The
ALBATROSS
NOVELS

AN ORIGINAL SINNER

ALBERT ROSS

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BY ALBERT ROSS.

AUTHOR OF

"THY NEIGHBOR'S WIFE," "IN STELLA'S SHADOW,
"WHY I'M SINGLE," "THOU SHALT NOT,"
"HIS PRIVATE CHARACTER," ETC.

"The eternal error!" he mused. "The cardinal mistake. No man knows himself. No woman knows herself. A word, a touch, a look, and the angel becomes a demon."—Page 133.

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TO MY READERS.

Perhaps the strongest criticism that could be brought against this story is that it is improbable. To that charge I am willing in advance to plead guilty. A similar idea, without the least pretence of probability, which has been worked out by one of the masters of English fiction, stands easily among the first half dozen great books that have seen the light in this generation. The tale *I* tell *could* have happened and his could not ; but the lesson I desire to teach will be no less apparent should you guess my chief secret and think you could have done as much had you been associated with the brothers Morley. The inadvisability of saying more on this head will be better appreciated when the final pages are finished.

There are still ghouls who assail each novel of mine without reading a line of it, though most of the notices which come to me tell a different tale. One writer gravely announces that "Thy Neighbor's Wife" is "not as bad as its boastful preface would seem to indicate." Let those of you who have a copy handy read that preface again, and see if you can find a word that justifies this slander. Another, signing a woman's name, declares that the same novel is morally worse—just think of it!—than "even 'Speaking of Ellen.'" Has she ever opened

the covers of that story of a pure, high-souled working-girl, that the noblest modern apostle of reform wrote me he hoped a hundred thousand beside himself would read? The 80,000 people who have already purchased the novel, and the hundreds of thousands who have read it, can give the right name to that kind of "criticism."

My thanks are due to the press for a thousand kind words during the past year. An occasional exception like those mentioned only make the contrast the greater.

Last winter I spent pleasurably in Florida, Louisiana, other parts of the South and the great Republic beyond. Everywhere I was importuned to locate a novel in that section, and some day I may do so. At present my plans are too far developed in other directions. The kindness I met and the numerous testimonies to the popularity of my works—which I found alike in the gorgeous hotels of St. Augustine and the mining camps of Mexico—I shall never forget.

Once more I must express my appreciation of the flattering communications of my numerous correspondents, to whom, as well as to all my other readers, in this centennial year, I wish health and happiness.

ALBERT ROSS.

Cambridge, Mass.,
May, 1893.

AN ORIGINAL SINNER.

CHAPTER I.

DESIGNED FOR THE MINISTRY.

As he entered the village church, every eye in the congregation was raised. Pale to such a degree that one who did not know him might have suspected serious illness, with restless dark eyes accentuated by the pallor that surrounded them, with clean shaven face and hair combed back on both sides, Clyde Morley always attracted attention, and to-day there was a new reason why he should be the observed of all observers. Everybody knew that he had decided to go on a long journey—in search of health, it was said—and that this was probably the last Sunday he would be seen in Arcadie for many months.

They watched him enter the holy edifice, in company with his guardian, Rev. Dr. Welsh, the pastor; and as the pair walked slowly down the broad aisle it came into many minds that some day *Reverend Mr. Morley* would ascend that pulpit. The aged minister was hardly more saintly in their eyes that this young

man, now not over twenty-three, who had been brought up after his parents' deaths under the immediate eye of the good Doctor.

Mr. Morley took his seat in his pew, bending his head devoutly in silent prayer. The clergyman gave out the opening hymn, and when it was finished announced his text.

Perhaps no sermon delivered in that church had ever received less attention. It was only when a veiled reference was made to the prospective departure of the young man who was in the thoughts of all that a temporary interest in the discourse was excited. They had known him from a boy, and had watched him as he grew older, feeling that he was something above themselves, almost above the earth on which he trod. He had talked little religion to them, but his life had seemed a perpetual light. The boys always thought of him when the minister discoursed of the youth of Jesus; the old men raised their hats to him instinctively; the matrons half believed that virtue exuded from his garments.

No young woman of marriageable age ever included Mr. Morley in her dreams of matrimony. Those who gathered at the Judean sepulchre would as soon have thought of marriage with the angel who rolled away the stone on that first Easter morning.

He had never been backward in the church meetings. No other prayer seemed so simple, unaffected and yet so powerful. But he had done more than speak and pray. He had been known to gather a crop for a poor widow, stopping on the way home to show a group of boys how to play a scientific game of ball. No one would be likely to forget the time when he risked his life to save a pet dog belonging

to a little fellow in his Sunday-school class, that had fallen into the millstream ; nor how, when the scarlet fever raged, and it was impossible to hire experienced nurses, he left college to come home and spend six weeks caring for the more violent cases in the improvised hospital.

"Others *talk* about Christ, but he *lives* him," was the expression of a woman whom he had more than once befriended.

When he was asked if he intended to devote his life to preaching the gospel, Morley sometimes answered, humbly, "Yes, if I ever grow to think myself worthy."

The inquirers went their ways impressed with his sincerity, though not in the least understanding him. If *he* was not fit to preach, they wondered who could be.

Dr. Welsh had many a talk with him upon the subject.

"You underrate yourself," he said. "You ought to proceed at once to finish your divinity course. A great work is open to you. The harvest is plenty and the laborers far too few."

Then Morley shook his head doubtfully, as he replied :

"No man has a right to set himself up as a teacher until his own life is secure. He should live down every temptation before he undertakes such a lofty mission."

The good clergyman smiled amiably.

"One would be more than human if he were never tempted," he answered. "Don't imagine that we of the pulpit are created of different clay from our congregations. On the contrary, it is because we are accustomed to the same tendencies that we are able

to advise and instruct them. We are told that the greatest One who ever bore our likeness was 'tempted in all points like as we are.'"

Morley answered in a very low voice:

"But we are not told that he yielded."

"No, my son, and neither will you."

It was impossible for Dr. Welsh to connect "his boy" with anything like a real transgression.

"How can we tell?" was the reply. "'Let him that standeth take heed,' saith the Scripture. I want to go away awhile and mix with the world. A teacher does well to attend the school from which his pupils are to come."

Dr. Welsh did not fully approve of this idea, but he saw that Clyde was set on it and that it was not wise to object too much. He only thought of the time that would be lost before getting to work in the Master's vineyard, for he felt that this young man would be safe anywhere. His spiritual nature shone from his clear forehead. Clyde would never be one to eat meat or drink wine if thereby he caused his brother to offend.

"Go, my dear boy," he said, feelingly, "but be not absent too long. Every day is so much taken from the work you are called to do."

Morley looked at his guardian affectionately.

"How certain you seem to be of what my duty is," he said. "Perhaps some other field may yet seem wiser for me to follow. I feel that the pulpit is not a thing to decide upon without full consideration. Many enter that sacred profession who are unfitted for it, to the great scandal of religion. How frequently we read of councils called to sit in judgment on ministers accused of immoralities. To be

sure they are often acquitted, for which we should thank God; but the ideal pastor is one against whom no breath of suspicion could lodge. Leave this matter to me, for no one else can decide it so well. I will write to you frequently and let you know how I am progressing."

It was a grief to the minister to think of even a possibility of his ward's giving up the profession for which he had done so much to fit him, but he believed it would come about all right yet. Clyde only wanted a chance to debate the matter fully in his own mind. He was to take his books with him and devote a portion of each day to study. Surely the Holy Spirit would guide him aright. The doctor had great faith and he tried to rest content.

On the Sunday in question, Mr. Morley spoke earnestly to his class, urging the boys not to be any less regular in attendance because he was absent. And at the close of his remarks he said some things which made them wonder.

"Truth is truth and right is right, whatever individuals may do to shame it. When I am far from you, remember only the best things you have known of me. Do not confound my actions with the precepts I have given you, should there ever come a time when I forget to live up to them. Let conscience be your guide, and you cannot go far wrong."

One of the boys suggested that the teacher had spoken as if he might never return to Arcadie; at which the tears came into his eyes and those of all the others.

"Life is uncertain at best," replied Morley, with emotion. "Every good-bye *may* be a final one. I hope that this will not prove so, but if it does—if it

does—remember that the sins of other men will be no excuse for yours. If you would be happy in this world and the next, you must always be upright and honorable, in every relation of life."

