver was on the open door of the carriage, while the other was extended to aid her in entering. She sprang in. "I cannot do otherwise than accept his politeness to-night," thought Margaret. "I suppose Mrs. Green must have told him I was sick. After all, he might not have intended to annoy me, and I was silly to cry so about it."

Saintly chastity is dear to Heaven, Milton tells us; and when a soul is found sincerely chaste, a thousand liveried angels lackey it.

CHAPTER XXX.

CHRISTMAS.

“Daily struggling, though unloved and lonely,
Every day a rich reward will give ;
Thou wilt find, by hearty striving only,
And truly loving, thou canst truly live.”

“The charities that soothe, and heal, and bless,
Are scattered at the feet of man, like flowers.”

WORDSWORTH.

CHRISTMAS! Merry Christmas! It rang clearly and blithesomely upon the winter air, echoed by the musical tones of childhood, and the husky, tremulous voice of age grew strong as it uttered the familiar greeting. Merry Christmas! floated up from many a dark alley and narrow lane; and the joyous words rose above the clang of loom and spindle, when Margaret entered the weaving room. Young girls were huddled in corners, exhibiting, under the shelter of aprons and handkerchiefs, the presents of Santa Claus.

“Here comes Lightfoot. What did you find in your stocking, Margy?”

“Nothing.”

“Nothing! Why, Margy, I never knew you to tell even a white lie before.”

“Positively nothing, girls.”

“Ah, that means a coach and four from Mr. Stanley, and a dozen pious books from your parson.”

"You give me the credit of having generous friends, as well as capacious stockings."

"Come, now, Busy Bee," coaxingly teased another, "tell us what you did have for a present."

"Nothing but breakfast, upon my word, girls."

"I declare, 'tis too bad! There isn't a girl who works in our room that deserves half so many presents, and all the rest of us have something," exclaimed Jane Brown. "Girls, let us get her up a present. What will you give?"

"Ten cents," "Ninepence," "A shilling," "A quarter," called out voices joyous and musical with good humor and generous feeling; while Jane Brown turned her bonnet bottom-side up for a contribution box, and gathered in the shining bits, in spite of Margaret's earnest entreaties that they would do no such thing.

"Three dollars! Well done, girls! What shall we buy for Margy?"

Some called one thing, and some another, but at last they all agreed upon a plain gold ring, and Jane Brown was unanimously chosen to select it.

"Do listen to reason, girls; let me say one word;" but, before Margaret could finish her sentence, a handkerchief from behind was passed around her mouth, while another girl forcibly held her hands, until Jane could be hurried off to the nearest jeweller's.

"If you would only have allowed me to speak, girls," said Margaret, when the freedom of speech was again vouchsafed her, "I was going to ask you to send that three dollars to the sick overseer, who used to be so kind to us.

He has a wife and three little children, and they are very poor."

"How did you find it out, Margy?" asked one.

"I called there, last week, to get his wife to make my cloak, for she's a dressmaker; and I found they had little or nothing to depend upon besides her sewing."

"Don't you like rings?" asked another, "who scarcely believed that benevolence could prompt her to forego the pleasure of an ornament.

"Oh yes; I always thought plain gold rings very pretty; but I could do without one, much better than Mrs. Lambert's little boys can do without shoes."

There were a great many thoughtful faces among the group of girls, who separated, and took their stations at the different looms; and more than one vision of a scanty home, and a patient, careworn mother, flitted before eyes that were bent upon the rapidly moving shuttles. Many a New England fireside had sent its fairest flower to bloom, and fade, and wither in the hot and unwholesome air of the cotton mills in Preston, because the relentless hand of poverty was upon the homestead farm; and the father, with a tremulous "God bless you, my child!" must send away his oldest, with her mother's tears warm upon her cheek. It was no wonder, then, that the Christmas greetings were a little sobered by the mention that Margaret had made of suffering and poverty.

"Here comes Jane Brown. Let us see your purchase. Come, girls; never mind broken threads, till you've seen the ring," called out one of the merriest of the weavers.

"Isn't it a beauty?" said one.

"You are famous for a trade, Janet," said another.

"Marked, as I live, with Margaret's initials!" exclaimed a third.

"That's fortunate," chimed in the fourth; "for if it hadn't been marked, Margaret would have exchanged it for three pairs of cowhide shoes for the little Lamberts."

"Didn't you want the ring?" asked Jane.

"Now that you've been so generous as to give it to me, I shall be very proud of it," answered Margaret. "I think it's a beauty, and it fits exactly," she added, holding up her small finger, with its unusual decoration, to the gaze of her companions. "Now, I shall feel a great deal happier in wearing it, if we can all put a few cents into the hat for Mrs. Lambert, and her little boys."

There were no dissenting voices, and Jane was again called upon to bear around the bonnet. Every one knew whose gift was the silver dollar, though no one had seen Margaret deposit it; and it was settled that Margaret and Jane should have the pleasure of taking the donation to Mr. Lambert's family, on their homeward route.

Those who have carried a few homely but necessary articles into the abodes of poverty, and have witnessed the deep emotion and tearful gratitude with which they were received, will rarely purchase expensive ornaments and useless gifts; at least, so thought Jane and Margaret, as they closed the door of Mrs. Lambert's humble room, with her grateful blessing resting like a soft dew upon their hearts.

Margaret threaded her way home through the dimly lighted streets, thinking how many pleasures even factory girls may enjoy, if they cultivate the germs of charity.

"You are a little later than usual," said Mrs. Green, when Margaret entered the supper room.

"Yes, ma'am; Jane Brown and I went a little out of our way, to see Mr. Lambert's family. But you mustn't keep the table standing for me, Mrs. Green; I can just as well take my supper in the kitchen, with Nancy."

"You'll do no such thing, Margaret; 'tis no trouble to me for the table to be kept in waiting."

"Mrs. Green, did you know I never had a home before so pleasant as yours, and that you seem very near to me—almost like a mother?"

Margaret stood by the hearth, and her hand rested on the back of Mrs. Green's chair, as she spoke. The good lady laid down her knitting, and drew the maiden upon her lap, caressing her with gentle, motherly tenderness; and then, as if ashamed of her womanly weakness, she pushed her gently toward the supper table, saying, with an effort to laugh, and thereby hide a certain kind of tremulousness in her voice: "You are spoiling me, Margaret, with your pretty ways, and by and by you'll be taking yourself away with a great piece of my heart."

"You mean the whole of it, dear Mrs. Green. But I haven't shown you the present which the mill girls made me this morning;" and Margaret slipped the ornament from her finger, and passed it over to Mrs. Green, whose hand rested on the tea urn.

"It's a beautiful ring, and you deserve it, dear. Factory girls have hearts as well as the rest of us, and I'd be willing to say it before Deborah Haskins."

Dear, good Mrs. Green! If there was anybody's opinion she particularly feared, 'twas that of her neighbor, Mrs. Deborah Haskins.

"I wouldn't wonder if you found that some people could make presents as well as the factory girls," said Mrs. Green, when Margaret took a lamp to go to her chamber for the book which she had been in the habit of bringing down to read by the dining-room fire since the cold weather came on. There was a smile of satisfaction upon her good-natured face, as she plied her knitting needles, and waited Margaret's light footfall.

The young maiden returned, with a cashmere scarf thrown over her shoulders, and bearing in her arms a large package, which she had not opened. Laying the package upon the table, she dropped upon her knees by Mrs. Green's side, and, resting her arms upon the woman's lap, without speaking, she gazed up in her smiling face.

"How sober you look, Margaret; a body would think you didn't like presents, to see the tears in your eyes. Come, get up, child, and look in the glass. I've never seen anything so becoming to your complexion as this scarf."

"Pray tell me, Mrs. Green, who has been so very kind to me."

"One should never ask questions about Christmas presents, dear."

"But I can't think of any one who would select such a useful and beautiful present for me, but yourself."

"Well, supposing I did; hasn't an old woman the right to please herself, once in a while?"

"Oh! Mrs. Green, I can never pay you for so much kindness."

"I don't want any pay, child; and, besides, you've more than paid, by the helping hand you lent Nancy when I was sick, last week. I dropped into Hamilton's yesterday, and I thought this crimson scarf would look so handsome with your green cloak, that I couldn't help buying it. Get up now, dear, and open this package, that a porter boy left for you this afternoon."

Margaret rose, and opened the bundle. "Prescott's Conquest of Mexico," in three large, handsomely bound volumes, and her own name, in gilt letters, upon the covers.

"What does it mean, dear Mrs. Green? I should think some such fairy as Jem O'Harry used to talk about, had been showering gifts upon me."

"It means, that some other folks think as I do, dear. But there's a note on the floor, that you threw down with the wrappers; perhaps that will explain."

Margaret picked up the note, and, opening, read: "Mr. James Stanley begs Miss Foster will accept the accompanying volumes of history, as a Christmas token of good will, and oblige her friend." She read the note twice carefully, to be sure there was no mistake, and then, dropping it upon the table, turned to Mrs. Green.

"I cannot keep these books, ma'am."

"What in the world is the reason, dear, when you are so fond of reading? Who sent them?"

"Mr. Stanley."

"How kind! I always knew he was generous. But

you mustn't cut out Laura Thompson, for she's set her heart upon having him."

"I shall send the books back," said Margaret, slowly picking up the brown wrappers, and enclosing the volumes.

Mrs. Green arose, and looked at the books.

"What a pity to send them back, when Mr. Stanley has taken so much pains! And your name on the covers, too. He's heard me speak of your fondness for books, and meant to do you a real favor."

"Do you think so, Mrs. Green?" asked Margaret, holding the wrappers hesitatingly in her hand.

"Certainly, dear; he's made up of good nature and generosity. I only wish he was a little more fond of Laura, for I'm afraid she'll take it sadly to heart, one of these days."

Mrs. Green looked only on the surface of things, and she didn't know that the article which served Laura Thompson for a heart was made of wax, and had been moulded into various forms before James Stanley took it for a plaything.

Margaret looked wistfully at the books. They were exactly what she wanted, and her own name on the covers! She thought how much pleasure they would have given her, if anybody else had presented them; while Mrs. Green stood by her side, enumerating the donor's amiable traits of character, and dwelling largely upon the unhappiness which Margaret would occasion by returning his polite gifts.

Margaret thought how sincerely sorry Mr. Stanley had seemed because his freedom had annoyed her, and made her ill. She thought, too, of his kindness in sending a carriage when it rained; of certain reproachful glances that he had

cast upon her, when she had glided quietly from a room to avoid speaking with him. "If I send back the books," she mused, "he'll think I'm resentful and unforgiving. Oh! if Maurice were only here to advise me."

Margaret's fear of wounding another's feelings conquered, and she took the books and scarf back to her own room, with a few tears of regret, but more of genuine gratitude.

The young girl had been blessed with few friends and few pleasures. It was not strange that a yearning, passionate nature like hers, so long cramped and starved for want of kindness, should incline tenderly toward those who now lavished it upon her.

Mr. Stanley pronounced the timid air, drooping lids, and modest blush of the maiden, when she thanked him for his kind gift, "perfectly fascinating! Bewitching eyes and hair! Would be a beauty, if she wasn't a trifle too brown. Lucky fellow, upon my word! My delicate attentions have quite brushed away from her little heart the ugly impression which my awkward beginning made; but I fancy I know how to tack about when I get started wrong. I shall have her magnificent eyes on my own terms soon, if I'm only a little wary and cautious."

God save thee, poor Madge!

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE TEMPTATION.

"Hear me forswear man's sympathies,
 His pleasant yea and no ;
 His riot on the piteous earth
 Whereon his thistles grow !
 His changing love—with stars above !
 His pride—with graves below !"

MRS. BROWNING.

"This above all—to thine own self be true ;
 And it must follow, as the night the day,
 Thou canst not then be false to any man."

SHAKESPEARE.

MARGARET was almost glad that a portion of the machinery in the room where she worked needed repairs, and the first day of March was set apart for the purpose. This would give the tired girls a holiday, and Margaret would make a long-promised visit to her Sabbath-school teacher. She was greatly in want of Miss Johnson's advice just now, for Mr. Stanley had invited her to attend a great ball with him, to be held in the City Hall on the evening of the fourth. The good citizens of Preston were in the habit of showing their republicanism in this way, and celebrating the inauguration of their chief magistrate, by the despoiling of white satins and patent kids. Margaret had politely declined Mr. Stanley's invitation ; but, with equal politeness, he had urged her to think of it for a day or two ; and as Mrs. Green, to whom she had confided the matter, thought there could be no

possible harm in going just for once, she decided, if Miss Johnson's opinion coincided with Mrs. Green's, that she would accept the invitation.

Miss Johnson greeted her pupil with warm cordiality; and, after introducing her to her mother and sister, and asking her many questions about her employment, reading, and studies, she opened the door of a small back parlor, saying: "Walk in this way, Miss Foster, and I will show you my books. We call this room a library, but 'tis a sort of school room, for I hear the recitations of my young brothers, and some of my pupils, in this room. I have my piano and guitar here, too."

It was a very pretty room, with a neat carpet, plain furniture, and three or four small study tables. On one side, a fine collection of shells, which Captain Johnson had brought from his foreign voyages, was neatly arranged, and on the opposite side stood a bookcase, with well-filled shelves. Miss Johnson saw that Margaret's eye lingered upon the books, and she opened the glass doors, taking down many of the volumes, and describing their peculiar merits. "Here is something, Margaret, which I value very highly, not only for its genuine worth, but because it was presented by a class of pupils last New Year. I wish you could find time to read it, for I remember that you like history, and this of Prescott's is as fascinating as a novel."

"I've been reading it since Christmas. One of Mrs. Green's boarders made me a present of it, and I've nearly finished it now."

"You must have been very industrious. Do you like it?"

“Oh yes; better than any other history I’ve ever read, though I’ve only studied a history of the United States with Mrs. Kempton, and read three volumes of Hume by myself.”

“If you see anything in my collection of books that you would like, I shall be glad to lend it to you.”

“You are very good, Miss Johnson. I had a friend, once, who used to read Shakspeare a great deal; but he said I wasn’t old enough to read poetry then. I’m nearly two years older now, and, if you think I could understand it, I shall be very glad to read it.”

“I dare say you’ll like it, and understand it, too, though there are some words and phrases which are not used in modern writings. Mine is bound in three volumes—Histories, Comedies, and Tragedies, separately. You had better take the volume of Histories first, as you are reading Hume. But, Margaret, you have never told me about this friend, who loved Shakspeare.”

“It was Mrs. Hardy’s son, Maurice.”

“Was he at home when you left?”

“No, ma’am; he hadn’t been at home much for a good many years.”

“Where is he now?”

“He’s a professor in a college in Uptonville, Tennessee.”

“And you haven’t seen him for two years?”

“It will be two years next fall.”

The deep blush on Margaret’s face, and her tremulous tones, puzzled Miss Johnson. “Two years since she’s seen him, and she couldn’t have been more than thirteen—a mere child, too young to have fallen in love. But what does this

emotion mean, if he were only a common friend?" mused Miss Johnson, as she tried to read Margaret's secret in the scarlet face and quivering lip that were bent over an engraving. She drew her pupil to a small sofa, and seated herself beside her.

Margaret, with an apparent effort to turn the current of her own thoughts, as well as Miss Johnson's, was the first to speak. "Do you ever go to balls?"

"I've not been to one for several years."

"Do you approve of them?"

"I do not think it wise or prudent for young girls to go often, even when they can be attended by a father or a brother. Why do you ask?"

"Because Mr. Stanley invited me to go with him, next Thursday evening, and Mrs. Green thinks 'tis perfectly proper."

"Who is Mr. Stanley?"

"A young clerk, who boards with Mrs. Green."

"Do you dance?"

"No; and I've never seen anybody."

"Then I suppose you are very anxious to attend this ball?"

"I don't care much about going. I would rather spend the evening with you, or in reading; but Mr. Stanley has been kind to me, and I don't want to disoblige him."

"I believe you told me you were putting your earnings into the Savings' Bank, in order to lay aside something to educate yourself. Do you know that a dress suitable for a ball room will be quite expensive?"

"I haven't thought anything about that."

"Well, let us think of it together. The cheapest and most becoming dress you can wear will be white muslin; and a very plain one, without ornaments, will cost at least six dollars; then you must wear white kid gloves, and pretty slippers; and a very moderate estimate of your whole expense will be eight dollars. You will lose a great deal of precious time in preparation for the ball, to say nothing about the desire which this indulgence will create for similar pleasures. Do you think Mr. Stanley is such a gentleman as Mrs. Kempton or Maurice would have been willing to trust you with?"

"He's not at all like Maurice. I shall not go to the ball, and I'm so glad that I came up here to ask your advice, for I hadn't thought about the expense; and eight dollars would do poor Mrs. Lambert so much good."

"You had better say nothing about the expense to Mr. Stanley; for, if he's like most young men, and anxious for you to go, he'll offer to defray it; but it is never well to accept presents from young gentlemen, unless they are relatives, for it places us under a sort of obligation to them, and we cannot act as freely as we should otherwise."

"If I hadn't accepted Mr. Stanley's Christmas present, I shouldn't have thought of going to the ball; but it seemed impolite to refuse, after all his kindness to me."

"It may be there isn't even the shadow of kindness in his attentions to you. I wish you would always talk with me before you accept his presents, or go anywhere with him; for I'm many years older than you, and have seen much more of the world."

"I'm very glad you give me the privilege of coming to you, for I often feel very friendless," said Margaret, rising to go.

"Stay a minute longer, and I will play you some simple music, if you will like to hear it."

Margaret looked her thanks, and Miss Johnson seated herself at the piano, and played several pieces with a nicely delicate touch and expression. Noticing the deep interest with which her guest listened to the music, she said: "I hope you will have the pleasure of playing for yourself, one of these days."

"I do not dare hope as much as that. If I can get a thorough education, enough to teach, I shall be very thankful."

"I will come in and read Shakspeare with you, Thursday evening, Margaret," said Miss Johnson, as she bade her pupil good-by.

"Oh! I shall be glad to see you; and I think we can be quite alone, for Mrs. Green's boarders will very likely be gone."

Margaret walked home with a firmer and more elastic step than had borne her to the house of her friend; but a temptation, more artfully gilded than any which had before tested the young girl's strength, awaited her entrance. A small box stood upon her table, and a sealed note lay upon its lid. She tore it open.

"Miss Foster will please accept the enclosed articles from her friend, J. S."

Margaret at first thought she would return the box un-

opened ; but then, there could be no possible harm in looking at its contents. She raised the lid. The first article that met her eye was a cameo pin, in a gold setting of beautiful workmanship ; then came a silk dress pattern, much too expensive and elegant for a young girl, but of chaste and delicate colors—for Mr. Stanley prided himself upon his faultless taste. In fine, the box contained a complete ball attire, not omitting a broad sash for the waist, white kid gloves, and satin slippers.

“How beautiful!” Margaret could not help exclaiming aloud, as she held the slipper on her upraised hand. She had never seen anything of the kind before. It was so natural for the young maiden to wish to see if it fitted. “How could Mr. Stanley know what size to get?”—and her eye rested admiringly on the small foot encased in the pretty slipper. She did not know that a small foot and ankle never escaped the notice of Mr. Stanley, and that his intellect was incapable of forming a correct judgment upon anything more important than the size of a slipper.

Now Mr. Stanley had very adroitly removed the great obstacle which stood in the way of Margaret’s attending the ball. He rightly supposed that she could ill afford the expense of an outfit, and that so inexperienced a miss could not summon sufficient courage to resist the desire of seeing herself arrayed in the beautiful dress he had selected. Then, the young man could not have the pleasure which he anticipated in introducing a young maiden to the fascinations of the ball room, marred by cheap and commonplace attire. “My bird must have handsome feathers ; and if her shy,

naive manners, and soul-melting eyes, don't provoke some of the veteran belles, no matter. Everybody will be wanting to know who she is, and I mustn't forget to give my juvenile a hint to keep dark about the mills. They'll think she's the future Mrs. Stanley; and, 'pon my word, I should be half inclined to raise her to that honor, if I could afford to be vexed with a family."

Margaret trifled long with the contents of the box—fastened the pin to a ribbon on her neck, and threw a fold of the silk around her shoulders, to try the effect upon her complexion; but the face that looked forth from the mirror did not wear the bright, joyous look which it had worn when she knelt upon the grassy margin of the brook, to see the reflection of her new calico gown in its clear waters.

She thought how patiently she had toiled to purchase that gown; how kindly Mrs. Kempton had aided her; and how pleased Maurice had looked, when she told him its history. She felt sure that Maurice would not approve of balls; and would not think it right to spend so much money on a single evening's entertainment. Then, should she go to one ball with Mr. Stanley, decked out in his costly trappings, how could she refuse to accept any favor which he might proffer hereafter?

The maiden slowly folded the articles, and replaced them in the box, closed its lid, and knelt by her bedside. A warm gush of tears fell upon the neat coverlet, and never in her life before had the orphan felt more keenly her desolateness and want of protection. "When I am weak, then am I strong." Surely, Margaret's weakness had brought her

strength ; for, when she heard Mr. Stanley's step in the hall she sprang up, and, taking the box, went down to meet him. He was waiting for her at the bottom of the stairs ; and, seeing her eyes red with weeping, and tears still upon her face, he did not wait for her to speak, but, opening the parlor door, drew her in. "Pray, what has happened, Miss Foster?"

"Nothing, sir ; only I cannot go to the ball, and I cannot take your presents, though I'm greatly obliged for your kindness."

Stanley took no notice of the box which Margaret extended to him, and she laid it upon a table.

"Not go to the ball, Miss Foster ! You have never seen anything half so grand ! The National Guards will be there, dressed all in uniform, with white pants, scarlet sashes, and gilt epaulettes. Bragdon's band will give us the most enchanting music. Then there will be scores of ladies fluttering in silks, and satins, and ribbons, and every one of them would give her eyes to exchange beaux with you."

Margaret made no reply.

"Come, Margaret, I haven't told you of the delicious supper of oysters, ice-creams, cakes, and wines. You'll never have a better chance to see the gentility, and mingle with fashionable society."

"I never dance, Mr. Stanley, and I should feel awkward, and out of my place."

"I'll answer for that, for I've never seen you awkward anywhere yet. I've taken great care that your dress shall be as handsome as anybody's. And then, there isn't a lady in

Preston that has such magnificent eyes, and such splendid curls as these.”

He raised the dark, silky masses in his hand as he spoke, and, when a repulsive movement of Margaret's caused him to release them, his hand rested familiarly upon her shoulder.

“Just think how Miss Thompson will envy you! She's been counting on my company to the ball, and has bought a flashy pink silk on purpose to wear. She'll wash the indigo all out of her eyes with tears of vexation.”

Mr. Stanley had now made a great mistake, in supposing Margaret would be influenced by the mean and petty desire of rivalling one of her own sex. The very thought of Miss Thompson's disappointment and mortification, had she no other reason, would detain Margaret from the ball. She had hesitated long in deciding, lest her refusal should give Mr. Stanley pain; but when she saw how he exulted over Miss Thompson's discomfiture, she thought that a nature selfish enough to glory in another's unhappiness, could not be seriously wounded by her refusal.

“Mr. Stanley, I'm sorry you bought these things for me. I cannot go to the ball, and they are much too fine for a girl in my situation. Perhaps Miss Thompson can use them.”

“Do you think I'm going to deck out that faded rose in the delicate shades which I selected for my fresh young bud? And, then, she couldn't get her great toe into these little slippers! Come, Margaret, you can't refuse to oblige me this once.”

“I must, Mr. Stanley. This one indulgence might create

desires which I cannot gratify; and I should lose all relish for such simple pleasures as I can afford to enjoy."

She moved toward the door, but Stanley placed himself against it, to prevent her departure.

"You talk like a parson, my pretty dear; but, if you like this ball, you shall always have plenty of such pleasures, and I'll take care that you are dressed like a princess, only asking one of your modest, bewitching smiles, to pay me for my trouble."

The maiden's lip quivered, and large drops trembled beneath her drooping lids. Stanley noted all this, and, mistaking her emotion for indecision, he thought a few smooth words and artful caresses would gain his point. He approached cautiously, and threw his arm around her waist, calling her a pretty, frightened bird, and laughing because she trembled in his arms, and struggled so vainly to free herself.

"Mr. Stanley, if you don't let me go, I'll scream as loudly as ever I can for Mrs. Green."

"Don't, dear; I should feel awfully to see Mrs. Green, Miss Thompson, and Nancy, all rushing in with the broomstick, poker, and mop. Come—if you won't cry, nor scream, and will take this box, you shall go."

Margaret fled to her own room. No matter, now, how carefully Mr. Stanley might weave the net in which he intended to secure his prize; no matter how many golden threads were mingled in its meshes; the pure and delicate instincts of the maiden's soul revolted against his bold, ungenerous conduct, and his artful attentions would not deceive

her in the future. Her eye had penetrated through the painted mist in which he was enveloped.

She shed no tears, when she gained the seclusion of her own room, though this wealth of woman lay in a large fountain so near her lids, that sometimes a slight incident would unlock the gates, and cause a copious overflow; but she bathed her flushed face and swollen eyes, smoothed her curls, and prepared to answer the summons of the tea bell. She was silent during the meal; but she was always shy and reserved, excepting when alone with Mrs. Green, and that lady saw nothing unusual in her boarder's appearance. And then, Miss Thompson was in such genial spirits, and pretty little nothings flowed so fluently and rapidly from her tongue, that there was no great necessity for any one else to make an effort to be agreeable.

She had entered the parlor at a favorable moment, before Stanley had recovered from the vexation of Margaret's refusal; and, being too earthy in his nature to form any just conceptions of a true, womanly soul, he supposed that Margaret would be piqued if he suddenly transferred his attentions to Miss Thompson, thinking that all ladies so fortunate as to come within the pale of his fascinations must be rivals for his affection; therefore Miss Thompson's blushing happiness was the natural result of Stanley's invitation.

But his heart was not so moved toward his "faded rose" as to bestow upon her the contents of the box designed for Margaret; and, taking it to the kitchen, he ordered Nancy to place it on Miss Foster's table during the evening meal. Margaret was startled and surprised to find it there; and the

accompanying note, which assured her, that if she returned the box again, he should burn its contents, troubled her, and left her in doubt what course to pursue. It seemed a great pity to waste so many valuable articles, when Mrs. Lambert's little children were suffering for clothes; and she decided to put the box away until she could talk with Miss Johnson about it.

Mrs. Green was surprised to know that Margaret was not going to the ball; but when she had listened to the girl's reasons, she seemed very well pleased, and said: "After all, one pays dearly for the whistle, that goes to a ball. You are so tired with standing, and walking, and seeing gay colors, and very likely to be sick with headache next day. I believe church members generally don't approve of dancing, though I think 'tis a harmless amusement for young folks. You are very thoughtful and discreet, dear; and, on the whole, I'm glad you are not going."

Margaret,

———"As thy tender years depart,
Keep that pure and innocent heart!"

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE FOURTH OF MARCH BALL.

“The best-laid schemes o’ mice an’ men
Gang aft a’gloy,
An’ leave us nought but grief an’ pain,
For promised joy.”—BURNS.

THERE was great fluttering and commotion in the city of Preston, the day before the ball was to come off. Many a young girl sorrowed because no gay cavalier had solicited her attendance. Two or three of the factory girls were among the favored expectants, and they wearied Margaret with their glowing descriptions of the beautiful dresses which they had spent the whole of their last quarter’s savings to obtain.

But in all the groups of anxious mammas and happy young belles gathered in boudoirs and bedrooms, holding important consultations over silks, ribbons, and flowers, there was not one in so delightful a flutter as Miss Thompson.

“Do step in this way a minute,” she called, as Margaret went past her door, and was seeking a book in her own room.

Margaret paused at the entrance. There stood Miss Thompson, with generous quantities of the flashy pink silk depending from her waist, which, thanks to Miss Harvey’s skill, lacked none of the graceful roundness of early youth; but, owing to the scantiness of the pattern, or the abundance of the skirt, the material seemed to have fallen short before

it reached the shoulders, and these important appendages to the "elaborated whole," together with the arms, were most cruelly exposed. However, a delicate lace bertha partly made amends for the lack of the silk; and what matter, if the arms were bare, so long as the hands were gloved? Her light-brown hair had been coaxed, with the aid of hot irons, into very becoming curls around her forehead, while an artificial wreath of rosebuds and lily of the valley crowned and partly concealed the very modest braid beneath.

"I thought I'd just call you in, as you've never been to a ball, and may never have another opportunity of seeing any one in a full evening dress. How do I look?"

"Oh! very gay, indeed; my eyes are almost dazzled."

"Isn't this pink becoming? It gives me a lovely color. I should like to take you along, Miss Foster, to see what effect the splendid music, dancing, and military, will have upon you. But you haven't any suitable dress to wear; and then, Mr. Stanley might be displeased; gentlemen don't like to divide their attentions, you know."

Miss Thompson was so satisfied with her appearance, as she turned, and balanced, and practised certain mysterious evolutions before her mirror, that she did not seem to expect any reply from Margaret to her very unusual burst of generosity.

"There's only one thing wanting now," she exclaimed, "to make me perfectly happy—a charming bouquet of natural flowers. I saw a perfect love, this morning, at Davy's, and told Mr. Stanley about it; but the dear soul had so many things to think of, that he forgot to bring it."

“It’s a pity for you not to have it, when its possession will give you so much pleasure. I’ll go down to Davy’s for it, if you think there will be time before the hack calls.”

“There’s a dear, good girl, now! Run like a cat, lest you shouldn’t be in time.”

Whether or no Margaret acted according to instructions, and imitated the quick, graceful motions of puss, is a matter of some doubt; but certain it is, the “perfect love” arrived in season to put Miss Thompson into bewitching transports; and, most fortunately, she had descended to the parlor, and Mr. Stanley witnessed the presentation.

He was charmingly attentive to his “faded rose.” Perhaps his knowledge of its evanescent sweetness might induce him to enjoy its frail beauty and fragrance while he might; and, then, the days of its “sere and yellow leaf” were fast approaching, and our exquisite must turn to fairer blossoms. He carried her precious bouquet and feather-tipped fan in his own hand; and once, when he was quite sure that Margaret was observing, he leaned tenderly toward her, till there was great danger of displacing Miss Thompson’s fair curls with his dark locks, and whispered something in her ear, which very perceptibly increased her blushing confusion.

But the hack bore them away before Mrs. Green’s patience was quite exhausted, or anything like envy and regret had disturbed the quiet current of Margaret’s thoughts; and if Miss Thompson found perfect happiness in the exciting pleasures of the evening, those whom God has created for infinitely higher enjoyments should be thankful that they are not obliged to seek happiness in the ball room.

Mrs. Green had just secured a comfortable position with her knitting, and Margaret was bending over a volume of Shakspeare, when Miss Johnson was ushered in.

"I was afraid you wouldn't come, because I wanted so much to see you!" exclaimed Margaret, aiding in the removal of her friend's bonnet and shawl.

"I did not forget my promise, though I am a little late. I waited for a friend, who was coming down near your place, and he'll call for me at half past nine."

Mrs. Green made some affectionate inquiries about her mother, the absence of Captain Johnson, and her own employments, and then gathered up her knitting, and left Margaret alone with her friend.

"I'm glad to find you at home, Margaret, for I was afraid you might go to the ball. It was a great temptation for one so young."

"Oh! Miss Johnson, the greatest temptation all came after I saw you;" and then Margaret related the story of her present, and the scene in the parlor.

"I have always given you the credit of being wise beyond your years, but I had no idea you possessed so much womanly strength."

"Indeed, I wasn't strong, but very weak. You did not see the tears of regret I shed, when I put the beautiful things away."

"Well, your better feelings conquered, and I'm glad you returned his presents, for he will not be likely to annoy you in this way again."

"Yes, I did return his presents; and when he urged me

to take them, even if I would not go to the ball, I ran from the parlor, and left them; but he sent the box to my room again, with another note, saying, if I returned it, he should burn its contents."

"And you have it now?"

"Yes; it seemed a great pity to burn up such beautiful things, so I put the box away, without trusting myself to open it, till I could ask you what to do with it."

Miss Johnson gazed thoughtfully at the embers on the hearth, without speaking.

"Was I wrong in keeping the box?" Margaret asked, at length.

"I do not know as you could have done differently. After two or three decided and ladylike refusals of his gifts, if he thrusts them back upon you in this way, he ought not to take any encouragement from any use you may make of them, though I would never gratify his vanity by wearing any of the articles of his choice."

"I'm sure I never can, Miss Johnson; I so thoroughly dislike him."

"The silk is probably too light and showy to be of much service to you; but I was thinking, just now, that, if you wish, I can exchange it with a friend of father's, who is an importer of silks, and procure, instead, a plain and becoming article, which will be of real service to you when you attend school."

"Oh! thank you; I can save the more money for my board, if we can turn his foolish gifts into something useful."

"Have you any choice of colors?"

Margaret hesitated. "Mrs. Kempton used to wear a plain brown silk, that I liked; but she had a green one, that was very handsome."

"Either of those colors would be suitable for you, Margaret; but you may bring down the box, if you please, and show me its contents."

The articles under discussion were soon displayed to Miss Johnson, and she wondered more than ever at the strength and courage which the young girl had shown in resisting the temptation to wear them.

"This box is so light, that I can easily carry it home with me to-night, if you will trust it to my keeping."

"Do with it anything you like, Miss Johnson; I'm very glad to be rid of it."

"Margaret, you have shown so much prudence in this whole affair, that I don't know as I've any need to feel anxious on your account; but I don't understand Mr. Stanley's attentions. You will, of course, avoid him, and repulse all of his advances; for, however honorable his intentions may be to you, it would be very unfortunate to become entangled in a love affair when you are so young, and should bend all the energies of your mind upon the great object of educating yourself. I should advise you to seek another boarding place; but 'tis so difficult for an operative to get board in respectable families, and then you might be exposed to greater evils than you will be here. Perhaps 'tis necessary that you should have these trials, that your Christian faith may be tested, and your heart purified for some noble work in our Master's vineyard."

“I have sometimes thought of leaving Mrs. Green’s; but she is so kind and motherly to me, and her home is so quiet and pleasant, that I cannot bear to go among strangers again.”

“Well, everything considered, I think you had better remain; and if Mr. Stanley is only a trifler, your unyielding, modest deportment may convince him that there is more strength, truth, and purity in our sex than he gives us credit for. Some young gentlemen seem to fancy we are all so vain and silly that they can trample upon our best affections with impunity, thinking, perhaps, that, like some herbs, the more they are crushed, the sweeter the fragrance.”

Miss Johnson and her pupil had but a short time for reading Shakspeare; but Margaret retired with a sweet consciousness of happiness, which none of the revellers in the ball room enjoyed. The evening with Miss Johnson had brought back so freshly the pleasant hours in the parsonage study, that Lucy Kempton’s soft voice seemed lulling her to sleep; and a panorama, half shrouded in mist, floated before her. Maurice, Mrs. Kempton, and Jem O’Harry seemed drawing her away from a precipice, whose verge was bordered with golden-hued flowers, and over whose brink hovered gay-plumaged birds beckoning her on with enchanting strains. The scene changed, and the hawthorn-skirted lane, the brook with its mossy stones and violet-covered banks, and the lily-fringed pond passed before her, and the robin in the old apple tree poured forth his most joyous and inspiring song. It was only a dream; but “dreams are high and unshapen beauties,” oftentimes angel guests—light, fleecy

clouds upon the mind, that soften and subdue the light of day.

Through Miss Johnson's influence, Margaret's gay ball-room dress was exchanged for a pattern of sober, brown silk, and the satin slippers for serviceable boots; while the pin, being of a fashionable style and nice workmanship, was disposed of at a jeweller's for its worth in money. Margaret decided to lay these things aside for the future, and regard them as favorable indications that Providence would convert the evils that assailed her into temporal and spiritual blessings.

Miss Thompson was enthusiastic in her brilliant descriptions of the pleasures of the ball room, and very unsparing in her use of adjectives. It gave her a fruitful theme to converse upon for a whole week. But even the roses which she culled were not thornless; for one of the breadths of her charming pink silk received the contents of an oyster bowl; and in the delightful whirl of a waltz, her new cameo pin became dislodged, and the merciless heel of one of the dancers ground it into the floor of the hall. And then, she told Mrs. Green, in a confidential way, that dear Mr. Stanley didn't seem at all like himself after refreshments. She had never seen him so witty and sparkling as he was before the supper; but the ice creams, or the wines, or something, made him so dizzy that he couldn't dance, and he complained so much of headache, that she ordered a carriage, and came home with him, although, by so doing, she missed of dancing a polka with Major Somebody, and disappointed a young lieutenant, with whom she had engaged to waltz.

She was sorry, for they were the most fascinating men—always excepting Mr. Stanley—she had ever seen. The glare of so many lights, too, gave her a headache, which even the starry memories of the evening could not charm away.