At the simple meal which Dr. Welch's puritanic ideas allowed him to have served on Suuday, little was said either by him or Mr. Morley. The heart of the clergyman was heavy. He loved this youth as well as if his own blood flowed in his veins. He had taken him to fill a vacant place in his house, when a little son died in infancy. Living alone with a housekeeper, he had missed the bright face and cheerful voice during the long term that Clyde had passed in college at Amherst, and had looked forward with delight to the time when the study of Christian precepts would be carried on under his own supervision. Now, after a few months of this work, his pupil was to abandon it suddenly and go out into the world, with no definite time set for return—even with a partial intimation that he might never take it up again.

Morley could not confide to this man the reasons that actuated him in his decision. He felt that he must go, that he could not risk a longer delay. He hoped the fit would pass away and that he should come back content to obey the wishes of the one whom he loved like a father. But he could promise nothing. He could only leave that to the future, which seemed very uncertain to him.

When the dinner was ended he went to his chamber and sat down—to think. To think! Had he not thought enough, for the love of heaven! How could he accomplish anything by thinking more?

"Poor, dear, good old doctor!" he said to himself.

"He little knows what is raging in the soul of the young saint in whom he has such confidence. He little dreams that if I did not leave Arcadie I might bring a curse upon the place instead of a blessing. Yes, I must go and see what the world is like. I must go and find what there is in it that so delights and fascinates my brother—my brother Frank."

Strange as it may seem, a smile came into the pale face as this name was uttered. But it faded in a moment as other thoughts followed.

"Were ever twin brothers so little alike!" he demanded. "How can it be, born of one mother in the self-same hour, that one of them listens only to the voice of God and the other hearkens continually to the deceits of earth? How is it that one only hopes to prove his worthiness to preach religion till his hair is gray and his step faltering, asking no higher reward than the consciousness of duty well performed, while the other thinks present joy the full complement of supreme existence, and even doubts if there be intelligent life beyond it? Why has one lived as safe from the allurements of sin as a vestal virgin, while the other walks in a worldly path with thoughtless steps. And these men are brothers—twin brothers—who ought to be as much alike in soul as they are in feature. Ah, Frank, Frank! I know not whether I love or hate you most!"

The smile came again, in strange contradiction of the words spoken, and then the saddest expression of all followed. The face of the thinker was buried in his hands as if he would hide something that he could not bear to contemplate.

"What is the matter with me!" he exclaimed, nervously, when he looked up again. "I have been

well taught. From a baby I have been pointed out as a model of goodness. I have been guarded from all evil company. Good Dr. Welsh crammed me full of commentaries as regularly as he gave me oatmeal, during my entire boyhood.

"I was not three feet high when I learned that I was destined to be a clergyman. I was the prize scholar in the Sunday-school when I was seven. Even then the other little fellows changed the subjects of their conversation when I came among them at their play. If one of them wanted to swear he would substitute some milder expletive in deference to my presence. When I grew older the girls told me their troubles as freely as if I were a mother to every one of them. They gave me their sweetest smiles, but the nature of the smile has changed now. It is not the kind they give to other young men. There is a sort of 'Your reverence' in it. I wonder what some of them would say if they knew the things that sometimes creep into my head!"

Mr. Morley shivered. Several young maidens of the village were crossing the green field in front of the house at that moment, and he paused to look after them till they were out of sight.

"What right have I to watch them?" he muttered, relapsing into his reverie. "If I should speak a word of love to one, she would scream, stop her ears and fly, thinking me insane. Has it not always been so? When I went to Amherst, I was elected, without being consulted, president of the Y. M. C. A. of the college. I suppose the letter that I bore from Dr. Welsh did that. The professors treated me like some piece of rare porcelain, upon which the vulgar breath must not be permitted to blow. I was asked

to take charge of religious meetings oftener than any of my associates. I was treated not only by the faculty but by my classmates as a sort of superior being. I have read that there is sin in the life of a student. So far as my knowledge goes, that statement is a complete libel. No one would have had the hardihood to let anything of the kind come under *my* observation. I finished my four years and then began to study for a divinity course, here in this village of Arcadie, sleepy enough for the dreams of a poet. There is my life outlined. Is it any wonder, looking back over such an existence and feeling as I do, that I should ask, 'What ails me?'"

There was a desperate cadence in the voice, for these words were spoken aloud. At the end there was a pause, as if the speaker half expected some other voice would answer him.

"I think I know where the trouble began," he went on. "Tired of doing nothing but study, I offered myself in my second year for the sophomore crew, shocking my professors extremely. But I pulled a very good oar, and when we won the race the boys gave me a good share of the credit. I felt the strength of a giant and I knew we must win. I heard the boys talk about the strangeness of so religious a man entering a race, but I could not see that I had done any violence to my creed, by exercising the muscles of my arms and back. The next term I joined the college nine, and the students began to admit that prayer was not wholly incompatible with the ability to pitch a ball. During the next year, I spent a great deal of time in the gymnasium, and began to take lessons in fencing and boxing. That came near precipitating a col-

lision. One of the professors, who took a deep interest in my spiritual welfare, assured me that boxing was unchristian. He said we were told in the Bible to present the other cheek when struck, instead of studying how to get in a return blow in the most effective manner. Still, he did not reproach me when I found his daughter one dark night, on a lonely street, in the grasp of a ruffian, and broke his jawbone. After that, the professor held his peace about the sinfulness of such strong training as I was indulging in. And yet I know to-day that the good man was right all the time and that I was wrong."

Another bevy of girls were crossing the field and the student stopped to observe them as they climbed a stile.

"I was wrong," he repeated. "To have carried out my purpose of remaining a saint I never should have developed my body. Strengthening my muscles gave new power to my heart, which gorged itself with rivers of red blood and sent them out in every artery till they intoxicated my brain. The better animal I became the less fit was I to be what I had intended. I am five feet eleven, and weigh a hundred and eighty pounds—just forty more than I can carry off with safety. I have tried the most violent exercise, and my vitality has steadily increased instead of diminishing. I have ridden horseback, climbed hills, walked twenty miles a day, hoed potatoes, sawed wood. Result, more life, more blood than I know what to do with. Nobody suspects my trouble. They see that I am tall and muscular, but they also see that I am pale, and that tired rings are forming under my eyes. They call my look 'intel-

lectual,' and 'spiritual.' That men should live fifty years in this world and know no more than that! Am I unlike all the rest, and passing through an entirely novel succession of experiences? They talk of Original Sin. Can it be that I am an Original Sinner?"

Failing to find a reply to his numerous inquiries, either in his own mind or elsewhere, Mr. Morley rose from his seat by the window and went to his writing-desk, from which he took some sheets of paper and an envelope. Seating himself at the desk he dipped a pen in ink. As he began to write, the smile came back to his troubled face.

"I must write to Frank," he said, "to dear Frank, that twin brother, so like me in feature, so unlike me in everything else. I must tell him that I am going away from Arcadie, in search of change, on a vacation, the length of which is undetermined. It may be that I shall see Frank before I return, but for the present I must ask him to send my letters when he writes (he is such a bad correspondent), to the care of Mr. Leavitt, Nassau street, New York. But particularly is it my duty to warn Frank in this epistle against the snares in the world where he abides, and which he knows much more of, no doubt, than I can tell him. Of course he would not actually do wrong things—really wicked ones—this twin brother of mine; but, nevertheless, his course keeps him in constant peril."

There seemed nothing in that soliloquy to justify the continued presence of a smile on the face of Mr. Morley, but truth compels the author of this book to say that it still rested there. As the reader will not meet him again for many days when he exhibits

anything but his customary sedateness, it may be well to note the exception to the rule. He dipped his pen again in the ink and went on with the letter, pausing at the end of each sentence to read it slowly. The entire composition occupied him for an hour and covered three sheets of common letter paper. When he had written, "Your Affectionate Brother," and affixed his name, he sat back in his chair and read the entire production again, weighing it carefully in his mind as he proceeded. Then he took an envelope and wrote this upon it:

Mr. Frank Morley,
Quincy House,
Boston, Mass.

The address seemed to have a special attraction for him, and he sat looking at it for some minutes without moving.

"Yes," he said, brightening, "Frank must still be stopping at the Quincy House. If he had changed his address, he surely would have told me."

He placed the letter in the envelope, stamped, sealed it, and put it in his pocket. Then he turned to the mirror above his mantel.

"Intellectual! Spiritual, is it!" he said to his reflection. "I could give it another name; but what does it matter? Muscles like iron, a heart beating like the great hammer of a mill, and pale enough for an invalid! I wish there was some evil to combat that only required physical strength. Macaulay tells of a bishop who threw off his cassock and donned jack-boots to fight James II. This face and frame of mine are at war, and the frame will win, if I don't

have a care. No, I don't mean that! I am still strong enough mentally to guard myself. A few months of change will make me all right, and then Clyde Morley, like Richard, will be himself again!"