Mr. Stanley's pale face and inflamed eyes were a sufficient evidence that some pleasures are more delightful in anticipation than in retrospect.



CHAPTER XXXIII.

EVERY-DAY EVENTS.

"A few fair deeds bedeck my life,
Like gilded cherubs on a tomb."—BAILEY.

"The verdure and greenness of life's pilgrimage come not from mines of gold, but from little acts of kindness, charity, and love."—MRS. ELLIS.

THE world moved on as usual after the ball, and 'tis not recorded that the March winds blew abroad the fame of its splendors with more noise than they were wont to bestow upon the commonest affairs of life. The looms and the spindles moved on, too, pausing not for the sleepy eyes, aching heads, and tired feet of the "favored few" who went to the ball.

But Jane Brown had not been seen in the weaving room since the fourth, and one, two, three days had passed since then. Margaret missed her pleasant, good-natured face, for

Jane was one of the most amiable and social of the weavers. The two girls, for several months, had taken their cold dinners together, and over their little baskets had dropped tears for each other's sorrows. Jane had wept because Margaret was an orphan, and Margaret had wept because Jane was blessed with the love of kindred. Sorrowing sympathies had brought the dewy wealth to Jane's eyes, and rejoicing sympathy to Margaret's.

Jane, too, was hoarding her weekly earnings, not because she hoped or particularly cared for an education, but because her generous heart could not allow her widowed mother to struggle alone in supporting the younger children. She had been in the Preston mills five years, and, during that time, her earnings had often been the sole reliance of her mother, when sickness had obliged her to lay aside the "seam, gusset, and band."

The sister next in age to Jane had received a spinal injury in childhood, by falling from a swing, and "Lame Lottie" could only add a mite to the maintenance of herself, by embroideries and nettings, which were often wrought in extreme physical pain. The oldest sister heroically absented herself from home, when she was little more than a child, and most praiseworthily denied herself of many luxuries for the sake of the household band gathered under an old moss-grown roof among the White Hills. Mrs. Brown's nice Bay State shawl, lame Lottie's comfortable wrapper, Nathan's winter coat and new geography, were a small portion of the home comforts which the absent sister's toil procured.

Jane wrought proudly and cheerfully, asking no reward

but the weekly letter from sister Lottie, and perhaps a loving, hasty postscript from mother, telling her how she had made over an old garment for little Tom, so that he could go to school, and how nicely the shoes fitted which she sent home by a neighboring farmer. If Jane has one of these inspiring epistles in her pocket, what cares she for her own well-worn dress and faded mantle, even though fair young ladies, muffled in velvets and furs, sweep coldly and scornfully past?

But Jane is not always well. Margaret has often seen her press her hand upon her side, while a look of intense suffering rested for a moment on her patient face; and she fears this unusual absence from the mills must be caused by illness. A little addition to her usual walk will lead her past Jane's boarding place, and Margaret cannot go home another night, without knowing if her friend is in need of assistance and sympathy.

"Sick! Janet, what does this mean?" asked Margaret, bending over the chair where her friend sat, wrapped in shawls, and propped with pillows.

"It means that I've been foolish and wicked. Oh! Margaret, I have so wanted to see you since last Thursday! I could not have waited another day, without sending for you."

Jane could scarcely enunciate for hoarseness, and her words sounded as if they were drawn through several folds of flannel.

"I'm sorry, now, that I didn't come before; but tell me, what is the matter, Janet, and what makes you so hoarse?"

"I caught a shocking cold by going to the ball; but if I

was the only one to suffer by my thoughtlessness, I shouldn't care." The memory of Jane's evanescent pleasures seemed anything but fragrant. "If I had only asked your advice about going to the ball, perhaps I might have gained courage enough to tell Mr. Dixon that he had better ask some one else to go with him."

"Don't cry, now, Janet. I'll ask Mrs. Green to make you a syrup for colds, which cured me last week, and you will be out again in two or three days."

"But oh! Margaret, Mrs. Green's syrups cannot bring back the money that I spent on my flimsy ball dress."

"No; but 'twill make you strong to earn more. You have been so prudent and careful, generally, that I don't think you ought to mourn so over a few foolishly spent dollars."

"You don't know, Margaret, how much suffering that one evening's pleasure will cost. My wretched cold and lame side are only two drops in the great bucket. I never went to a ball before; but I've been learning to dance, this winter, to please Samuel, and when he wanted me to go to this ball, I couldn't bear to tell him that mother's family was so very poor, and partly dependent upon me, that I ought not to afford the expense. Do you know, Margaret, that Samuel and I are to be married as soon as we can lay up something for housekeeping?"

"I didn't know it before."

"I've wanted to tell you for a long time, but waited for you to ask me about it. We've been engaged all winter. I thought he would like to see me dressed handsomely if I

went to the ball; so I bought a light silk, and, with the trimmings and ornaments, it cost me twenty dollars—nearly all that I had laid aside for my wedding things. I thought the ball dress was so light and handsome 'twould do for a wedding gown, if I put it away carefully, and did not wear it till then; but there was a cup of coffee spilled upon one side, and an ice cream on the other, and 'tis all covered with the ugliest stains you ever saw."

Notwithstanding Margaret's sympathy with the sufferer, she could hardly help laughing at the dolorous, husky, half-whispered tones with which the misfortunes were told; but the thick twilight hid her mirthful face from Jane, who went on giving her sorrow words as fast as her sobs and tears would allow.

"Oh! Margaret, if I could only get that money back, I'd sit up every night to work for three months to come; but that will not do; I must have it now—this very week; and I'm too proud to tell Samuel how foolish and wicked I've been, and how poor my mother is."

"You need never be afraid to tell him the whole truth, Janet; and if you've been thoughtless, 'twas only to please him. You've done nothing very wrong, I'm sure."

"Just read this letter, Margaret, and you'll see how much wrong I've done, and then you'll despise me for being so selfish and forgetful."

"Your room is so dark, I can scarcely see your letter. You must tell me what you think it best for me to know."

"I forgot that night had come, and we have no lamp; but I'm glad that you cannot see my face, for it must look so

ugly to you. I told you once about my lame sister Lottie. She's a dear, patient girl, so gentle and uncomplaining always. Well, mother says, in her letter, that Lottie is worse; that she cannot bear her weight, even with her old crutches, now, and that she sits all day, leaning against a pillow, stitching upon her muslins. We've long wanted her to have one of those nice, stuffed easy chairs, that can be rolled about—I believe they are called self-propelling; and, don't you think, as if to aggravate my misery, one costs just as much as my ball dress; at least, mother says a very good one can be bought for twenty dollars; and she wanted me to buy it, and send it home by a neighbor, who will call this week. Oh! Margaret, dear lame Lottie must sit three months longer in a hard, ugly chair, because I spent my money so wickedly."

It did not stop the current of Janet's tears, to know that Margaret's flowed too; but their violence seemed somewhat softened, as she went on to describe Lottie's illness, her patience and sweetness, and her mother's industry and self-denial.

"You see, we are proud as we are poor, Margaret, and there is not a single one of us who will stoop to ask mother's rich friends to help us, until we've sold the last article that will bring a farthing. Esquire Bland, of this city, is mother's brother. I never call him uncle, though, and he knows how hard we are all working, and that I'm here in the mills; but never a dollar of his money has saved us from the poorhouse. He came up to father's funeral, and advised mother to break up housekeeping, and bind the children out. I was only twelve years old, and Lottie nine. She had just

been thrown from the swing, and we didn't know how badly she was injured. Then, there were two little boys, six and four years old, and Tommy was a baby. I shall never forget how mother looked, when she told Esquire Bland that she could work, and that her children wouldn't be bound out until she had made an effort to keep them together. There was so much earnestness and holy faith in her face, that she looked like an angel, and I crept behind her chair to cry. Oh! Margaret, that night made a woman of me, and I made up my mind to add the strength of my little arm to mother's; and never, until last week, have I broken that resolve, though I've worked in the mills five years."

"And you didn't break it last week, Janet; you've shed more than tears enough, to-night, to atone for much greater thoughtlessness."

"I suppose 'tis foolish for me to cry, for tears will not bring back the money, nor buy Lottie a chair."

Jane was right. Woman's wealth is not current in the world of dollars and cents.

"Janet, I was invited to the ball, and strongly tempted, too; but my Sabbath school teacher helped me to refuse. If I had gone, perhaps I might have spent more than thirty dollars. At any rate, I want to give you this sum, to buy Lottie a chair."

"Why, Margaret, you must think I'm cruelly selfish, as well as thoughtless, if I would accept money from you, when I know you are trying to lay up something to pay your expenses at school. You are noble and good, and I thank you, just as much as if I took it."

“ Listen a moment, Janet, and you’ll see, that instead of accepting a favor from me, you are only granting me one by taking this money. Somebody, that I don’t like, gave me all of thirty dollars’ worth of things, in such a way that I couldn’t return them. Now, if I give this amount to one who is really needy and deserving, I shall be a great deal happier. I feel ashamed to be hoarding away every cent of my earnings for selfish purposes, when you are doing so much to make your friends happy. Now, Janet dear, let your friends be mine, and, as I’ve no sister, we’ll share Lottie together; only you mustn’t tell her that I send the chair.”

It took a great deal more of Margaret’s loving-heart-logic to melt Jane’s reluctance; but finally her gentle, persuasive earnestness prevailed, and several months passed before lame Lottie knew whose generosity had procured the comfortable easy chair, which her own little strength could push about the house and garden.

As the months wore away, many necessary articles, and a few luxuries, found their way to the secluded home of the Browns, which were not the product of Jane’s industry alone. The two self-sacrificing girls took great delight in planning joyful surprises for the home circle.

The autumn brought a crisis in Lottie’s disease, and the old family doctor said, if she could be placed, for a few weeks, in the care of a celebrated physician in the metropolis, he thought she might recover the use of her limbs.

This news the anxious, toil-worn mother lost no time in communicating to Jane, for she knew her absent daughter would take pleasure in any self-denial that could accomplish

this object. "I know of but one more article we can sell," she wrote to Jane, "and that is your father's old silver watch. I have reserved it through all of our dark days, hoping we might never be obliged to part with it; but I'm willing to do anything now that promises to benefit our dear lame Lottie. Your brothers say that you needn't send them the winter coats that you promised, for, with a great deal of patching, the old ones will be comfortable at home; and they won't go to school, if Lottie can be sent to this great doctor; Nathan will teach the younger boys. He has grown to be such a comfort, Janet—generous and noble-hearted, like his father and oldest sister. He earns a trifle by helping our neighbors do their light harvesting, and then he weaves baskets in the evenings; but he isn't strong, as most boys of thirteen, and loves to study so well, that I can't bear to see him working so hard for the rest of us. The neighbors are very kind, and Mr. Trueman is going to pay me more for making shirts, and allow me to leave out a part of the fine stitching that troubles my eyes. Our minister's wife has given Lottie a dark blue silk dress, which she is going to alter into a wrapper for her; and I think I can get through the winter comfortably without my brown merino, so that we shall not need any new dresses for her. But, with all of our twisting and turning, dear Janet, 'twill come hard upon you, and this gives me a great many tearful, anxious hours; for you've been so womanly and self-sacrificing since your father died, that I long to see you doing something for yourself; and then, you ought not to try to do anything more for us without telling Samuel, for he will have to wait a long time before I can give him my

precious child, if we try to send Lottie away. Think it all over carefully, Janet, and talk with Samuel before you write, for I don't want to say anything to raise Lottie's hopes, and then have to see them die again."

Jane could think and talk the matter over with Margaret, and they together could plan and work for Lottie; but to tell Samuel Dixon of their extreme poverty, and why she wore the same old dress and bonnet so long, was quite another thing.

"I'm sure you would be happier, Janet, if you told Samuel all about it," said Margaret, one day, after they had united their savings for the benefit of lame Lottie. "If he is only half as highminded and noble as I think he is, he'll be proud to know that you are so self-denying and generous; and, instead of liking you the less for your poverty, he'll be glad that you haven't a dollar."

Lottie's injury was of long standing, and, after a month's trial of his skill, Doctor —— pronounced her case incurable, and the sufferer was carried back to her humble home. If Jane wrought on with less of hope and animation, through that never-to-be-forgotten winter, which spread its cold mantle over patient Lottie's grave, the memory of her gentle sister's purity often soothed her weariness; and there was still necessity enough in her mother's family, and love enough in her own heart, to stimulate her efforts. When Esquire Bland, whom God has abundantly blessed, and who does not know the meaning of self-denial, gives fifty or a hundred dollars for benevolent objects, his name is blazoned in the newspapers as a pattern of nobility; but when his

niece spends seven years of her life in a cotton mill, scarcely allowing herself a holiday, or comfortable clothing, that she may soften the hard hand of poverty and actual want in her mother's dwelling—she is “only a factory girl.” But is not the hard-earned mite of the loving sister and daughter as acceptable in the eyes of the Great Judge, as Esquire Bland's munificent donations?

CHAPTER XXXIV.

MARGARET'S ILLNESS.

“One foster-nurse of Nature is repose,
The which he lacks; that to provoke in him
Are many simples operative, whose power
Will close the eye of anguish.”—SHAKESPEARE.

THE changes of two years have written their history upon Margaret's heart since the fourth of March ball. Spring, summer, autumn, and winter, have found her, early and late, at her toil; but two or three precious hours, stolen from sleep each night, and spent in earnest study, have so enriched her intellect, that, while her hands have been employed in mending broken threads and regulating the movements of machinery, her thoughts have been busy with the wealth of those who have left “footprints in the sands of time.”

There have been some changes in Mrs. Green's family, and Margaret's small circle of friends. Miss Thompson, after

repeated efforts to convince Mr. Stanley that her continual presence was necessary to complete his happiness, and having had the chagrin of seeing him more tenderly devoted to several young ladies than he had ever been to her, notwithstanding she had practised her prettiest airs for his particular benefit, wisely concluded to waste no more time upon him—for delay, in her case, would soon be dangerous—but to accept, blushing and becomingly, the attentions of a sober widower, whose gray hairs certainly entitled him to her respect, to say nothing about the claims of five motherless children upon her tender sympathies. Miss Thompson was married, and rejoiced in the euphonious title of Mrs. Ezekiel Brush. Miss Harvey had gone to her home in Vermont, to soothe the last days of her invalid mother; and Mrs. Green, though she couldn't possibly live without the society of the two gentlemen, who had found a home with her so long, and would as soon have turned away an own child as Margaret Foster, said she wouldn't be plagued with new boarders at present.

Miss Johnson had left Preston, too. A large and generous compensation had been offered her by the trustees of Cherryville Institute, to teach music and drawing; and she hoped to render her father's family more substantial aid by accepting the invitation than by remaining at home. Margaret missed her friend; but she was beginning to count the months, even the weeks, when she would join her at Cherryville. She had been accepted as a student for the coming year, and would join the new class in September. No wonder, then, that the days glided by on swift-winged pinions.

But Margaret had been working too hard, during the past year, and studying too late. She had exerted her physical strength to its utmost limits, that there should be no failure of funds; and her mind had been quite as severely taxed, that she might take a respectable stand with the new class.

This anxiety of mind lest she should fail in her preparation, or fall short of means to secure her object, united with twelve hours of daily physical toil, and nearly three hours of mental application, had paled Margaret's cheek, and stolen the elasticity from her step.

Mrs. Green had predicted something terrible for several weeks. "You can never stand it, dear. Why, the color is all leaving your cheeks, excepting that hectic flush, that comes on after you've studied an hour or so. And then, your eyes are so large, while your waist isn't bigger than my arm! Put away your books for to-night, and chat with me."

Margaret had become accustomed to these motherly appeals of Mrs. Green, and she would generally rise from her study table, when they were most earnest, and draw a low stool to the good lady's feet, eat one of the apples that in winter evenings were always in a small gilded wire basket near the hearth, and laugh and chat so merrily for a few minutes, that Mrs. Green would be half persuaded that her fears were groundless.

One evening, in the latter part of March, Margaret came in with a more wearisome step than usual. She had suffered all day from headache, and the drenching rain and mud through which she must pass to Waverley street, were not the best opiates for it.

She drank her tea, but, even to deceive Mrs. Green, she could not swallow her toast; and when the tea things were removed, and she attempted to read, the page swam before her eyes, and she bent her head upon the table.

"I knew it would be so. I've been telling you all along that human nature couldn't bear up under so much; and you had always a slender, delicate look."

Mrs. Green raised the curls from her forehead, felt of her burning hands, and pronounced her in a high fever.

"Nancy!" she called, opening the kitchen door; "Nancy, put on a kettle of water, and heat it as quick as possible; and then take a teacupful of pennyroyal from the broken pitcher on the top shelf, and put it steeping in the brown mug. Miss Foster has come home sick. She ought to have been in bed all day."

If pennyroyal tea and hot baths failed Mrs. Green, she was sure that nothing could break up a fever. Margaret made no resistance now. Indeed, had it not been for Mrs. Green's strong arm, her trembling limbs could not have borne her up the stairs. She was so worn and exhausted, that the soothing influence of the bath, and the copious draughts of tea which she was forced to swallow, threw her into a heavy slumber; but there was nothing refreshing about the sleep, for she moaned continually, tossing restlessly upon her couch. Mrs. Green shook her head with an ominous sigh, as she bathed her hands and limbs, and applied camphor to her throbbing temples.

"There's no help for it now, poor child; she has a settled fever," she said, when she drew aside the curtain that

she might scan the face of her patient by the morning light. Margaret had made several vain attempts to rise, when the tones of the factory bell floated to her chamber, but, failing in her efforts, she had fallen back fainting upon her pillow. Mrs. Green's vigorous application of camphor and hartshorn had restored her only to a consciousness of intense pain in her head and limbs.

With a thoughtful face, the careful housewife descended to her kitchen. She was always in the habit of aiding her one servant, and superintending the whole domestic machinery; but she couldn't trust Margaret to the care of another. "Better let Nancy spoil the bread with saleratus, bake the juices all out of the meat, and burn the coffee to cinders," she thought, "than let Margaret die through the negligence of a careless nurse.

"Nancy, you must be prompt and faithful in the kitchen for a few days, and get the dinners up neat and nice, for I shall not have much time to mind you. Miss Margaret is sick, and I'm not going to trust her in strange hands."

"Sick, mem! Didn't I know she'd been a failin' for a hull month? But niver a word of complaint has a body heard from her swate lips. I could have told ye the angels was a callin' her, poor dear! She's one of 'em now, all savin' the wings."

"I've no doubt careful nursing will set her up again. Nancy, you must put the bread rising, this morning; and remember, a cup of yeast, a pint of milk, and a pint of water, with a teaspoonful of salt."

"I'll not be after forgittin', mem; but ye needn't mind

the kitchen, and things shan't get tossed up here, while ye're tendin' Miss Margaret—the Lord love her swate, patient face!”

Mr. Stanley was despatched for Dr. Atherton, with injunctions to hasten the good man's pace. We feel in duty bound to give Mr. Stanley the credit of feeling as much anxiety about Margaret's welfare as a person of his natural selfishness was capable of; and he therefore moved toward the doctor's office with as much haste as would be consistent, giving due consideration to a graceful and dignified appearance in the street. He had told Mrs. Green, a few weeks before, that he should fall desperately in love with her pretty boarder, if she would only allow it; but that she refused all his attentions with as proud an air as if she had been a princess, instead of a factory girl.

Before the arrival of Doctor Atherton, Mrs. Green had carried her patient, with the aid of Nancy, down to her spare chamber, not only because the room was larger, and more conveniently furnished for sickness, but she wanted to save the doctor the trouble of ascending so many stairs. “One flight was enough for so stout a man,” she told Nancy.

Dr. Atherton examined his patient carefully, and thought, from appearances, she had been resisting the fever for several days. “She's a sick girl, ma'am, very sick,” said the doctor, in answer to Mrs. Green's anxious inquiries; “but I've no doubt a little help of mine, and your careful nursing, will make all right again.”

There was no want of tender care, and no want of faithful attendance on the doctor's part; but the disease made

rapid strides, in spite of medicine and nursing. Mrs. Green suffered no one to approach the bedside of the sick girl, save the physician and Jane Brown. Even Jane, though she plead tearfully to remain with her friend, was only allowed the privilege of taking care of her two or three nights, and then Mrs. Green reclined upon a couch in the same room. The fever raged violently for a week, and then a crisis seemed approaching. The doctor's morning and evening visits were long, and nothing, which could be mistaken for a smile, had broken through the anxious cloud which had rested on Mrs. Green's face during the week.

"There is something troubles the girl's mind; can you tell me what it is, Mrs. Green?" asked the doctor, as he came from the sick-chamber, on the evening of the seventh day of Margaret's illness. "She's always wandering when she wakes, and she mutters strangely, in her sleep, about being carried back to Mrs. Hardy."

"Poor child!" sighed Mrs. Green, wiping certain traces of womanly weakness from her face; "I haven't known much about her history, only she's an orphan, and, I guess, has been rather roughly used before she came to the mills. She's talked a great deal about that Mrs. Hardy since she's been sick, and seems to be entreating somebody, whom she calls Maurice, not to have her carried back. I think so much hair is bad for her head, doctor, and I should have had it cut off before now, only it made my heart ache to see how she clings to it, when she's wandering, drawing the long curls around, and pressing them to her bosom, and entreating Mrs. Hardy not to cut them off."

“I’ve rarely seen a finer growth of hair ; but if we don’t remove the pain from the head in the course of twenty-four hours, it must be taken off to make room for a blister. Be very particular to change the baths often during the night, and give her one of the powders in the white paper every hour, and a small pill every three hours.”

Dr. Atherton departed, and Mrs. Green returned to Margaret’s chamber. The unprotected state of the orphan, combined with her modest deportment and untiring industry, had won largely upon Mrs. Green’s affections before this illness ; but there is always something about the helpless prostration of those we love, that touches a tenderer chord, and awakens deeper sensibilities than the joyous, ringing laugh of health. A fond mother could not have hung more tenderly over Margaret’s couch ; and she was often raised in the good woman’s arms, and pressed to her heart with soothing caresses, while large tears fell down upon the sick girl’s throbbing temples and fever-parched lips. It was pitiful to hear her moans during the night, and to see how wildly she clung to Mrs. Green, as if she were pursued, and just ready to be seized by some frightful monster ; then she would talk strangely and incoherently to Mrs. Green about Jem O’Harry, the strawberries, tulips, and roses, and seem to be entreating somebody to help finish her gown before Maurice should come home.

Before the dawn of the eighth morning, Margaret grew easier, but complained so much of weariness and faintness, that Mrs. Green took her from the couch, and rocked her as she would an infant in her arms, lulling her to sleep with snatches of the old nursery songs which she had, long years

ago, softly hummed over the cradle of her only child. If she had not sealed his fair blue eyes, and straightened his round limbs for the grave, the motherly fountains of her heart might not have flowed forth so freely to poor Madge.

Dr. Atherton pronounced the gentle, refreshing slumber of his patient, on the morning of the eighth day, a very favorable indication. "I had great fears how it might turn, last night," he said to Mrs. Green; "but this refreshing sleep, and the moisture of her hands and limbs, indicates a favorable change. We will not slacken our care for a few days, and she'll soon give us credit for our pains. But she ought not to go back to the mills, Mrs. Green; she's of a delicate make, and has already taxed her physical strength to its utmost. You say she has no friends?"

"Not a relative in the world, I've heard her say; but she'll never want a home while I have one. I shall try and persuade her not to go back to the mills, though I believe she's trying very hard to get money to educate herself."

"She has a finely developed head, and a pair of the finest eyes ever made for a woman. Well, we'll see what can be done for her when we get her on her feet again. Until I call, this evening, you may give her twelve of these drops every hour, alternating with these powders."

CHAPTER XXXV.

CONVALESCENCE.

“The languor of her step shall yet
With winter snows depart ;
Her foot shall spring on carpets wrought
By Flora's loving art,
And keep time to the joyous beat
Of her exulting heart.”

A STRONG woman could easily have raised Margaret in her arms, before toil, anxiety, and disease had reduced and thinned her slight figure ; and now the pale, wasted girl was no burden to Mrs. Green. She often sat down upon the low couch, with Margaret's head pillowed upon her bosom. It was a pleasure and relief to be thus raised from her pillows, and a grateful smile would ripple over her pale face when she felt the gentle clasp of Mrs. Green's arms. She seemed to have an intuitive consciousness of the pleasure which her careful nurse took in ministering to her helplessness. Perhaps she read it in the tender, lingering glance of her eye, the softened, subdued tones of her voice, and therefore abandoned herself freely to the pleasure which caressing gentleness diffused through her languid frame.

“I'm quite free from pain now, only so weak,” was Margaret's reply to Mrs. Green's morning inquiry. “Where did you get these beautiful flowers ?” she asked, as Mrs. Green placed in her hand a rare and fragrant bouquet.

“Mr. Stanley sent them to you. He’s sent in two or three before, but you’ve been too weak to notice them.”

“’Tis strange I didn’t; I’m so fond of flowers. Perhaps their being in the room made me dream so much of honeysuckle and hawthorn. Please thank Mr. Stanley for them.”

Margaret had manifested no inclination to talk since the fever turned, receiving with perfect docility the offered medicine and nourishment; and Mrs. Green was delighted with the pleased attention which she bestowed upon the flowers, pressing them to her lips, and inhaling large draughts of their fragrance.

“How long have I been sick, Mrs. Green?”

“It’s just a fortnight to-day, dear, since you gave up; though, in my opinion, you’ve been sick a much longer time.”

“So long! But it has seemed a terrible dream! Does the doctor think I shall get well?”

“Why, yes, dear; you’ve been gaining a little every day for nearly a week. What made you ask such a question?”

“I don’t know; I think I want to get well.”

“To be sure you do. You haven’t the heart to leave me alone now!”

“Then you really love me, and would be sorry to have me die?”

Mrs. Green made no answer, but, taking Margaret from the couch, sat down upon a low chair, and drew her arms closely around her, hiding her face in the dark curls that rested upon her bosom. Neither spoke again for several

minutes; deep and tender emotions had made the strong woman nearly as weak as the sick girl.

"I should certainly want to get well now, Mrs. Green, if 'twas only to show you how grateful I am for your kindness to me. If ever you get sick, or I live till you are very old, I'll take you in my arms, as you do me, and kiss the fever from your dear lips, and smooth your soft hair." A closer embrace was the only reply. "I have sometimes prayed to die; but I think it was wrong and selfish; it was just because I didn't want to live alone without anybody to love me."

"Hush, dear! Nobody can help loving you."

"I think my mother must have been like you, Mrs. Green; she used to hold me in just this way. But oh! she was so pale, and tears were always dropping down upon my hair, when I lay in her arms. She died, and then, for a great many long, dark years, I had nobody to love. At length Mrs. Kempton moved to Clyde, and she was gentle and loving, and pitied me because I was so friendless, and helped me in a great many ways; but she died, too, and I thought God meant to take away everything that I loved."

"Had you no other friends in Clyde?"

"Jem O'Harry was a friend; but there was somebody, who had gone a great way South, that was kinder than Jem, and I liked him a vast deal more. Sometimes, since I've been sick, I thought he had come back, and was holding me in his arms, and smoothing my hair, as you do. Mrs. Green, how much longer shall I be so weak?"

"Not many days, I hope."

“Don't you think I can go into the mills next Monday?”

“No, Margaret.”

“But I must try very hard to go in a few days; this sickness has cost so much, that I can't go to school in the fall, unless I work diligently all summer.”

“Only hear her, doctor! She has just asked if she can't go to the mills next Monday,” said Mrs. Green, as the doctor walked in.

“You'll do well if you can stand alone by that time; though you've made a rapid stride toward the mills since yesterday,” added the doctor, feeling his patient's pulse, and examining her tongue.

“You may give her plenty of chicken broth and weak tea, now, Mrs. Green; but mind that she doesn't get at the beefsteak and plum puddings yet, else we'll have our work all to do over.”

“Oh! Dr. Atherton; I don't eat anything but gruel.”

“Well, I shouldn't suppose a girl so weak as to lie like a baby in Mrs. Green's arms, would want anything else. Do you often make her hold you in this way?”

“I don't make her, but she takes me up sometimes to rest me.”

“Very like; but she's grown so fond of this nursing business, that I expect she'll take an easy chair to the mills, and hold you there in her arms.”

Margaret laughed, and the doctor's satisfied smile showed that his pleasantry had accomplished its object. After a few simple directions, he departed, and Mrs. Green laid her patient upon the couch, lingering long to arrange the coverlet,

smooth the pillows, and adjust a stray curl; then, stooping to leave a kiss on Margaret's forehead, she bade her close her eyes for a nice sleep, while she went down to give Nancy some important instructions, and superintend the making of some chicken broth.

Her employment scarcely detained her in the kitchen for an hour, yet several times ere its completion she had crept softly to the door of Margaret's chamber, to steal a glance at her sleeping face. Once, when the sick girl moved upon her pillow, and uttered a few low sounds, she went to the bedside, and bent over to listen. "Yes, if you say so, Maurice—if you think I must go back; but you'll stay there too?" And again: "Nobody knows that I like you, Maurice, better than Mrs. Kempton—better than everybody else in the world; and, indeed, I didn't mean to. Is it wrong? is it wicked, when I cannot help it?"

Mrs. Green turned away, that her tears might not fall upon the sleeper's face, murmuring to herself: "Poor child! poor dear! her heart is a great deal older than her head. I've thought, many a time, that she must have been in love, or else she wouldn't have been so gentle and patient always, and refused Mr. Stanley's attentions so steadily. I'd like to see the man that could tamper with a heart like hers; he'd get a piece of my mind, I reckon."

But, dear Mrs. Green, it wouldn't have been a very hard piece to digest, for your kind nature could do little more than threaten an attack.

Several of the operatives had called to see Margaret, but none had been admitted, excepting Jane Brown; and, since

Margaret had regained her consciousness, even Jane had not been allowed to enter her room, lest the excitement of seeing a friend should be too much for the sick girl's weak nerves; but sometimes Mrs. Green permitted Jane to look at Margaret through the open door, if she was sleeping.

Margaret usually lay so still upon the pillows, with closed eyelids, the pallor of her face and the sharpness of her features increased by the dark masses of hair which fell around her, and the hands, that lay upon the coverlet, were so thin, Jane could scarcely believe she breathed, much less that she was likely to recover.

"I wouldn't wonder if she was never able to wear this wrapper, which the mill girls have sent her," said Jane, one evening, after she had been looking at her sleeping friend. She placed in Mrs. Green's hand a bundle, adding: "It may give her pleasure to know that we've thought of her. Tell her that only the girls in our room paid anything toward it, and we hired Mrs. Lambert to make it, for she knows Margaret's size."

Jane waited for no thanks, and Mrs. Green carried the bundle to Margaret's chamber, not allowing herself the pleasure of looking at it, till her patient was able to wear it.

On the Monday when Margaret had hoped she might be able to return to the mills, she was strong enough, for the first time, to sit in an easy chair without the support of Mrs. Green.

"I feel so much better, Mrs. Green, that if I had a loose wrapper, I think I might be dressed, and then it would certainly seem as if I was getting well faster."

"Well, who knows what the fairies have sent us, dear?" said Mrs. Green, bringing forward Jane's bundle, and displaying a beautiful crimson cashmere dressing gown, made with exquisite neatness and taste.

"Mrs. Green, where did this beautiful wrapper come from?"

"'Tis a present from the mill girls who worked in the room with you; they hired Mrs. Lambert to make it, and sent it here by Jane Brown, two or three days ago."

"How generous and thoughtful! Didn't Jane ask to see me?"

"Oh, yes, she's called often; and when you were too sick to notice anybody, she took care of you two nights; but since you've been gaining a little, the doctor said you'd better not see friends."

"You all mean to kill me with kindness," said Margaret, hrushing away her tears, and allowing Mrs. Green to fasten the wrapper upon her, and adjust the silken cord and tassels in front.

"Now just look in the glass, and see how becoming it is." The proud nurse held a mirror in front of Margaret.

"Why, how thin and pale I've grown, Mrs. Green! and my hair never looked half so thick and dark before. Don't you think it would be well to fasten it up with a comb, till I'm able to dress the curls?"

"Perhaps so; we'll try the effect."

Mrs. Green brought a comb, and, gathering up the long tresses, confined them in a knot behind. "It makes you look a little odd, and a trifle older, but they are out of the

way. If you feel strong enough, I should really like to have you sit up, and let Dr. Atherton see you in this beautiful dressing gown. 'Tis nearly time for his morning call."

"I should like to try my strength, and I'm going to ask you to bring my writing case from my bedroom, before the doctor comes."

The writing case was placed upon the table by her side, and not many minutes elapsed after Mrs. Green went down to the kitchen, before Dr. Atherton bustled in.

"Up! and dressed, too, as I live! and to-morrow my bird will have flown to the mills!"

"Not quite so soon, for I can't walk yet without Mrs. Green's help; but don't you think I can go next week?"

"No, nor next year. You'll never be strong enough again to endure such fagging. The strongest girls wear out very shortly, working so many hours; and you've done quite too much already for so delicate a constitution."

"But I haven't a relative in the world, Dr. Atherton, and I must do something for myself."

"You've plenty of relatives, miss; for instance, your mother, Mrs. Green, and your uncle, the doctor—respectable enough for you to own, are they not?"

"You've both been so kind to me, that I shall never be able to pay you."

"Just devour as many chickens as possible, and coax a few roses to bloom in your face, and we shall be paid."

"If you will please give me your bill this morning, doctor, I'll pay it, for I don't think I shall need any more attention."

"You will, though; and I'll come as often as I choose."

Margaret opened her writing case, and, taking out her purse, passed it over to the doctor. "If there isn't enough, I've something more laid aside in the bank."

The doctor examined the contents of the small purse, exclaiming: "Quite an heiress, I declare! One, two, three, four V's, one eagle, and two silver dollars! And how much more in the bank, you young miser?"

"Two hundred dollars; but I'm owing Mrs. Green for the last month's board, to say nothing about her nursing."

"What are you going to do with so much money?"

"I've been laying it aside to pay my expenses at school for a year; and if this illness hadn't put me back, I should have gone to Cherryville in September."

The doctor gathered up the bills, the gold piece, and the silver, and put them back into the purse, laying it upon the table. He walked slowly to the door, and then slowly back again to Margaret's chair. "You've been up long enough this morning, and, if you are willing to trust yourself in my arms, I'll put you on the couch."

Margaret thanked him, and allowed herself to be taken from the chair, and placed upon the bed.

The doctor seemed to have forgotten his intention of leaving, and drew his chair up by the couch, looking thoughtfully at his patient.

"Have you ever been to school?"

"No, sir; at most, not a whole month in my life."

"You can read, I suppose?"

"Yes; I've studied some by myself, and a lady in Clyde used to help me a great deal."

"Tell me what you know. First, in arithmetic: can you say the Multiplication Table?"

Margaret laughed heartily. "I've been through Colburn's and Greenleaf's National Arithmetic, and nearly through Colburn's Algebra."

"Never studied history, I reckon?"

"Yes; I've read Hume's History of England, Prescott's Conquest of Mexico, and a history of the United States."

"Well done! Few young ladies of your age can say as much. What do you want to go to school for?"

"In the first place, I want to know enough to teach, because I must support myself in some way."

"Very commendable. Well, in the second place?"

"I love books, Dr. Atherton, and I want to cultivate my intellect, so that I can enjoy what great men have written. And then, if I'm educated, I can do more good in the world. My mother was an educated woman."

"Who was your mother?"

"Katharine Norris, of Hayden."

The doctor made a sudden start, and seemed as if about to utter an exclamation of surprise; but, checking himself, he gazed intently at the maiden, and asked:

"When did your mother die?"

"Nearly thirteen years ago."

"Where were you living at that time?"

"Mother died in the poorhouse in Clyde."

Another half-uttered exclamation from the doctor, and a few slowly trickling tears on the face of Margaret followed.

"You were too young to remember much about your mother?"

"Yes."

The doctor asked no more questions, and for a few minutes allowed his patient to weep in silence.

"There, that will do, Miss Foster; we'll have no more crying, unless you cry for joy. I didn't mean to harrow up old griefs, nor to draw from you any portion of your history, without having good reasons for my rudeness. I've found something pleasanter for you than working in the mills. Miss Parker, the teacher of one of our primary schools, needs an assistant, and, as I'm on the committee, she came to me, yesterday, to get me to procure a young girl for her; mind you, a young girl who's willing to be told, and do exactly as Miss Parker directs. She'll be here, in a week or so, to see how she likes your looks, and you might as well have that hair of yours brushed back, and gathered up in a sensible, Quakerish style, and put that handsome dressing gown under the bed, for Miss Parker is a little old-fashioned in her ideas, and wouldn't like to see a poor girl dressed too fine."

"I didn't buy this gown; 'twas a present from the mill girls."

"Keep it on, then, and I'll tell Miss Parker 'twas a present; she'll take it as another proof of your amiability, corroborating my stories."

"But, Dr. Atherton, I'm not seventeen yet, and I don't know enough to be of any use to Miss Parker."

"Didn't I tell you we wanted a young miss who wouldn't

set up for herself, and turn Miss Parker out of doors? If you can teach the little rogues their a b ab's, and how to count a hundred, you'll do. We can't afford to pay an assistant more than four dollars per week; but you'll only have to work six hours each day, and that will be more than you ought to do, this summer."

"Oh! Dr. Atherton; you've been so kind——"

"No, I haven't; there's no need of thanks. When a man sees a slender, helpless girl, struggling up hill, he would be worse than a heathen not to lend a helping hand. I shouldn't have told you about this to-day, if I hadn't hoped the prospect of benefiting the rising generation would induce you to eat an extra mutton chop and three boiled eggs a day. There! I didn't mean to go until I saw sunshine enough in your eyes to dry up the dew on your cheeks."

When Mrs. Green came in, a few minutes after, she found quite as much dew as sunshine still remaining on Margaret's face; but when she had heard a history of the doctor's visit, she did not wonder that the girl's joy "couldn't show itself modest enough without a badge of bitterness."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE UPTONVILLE PROFESSOR.

"There's nothing ill can dwell in such a temple ;
 If the ill spirit have so fair a home,
 Good things will strive to dwell with't."

SHAKESPEARE.

"I climb the hill ; from end to end,
 Of all the landscape underneath,
 I find no place that does not breathe
 Some gracious memory of my friend."

TENNYSON.

MAURICE was at home again. Three years in the South had wrought great changes in him. Whether it was a more extensive mingling with and knowledge of the world, a closer application to books, the cares and responsibilities of his profession, or the handsome growth of a pair of whiskers, which had added so much dignity to his personal appearance, it would be difficult to decide, but he was changed ; and no wonder Sarah Hardy was proud of her son.

Not that a woman of her narrow-minded selfishness could understand a nature like his—could feel an honest, legitimate pride in his noble intellect and generous heart ; but she was proud of his worldly honor and handsome face.

Maurice saw changes in his mother, too, and rightly thought old Time had left deep footprints on her face. It was colder and harder, as if the last four years had been an

unbroken winter in her soul, and its drifting snows had been allowed to accumulate year by year.

The smile, which she rarely harbored in early life, had grown less frequent in later years, and an unbending, dignified, business-like air, was never melted by anything genial and womanly. She loved her only son, but there was nothing tender or motherly in her affection for him. Perhaps she thought a few thousand dollars, which he would inherit at her decease, a more tangible proof of her love than anything else she could bestow, making ample compensation for the lack of that softer currency flowing from the human heart.

Maurice was at home again. He had visited every pleasant nook of the old farm, admired Jem O'Harry's nice skill in gardening, and listened attentively to his mother's minute account of each year's harvest.

"You've been working too hard, mother; why can't you be persuaded to hire a kitchen girl, and take some rest, now that you are growing old?"

"As if there could be any rest for me, with an idle, slovenly girl in the house! I'd rather wear my hands off to my elbow joints, than be plagued with another like Madge."

Maurice had been at home two days, but neither mother nor son had made any allusion to Madge before. Respect for his mother, and early experience, had taught Maurice to avoid carefully every point upon which they could not agree. He had missed the warm greeting and pleasant smile of the bound girl; had missed the light footfall by his side, when he walked down the old lane, and there was something wanting

to make the early crocuses and tulips look natural and home-like in the garden.

——“ His early days
Were with him in his heart ; ”

and with these early days were mingled pleasant memories of the little sunbrowned maiden—his pupil.

“ I suppose you haven't heard from Madge, since she left so strangely ? ”

“ No ; and never desire to.” There was something about the woman's face which forbade further questioning, and Maurice was silent.

“ Are you going back to Uptonville ? ”

“ Not at present ; perhaps not for some years. I'm glad you asked the question, mother, for I've been dreading to speak on a subject which I'm afraid will give you pain ; but after I've told you of my plans for the future, if you have any objections to them, I shall feel in duty bound, being your only son, to heed them. The trustees of Uptonville College desire to make it a very popular institution, in order to prevent their young men from coming North to be educated, where they sometimes become imbued with Northern principles ; and for this purpose they desire that one or more of their professors shall have the reputation which travel, and study in foreign lands, give a person. I have been solicited to go to Germany, that I may, in one of their universities, acquire a more thorough knowledge of their language and literature than can be obtained at home. This wish of the trustees harmonizes with a long-cherished desire of my own to study in a German university.”

“It will cost a great deal of money, taking the voyage and everything into the account.”

“Well, I suppose it will be rather expensive; but, if I decide to go, the trustees have very generously offered to continue my present salary of one thousand dollars per year during my absence, on condition that I become Professor of Modern Languages in Uptonville on my return. Then, since I’ve cancelled my college debts, I’ve laid aside a small amount for some exigency like this.”

“How long will it be necessary for you to be away?”

“Some three years or more; and I can hardly make it seem right, now that you are growing old, to be gone so long.”

“You’ve been in Uptonville nearly four years.”

“I know it, mother; but the time will seem longer, and the distance greater, with an ocean between us. Somehow, I have a strange dread of leaving you again; but I cannot define my fears.”

“If this tour is going to be of sufficient advantage to you to make amends for the time and money, I should advise you to go. As for me, I’m still strong, and can do as much work as ever I could; so it wouldn’t be worth while to stay at home on my account.”

It was natural for Maurice to wish there was just a gleam more of tenderness, and a little less of pride in his mother’s manner.

“How soon will you go?”

“There’s a Liverpool steamer sails from New York in a week from to-morrow. This is said to be the most favorable

season for crossing the Atlantic, and I suppose our trustees are anxious that there should be no unnecessary delay."

"It's fortunate that I made a dozen shirts for you last winter, against time of need, for they couldn't be made now."

"You are always thinking of my physical wants, mother. I hope I shall be a comfort and a blessing to your old age."

"You've always been a dutiful son, Maurice, and you do great credit to your early training. It has always been my maxim, 'Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.' If I had been as careless and neglectful as most mothers, I shouldn't now be taking pride in your honor and promotion."

Hug this thought to your cold, miserly heart, Sarah Hardy, if it affords you any comfort, for there's little enough of pleasure in the hard, rough path you've chosen to walk in.

Maurice did not seem inclined to talk any more about his European tour, but, after a few minutes of thoughtful silence, asked if Mr. Kempton wore well with the villagers.

"Rather better than he did the first year. Nobody liked his wife, and she was a great hindrance to his usefulness."

"I thought she was extremely modest, amiable, and anxious to be useful."

"She spared no pains to make people think so, thrusting herself into every corner under the pretence of trying to be useful; but some of our villagers were a little too independent to be taught religion and philanthropy by a boarding-school miss, and a slaveholder's daughter, too. Madge would never have thought of running away, if it hadn't been for the fine notions she got from her. I wouldn't wonder if

she received some pretty broad hints to mind her own business, before she got sick, tramping up to the Flanagans, and over to Mary Tilden's, with her pitchers of gruel and broth."

"Has Mr. Kempton married again?"

"No; he has a widowed sister to keep his house. There's been a great change in him since his wife died. Folks think he's a great deal more spiritual, but I'm no judge of that."

The conversation was interrupted by the entrance of a neighbor to chat with Mrs. Hardy, and Maurice strolled out to the garden.

'Hard at work, I see, Jem. How is the garden coming forward this spring?"

"There's niver a patch o' ground this side o' swate Ireland, that does handsomer, yer honor."

"Well, there is some satisfaction in working upon land that gives you credit for your labor; isn't there, Jem?"

"Indade, sir, I've been afther sayin' that same, mony's the time. Look at them airy pase, up the hull length o' me hand! while Dacon Simpson's are jist crapin' out o' the airth, as palè and sick-like as ye plaze. Them air inyuns and cow-cumbers are a dale ahead o' the nabors'."

"You may well be proud of them, James. I haven't seen so nice a garden since I left Tennessee."

"An' it's Tanaysy where ye've been this long time, yer honor? Would ye be afther tellin' me if there be cotton mills in the town?"

"None in that region, I believe; at least I've never seen one."

"I was a thinkin' as how ye might have come across swate little Margy, seein' as she wint in sarch of a cotton mill."

"Madge went in search of a cotton mill! Can you tell me anything about the child, James?"

"Niver a word, yer honor, savin' this: thra years agone come May, the swate leddy at the parsonage died, an' little Margy tuk it sore to heart, growin' thin an' pale as a wraith o' snow; an' all on a sudden, one night, she came to me, an' sez she, 'Jem, I'm goin' away.' It came nigh takin' the breth all out o' me body, ye may belave, yer honor, for she was like the dew o' the mornin' to me sowl. 'Goin'?' sez I; 'where can ye be afther goin', honey?' 'Away, to 'arn a livin' in a cotton mill,' sez she. So, afther a dale o' talkin' and ontratin' her to stop, I was minded to help her a bit; an' I laid in with Mr. Parsons to take her along in his market wagon to Hayden."

"Where did she go when she left Hayden?"

"Bad luck to me tongue, that I can't be afther tellin' yer honor; but she only said she would go a long way in sarch of a mill."

"Had she any money, Jem?"

"I asked her that same, yer honor, an' sez she, 'I've a bit o' gold that the young gintleman sint in a lether.' Och, sir, an' ye can niver be afther knowin' how I missed her swate smile in the gardin an' fields. The flowers seemed jist wiltin' away, an' the blessed sun came nigh forgittin' to shine, whilst the owld robin, that was niver wary o' singin' to her, what should he do but forsake the apple tree ontirely!"

Jem never repeated the story of his young friend's flight, without adding some poetical embellishments and variations.

Maurice was not surprised, when he heard of Lucy Kempton's death, to learn that Margaret's home had grown so unpleasant to her that she had sought another; and, after the reception of his mother's letter, describing her bound girl's flight, he had waited anxiously several weeks, expecting a letter from Madge, acquainting him with her locality, and her reasons for leaving the farm. But when weeks swelled into months, and no letter came, he wrote to Mr. Kempton, entreating him to lose no time in making search and inquiry for Madge. After a long delay, he learned from Mr. Kempton that not the faintest trace of her whereabouts could be obtained; and thinking, after so long a lapse of time, that it would be useless to leave his professional duties, and go North in search of his young pupil, he decided that there was nothing left for him but to leave the orphan in the hands of Providence. His busy professional life left him but little time for thoughts of the little maiden; but still, when, now and then, visions of New England and home flitted before him, a modest, intelligent face, and eyes that, beaming like "embodied smiles," grew more beautiful and brilliant when he approached, always formed a part of the picture.

His conversation with Jem inspired him with hope that Madge might be found, for it would not be a very difficult matter to search every cotton manufactory in New England; and was it not a duty that he owed his father, who had come under solemn obligations when Madge was indentured, to give her a good common school education, and respectable

clothing; was it not a duty he owed him to make at least an effort to find her, and, if possible, make some little reparation for the injustice done her childhood?

There is an instinct "which makes the honored memory of the dead a trust with all the living;" and common justice, to say nothing about the desire of fulfilling the spirit of his father's written promise and expressed wishes, would prompt him to seek her out, and endeavor to benefit her, while yet one year more of her apprenticeship remained. But if anything was attempted before he went to Germany, no time was to be lost.

Always prompt in action when benevolence inspired him, he went immediately to Mr. Parsons, and, finding in what direction Madge had gone from Hayden, he very naturally inferred that, as her purse was light, she would stop at the first large manufacturing town; this must be Preston, the very city where his old friend, Mr. Briarly, was settled, who had been his pastor during the first few months of his residence in Uptonville.

When Maurice told his mother that business would take him to the city of Preston, where he might be detained several days before embarking for Liverpool, she supposed that affairs connected with his foreign travel drew him thither, and asked no questions.

The twilight of a beautiful spring day found Maurice in the same depot where, three years before, poor Madge had paused, frightened, bewildered, and uncertain which way to move. Her old friend and teacher was certain of the first step he would take, and ordered the coachman to drive him to the residence of Mr. Briarly.

The worthy pastor extended a warm greeting to the young professor, and, after refreshments, the larger portion of the evening was spent in talking of the Uptonville people, and Maurice's projected tour to Germany. Mr. Briarly had much excellent advice to give, talked long with his young friend of the infidel sentiments which tinctured, to an alarming extent, the most beautiful of German literature, warning him of the seductive manner in which it was so artfully decked in false colors, that sage and experienced men had been lured on by the beautiful, flowering vines that encircled and hid the Upas tree, till its poisonous sap had dropped upon their own hearts, changing their clear fountains to a turbid, muddy tide. "Only keep the example of our blessed Christ constantly before you, my young friend, and the holy truths of His inspired Book warm and fresh in your heart, and you may cull the flowers of German literature, while the weeds and thistledown of its infidelity and Pantheism will float harmlessly past."

"It will take the heaviest kind of a logical sledgehammer, Mr. Briarly, to break up the foundations of my Puritanical faith."

"I trust so, my friend. Avoid 'the primrose path of dalliance;' strengthen your faith with prayer, and foreign polish will not harm your intellect. Mr. Kempton is still in Clyde, I believe?"

"Yes, sir."

"He married my old friend Crosby's daughter, Lucy—a sweet-tempered, charming girl; and I never heard of her death till last winter. Speaking of Lucy reminds me that

the young lady who told me of Lucy's sickness and death, was from Clyde, your native town, I think."

"Yes, sir. What was the young lady's name?"

"Foster, sir—Miss Margaret Foster. I shouldn't have remembered her name so particularly, but this very afternoon Dr. Atherton came in to tell me that he had employed her as an assistant in one of our primary schools. The doctor is very active on the committee, while I'm only a sort of honorary member. Did you ever know Miss Foster?"

"There was a young miss of that name in Clyde before I went South, but I was told yesterday that she left there, to work in a cotton mill. She can't be more than sixteen or seventeen years of age, at most."

"The same person, I reckon. Dr. Atherton, who belongs to the Isaac Hopper school, was called in to attend her through a fever, which was induced by overtasking herself in the mills, and studying late nights. The doctor is wonderfully interested in her, and thinks he has found a pearl of great price. I have often noticed her modest, intelligent face in the Sabbath school, and somebody told me she is struggling bravely to educate herself."

"Do you know where she boards?"

"The doctor told me, and I put it on my tablets, thinking to call soon. She's had a terrible illness, and isn't well now. Yes, here I have it—Mrs. Green's, Waverley street. We have a great many excellent young ladies in our cotton mills, sir—daughters and sisters of whom any father or brother might be proud. I know of several instances of great self-denial on the part of young girls, who are support-

ing aged and infirm relatives. Others educate themselves so as to become popular teachers; while not a few aid ambitious brothers in getting through college. You'll come back from the old world, my friend, blessing God for American institutions, everything American—but American slavery.



CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE VISITOR.

“Our pleasures all pass from us one by one,
With that relief which sighing gives the heart,
Though each sigh leaves it lower.”

BAILEY.

“Faith shares the future's promise; Love's
Self-offering is a triumph won;
And each good thought or action moves
The dark world nearer to the sun.”

WHITTIER.

“DON'T you think I can go down to the parlor to-day, Mrs. Green?”

“I'm a little afraid you'll get cold, dear; hadn't you better wait a few days?”

“It isn't quite a week before Miss Parker wants me to come into the school, and I must get a good deal stronger in that time. I should like to try, for I've been in this chamber nearly five weeks.”

“It must seem a long time to you, dear; and the day is

so pleasant and summer-like, I don't know but you may venture down. I'll tell Nancy to put a few coals in the grate, lest the room should be chilly, and you can wear a shawl through the entries. I'll go down first, and see that everything is nice and comfortable."

Mrs. Green soon returned, and, as she wrapped a shawl around her patient, she said :

"I'm glad, dear, that you dressed your curls in the old way to-day ; it makes you look more natural. This crimson dressing gown is very becoming. I only wish there was a little more color in your cheeks."

"I have never much color when I'm perfectly well, Mrs. Green. How refreshing the air of this hall is! I don't believe there is any need of my leaning on you." But Mrs. Green did not remove her arm from Margaret's waist, until she had placed her on the parlor sofa, propped on each side with cushions.

"You tremble like a leaf, dear, and, if it hadn't been for my arm, would have tumbled the whole length of the staircase."

Mrs. Green sat for some time by her patient to be sure she was not going to faint, but at last thought of something that needed her presence in the kitchen. "I hate to leave you alone, dear ; and, as I shall be housecleaning to-morrow, I mean to send for Jane Brown, to spend the day with you. She seems to be a nice sort of girl, and it will be a great treat for her."

"Thank you, Mrs. Green. I should like to see Jane ; but I'm not lonesome, now that I'm able to read again."

Mrs. Green, loth to go, arranged the curtains, brushed the hearth, and added an extra polish to the card table with the corner of her apron. "There's the door bell! I hope there are no callers before I've changed my cap and gown." She peered through the half-opened blind. "A spruce-looking young man, I declare! Don't move from the sofa, dear, and I'll go to the door myself, for Nancy's hands are in the dough."

The door opened, and one glance at the face and form that entered brought a strange dizziness to the girl's heart, and a color to her pale face, that rivalled the hue of her dressing gown. She heard Mrs. Green's voice. "Mr. Hardy, Margaret—an old friend of yours, from Clyde."

The door closed after Mrs. Green's retreating figure, and Margaret mechanically repeated, "Mr. Hardy!"

"Your old friend, Maurice. You haven't forgotten him, Madge?"

She attempted to rise, but he reseated her, retaining in his own the trembling hand she extended. "You are glad to see me, Madge?"

The young girl made a quick movement, as if she would throw herself into his arms; but, burying her face in the sofa cushions, answered only with tears. Maurice released her hand, and walked to the window. He did not understand her emotion, and thought her recent illness must have made her weak and nervous. He lingered by the window till he supposed she would have recovered from the surprise of his sudden appearance, and then returned to the sofa.

"I shall call you Miss Foster—a name that isn't pleasant

or agreeable to me—if you don't raise your head soon, and say something besides 'Mr. Hardy.' ”

“ Oh ! Maurice, I'm glad to see you.”

“ Thank you. That was spoken like the little Madge I left in Clyde, nearly four years ago ; I was afraid Miss Foster had forgotten me.”

“ You couldn't think so ! ”

“ Well, I didn't like to ; but when I came in, and saw a young lady, in place of my little Madge, who either couldn't or wouldn't say anything but 'Mr. Hardy,' how could I help it ? ”

Margaret had raised her head now, and the deep light of her dark eye was turned toward her visitor. “ I've been ill, Maurice, and when I tried to express my great joy in seeing you, I suppose that weakness kept my tongue from moving, for I certainly tried to speak.”

“ You have been ill. Now that you raise your head, I see how thin and pale you are. Did you have good care taken of you ? ”

“ Oh ! Maurice, the nicest care. My own mother couldn't have watched me more tenderly than Mrs. Green did ; and Dr. Atherton called twice a day, when I was first taken ill.”

“ What made you ill, Madge ? ”

“ Mrs. Green says I've been wearing out for a long time, and Dr. Atherton says mill work is too hard for me ; but I didn't think anything about my health, I was so anxious about something else.”

“ How long is it since you gave up ? ”

“ It will be five weeks to-morrow.”

“Tell me about this sickness, Madge.”

“I don’t remember much about the first two weeks; only the last day I went to the mills, the pain in my head made me so dizzy, that I couldn’t see broken threads; and then I got wet walking home, and grew so faint and sick in the evening, that Mrs. Green couldn’t cure me with herbs, and sent for Dr. Atherton. Oh! I tremble, now, when I think of the terrible dreams I had.”

“What about the dreams, Madge?”

“Sometimes I thought wicked people were dragging me where I didn’t choose to go; and then I was falling over a precipice on to sharp, jagged rocks, or else I was wading in the little brook at home, and the waters would suddenly rise into a great black stream, hurrying me away in the strong current.”

“But were there no pleasant dreams?”

“Oh, yes; you often came and saved me from some frightful death, and rocked me in your arms, and smoothed my hair, as mother did long ago; but when I woke, ’twas only Mrs. Green. Sometimes I dreamed of the Mayflowers and honeysuckles at home, and you smiled upon me, as you often did when I said my lessons well.”

Maurice again walked to the window, apparently now to hide his own emotion, and not to wait for the young girl’s to subside. When he returned, he took from his pocketbook a small bunch of withered flowers, and placed them in Margaret’s hand, saying:

“You see, I remembered your favorites.”

“Maurice, did you gather these for me?”

"I had a little hope of finding my young friend, and I thought, if she didn't remember me, she would be glad of the flowers she used to tend; and I could tell, from the way she greeted them, if she was greatly changed."

Margaret bent long over the flowers, pressing each one silently to her lips.

"I'm afraid these warm tears will not restore their freshness and beauty, Madge."

"You see, I haven't changed in my love for flowers, nor the habit of crying when I'm pleased."

"No, you are not greatly changed—a little taller, I should say. Stand up, and let me see." Margaret rose. "Oh, yes—considerably taller; and you are not on so good terms with the sun. What has old Time done for me in these four years, Madge?"

Margaret stole a bashful glance at his whiskers, but only said: "You seem just as kind as ever."

"You haven't asked me, yet, how I happened to find you!"

"I am making my pleasures last just as long as possible; and I don't feel quite sure that this isn't one of the dreams that have haunted me so lately. Are you directly from Clyde?"

"Yes; I left mother's cottage yesterday morning, and only last Saturday I arrived from Uptonville."

"Does Jem O'Harry still work in the garden?"

"Yes; and Jem hasn't forgotten the little hands that used to pull up weeds, and tend the flowers."

"Are the tulips in blossom on both sides of the garden walk?"

"There are a great many this season, and they are just budding."

"Does the crocus bloom on the south side of the grape trellis?"

"I'm not certain, but I think it does."

"Oh! how much I've thought of the apple trees this spring, and the hawthorn hedge, and the violets down by the brook. There is so little that is green and pleasant here! Is the farm looking very thrifty and beautiful now?"

"Uncommonly so, I should say. Jem is a very skilfull hand."

"Maurice, I haven't dared to ask about your mother!"

"But I think the gentle, forgiving heart of Madge cherishes no ill will against my mother. Am I right?"

"I do not love her."

"No; but you would not willingly cause her unhappiness, or harm her in any way?"

"I should be sorry to do either; and if she was sick, I think I could wait upon her very patiently. Did I do right in leaving her?"

"Why didn't you ask me that question three years ago, so as to save me all the anxiety I've had, lest my little pupil was ill treated, uncared for, and sick among strangers?"

"I never thought you would be anxious; and then, I did write several times, but I hadn't courage enough to send the letter."

"Why did you lack courage? Hadn't I proved myself your freind?"

"Oh, yes; the best and dearest friend I've ever known

since mother died; but I knew your mother would write all about it, and I was afraid you wouldn't understand my motives, and would blame me for leaving her. Oh! Maurice, I was so wretched after you went away, and Mrs. Kempton died, that I couldn't think of staying there four long years."

Margaret paused, but she could not determine whether the serious, thoughtful look on the face of her friend indicated displeasure or approval.

"The first thing I shall do, after I get education enough to teach, will be to pay your mother for the four years of time I've taken."

"How much will it take, Madge?"

"I should think three hundred dollars would hire a kitchen girl for that length of time."

"How are you going to earn so much money?"

"I shall teach, after I get my education."

"Do you expect this education will drop down to you as manna did to the children of Israel?"

"No, indeed. I'm going to Cherryville Institute for a whole year. I have two hundred dollars, that I've earned in the mills, to pay my expenses."

"You are a brave girl; but I almost wish you hadn't a dollar."

"Why, Maurice! I thought you were my friend, and would be glad to know I had earned enough to pay my expenses at school for a year."

"I should be glad, if you hadn't paid dearly for the paltry sum in headaches and heartaches; and then, if you hadn't a dollar, I should take pleasure in knowing you were dependent upon me."

Margaret wondered what pleasure there could be in such dependency, but she didn't ask her friend to explain.

"Haven't I made you talk too much this morning?"

"I should never be weary with talking to you."

"I hope not; but you are not strong yet, and I want you to tell me a great deal more about what you've been doing since I left Clyde. Now, if you will recline upon the sofa, and allow me to arrange the pillows, so that you can rest, I will stop an hour longer; if not, I must go now."

"I will do as you wish, but I don't feel the need of rest."

There was a pleasure in being thus cared for; and, when Maurice drew a chair to her side, he could not fail to read it in the glad light of her eye.

"Now begin, if you please, with your flight from the farm, and tell me what has happened since."

"I ought to commence as far back as Lucy Kempton's death."

"Do so, for I haven't heard much about it."

Margaret commenced very much as she would have done in former years, if Maurice had asked her to recite a lesson, and in simple, well-chosen language, which showed her friend that three years had done more to enrich her mind than her purse, described her friend's illness and death, and Mr. Crosby's benevolent offers of aid. Maurice did not interrupt her, until she spoke of Mr. Crosby's proposals, and then he asked:

"Did mother know of this?"

"Mr. Crosby told her what he would do for me, and asked her permission to take me South; but she was greatly offended, and thought he only wanted to make a slave of me,

because I'm so brown. Her harshness, at this time, was one reason why I left so suddenly."

"You asked me once, this morning, if you did right in leaving mother. I did not answer you then, Madge; but let me say now, if God had blessed me with a sister, I should have desired her to take precisely the step you did, under similar circumstances."

Margaret impulsively reached forth her hand to Maurice, and this silent expression of gratitude was more eloquent to him than words.

"When you decided to leave the farm, why didn't you go with Mr. Crosby, instead of coming to the mills?"

"Mr. Crosby left Clyde the day before I made up my mind to leave, and I had only ten dollars, that you sent me. I knew it wouldn't carry me to Tennessee, even if I could find the way alone; and I felt ashamed to start on so long a journey with only a gingham sunbonnet to wear on my head. I heard some ladies, who visited your mother, tell about how much money girls could earn in the Preston mills, and I thought I should be a more independent and useful woman, if I tried hard to help myself."

"You made a wise decision, Madge; but now tell me how you succeeded in eluding mother's vigilance, and finding your way here."

We will not put upon paper the details, with which our readers are already familiar, for they could not read them a second time with the absorbing attention which Margaret's interesting recital created in the mind of her listener. She was often interrupted by Maurice, and she often paused to

wipe away tears, which would start, when she turned over some sad page in her history for his perusal.

The factory bells tolled the hour of noon. Maurice rose abruptly, saying :

“ I engaged to meet Mr. Briarly at dinner. Madge, will you be strong enough to ride with me to-morrow ? ”

“ Yes, I think so ; 'twill be a greater pleasure than I've had for three years.”

There was no need for Maurice to be told of this. It glowed upon her cheeks, and sparkled in her eye.

“ Save your strength, then, by resting this afternoon. I will call at nine in the morning.”

It was not strange that even Mrs. Green's pleasant face, when it appeared, a few minutes later, should have been an unwelcome intrusion. There are some pleasures which we like to live over in memory, and place carefully away in a secret storehouse, while they are yet fresh, and untainted by collision with every-day affairs.

“ I thought your company would never go, Margaret. I grew so tired waiting.

“ But he wasn't here long, Mrs. Green.”

“ Only two hours ! But I dare say the time seemed short.”

“ It did, for we had a great many things to say. He was a friend and teacher of mine in Clyde, and he has been a professor in Uptonville four years.”

“ Dear me ! How frightened I should have been, if I had known we were to be honored with such grand company ! But the dinner is ready, dear, and I've made a place

for you. It's a long time since you've taken a meal below stairs."

Margaret met Mr. Stanley in the dining room, and, not having seen him since her illness, she cordially extended her hand, and thanked him for the flowers which he had sent, and whose fragrance, she told him, had quite destroyed the odor of medicine. Nothing could exceed, in gentle politeness, Mr. Stanley's bows and compliments; there were no words in the English language sufficiently expressive of his delight in her restoration. Margaret's happiness was contagious, and all were disposed to make the dinner hour as cheerful as possible. Mrs. Green's graciousness showed itself in the liberal portion of table bounties which she urged upon each.

In the course of the afternoon, Margaret told Mrs. Green of the pleasant anticipations she had for the morrow.

"It is just exactly what you need, dear, if he only comes with an easy carriage and a gentle horse. But what in the world will you wear? 'Tis too late for your winter hat, and your last summer one will be out of style. I'll go right down to Fletcher's, and bring up half a dozen of the prettiest I can find, for you to select from."

"Oh, no, Mrs. Green; my last summer bonnet will do nicely. I don't believe Mr. Hardy will notice but the style is new."

But Mrs. Green was hard to be persuaded. She took great pleasure in seeing Margaret becomingly arrayed, and considered a handsome wardrobe conclusive evidence of a person's gentility. She would hardly have joined with Scot-

land's noble poet, in saying, "A man's a man for a' that," if the person in question had been clad in rusty and threadbare garments. She was slow to discover Heaven's seal of nobility, unless fashionable attire helped to proclaim it.



CHAPTER XXXVIII.

NEW PLEASURES.

"Every sound
Was music to me; every sight was peace;
And breathing was the drinking of perfume."

BITTER-SWEET.

"The sunniest things throw brightest shade,
And there is even a happiness
That makes the heart afraid."

THE spring morning dawned most propitiously for our invalid. There was no fragrance of apple blossoms and hawthorn buds wafted on the air of this manufacturing city, but Margaret did not heed that now, and weep, as in former years, because she had not even a Mayflower or a pansy to call her own. Even the few faded blossoms gathered in Clyde lay unheeded in her writing case, for the maiden's anticipations were more fragrant than the breath of flowers. The hour of nine, to Margaret, seemed long in coming, though Mrs. Green declared she couldn't tell where the hours had gone. She hadn't accomplished half as much as usual, she said, and yet she had found time to superintend Mar-

garet's toilet, put the parlor in its best estate for the reception of the young professor, and arrange the bows of her neatest cap in the most becoming manner. "There's the carriage!" she exclaimed, when, for the twentieth time, she peered through the blinds to watch its arrival. "I shall speak to Mr. Hardy myself," she added, "for I want to caution him about driving too fast and too long. You can't endure much fatigue yet."

She hardly allowed Maurice time to make the usual morning salutations to herself, and his friend, before she interrupted him :

"I've been telling Margaret, Mr. Hardy, that I should caution you about driving too fast. She's been a very sick girl, and a little too much fatigue, when she's still so weak, might bring on a relapse."

"I was thinking of that, Mrs. Green; and as my friend, Mr. Briarly, tells me there is a fine pond, called Deepwater, near Birch Hill, and an excellent house for the accommodation of visitors close at hand, I thought I would drive your patient there very slowly this morning; and then, if the day is pleasant, allow her to rest until afternoon, before returning, unless she objects to this bit of country air which I propose to give her."

Maurice turned to Margaret for a reply, but Mrs. Green saved her the trouble.

"She'll like nothing better, sir. You should have heard the poor child moan for flowers, when she was sick! Only mind that she does not try to gather them for herself to-day."

The young man promised, and Mrs. Green, with a careful

hand, secured Margaret's shawl and scarf, and followed them to the door.

"Wait a minute!" she called, when Maurice was gathering up the reins; and, returning to the parlor, she quickly emerged with an extra shawl and sofa cushion. "I'm afraid she can't rest against the back of that chaise, Mr. Hardy. Just place this cushion so that she can lean against it; and here's another shawl, lest there should come up an easterly wind this afternoon."

Margaret warmly thanked the thoughtful woman for her care, and, when the carriage rolled away, Mrs. Green lingered upon the step until it was out of sight.

"It is lucky the day is so bright and sunny," she said to Nancy, on her return to the kitchen, "for a little country air will do Margaret more good than medicine. I'd give my best cap to know if this Mr. Hardy is the Maurice that she talked so much about when she was delirious. He has a fine, handsome face, and seems as tender of her as if she was a sister. I wonder what Deborah Haskins would say, if she knew a college professor had visited at my house, and that my little boarder, whom she's impudently called a factory girl, has actually gone to ride with him!"

"It took me a long time to get accustomed to Mrs. Green's motherly kindness," Margaret said; "but now 'tis so pleasant to be cared for, and to feel that one person in the world really likes me."

"You were very fortunate in finding such a boarding place. Mrs. Green's face is a mirror of her genuine goodness and benevolence."

Margaret related several little incidents in proof of Mrs. Green's amiability and affection for herself, while they were passing through the city and its suburbs; but when they left the dusty streets, and came in sight of orchards and farms, she was so eager to catch and retain "the fleet angel of the moment," that the memories of a sick-chamber and tender nurse were left far behind. The harshest clang of the factory bell might have pealed forth from the chimney of a brown farmhouse—Margaret would only have heard the swallows twittering beneath the eaves. A princely cavalcade might have passed upon the right, with gayly caparisoned horses, liveried outriders, and a coroneted coat of arms—Margaret would only have seen the tender green of the budding trees, the banks of blue and white violets, and the sweet-scented fern upon the left. Maurice watched, with a well-pleased face, his companion's eager delight.

"Only look, Maurice! there are tulips, and pansies, and crocuses, all in blossom; and I'm sure I can smell hawthorn!"

They were passing a cottage garden, and Maurice turned his horse's head to the gate, and prepared to alight.

"What are you going to do, Maurice?"

"Buy some of these flowers."

"Oh! don't take so much trouble;" but Maurice was already inside the garden, and gave no heed to her expostulation.

The woman who presented herself at the cottage door was greatly surprised at her visitor's request to purchase flowers. "I will gladly give the sick lady as many as she

wants ; but there are only a few of the earliest spring flowers in blossom." She threw her apron over her head, and walked down the path, to aid in gathering them. "Tell the lady," she said, when she had tied together a large bunch of the early buds and blossoms with a thread of the sewing cotton that hung around her neck, "tell the lady, if she should come this way in a month, or so, I will give her a much greater variety, with some choice specimens of the rose. I can add a mossbud and some geraniums to this nosegay, from my house plants, if you will wait a minute."

Maurice could wait, when he thought Margaret's pleasure would be enhanced by the delay ; and the piece of silver which he forced the woman to accept for the flowers, convinced her that he was a "gentleman born and bred."

Margaret had not many words to offer, when Maurice placed the flowers in her hand, but her manner was a sufficient proof that she appreciated his delicate kindness in obtaining them.

"You mustn't mind, if I make a great many childish exclamations to-day, Maurice ; and you mustn't think of getting for me every beautiful thing that we pass."

"Of course not. The chaise will not hold all of the green hedges, violet banks, and apple trees."

Margaret laughed, and asked : "Do you know, Maurice, that I haven't seen a farm, since I left Clyde, and that I've never been in a carriage before, excepting when I rode in Mr. Parsons' market wagon to Hayden, and a few times a hack has taken me from the mills, when it rained ?"

"I'm not sorry to give you this pleasure for the first

time ; but you must not infer that I would not gladly have witnessed your enjoyment of it years ago."

It was nearly ten miles to Deepwater from the city, but this portion of New England was so beautiful, and the spring morning so pleasant, that distance and time were both forgotten.

"This sheet of water must be the pond which Mr. Briarly described, and this quiet, rural house, the Visitors' Hotel ; but it hardly seems half of ten miles from the city. We've been riding two hours, though," he added, looking at his watch, as they drove up to the door of the hotel, "and I am afraid you are very tired, Madge."

"I really cannot tell, for I haven't once thought about it."

Maurice lifted his friend to the piazza, and then half carried her to a neat private parlor. He took off her bonnet and shawl, and arranged Mrs. Green's cushion upon the sofa, bidding her rest, while he went out to give directions about the horse, and order refreshments.

Margaret needed rest after this unwonted excitement and exercise, for she was still almost as weak as an infant. The darkened parlor and soft cushion invited repose, and, before Maurice returned, she was fast asleep.

"I'm glad that she can sleep," he thought, seating himself where he could watch her face. "I've been afraid the excitement of the morning would fatigue her too much."

Maurice was but little used to the society of ladies. He had been a close student in college, mingling but little in company. Uptonville was a country town, and he had not met a half dozen intelligent and refined ladies during his resi-

dence there. He had speculated but little upon the nature of his regard for Madge; but when he had questioned his heart, it seemed only natural that he should be interested in the welfare of one who had spent so many years under his mother's roof; who had been so harshly treated by that mother, too, and who had no natural claims upon the sympathies of any one. She had been a companion, a pupil, and he was sure his regard for her was fraternal.