He went to the post-office to put his letter in at the orifice in the door, bowing to all he met, but stopping to speak to none. And more than one woman remarked afterwards that she had never seen his face so like an angel's!

CHAPTER II.

THE BEST SHOD WOMAN IN BOSTON.

"There's the best shod woman in Boston!"

A loud laugh from the half dozen companions of Mr. Frank Morley greeted this statement. One of them, Mark Melton, a young medical student, did not join in the hilarity, but with the others it was universal. The party sat at the window of the Revere Club, situated near the corner of Tremont and Park streets. A young lady, who had just passed, in company with one more elderly, was the cause of the remark that convulsed the crowd.

"You wanted to know what interested me so in her, and I answered you honestly," continued Mr. Morley. "It's no small thing to find a woman as well shod as she. If you don't believe it, make a tour of the fashionable streets or the retail quarter and see for yourself. You will find plenty of expensive gowns, elegant hats, handsomely arranged

hair and pretty faces. But the boots—what are they, for the most part? Dowdy things, run over at the heel, marked and scarred by use, badly shaped, muddy if there has been a shower or a watering-cart along within half a day. Then, if this young lady comes by, you may note the difference. The dictionary does not contain adjectives enough to express the admirable character of her foot-gear. To see her after the others is like coming out of the hot parlor of a summer hotel upon the broad piazza that overlooks the sea."

The coterie, all but Melton, indulged in another laugh.

"Bah Jove! It takes Fwankie to makes compa-wisons!"

It was Charlie Wilkins who said this, an over-dressed young fellow who, had he lived at the present day, would have been called a dude. But this occurred long ago, when that word had not been coined, and about eight months, by-the-way, after Clyde Morley left the village of Arcadie.

Frank was a tall, handsome fellow, liked by everyone in the club, of which he was the soul and life. He was dressed in a business-looking suit of gray, with a bright cravat and a slouch hat, which he kept on his head, even inside the clubhouse. He had a rather long, drooping moustache, which he was in the habit of fondling considerably. He devoted a portion of each day to the reading of law at an office on Court street, but he never seemed pushed by his engagements, acting like one who knows the world is before him and means to take his time in dealing with it.

The Revere was not an aristocratic organization,

being composed for the most part of young fellows employed in the large wholesale houses. Its quarters were not expensive and its cuisine was limited. It afforded a meeting-place—one might almost say loafing-place—for its members at a moderate cost, and a lunch that was a little cheaper than it would have been outside. Frank, who could have afforded a much dearer club, had taken a great fancy to this one, being naturally of democratic tendencies, and he was found here nearly every day from twelve to two.

"This is not such a laughing matter as you seem to think," he went on to say, still maintaining his gravity amid the laughter of his associates. "To many women clothes are a religion. Let a girl's new hat fail to arrive Saturday night and ten to one she will be missed from church on Sunday. Let her discover that one of her chums has a newer cloak than she and you will find her strictly 'at home' until papa's purse remedies the deficiency. Most of them pay enough for boots to get better results than they do, but it requires positive genius to dress the feet as they should be. The young lady who passed just now would excite their envy, as she does my admiration, if they could see themselves with my eyes."

Mr. Wilkins raised himself languidly from the sofa on which he was reclining at nearly full length and adjusted his glass.

"Excuse me, de-ar boy," he drawled, "but how the de-vil do *you* know so much about it? You're not mar-wied and no one ever knew you to call on a gi-rl."

"Observation, Charlie," was the quick reply.

"Observation and listening to fellows better informed than I."

Between this question and answer the laughs of the party were repeated as before.

Silas Clarke, a reporter on the *Evening Sphere*, put in a word then.

"I can explain it, boys. Frank is so bashful that when he meets a girl he does not dare look at her face. His gaze seeks the sidewalk, and naturally enough he gets a good view of her feet."

Wilkins rang the bell at that and when the steward appeared, he inquired what the boys would have to drink. He declared that the last joke of Clarke's had made him thirsty—actually parched his throat, 'pon honor!

"You're not ex-actly wight, old fellow," said Charlie, when he had moistened his palate. "Clo-thes aren't *ev*-ewything to a woman, you know. There's some doocid fine pic-tures—and—and statues in the world without much cal-ico on them, bah Jove! Do you think We-nus would look any bet-ter if this gi-rl we just saw should lend her a pair of her sho-es?"

Even this witticism, which—more from the manner of its delivery than anything else, and the fact that all had so recently drunk at the author's expense—affected the others to suffocation, had no effect whatever on Morley.

"If you will substitute sandals for the shoes, and add a Grecian costume of the ancient days, in the interest of harmony," said he, "I certainly think any statue of Venus would find itself much improved by the addition. I would no sooner paint a nude female figure than a chicken minus its feathers. No such

figure can be as beautiful as one properly draped."

Wilkins was so much interested in this statement that he actually sat upright, a position which he assumed in the club-room very seldom indeed.

"That's awful twea-son to a-rt," he protested. "And this ti-me you can't even plead obser-wation, Fwankie."

"Why not?" demanded Morley. "I've seen paintings enough of both kinds, I should think, to form a fair judgment."

Silas Clarke came to the aid of Wilkins, in part payment for the bottle of beer he was consuming.

"We shall have to hold you to your assertion," he said. "You say that *no* nude female figure can be as beautiful as one draped. Now the question is, how can you tell? You don't pretend to have seen them *all?*"

Morley sat abstractedly for several seconds.

"Of course," he said, rousing himself, "I only meant to express my belief."

Wilkins heaved a comical sigh and began to draw into his throat the contents of a tumbler filled with julep.

"That's dif-fewent," he found time to say between swallows. "You don't believe there's a he-ll, but you can't prove there is-n't till you get the-re."

It took very little to excite the risibles of the club men, and most of them considered this worth another roar.

"I've a brother," replied Frank, soberly, "who could answer that question. "He's not only sure there is a hell, but he's positive I'm going to it."

"Oh, the pweacher?" interposed Wilkins. "Well,

just bwing him here and we'll knock that non-sense out of him."

Frank sat looking intently at the floor.

"I'm not able to say he's wrong," he replied. "He's studied the matter with a good deal of care, and he knows me pretty well."

A young man who was employed in a leather-house on High street protested vigorously against this sort of conversation.

"It's too damned warm to talk of such things to-day," said he. "Who wants to think of a hotter place when the thermometer in Boston registers 85 degrees? And that reminds me that it's time I started toward the office."

The rising of this youth served as a general signal for departure. Soon the room was emptied of all but Morley and Melton, if we except Charlie Wilkins, who had fallen sound asleep on a sofa, with his mouth open.

"I—I know the young lady of whom you were speaking a little while ago," said the medical student, nervously.

"The young lady!" repeated Frank, with a start. "I do not remember speaking of any young lady."

"Have you forgotten?" asked Melton, in a half-timid manner. "The one who passed with an elderly companion."

"Oh!" cried Morley. "I remember. But I was not speaking of her. I was only speaking of her boots."

Melton shrank a little, as if the allusion annoyed him.

"I know her father," he said. "He is Col. Horace

Fuller, a retired army officer, and lives in rooms on Shawmut avenue. You must have heard of him."

Morley was looking out of the window, preoccupied for the moment. He had just had his attention attracted to a lady remarkably well-dressed except in foot-gear, which was execrable.

"Y-e-s, I've heard of the Colonel, but I have never met him personally. How did you happen to?"

After examining the face of Charlie Wilkins to make sure he was still asleep, Melton replied, cautiously:

"My father knew him in the army. I was introduced one night at his club, and he invited me to call. She's a very nice girl, Miss Fuller."

"Her boots are certainly perfection."

Melton was evidently pained at the lightness of his companion's manner, but Frank was still gazing out of the window and did not notice it.

"She is a most lovely girl," continued the medical student. "So dutiful to her father, so mindful of his comfort. They are not rich and her clothes aren't as expensive as one would think. She evidently has the faculty of looking well on a little money."

Frank Morley could not give up the impression that had been made on his mind.

"Her boots must cost a mint," he replied, thoughtfully. "And her hosiery, too, for she always wears tints that match. You can't get those things for a song. This morning she had on low shoes with russet hose, all alike. I should have set her down as the daughter of some one in the shoe and stocking line. I have seen her frequently this summer, and it doesn't seem as if she ever wore the same boots or hosiery twice."