Maurice had some grand ideas of love: a glorious ideal was enshrined in his heart of a perfect woman, beautiful, accomplished, amiable, and domestic—a radiant star in society, and a soft, gentle light by his own hearthstone. When this goddess appeared, his heart would bow at once in reverent adoration. But when his fancy drew a picture of home comfort, somehow Madge always glided softly into the background, a satellite attendant upon his queen; but her large trusting eyes were upraised to his in holy faith, and with brotherly care would he watch over and protect her. He was not a little surprised to find her so much improved in personal appearance. "She will always be a little brown," he thought, "but one will never notice that, after seeing the depth and purity of her eyes. Every expression of her face is refined and delicate, and she has soft, abundant hair." He looked again at the dark, rich veil which was raised from her temples on one side by the hand that rested beneath her face, and partly concealed her features on the other side, by falling in luxuriant waves over her neck and shoulders. "Yes, these curls," he mused, "would give her a claim to beauty, even if she had no other; and then, her hand is small and

delicate, notwithstanding the hard, rough usage of former years. Her manners are easy and natural; there never could be anything affected about so truthful a person. She will make any man happy, when she comes to love." Perhaps the glow upon her cheek, and the warm kindling of her eye when it met his, and her artless expressions of yesterday, rose before him, for he mused again, half aloud: "No, she cannot know anything about love yet—she's too young; and then, she was only a child when I left Clyde, though, to be sure, she seems to have cherished strong, almost passionate sisterly affection for me. No wonder, for a nature like hers must cling to something, and God knows she has had little enough to love."

The sleeper moved. She had been a little wandering and frightened upon suddenly waking, ever since the first day of her attack—the natural result of overtasked nerves and extreme weakness, Dr. Atherton said.

She opened her eyes, gazing around with a bewildered look, and starting from the sofa with a frightened air and low cry. Maurice sprang forward, and took her in his arms. He was unused to sickness, and he thought surely the relapse, which Mrs. Green predicted would be the effect of over-exertion and weariness, had come. He poured some water from a glass that stood near, upon her head and face, and had the satisfaction of seeing a conscious light return to her eyes, and a blush to her pale face, when she knew whose arm supported her.

"I'm better, now, and can sit by myself."

Maurice at once placed her upon the sofa, saying:

“You’ve had a nice, refreshing sleep; but the waking wasn’t so pleasant.”

“How long have I been sleeping?”

“Nearly an hour; and you have waked just in time, for I ordered dinner to be brought to this parlor at twelve, so that we might have time to ride around the pond, if you get sufficiently rested.”

“How much trouble you are taking for me!”

“Do you think so, Madge?”

Margaret made no reply. She was busy in picking up the flowers which had fallen upon the carpet while she slept, and arranging them in a glass of water, that she might carry their beauty and fragrance home to her little chamber.

“We are sometimes very selfish in selecting pleasures for another, and I gratified my own inclinations quite as much as yours in this morning’s excursion. The duties of my profession in Uptonville have allowed me very little time for recreation.”

“How soon are you going back?”

“Not for a long time, to Uptonville.”

“Will you stay at the farm, with your mother?”

“No, Madge; but I shall not answer any more questions, until we’ve disposed of this chicken, and sundry other delicacies.”

Maurice drew out the table, and arranged the dishes which the servant brought in, laughing and chatting in a humorous way during the meal, to dispel any timid or bashful feelings which might trouble his young companion.

When the dishes were removed, Maurice opened the

blinds of the window that overlooked the pond, and wheeled the sofa up in front, telling Margaret that she must rest again before he should allow her to ride.

“You shall recline where you can look out upon this beautiful pond, while I tell you what I’m going to do, if God spares my life, in the next three years. But first tell me what you were thinking about, a moment since.”

“I’m wondering, now, what you are going to do.”

“But a moment since, Madge?”

“I was thinking of the pond in Clyde, and the fallen trunk that I used to wade out upon, after lilies.”

“You were fond of the old farm?”

“Yes, very.”

Both were silent, for both saw mirrored on the clear waters outstretched before them the fleeting pleasures of childhood. Maurice was the first to speak.

“You asked if I should remain at the farm. No, Madge; I’m going to Germany.”

The young girl started, but the tears, which flowed so freely four years ago, when he announced his intention of going South, were restrained now; the drooping lids and quivering lips were the only visible signs of emotion, while she listened to his reasons for going abroad, his plans for study, and the great field for future usefulness which this foreign travel and polish would open for him. He ceased speaking, and again turned his eyes from his companion’s face toward the pond. He needed to drink deeply of the quiet beauty spread out before him, to calm the troubled waves that were rising in his soul, when he thought of leaving

the pale, unprotected orphan by his side again with strangers.

“When will you go, Maurice?”

“I shall sail from New York next Wednesday, and must be in Clyde again to-morrow night. Would you like to ride around the pond now?”

“Yes, if it pleases you.”

“I’ll go, then, and order the carriage, for, after I’ve shown you the beauties of the pond, you must rest again before we start for the city.”

When he returned, Margaret still reclined upon the sofa, but one hand was shading her eyes, and tears crept slowly through her fingers. Maurice looked a moment at the tearful face, stopped, and touched her lips with his own. It was a strange, unwonted token of affection for Maurice to offer, and for Margaret to receive. An observer could hardly have told which was the more embarrassed. Margaret rose quickly from the sofa, and, gathering up her shawl, bonnet, and scarf, prepared for the drive, while Maurice turned to the window. A moment more, and he was aiding Margaret in her preparations, pinning her shawl and scarf with the freedom of a brother.

The narrow carriage path by the pond was smooth, and lined on both sides with graceful birch trees and evergreens; it bounded the pond on its southern side, and, leaving it on the right, wound gracefully up an eminence, known to pleasure seekers for miles around as Birch Hill. The prospect from its summit was one of rare beauty. Distance lent enchantment to a small village on one side, the pond slept

quietly at the base of the hill on another, and, in every direction, comfortable, thrifty farmhouses might be seen, and broad, green fields, chequered with patches of newly-ploughed land.

Distant mountains, the crowning glory of New England scenery, were dimly seen through a thin veil of vaporish mist. Margaret's eye did not fail to observe every jagged rock and green tree, each graceful curve and delicately drawn line in the landscape; and her companion, by skilfully pointing out interesting objects, by animated descriptions of places he had visited in the South, managed to turn the tide of her thoughts from the great distance which must so soon separate them.

It was not till after they had enjoyed all of the beauties of the pond and Birch Hill, rested at the hotel, and were again on their way to the city, that Margaret in any way reverted to their separation.

"This day has been like one of the pleasant dreams of my illness; and when you go, it will be like the wakings, when I found myself worn and nervous with pain, instead of gathering flowers by the brookside."

"Madge, you must promise to inform me, before you take any important step in my absence. Never go to the mills again; you are too delicate for such hard work; and I'm afraid you are not strong enough to teach, this summer. As you have never had a brother, and I have never had a sister, I shall claim a brother's privilege of advising you. Shall I?"

Margaret looked up, in trusting confidence.

"Well, then, sister Madge, tell me, first, what you propose to study in Cherryville."

"I have thought I should get the principal to tell me what I shall most need to prepare me for teaching; and, since you've spoken of going to Germany, I've been thinking that perhaps I might study German too."

"By all means, Madge, if there is a competent German teacher in Cherryville. If you have any taste or inclination for music, you had better devote considerable time to that, for 'tis getting to be a very necessary accomplishment for young ladies, besides being the most profitable branch to teach. You've made very commendable progress in your studies, without the aid of teachers, and I'm half afraid I shall come back from Germany, and be unable to recognize my sister Madge in the accomplished Miss Foster."

"I hope you will find me improved, and more worthy of your kind regard than now."

"You are all I desire in a sister. I'm glad that I do not leave you quite uncared for. Mrs. Green and Dr. Atherton have proved themselves true and warmhearted friends."

They were nearing the city.

"Madge, I shall leave in the evening train, for business will detain me at Hayden for a few hours to-morrow, and I must bid you good-by as soon as we arrive at Mrs. Green's. Have you not something more to say? or some request to make?"

"Only to thank you for the great happiness you've given me to-day. I should like to give you something. Would you wear this plain gold ring for my sake?"

Maurice held forth his hand, and Margaret, drawing her Christmas token from her own finger, placed it upon his.

"I shall not need this to remind me of Madge, but, for her sake, I shall wear it."

He talked cheerfully and pleasantly of his voyage, until they reached Mrs. Green's door; then lifted Margaret from the chaise, and led her to the parlor, folded her for a moment in his arms, and then—he was gone. Margaret was alone; the glorious enchantment of her dream had vanished; its golden memories only remained.



CHAPTER XXXIX.

CONNECTING LINKS.

"Clothing the palpable and familiar
With golden exhalations of the dawn."

"Oh! 'tis the heart that magnifies this life,
Making a truth and beauty of its own."

WORDSWORTH.

WHEN Mrs. Green came into the parlor, a few minutes after Maurice went away, she did not find Margaret in hysterics, or a fainting fit, but sensibly occupied in folding her shawl and scarf. There were a few tears upon her cheeks, and a great many more seemed to be trembling beneath her lids, but she was able to answer very intelligibly the multitude of questions which Mrs. Green must ask about the excursion, and maintained her dignity with remarkable composure during the evening meal.

She even listened attentively to the elaborate congratula-

tions of Mr. Stanley, who had just been informed of the good fortune which would prevent Margaret from returning to the mills ; and not till night drew a friendly veil between her and curious observers, and the holy stars looked down in sympathy, did she allow herself the luxury of tears. She did not weep with the same agony of feeling that flowed forth three years ago, when she excluded herself from the kind sympathy of Maurice. A special providence had restored to her his friendship, and his brotherly affection had thrown a new charm around existence ; but would such a love satisfy the cravings of her heart ?

Margaret dared not answer the question. She would joyfully bask in the sunshine of the present, garnering from it strength for the battle of life.

Jane Brown came in, the next morning, to bid her good-by. She was going to the homestead cottage.

“ But how long will you be gone, Janet ? ”

“ Until September ; and I want you to visit me at mother’s, if Samuel is able to finish our house by that time. I shall want you for a bridesmaid.”

“ Oh ! Janet, I’m glad you are going to reward Samuel so soon for his goodness and patience in waiting so long for you.”

“ He ought to thank you, if he is under obligations to any one, for I don’t know when we should have been married, if you hadn’t done so much for sister Lottie. You’ve been the dearest, kindest friend I’ve ever had, excepting mother and Samuel. I don’t want to be married, Margaret, till I’ve paid you for your kind help.”

"I've been more than paid, Janet, by your love and friendship, and by the pleasure I took in feeling that I was of some use in the world. I've often envied you the happiness of having so many to love and care for."

"Well, I believe it has kept me from a great deal of selfishness and wickedness; but mother's family don't need my help now, since dear, lame Lottie died, and the boys have grown so large, and willing to help."

The girls talked long, and built many castles for the future, and then, with promises of constancy, and affectionate good-byes, parted.

Margaret gained rapidly in strength, and Mrs. Green gave the country air, which she had inhaled for a day, great credit for her improved looks. The letter which she received two days after Maurice left, might have added balm and strength to the beneficial effects of the excursion; but we can better judge after perusing it.

"DEAR MADGE: I enclose, in this letter, two hundred dollars, to aid you in acquiring a musical education. The study of this science will materially increase your expenses, but I think you will derive great benefit from it, especially if you should teach in the South. You need not receive this as a gift, though, as my sister, you might accept from me a much larger sum. 'Tis less than your just due for services rendered my mother, but all that is in my power to offer you now.

"I have no doubt that your persevering and self-dependent nature would secure for yourself all of the advantages of schools and teachers, without this aid; but such self-reliance

would retard the object for which you are striving, and, by sowing the seeds of ill health, place obstacles in the way of your future usefulness. The brave and heroic efforts you've already made, have cost you a fearful illness.

“When you had the misfortune to be thrown upon the world, bereft of natural protectors, and my parents became your legal guardians, they gave bonds, granting you certain privileges of education, which, owing to my father's early death, you have never received. I remember him as an upright, noble-minded man, generous almost to a fault. I remember, too, of hearing him express the desire of adopting you as his own child. Had he lived, this, or some other benevolent design relative to your welfare, would have been executed. Over the whole of your relations to my mother I am desirous you should draw the veil of charity. As my mother, she is entitled to my regard, and filial duty will prompt me to reverence and honor her declining years; but, Madge, I know what it is to hunger and thirst after natural affection—to long for one word of tenderness and sympathy from the mother who cradled me in her arms. Then, if love and gentleness were scantily doled out to an only son, do not wonder that harshness and oppression should have characterized her treatment of one whose sensitive and delicate nature she could not understand.

“I am anxious to make some atonement, so far as my means will allow, for the ills you suffered in childhood, and, as my honored father's representative, to execute the spirit of his designs. If justice did not demand this, a tenderer emotion draws me toward you, and I shall claim a brother's

right to aid you in securing the social position which your intellect, goodness, and purity would adorn.

“Three years ago I might have expressed anxiety lest your perseverance should flag, and the wings of your spirit, while soaring after the truly good and beautiful, should become dragged in the mud and dross of earth. Now, I am confident that the unerring instincts of a pure and truthful heart, sanctified and redeemed by our blessed Saviour, will deliver you from all evil. Remember, that the heroic and virtuous strength which will resist temptation in its most fascinating guise, is the growth of years, and must be carefully watched and nourished. Your gift shall remind me, in foreign lands, that one heart upon my native soil regards me with sisterly affection; and may this little ring, which I enclose for you, be to you a pledge of my sincere and fraternal regard.

“I’m sorry that I cannot see you again before embarking, and I shall not probably write till I’m established in the University of Heidelberg, so that I cannot hear from you for a long time; but, confidently committing you to the care of our Merciful Father, I shall ever remain,

“Most affectionately your brother,

“MAURICE P. HARDY.”

The years which had strengthened Margaret’s heart since she had received any token of remembrance from Maurice, had not incapacitated it for enjoyment, but, rather, its long dearth rendered it more truly grateful for the present shower, and she did not fail to return humble thanks to the Giver of all good for her present blessings. Maurice’s gener-

ous gift was deposited in the bank with her own dearly bought savings, while Hope's sweet, inspiring breath fanned the energies of her soul.

Although Margaret had been strengthened by more powerful stimulants than any which Dr. Atherton could bestow, still the Monday morning which witnessed her installation as aid to Miss Parker in the Holly street Primary School, found her scarcely strong enough to walk the short distance from Mrs. Green's house; and it was not strange that the little flaxen-haired a-b-c-darians laughed and tittered to see so pale and slight a girl enthroned on one of the high chairs by Miss Parker's side; nor that the worthy woman, who had swayed the sceptre of love for fifteen years in Holly street, should cast anxious glances at the youthful figure of her assistant.

Miss Parker told her she might watch the intellectual machinery for the first half day, but in the afternoon she should give her a division of the freshmen, and a class somewhat farther advanced; who were solving the mysteries of mathematics as far as the first ten columns of the multiplication table. It was an easy matter for the young girl, who was not so far removed from childhood but that she distinctly remembered all its wants and trials, to adapt her patient, persevering nature to the duties assigned her—an easy matter, for one so amiable, to win the hearts of her little students; and, their good will secured, the labor of introducing them to the profound depths of the primer and spelling book was comparatively light. True, she was sometimes puzzled to know how to sow the germs of good in the heart of some obstinate, rebellious urchin, who couldn't, or wouldn't under-

stand how a knowledge of the alphabet was to aid him in the journey of life ; but her patient toil was generally rewarded by the bright look of triumph which the embryo lawyers, doctors, statesmen, and divines would wear, as these mysterious hieroglyphics were safely lodged in their memories. And then, such quantities of smiles, kisses, and roses, as greeted her entrance to the schoolroom ! Had her heart been struggling with some great sorrow, this mingling with the freshness and dew of life's spring morning would have been the best opiates for it ; but Margaret had no occasion now to seek the drowning of grief in active and engrossing employment. Her thoughts were sunny, and unshadowed by any fears for the future.

Miss Parker told Dr. Atherton that Margaret's patience knew no bounds—obstinacy and dullness melting before it like icicles in a June sun ; and she united her powers of persuasion to the doctor's to induce her assistant to remain another term ; indeed, to give up the idea of going abroad to school, but add to her present store of knowledge while she was teaching in the primary school. She could take lessons of Mr. Briarly, or some one competent to instruct her, and, by so doing, increase her hoard in the bank. But Margaret had fostered the desire of attending school too long to relinquish it now, and September found her in readiness to join the new class. She had prepared a plain, neat, and abundant wardrobe, and Mrs. Green's ready hand and affectionate heart had been at her service during her preparations.

It was natural that she should often think, while packing her trunks, of the one solitary journey she had taken, when

all her earthly possessions were carried in her own hand, and only Jem O'Harry's blessing to speed her on, and contrast her dreary, unprotected state at that time, with her present happiness and abundance, blessed with the sincere friendship of Mrs. Green, and cheered in her earnest endeavors by sweet-voiced missives from beyond the sea.



CHAPTER XL.

DR. ATHERTON AND MARGARET.

"No one is so accursed by fate,
No one so utterly desolate,
But some heart, though unknown,
Responds unto his own."—LONGFELLOW.

"Birth has gladdened it ; death has sanctified it."

"I CANNOT leave for Cherryville, Dr. Atherton, in debt to any person, though I don't think money will ever pay you for the care you took of me last spring. You refused money then, but I came over to your office, this evening, to insist upon your taking something."

"Be seated, Miss Foster. I was thinking, to-day, you might be leaving soon, and I must find time to drop into Mrs. Green's, and bid you good-by. When are you off?"

"To-morrow morning, sir."

"You will come back to spend the holidays?"

"Mrs. Green wishes me to, but I cannot promise, for I

do not know how busy I must be to keep up with my classes."

"No trouble on that score, I reckon. What do you wish me to do with this purse?"

"Take your pay for tending me in my sickness."

The doctor rose, leaving the purse upon the table, and slowly and thoughtfully took a few turns across the office, then seated himself by the side of Margaret, saying:

"Once, last spring, I asked you several questions, which probably surprised you; certainly they gave you pain, and, under ordinary circumstances, I should have had no right to draw from you any portion of your history. If you can spare me half an hour, with sufficient patience to hear an old man's story, I will tell you one of my reasons for refusing the contents of that purse."

Margaret assured him that any amount of time and patience which he could desire, were at his disposal; and Dr. Atherton resumed speaking:

"When I was first called to see you, there was something about your eyes and features that reminded me of an old friend. But a man of my years is always fancying he can detect resemblances to old friends in every new face he meets, and I thought but little about it, till after your fever turned, and I had heard you utter a few sentences in a natural voice; then every tone of yours brought back again the face, the figure, and the voice that I had seen and heard only in dreams for twenty years and more. I should not now reveal to you a passage in my history, which has been concealed for so many years, had not your answers to my

questions convinced me that you had a right to know. But I have waited several months to know if Kate's child inherited from her mother anything more than her eyes and hair. I find these features the smallest portion of your inheritance. You are the counterpart of your mother in perseverance, self-dependence, and, if I am any judge, in amiability, too."

"You must have known my mother well, Dr. Atherton. Why did you never tell me before?"

"Because I wished to prove you. If I had found you only like her in features, I should never have told you that Kate Norris was my cousin."

"My mother your own cousin, Dr. Atherton?"

"Certainly, child. Judge Norris, of Hayden, was my mother's only brother. Let me see—that establishes a sort of relationship between us; does it not?"

"Oh! tell me, quick, everything you knew about my mother!"

"That would take a long time, for I knew her well—too well, alas! for my own peace."

"But I thought you said she was amiable?"

"So she was—an embodiment of good nature and gentleness, without any lack of spirit and dignity. It was only because she was such a paragon of womanly loveliness and perfection, that she charmed sleep from my lids, rest from my couch, flesh from my bones, and peace from my heart! I loved her, girl!"

"Of course you did, if she was your cousin; gentle and amiable, too."

"I loved her, foolish girl! but I forget that you are little more than a child, and do not know the meaning of that word. You have never seen a strong man, weak as a child, willing to kiss the dust that his idol's foot had pressed, or to spend a lifetime in Egyptian darkness, if the light of her smile blessed his soul!"

Dr. Atherton bowed his head upon the table. There was something fearful in the strong tide of impassioned feeling, which, gushing forth, washed out the impress of twenty years, as easily as a huge wave washes from the shore the tiny footprints of a little child.

The shadowy figure which haunted his dreams had assumed a palpable form, and stood by his side, glowing and throbbing with a rich, warm life. Margaret gazed with awe and astonishment upon the bursting forth of these volcanic emotions, which were concealed in everyday life beneath so calm and placid an exterior. After some minutes, she asked:

"Did my mother love you, Dr. Atherton?"

"Yes, as cousins love; perhaps even more, for I was an inmate of her father's house, and she had no brother; but all the wealth of her heart was lavished upon Richard Foster. The few scanty drops that were left of this pure fountain would not slake a thirst like mine."

"My father? Was he worthy of such love?"

"Worthy, child! Could a man, after basking in the gorgeous light of Italian skies turn to the frozen zones, if he was worthy the love of Kate Norris? But, granting, for a moment, that she was only a common woman, and had given the first love of her heart to Richard Foster, was he worthy

of such a priceless gift, if he did not exert every energy of his soul to cherish and protect it? He was your father, Margaret, but I must speak! His selfish nature could no more appreciate woman's love and devotion than an untaught Malay could understand the eloquence of Demosthenes. He courted a fortune, instead of Kate Norris; and, when the base, yellow metal was withheld from him, he turned coldly from the refined gold, the precious jewel which was all his own. He left her; and Kate Norris, once the beautiful and accomplished daughter of affluence, died in a poorhouse, broken-hearted and friendless, leaving to her only child an inheritance of poverty and tears. You may well cry now, Margaret, and I most devoutly wish your tears might wash the stain of guilt from your father's soul."

"Do you know anything about my—about Richard Foster, sir?"

"I've been told, that, after savage coldness and neglect, he left Kate sick in childbed, and never returned. God grant his eyes may never rest upon your mother's deathbed legacy—her bequest to the almshouse."

"Where was my grandfather, that he allowed mother to die in the poorhouse?"

"Sleeping in the old burial-ground of Hayden, and his fine fortune all spent in buying passports across the river of death. You don't understand me. Your grandfather gave his property to charitable institutions."

"Was my mother his only child?"

"Yes; and he was more to be envied in the possession of this one, than if a dozen ordinary compounds of flesh and

blood, muscle and bone, had called him father. I see you know but little about your mother's family."

"Nothing, only a few mysterious hints that I picked up in childhood; and oh! I've so longed to know what made mother so wretched, and why she was abandoned by all her friends."

"For the crime of loving, child! for having been made with an unfashionable heart, that couldn't be taught to whiffle and turn with every breeze!"

"Then grandfather wasn't pleased with her choice?"

"He was an upright, honorable man, shrewd, and quick to detect cunning and falsehood, and his eye saw through the thin veil of manhood and honesty which Foster wore just long enough to secure his prize. He knew the judge did not favor his suit, and that Kate loved and honored her father; but, fawning and whining as only an earth-born, grovelling soul could, he feigned sickness, and a generous, self-sacrificing woman abandoned home, luxuries, and a father's love, to save him from a broken heart, when nothing but a mallet of gold could quicken the life-flood that coursed through its cobwebbed, dust-stained alleys. Kate had always obeyed her father, and the old man, thinking his command would be regarded, when he told her the result of marrying Foster would be the loss of her inheritance, and banishment from his house, rested in peace, while the despoiler carried away his household god. Judge Norris kept his word, and Kate was too proud-spirited to be a craven on his bounty, till desertion, sickness, and penury humbled her, and your wailing cries shook down the last crumbling battlement of pride. She

came a long distance—God only knows *how* she came—back to the old place. Judge Norris was dead. You know the rest.”

“Where were you, Dr. Atherton? Why couldn’t you help her?”

“Do you suppose I remained in Hayden, to see my idol shattered, ruined? Had she been enthroned upon the altar of a man’s heart, I could have borne it; but to see her the wife of Richard Foster, was another thing! Could I remain, a blasted, withered trunk, the target for a heartless throng to shoot at?”

“Where did you go?”

“Listen, Margaret, and I’ll tell you briefly a few incidents of my life, which are connected with your mother’s history. When I was six years of age, my mother was left a widow, with two boys, and I was the older by two years. She was a clergyman’s widow, and, of course, penniless; but we were allowed to remain in the parsonage, a few miles from Hayden, where your grandfather Norris generously supported us for three years. Then your grandmother died, leaving Kate in her third summer, and Judge Norris took his widowed sister and her boys to his own house. We were cared for and educated as if we had been his own; but he always told us the expectation of inheriting his property should not spoil us. He would fit us for the duties of life, so far as he was able, and leave us to carve out our own fortunes. He had commenced life with only a strong heart and vigorous will, and he believed that only these were essential to secure success and honor. My brother William inherited

our father's delicate constitution, and close application so shattered his nervous system, that, in the last year of his collegiate course, he died. There is an old quotation from the world's greatest poet, that reads :

‘ When sorrows come, they come not single spies,
But in battalions.’

This was fearfully verified in my own history. I returned, after graduating, to my uncle's house, to find my mother rapidly approaching ‘ the bourne from whence no traveller returns,’ and the beautiful cousin, who had been enshrined in my heart from boyhood, betrothed to a man whom my soul loathed. But he knew well how to assume the mask of purity and polished refinement, else your mother's heart had not been so easily won. My uncle knew that I had chosen the science of medicine for a profession, and, after mother's death, he suggested that I should study in a famous medical college in Paris, and nobly offered to defray my expenses. I accepted his kindness, and went abroad. After an absence of three years, I returned. Your parents had removed, but a short time previous, to a distant part of the West, and I could learn but little about Kate, excepting that she had changed greatly in personal appearance, wearing habitually an expression of care and anxiety, and that her former brilliancy of spirit and manner was all gone.

“ I went South, where I practised my profession twelve years, during which time I heard of my uncle's death, and the disposal of his property by will. The climate of the South—I was in New Orleans—did not agree with me, and,

after a miraculous restoration from yellow fever, I came back to breathe the air of my native hills. You find me now a hale, rugged man, on the sunny side of sixty, and probably read in my face only the lines which threescore years would leave there; but I've opened for you a door in my heart, whose latch has not been raised for more than twenty years; and you can guess the reason why I've lived a solitary life, unblessed by the sunshine of woman's love."

"Did you first hear of mother's death from me?"

"No; an old friend in Hayden had gathered a few particulars; but, as it was his belief that Kate's child died in the poorhouse, and I made no search for it, you may well suppose that, when I found her, with a brave, independent spirit, struggling and suffering alone, I blessed God for the providence which had called me to her bedside. You will not thrust that purse in my face again, Margaret, now that you know kindred blood gives me the right to aid you?"

Margaret rose from her chair, and, stepping to the doctor's side, kissed his forehead, and remained standing with both hands resting confidently upon his broad shoulder.

"That kiss would cancel a much greater debt than you owed me, child!"

"You can't tell, Dr. Atherton, how strangely I feel, to find a person actually related to me; one who knew my mother, and loved her, too!"

The doctor drew her closely and tenderly to his side. "I'm glad to find Kate's child; if she should ever learn to love me——"

"I have always liked you, ever since that terrible illness;

but now there will be a new pleasure in loving you. I must have a new name for you ; what shall it be ?”

“Uncle—Uncle Atherton sounds better than doctor, doesn't it ?”

“Oh ! a vast deal. Uncle Atherton makes a new, strange world—a pleasant, sunshiny world for me ! Now, when I'm sick, uncle shall tend me ; when I'm in a strait where two ways meet, uncle shall guide me ; when I study diligently, uncle shall praise me.”

“What will niece Margaret do for her uncle ?”

“When you are sick, I will be your nurse, and take such nice care of you that you'll scarcely want to get well ; and when you have a house of your own, I'll keep every particle of dust from your books, stand ready with your coat and cane when you go out, and put them in your places when you come in. Then I'll make your tea, and bring your slippers and easy chair close to the hearth ; and, if you are dull, I'll talk and read to you.”

“If I only had a house, dear niece, you should be its good angel ; but I've been so prodigal of God's gifts to me, that I'm little more than even with the world. Now I can only regret my former thoughtlessness, which prevents me from taking my new treasure to my own hearthstone. But possibly, when you've packed all of the book learning into your little head that it can well contain, I shall have a home for you. When will that be ?”

“I cannot tell, uncle ; I'm fond of study, and shall go to school as long as my money holds out.”

“Margaret, 'tis my wish that you should consider Mrs.

Green's your home at present. Return there in vacation; the old lady has a very sincere regard for you. I've made up my mind to ask her to take me into her family. . . I believe she takes a few boarders?"

"Do, uncle; it will be so pleasant for me to think my two best friends are in the same house; and, if you are there it will seem more as if I had a home to come back to. Shall I tell Mrs. Green that I've found an uncle?"

"Yes; or, perhaps, as 'tis getting a little duskish, I had better take you home, and find out if Mrs. Green can take another lodger."

"That will be nice. Let me get your hat and cane, uncle."

"So you are already claiming the prerogatives of relationship?"

"If you only knew how desolate and friendless I've sometimes been since mother died, you would not wonder that I turn so gladly toward a relative. This new love makes me half crazy with joy, uncle!"

"It takes off the weight of a score of years from my own heart, child!"

He stooped to kiss the fair cheek of the young girl, who clung so trustingly to his arm, and they passed out into the twilight, Margaret unable to check the happiness which made her step too light and bounding for the sober pace of half a century.

-Mrs. Green's proud, happy delight was almost equal to Margaret's, when she learned that her young boarder had found a relative.

"'Tis very strange," she said to the doctor; "but I used to think, last spring, when I saw you together, that there was a strong family likeness. There's a certain something about the eyes and forehead, now that I know you are related, that makes me wonder that I hadn't guessed it months ago."

Margaret left the room, to put away her bonnet and shawl, and Mrs. Green continued:

"I always knew that child came of a good family, sir. She was scarcely fourteen when I took her in, and right from the country, too; but she wasn't the least bit awkward; modest and timid, to be sure. And then, she seemed to catch, without being told, the most proper and pretty ways. Unless there's genuine, good family blood in a person's veins, they don't take gentility so naturally, but there's always something affected and mincing about them. It always did me real good to help the girl, because she tried so hard to help herself, and be somebody."

"We both owe you a great debt, Mrs. Green, for your kindness to her; and I've been thinking there's no better way for me to express my gratitude, than by begging you to allow the girl to regard this as her home, while I will be responsible for any expense and trouble she may be. If I had a home and family of my own, I should take her to it; but I've been too lavish in the expenditure of money, and too heedless about collecting bills, to lay aside anything worth naming for exigencies. I should have regarded money differently, if I had been a marrying man, or if I had known this young chick was alive."

"I've told Margaret a great many times, doctor, that she'll always have a home while I'm alive. She's seemed like an own child ever since she lay in my arms so weak and helpless."

"Will you take another boarder, too, Mrs. Green? I should like to be near the girl when she comes back for a holiday, and my present quarters are made uncomfortable by the noise of children. I think I should feel more homelike in a tidy, well-ordered house like yours, and I'm not at all particular about the price I pay."

After becoming and suitable hesitation on Mrs. Green's part, the necessary arrangements were made before Margaret appeared; and, when she came in, the doctor said he must lose no time in saying good-by, for there was a sick child in Poverty Lane, that must be attended to without delay.

"Mind your teachers, niece, but don't bring on another fever by hard study, for perhaps you'll not find a Mrs. Green and Dr. Atherton in Cherryville!" Margaret promised. "Well, then, good-by till Christmas. Drop me a line once in a couple of weeks, that I may know of your progress."

The tears through which Margaret looked at her uncle's retreating figure were only those of deep thankfulness for God's loving-kindness.

CHAPTER XLI.

CHERRYVILLE INSTITUTE.

“ Oh ! when her life was yet in bud,
He, too, foretold the perfect rose ;
For thus she grew, for thus she grows
Forever, and as fair as good.”

TENNYSON.

“ *September 10th, 18—.*

“ DEAR MAURICE: I've been a whole week in Cherryville, but this Saturday afternoon is the first leisure I have found for writing ; and now I have so many things to say, that I'm afraid I shall hurry from one to the other, or 'dish them all up together' in a very unscholarlike way. No great matter, however, so long as my brother is no harsh critic, even though he is a student in Germany. I am actually at school ! The great object for which I've been striving and praying so long, is accomplished. Now, if the reality is half as pleasant as the anticipation has been, a princess might almost envy me.

“ You asked me to describe Cherryville, the institute buildings, my teachers, companions, and employments. The town seems very beautiful to me ; but you know my whole world has been made up of Clyde, a manufacturing city, and one glorious day at Birch Hill, so that I cannot compare it, as you would, with American, English, and German cities. The village is very much larger than Clyde, but not at all like a city. The houses are mostly cottages, and nearly

every one has a garden; they are scattered all about, too, and shaded with maple and chestnut trees, and have nice green turf in front, instead of hard, brick walks. I long to run upon the wayside, as I used to in the old lane in Clyde; but, when we go to the village, we must walk properly and demurely by the side of one of the teachers. I don't mind this, because there's plenty of opportunity to run back of the schoolroom, upon the banks of the river; but I've already heard some of the young ladies complain bitterly about being so restricted. I wonder what they would think of being shut up in a cotton mill, from six in the morning till six at night, for three years?

"The institute building stands a little way from the village, just about as far as the parsonage from your mother's farm. It is only a common-looking brick house, large enough to accommodate forty pupils and three teachers. One professor boards in the village, and twenty of the pupils are day scholars.

"There is a large, beautiful yard, hedged in on three sides with cedar and holly; but the river comes up on the back, and its waters are almost hid by the wild-cherry trees and old willows, that bend over as if their branches longed to kiss the bright, dancing waves. Perhaps 'tis only because my heart is so full of gladness, that I fancy the trees lean tenderly toward each other, and long to embrace the water.

"My room overlooks the river, and I can see just one happy-looking farmhouse on the opposite bank, with an old well sweep, an orchard, and cornfield; and then there are dark woods beyond, and blue mountains in the distance.

It makes me think of Clyde, when I look from this window, and I wonder if there isn't just such another little bound girl, as I used to be, belonging to the farmhouse, tending the flowers, and helping to harvest. Oh! if there is, I hope there is just such a good Mrs. Kempton and kind Maurice to help her over the rough places, and inspire her with hope. What a debt of gratitude I owe you! But I mustn't speak of it now, for I've been just ready to cry all this week; and if the tears get started, I can't possibly finish this letter, and I've scarcely begun to tell you anything yet.

"Professor Abner Howe is the principal, and his wife assists him. She is a graceful, amiable lady, and seems like Mrs. Kempton, only she is a little taller, with darker hair and eyes. She hears the recitations in English, while Mr. Howe teaches the classes in Latin and Mathematics. Miss Mary Johnson, from Preston (you will remember I told you about her the first time you called at Mrs. Green's), gives lessons in music and the ornamental branches; and Professor Talbot in French, German, and Italian.

"There are only two young ladies in the school whom I've ever seen before—Miss Bland and Miss Lyman—and they used to be in the same Sabbath class with me in Preston; but they do not seem to know me here. I heard Miss Bland tell a group of the girls, as I passed them in the hall, yesterday, that I was 'only a factory girl;' but if she wants to annoy me, she must take some other method. I told Mrs. Howe that I had been a factory girl, and wanted to become a teacher, and asked her advice about my studies. She seemed interested, and anxious to aid me, and thinks, with

you, that I had better devote a large portion of my time to music and the modern languages. I shall commence piano-forte music next week, and French and German next term, if I make good progress in my English studies this autumn.

“I cannot tell you how kind Miss Johnson is; and she has introduced me to Miss Macomber and Miss Caroline Upham; they are both agreeable and social. If every young lady in Cherryville should be afraid to brush against me, lest she should be contaminated with cotton dust, I could not be made unhappy now, while Miss Johnson is near to encourage and commend me, and while my brother Maurice blesses me once a month with a good long letter.

“How the dark, heavy clouds have cleared up from my sky during the last few months! I used to think nobody would ever love me, because I was a pauper, and was so bashful and brown; and then I sometimes cried for hours, and wickedly prayed to die, because no person cared to help me, or was related to me. But now—oh! Maurice, the words have been bursting from my heart, and trembling on the point of my pen, ever since I have been writing—I have found a relative—a cousin of my mother’s! I didn’t tell you, at first, because I wanted to leave my greatest joy to surprise you with at last. I can almost see you raise your eyebrows, as you would, sometimes, when I said a lesson well, and hear your voice saying, ‘You are only joking, Madge!’ ’Tis no joke, dear Maurice, but a genuine fact, and makes me so deeply, strangely glad, that I cannot think of words to express my joy. And then, he’s such an agreeable man! just the only one, besides yourself, whom I’ve ever

seen, that I should choose for a relative! You can hardly help guessing, for I've told you how attentive Dr. Atherton was in my sickness, and how he chose me for an assistant in the primary school. Well, this very man was *more* than a cousin to my mother, for he loved her as a man loves the woman he wishes to marry. He says she was beautiful, amiable, and noble-hearted. Oh! I shall strive very earnestly to be like her. He bids me call him Uncle Atherton; and this seems right and proper, for he was brought up and educated by my grandfather Norris, as tenderly as if he had been my mother's brother.