Melton blinked as many times during this sentence as if each word had been a flash of lightning.

"He has nothing but his half-pay, I am sure," he answered. "Their rooms are furnished plainly. I go there sometimes to play cribbage with him, of which he is very fond. He plays each game as if it was the deciding battle of a great war."

Frank had now turned around and was observing his friend with interest. It had just occurred to him that there was something more than common in the way Mark regarded the Colonel's daughter.

"The young lady has sat in the room with you sometimes, I suppose?" he said.

"Often."

"Then you should have observed enough to know whether I am right. Has she ever worn the same slippers—or stockings—on two different occasions?"

Melton flushed all over his earnest face.

"I have found her countenance too interesting to permit my gaze to rest elsewhere," he remarked with the least touch of asperity.

Morley shook his head, slowly but positively.

"A great mistake, Mark; a great mistake. There are a thousand pretty faces in Boston and only one pair of feet shod like those."

It was not easy to get angry at Frank. Mark reckoned him among his most particular friends.

"I think you would find, if you would call there with me," he said, with dignity, "that Miss Fuller's attractions do not begin and end below the hem of her gown."

Morley stretched his arms lazily above his head.

"You're very kind to propose it, Mark," he replied, "but I don't often get as near women as that. I

observe them at a respectful distance, in public places, on the street, or out of this window here ; but to walk right into their homes would be too much like bearding the lion in his den. It is one thing, you know, to watch the king of beasts from outside his bars, and quite another to open the door and enter."

The medical student could not repress a smile at the odd comparison.

"You would find, if you went there," he said, "that Col. Fuller would be more apt to take *you* for the dangerous beast to which you allude, and have a care that his pet lamb did not come too near your claws. He treats her exactly as if she was only a little girl, and she seems perfectly content that he should do so. She is the most retiring young lady I ever met. She sits in the room without ever speaking unless addressed, and then only in the briefest manner. She might be deaf and dumb for all the evidence she usually gives to the contrary."

Morley stretched himself again.

"It will be mighty dull for her husband, if she doesn't change," he ventured. "But, probably, when she's married she'll go to the opposite extreme."

Mark Melton sat upright in his chair.

"'Her husband?'" he repeated, hoarsely.

"Exactly. She doesn't intend to spend all her life with the half-pay officer, does she? You don't doubt she'll get married, sometime."

The other exhibited great confusion.

"Oh, certainly," he stammered.

Morley leaned over and rested his arms on the table.

"Miss Fuller will marry somebody—let us say *you*." (He ignored the spasmodic gesture with which the suggestion was received.) "Now, after wedlock has begun, will she remain as silent as she now is? That is a serious question. And if she talks, what sort of things will she say? We observed her enough to know that she's not intellectual—oh! don't think I mean to criticise her for that—it's a good thing. She's pretty—*you* say—and she's the best shod woman in Boston—*I* say—and what more could a reasonable man ask?"

A good many ideas were roaming through Mark's head as he listened to this speech, but he found that he could give utterance to none of them. It was strange that Frank should have guessed his secret so quickly, for he did not think he had said anything to reveal it. It was true he was in love—very much in love—with Miss Lettie Fuller, and he played games of cribbage with her father for the sole purpose of being near the object of his affection. He had never dared to hint the state of his feelings to the young lady, even by so much as a glance, and he had no reason to suppose that she suspected them. But he used to think that, perhaps, if he continued to be admitted to the house on his present footing, and if he was lucky enough some day to get a fair practice in medicine, it would not be impossible to muster sufficient courage to speak the necessary words and win that beautiful creature for his wife.

"I might as well admit that I like Miss Fuller very much," he stammered, "for you'll be sure to find it out. It's not every fellow that I'd ask to go there, but I'd like to have you know the Colonel. You're cynical, and a woman-hater, and given to odd expres-

sions, but I'm sure you'd do anything to help a friend."

The young disciple of Blackstone eyed his companion quizzically.

"You bring a heavy indictment against me," he smiled, "and I'm not ready to plead guilty to all of it. Am I cynical? I don't believe it. And a woman-hater? That is certainly news. I think, on the contrary, that I like the sex very well—always, be it understood, at a respectful distance. They are things to which that lends enchantment. Have you ever ridden out to the blue hills of Milton?"

Melton shook his head.

"Well, if you ever do, you'll find them much more impressive on the road than after your arrival. In my walks about this town I have almost fallen in love with many girls I've met. I am not insensible to beauty. I like color, pose, gait, style. But I always feel that a nearer view of my divinities would result in disillusion. I have noticed that the down comes off the peach with a very little handling; that the rose on the bush keeps its fragrance much longer than the one worn in a button-hole or placed in a vase. I have even felt like closing the apertures of hearing as I neared these creatures, lest the first words I heard from their lips might prick the beautiful bubble and scatter its prismatic glories into the atmosphere."

Mark sighed, as is the habit of lovers.

"Perhaps my sentiment toward Miss Fuller may be rudely crushed like your mythical bubble," he mused. "But I shall hope to the last. I am not a man to go through life alone. As soon as I feel justified in asking her, I mean to do so. In less than

a year I shall be authorized to put out my sign with 'M.D.' on it, and the patients will have to come."

Morley thought his friend the victim of a common complaint of youth who he would be much better off without. His own life was pointless enough, but he did not see how a partner that wore petticoats would improve it any. Still he liked Mark, and he said in a good-natured way that he would gladly call at the Colonel's with him and do anything he could to further his matrimonial aspirations.

"Thank you! Thank you! I knew you would!" exclaimed Melton, warmly. "And please don't say anything again, when the boys are here, about—about her—shoes."

"Or stockings? Certainly not. Or if I do, it shall be in the most dignified manner. I can't quite forget her position as the best shod woman in Boston."

Mark started to reply, but thought better of it, and went out upon the street with his friend. They parted at the corner of the Common, as their paths led in different directions at that hour.

Frank Morley strolled down to his law-office on Court street, in a brown study. This world was a great puzzle to him. He did not know, on the whole, as he liked it very well. He was really getting misanthropic.

For the rest of the afternoon, though his eyes rested on the page of the law book he was supposed to be reading, he thought only of delicate boots and tinted hosiery, and a fair girlish face with bright blue eyes.

CHAPTER III.

"I LIKE ALBERT ROSS AND OUIDA."

It did not need the partial eyes of a lover to find in Miss Lettie Fuller more than ordinary attractions. Though twenty years of age at the time when she is introduced to the reader, she had still that girlish form which Howells truly says is the divine right of the American girl. Slender and exquisitely moulded, she carried herself with perfect confidence and grace, and the judgment which she exhibited, is not the less remarkable when one remembers that she had been without a mother for many years. Her father appeared to have lost all regard for female society other than her own. Being left to her own tastes in the matter of dress, she garbed herself in the fashion that suited her, and as well as the sum placed at her disposal would permit. She did not spend, as Frank Morley had suggested, "vast sums" on her boots, nor on all of her clothing combined. But her money went a very long way.

The first thing that the average novel-reader wishes to know about his heroine is the color of her eyes and the tint of her hair. These particulars when given often convey very little information of her personality. There are blue eyes and blue eyes, there is blonde hair and blonde hair. Lettie Fuller's eyes were blue and her hair was light in color, but

neither quality was exhibited to a striking degree. No casual passer in the street would have paused and exclaimed: "What lovely eyes!" nor, "What magnificient hair!" They would, and frequently did say, "What a very pretty girl!" but if you had asked them in what her prettiness consisted, they might not have been able to answer you with particularity, after she had passed out of sight. Had they been able to spend five minutes in watching her unobserved they would have said, as a result of their inspection, that she dressed well; that her face was of the order called "sweet;" that her complexion was very pure indeed, and that her manners were beyond praise.

A beauty? Not exactly. A hundred girls that one might meet on Washington street, between Boylston and School, would be worth more to a portrait artist who wanted to put his work in the next exhibition. She would not have been available even to the fashion-plate engravers, for she cared little for the latest modes. But something that fascinated men she certainly was, though until that day when she passed the rooms of the Revere Club she had never seemed to know it.

Mr. Mark Melton, the young physician that was to be, had been the only male visitor that entered her father's abode on Shawmut avenue since she came home from boarding-school. Up to the time of his appearance her sole companions were Miss Bessie Bright, the niece of her landlady, a girl of about her own age, who made her home in the same house, and Mrs. Bright herself, one of whom usually went out with her when she was not accompanied by the Colonel. He had great confidence in Miss Bessie.

He belonged to a club of ex-officers of the army and navy, at which he passed a good deal of his time, and if the girls were together he was satisfied.