"This new treasure makes me feel prouder and richer than if an immense fortune had fallen at my feet. I wish you could see my uncle—you would like him, I'm sure; he's so honest, generous, and intelligent. Mrs. Green says he's quite a poor man, though he's one of the best physicians in the city, because he gives away so much money, and never asks people to pay him. I'm certainly glad he isn't rich, for, when he grows too old to practise, 'twill be such a pleasure for me to take care of him. I shall not be in so much danger of growing selfish and coldhearted, now that somebody lives who has a claim upon my love. What a glorious future there is before me! If storms and darkness gather again, I hope God will give me strength to resist them. This new love for Uncle Atherton does not shut out of my heart the memory of my old friend and teacher, and I do not fail to pray, every day, that Maurice will not forget his

"Affectionate sister,

MADGE."

CHAPTER XLII.

ONLY A FACTORY GIRL.

“Yet nerve thy spirit to the proof,
And blanch not at thy chosen lot;
The timid good may stand aloof,
The sage may frown, yet faint thou not.”

BRYANT.

“ONLY a factory girl!”

“Fie! fie! Emily Bland; you are not often so out of tune. 'Tis this dreary, drizzling November rain that has given you the blues.” Ruth Macomber's musical voice might have put a host of unmusical feelings to flight.

“The weather is bad enough, to be sure, Ruth, but it doesn't trouble me half so much as to see that factory girl placed on a pedestal for us to gaze at and admire. Mrs. Howe and Miss Johnson are constantly reminding us of Miss Foster's industry, Miss Foster's quickness, and Miss Foster's perfections!”

“One wouldn't suppose she had ever heard of a cotton mill,” chimed in another. “She moves about as grandly as if she were the President's daughter.”

“Pray tell us why she shouldn't, girls?” asked Ruth Macomber.

“I've told you that she worked in a cotton mill for three years, and then had the impudence to thrust herself into a fashionable boarding school. We don't think anything more

of factory girls in New England, than you do of slaves in Virginia."

"But, Emily, if one of our slaves, a fair young girl, and an orphan, too, had laid aside a little money by industry, and was bravely trying to educate herself, I think I should try and help her along, so far as kind words and pleasant looks could aid."

"I have always heard that Virginians were aristocratic; but I believe Ruth Macomber would join hands with this factory girl, and expel every young lady of respectable family from the school."

"What would you call respectable families?"

"Why, those who are not obliged to dig for a living—such as professional men and wealthy merchants. I, for one, don't want to mix with plebeians; and as long as we've no titles to distinguish true aristocracy in America, I think we had better be pretty choice of our associates. I have heard you belonged to one of our first families in Virginia, Ruth, or I shouldn't have chosen you for a friend."

"And I thought Emily Bland had good common sense, and a truthful, affectionate heart, and never stopped to inquire whether her father was a Yankee peddler, journeyman tailor, or a shoemaker, so that his daughter pleased me. My father has taught me that genuine nobility consists in moral excellence and intellectual gifts. Sometimes the 'accident of birth' may favorably develop these germs of aristocracy in one, and cramp the growth of the royal plant in another; but when we see a young girl struggling to gain that position in society which every true American woman may attain,

those of us whom lucky accident has placed a little higher up on the ladder, should reach her a helping hand. I'd gladly share with Miss Foster the wealth I may inherit, if she could bequeathe me a portion of her talent and industry."

"You would want some of her beauty, too, I suppose! She might spare you half of her hair and eyes, and then have enough left for ordinary purposes."

Emily Bland's speech was finished by a loud laugh, which was not echoed by the group of girls half so heartily as she expected.

"Come, now, Ruth, say you think the little Malay is a beauty. Your philanthropy needs this last finishing touch."

"I can't conceive how my opinion of her beauty would come under the head of philanthropy; as a mere matter of taste, however, I think Miss Foster may make as honest pretensions to beauty as any of us."

"Do you hear, girls? Besides being held up constantly before our eyes as a pattern of excellence, Ruth Macomber thinks this factory girl might sit for a Madonna, Hebe, Juno, or at least an ideal of Cleopatra and Desdemona! The next thing I shall know, you will all be coaxing your hair into long, melancholy-looking, lackadaisical curls, and propping your eyelids apart, that you may be sufficiently ox-eyed."

Emily's brilliancy was usually hailed with shouts of merriment, but not one of the group could fail to discover the bitterness and sarcasm in her mocking tones; and, somehow, when the shafts of her wit were pointed at one of the most modest and unassuming of their number, they failed to produce the usual response.

Miss Macomber, with a slightly perceptible curl in her short upper lip, and just enough surprise and indignation in her gray eyes to make their light somewhat warm and flashing, resumed her rapid walk across the hall, which was the only exercise the November rain would allow; but a pale young miss, with light-brown hair and sunny blue eyes, who had been a silent listener, when she saw Miss Macomber retreat, came forward, saying:

"I know of one person who says Margaret Foster is positively handsome."

"Strange! He must have been a South Sea islander! Tell me, quick, Miss Upham, what new victim is drawn into the vortex of her charms?"

"Professor Talbot said her eyes would melt an iceberg, besides a score of pretty sayings which I can't remember. For my own part, I never can tell whether she's handsome, for I'm half drowned in the clear, liquid light of her eyes every time she turns them on me; and there's so much fascination in her truthfulness and amiability, that I've no thought left for her features."

"If we are to have a sermon now, Miss Upham, please choose another text, for I'm heartily tired of discussing this factory girl's perfections."

"Just hear the last head of my discourse, Emily, for I haven't occupied the speaker's stand half as long as the rest of you. Do you remember that some of us wondered why Margaret didn't go to the concert last Friday evening, when she's so fond of music, and 'tis so seldom we hear anything like Madam Fontine in Cherryville? Well, when I came

home, I found her hard at work on a coarse woollen frock for our washerwoman's little girl; and when I expostulated with her upon the folly of denying herself such a luxury as the concert, and wasting her eyesight on plebeians, she gave me such a look of pity and surprise——”

“’Tis remarkable, that Rev. Theodore Upham's daughter is alive to tell the tale!”

“I don't care for your mocking, Emily Bland; and I shall tell my story, because, if I do get your ill-will, I can steal into your good graces again with some of my numberless charms. It seems that Margaret had promised to finish the girl's frock on Saturday, but finding that she could not complete it without remaining away from the concert, she denied herself a luxury rather than disappoint the child, who, she says, was not half clad for the season, and its poor mother finds no time for sewing. How many of us, girls, would have done likewise?”

There was no reply, for a door opened at the lower end of the hall, and the object of this grave discussion entered, and approached the group. Miss Macomber drew Margaret's arm in hers, and they continued to pace the floor. As they occasionally passed the girls, who were lounging listlessly near the window, they heard one and another exclaim: “What a tedious afternoon! It seems a month since the sun shone.” “How the pianos do rattle!” “Isn't it almost supper time? I could devour a roast turkey and plum pudding; but we sha'n't get anything but the very thinnest and genteelst slices of bread and butter, with two crab apples apiece, washed down with a cup of that gallon of hot water

which they pour on six leaves of Souchong tea! I say, Emily Bland, aren't you hungry?"

"No; I keep gingerbread and apples in my room, and, if you are next door to starvation, you may go there and help yourself. I would give more for the letter I am expecting, than for the nicest supper in Christendom. It has been three days since I could wade through this mud and slop to the post office, and I'm dying to know if father is going to let me come home to the grand Thanksgiving ball!"

"Dear me!" sighed Carrie Upham; "if good old Job had only been plunged into the mud and rain of a New England November, I don't believe his name would have been handed down through the mist of ages as a pattern of patience."

The hour for recreation wore away, while one looked wishfully into the outer world, another sighed for supper, and a few busily conned the morning's lesson; but Margaret was not visible. She had slipped out unobserved; and now, wrapped in a thick shawl, hood, and overshoes, she was skipping over the little pools of mud and water, laughing defiance at the pattering rain as she walked rapidly toward the post office. Not for herself did Margaret walk a mile in the cold November storm; but possibly, if sunshine had not visited her yesterday in the shape of a letter bearing a foreign post-mark, she wouldn't have gathered strength and courage to brave the elements to-day. Perhaps even Emily Bland's desire to know if she was to attend the Thanksgiving ball, would not have been sufficient, alone, to tempt Margaret forth, if she had not heard Miss Johnson express a wish to hear from her mother.

“Miss Johnson cannot expose herself in such a storm,” thought Margaret, “but I can, for the sake of giving her pleasure; and if Miss Bland’s letter contains good news, possibly she may be more affable during the evening.”

The young clerk peered curiously under the dripping umbrella. There was genuine sunshine in the dark eyes that met his—even though it was November—and genuine music in the voice that asked, “Any letters directed to the care of Professor Abner Howe?”

There was something nearer akin to sunshine in the clerk’s face, when he saw the glad smile with which Margaret received her bundle of letters, than had blessed it during the long storm.

Her own name on one of the missives, in Uncle Ather-ton’s handwriting, might have aided Margaret’s homeward steps; for, no matter what there was in store for the rest, the little sacrifice of personal comfort which she had made for others had already brought her a rich reward. Uncle Ather-ton’s letters were always lively, humorous, and affectionate. Margaret could scarcely wait to lay aside her dripping garments before she broke the seal.

“There’s the tea bell, and Miss Ruth’s tap upon my door! She’ll see my wet clothes, and know where I’ve been.”

“The tea bell, Miss Foster; I came to tear you away from Butler and Macaulay!” But the young lady paused in the midst of her sentence, arrested by the sight of her friend’s dripping shawl and muddy overshoes. “Margaret Foster, what tempted you to go out in this rain?”

Margaret held up her package of letters.

"Yes, I see; but you must have very dear friends, to walk so far in such a pelting storm for a letter."

"I didn't go for myself; but I was more than paid by finding this treasure from Uncle Atherton."

"Don't tell me, now, that you stole away to the office to procure a gratification for Miss Bland, who never thinks of anybody but herself."

"I didn't go entirely for Miss Bland, but I wanted to get news for Miss Johnson, who is very anxious to hear from home. I intended to send these letters into the hall by a servant, so that no one should know who brought them, or feel under obligations to me; but you may take them along, while I get ready for tea."

"I shall not tell you, now, what I think of you, Margaret."

"Please don't, dear Miss Macomber, for I happen to be in very good humor with myself."

Miss Macomber carried the letters to the dining room, and the eager, thoughtless girls received them without pausing to ask who had procured for them this pleasure; only Miss Johnson took hers with a look of astonishment, asking the fair Virginian if she had exposed herself to the storm.

"No, ma'am; but a young lady who knew of your desire to hear from home, and Miss Bland's wish for a letter, has been to the office."

"I hope Miss Foster was suitably protected against the inclemency of the weather," said Mrs. Howe.

"The warmth and generosity of her nature would be a

sufficient protection from cold-taking," added Miss Johnson ; but she left the room, to be sure that her favorite should not suffer from the exposure.

Emily Bland ate her supper in silence, without choosing to meet the eyes of the young ladies whom she had entertained during the hours of recreation ; and when Miss Johnson returned to the tea table, accompanied by Margaret, she did not acknowledge her obligations to the latter by the coldest "thank you," or the slightest inclination of the head.

"If she chooses to wade through this mud and slop to the office, 'tis none of my business," proclaimed Emily, while the girls were gathering in the parlor for prayers. "I didn't want my letter enough to thank the little Pharisee for it. She only went for the sake of having another wonderful self-sacrifice proclaimed upon the housetops. Besides, 'twas no discomfort to her ; factory girls get used to all sorts of weather."

Emily pretended not to hear the whispered tones of "Hush ! hush ! Miss Foster has come in." But this want of politeness and generosity did not increase her popularity with the school girls. She had for many months been an acknowledged favorite in school, chiefly on account of her lively manners, and sparkling, off-hand conversation. She was a brilliant scholar, not thorough or diligent, but possessed of sufficient attractions to make herself popular, if her false ideas of caste had not been so ungenerously manifested in her treatment of a few young ladies, whose social position she considered inferior to her own. But to none had she been so unkind, so unladylike, as to Margaret. It might have

arisen from long-cherished ideas that all labor was degrading, and it might have been because she saw in the modest, simple manners of Margaret, in her uniformly generous and amiable deportment, a deeper fount of kindness than nourished her own springs of action, and she feared a successful rival.

One year ago, Miss Bland's unjust suspicion and censure would have given Margaret many tearful hours. She was stronger now, and, although tears of grief and surprise filled her eyes, they were not allowed to escape. The shafts of envy and ill-will could make no lasting impression on a mind so strongly fortified with love and Christian charity.

Margaret advanced rapidly in her studies. Her natural quickness, combined with diligence, attention, and good instruction, produced brilliancy and thoroughness. The seeds sown by Mrs. Kempton upon a soil which seemed to have been too long neglected to bear anything but weeds, promised a glorious harvest.

CHAPTER XLIII.

MARGARET'S CHOICE.

"Wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired, are not to be compared to it."—PROVERBS.

"But love is more
Than in the summers that are flown,
For I myself with these have grown
To something greater than before."

TENNYSON.

THE Christmas holidays were over; only one evening of pleasant home comfort remained for Margaret. She sat upon a stool near the hearth, leaning against Mrs. Green, and gazing thoughtfully into the fire.

The good woman's knitting lay neglected upon her lap, and one hand rested affectionately upon the girl's head. She was thinking of the long winter evenings, when the musical laugh of Margaret would not disturb the monotonous click of her knitting needles, or rouse puss from her delicious repose upon the rug; and, though Mrs. Green never borrowed trouble, or looked deeply into the future, she might be thinking of the time when Margaret's presence would not throw a tinge of sunny brightness over the parlor, even for a few days of vacation.

A year and one term of Margaret's school life has passed. We find a shade of deeper thought upon her face, which is still somewhat too pale, and the looping up of her curls has added womanly dignity to her appearance—so Dr. Atherton

says. Many people wonder how a young lady so *petite*, so pale, and so brown, can ever be called handsome; while others remember only the deep, tender, and truthful light of her eyes. But the maiden is not thinking whether she may have any claims to personal beauty, as she gazes into the bright coal fire. She does not see, in the fitful blaze, any gorgeous castle, opening to shield her from life's realities; but fancy's pencil draws a fair and pleasing picture. She does not shrink from a future of independent toil, now that her heart and intellect have been strengthened for the contest.

One shadow only rested upon the fair young face, caused by the thought that only one more term of study must she indulge in at present. Mr. Howe had promised to exert his influence in obtaining for her a situation as governess for small children, or the place of an assistant in some school, before the spring opened.

By careful economy and self-denial, Margaret's small hoard, with now and then a substantial present from Uncle Atherton, has defrayed her expenses, thus far, at Cherryville, and her board is paid for the coming term. Her wardrobe is still neat, though Miss Bland affirms that she has but one presentable gown—"an old brown silk, so like her complexion, that one would think they had both been cut from the same piece." But Miss Bland's gay trappings and fashionable attire create no envious or jealous feelings in the heart of Madge. She is proud of the brown silk, old cloak, and straw bonnet, which have been such faithful friends, and she cannot part with them yet, till she can play the piano with

more skill, and read her beloved German with greater fluency.

Margaret sat long with her eyes fastened upon the ruddy blaze. She was planning her winter's course of study. Mrs. Green broke in upon her reverie, by wondering what kept Dr. Atherton from home.

"The tea and muffins will be spoiled if they stand much longer. Didn't the doctor say he should spend this evening with you, Margaret?"

"I believe so; but he wouldn't neglect a patient for the sake of giving me pleasure, you know. Hark! the street door opens. Isn't that uncle's step?"

"No, dear; your uncle has a slower, heavier step. Something has brought Mr. Stanley home earlier than usual;" and Mrs. Green thought of something which must be done in the kitchen. She left the room when Stanley entered, and Margaret rose from her low seat by the hearth, to follow. "Coming events cast their shadows before;" and the maiden had an instinctive dread of a disagreeable scene.

Her natural kindness, and her reverence for the feelings of others, had prompted her to treat Mr. Stanley with politeness, and receive from him such attentions as a young lady might accept from a common friend; but her heart rebelled against encouraging anything marked or tender. When Margaret had been at home in vacation, during the past year, Mrs. Green had warmly advocated Mr. Stanley's cause, by rehearsing his generous qualities, and dwelling upon the sober, serious tints with which the last year had dyed his character. "I believe 'tis all owing to your influence, dear,"

she had said to Margaret. "He used to be gay and trifling, because he thought all girls were silly and weakminded, like Laura Thompson; but when he found you modest, amiable, and serious, he grew more grave and sincere. And then, his father's death, last summer, made a great change in him. Perhaps the care of so much property makes him thoughtful and sober; his father left him several thousands, and he has gone into business with his old employer."

Margaret always listened with gentle seriousness, but nothing could banish the unfavorable impression which the young man's first rude and bold attentions had created. She was always shy and timid in his presence; but Stanley, in his blind self-confidence, had latterly mistaken her shrinking reserve for modest, maidenly attachment. Three years ago, his attentions to Margaret were only to secure a new plaything—to sacrifice upon the altar of self-love another victim; but Margaret's uniform repulse of boldness, her steadfast adherence to purity, her simple, truthful, and womanly character, had really produced a great change in Stanley; and now, instead of seeing the maiden's heart flutter and tremble at his touch for a month, or perhaps for a year's amusement, he was anxious to secure it for a life-long treasure.

He detained Margaret, when she would have followed Mrs. Green from the room, saying:

"Give me half an hour this evening, Miss Foster. You go back to Cherryville to-morrow, I believe?"

"Yes, sir."

"You carry away a large portion of our happiness with you."

"I should be sorry to think so. Uncle Atherton and Mrs. Green may miss me for a few days."

"How much longer will you remain at school?"

"Only till spring."

"And then you will reside constantly with us?"

"No; I expect to teach, either as governess, or as an assistant."

"Teaching is dreary, fatiguing business, Miss Foster. You had better abandon all thought of it."

"I do not shrink from encountering any of the ills of the profession; and, if I did, I should have no choice but to conquer my repugnance, for I could not be dependent upon Uncle Atherton. He is growing old, and I should rather think of laying aside something to comfort and support his age, than allow him to labor for me, when I'm young and strong."

"I admire your heroism; but, if a younger man than Dr. Atherton should claim the right of supporting you, and shielding you from every rough blast, what would you answer?"

"I should probably ask upon what the younger man based his claim."

"The sanctities of love, Margaret."

"If the love of an honest, truthful heart should be offered me, and I could give mine in exchange, teaching might not be a duty; but I'm not foolish enough to crave that which is not mine, nor weak enough to shrink from a field of labor which Providence has prepared me to enter."

"My dear Miss Margaret, sincere, manly love is now

offered you, and a luxurious home shall await your return from school. Have you nothing to give in return?"

"I don't understand you."

"You would have guessed, long ago, the motive of my intentions, if you had been at all like other girls. May I not gather courage from your blushes, and dare hope that you reciprocate my feelings?"

"I honor and reverence true affection, Mr. Stanley; and, so far as yours is sincere, I respect it; but do not ask for a return." Margaret turned toward the door.

"Stop a minute, Miss Foster; let me say a few words more. Your artless manners, the purity and earnestness of your life, have done a great deal toward reclaiming me from the miserable slough of vanity, flirtation, and more detestable vices. Until I saw you, I thought all women were vain, silly, and coquettish—made for our amusement. You have been a constant rebuke to me, and now I implore you to be the strong angel who shall keep me from yielding to temptation in the future. Do not say no, Margaret, but bid me serve as long as Jacob for Rachel. I know I am unworthy, but your Uncle Atherton gave his consent for me to plead my own cause."

Margaret bowed her head upon the table, and a torrent of painful, agonizing thoughts seemed almost bursting her brain. Uncle Atherton thought him worthy, and why should a poor girl refuse such a home as he could offer? If 'twas true that her influence could save him from a wicked, selfish life, ought she not to sacrifice her own happiness? Could she not accomplish more good in this way? If Mau-

rice was only here to help her decide! And then came the bitter thought, that Maurice had never spoken to her of anything but fraternal regard; he had never offered to shield and protect her from the stern, sober realities of life, but had aided her in preparing to buckle on its heavy armor. She thought how gladly, trustingly, she could turn to Maurice, if he should offer her a home and life-long love; how much more desirable and pleasant a life of self-dependence looked for the future, than a princely home, if its luxuries must be shared with James Stanley. His love found no answering echo in her heart.

When Margaret raised her head, the bright flush was gone from her cheeks, and the tears that glistened in her eyes did not betoken hesitation or weakness; her pale face was eloquent with pure resolve, and strict adherence to right.

"I should wrong you, Mr. Stanley, by accepting your generous offer, or by giving you a shadow of hope for the future; and I should sacrifice the holiest feelings God has given woman. I do not love you."

"One thing more, Miss Foster; tell me if you love another?"

"No—yes—indeed, I cannot tell. Please let me go, if you value my esteem."

Mrs. Green was sorely puzzled by Margaret's pale face and nervous, excited air. She had guessed, quickly enough, why Mr. Stanley had detained her in the parlor; but, as she had never discovered in Margaret any indications of regard for him, she had but little hope of establishing her favorite in a handsome home, so near that she could drop in any hour

of the day with her knitting. She knew that the winter of life was creeping stealthily upon her, and she longed to have Margaret's fresh, young heart so near that its warmth and sunshine might melt the frost as it gathered upon her own. The young girl understood Mrs. Green's scrutinizing glance, and the deep sigh that followed. She leaned her head on the kind shoulder where it had so often rested, and tears fell down upon the hands which had dropped their knitting.

"You are not sick, dear?"

"No."

"What troubles you, then?"

"I couldn't love him, Mrs. Green!"

"I was afraid it would be so; but don't cry, dear. You can't be blamed, for love goes where 'tis sent. Long years ago, I would have given a world, if I had owned one, to have said 'yes' to a brave young man; but it wasn't Reuben Green that was suing. I half guessed how matters would turn, when that young professor came to see you. Am I right, dear?"

"He never asked me to love him."

"Well, love has a thousand ways to speak, without words; but, unless you have very strong reasons for loving him, Margaret, you had better marry a man who can give you a good home. A woman is always happier in a snug, quiet home of her own, than she is to be buffeting about, earning her own bread. I can't bear to have you leave us, and I tremble when I think of the snares laid for a beautiful face. Will Mr. Hardy stop in Germany much longer?"

"Nearly two years."

“He has been gone over a year now, Margaret, dear. Three years is a long time for a man to be constant, when he is away from his betrothed; and I believe you said he had never spoken of love?”

“No; only brotherly interest.”

“You were scarcely more than a child when he went away, and so pale and thin, that he couldn't think you would ever grow so handsome as you are now. Besides, he didn't know what a fine scholar you would make, and it could hardly be expected he would love you. I don't like to distress you, dear, but I don't want you should cherish any hopes that may never be realized; you will be so wretched hereafter. If Mr. Hardy had promised to marry you, it would be quite a different thing; but, even in that case, it would be very uncertain. A man's love isn't like woman's; new faces always have new charms for them. And then affection isn't so large a part of their lives as 'tis of ours, and they hold it much more lightly. Hadn't you better think again, dear, before you say 'no' to Stanley?”

“I do not love him.”

“No; but I dare say such a modest, timid child wouldn't be thinking about the matter at all, and you are too young now to be plagued with these things; though, bless me! I wasn't eighteen when I married Reuben. You see, a young heart like yours can learn to love an upright, honorable man. Hadn't I better tell Mr. Stanley that you will wait a few months before you decide? You can finish getting your music in that time, and he will buy you an elegant piano.”

“But I could never play on it. My heart would be an

iceberg, and I could draw from his piano only cold, frozen strains. I cannot love him, Mrs. Green."

"Well, I'm sorry, dear, for I should love to have your sweet face always near me; but I'm not selfish enough to ask my child to sacrifice herself for me. The future may have something better in store for us both. Anyhow, we will not borrow trouble. Wipe away your tears, dear, and let Uncle Atherton see your bright smile. I hear his step in the hall."

Dr. Atherton entered, bearing in his arms a bandbox, which he handled about as awkwardly as Margaret would handle his medicine case.

"Ay, uncle, I thought you were going to spend this evening at home with me; 'tis just on the point of striking nine. Do all men regard promises as lightly?"

"Men of my profession cannot always do as they would. Take care, child! You need not fumble over that bandbox till I'm ready to have it opened. There's a story connected with it, which must first be told."

"Oh! a bit of romance, uncle. I'm all attention."

"Something of romance, true, Margaret; but there's a vast deal of it in real life. Twelve years ago I was called to see a young lad, in New Orleans, who was terribly ill of a typhoid fever. The attack was violent, the lodgings miserable, and his only nurse a younger brother, twelve years of age. My efforts to save him were blessed, and he finally recovered; but the only compensation he could return for my care, was gratitude, and that sufficed me. All memory of the affair had been swept from my mind, until, this evening,

I took from the office a letter, signed Thomas ——, enclosing fifty dollars, and narrating the incidents I've just told you. It seems that Thomas is now a successful business man. After reading my letter, and pocketing the money, I was walking briskly home thinking how I could best dispose of this sum, when I met Esquire Bland's servant, with a summons for my immediate attention. The baby had pulled a cup of scalding tea over his bare arm, and was screaming lustily, while Mrs. Bland and Emily made about as much ado as the child, without attempting anything for his relief. I dressed the burn, and very soon the little fellow was sleeping quietly in his mother's arms. Then, Esquire Bland coming in just as I was leaving, of course I must stop a few minutes to chat with him. It was fortunate I did, for, while we were talking, a bandbox of ladies' flimsy gewgaws was sent in, and Miss Emily at once hoisted upon her head a saucy-looking little thing, covered with gay-colored ribbons and feathers, which she called a bonnet. She seemed wonderfully satisfied with her appearance, and, on the whole, I think she is a very dashing, showy girl. Her mother followed her into the next room, and I heard them exulting over the bonnet, while Miss Emily said something about Margaret Foster's dowdy-looking clothes. I inwardly thanked the pert miss for her saucy speech, and immediately made up my mind that my niece should dress at least respectably. I said good night to the Esquire, and walked down to Fletcher's, and told the presiding genius there that I wanted something pretty and stylish, for a nut-brown young lady, with dark hair and eyes, to wear on her head. We decided upon

this, Margaret, if it suits you ;” and the doctor drew from the handbox a pink velvet bonnet, ornamented with white feathers, which he clumsily attempted to adjust on Margaret’s head.

“’Tis just the color for her, doctor,” said Mrs. Green ; I was wishing, to-day, that I could persuade her to have a new bonnet, and this is so handsome and becoming.”

“Uncle Atherton——”

“I haven’t time to be pothered any longer, for I’ve got to see a sick woman before I can eat my supper. Here, Stanley, this way a minute ; I want your opinion of my taste in selection.”

Stanley was at the foot of the staircase, and he turned, and paused a moment in the open door. Margaret did not venture to raise her eyes, even when Mr. Stanley remarked that “Miss Foster’s face could not be improved by a handsome bonnet.”

“Stanley seemed in a great hurry, Margaret, and I wanted him to see this piece of figured green silk. I’m as tired as Miss Emily can be of the old brown one which you always wear examination days. Remember, you are to wear the new one when I come to Cherryville, in February.”

“Anything to please so generous and kind an uncle.”

Margaret followed her uncle to the door, clinging affectionately to his arm. He noticed her unusual excitement, and suspected its cause, but made no allusion to it. Much as he desired his niece permanently located near himself, he resolved that the truthful instincts of her pure heart should alone govern her choice.

CHAPTER XLIV.

FRAGMENTS.

“Mark how there still has run, enwoven from above,
Through thy life's darkest woof, a golden thread of love.”

TRENCH.

MARGARET did not leave Cherryville at the close of her second school year. A new musical professor had been obtained for the institute, Miss Johnson being obliged to return to her father's family; and Professor Howe, Dr. Atherton, and a few other friends who were deeply interested in Margaret's welfare, urged her to remain where she could receive, for a few months, the benefit of the new teacher's instructions. Professor Howe secured for her the village school in Cherryville, and the small salary which she received sufficed to defray her expenses, while she could perform the duties of teacher, and secure several hours each day for musical practice. Mr. Davenport, the new teacher, was a German, and music flowed smoothly and naturally beneath the touch of his fingers. He was a scholar, too, and extravagantly fond of the literature of his own country, and greatly pleased to find so apt and diligent a pupil in Margaret.

It was a golden summer for poor Madge; and, in her eager quaffing of its inspiration, she almost forgot that its joyous sunshine could not always last—that its flowers must fade.

She always received a monthly letter from Maurice, full

of kind and brotherly encouragement, but there were no gleamings of a tenderer and holier emotion. Margaret did not look for it. Her present communion with him, her devotion to books, and her enthusiastic interest in the village school, sufficed to occupy her heart.

Her short summer vacation was spent, as usual, with dear Mrs. Green, Uncle Atherton, and Miss Johnson; and, during the month, by sharing the labors of the sick chamber and nursery with her friend, she had the satisfaction of returning some of the many kindnesses which Miss Johnson had conferred upon her.

Mr. Stanley was married, and established in a house of his own. This was another source of happiness to Margaret, not only because it proved to her that she had given him no permanent pain by her refusal to share his fortunes, but because she trusted the gentle, womanly influence surrounding his home would lure him from temptation, and strengthen the germs of good which seemed to be gaining an ascendancy over his natural vanity and selfishness. She did not even bestow one sigh on this proof of man's fickleness in love, for she remembered the long years of her Uncle Atherton's hopeless constancy.

The Christmas holidays were again approaching, and the pupils of the seminary were preparing for a party, which Mr. Davenport had announced his intention of giving, to celebrate his birthday, on the evening of the twenty-fourth. There was to be an exhibition, the day before Christmas, of the musical talents and various accomplishments of the young ladies, when not only the parents and friends were invited to

be present, but the faculty and students of the neighboring college. Margaret had been desired by the teachers to take an active part in the exercises, and had consented to play a scientific composition of Mendelssohn's, and take a part with Miss Macomber and Mr. Davenport in a German dialogue. Emily Bland, who was now in the graduating class, had been selected to perform a brilliant Italian opera piece; and Carrie Upham had been coaxed and persuaded to sing an old Scotch ballad. Great was the interest and excitement, for, besides the mental polishing and outward adorning of each pupil, the schoolroom and reception hall must be decorated with cedar and holly.

The tardy rays of the winter morn saw much lingering over curious braids and plaits of hair, gay-colored ribbons, and dresses; but the last finishing stroke was given, the last satisfied glance reflected from the mirror, when the chapel bell summoned them to prayers.

The reception hall was crowded, at an early hour, with proud and anxious parents; grave and dignified professors, prepared to receive any exhibition of talent in a female school without moving a muscle; and critical, curious students, eagerly looking for pretty faces and genteel airs. There were general exercises first, in which each pupil could take a part; and then followed dialogues in English and French, and select readings. When Mr. Davenport appeared, leading in his two pupils in German, and announced to the audience that an act from *Iphigenia* would be recited in the original, there was perfectly hushed attention. One could hardly tell which attracted the most admiration—Mr.

Davenport's foreign air, Ruth Macomber's proud and fascinating beauty, the unique face of Margaret, or the ease and grace with which the performers acted their parts. Emily Bland created quite a general buzz of admiration by her spirited performance, bright, handsome face, and elegant dress. Several exercises of minor importance followed, but perhaps none met a warmer response than Carrie Upham's Scotch song, for all could understand its homely phrase and sweet strains. Emily Bland was delighted that Margaret's performance on the piano was reserved for the last exercise, because, she said, everybody would be so tired of the whole affair, that no one could tell whether she was playing a psalm tune or a polka.

But Miss Emily was mistaken, for Margaret's smoothly flowing execution, her artless unconsciousness of superior talent, the soul of music that sparkled in her eyes and dripped from her fingers, drew from the visitors such murmurs of applause, when she rose from the piano, that Mr. Davenport came forward, and, after a few whispered words with his pupil, she returned to the instrument, and played a simple national air, glad only that her performance had given pleasure to the visitors, and reflected credit upon the school, desiring no higher reward than a look of approval from her teachers, and a glance of approbation from Uncle Atherton. When the good doctor found himself alone with his niece, he pinched her thin cheeks, smoothed back her hair, and asked "why she was not handsome, like other girls—Emily Bland, for instance."

"But you wouldn't have me like Emily Bland, uncle?"

“No, not exactly; but you study too hard. Where’s the use of depriving yourself of rosy cheeks for the sake of talking German? One language is enough for a woman.”

“Too much, sometimes, uncle, if she has not wisdom and prudence to guide her in using it. I thought you seemed pleased with me this afternoon.”

“I was more than pleased, child; and I thought, if a vision of this day could have cheered your mother’s death-bed, she would not have bequeathed you to the almshouse with so many tears.”

“But the memory of her tears has often been my good angel, Uncle Atherton. Who can say that I might not now have been in the almshouse, but for the baptism of her tears?”

“True; a wise Providence hath ordered all things rightly, though I’ve sometimes found it hard to think so. I saw an old schoolfellow of mine, from Hayden, this morning, who happened to be in town on business, and dropped in to the exhibition. He’s one of the trustees of Hayden Academy, and wants to obtain a music teacher. I left him talking with that mustachioed foreigner—Davenport, I believe you call him.”

There was a gleam of hopeful interest in Margaret’s eye, and a faint, tremulous color in her cheek. She had often turned longingly toward Hayden as a future residence. It was her mother’s native town, and only twelve miles from Clyde, where her ashes still slumbered. She did not regard her school in Cherryville as a permanent situation, and had only accepted it till a more lucrative and congenial one was

secured. She wondered if Mr. Davenport would be likely to mention her name to the gentleman, and, while she was thinking and wishing, the door opened, and they both entered the parlor, and Dr. Atherton introduced to her Esquire Clifford, of Hayden, asking him, almost in the same breath, if he remembered Kate Norris.

“You are a strange fellow, Atherton, if you think I could forget your handsome cousin. Begging Miss Foster’s pardon for saying it in her presence—we have no such young ladies, nowadays, as Kate Norris.”

“Miss Foster will only thank you for this tribute to her mother’s memory.”

“Do you mean to say, doctor, that this young lady is Kate’s child?”

“She has that honor. Do you not see a likeness in her features?”

“She has reminded me strangely of some one, but I didn’t think of Kate, for it was rumored that her only child died in the poorhouse. You shall tell me, during supper, what good fortune threw her in your way; but I’ve a little business with the young lady, which must be settled immediately, for I suppose she wants to be furbishing up for the party. I came to Cherryville, to-day, expressly to obtain a music teacher for Hayden Academy, without knowing anything of the exhibition. I was pleased with Miss Foster’s performance, so different from the usual insipid, timeless drumming of young ladies. Mr. Davenport tells me she has studied music with the expectation of teaching it; that she is scientific, and has the spirit of music in her; and, in my

opinion, one can never perform as she does, without studying for an especial object; and, though she's rather young, her attainments are exactly what we want. She does not look as though she would be wanting in dignity. We can only offer you a salary of three hundred dollars, Miss Foster; but as I've three girls of my own who want to be learning music, I'll willingly board you for the sake of having them well taught. I dare say you'll be wanted to play in one of our churches, when your fame gets noised abroad somewhat. What do you say to this, Miss Foster?"

Margaret turned to her uncle. There was a grave seriousness upon his good-natured face, that troubled her, and she half wished he would answer for her.

"Will you give me an hour to think of your generous proposals, Mr. Clifford?"

"Yes, two, if you wish. I am going to the village now, but shall be back in season for the party. I suppose two such time-stained, veteran beaux as we are, Atherton, need not fear the united charms of a whole battalion of young beauties."

"We are in no great danger, I reckon, Clifford."

Mr. Davenport left the parlor with Esquire Clifford, and Margaret and her uncle were alone. Some minutes passed in thoughtful silence before either spoke.

"Well, uncle?"

"What would you say, Margaret?"

"I want your opinion of my prospects, and your advice."

"I have never wanted you to leave me, child, and I have always hoped, when you had finished up here, you would

come home to Mrs. Green's; the old lady is fond of you, and we can live quietly and pleasantly in her family."

"But I should feel so dependent, uncle. If you were rich, and could afford to support me in idleness, it would be quite a different thing. Now I shall be earning something to make a home for us both when sickness or old age comes upon us. I want a piano, too, and, with the salary Mr. Clifford offers me, I can very soon lay aside enough to buy one."

"All this sounds well, niece; but I never like to see a young girl struggling for bread and butter. 'Tis man's right and duty to protect woman from all the toils and hardships of life; and I say again, there is no need for you to teach while I am living."