Young Melton's father had served in the volunteer service during the civil war, and had been slightly known to Col. Fuller at that time. A rebel bullet laid him low in the last days of the struggle. Happening to call at the Veteran Club one evening to see a member, Mark was introduced to Col. Fuller as a son of Maj. Melton of the 371st. No introduction could have made him more welcome to the old soldier, who talked with him for an hour about the battles in which he had participated with the lad's father, and then invited him with great cordiality to visit him at his home. Had Mark known at the time that one of the attractions of the home was a pretty daughter, he might have accepted the invitation sooner than he did. But he waited until he found a dull evening on his hands and then bethought himself of his promise.

"Col. Fuller is out at present, but Miss Fuller is in, if you would like to go up and wait," said the servant to him, in answer to his bell.

Mark had never heard of Miss Fuller, and had an idea at the moment that the title was probably borne by some antiquated old-maid sister of the Colonel's who lived with him. He, however, responded that he would go up. He ascended two flights of stairs and waited until the domestic rapped and brought Miss Lettie to the portal.

"A gentleman to see your father. He says he will wait."

The surprise of the visitor was so great that he stood stupidly for an instant at the threshold, before

availing himself of the courteous permission to enter, which the young lady gave him. Then he stepped into the little parlor, which was one of the three rooms that the Fullers occupied, and after giving his hat to the girl, took a chair near one of the windows.

"Was papa expecting you?" asked Lettie, for it was by no means an ordinary thing to have callers at the house.

"Perhaps not to-night," answered Mark, thinking already that he had never seen a sweeter looking girl. She was dressed all in white, something very becoming to her as it is to most women, and her hair was combed back and hanging in one long braid. "I met him at his club several weeks ago, and he invited me to come here when I should have an opportunity."

The girl's eyes filled with sudden intelligence.

"You must be Mr. Melton," she said.

"Yes," he replied, astonished that she should have guessed so accurately. And thereupon she told him that her father had expected him for a number of evenings, and had at last concluded that something must have called him away from the city. She said this with an air that put him quite at ease, and he soon found himself talking to her as if they had not met for the very first time in their lives a few minutes before.

"Papa thought a great deal of Maj. Melton," said the girl. "I think they saved each other's lives, or something of the kind. He will be glad you have come."

In answer to a question she said it might be an hour, perhaps even two, before her father would return, but that she hoped her guest would be able

to wait, no matter how late it was. Being wholly contented with the prospect of passing an evening in such pleasant company, Mark replied that he should certainly remain. The conversation drifted at random upon various subjects. In the next hour Mark learned how long the Fullers had lived in Boston, and where Miss Lettie had attended school, as well as many other things; while he told the girl considerable of his own life, including the fact that he was on his last year at the medical school and intended to set up practice as soon as he should graduate. As Mark was a highly proper young man he said nothing to which the most particular mother could have objected, and the impression that he made was, on the whole, a very good one.

"Will you allow me to look at the library?" he said, after the clock had struck nine. Receiving a pleasant affirmative he went over to the bookcase and began to scan the titles of the volumes. "Your father has good taste in his selections," he remarked, a moment later. "It would not be easy to get a better list into the same space."

Works on the art of war, military tactics, biography, history and science, with encyclopædias and a very few sets of standard fiction and poetry made up the two hundred volumes.

"Don't you think Guizot reads like a romance?" he asked, presently. "He seems to me a master of the art of telling things."

She met the enthusiastic look with a rather blank expression.

"I have not read him," she said, truthfully. "I never could get interested in history. I like novels better."

He was set considerably aback by this confession made in the most open manner. He had imagined, somehow, that the daughter of a colonel must have the highest tastes in the matter of reading. He began to fear that he had taken a too lofty tone with her all the evening.

"Novels *are* interesting," he stammered, looking along the shelves. "And there is much to be learned from them, also. Which of Scott's do you think best?"

He was sure she would say "Ivanhoe," and took out that volume, prepared to agree with her.

"I haven't read Scott," she replied, "except a little that they made us do at school. I like Albert Ross* and Ouida."

Mark did not know much about young girls, but he had a general notion that their reading was more carefully supervised than this. There was no harm in Albert Ross, of course, but of Ouida he had his doubts. He remembered to have read some of her books, in other years, that he did not think he would have given to his sister, if he had had one. Young Mr. Melton had old-fashioned notions on this sort of thing, quite behind that of the present age. However, he had only to look at the calm eyes of the young woman before him to feel sure that whatever harm there might be in such novels for some people there had been none for her. She told him of her favorite authors quite as if she thought he would approve them, and it was not for him to set up as a censor of her reading, on such brief acquaintance.

"I suppose you go to the theatre," he suggested, as he resumed his chair by the window.

* This is evidently a rank anachronism.—[Electrotyper.]

"Oh, yes! I go nearly every week."

"What do you think of Booth's Othello, as compared to M'Cullough's?"

Here at least was something on which they could find common ground, he fondly believed. But again he was doomed to disappointment.

"I can't bear tragedy. I don't appreciate Shakespeare, anyway. I did go to see Rignold as Henry V., but the "Julius Cæsar" with Barrett and Davenport tired me dreadfully. Everybody says they can't understand it," she added, in deference to the surprised look that he could not conceal, "but it's so. I want something lively."

Realizing all at once what a strange expression had come upon his face, Mark did his best to obliterate it. He asked incidentally whether Col. Fuller's views of the drama coincided with those of his daughter.

"Oh, papa never goes with me," she answered, pleasantly. "He thinks all the actors and actresses worth seeing died long ago. I go always to matinees, and Bessie—I should say my friend, Miss Bright, who lives in the house—usually accompanies me."

Melton was glad to hear of Miss Bright. He had imagined for a moment some masculine individual as Miss Fuller's escort, when she announced her father's objection to the modern drama.

"She likes those other plays better than I do," pursued Miss Lettie, feeling vaguely that her friend ought to be relieved from the stigma that evidently rested in the mind of this caller against her own theatrical tastes. "But she is a good girl to me, and when we go together she lets me select the places. Her aunt, our landlady, goes with her to see Booth and Barrett and that kind of thing, so she gets it all, eventually."

She smiled at this, and Mark smiled, too. He thought it would not be easy to criticise this young creature to her face, no matter how erroneous her ideas might seem to him. She was at least very pretty, and he was not disposed to demand too much of women. He would have liked to find her ready to discuss Guizot and Macaulay and Keats and Byron, but he was quite content to speak of minor matters with her, in the enforced absence of these. They went on to talk of Boston, and the harbor and suburbs, with which she was wholly familiar, and the clock struck again before her father came.

"I am sorry—most sorry, I assure you," were the first words with which the Colonel greeted him. "I have been doing nothing more interesting than to take a long ride on the street-cars, just to find the coolest possible place to spend the evening. I had almost given up expecting you, and feared you had gone away to spend the summer. How long have you been here?"

Melton replied that it must have been more than two hours, but he added gallantly that Miss Fuller had made the time pass so swiftly that it hardly seemed as if it could have been so long. Neither the Colonel nor his daughter gave the least sign that they noticed anything special in the answer, and for this Mark was immediately grateful. The words were hardly out of his mouth before he regretted them, as they did not sound at all as he thought they were going to.

"I hope you are not in a hurry now," said the Colonel, "because I want you to play me a hand at cribbage if you have the time. I never pay any attention to the time of night when I am at play

and I have frequently sat up till morning in my younger days. If you can stay and join me I shall be under obligations."

Melton answered that he would be pleased to remain for the purpose indicated. At the same time he wished inwardly that he could have been left alone an hour or two longer with the charming Miss Lettie. The cards were produced by the young lady, and the table arranged for the players. As soon as they had begun their play she wished them a pleasant good-night, going to her father's side and kissing him in a filial manner.

"Must you leave us?" asked Mark.

"Yes," her father replied for her. "I think it is best for girls to be early in bed. Don't you, Mr. Melton? You're going to be a doctor, and you ought to have some knowledge on that subject."

Miss Fuller was looking at him, as well as her father, awaiting his semi-professional reply, and Mark had an unpleasant fear that he was blushing.

"I suppose the old proverb of 'Early to bed and early to rise,' is still as good as it ever was," he replied, evasively. "But—I only think of that as applied to children."

Col. Fuller was arranging the cards, and for a second seemed lost in that occupation.

"To children?" he repeated. "Yes, that is the idea. I always send Lettie to bed by ten, if I am at home. Good-night, dear," he added, seeing that the girl was waiting. "Mr. Melton, it is your play."