"There will be nothing but pleasure in teaching music. You know I have been struggling for four years to obtain my education, with the expectation of teaching constantly before me; and whenever the way has seemed dark, or my courage failed, God has raised up friends to aid me. I do not believe that woman should be so helpless and dependent, uncle; and there are a great many ways in which she may earn a livelihood, without departing from the sphere which her Creator intended she should adorn, or violating the delicacy and modesty of her character. I am sure you will consent for me to go to Hayden, where I can be so useful in such an honorable and ennobling way."

"I shall let your own inclinations govern your decision, Margaret, for hitherto they have been a safe guide, and I have no fear that a soul like yours will swerve far from recti-

tude, or become contaminated by the necessary contact with low and vulgar minds, which this profession leads to."

"Thank you, uncle; you do not know how sweet and pleasant is your approval, and I will strive to live so sincere and earnest a life, that you shall never look upon me with less of love than now."

There was tenderness, love, and pride in the caress which Dr. Atherton bestowed upon his niece.

"I was intending to go home this evening, but I suppose, by waiting till to-morrow, I can take you along."

"I can be ready by noon, and I shall need the whole week of quiet at Mrs. Green's."

It would be tedious, at the fag end of a chapter, to describe Margaret's leavetakings in Cherryville; needless to say that many sad thoughts brought tears to her eyes, when she remembered that many pleasures of the past she could live over only in memory.

CHAPTER XLV.

MAURICE IN HEIDELBERG.

"Love horrors greatly from opinion, and pride, above all things, strengthens affection."—BULWER.

"Thus, even thus,
He, too, received his sacramental gift
With eucharistic meanings ; for he loved."

MRS. BROWNING.

"ONE should see Germany first at this season, dear Madge, though Heidelberg is beautiful at all seasons, but in October there is a richer, deeper beauty poured into the lap of the Odenwald. I took but little note of it last year, for my heart was in America, and I could see no reason why the phlegmatic German should think the Fatherland the only place God had created for His favorite children ; but now the brow of Heiligenberg seems nearer heaven ; and when I see it, wrapped in golden and amethyst clouds, I do not wonder that they call it holy mountain.

"'Tis near the hour of sunset now, and I'm sitting on a rude stone seat, high up on the side Kaiserstuhl. Just below me are the ruins of a grand old castle, around which hangs the unwritten history of five centuries. 'Tis easy to fancy the voice of prayer comes floating up from the ruined, moss-grown chapel ; for, although there may have been precious little of devotion and pure worship in the services of the priests, and the prayers of many who have knelt before

its altar, yet I can see fair-haired and pure-souled maidens kneeling upon its cold, gray stones, whose matin hymns and evening orisons were pure as the sunset ray that kisses the brow of Heiligenberg.

“The soft voices of the old pines have chanted their requiems for many a century.

“The gray old town of Heidelberg, which rests at the foot of Kaiserstuhl, looks as though all of the philosophy contained in the dust-covered volumes of its university hung in a vaporous cloud around it; but the nut-brown maidens, returning from their harvest gleanings in the orchards and meadows, do not look as if the philosophical cloud shadowed their hearts. Their merry songs and jocund laughter, mingled with the musical sound of the vesper bells, rouse every slumbering echo of the mountain. Their sunny-blue eyes and loose hair, gay jackets and kirtles, seem appropriate parts of every harvest field and vineyard in Germany, where the order of many things is reversed, and the patient cow is fastened to the yoke, while the ox grows fat and lazy in the rich pasture lands. How odd and strange it would seem, in America, for women to perform the rough work of the fields! Oh! Madge, I would still say, Let me live and die beneath the shadow of the ‘stars and stripes!’ though the very breezes of Germany sweep past in soft, metrical measure, and the breath of poetry rises in fragrant incense from her mountains, hills, and valleys; her rivers flow in numbers, and her woodlands are vocal with the immortal strains of Schiller, while the deeper, richer notes of Goethe swell the great anthem which Germany sends up to heaven; and yet,

give me back my own country, the glad, free echoes of her hillsides, the swift rushing of her mighty rivers, whose waves bring to us no voices of the middle ages. In exchange for gray old cathedrals, cold, frowning castles, and ivy-grown ruins, give me the strong, gushing, spring-like current of life, which sweeps over the whole length and breadth of America. Yet here, in the sweet valley of the Neckar, dear Madge, where everything tells tales of long ago, my soul has learned a new song. If you were here, I should pour its delicious music in your ear, for 'tis constantly welling up from my heart, and trembling upon my tongue. I cannot say, with Goethe's maiden, 'I have seen enough of life, for I have lived and loved;' and, even if the pure spirit which has brought such an Eden of joy to my heart, should be recalled to her native heaven, I should still bless God for the privilege of living where her breath had perfumed the air. Oh! there is so much brilliancy, beauty, and glory in life, since love has hallowed it! Madge, my sister, does not your heart echo my gladness? How many times I have thought of you, when looking at Lady Blanche! There is nothing in her queenly style of beauty, nothing in her blue eyes, fair hair, and radiant complexion, at all like you; and I think the resemblance must consist in the purity and delicacy of soul which mark so prominently the features of my sister and friend.

"I have known her only one short month, but a whole lifetime of bliss has been crowded into it; for I have counted time by heart-throbs, not by hours, since Heaven smiled upon me through the eyes of Lady Blanche. I believe she has visited me in dreams for years.

“I have long thought that I should recognize at once my guiding star, even though its light first beamed upon me 'mid the dazzling brightness of more brilliant luminaries. In one of the beautiful paths, known by the name of Philosopher's Way, which winds gracefully up the Kaiserstuhl, I first met Blanche Russell. Kaiserstuhl, Ararat of my soul, on thee rested the ark of my future happiness. Henceforth thy name shall suggest to me only beauty, glory, and magnificence.

“She was leaning on the arm of her father, Sir Gardiner Russell, an English baronet, whom I met last summer in Baden-Baden. We had a pleasant acquaintance there, and Sir Gardiner greeted me on the side of Kaiserstuhl with cordial familiarity, and presented me to Lady Blanche, his only daughter. They were seeking the old ruins for the first time, having been in Heidelberg but a few days, while I was returning to the University from an after-dinner stroll. I could do no less than offer my services as guide to the baronet and his daughter, which they politely accepted. I found Lady Blanche perfectly familiar with the history of the castle; and, in our frequent rambles around the ruins and the mountain sides, she has narrated many a wild Bohemian legend.

“I am glad you progress so rapidly in the study of the German, for Blanche speaks it with great ease and fluency; and when we are all gathered in the American home which I shall make for us, we will read the true essence of poetry in its original language. My fancy never builds a home, without reserving in it an apartment for my sister Madge, where she shall have her books and music.

“Lady Blanche is a fine singer, and performs with admirable skill upon the piano and harp. I heard her play, last evening, in the parlor of one of our professors. It was a small select party, consisting chiefly of University families, and a few distinguished people who are visiting Heidelberg. There was a beautiful and fascinating French lady present, who has earned quite an enviable reputation with her pen; but she was too voluble, too conscious of her own brilliancy, to please me. Blanche conversed in French with her, for some time, upon the merits of Madame Dudevant, a writer who adopts the masculine *nom de plume* of George Sand. The conversation was very animated on both sides, though Lady Blanche preserved her English coolness and dignity in discussing Consuelo, while Madame Ernestine grew excited and irritated when they differed in opinion. I was glad when Fraulein Kate, the daughter of our host, came up, and turned the conversation upon music, for then I could draw Blanche into the conservatory, under pretence of examining the beautiful plants, but, really, to win from her one smile, which should be all my own.

“Sir Gardiner will remain in Heidelberg till December, when he will go to his estate in the north of England. I haven't told him yet of my affection for his daughter, and Lady Blanche desires that I should not mention the subject to him while they remain in Germany; but, if our preferences stand the test of time, that I shall obtain her father's sanction by letter, after they are located in their English home. Sir Gardiner treats me with uniform politeness and cordiality, so that I feel almost certain of my suit. I have not yet dis-

covered, in either father or daughter, any undue love of titles or wealth; they are both too intellectual to care for these appendages.

“Next June—yes, New England is most lovely in June—I mean to bring my regal flower to our republican land. You had better remain in Cherryville till I return, when, if you and Lady Blanche are pleased with each other—and I’m sure you will be—we will all go to Uptonville together.

“Your late letters, Madge, indicate a proficiency in study, and a maturity of intellect, that delight and astonish me. The translation which you sent me of the ‘Two Angels,’ is very truthful, preserving all of the purity and gracefulness of the original. As I came up the Kaiserstuhl to-night, I was thinking of the wonderful change in your fortunes, which your own womanly independence and perseverance has wrought, and wondering why God’s providences should have hedged in your early years with so many obstacles, which would have been insurmountable to almost any one but yourself. I could only say, ‘He doeth all things well.’

“The shadows are long and dark in the valley of the Neckar, dear Madge, and I must say good night.

“Affectionately your brother,

“MAURICE P. HARDY.”

CHAPTER XLVI.

CONFLICTS.

“There is a love that never chills
 ’Mid earthly damps ;
 Its light and warmth reflected rays,
 From Heaven’s bright, glowing lamps.”

“Her lot is on yon—silent tears to weep,
 And patient smiles to wear through suffering’s hour,
 And sunless riches from affection’s deep,
 To pour on broken reeds—a wasted shower ;
 And to make idols, and to find them clay,
 And to bewail that worship—therefore pray.”

MRS. HEMANS.

POOR MADGE ! only one hour ago rich in golden hopes ; now a merciless simoon has swept them all into the ocean of the past ! Ah, “deep is the ploughing of grief, but oftentimes less will not suffice for the agriculture of God.” The letter, so eagerly looked for, so fondly welcomed, richly freighted, like its predecessors, with brotherly affection, has brought this drenching sorrow. How like leaden weights each word rests upon her heart, which has hitherto so gladly echoed the joy of Maurice. How cruelly, mockingly, comes up the dulcet voice that bade her call him brother, and how quickly floats away the veil of sisterly affection in which she had so carefully concealed a purer, holier love. Had he been only a brother, how she would have rejoiced in his great happiness, and the crumbs that fell from the table of Lady

Blanche would have sufficed the natural cravings of her spirit; but now, when he glowingly described the fragrant incense offered another, she was quickly conscious that only such a deep and strong tide would fill the desolate and deserted channels of her own heart. How humbling was the thought that she had built a castle upon sands; that she had so far presumed upon the natural kindness and generosity of Maurice, as to lavish upon him all the wealth of her nature!

Poor Madge! shrink not from looking down through thy tears at the withered hopes and crumbling ruins of thine heart. Regard well each jagged, broken column, and then—pray. Woman's lot is upon thee—tears, sorrows, and shipwrecked affections. Too soon have the hopeful ventures of thine heart returned with their shadowy freight; but yet, if they had longer basked on summer seas, their return would have brought darker and more certain desolation. I would not even dare bid thee hope that the changing sands of time may cover these ruins, and that, from the trunk of death, there shall yet spring up a new life and fragrant flowers, whose perfume shall refresh life's wearied traveller.

Weep, now; no matter how many times dear Mrs. Green taps at thy door, bearing in her hand her universal panacea. Herb tea may cure thy headache, but only in Gilead canst thou find a balm for thy bruised spirit. Turn not away from Uncle Atherton's deep, searching eye, for his soul has passed through the same troubled waters. And then, only this one day must thou bend beneath the rod. To-morrow, strength must be found to meet the world's cold gaze; to-morrow thou must go forth alone. Linger a little

longer in Uncle Atherton's good night embrace, for thou'lt never find in this great world a truer, stronger breast against which to hide thy tears.

Poor Madge is again rapidly whirling toward Hayden. It will be a long time before Uncle Atherton's kind voice will greet her, or Mrs. Green's gentle caress soothe her weariness; she must seek now, in the busy occupation of her brain, a refuge from the wailing cries of her heart, and quench her thirst at the great fountain of living water, for the springs of earth are turbid and muddy.

Margaret takes little note of the sullen wintry sky that bends frowningly above her—scarcely looks at the drifts of brown and withered leaves rustling mournfully in the wind, which the early winter snows have not yet covered. Strange, when the desolation of the outer world has so much in common with her heart, that she seeks no communion with it, but bends forward to hide her face on the railing of the seat in front. Even the loquacious elderly lady by her side, who, in a sharp, shrill voice, is rehearsing a history of her stage journey yesterday, its marvellous escapes from dangers seen and unseen, fails to arouse her.

Night approaches, but, instead of the storm which all of the passengers had been predicting, the dark masses of clouds drift gloomily away from the setting sun, and a few pale and sickly rays gleam athwart the wintry landscape.

"Take courage, young woman," said an elderly man in a broad brim and drab coat, who occupied the seat in front of Margaret, and now addressed her. "By raising thy head, thou canst see a fine sunset; and, if I mistake not, the moon

will soon show her face over yonder treetops. Thou hadst better look abroad upon nature, when thy heart is sad."

Margaret raised her head, and, thanking her unknown friend for his interest, turned toward the sunset. Another half hour passed, and she had resumed her old position.

"Thy face is much too young, friend, to be clouded with sorrow. Thou must know that one side of the darkest cloud is forever golden in the sun; and thou must not let the ills of life dim thine eye of faith, which can see the golden side. I am afraid thou hast never learned to lean on the arm that can always shield. When thou hast any great grief, remember that 'God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.'"

"Passengers for Hayden!" shouted the conductor, before Margaret could reply to the last words of the honest Quaker; but the hurry and confusion of the moment did not sweep them from her mind. "'One side forever golden in the sun!' Merciful Father, turn not the light of Thy countenance from me, but teach me to drink this cup of bitterness meekly and submissively." This prayer was the earnest breathing of a contrite, humbled heart, alone at the foot of the cross. Tears flowed copiously now, but they were soothing, healing drops, for a faint glimmer of the golden side stole through the cloud, and Margaret remembered whose hand had tempered with loving-kindness every sorrow of her life.

It was fortunate that the Clifford family were attending a concert on the evening of Margaret's arrival, so that she would not be obliged to expose her tearful, haggard face to

them; and her long journey was a sufficient excuse for retiring at an early hour. It was not strange, after two days' abandonment to grief like Margaret's, that Esquire Clifford should greet her with an exclamation of surprise upon her altered appearance, and his aristocratic lady should ask how long she had been ill.

"I am not really ill, Mrs. Clifford, though I believe saying good-by to old friends, together with travelling, gives me that appearance."

"We hope the bracing air of Hayden will make you strong and well in a few days," said Esquire Clifford. "Have you ever been in our city before, Miss Foster?"

"I passed through it once, nearly five years ago."

"Come to this window, and I will show you where Judge Norris used to live. Do you see that old, gray church with the square tower? Well, the brick house opposite, with the pointed gable, belonged to your grandfather. It looks old-fashioned now, but, when I was a lad, there was not a finer house in Hayden."

Margaret's eye followed mechanically, as Esquire Clifford pointed out the prominent public buildings and private residences, but she saw only the moss-covered roof that had sheltered her mother, the time-stained walls that had listened to the glad music of her springtime, and the garden path her feet had pressed, before blight and mildew settled on her heart.

"There's the breakfast bell, Miss Foster; and here are a couple of misses, who often neglect to answer its summons—your pupils, Rachel and Helen."

Margaret turned from the window, to meet the welcome of the taller girl, who looked about fourteen years of age, while Miss Helen, the younger, only timidly bowed, and retreated to the hearth. Both girls were fair, and Rachel particularly so; but one glance of Margaret's told her that their beauty consisted only in regular features, bright eyes, and abundant hair; a truthful, loving, genial light was wanting in each face.

Margaret learned, during the morning, that the eldest daughter of the Clifford family was married, and resided in a distant city; and one son was in Yale College, while another followed the natural bent of his inclinations, and measured ribbons and laces in his native city—much to the grief of his proud mother, who thought the stain of labor a shameful blot on the family escutcheon.

Esquire Clifford's family was one of wealth and distinction in Hayden; and, though Margaret's new home was very unlike Mrs. Green's, and vastly different from the boarding school in Cherryville, yet it would have been more pleasant and beautiful than anything she had ever known before, if the light of one loving eye had welcomed her to its hearthstone.

Margaret soon learned that Mrs. Clifford did not receive the music teacher of her daughters as an equal; and, not being over-anxious to melt the lady's hauteur and reserve, she seldom lingered in the parlor after giving the young ladies their morning instruction. Her duties in the academy occupied her five hours each day; and, for the first few months of her residence in Hayden, her evenings were spent

alone in her chamber, unless she was called down to exhibit her musical skill to curious visitors.

How wearily lagged those winter evenings, and how often German books and favorite authors lay neglected, while her head was bowed with its weight of tears. It was long before she gained strength to answer Maurice's letter, and then every sentence was so carefully worded, her congratulations were so earnest, and her prayers for the success of his suit so fervent, that no one could have guessed each word was bathed in tears, and drawn from an aching heart. Like Rebecca, she would bless the fair and favored Rowena, and not beg a single drop from her overflowing cup to moisten her own parched lips. She thanked Maurice for his kind intentions regarding her, but assured him she could find a more suitable home for herself—one more in harmony with her natural inclinations; and that her profession would obtain for her everything that was necessary for her comfort. She thought, too, that Uncle Atherton, who was growing old, had claims upon her, and she should exert all of her energies to make the evening of his life pleasant.

Maurice looked at everything through the azure and golden light that radiated from his own heart, and missed not the blithesome, enthusiastic tone of her former letters. If a little more sober and subdued in its style, he thought it the natural effect of increased care, and deemed not that the flower which knows no second spring, had blossomed in her heart, and that already an incense from its crushed and broken leaves was hallowing her daily life, beautifying it with acts which would crown the winter of life with more than summer glory.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE HOLIDAY.

"The heart were of strange mould, that keeps no cherished print of earlier, happier days."

WINTER had melted away from the streets of Hayden, and new freshness and beauty were creeping softly over the earth. The warm, genial influence of spring gladdened every heart, and, if not so warmly welcomed by Margaret as in former days, she responded cheerfully to its gay carol, for she had learned to gather happiness from a busy, useful life, and, by scattering flowers in the pathway of others, to enrich and adorn her own heart. The purity and modest dignity of her deportment were winning for her many friends, and the music teacher was a welcome guest in several families of excellent social standing. Many, who were first attracted by her professional skill, soon learned to admire and love the noble qualities of her heart and mind. Her salary was increased by the compensation which she received from the people worshipping in the old stone house on the corner of Fairmount street, whose organ she played. It was a small remuneration which they offered for the first year, but Margaret, having had but little practice upon an organ, deemed it quite sufficient. She had no time for tears now, no time for vain and lingering regrets, for each hour was crowded with duties.

Only twelve miles from Clyde! Was it strange, that

when the first of May gave Margaret a holiday, she turned longingly toward the old farm, and the desire to look upon it once more before Maurice returned with his bride grew so strong that she could not resist it?

A stronger impulse drew her to Clyde—the wish to find her mother's grave, and plant beside it a neat and appropriate memorial.

It was an easy matter for her to secure a carriage and driver for a single day, and she was glad that none of the Cliffords were on terms of sufficient intimacy to question her closely as to where or how she should spend the day.

Nothing called up old memories, or looked familiar upon the road, till she reached the little village. Five years had scarcely added one gray tint to the old meeting house and parsonage, and the white cottages appeared just as cleanly and homelike as when the little bound girl looked back upon them through her tears. She could see Lucy's grave in the corner, close by the parsonage garden, no longer the fresh mound of earth she had left, but covered with a mantle of soft green, while a marble slab marked her resting place.

"You may drive slowly now," said Margaret; "and if I should leave the carriage presently for a half hour, do not answer the questions of any curious persons who may chance to address you."

"Ay, ay, ma'am."

They were nearing the farm, and Margaret was already leaning from her carriage to catch a glimpse of the old apple tree that shaded her attic window. But what had happened to the cottage? Margaret thought surely it must have

changed owners, for Mrs. Hardy would never have so enlarged and modernized it for her own use. There was Jem—honest-hearted Jem O’Harry—weeding the tulips. She could not go back to Hayden without speaking to him, and yet he must not know that “poor Madge” was addressing him. She drew her veil closely around her, and asked her driver to stop, and purchase a bouquet for her of the gardener, bidding him come to the carriage, that she might tell him what flowers she desired.

“At yer service, mem,” said Jem to his old “Margy, darlint,” with a profusion of bows, and holding what seemed to be the very ragged straw hat of five summers ago in his hand.

“Yer leddyship should be afther knowin’ that so airy in the season we have nothin’ but tulips, crocuses, and pansies—nothin’ at all fit for a boky, mem.”

“Never mind; I’ll take such as you have. Who owns this fine place?”

“Mrs. Hardy, mem; an’ there isn’t in the hull world a nater patch o’ land than this ’ere.”

“The cottage looks as though it had been newly built.”

“Indade, I’m thinkin’ yer leddyship must be a furriner, or ye’d be afther knowin’ that my mistress’s son is goin’ to bring a bride from Gemeny, or some great city beyant the sea, an’ his owld mither here has spent a dale o’ cash in makin’ the owld nist as good as new. Ye see, Maurice is goin’ to marry the darter of a rich lord, an’ so he writ hum, last year, to have the owld place furbished up; an’ my mistress sint to Hayden for carpentaries an’ housejiners, an’

they've been a tarin', thumpin', an' hammerin' about here iver since last harvestin'."

"Is the place finished now?"

"An' shure, mem, what more can they do? 'Tis as nate as a pin, from garrit to cellar, with carpets and furnitary fit for a quane. If ye are curious like to see, maybe my mistress will be afther showin' ye the hull, for she's mighty proud o' the new nist."

"No, thank you; I have lingered too long already. Here's a piece of silver to pay for some flowers, and you may give me a few apple blossoms, and sprigs of holly, if you please."

'Shouldn't I be ashamed to confiss that swate Ireland was the land o' my birth, if I took your silver for a handful of flowers? Saints forbid that Jem O'Harry should be a shame and disgrace to his mither country!"

"Five years have left no frost upon Jem's heart," thought Margaret, as he turned away to gather the flowers. Jem quickly returned with the early blossoms.

"If you will not take money, honest man, please accept my thanks, and a blessing for your generosity." Margaret extended her hand, and Jem, grasping it warmly, called down the blessing of "the Howly Virgin, and all the saints, upon her leddyship."

The carriage moved slowly on, till the handsome Gothic cottage was hid from Margaret's gaze by the blossoming apple trees and old chestnuts. She had no desire to look in upon the home of Lady Blanche, but she must needs visit the pond and brook.

She left the carriage, and, climbing the hedge, easily found her way across the field to the lane, through which she had taken so many solitary walks. Every mossy stone, each knoll, tree, and hedge, was greeted as a friend. Five years had left no marks of change upon these early haunts, unless, indeed, the little brook had shrivelled up with age; it did not look nearly so large as when she used it for a mirror; and the face that looked up from its clear waters now, as she knelt upon its violet-fringed banks, was no longer the face of a child. Her tears had often mingled with its rippling tide, and no wonder they should drop thick and fast now, when the sorrows and pleasures of her childhood were pictured before her. She must needs live over in memory the last time she had walked with Maurice to the brook and pond, and then, flinging the last fragment of her withered hopes into the stream, and praying earnestly for strength, she retraced her steps to the carriage, and bade her driver proceed to the almshouse.

The building had been repaired and enlarged, and Mr. and Mrs. Collins no longer had charge of its poor; but, learning that they resided in a farmhouse a little further up the road, she proceeded to their dwelling. She found the old overseer confined to his chair with rheumatism; but Judith was bustling about in what seemed to Margaret the veritable blue and white calico gown and checked apron which floated in the dim and shadowy background of her early memories. She came forward, with a low courtesy, to greet her visitor. Margaret seated herself in the proffered chair, telling Judith that she had called to learn, if possible, where Kate Foster was buried.

"Where did she die, young woman?"

"In the old poorhouse, nearly sixteen years ago."

"Sixteen years is a long time back, and many a poor creature was carried to her long home while John and I lived in the old house. It was a wicked shame, that when my good man here grew a little stiff with the rheumatiz, he should be trundled off. Kate Foster, you said? John, do you remember anything about a woman, called Kate Foster, who died in the old poorhouse?"

"Kate Foster? Well, now, it is queer, but I haven't thought of her pale face for years. Why, Judith, she was the daughter of a rich judge, and she left us that odd-looking, disagreeable child we bound to Sarah Hardy."

"My memory is just like an old sieve, late years; but, now that you mention the child, it all comes back as plain as day. What a broken-hearted thing she was, to be sure; and what a troublesome imp she left behind! Such a snarl of tangled hair, and such great eyes! Bless me! I can almost hear her scream for her dead mammy now. John, didn't we hear that the child ran away from Sarah Hardy, five or six years ago?"

"Yes, and she's never been heard of, to my knowledge; came to some bad end, no doubt."

"Can you tell me, Mrs. Collins, where the poor woman was buried?"

"'Twas nigh three miles from here, in the old burying ground back of Mill Hill."

"Is there any stone by which I can find her grave?"

"Dear me! I can't remember. John, do you know if this young woman can find Kate Foster's grave?"

"I used to have the first letters of every pauper's name cut in a rough stone, and placed at the head of the grave; and I'm positive Kate Foster was buried in the west end of the yard, near an old elm that was half torn away by lightning years before. 'Tisn't often that anybody wants to find a pauper's grave; but, when I first had charge of the poor, I used to be particular about giving them a stone, or a wooden slab, for humanity's sake. May I be so bold as to ask your name, young woman?"

"Margaret Foster, sir."

"I guessed as much, Judith, though the child has altered amazingly. I am mighty glad to find you grown so handsome, and dressed so well, for, you see, I feel a sort of interest in bound children. You must be out of your time now?"

"Yes."

"Married, like enough?"

"No."

"Living at service anywhere hereabouts?"

"I am teaching music in Hayden."

"Judith, do you hear that now? Many a child that I've bound out, has made something after a few hard rubs and knocks, but I've never heard of a case like this—actually teaching music in a great city! You would have no objections to telling me what you earn, I reckon?"

"None at all. I am paid nearly four hundred dollars per year."

"Bless us! nearly as much as your old mistress rakes and scrapes from her farm and dairy. What does Sarah Hardy think of your good luck?"

"It is not at all likely she knows of it; I have not seen her for five years. I am much obliged for the information you have given me. Shall I find the burying ground by following this road?" Margaret had risen to go.

"Yes; drive along till you come to a road that crosses this, then turn to your right, and go past the mill; the graveyard is just back of it. But sit down, Margaret, and tell us your history, while my old woman gets you a bit of something to eat."

"Thank you, Mr. Collins; I am not hungry, and there's nothing wonderful in my history to tell. I earned money to pay my expenses at school by working in the cotton mills, and God has provided me with kind friends since I left Mrs. Hardy."

Margaret could certainly be forgiven, if there was a little more of dignity and reserve in her farewell than was natural to her gentle heart, for she distinctly remembered of receiving many a harsh, ill-natured word and blow from both the overseer and his wife. Her present success could in no way be attributed to any kind care or thought which they took in apprenticing her.

"Goodness me! if she hasn't a good share of her mother's pride, I'm mistaken," exclaimed Judith, when her visitor departed. "A body would have thought she might have been civil, and told us something more of herself. But I've heard enough to make Sarah Hardy's ears tingle, and the story will lose nothing by passing over Mrs. Thorn's tongue to her. She shall have it before another sunset."

Margaret, after diligent search, found the rude stone

bearing the initials K. N. F., which marked a grass-grown mound. It was so near the blasted elm, that she could have no doubt her mother's ashes slumbered beneath. I would not dare attempt describing Margaret's emotion, when she gazed for the first time upon her mother's grave. There are passages in the life history of every person too solemn and tender to be painted with words. She rose from the sod with more perfect submission than she had felt for months, and, with trusting faith, placed her hand in that of Infinite Wisdom.

It was soon generally known by the villagers that poor Madge had been seen in Clyde, and many curious and exaggerated stories of her good fortune floated from ear to ear, gathering marvellous magnitude. It was wonderful to remark how many good people, who had never blessed the bound girl with a kind word, had always known poor Madge would make a noble, independent woman. They had seen bright gleams of the future in the depths of her eyes—noted it in her voice and step, and would hardly have been surprised if they had known she had passed through the village in a coronetted carriage, the bride of a prince!

“Thus human fancies wax and wane like moons.”

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE DARK VALLEY.

“Oh! what a wonder seems the fear of death,
Seeing how gladly we all sink to sleep.”

COLERIDGE.

“THERE is a gentleman in the parlor, who has called to see you, Miss Foster.”

“I will go in directly, Miss Rachel, as soon as I've taken off my bonnet, and carried this music to my room.”

“Let me carry up the music, please; you look pale and tired.” Margaret turned to see if the handsome, haughty girl were really in earnest, and meant to perform an act of kindness for another. There was no mistaking the sincere look of her pupil, and, throwing her arm around her with an affectionate caress, she thanked her warmly. Trifles light as air make up the sum of life. Rachel's act and Margaret's caress were the veriest trifles, but from that moment there was a bond of kind and sympathetic interest cemented between teacher and pupil. Margaret would no longer feel herself a stranger in the home of the Cliffords, and Miss Rachel would recognize the pure womanly influence which was drawing her up from the pit of selfishness.

“You've conquered me, Miss Foster; I am docile as a lamb.” It was lightly, laughingly said, but Margaret saw much deeper feeling than her tones implied, in the flushed cheek and trembling lip of Rachel Clifford.

She paused, before entering the parlor, to smooth her curls and arrange her collar. "A gentleman wishes to see me? Some business matter, I dare say," thought Margaret, and she opened the door.

"Uncle Atherton! dear uncle!"

"I've given you a great surprise, my child; but I trust 'tis an agreeable one."

"Oh! I'm so glad to see you. Did you come all this way to visit me, uncle?"

"I shouldn't have come here, if my niece had been anywhere else, though I was glad of an excuse to visit the old place again."

"I have not had so great a pleasure since the first time you called me niece."

The doctor folded her closely in his arms for a minute, and then held her where he could read her face.

"No, I see plainly you've not been used to pleasures of late! Why, child, you are thin as a shadow! What does it mean?"

"It means that I am never robust, rosy, and handsome, like other girls. But you don't like me any the less for that, dear uncle?"

"I like you too well, with all your proud independence, to allow you to go on making your shroud and digging your grave. You may as well pack up your things in the morning, for I shall take you back to Preston."

"You are a dear, good uncle, and I should like nothing better than to spend this summer vacation with you; but I've so many private pupils now, and an organ to play, too, that I can't possibly go."

"We'll see; I don't care if there isn't so much as the ghost of a musical sound heard in this city for a month! You are going home with me."

"Uncle, did you ever read of a firefly that never shines only when in motion? Now, if you should take from me all useful employment, my mind would darken, and I should grow dull and heavy, like the fly when its wings are clipped. You know a great German author says, 'A useless life is a lingering death.'"

"Stuff and nonsense! I don't care for a legion of fireflies, or a ton of German poetry! What is it all worth, weighed in the balances with health, or honest affection? Besides, you'll find enough to do in Preston; your old nurse is sick, and has taken a fancy to see you."

"Dear Mrs. Green! Why didn't you tell me before?"

"You didn't give me time, neither have you inquired."

"How thoughtless! Has she been sick long, uncle?"

"Since the first of May, I reckon; but she kept up, and said but little about it, till last week. She has failed very fast since she took her bed."

"Uncle, do you mean to say she's very sick—dangerously so?"

"I know of nothing that can save her. She has been of a consumptive turn for years, and, now that the disease has really fastened itself upon her, it makes rapid work."

Margaret buried her face in both hands, and the doctor slowly paced the floor. Did she need another great grief to hallow her heart, and loosen its hold on earth? Must this kindest, tenderest, and most genial of friends be taken from

her, that she might more trustingly turn to the only safe Refuge? Was not the memory of Mrs. Green's patient, loving watchfulness over her own couch sufficiently strong and grateful to draw her to the bedside of her nurse?

"Uncle, I shall go to Mrs. Green."

"I knew you would, my child."

"And if my tenderness and loving care can save her, she shall not die."

"Hush, child! 'tis not in human strength and love to lengthen the silver cord."

"She's been so gentle, tender, and loving to me—just like a mother!"

"I know it, dear."

"I shall take care of her as long as she lives."

"That will be only a few days."

Again Margaret's head was bowed, and strong emotion made her tremble like a stricken leaf. For some minutes Dr. Atherton allowed her to weep in silence, and then, lifting her bowed head, and smoothing her hair with the tenderness of a woman, he said:

"No more tears now, Margaret; you must be getting ready for your journey."

"When shall we start?"

"You can be ready to-morrow?"

"Yes, to-night, if 'tis necessary. But, uncle, I shall return to Hayden when Mrs. Green needs me no longer."

"There is no need of deciding that question now."

"You see, I can be very useful here, and, by steadily adhering to my profession, I can soon make us a nice, comfortable home."

“Esquire Clifford tells me you are growing fast in public favor; but I don't like for the fragrance of my rose to be so widely scattered. Margaret, I have a letter in my pocket for you, and it has been there nigh two months, simply because I thought you would be better off without it. Don't look so horror-smitten, for I have not broken the seal, and know nothing of its contents; but this much I am certain of: the last letter in this handwriting, and bearing this foreign post-mark, did you no good. I saw its blighting ravages in your face the day before you left for Hayden, and I can see now the dreary emptiness of your woman's heart; and I do not need to be told why you throw all the energies of your nature into your profession. I shall give you the letter, but, with it, an old man's advice. If you can look back calmly and steadily upon the past, if you've gained any strength for the future, do not read it. One line, one word, may destroy the fortress you have been building, and then the labor of months must be done over. We are fearfully and wonderfully made, child; and the human heart, once jangled out of tune, requires a cunning hand to mend its broken strings.”

Dr. Atherton laid the letter upon the table, and left the parlor. Margaret took it up, and went to her chamber. “This probably announces his marriage,” she thought; “and why should I fear to look upon his happiness? But yet, in the fulness of it, he has forgotten me, or else was ashamed to show Lady Blanche one whom he called sister. He must have been in Clyde before this, for June was the month he named; and two months have passed since then, with only twelve miles between us.”

The seal remained unbroken ; the stormy conflict passed over, and, through the rifted clouds, Margaret saw the golden gleam of angels' wings.

Leave of absence for a few days was readily granted the music teacher by her patrons, and, late in the evening of the day that followed her summons, she was standing by the couch of her suffering friend. Few words were spoken by either, but Mrs. Green held long the head she had so often pillowed to its old resting place, and then, with her accustomed kind thought and care for Margaret, she whispered :

"This will never do, dear. You've had a long journey, and I shall send you directly to your room. I've a great deal to say, but not now. Stand back a little, so that I can see your face. Margaret, dear, how pale and worn you look ! Have you found kind friends ?"

"Plenty of excellent friends, dear Mrs. Green ; but nobody like you."

"You have been a sweet child to me, dear ; but I cannot talk to-night, and I cannot let you remain here. After you are rested, I shall be glad if you will watch with me till all is over—it will not be long."

Margaret reluctantly left the room, but Dr. Atherton's command was added to Mrs. Green's gentle persuasions, and she had no choice but to obey. The morning light showed what fearful ravages disease had made in a few short months. Mrs. Green's plump figure was thin and wasted, and a blue-white pallor had settled upon her face, while a dark border lay heavily around her languid eyes. Oh ! it was sad to see

the once strong, active woman, the gentle, warm-hearted friend, so stricken and helpless !

Margaret resolutely locked the fountain of her tears, and seated herself by the couch, administering with her own hand the soothing draughts and simple nourishment which worn-out nature required. If she needed any reward for her devotion, the patient, satisfied smile with which Mrs. Green received her tender ministrations sufficed.

Quickly, but noiselessly, the tide of life was ebbing away, for the storms upon its sea had never been tempestuous. She had tasted of woman's sorrows—bathed in tears the icy form of her husband and only child ; but these great griefs had left no deep lines upon her heart and brow. Always looking for the silver lining and the golden side, the shadows of evening had crept upon her almost imperceptibly ; but, when fully conscious of their presence, she did not shrink fearfully from them.

“'Tis much better to die before life is a burden, dear,” she said, one evening, when Margaret was holding her thin, wasted hand, and gazing sorrowfully into her altered face. “I've had much more happiness, in my threescore years, than generally falls to the lot of woman. Reuben was a kind husband, and a better Christian than I have been. Poor soul ! he went from me years ago, and our baby, too ; but something tells me, Margaret, that I shall meet them soon. I have no kindred to weep when I am dead, and follow me to the grave ; but you will do all that love can do. There will be a little left—perhaps a few hundreds—after my poor body is decently interred, and this I've always meant to

give you ever since that dreadful illness, when you lay so near my heart. Your uncle has all my papers, and he will see about the legal forms."

Margaret answered only by grasping more closely the hand that rested in hers, and hiding her face in the coverlet.

"Margaret, dear, I'm strangely tired and sleepy. Is it very late?"

"The parlor clock has just struck nine."

"You are needing sleep, but I want to know that you are near me to-night, dear. Draw up that couch, and arrange the pillows so that I can see your face, and then lie down. Margaret, kiss me first."

It was a long embrace, and the maiden's warm tears mingled with the cold dew upon the dying woman's brow. She hung over her with stifled sobs and passionate caresses for a few minutes, but, remembering that abandonment to such grief would unfit her for the duties that were crowding upon her, she rose from her knees, and sought her own couch, which she had drawn so near Mrs. Green's that she could watch the shadows upon her face.

Margaret had been at home only a week, but, delicate in constitution, and worn with teaching, the watching and anxiety of this one week had exhausted her strength; and when she found that Mrs. Green's lids closed wearily over her eyes, and her breathing was gentle and regular, she, too, sank into a peaceful and refreshing slumber, and in dreamland forgot that sorrows and tears laid heavily upon her heart.

She was wandering in soft, green fields, and beside pleasant waters, while Lucy Kempton's hand supported her, and

dear Mrs. Green, no longer wrinkled and old, but "a fair maiden in her Father's mansion, clothed with celestial grace," seemed beckoning her onward.

Poor Madge! With the first gray tints of dawn, "a change came o'er the spirit of her dream;" the veil was drawn aside, and she was alone with the dead!

One or two days of silent watching and weeping, disturbed only by the visit of the undertaker and the officious kindness of friends, and then came the coffin, the hearse, and the pall—Mr. Briarly's prayer—the sombre funeral procession—and the panorama was complete.

Did you ever return from a new-made grave, with the harsh rattling of the sods upon the coffin lid still sounding in your ear?

Then, when a hat, cane, glove, workbox, or some simple article seems mutely asking for its absent owner, you realize, more fearfully than before, that a light is quenched which you cannot call again—a music hushed which you cannot rouse.

Margaret went tearfully from room to room, gathering up mementos of the dead. The knitting just up to the heel, neatly folded, as was Mrs. Green's custom, when the hands of the parlor clock pointed to bedtime; her cap, with its becoming ribbons, and the spectacles she had worn so slyly; her thimble, and scissors, and old black Bible, so eloquent in their silent desolation, were laid carefully away, where stranger hands would not grasp them heedlessly, and stranger eyes should not rest coldly upon them.

Fold up the black silk gown, poor Madge; it will no

longer rustle harmoniously with Mrs. Green's brisk step ; and that nice shawl will never be needed to shield her from cold again. Put them away, with everything her loving hands have hallowed, and go forth into the world again, remembering that her genial face will never welcome you from its toil, nor her arm uphold you when life's burdens press too heavily. These silent, deserted rooms are no home for you now ; even Uncle Atherton bids you go. His slow step is upon the stairs. Wait a moment, Madge, for his good-night blessing.

“Up still, Margaret? You should have been in bed an hour ago, for you are worn and tired. But I was thinking, a moment since, that I could hardly wait till morning before telling you of a little tour I've planned, to bring the color back to your cheeks, and the old light to your eyes. I believe you are right, after all, about returning to Hayden ; and perhaps, by another spring, I may follow you, for I feel strongly inclined to spend my second childhood near where I spent my first. I cannot let you go back to Hayden alone, and, as I ought to go to New York on business, I intend taking you along. We'll have a sail up the Hudson, and, like enough, catch a glimpse of Niagara. What do you say about it, Margaret?”

“That you are always kindly thinking of me, dear uncle.”

“You have not said that you are glad to go.”

“If anything could give me pleasure now, it would be your company, and this journey.”

“Thank you, Margaret. Perhaps I may as well tell you,

now, that Esquire Bland and I have been looking over Mrs. Green's papers, and we find her little property amounts to something like one thousand dollars in the Savings Bank, and her household furniture will sell for a trifle more. What disposal shall I make of these things?"

"Oh! none at all, just yet—only to have the furniture stored in some safe place. Isn't it strange that she should give all this to me, dear uncle?"

"I see nothing strange in it. She had no relatives, and you have been like a child to her for six years. Dry your eyes, now, Margaret, and think no more of your loss, but of her great gain."

It was well that Dr. Atherton planned a little diversion for his niece, before she returned to Hayden, else this new sorrow might have been the one drop too much. For several months she had plunged recklessly into the inspiration of music, to drown memories of the past; but one more drop added to her cup of bitterness, and the sweetest melody might have been changed to a wail of sadness.

Two weeks of constant change and pleasurable excitement, with the kind, honest face of Uncle Atherton beaming upon her, were a sovereign balm for the pain in her heart, and she returned to her pupils in Hayden with a more earnest, lively interest in the everyday duties of life, than she had supposed could ever again animate her.

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE CLIFFORDS.

“Cursed be the social wants that sin against the strength of youth;
Cursed be the social lies that warp us from the living truth.”

TENNYSON.

“I'M so glad you have come back, Miss Foster! You cannot think how long the month has seemed. It would have been absolutely gloomy here, if brother Willis hadn't come home from Yale, soon after you left.”

“I am pleased to come back, and glad to see you, Miss Rachel.”

“You've grown handsome, Miss Foster! I'll tease father to take me to Niagara, and see if 'twill improve me as much. I almost wonder, now, that I used to think you so ugly! I've been telling Willis what a nice teacher you are, and what a wonderful store of wise things you have packed into your little head. He is mighty fond of music, and can hardly wait to hear you play.”

“He will be disappointed now, Miss Rachel—you have led him to expect so much—when he finds I am only a commonplace performer. You know I studied to be a thorough and competent teacher—not for brilliancy and effect.”

“It makes no sort of difference what you studied for. Everybody says you play beautifully—splendidly!”

“Hush! hush, dear Rachel! You'll make me vain.”

"Indeed, I'd like to see you put on a few more airs; you are too quiet and bashful by half."

"I will give you a chapter of my history sometime, and then you'll not wonder that I am always quiet, often sad."

"I would sit right down at your feet now, and beg for the chapter, but I know you must be very tired. All the way from New York since morning, did you say? You must get nicely rested before evening, for we are going to have company, and father said he should bring your Uncle Atherton home with him. Helen and I drummed all the morning on that last duet you taught us, for mother likes to have us show off when friends visit us."

"I have not inquired for your mother and Helen. I hope they are well?"

"Never better. Willis puts us all in excellent spirits. Oh! I'm so glad that he's going to study law with father, so that he'll be at home all the time now. He has gone out to drive with mother and Helen, this afternoon, but I took a fancy to stay at home to meet you. I expected to find your face as long and thin as a shingle, for father said you had lost a very near friend; but I should think you had found a dozen! Why, bless me! here's the carriage, and I wasn't looking for it this half hour!"

The gay, sprightly girl was gone, and her last sentence floated in through the door she had left ajar.

Kindness and patience will in time melt the most formidable barriers of reserve and pride. Rachel was first in the Clifford family to acknowledge the simple, unostentatious beauty of Margaret's life; but her influence was secretly felt

and admired by every member of the family before the waning of her first year with them.

The music teacher had often been called down to the parlors to entertain visitors, but Mrs. Clifford's manner always showed that she was not expected to linger after she had performed for their gratification. On the first evening of her return, if Uncle Atherton had not drawn her arm in his to detain her, when she rose from the piano, Margaret would have left the room in her usual quiet, graceful way. Miss Rachel, too, immediately approached with the brother whom she considered so near perfection. Dr. Atherton had already seen him at dinner, and, being in the best possible humor with himself, and the world generally, their corner soon became the most animated part of the room.

"Atherton, upon my word, you are growing young! It would take a wise head to tell which was the old doctor, and which the boy, if your time-stained locks didn't tell a tale. If 'tis this pale little girl who's put you all in such fine spirits, I'll remove her to another part of the room. Miss Foster, are you the instigator of all this noise?"

"Oh! I beg you not to mind papa, Miss Foster; he's only joking! Dear me! you've scarcely said a word."

"You see, Mr. Clifford, that I have a brave champion to defend me. Miss Rachel can testify to my correct deportment."

"Her testimony will do you no good—she's an interested party; but I see plainly you are all leagued together. Willis, my hoy, the young people are trying to get up a dance. You and Rachel must aid them. Atherton, I have

one Puritanic foot that refuses to join. How is it with you?"

"Mine are both troubled in that way."

"Shall I have the pleasure of dancing with Miss Foster?" Young Clifford proffered his request with as much deference as if he had been addressing his mother's most favored guest.

"Thank you, sir; I never dance, and, besides, I shall be wanted at the piano, if all the young ladies join the set."

"Yes, Miss Foster must play for the dancers, Willis. You had better lead out your mother first; she likes to indulge in youthful pastimes once in a while."

For some reason, much to the surprise of his mother and sisters, Willis soon wearied of the dancing, and seemed greatly to prefer turning Miss Foster's music, while she continued to play; and when her services were no longer needed for the dancers, he remained by her side, introducing topics of conversation which, without any apparent effort on his part, were calculated to draw forth the treasures of her intellect."

"What in the world made you so stupid this evening, Willis?" asked Mrs. Clifford, when the company had all dispersed, and only her favorite son remained with her in the drawing room. "You danced only two sets, and was scarcely civil to any one in the room."

"You astonish me, mother! I was just thinking that we had not received so pleasant a company since I returned from college. I don't like much company generally, but I thought everything passed off extremely well this evening."

“Owing to the fascinations of our governess, doubtless! Now do not be so thoughtless again, Willis, as to bring down the remarks of everybody upon you, by being foolishly attentive to Miss Foster. She has only been used to a civil ‘good evening,’ and ’tis all she expects.”

“But why has she not the right to expect as much civility as any of our guests, mother, especially when we make so many demands upon her for their entertainment?”

“Nonsense! She’s paid for her trouble, and, without doubt, takes great pride in showing off her skill in music. Everybody expects a governess to entertain company with her accomplishments, but never to linger, after she has performed her part, to be entertained.”

“Miss Foster plays skilfully, but, in my opinion, she might give your guests as rich a treat with her conversation as with her music. I have never met a lady who could express herself with more ease, or who had a more familiar acquaintance with books.”

“Of course, she’s accomplished; she has been studying for several years, to prepare herself for teaching, and, generally, she remembers her position, and puts on no professional airs. But do not allow her to give you any lessons in conversation again, before company, or I shall depend upon Rachel for music, and not call our governess down. You ought to consider her reputation, too; for any marked attentions on your part would only bring her into disrepute, and injure her professionally.”

“Pray explain yourself, mother. I cannot understand why my attentions should dishonor any young lady.”

“Any young lady in your own social grade would be honored with your notice, I’m proud to say; but ’tis different with a governess. Nobody would suppose your intentions honest, and I should be sorry for Miss Foster’s reputation to be stained in my house. Her character and profession are her only wealth.”

“’Tis a shameful and wicked state of things, mother, if a young lady of Miss Foster’s native grace and purity, and with such brilliancy of intellect, simply because she uses the faculties God has given her in an honorable way, must be excluded from respectable society; and, because she has no money, cannot receive the polite civilities of a young man whose father happens to be rich, without staining her reputation! I have no patience with such a pasteboard aristocracy, hedged in with flimsy conventionalities, and where I find true nobility of soul I will honor it.”

“You may respect and honor worth, without attempting to raise it from its natural sphere. But ’tis late, and I am tired of this waste of words. I am sure, after the hints I have given you, your own good sense will dictate a respectful but distant bearing toward our governess.”

Respectful! Oh, yes! nothing could be more respectful than Willis’ treatment of Margaret as the weeks wore on. If she was sent for to entertain guests, it was his hand that opened the piano, led her to a seat, and turned the music. If she timidly ventured to express an opinion in the family circle, it was Willis who listened attentively, and encouraged a repetition of the boldness. If Margaret desired a book, Willis procured it; if she walked, by some fortunate chance Willis almost always accompanied her.

The marked preference which her son showed the governess, could not fail to attract the anxious, aristocratic eyes of Mrs. Clifford. Winter was approaching, and the readings and chattings of its long evenings would be dangerous. Her son must be removed from the charm of Miss Foster's accomplishments, or the charm must be removed from him. Woman's tact seldom fails to accomplish its object, if her pride or family honor are in danger of contamination. She suddenly discovered that, from the numerous apartments of her large house, one could not be spared for the governess. The chamber Margaret had occupied for a year, must be refurnished for a library. Every member of the family expostulated; but no! she couldn't show visitors into the meagre little room which had served for a library so long; and she would have a room handsomely arranged, and fitted up in style. They owned a carriage, and Rachel and Helen could be sent to Miss Foster's new lodgings every day for instruction.

Mrs. Clifford's polite announcement of her intentions to Margaret did not surprise or alarm her. She had seen, for some weeks, that her hostess regarded with dismay the attentions which Willis made no effort to conceal; and, feeling quite as strongly inclined as Mrs. Clifford to discourage his addresses, she had already determined to leave her present abode, and was only waiting for Uncle Atherton to determine whether he would come to Hayden in the early winter, before deciding where to go.

Mrs. Clifford extended the hospitalities of her house until Margaret could find a convenient boarding place, and assured

her of continued patronage. "Rachel and Helen have grown quite fond of you, Miss Foster, and their improved style of playing gives you great credit for the pains you have taken with them. Whenever a word of commendation from me can aid you in your profession, I shall be glad to give it. Many of the best families that employ you were induced to do so upon our recommendation."

Margaret thanked the proud woman for her patronage, and assured her that she would not trespass upon her hospitality many days.

"There is a cottage in Maple street that I think of hiring; for, if Uncle Atherton comes to Hayden this winter, we want a more quiet home together than we can find in a boarding house; and then I wish my private pupils to come to my own rooms for instruction. If you should hear of a good housekeeper, Mrs. Clifford, you will confer another favor by securing her services for me."

"Do you really think of housekeeping? It will be very expensive to furnish the cottage, even in the most ordinary manner. I should advise you to hire a couple of rooms, and take your meals with a respectable family."

'I want to make Uncle Atherton's last days as pleasant as possible, and we shall both be happier in a home of our own. I have a great many necessary articles for housekeeping that Mrs. Green left me.'

"Well, you probably know best what is for your own comfort and convenience; but 'tis very odd and strange for a young lady to commence housekeeping before she is married."

“Call it Uncle Atherton’s house, if you please. He has certainly a right to provide himself a home, and invite his niece to it.”

“Oh, yes; that seems right and proper enough, and I’m glad you are to have his protection. It would be a great pity for so young a girl to bring censure upon herself by imprudent conduct. If you need the carriage and a servant in making any of your preparations, they are at your service.”

“Thank you, Mrs. Clifford.”

“She’s proud enough to mate with a Clifford,” mused the lady, when her governess had retired; “and if she only had money and position, I would throw no obstacles in the way of Willis; but ’tis madness for him to think of marrying a poor governess, when there is a Southern heiress ready to lay her fortune at his feet. To be sure, Miss Welby is not so accomplished and graceful as the music teacher, but then she has genuine aristocratic blood in her veins, and a well-filled purse; these are better introductions to genteel society than graceful manners or a well-filled head.”

It made little difference to Margaret who approved or condemned her housekeeping plans, so long as Uncle Atherton was delighted with the prospect of a home. He could not arrange his business so as to leave Preston for some weeks, but he thought, if Margaret could obtain a housekeeper, she had better go to their new home without waiting for him.

With all Mrs. Clifford’s anxiety about the disposal of her son’s affections, she invited Margaret to remain until Dr.

Atherton arrived. How much of this generosity might be the result of her husband's influence and Rachel's pleading, we will not presume to say. Perhaps there was enough of pure womanliness in her heart to respect and admire Margaret's modest and dignified character, and to prevent her from sending the young girl from her roof without the protection of her uncle. Margaret was busy—almost happy—in her preparations for her uncle's arrival; and, with due regard for Mrs. Clifford's ambition and her son's affections, she delicately avoided him, spending her leisure apart from the family, unless particularly requested to join them.

Faithfully performing the duties of the present, looking cheerfully but soberly into the future, her days glided on, blessed with the consciousness which strong and earnest endeavors to attain purity, excellence, and submission confer.



CHAPTER L.

AN EVENING AT HOME.

“But oh! of all delightful sounds
Of evening or of morn,
The sweetest is the voice of love
That welcomes his return.”

SOUTHEY.

WHEN you first entered the parlor, you would have exclaimed, How pleasant and tidy! and, after sitting a few minutes by the coal fire, a genial, homelike feeling would

have absorbed every other. Good common sense, combined with simple and elegant taste, must have chosen every article, and arranged it in the room. Cheerfulness looked up from the pretty carpet, glowed upon the hearth, and lingered upon every article of furniture. Cheerfulness rested upon the face of good Uncle Atherton, and beamed in the eyes of his niece; it rippled in a smooth, harmonious gush from the piano, when its mistress touched the keys, and flowed gently from her lips when she talked or read. And sometimes a stronger emotion was mirrored in the faces of the favored guests who were admitted to this hearthstone.

“Leave your practice now, Margaret, and take this chair by me.”

The maiden came forward where the light of the lamp and the blaze upon the hearth shone directly upon her. There was a singular charm in the quiet, sober face and large eyes upturned to the doctor's gaze; gentleness and strength, amiability and intellectuality blended together, softening and beautifying each other.

“We have a nice, comfortable home, Margaret!”

“I'm glad you think so. But have you discovered any new charm?”

“There is an inexhaustible charm in the quiet, homelike feeling that steals over me whenever I enter this room. 'Tis nearly or quite four years since I tended you in that fever?”

“Four years this very month.”

“And now the little factory girl, whose life seemed scarcely worth a straw, is the most popular music teacher in Hayden.”

"Say only, uncle, that God has been pleased to bless the factory girl for striving to aid herself. If by popularity you mean the approval of friends, I am glad that faithful, patient effort has earned it."

"There's no need of your spending so much time with your pupils now. I am beginning to have quite a respectable practice, and, with the income of Mrs. Green's legacy, and your salary for playing in church, we might live very independently without your spending five hours each day at the academy."

"I know it, uncle; but my duties are not irksome, and I want to treat myself once in a while with the luxury of helping those who are not so highly favored as we are."

"You are a strange, perverse child, always ready with an excuse for your ceaseless fagging. Come a little nearer, for I want to see each light and shade upon your face. Are you happy?"

"Do I ever show any signs of unhappiness?"

"No, no; but many a woman conceals an aching, empty heart with smiles and artful disguises."

"You have often commended me for frankness and sincerity, and now you half accuse me of deception."

"Nay, Margaret; but tell me plainly if this professional life answers all the cravings of your soul."

"Why, no! if you will be flattered, dear uncle, my chief delight is in making home pleasant for you. Without you, there would certainly be a vacancy which my pleasant professional duties could not fill. You see, now, with five hours at the academy, ten private pupils, my reading and

practise, a little housekeeping, and a great deal of chatting with my unele, there is no time for me to nourish discontent. Then I have a quiet, home-loving heart, and the affection and protection of my uncle make me too deeply happy and thankful to think of looking abroad for pleasures, or seeking them out of the sphere where Providence has placed me."

"Margaret, the twilight of life is already wrapping me in its dusky folds. I could look more cheerfully upon its shadows, if I saw the strong arm which would support and protect you when I am gone."

"I have learned to lean trustingly on the Strong Arm that never fails, dear unele; but something tells me I shall be blessed with your love for many a year."

"I believe the love of a younger man would be a richer blessing. Margaret, what sent young Clifford away so suddenly?"

"I did not know he had left town."

"His father told me, to-day, that he had gone to Cambridge; and, not more than a month since, Willis told me he should finish reading law in his father's office. How do you account for this, niece?"

"All things earthly are mutable, unele, and I believe man has never been an exception. I should never dare attempt to give a philosophical reason for all the breezes that ruffle his strong mind and heart, making his moods as variable as the vane on the old stone church."

"This careless indifference, Margaret, is a borrowed cloak, and ill becomes you. If I could persuade myself that there was the least stain of coquetry about you, Clifford's attentions and sudden retreat would be no mystery."

“Uncle, I have never encouraged his attentions. He visited us on your invitation, and I only treated him with the common politeness that I extend to others. Indeed, I stretched my inventive faculties to avoid the result, which months ago I feared.”

“He made you an offer of marriage?”

“Yes.”

“And you refused him?”

“Yes.”

“I have no right to dictate, Margaret, and no wish to let curiosity conquer my manliness; but it does seem passing strange that you should say ‘no’ to young Clifford.”

“But it would be stranger still if I had said ‘yes,’ without that deep and holy love which alone can sanctify the marriage relations.”

“You will not find one man in a hundred so richly endowed by nature, so agreeable, so suitable for a life companion.”

“I dare say I shall never meet another with so many amiable and manly traits. I am sorry to lose his society, for we have few friends so intellectual, although there was not quite enough of vigor and independence in his intellect to suit me. He was too ready to adopt the opinions of others without careful research. But supposing I had loved him sufficiently to honor him through life, and there had been perfect harmony of tastes and pursuits, the match would have been most undesirable. You know his family are all purse proud and aristocratic; they barely tolerated my presence during the year I spent with them; and for a music teacher,

without name or fortune, the daughter of a reckless, unprincipled man, to take advantage of young Clifford's generosity, would be unpardonable. I should be no companion for his gay, fashionable mother and sisters, and, in a short time, his eyes would be opened to the unfitness of the match. I honor and respect Clifford too much to marry him, uncle."

"I suppose you would not marry a man whom you did not honor and respect?"

"No; but, clinging to the honor, there must be a tenderer, holier feeling. I believe woman's love may make an Eden out of the most commonplace abode, or the want of it may transform a princely palace into a barren, dreary waste. I have not love enough for Clifford to make him such a home as his generous, manly nature deserves; and I could not be happy in a position where I should be regarded as an intruder."

"Do you never mean to marry?"

"I think 'tis very probable that I shall not. You and I agree so well, and live so quietly happy in this charming home of ours; and then, I have so many sources of enjoyment in my books and music. Mr. Clifford can find a much more accomplished lady, with a fortune and handsome face, to bless his future home; but you will have to live alone with Sally, if I go away."

"Margaret, Heaven knows the evening of my life will be dreary enough without you, but I cannot have you sacrifice youth and all prospects of future happiness for me. I said nothing when you refused James Stanley, for, although he had changed greatly for the better, I did not think him your

equal, mentally or morally; he was naturally too vain and egotistic to mate with my self-denying niece; but now, if a word of yours can recall Clifford, I should advise you to say it. He is worthy any woman's love, and you say that you honor and respect him, and take pleasure in his society."

"But in all this I have no love for him."

"Well, you are an incomprehensible, independent miss, as obstinate in driving the tender passion from your heart as your mother was in cherishing it. Get down from my knee, and go to bed! Stay a minute, though, and tell me if you have heard lately from that Southern professor, who was in Germany."

"It has been nearly a year since I received a letter, and the last is locked in my writing case, with its seal unbroken."

"You cannot be so foolish as to think of waiting for him, my child?"

"He has been married nearly a year, I suppose."

"Strange, that you never told me!"

"You have never spoken of him to me since you gave me that last letter. He wrote me, some time before, that he expected to be married, in June, to Lady Blanche Russell, an English baronet's daughter."

"Did he break an engagement with you, Margaret?"

"Oh! no, no; he only called me sister, and wrote me nice letters of encouragement. He was always noble and generous, when I lived with his mother."

"And you have loved him ever since you were a bound girl?"

"Do not ask me, uncle; I had no right to love him."

“Poor child! one of your own sex says, ‘’Tis woman’s greatest curse to love first and most;’ and sometimes I can say with De Quincey, ‘Love nothing, love nobody, for thereby comes a killing curse in the rear.’”

“Uncle, I believe the pure love which you have known, has refined your nature, sanctified your heart, making it unselfish and generous. Instead of a curse, it has been your greatest blessing. Would you pluck out every golden thread which love has woven in your web of life, and willingly cast from you even the memory of its tears? The Opium Eater has said many true and many beautiful things, but that is no reason why we should accept anything from his pen which our natural instincts reject. God would never have created us with capacities for loving, if He had intended that we should keep the sacred fount sealed in our own hearts. Its generous diffusion can never diminish the fountain.”

“You’ve been getting romantic notions from your German books. I am astonished that one head can contain so much sense and nonsense. But don’t talk to me again of the blessings of love with such a quivering lip and pale face as you have to-night, or I shall be sure to adopt the sentiments of De Quincey. Good night, now, with an old man’s blessing.”

In the early spring, Margaret’s private class of music pupils had increased so rapidly, that Uncle Atherton’s persuasions were no longer necessary to induce her to resign her situation in the academy; and another charm was added to the cottage in the person of Miss Johnson, who had accepted Margaret’s situation in the school, and was now the

guest, as well as the tender, faithful friend of her former pupil.

Similar in disposition and tastes, with the same high and noble aspirations, their mutual friendship was a blessing to both; and few people could enter the cottage without feeling the influence of the nobility and excellence of its inmates.

CHAPTER LI.

JEM O'HARRY.

"Howe'er it be, it seems to me
'Tis only noble to be good;
Kind hearts are more than coronets,
And simple faith than Norman blood."

MARGARET had not forgotten her old love of gardening; and when the May sunbeams coaxed the early blossoms to come forth, she furnished herself with garden implements, and prepared to make the most of the little patch of land in front of the cottage.

Uncle Atherton had quite a respectable space back of the house for kitchen vegetables, and he had threatened the destruction of anything which should appear on his part of the premises in the ornamental line. Margaret might have as many flowers in front as she chose to take care of, though he thought the greensward looked vastly better than clumps of flowers; but his niece insisted that 'twas quite as much for the doctor's pleasure as her own, that she spent a half hour

each morning in cultivating tulips, pansies, pinks, and roses. She was bending over the fragrant soil early one morning in May, very much after the fashion of seven years ago, only the old calico sunbonnet was exchanged for a pretty garden hat, and the hands that held the small spade were gloved, when the pausing of wagon wheels in front of the gate arrested her attention, and, rising from her work, with a pinkroot in one hand and a spade in the other, she turned to see her early visitor.

"Beggin' a thusand pardons for onterruptin' ye, ma'am, but can ye be afther tellin' me where I can find a dacint woman to take care of a dyin' leddy?"

Margaret did not need to see the old straw hat, which must have been worn for an ornament, for it had long since refused to debar the sun and rain from Jem's face; she did not need to see the striped blue and white frock, nor the generous cotton kerchief, that answered the double purpose of cravat and dickey, to know that her old friend and fellow laborer was addressing her. That rich Irish voice, which had so often called down the blessing of the holy saints upon her unprotected childhood, belonged to no one but Jem.

But Jem discovered no likeness to his "Margy, darlint" in the young lady who approached the gate, and the pleasant voice that replied to his query brought no echo of long ago to his ear.

"You want to find a nurse, then, my good man?"

"An' shure, I'm not at all petikiler; if she can jist make a bit o' gruel in a dacint way, she'll sarve onyhow."

"Does the sick lady live in this city?"

"Indade, if she did, ye'd not be afther findin' me twelve miles from Clyde this blessed mornin', when the praties an' inyuns on me own patch o' land are a shame to a Christian gardin! It's nigh four weeks since Bridget an' me have been runnin' an' waitin' on the owld misthress, till we're e'enamost tired to death; an' yesterday, all at once, Bridget tuk sick in her right shoulder, an' niver a bit can she use her arm. Ye see, I'm not at all aisy in a darkened room, an' not a drap o' gruel do I know how to make; so I sez to Bridget, this mornin', as I was a turnin' the matter over in me mind afore the brak o' day, 'Bridget,' sez I, 'I'll take the owld misthress' horse, an' go straight to Hayden as iver I can, an' if there's a dacint woman in the city that will come for the love o' the Lord, or love o' the money, I'll bring her home; if not, Bridget,' sez I, 'git me a big apron, an' I'll turn nuss. But it seems a mighty shame for an owld man like me, who's lived a paceable life in the swate open air, to be shut up in a dark, onhilty room, with a dyin' woman, an'—beggin' yer pardon—she's niver the most agrable when she's well."

"Can't you find somebody nearer home to take care of your misthress?"

"An' hev'n't I sarched the hull o' Clyde, from one eend to tether, an' niver a woman could be found who'd tarn over her hand to save me owld misthress from the divil himself! An' ye'd not be afther wonderin', if iver the light of her eyes, by any ill luck, had fallen on yer leddyship. Many's the time when I've said to meself, or Bridget—an' she's all the same as meself—'Bridget,' sez I, 'it's an awful thing to

live sich a life, an' die sich a death, that paled inyuns won't draw tears from the nearest nabor's eyes. But yer leddyship needn't be afther repatin' what I've said, seein' as how it mightn't dispose any civil woman to go alongst with me; an' thin I wouldn't like for Sarah Hardy's ghost to be a comin' back, afther she's once dacintly in purgatory, to torment me. I reckon, now, I might as well be a goin', if yez can't give me the information that I axed."

"Stop a minute. Jem, don't you know me?"

"Know yer leddyship? How should I, mem, whin, iver since I lift swate Kilkenny, ten years agone, I've lived in Clyde, savin' the forty days that we were tossed up an' down on salt wather. If iver I go back to the land o' me birth, you may be shure I'll not travel by sea, for it's a most on-hilthy style o' carriage. Maybe, now, me eyes hev been blessed with the sight of yer leddyship, if iver ye hev been in Clyde."

"I lived on Mrs. Hardy's farm when I was a child."

"Yez are not a goin' to tell me that swate little Margy, who wint a long way in sarch of a cotton mill, has grown to be the fine leddy that I hev the honor to be spakin' with?"

"I am the same little Margy—Mrs. Hardy's bound girl—that you lifted into Mr. Parsons' market wagon, nearly seven years ago. Do you know me now?"

James had clambered down from his wagon, and, holding the hand that Margaret extended, he exclaimed:

"By Saint Patrick! I belave yer leddyship is spakin' the truth, for I niver saw a pair o' eyes like yer own, savin' Margy's. But she was a wee bit thing, an' I'm a thinkin' a

breth o' wind would hev blown her about like thistledown, only she was a dale too spry for the wind. Bless me sowl! Margy, darlint, how tall ye've grown! straight an' slinder as iver! Strange I hadn't knowed ye at first; but me eyes are failin' late years. Jist the same little Margy, only a dale han'somer! An' is it meself that's a livin', to clap me eyes on yer swate face once more? Seven years agone, did ye say, since I tuk yez in me two arms, an' lifted ye into the wagon that carried ye away? Many's the time that I've sed to Bridget, sez I, 'Bad luck to the man, woman, an' childer that spakes an onkind or onhandsome word to the mitherless orphan. An' shure, ye tuk away the light o' me eyes an' the pace o' me sowl, whin ye wint in sarch of a mill. Did yez find that same, swate honey?"

"The mill? Oh, yes; I found plenty of mills, and plenty of friends, after I left Mrs. Hardy."

"The Lord love ye! I might hev knowed the howly saints would hev smiled down on so swate a face an' eyes, that made a body think o' the stars; but I've been afear'd they'd take ye up to live with thimselves in the golden city. An' it's sorrowful times we've been a havin' at the owld place, since yer little hands tindid the flowers and pulled up the weeds alongside o' Jem."

"Mrs. Hardy is sick, you said."

"Shure, she's jist the same as dead, yer leddyship, only a dale o' trouble still. Maybe the expinse o' the funeral howlds her back, but there's no knowin'. It's four weeks, now, since she's been in a mighty onaisy state, scramin' an' groanin' as if she was already in purgatory. An' it's you,

Margy, darlint, that she's called to bring a drap o' cowl wather for her hiritic tongue. I'm thinkin' yer ears would niver be afther forgittin' the sound o' her voice, if ye could hear her, now, scrame for her dead husband, an' Master Maurice, who's niver come back from beyant the seas, an' yer own swate silf, too. Ye see, there' are a hull legion more of evil sperrits in possession o' her sowl, than our blessed Christ driv out o' Mary Angeline, when a hull drove o' pigs tumbled into the sea, an' the salt waves licked them up. Indade, it comes nigh breakin' me heart to think how young Master Maurice'll take on, whin he comes back an' finds there's not a ruf on the owld farm to shilter his bonny bride. Ye should hev seen the nate Goric house, which the carpentaries builded out o' the owld one, for, by Staint Patrick, 'tis now a hape o' ruins; only a few black bames an' coals, an' the northernmost chimbley, are lift of its glory!"

"Mrs. Hardy's house burnt, Jem?"

"Shure as I'm a spakin' with yer leddyship, there isn't a hull bame, nor a bit o' board so big as me hand!"

"Pray tell me how it happened."

"Indade, that's not an aisy matther at all. I should as soon be thinkin' an evil sperrit did it out o' spite, only they wouldn't be afther doin' so shameful a dade to one o' their own. Ye see, it was in the dead o' the winter, an' there had been an oncommon fall o' snow, but it had jist turned to rain. The night was darker than pitch, yer leddyship, an' niver a star loked out o' the sky from sunset till sunrise. I slapes mighty sound, but Bridget—kind sowl!—always kapes an eye open. Wal, I was jist snorin' away as comfortable

as ye plaze, whin Bridget, sez she, with a great thumpin' on me side, 'Jem O'Harry, man, why can't ye be after wakin', whin, likes enough, the day o' judgment has come!' Day o' judgment! thinks I to meself, an' I was on the floor quick as ye could wink, for, ye see, I wasn't at all ready to be settlin' me accounts. But I was aisier in me mind whin I seed the great light come from the new Goric house; an' sez I to Bridget, 'Pride goes ahead o' destruction, an' its a grate wonder that the misthress' house hasn't tuk fire afore.' As soon as iver I could make meself dacint, I ran, scramin' 'Fire! fire!' but jist as I rached the gate, what should the ruf do but fall to the ground! Dacon Simpson an' the parson was a howldin' me owld misthress, who was a wringin' her hands, an' makin' as though she would rush into the hape o' flames. An' oh! it was an awful sight to see the han'some furnitary tumbled about in the snow! An' shure, I shall niver be after forgittin' the cracklin' o' the flames an' the scramin' o' Mrs. Hardy, if I live as long as Methulsir!"

"Where has Mrs. Hardy lived since the fire?"

"Indade, mem, it's jist nowhere she has lived the best part o' the time, but wandered ghostlike around the owld place, a gazin' at the ruins, and a mutterin' to herself. The parson tuk her home with him, an', whin she could be ontrated to lave the remains o' her splendid house, she stayed there, an' after she tuk sick, he shiltered her. An' shure, there's been no lack o' kindness to her, only jist now the nabors are tired o' her noise, an' sort o' 'fraid to be left in charge. But I'm a kapin' ye a long time from yer flowers. Yer leetle hands hev'n't forgot how to use a spade and pull

up weeds, I reckon. Bless me! yer swate eyes would turn to salt wather, if ye could see the owld gardin now, grown over with weeds, an' the likes o' them. But I must wish ye the top o' the mornin', now, swate honey, an' be gettin' back to Clyde."

"James, you will be most likely to find what you need, by going to an intelligence office. Keep up this street till you come to a large stone building; then turn to the left, and, three doors from the corner, you'll find an office."

"Mr. Kempton was a tellin' me that same, this blessed mornin'. Margy, darlint, should ye iver be afther comin' to Clyde, don't forgit Jem O'Harry."

"I shall never forget one who has been kind to me, James."

The corner of the street hid the old straw hat and blue frock from Margaret's eyes, but she still stood leaning against the garden gate. Charity and duty were tapping softly at the door of her heart, but, for some minutes, pride forbade them entrance. Nine years Mrs. Hardy had given her shelter and food, but never a word of love. The whole of childhood's sunny spring she had changed to a night of tears. Had she been a gentle mistress, a kind friend, how quickly would Margaret have gone to her in this affliction; but the Samaritan paused not to inquire if the man who fell among thieves was a friend or foe; and our blessed Christ bade us return good for evil. Mrs. Hardy was the mother of Maurice. For the sake of one who had been kind to her in childhood, Margaret could make almost any sacrifice now. She would go to her old mistress, and, if spurned from the

bedside with the old look of hate, she would at least return to her own home with a clear conscience.

Margaret gathered up her garden tools, and passed through the cottage to Sally's domains. Sally was a strong, active Yankee, sincerely attached to her young mistress, and in all respects capable of taking the sole charge of the household. She listened with some surprise, when Margaret told her that she was going to leave home for a few days, and desired her to see that Uncle Atherton was made comfortable in her absence, but asked no questions about this sudden journey.

Margaret wrote a note to her uncle, and, leaving it upon his table, went as quickly as possible to the intelligence office to find Jem. He had been unsuccessful in his search for a "dacent woman," and was just turning toward home, when Margaret approached him.

"If you'll let me ride in your wagon, James, I'll go and take care of Mrs. Hardy for two or three days. I must come back to Hayden before the Sabbath."

"The owld wagon isn't at all fit for yer leddyship to ride in; but if ye've a mind to go, I shall be proud to take ye along. Ye're mighty forgivin' onyhow, Margy, dear, to visit the owld hiritic now, whin she niver trated ye in ony but the onkindest an' onchristianest manner."