Somewhat confused at having been made to appear as classifying this young lady with the infant-class, Melton met her eyes constrainedly, as she

bowed to him in parting. He found in her gaze the same extreme openness he had noticed hitherto, and felt the final word almost like a blow, as she said to him, "Good-night, *sir*." But when the door of the inner sanctuary had closed behind her, he thought what a dunce he was to lose his head completely over a girl he had never seen until that evening, and he picked up the cards that had been dealt to him and began to pay due attention to the game.

Col. Fuller was an expert player, and at first won everything from his young opponent. But Melton, finding the need of exerting all his skill, which was not inconsiderable, roused himself and succeeded in turning the scale so much that he kept nearly even with his antagonist. It was so seldom that the Colonel found a player who was anything like a fair match for him that his delight was great.

"By George, you can play!" he cried, as the young man won for the third time. "You get it straight from your father, the Major. On the night before the battle of Antietam we played till the cocks could be heard crowing in our commissary's department, and I came out only one game ahead. Can't you stay for another? It's not very late. Just one more, and then we'll postpone the rest till another evening."

Melton willingly remained for the other, which the Colonel won. Then he took his hat and was escorted to the front door by his host, everyone else in the house having long since retired to rest.

"So you're going to be a doctor, are you?" said the elder gentleman, on the door-step. "Well, you ought to make a good one. You've got a cool head. Let me know the next time you're coming, and don't

make it too far off, either. It must have been awful dull for you, waiting here two hours! I'm sorry I didn't know it, for I could have come home, just as well as not."

The young man did not join in this sentiment. Had it not been that his mind was full of the fair daughter of his host he was sure he could have won much oftener than he had at the card-table. Perhaps that would not have been judicious, however. He might have to ask this man a momentous question one day, and it would not do to begin by wounding his self-love.

Melton resolved that, no matter how often he played with Col. Fuller, he would always let him win the majority of the games. He had not much guile in him that night, but he had enough for that.

CHAPTER IV.

"SHE'S NOT LIKE OTHER GIRLS."

The games of cribbage had taken place with considerable frequency since that first night spoken of in the preceding chapter, up to the time when Mark Melton held the conversation with Frank Morley in the rooms of the Revere Club, but never in all that interval had Mark found another opportunity to speak with Miss Fuller alone. The Colonel was too fond of his game to risk missing the visits of his young companion, and he was always on hand when he arrived. Miss Lettie usually remained in the room, after arranging the cards and the table, until ten

o'clock, when she came to kiss her father and to bid him and his guest good-night. There was no chance to say anything to her except the most perfunctory things, and there was nothing to imply that she understood in the least the feelings she had aroused in the breast of the medical student.

Lettie appeared on all occasions the very dutiful daughter of a not over-attentive father, ready to obey his slightest nod and oblivious to all other men under the sun. Her garments were always of the type that had attracted the attention of those who knew her for the past three years. She seemed to Mark a bright ray of sunshine in the room, and he thought the gas lamps hardly furnished sufficient light for the game when she closed the door of her bed-room behind her.

There was no trouble in securing the consent of Col. Fuller to inviting Frank Morley for an evening's chat. The only stipulation was that it should not take the place of one of the regular evenings devoted to cribbage. And it turned out, when they were all together, that Col. Fuller had heard of the Morleys, and had a high opinion of them.

"Yes," he said, "I knew Winthrop Morley by reputation, years and years ago. And so he was your father! Well, well! Your mother is dead, you say. Are you the only child?"

"No," replied Morley. "There is one other, Clyde, who is going to be a clergyman, I think."

Miss Lettie was not visible. Frank wondered if she had been purposely spirited away on his account, and he made a facial inquiry of Melton to this effect.

"A clergyman!" echoed the Colonel. "It doesn't seem possible, in these times, that young men are

really entering that profession. It is like hearing of a woman learning to spin, with the view of following it for a livelihood. The church is not a modern institution. Hardly anybody believes in its authority. I had an idea that the ministers were gradually dying off, and that the whole thing would come to an end with this generation."

Frank laughed good-humoredly.

"I'd like to sit by and hear you tell that to Clyde," said he. "Why, religion is as real to him as the air he breathes. He turns to the Bible as we do in my profession to the books of common law, and his commentators are as sacred to him as Blackstone or Coke is to us."

The Colonel shifted in his chair.

"But it's damned nonsense!" he exclaimed, bluntly. "It's an old, played-out fable, the whole business. I'll sit down with him, and if he's amenable to reason I'll show him in half an hour that there's not a bit of truth from Genesis to Revelation. What's the use of putting those old manuscripts against the discoveries of modern science? When it's been proved beyond a doubt that this world was hundreds of centuries in growing, how can a man stand up in a pulpit and repeat the barbaric conceit of a six days' creation? Who that has studied astronomy even in a high school is going to believe that a planet was held suspended for hours without pursuing the revolutions that maintain the equilibrium of all the solar system? And if one story is false they all are. A discredited witness on one point wastes his time before any sensible jury."

"Oh, Clyde doesn't mind the Old Testament so much," explained Frank. "He says that's a second-

ary consideration. It's the Atonement that he lays all his stress on."

The military gentleman fairly snorted with disgust.

"The biggest yarn of the whole !" he replied. "I tell you nobody takes any stock in it in these days except old women and children. I am sorry, Mr. Morley, that a brother of as intelligent a young man as you should waste his life in trying to make people swallow absurdities. Here comes my daughter," he added, as the door opening into the hallway was pushed ajar. "Lettie, this is Mr. Frank Morley, a friend of Mr. Melton's."

The religious discussion gave way before the more pressing emergency, as both the young men rose to welcome Miss Fuller. The young lady bowed to each in the most unconstrained manner, and then spoke to her father about some errand that he had bade her attend to. Next she removed her hat, and sat down at a little distance from the group, evidently thinking that their personal interest in her was ended.

Col. Fuller had never realized that his daughter had grown out of her childhood. She was twenty years of age, but to him there was no difference between now and ten years ago. She had been taught as a little girl to remain quiet when others were present, and the same rule prevailed still. "Do not speak unless you are spoken to," was one of the earliest mottoes she remembered, and there had been no countermanding of the order. Miss Lettie lived under military discipline, and she never dreamed of mutiny.

Frank Morley had come to this house for the sole purpose of studying this girl, but he had no inten-

tion of attempting to "draw her out," too soon. He preferred to see her in her natural environment, knowing that he could judge her better thus. He had already seen that her father was a man of dogmatic temperament, and he suspected the nature of his rule over the daughter from the first. So he went on, leading the conversation from one thing to another, carefully watching Miss Lettie's face, from time to time, as opportunity served. And he did more —he let his glances fall upon the dainty gray slippers that she wore and the light gray hosiery that peeped out from under her chambray skirt.

"The best shod woman in Boston."

Yes, she was all that and more. The best shod woman in the world, according to his belief. And he fell to thinking that something had conspired to effect this result more than the mere art of the shoemaker. There was an exquisite little foot inside that boot, unless he was much mistaken. The arched instep of the leather must have its counterpart in flesh and blood beneath. Very tiny the feet must be that could find room in such little boots. She had the prettiest feet in Boston, as well as the taste to cover them in the most attractive manner.

To Frank Morley this was nothing less than high art. He could study the anatomy of a pretty foot with the same enthusiasm that another might have given to a seashell or a mountain flower. As Miss Lettie leaned back in her chair the young student did not neglect his opportunities.

He was a sort of amateur connoisseur in the matter of women, this quiet fellow, who was so little understood by the men who thought they knew him best. Between the sentences that he spoke that even-

ing—and the conversation never flagged—he was making mental calculations that referred wholly to the daughter of his host. He was taking a physical inventory of her.

"She weighs," he was saying to himself, "let me see—about a hundred and twenty pounds. Her height, as well as I can guess, is five feet two. Her proportions must be well nigh perfect, taken from the artistic standpoint. Decidedly, Melton might do much worse."

Then he regarded the book that she had in her hand, and which, while not reading, she was examining from time to time. The cover was of paper—not cloth—and its color was yellow. What is there about yellow that demoralizes the contents of any book? If Bulwer's novels were to be issued in yellow covers I think they would take on the quality that seems inseparable from that shade. When Morley saw the color of the cover he did not try to discover the title. He had glanced at the bookcase in the room, and at the centre table, and saw that some of the best things in literature were there. And she had selected a yellow novel!

However, this did not annoy him. He had ideas of his own about such things. He had meant it when he said to Melton at the club window: "She's not intellectual—that's a good thing." She must read, and the sort of story that is found between yellow covers would not be likely to spoil her beauty. He knew, though Oscar Wilde had not yet put the idea into words, that too much thought is apt to make deadly war on regularity of feature and clearness of complexion.

At the usual hour Miss Lettie rose with prompt-

ness to bid all good-night. There seemed something very strange in the manner with which she kissed her father before the others, just as a child of ten might have done, and Morley found in it a refreshing novelty. He closed his eyes for an instant as the girl's ripe lips touched the bronzed cheek of the old soldier, but he opened them again without attracting attention and gave her a dignified reply to her simple adieu. After she was gone he found that the time dragged slowly, for he had little interest in the things the Colonel was saying, and he was glad when the time came for departure.

"Come again, Mr. Morley," said Col. Fuller, at the door. "I shall always be glad to see you. I have known of your family for many years. Bring along the clergyman, too," he added, laughing grimly, "that I may cross swords with him."

"If he'll consent, I'll be glad to," smiled Frank. "As for myself, I assure you I shall not allow you to forget me."

As soon as they were around the corner Mark spoke.

"Well, how do you find Miss Fuller on nearer acquaintance?"

"Pretty and charming. Of course, I'd rather get the sound of her voice a little more. It is not quite enough to hear 'good-evening' and 'good-night.' But I'm sure she is very sweet and I'm almost disposed to envy you."

Mark Melton started.

"I need only your pity, not your envy," he said, as he caught the idea conveyed in his friend's remark. "I have never had a word in private with her since the first evening I called there, four months ago, and

if I had I don't know as I should be able to say anything. She's not like other girls, you can see that. Though she's certainly nineteen, in thought she's but a child. You notice the way she treats her father, and how he acts toward her. I fear it would strike both of them as preposterous if any man should talk of taking her away, and I don't believe I shall ever have the courage to try it."

Morley laughed; a low, gurgling laugh that he affected.

"If *I* wanted her," said he, "*I'd* find a way. You must pluck up heart, old man. Someone else will get her, if you don't."

Melton looked at him gratefully.

"I knew you wouldn't want her, Frank. Why is it you never *do* want a woman? Are you going to live all your life a bachelor?"

The other man grew more sober.

"I think that's the way the fates have marked it out," he said. "I wouldn't make a good husband. And it's not that I don't like women, as you seem to think. No, it's because I like them too well. I can't think of confining my attentions—even my eyesight—to any single one of the fascinating creatures. Now, you're quite different in your make-up. You'd marry that pretty piece of Dresden china there and never look at another bit of bric-á-brac, if you lived a century."

Melton bowed in cordial assent.

"Yes, I would," he said, gravely.

"Well, if you want her, you must have her," continued Morley, with an air of conviction. "The greatest pleasure of life is in wanting things and getting them. An appetite and something to eat are said by men of your profession to be the two great de-

siderata. Neither is very valuable if taken without the other. You want the Colonel's pretty daughter. I don't say it is a sensible desire, and I don't say it's not. The point in my mind is merely that you have the want and must gratify it. We will sit down together to-morrow, and get up a plan to move immediately upon her intrenchments. They will be guarded by her military papa, well versed, as one might suppose, in the science of defense, but we will carry them, nevertheless."

The student looked up gratefully.

"You are very kind, Frank. You have put courage into my heart. But let us not wait until to-morrow. Give me some idea now that will send me to my room with new hope."

It was a very serious matter to him, and the good-nature of his companion was affected instantly.

"Well, my boy, let us see. The main thing is a beginning. Now, is it wiser to win the heart of the girl, and try to get the father's consent afterwards, or to train all our guns upon the colonel and trust to Miss Lettie's obeying him, as she is evidently in the habit of doing without protest."

"I would never marry her unless she had learned to care for me," said Melton, earnestly. "We should have to wait a long time, I fear, at the best. I cannot think of a wife until I begin to do something at my profession, say in two years or so. All I hope for now is to gain a sort of foothold—to let her understand my sentiments. I am willing to endure delay, but I want something to encourage me."

Morley bowed with satisfaction.

"In that case some way must be devised of getting the idea into the girl's head that you care for her.

That will make it safe for you to wait, when she has begun to reciprocate, you know. As for the pater, he likes you already. Keep up your cribbage and you'll have him solid. When the final crash comes, offer him a corner in your mansion where he and you can keep on with the cards. Now, how can we get into communication with Miss Lettie? I have a plan. What's the name of the girl you told me she chums with? Bright, Bessie Bright, that's it. I will get acquainted with Bessie."

He looked so confident that he had hit on a feasible scheme that Melton hesitated before he asked him how he was going to manage it.

"I don't exactly know, myself," replied Frank, with another laugh. "Probably, I shall have to take a room there. I haven't the bashfulness with which you credit me, and if I want to get on speaking terms with anyone it doesn't take long to accomplish it. I will ask my friend Bessie—"

"Your friend?"

"My friend that is to be."

"Oh!"

"I will ask her all about Miss Fuller, and her habits of going and coming, and the first you know, we shall all meet—accidentally—and you will have the opportunity to begin your suit. Then I shall be able, from time to time, to give you a lift by sounding your praises, which I can surely do with a good conscience. She—Bessie—will repeat what I tell her to Miss Lettie, and the seed will begin to take root."

Melton was cheered by these expressions, for they showed that Frank was disposed to aid him, and he wanted his help very much. The friends parted at

the corner of Tremont street and West Chester Park, agreeing to meet on the following day at the Revere Club.

Morley felt that his reputation as a prophet depended on his carrying out the plan which he had outlined to Mark, and on the second day after the suggestion he rang the bell at the house on Shawmut avenue, and inquired for Miss Bessie Bright. When that young lady appeared, he begged pardon for troubling her, mentioned the names of the Fullers as slight acquaintances of his, and asked whether there were any vacant lodgings to let.

There were not, to his relief, for he did not want to establish himself on the premises, if he could help it. But he managed to prolong his stay for fifteen or twenty minutes, and to make himself agreeable to the young lady during that time. He spoke of intending to call on the Colonel, but was informed that the gentleman had gone out some minutes earlier, a fact of which he was very well aware, having waited in the vicinity till this occurred before he presented himself.

"Miss Lettie is in," said Bessie, glad to impart any information to so polite a young man. "And if you like I will tell her that you are here."

"Oh, no," said he, lightly. "I could not think of troubling you. I can call at any time. However," —he hesitated—"if she likes to come down here a moment just to receive my regrets at missing her father—"

Bessie said she would call her, and retired to do so. Presently the girls returned together, and Lettie recognized Mr. Morley with a pleased smile.

Then there seemed sufficient excuse for ten min-

utes more of casual talk, and feeling that she was in a manner introduced now to this agreeable stranger, Miss Bessie thought she would be glad to meet him again. She said perhaps one of the rooms would be vacant in the course of a few weeks, as a lodger talked of moving; and Frank said he should certainly call to ascertain.

In the presence of her friend, Miss Lettie remained nearly as taciturn as in that of her father, but Miss Bessie talked freely enough to make up for it. She was a typical New England girl, afraid of nothing under heaven, and vivacious to a degree.

Upon the strength of Bessie's invitation Frank Morley came to the house several times during the next month, always when the Colonel happened to be out. And thinking it more proper than to be alone with him, Miss Bright usually went up to get Lettie to join the party.

Frank was certainly making rapid progress—in the interest of his friend.

CHAPTER V.

THE LAWS OF HEREDITY.

The humorist as well as the chief cynic of the Revere Club was Silas Clarke, the tall, lanky fellow attached to the staff of the *Evening Sphere*. A good deal of his wit was at the expense of Charlie Wilkins, though there was a sort of friendship between the two men, quite at variance with their extremely

opposite natures and circumstances. Wilkins, who had inherited money, was provided abundantly with the necessary funds to make life comfortable. Clarke found his twenty dollars a week pretty short commons. Wilkins was always dressed in the height of fashion, if not beyond it. Clarke's clothes wore the appearance of having been made a long time ago for some other man. Wilkins, while by no means a fool, was an easy butt for those of his acquaintances who wanted to amuse themselves. Clarke was suspicious of pitfalls and seldom caught napping. If Clarke was short of money towards the latter end of a week—and he usually was—Wilkins was always ready to "lend" him some. If Charlie discovered, long after everybody else, that Clarke had been making a guy of him, he forgave the joker with the best humor and fell just as easily into the next snare set for his feet.