"If we do good only to those who are kind to us, we fall very far short of our Saviour's precepts and example."

CHAPTER LII.

THE ENTRANCE OF THE GREAT UNSEEN.

“ My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,
And every tongue brings in a several tale.”

“ 'Tis sweet to stammer one letter of the Eternal's language—
On earth 'tis called forgiveness.”

It was a strange face that admitted Margaret to the parsonage, and, sending up her name to Mr. Kempton's study, she entered the old parlor. The last time she was in that room, she had hung tearfully over the pulseless form of its young mistress, her friend and teacher. The sobbing, despairing child was a woman now, but her eyes were not unused to tears; and, as the memories of her childhood's sunniest hours, spent in that room, assumed shape and color, they unlocked the deep fountains beneath her lids.

Seven years had paled the roses on Lucy's pretty carpet, and added a sober hue to the mahogany card table upon which her satchel of books used to rest; but they had not deepened a single furrow on the face of the Quaker preacher who looked down tenderly and humanely from the canvas on the wall. The same books were upon the centre table—Cowper's “Poems,” “Paradise Lost,” and a volume of Shakespeare—but the bright morocco and gilt bindings were faded and rusty.

The door opened, and Mr. Kempton approached Margaret. Seven years had painted the shadows of deep and

anxious thought upon his face, and left frosty footprints in his dark brown hair.

"They told me Margaret Foster was in the parlor. The name had a familiar, pleasant sound, and I find the face not altogether new, but I can scarcely be persuaded that the little bound girl is so soon a woman."

"Seven years make great changes, Mr. Kempton; but I'm Mrs. Hardy's bound girl, poor Madge."

"Your eyes are a sufficient proof of your identity with the poor Madge of seven years ago; but, in all else, how changed! I hope my little friend has preserved her truthful simplicity, and, if there has been as great a change in her intellect as in her personal appearance, she can certainly have no reason to look back with regret upon her hasty leave-taking of Clyde."

"God has most abundantly blessed my endeavors, Mr. Kempton, though I have sometimes feared that I gave my mistress rather too unceremonious a farewell. I have come back to make atonement and restitution, now, for any wrong I may have committed against her."

"You must have a kind, forgiving nature, Miss Foster, if you harbor no ill-will for your old mistress."

"I do not remember a single act of her life with any pleasure, and I still feel the sting of the thorns which she scattered in my pathway; but her roof sheltered my defenceless head for nine years, and her table satisfied the cravings of appetite. If I am not drawn to her by the chords of love and grateful remembrance, the voice of suffering humanity has reached my heart. Do you think she will recognize me?"

“Probably not, for she does not seem to know her nearest neighbors. She is dying a fearful, terrible death. The last messenger is to her only the King of Terrors.”

“I gathered as much from Jem, but I could not learn from him the cause of her misery and illness; at least, I could not make it seem probable that the burning of her house had produced such a fearful calamity.”

“The loss of her property has doubtless occasioned derangement, but her illness was brought on by exposure. She hovered about the ruins for several weeks, bewailing and lamenting her losses, and finally remained out all night in a pitiless rain. The exposure induced this fever, which is fast hurrying her to the grave. You will be greatly shocked to see the changes which time, disease, and a harrowing conscience have wrought upon her.”

“But I suppose the loss of her house did not make her a poor woman?”

“By no means. She owns one of the best farms in Clyde, and the neighbors say she has more than money enough in the bank to build another house; but money was her idol, and, having no Christian faith to sustain her, her intellect was demolished with her idol. The ‘rushing, mighty wind’ swept over her, but she heard not the voice of God calling for an account of her stewardship. The camel and the needle’s eye are often in my mind, of late, and I can bless God for contented poverty, while looking upon this human wreck, stranded upon the bleak coast of avarice and worldly lust.”

“Her son should be with her now.”

“Yes; but he has never returned from his foreign tour. It was rumored that he would bring back a bride, nearly a year ago, and I have never been told what hindered. He has been in Italy during the winter, and I wrote him an account of this deplorable state of things several weeks ago, and begged him to return home.”

“Shall I go to Mrs. Hardy now?”

“Yes; but do not trust yourself alone with her at present. She has not committed any act of violence yet, and is now so near her end that I do not really fear any danger; but her old aversion and prejudice may rise up strong and mighty in death. My sister has been too weak and nervous to be left alone with her, and her old servant and his wife have been her principal attendants. Mrs. Simpson is with her this morning, and while she is by you need not fear.”

The pastor ascended the flight of stairs with Margaret, and opened the door of the chamber, where, upon a couch, lay the strong woman of seven years ago, helpless, and dependent, now, upon the neighbors whom she had treated with such proud reserve, for the necessary attentions which her weakness and sufferings required.

Margaret stood by the bedside, gazing tearfully at the wreck before her. She was sleeping now, but so sharp were her features, so pale and haggard was her face, that, had it not been for her restless tossings and frequent groans, one might have thought the seal of death already on her eyelids. Seven years ago there were but few silver threads in her abundant black hair; now, the long locks were perfectly gray, and hung about her face or floated on the pillow in

unkempt and tangled masses, which Mrs. Simpson was vainly trying to gather up and confine, but the restlessness of the sleeper prevented.

“It is an awful thing to die so, Miss Foster, without a tear of love dropped upon one’s coffin; and ’tis certainly very forgiving in you to come all the way from Hayden to do a kindness for one who treated you with so much harshness. Jem O’Harry has been telling me that you are the poor Madge who used to work in her garden. There has been as great a change in you as in Sarah Hardy, but a very different one. I’m really glad to hear that you have been so wonderfully blessed and prospered. Do you live in Hayden now?”

“Yes, I am teaching music there; and I’ve found a relative, an uncle. We have a home together.”

Mrs. Simpson was prevented from expressing the joy of her kind heart by the waking of Mrs. Hardy, whose dull, heavy eyes were fastened on Margaret.

“Stand a little this way, Miss Foster; I am almost sure she knows you,” whispered Mrs. Simpson, but the girl neither moved nor answered. The old emotions of fear and dread which the light of those eyes always kindled in her soul, had almost paralyzed her tongue. The dying woman, without any token of recognition, turned her eyes vacantly to the wall, muttering to herself in broken sentences and incoherent exclamations.

“Listen to her strange jabbering, Miss Foster; her conscience gives her no rest, sleeping or waking.”

The whispered tones seemed to reach the heavy ear

of Sarah Hardy, for she called out in a harsh, creaking voice :

“Who says I’ve been harsh and exacting? Haven’t I money enough to build another house?” And then, in lower complaining murmurs: “Oh, it was a pity! two thousand dollars wasted on the old house to please Maurice, and all burnt up! It would take four years to save as much from my dairy and farm. And the cows gone, too—Brindle, Daisy, Spot, and the red heifer all burnt! Fire! fire! Robert, a bucket of water, I say! Quick, Madge, quick! You lazy thing! you carried a lamp to bed—you know you did! Run to the bureau drawer, Maurice, and bring my purse. There are fifty dollars in gold, and three five-dollar bills! What are you so moping and slow for, boy?”

Her violent screams of “fire!” which were prolonged for some seconds, seemed to exhaust her strength, and she threw herself back upon the pillows. Margaret, no longer frozen with fear, attempted to moisten her lips and tongue with cold water.

“They said I gave her sour milk and mouldy bread, but ’twas good enough for a pauper. I tell you she was all Foster! Don’t stare at me with Kate’s eyes!”

Margaret drew back, where the wretched woman’s gaze would not fall upon her face.

“Maurice is coming home with a baronet’s daughter, and I’ve spent two thousand dollars on the old house! Who says she won’t marry him? It is a lie! The queen would be proud of my handsome boy! Jem, plant the tomatoes this side of the holly hedge. Two dollars’ worth of straw-

berries sold yesterday; twelve pounds of nice yellow butter, too!—a shilling a pound I'll have for that! Never mind, Maurice; there are plenty of girls as rich as Blanche Russell. Show a little of your mother's spirit. What are you talking about, Robert? Adopt that brown little pauper! I tell you again, she is all Foster. I told the neighbors Lucy Kempton was lazy, and wasted the salary! Take away her mournful eyes; they are mocking me now! Off, I say! You stole away Madge, and she was worth a dollar a week to me! Will no one bring a bucket of water to save my house? Two thousand dollars burning up! Fire! fire! Robert, do you hear? the house is on fire!"

Again her wild and frenzied screams pierced the remotest corner of the parsonage, and then sank into hoarse whispers, like the angry moaning of the sea when the fury of the storm is past.

"Wasn't it an awful shame to waste my hard-earned money on silver forks?—but I shall be mother-in-law to Lady Blanche. A new silk dress, did you say, Maurice? I can't afford it. Madge dead! Did hard work kill her? She only weeded the garden, picked the berries, ran of errands, and washed the dishes. Drive up the cows—quick, Madge! Don't look so mournfully at me, Robert. I didn't kill her. Is she rich, Maurice? Worth half a million! Let her marry a lord, and live in London; there are plenty of rich girls who'd be glad to marry my son. Two thousand dollars gone, and only a few black, ugly cinders left! I sold my conscience for gold—the devil had it at his own price; but it comes back again, mocking me with that pauper's

eyes, crackling and hissing like something on fire! My new Gothic house won't burn. No, I never prayed, but Robert did. Prayers cannot save me now; but there's no harm in trying—prayers don't cost money! Two thousand dollars gone! I'd give as much more for a minute's rest. Robert, will you read a chapter, while I finish the churning? Then you can pray. But Madge needn't come in; she's weeding the turnips!"

"Hadn't I better call Mr. Kempton to pray with her?" asked Margaret.

"It would do no good. She has often talked in this way, and begged Robert to pray with her, and then we have called our minister, but she wouldn't mind his prayer, and he couldn't be heard for her screaming and groaning. She seems quite worn out, now, and if you are not afraid to be left alone with her, I'll go home and see to the children."

"Do not stay for me. If she grows violent, I'll call Mr. Kempton."

Two wearisome days and nights Margaret sat by the couch of her old mistress—not always alone, for Jem O'Harry was bustling in and out, and gentle Mrs. Simpson stole an occasional hour from domestic cares to sit by her neighbor, while the grave face of the pastor was often seen at the bedside, and his widowed sister came in to perform any necessary duty.

Margaret thought of Lucy Kempton's happy, triumphant death, the gentle ebbing of the life-waves when Mrs. Green went home, and turned with a cold shudder from the haggard face, distorted features, and vacant eyes so wildly, fiercely

glaring—from exclamations wrung by an accusing conscience out of a selfish, sordid heart.

There was no melting of the iceberg in her soul, no lulling of the tempest ere her bark went down ; but, with “two thousand dollars” quivering and struggling on her tongue, the glazed eyes became fixed, the clenched hands unloosed, and, with a groan of despairing anguish, the spirit of Sarah Hardy stood before a righteous Judge.

“Now may the howly saints intercede for her hiritic sowl!” ejaculated Jem.

“Blessed Saviour, who didst pardon the dying thief, have mercy on her immortal spirit,” prayed the pastor.

A prayer for her stern mistress had been constantly welling up from Margaret’s heart for two days. No words escaped now from her lips, but with gentle hands she wiped the cold death-dew from her forehead, smoothed back the gray locks, and closed the lids of those eyes that never gleamed tenderly upon the bound girl.

CHAPTER LIII.

THE PAST AND PRESENT.

"Love took up the harp of life, and emote on all the chords with might ;
Smote the chord of Self, that, trembling, passed in music out of sight."

TENNYSON.

"I felt that God was smiling on my lot,
And made the airs his angels, to convey
To every sense and sensibility
The message of his favor."

BITTER-SWEET.

"Steep the heart in one pure love, and it will last thee long."

"BACK again, truant? Who did you think would read the paper to me, and pour my coffee, for three days?"

"I dare say Mary Johnson performed these little deeds of charity for you with more skill and dignity than your humble niece could have done."

"My proud niece, you mean; for never did bachelor uncle have in charge so independent and unmanageable a miss as I have. What good comes of this Quixotic expedition, and what heinous sin had you committed, that required so severe a penance?"

"It was no penance, uncle. I was doing myself a pleasure. Mrs. Hardy's injustice and unkindness to me were no reasons why I should not strive to make her last days comfortable."

"How did you leave her?"

“She died last evening. Oh! it was a most wretched exit, a fearful death, and I would gladly shut the memory of it from my heart. Without kindred, without love, and without Christ! It was dreadful to witness.”

“A fit ending for such a sordid woman. But we will not judge harshly of the dead. I cannot chide you for going to her. A forgiving spirit brings a blessed reward. Margaret, you are in want of rest, and I will make excuses for you to the pupils who come to-day, and you can remain in your chamber.”

“I did not feel weary until after she died; but now I find my physical powers not quite so strong as my will, for I long to attend to my pupils, and make home pleasant for you to-day. I ought to go and see the Stacys, too. How are they, uncle?”

“The mother is gaining fast, and I think we can save the little girl. I never knew, until yesterday, how many hours you had spent with them, nor how much your bounty had relieved them; and I didn’t tell Mrs. Stacy, when she was repeating the name of Margaret Foster with so many grateful sobs and tears, that I knew anything about such a strange compound of womanly gentleness and brave independence——”

“Never mind about it now, uncle; I have a great favor to ask.”

“Well, what is it, child? something you have already decided to do, I dare say. But mind, if you think of joining Florence Nightingale, I shall cage my bird at home.”

“I have no such desire. There is quite enough scope for

my philanthropic efforts in our own city ; but I have taken a fancy to little Ellen Stacy, and her mother is so wretchedly poor, with three children besides, that she will gladly give me this one. I should like to adopt her, and educate her—she is so bright and winning—if you think it proper. I shouldn't have thought of it, but her mother asked me, a few days ago, if I would try and find a respectable family who would take her as a bound girl. Oh ! uncle, I shudder at the sound of that word ; and when I looked at little Ellen, and thought of the coldness and misery of those nine desolate years that I served Mrs. Hardy, and then of the wearisome toil and temptations of my factory life, it seemed as though God was calling upon me to show my gratitude for the mercies and blessings of these later years, by shielding this little heiress of poverty from a few of its tears and trials.”

“What can you do for her, my child ?”

“I can teach her to be useful ; and now, while the soil of her heart is soft and pliant, I will plant in it the seeds of truth, charity, gentleness, and self-reliance, and pray that Heaven's own dews may nourish the tender plants as they spring up, and bud, and blossom.”

“But she must have bread and butter, and clothes to wear.”

“How can I make a better use of Mrs. Green's legacy, than by devoting it to this purpose ? Then, I can earn more than enough with my music to make Ellen and myself comfortable. You know my habits are simple, and I like a plain wardrobe. But you shall decide for me, uncle ; and, if you

think I am not a suitable person to take in charge so young and tender a child, I will thank you for telling me plainly."

"I have never seen any one who had better capacities for training and instructing childhood; and the only objection I have to your plan is, the trouble which the child will bring you. You must look after her clothes, and her manners, to say nothing about the instruction which you propose giving her."

"I have thought of all these things; but I should show a very unthankful heart for God's great goodness to me, if I should shrink from self-denial, and refuse to aid the child because she would increase my care and labor."

"You have my approval, Margaret. I may as well yield at once, when you sue for a favor, without stopping to parley. When do you propose bringing the child here?"

"To-day, if you please, because Mrs. Stacy is so sick, it will be a relief to her to have the noise of one child removed."

"Well, go to your chamber and rest first, and I will go to the Stacys with you this evening. Perhaps the guarantee of my guardianship will take away the semblance of eccentricity and romance which people might ascribe to you in adopting the child. Such follies are not generally supposed to be on good terms with deep furrows and sober gray hairs."

Margaret's thanks for her uncle's generous compliance with her wishes were lost upon the doctor, who, gathering up hat and cane with all possible haste, was escaping from the room. She found her pretty little chamber a pleasant,

soothing retreat after the exciting and tempestuous days of her absence from it, and her weary lids were soon closed in a grateful, refreshing slumber. But a vision of bygone days, or an angel guest, haunted her pillow, and so strengthened her heart, that, on waking, she took from a drawer her writing case, that had been locked for nearly a year, and, drawing the bolt of her door, sat down and opened it. There was a letter with a foreign postmark and unbroken seal; a little plain gold ring, which she had not been strong enough to wear, because, forsooth, it was too heavily freighted with memories she had no right to cherish; and a withered bouquet, which must needs bring back the day at Birch Hill, with all its pleasures written in unfading lines upon its faded leaves! Poor Madge! it was meet and fitting to bathe it once more with tears, for the fountain was a bitter one that drenched it last—a hopeless strength, that laid it away.

Margaret sat for some time looking at the unbroken seal. She had never summoned resolution to destroy the letter, because—well, there was a sacredness about everything the hand of Maurice had touched, which withheld her. Now, the sleeping vision, and the remembrance of Mrs. Hardy's incoherent entreaties for her son not to mind the refusal of Lady Blanche, prompted her to open it. She broke the seal, and the letter, dated "Florence, Italy, April 20, 18—," is before us:

"DEAR MADGE: It has been a long time since I have written, for I believe my last was mailed at Heidelberg, in October of last year. Your answer to that was long in com-

ing, and then, for some weeks after its reception, I was too miserable to give my thoughts any suitable clothing in words, much more to put them upon paper. But, in my saddest and most wretched hours, it would have been a relief to talk with you; and for the last month I have so longed for your sympathy, that I have conquered the repugnance I have felt about revealing, even to you, a disagreeable fact, and exposing my unmanliness.

“Now do not laugh at my weakness, and I will tell you of the downfall of my hopes, the crumbling of my gorgeous air-castles. I told you, last October, of my love for Lady Blanche Russell. Oh! she *was* fair, wondrous fair, and her graceful majesty would have honored a queen. A vision of her superior loveliness sweeps before me now, but its dazzling glory has departed. I believe I could meet this proud, cold-hearted, beautiful woman to-day, with the dignified reserve and cool self-possession which becometh a man.

“If she had not been false as fair, I could not so soon record the history of our acquaintance with a firm, untrembling hand.

“Sir Gardiner and his daughter remained in Heidelberg until the first of December, and then left for England. I had been the constant attendant of Lady Blanche, when her father’s illness detained him at home, for more than three months, and about half that time her accepted lover, though I had never asked the baronet’s consent in form, but took it for granted that he sanctioned our engagement, because he treated me so cordially, and apparently smiled benignantly upon my devotion to Lady Blanche.

“I must have been an infatuated, moon-struck apology for a man, or I should have detected in the father’s manner only polite affability, and in the daughter’s love *only* worship for her queenly self, and cruel pleasure in securing another captive.

“Doubtless she might have taken pride in showing me the culture and polish of her strong, masculine intellect, and liked the novelty of having its powers drawn forth by one whom she considered her equal in mental attainments. Sometimes, Madge, I am pleased to think there was a softer, more feminine emotion which induced her to hold me a willing captive so long, but which was finally conquered by her English pride and love of nobility, title, and wealth. I frankly told her that I was dependent upon my professorship for a livelihood, and that, perhaps, I might inherit a few paltry thousands from my mother. She more than hinted that intellect, and perfect congeniality of mind and heart, were more highly prized by herself than rank and money, and I believed her generous, noble, and loving.

“Thus she left me. But now comes the sequel of this delusive dream. For two short months we exchanged weekly letters, more like essays and criticisms upon our favorite authors, than like the spontaneous gushings of that language which is indigenous to the heart; though my pen oftentimes escaped from its trammels, and painted in truthful colors the deep, sincere love that would have rejoiced in making any sacrifice for her happiness.

“Last February, I wrote to Sir Gardiner, asking the hand of Lady Blanche, and mentioning June as the delight-

ful month in which I would like to show my peerless bride our fair republic. It seems strange to me now, but so perfect was my faith in his daughter's love, that I awaited his answer with the calmness of assurance. Then you can imagine how overwhelming was his studiously polite and chilling reply. His daughter, he wrote, was the heiress of half a million, descended from a long line of noble and titled ancestors, the only child of a baronet, and, whoever was honored with her love, would succeed to his name, title, and fortune, unless her chosen lord should chance to be of nobler birth than the lady. He had honored and respected my intellect and gentlemanly bearing, but begged leave to chide the presumption and characteristic American boldness which prompted a young man without wealth or title to seek the love of Lady Blanche.

“Then came a note from the daughter, with the baronet's coat of arms upon its seal. I remember how rudely I dashed the whole into the glowing embers on my hearth, when I had finished reading, with a hearty wish that I could see all titles and pride of birth melting like the baronet's insignia on the wax. Lady Blanche politely regretted that the pleasure she had taken in my society as a man of literary cultivation and refinement should have so far encouraged me, and craved pardon for having allowed me to speak of love. In an unguarded hour she had forgotten differences of rank, and had mistaken a pleasurable, intellectual interest in me, for a deeper emotion. Time had shown her (two short months, remember, Madge!) that this regard for me was only a bubble on the deep, unfathomable fountain in her heart, whose waters

had been stirred, since our parting in Germany, by a young nobleman, and that in the early spring their fortunes would be united.

“She referred to our long and pleasant walks on the sides of Kaiserstuhl, and said the memory of her short stay in Heidelberg would be always fragrant and sunny, thanked me for having contributed to its pleasures, and wished me future success.

“What next, after the burning of my letters, do you ask, Madge? Oh! for a few weeks all of the romance and beauty of life seemed faded, and the world was a great, interminable waste of sand and ashes. My Ararat became suddenly only a common elevation of land, and Heiligenberg lost its holiness; its summit was no nearer heaven than the tops of our own New England hills. But this resignation of my manhood to tears, and repining, and useless murmuring for the fickleness of Lady Blanche soon grew dull and monotonous; and receiving a letter, in March, from the trustees of Uptonville, desiring me to spend a year in Italy, and complete the translation of a valuable German work, while I was acquiring the Italian and Spanish languages, I bade farewell to sober, philosophical old Heidelberg, and this fine April day finds me in Florence. I shall spend some months in Rome and Venice before returning to America.

“Dear Madge, your truthful face, the deep, trusting light of your eyes, the refinement of your intellect, have been often in my thoughts of late; and I will not say how often your warmly sympathizing nature has risen up in contrast with the hauteur and coldness of Lady Blanche. I begin to

think I may have been mistaken in supposing my regard for you only fraternal; but I will make no avowal of a deeper love, until I can read in your face a true record of your heart's history. The changes of a year must elapse ere then, and I may come back to find you the wife of another. If such should be the will of Heaven, I will still solicit from you the love of a friend and sister.

“With earnest wishes for your happiness, I am always
your affectionate
MAURICE P. HARDY.”

Twice, three times must Margaret read this epistle before she could quite persuade herself that Maurice had really written it in his right mind. She had thought, with Mrs. Hardy, that the love of Maurice would be an honor to any woman, and never dreamed that want of title and fortune would be an impediment to his marrying any lady in England, not immediately connected with the royal family.

Maurice suffering, in want of sympathy, and that precious letter locked in her writing case, with its seal unbroken for nearly a year! Her foolish heart, that could not look at happiness through his eyes, would gladly have shared his sorrow; but the tears that flowed copiously on the first and second perusal of his letter, were brushed away on the third reading. Her eye had caught the full meaning of the last clauses, and a timid, trembling hope came softly tapping at the door of her heart, which gently yielded to the angel visitant. She lingered long over the contents of that writing case, caressed the poor, withered mementos of Birch Hill pleasures, and found the little ring no longer too heavy to be

worn. The dark cloud, which had so long hung over her, seemed suddenly to brighten and float away, revealing flecks of silver and gold. Ah, well did Margaret

“ Know how sublime a thing it is
To suffer, and be strong.”

Uncle Atherton thought she must have had a refreshing slumber, when she came down to go with him to Mrs. Stacy's, and even hinted that she was growing positively handsome. He did not know her “ beauty was the effect of soul.”



CHAPTER LIV.

CONCLUSION.

“ O sweet, pale Margaret !
O rare, pale Margaret !
What lit your eyes with tearful power,
Like moonlight on a falling shower ?”

“ What he said, indeed,
I fain would write it down here like the rest,
To keep it in my eyes, as in my ears,
The heart's sweet scripture, to be read at night
When weary, or at morning when afraid.”

AURORA LEIGH.

“ THE children of the very poor never prattle !”

Ah, Charles Lamb should have visited America, before writing *that* sentiment, and perhaps he might have qualified his broad assertion. He should have looked into the face of

little Ellen Stacy, as she danced with the sunbeams, sung with the breezes, and laughed with the flowers, and then have added this paragraph: "I did meet with a little fairy, once, in the most wretched abode of abject poverty, whose every motion was eloquent with graceful joy, whose voice was glad, happy music, and the sunshine of heaven gleamed in her deep blue eyes, and floated in her soft brown curls; but I sighed, while I gazed, for I knew the blight of poverty must soon hush her laughter, dim her eye, and sober her pace."

All this might have happened, for poverty has a heavily-crushing hand; but one, whose brave endeavors had lifted the heritage of tears from her own head and heart, rescued our little fairy Ellen from the curse. Margaret Foster did not sit down in listless content, when she had driven want from her own door, but her cheerful face carried sunshine and hope into many a wretched hovel and damp cellar. God's poor blessed her, and the feeble voice of age grew more husky when speaking of her self-denying goodness. Uncle Atherton said that 'twas her constant care and thought for others, that made everybody so delight in her; but little Ellen did not pause to think much about the charm that drew her to Margaret's side, when the music pupils were dismissed. She found great delight and satisfaction in the shelter of arms that always tenderly welcomed her; and the soft, pleasant voice that instructed, admonished, and blessed the child was never wearisome.

The summer days sped by, bearing gladness on their golden wings for Margaret; but, in the fulness of her joy,

she forgot not who had commissioned angels to remove the stones from her pathway, who had aided and inspired, and whose hand had upheld her in times of darkness, doubt, and temptation, but meekly and humbly, at the foot of the cross, she besought strength and grace for the hour of prosperity, and submission for adversity. Did music, books, deeds of charity, and love for Uncle Atherton and little Nell fill every channel of her heart?

Would the kind friend, who has read the simple record of our Margaret's struggles, lay down the history of her noble endeavors and brave conquest with less of interest, if the writer should draw the curtain now, simply assuring them that she still lives, a useful, loved, honored, and therefore happy woman? Is it not enough to know that beauty and verdure spring up around her, that matrons and maidens grow gentler and stronger, manhood purer and nobler, in her presence, while little children look up with trusting gladness into eyes that are always beaming warmly, because the frosts of time are not allowed to gather on her heart?

The utilitarian, moralist, and sage may pause here, while our Madge extends her hand, warmly thanking them for their sympathy, and begging them earnestly to aid her in "levelling up" humanity, and never to weary in well-doing. And those who long to know if the love of her gentle heart found no answering echo, and her head rested not against the refuge which God made for woman, are kindly invited to walk with me into the parlor of her little cottage in this summer twilight.

Uncle Atherton has gone into the outskirts of the city to

see a poor German family who are suffering from disease and poverty, while Mary Johnson, the firm, faithful friend of seven years, has gone to her father's family for the summer vacation, no longer young in years, but with eternal youth in her heart.

Little Nell, who promises to be as gentle, pure, and good as Charles Dickens' inimitable angel without wings that bore this name, has kissed her new mamma good night, and now Margaret is alone. Let us look at her a moment, as she stands by the open window, dallying with the honeysuckle before she draws down the blinds, for we are about bidding her good-by for a long time; and, when we meet her again, there may be threads of silver braided with the dark, wavy masses of her hair, and disease may have dimmed the glorious brilliancy of her eyes. We find the soft folds of her white muslin, which she wears often to please Uncle Ather-ton, in harmony with her pure face and graceful figure. Some of you might call her too brown, and some too pale, and others would say her forehead, nose, and chin were far from faultless; but when she turns the full light of her eye toward you, and you see the different shades of expression on her truthful face, you will forget to criticize.

Her hair is much too heavy and abundant for the comb that partly confines it, and, when the dignity of the music teacher is laid aside, Margaret loves the gentle caress of the curls upon her neck and shoulders, and our little bound girl no longer fears Mrs. Hardy's scissors. She turns from the window, and seats herself at the piano. Perhaps she may be wondering whether the old friend who passed through Hay-

den yesterday, on his way to Clyde, likes music of the heart or of her head, and hesitates in making a choice between the simple and sublime. And then, again, she asks herself what possible difference it can make to Margaret Foster what kind of music Professor Hardy admires; and, while her fingers are running mechanically over the keys, her thoughts are not with the grand old masters of music, but pondering, over and over again, the events of yesterday. She thought it strange that Uncle Atherton, generally so frank and communicative, should be so reserved and mysterious about the visit of Mr. Hardy; and it seemed a pity that this visit should have occurred when she was taking a holiday at the country seat of one of her patrons.

Uncle Atherton said that his guest was directly from Preston, which city he had visited on his way from New York to Clyde, for the purpose of finding them, and that he had arrived in America only the day before yesterday. Mr. Hardy might return to Hayden in the course of a week or ten days, but more than this she could not gather, though her uncle seemed well pleased with his visitor.

There was pleasure in knowing that her old friend had thought of her so soon after his feet touched American soil, and this pleasure began to manifest itself in the style of her performance. The notes she drew from her instrument were no longer low and dreamy, like the rippling of a lazy brook, but a thanksgiving anthem; the twitter of swallows, and her favorite robin's song, gushed from the keys, and floated in joyous strains through the cottage. Margaret's heart is full of music now, and she does not hear Sally's voice at the

door, bidding a tall man, whose face is familiar with Italian sunshine, walk into the parlor; she does not hear the opening nor the closing door, nor the step that approaches; and when a hand is laid upon her head, she does not move nor turn, for Uncle Atherton often comes quietly to her side, when she is playing, and rests his hand gently upon her head, as if invoking a blessing; but the music grows softer, and she speaks, without removing her fingers or her eyes from the keyboard.

“You are back early, uncle. Is the German woman any better?”

She waited for an answer, and then turned to see what made Uncle Atherton silent. Surely the sight of his dear, familiar face would never have dyed her cheeks and neck so deep a crimson, and sent the warm color back again so quickly—would never have caused her frightened exit from the music stool; and her uncle’s voice never called her “Madge!”

Only that one word fell upon her ear, and only one did her trembling voice give in reply—“Maurice!”

Professor Hardy drew her to a seat on the sofa, and, holding both her hands so that she could not conceal from him the dewy welcome that flowed from her eyes, gazed intently at the fitful, varying shades upon her face.

“I read nothing but welcome in your face, Madge; no unkindness. Is there no look of reproach for your old friend?”

“Oh! Maurice, you could have expected only welcome from me.”

"Tell me there is no shadow of resentment in your heart; I'm not satisfied with the welcome in your face."

"It is a faithful mirror of my heart."

"Then I'm well pleased, and the fears, doubts, and anxieties of the past year are vanishing, while the feeble rays of hope are growing stronger and brighter. But your uncle told me, yesterday, that you thought I had forgotten you, and that, in some way, I had caused you intense suffering. Was he right, Madge?"

"You were always kind to me; but, months ago, I thought——"

"I'm waiting to know what Madge thought."

"I had no right to expect you would remember me, when love for a noble and beautiful woman occupied your thoughts."

"You are thinking of Lady Blanche. Her name slips from my tongue like any other word. Now look in my face, Madge, and see if you can read there any lingering, regretful emotion."

Margaret was formerly in the habit of obeying her teacher, but now, instead of looking up, she bent her eyes most steadfastly upon the carpet.

"She was a diamond, Madge—this Lady Blanche—beautiful, but cold; sparkling and radiant, but without warmth; shining, but sharp. When I would have worn this diamond upon my heart, and placed it in a setting of pure, honest love, I found it too costly for my purse. It must be purchased with gold, ornamented with a title, and worn at courts. My republican heart would soon have wearied of the cold and

dazzling brilliancy of such an ornament, if I had secured it. But, Madge, I sometimes thought it strange that Lady Blanche, with all her fascinating power over me, could not displace from a secret niche in my heart the little maiden whom I called sister. It was not till after the impetuous, passionate, evanescent love for the titled lady had passed away, that I knew my own life would have been dreary and desolate, even with Blanche Russell, if little Madge could not have been sheltered and protected by a dearer love than I should have had any right to bestow. Do not withdraw from me, or turn away now, but, after you have heard what I am going to say, you may send me away, if you choose.

“Madge, I know now that it was many years ago, even before I went South, that I looked upon my mother’s bound girl with deeper emotion than pity, or brotherly interest. I remember when she ran toward me, and sprang to my arms, and with what strange delight I held her to my heart the morning I started for Uptonville. I remember, four years ago, how her ways pleased me, and her voice filled my soul with low, soft music, that has ever since floated there, even when the musical tones of Lady Blanche were ringing in my ears. But I mistook, for a long time, the deep, quiet happiness which Madge gave me, for a brother’s love, and not until her letters ceased coming, and I longed for her sympathy and kind affection, did I know that in the secret recesses of my heart I had long loved her with a holier feeling than had ever been given to Lady Blanche. Will you turn from me now, Madge, and send me away with a heart blank and hopeless? You once turned toward me confidently, and

looked in my face with trust; have I forfeited all claim to your confidence, Madge?"

"Oh! I have perfect faith in your kindness and generosity!"

"Nothing more, Madge?"

"What would you have me say?"

Maurice should have been satisfied with her low, trembling tones, and the tears that dropped upon his hands, but he selfishly craved something more.

"Say what your heart dictates, when I ask if you find in it only sisterly regard for me?"

"I love you, Maurice, more than all the world besides."

"Spoken like my own truthful Madge! Now let me read it in your eyes."

They were upraised to his for a moment, but one glance sufficed him, and he drew her head where he told her it should rest for life! Poor Madge no longer, but rich, happy Madge, has found a refuge which she would not exchange for a crown. The bitter memories of past desolation are all washed from her heart by the warm, grateful tears of the present.

"I had a long talk with Dr. Atherton about you, yesterday. Shall I tell you what he said, Madge?"

"I do not care to know; it was nothing that could increase my gladness now!"

"But the knowledge of it increases mine."

"Tell me, then."

"He said, in his opinion, you had loved me from childhood, and——"

"He had no right to tell you so!"

"Had he no ground for his belief, Madge?"

"I should like to know!—did he tell you?"

"He says that my Madge has had petitioners for her love, who have gone away empty-handed, and that only last winter a most worthy and excellent young man——"

"That will do, Maurice. Men jump at conclusions, and draw inferences with astonishing quickness and accuracy."

"Why didn't you marry Willis Clifford?"

"Because I had no heart to give him; it had been gone from me a long time."

"How long, Madge? You see, I have so long craved food of this kind, that I am not easily satisfied."

"Ever since I can remember."

"Madge, will the tender, watchful, and abiding love of my heart atone for the sufferings of your early years?"

"I count all trials, sorrows, hardships, and struggles sweet, which are crowned with the blessing of your love."

"And the memory of my mother rouses no resentment in your heart?"

"I forgave her years ago. I could almost love her now, for your sake."

"Bless you, my own Madge! They told me, in Clyde, that you closed her eyes, and smoothed back her hair, dropping tears of pity upon her gray locks; and I thanked God that hands so dear to me had performed these last sad offices. Can you tell me anything pleasant about her last hours?"

"She talked much about you."

"But her ruling passion was strong in death. She had

no peace in believing, no confidence in Christ's power to save. Was it so, Madge?"

Margaret could not answer. The horrors of that death-bed scene were still fresh in her memory, and she covered her face with both hands, as if to conceal a terrible vision.

"I can only solace myself with the thought that God is merciful and tender in His Justice. His ways are past finding out. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? Madge, I cannot let you weep to-night, though your drops of pity are precious and soothing to me. Raise your head now, for I have not told you all that Uncle Atherton said."

"You must not mind all he says about me."

"No; but when he said I might take his niece away this autumn, if I could gain her consent, I thought I should mind him. Will you go to Uptonville, in October, with me, Madge?"

"Dear Uncle Atherton!—who will care for him?"

"Shall I go alone, Madge?"

"And little Nell loves me, and is learning to be so good——"

"Must I go without you, Madge?"

"Oh, no, no! But little Nell?"

"She shall not leave her kind benefactress. But you must allow me to share the pleasure of teaching her to be like yourself."

"Not like me, Maurice, but vastly more good and noble. You must teach me to be better and wiser, and we'll both teach little Nell. You shall be my guiding star, and your love shall make me strong for every duty."

“And in that stillness, calm and holy, which most becomes a woman, thou shalt sit by the fireside of my heart, feeding its flame. Love for God, for each other, and for humanity, shall be our buckler and strong wall of defence. We shall lack nothing, having that charity which suffereth long, and is kind. And, Madge, allow me to quote from our favorite author :

“Beloved, let us love so well,
Our work shall still be better for our love,
And still our love be sweeter for our work,
And both commended, for the sake of each,
By all true lovers and true workers born.”

THE END.