Wilkins' chief weakness was a desire to get married to about every pretty girl he met. He had confided his partiality for several girls, one after another, to his friend Clarke, and was indebted to him for the fact that he still remained a bachelor. Clarke had a notion, aside from his tendency to find a joke in everything, that Charlie would be of much more use to him if he remained in a single state, and determined to keep him out of matrimony as long as possible.

"It's a damned important thing, this getting married," said Silas to him, one day, at the club, when the rest of the boys were out. "A man must think of a good many things except his own taste and fancy. Really he is about the last person whose pleasure should be consulted."

"Gwa-cious!" exclaimed Charlie, struck with astonishment.

"The present system is all wrong," pursued Clarke, delighted at the close attention he was receiving. "It is left to the man to propose. The initiative and referendum, as they say in Switzerland, are entirely with him. Now you will readily see that it ought to rest with the woman. She is the one who has got to stand or fall by the bargain. And there are others too seldom considered—the prospective children."

Wilkins uttered another exclamation.

"You had not thought of them!" said Clarke, dryly. "No, I will wager not. Do you ever think of anything? What did you imagine marriage to be, a picnic? Did you have an impression that it was a sort of clambake, with watermelon and green corn ad libitum? I am ashamed of you, Mr. Wilkins!"

Whenever Clarke got so far as to apply the word "Mister" to his friend, Charlie always fell into the deepest melancholy.

"Now this girl that you called my attention to this morning," Clarke went on, with an air of reproach. "Of what nationality, what race is she? Did you pause to consider that question at all? Did you reflect on anything except the condition of your pulse? You are an American, brought up after the manner of your countrymen. She is a Jewess. Don't tell me you didn't know it."

Wilkins stammered that he did know it, and knew it very well, but that she was unusually pretty and well bred.

"Pretty and well bred!" echoed Clarke, scorn-

fully. "That is a great consideration, isn't it? Have you studied the laws of heredity, Mr. Wilkins? Are you aware that your sons, should you marry this woman, would be Sheeneys?"

"Bah Jove!" uttered Charlie, growing faint.

"Have you reflected that, notwithstanding the beauty of the mother, these sons of yours might and probably would have hooked noses and round shoulders? Are you aware that in consummating such a union you would doom yourself to become the father of old-clothes merchants and peripatetic peddlers? Of course you have not given that little matter any thought! And as children almost invariably follow the religion of their mothers, would it not be agreeable to listen to the wails of your boys as they were subjected to the rite of Moses before a large and interested congregation?"

"Howible!" came from the shaking auditor.

"'*Abraham* Wilkins!' '*Levi* Wilkins!' '*Moses* Wilkins!'" pursued the tormentor. "How nice those names would sound! She would present you with at least a dozen of them, for the fecundity of Jewesses is well known. Then her relations would throng your house at the ten thousand feasts of your wife's church—Isaac, Simeon, Noah, and the rest, until you couldn't tell whether you were in Boston or Jerusalem!"

From the pale lips there issued a murmur of protest.

"Shall I go on?" demanded Clarke.

"Oh, no! The de-vil!"

"This will be the first and last chapter of Hebrews for you, I hope," continued Silas, with severity. "Supposing you had not happened to confide in me,

but had gone on and married this girl? Take warning and never follow your inclinations, for they will certainly lead you to sheol!"

"Oh-me-Gard!"

The entrance of Frank Morley, Mark Melton and several other members of the club, put a stop to this conversation. Wilkins' depressed appearance was noticed, but several sly winks from Silas prevented the asking of any questions at that time. Lunches were ordered and other subjects were debated around the tables. The recuperative powers of Wilkins were so great that in the course of five minutes he appeared to have forgotten the beautiful Jewess for whom he felt quite willing to die that morning. He ate as heartily as the others, and even entered into their discussions with his ordinary interest.

"Where's that preacher-brother you were telling us about?" asked Clarke of Morley, who had taken a seat at table exactly opposite to him. "I'm dying to see that fellow."

"He's coming to Boston some time this winter," replied Frank, calmly. "You'll have a chance to argue all you like, then. But he'll floor you. He's got the alpha and omega of theology at the ends of his fingers."

"Strange what a difference there can be in brothers!" interposed the young man from the leather-store on High street."

Morley ignored the covert sarcasm.

"Yes," he answered, "Clyde and I are not much alike, except in personal appearance."

Wilkins' thoughts were back for a moment to the subject of heredity, which had interested him immensely.

"I think that's the stwan-gest thing," he drawled. "Being born of one mo-ther at one ti-me, a fellow would think you ought to be exact pa-wallels in ev-wything."

Morley bowed assent to the proposition.

"Nature's a queer old lady," said he. "She seems to take delight in contrasts. Now, Clyde thinks he was sent upon this earth to regenerate it. All the sins and woes of mankind bear on his individual frame. His twin brother thinks it quite enough to look out for No. 1. He goes through life with his eyes fixed on the ground, while I—"

"Raise them at least to the height of a pretty girl's boots," laughed Clarke. "I haven't forgotten the day you showed us 'the best shod woman in Boston.' And I know now who she is, too, for I reported a military ball the other night at which she danced with her father. Yes," he added, pleased at having attracted the attention of everyone in the room, "and quite as pretty I found her on a nearer view as she appeared on the sidewalk. But my opportunity to observe her was cut short by her departure before eleven o'clock with another pretty girl who had come for her in a carriage. However, I got introduced to the old man, and made the best impression I could on him."

He intimated so much more than he said that the hearers grew quite envious of him, at least all but two, who had much stronger feelings. And one remarked audibly that no one had quite the opportunities of a newspaper man, who could go everywhere and meet everybody.

"In personal appearance, as I was saying," said Morley, to put a stop to this, "there is a strong

resemblance between me and my brother. So much, in fact, that we have been mistaken for each other. Clyde was asked one day on a railroad train to take a hand at a game of euchre, which he would not have touched for his life ; and the last time I was at home, I was requested to lead in prayer at a church meeting."

This was considered sufficiently funny to draw a laugh from everyone present. The conversation, however, soon took another turn, and when Morley and Melton had finished their lunch they strolled down the street together.

CHAPTER VI.

"I LOVE YOUR DAUGHTER."

The month was October. As they reached the Common a gust of autumn wind blew around them the first dry leaves of the elms. It was chilly and the pedestrians whom they met walked rapidly.

"How many times have you met her now?" asked Mark, anxiously.

"Four," replied Morley, with a smile. "I am a welcome visitor, if I am any judge. And so would you be if you were not so dreadfully afraid of yourself. I thought, that time you called there with me, you would faint away before I got you out again."

Melton looked discouraged.

"I know I acted like a dunce," he admitted, "but you are so perfectly easy under all circumstances

that your presence makes me the more constrained. I talked well enough with her the first time I called, but then I had not conceived the idea of trying to make her mine for life."

"All the more reason why you should brace up now," laughed Morley. "You will have to do your own proposing. I have succeeded in establishing a foothold at Miss Bessie's through which I can bring you into the presence of your loved one, but it is for you to do the rest. Miss Fuller's case is different from any other that I have ever known. She does not guess in advance what one is going to say. It is easy to see that her heart and her experiences are entirely virgin. I tried to hint to her something of the state of your feelings, the last time I was there, and she did not seem to understand me in the least. You will have to put on a very different front from your present one, if you expect to gain any standing in that quarter. I am not sure, after all, but your best course is to go direct to the Colonel. She is such a dutiful child, she will do anything he tells her. If he says, 'My dear, you will please marry Mr. Melton,' it will be quite the same to her as if he said, 'Lettie, it is ten o'clock and time you were in bed.'"

It did not strike Melton, any more than it had on the previous occasion, that the right way to win a wife was through the medium of her father. He felt that the first thing was to make an impression on the damsel herself. He believed that when he had gained her affection it would give him courage to brave the presence of all the retired colonels in the world. The young men continued their walk along the mall, into Tremont street again and then into Shawmut avenue,

for it had been agreed between them that they would make another call upon Miss Bright and her friend that very afternoon.

When Miss Bessie appeared and escorted them into the small parlor, Mark felt that he was brave enough to dare anything. When she went upstairs and returned with Miss Lettie he found that his bravery had oozed out of the pores of his skin and that he was as great a coward as ever. There was, truth to tell, but little opportunity to make clear the state of his mind, with another couple present, but he thought Lettie ought to see it in his eyes or detect it in his voice, and it was evident she did nothing of the kind. She did not seem to have the least embarrassment in his presence. The quartette laughed and talked together like other acquaintances, and when the time came to go, Mark knew that, so far as his objects were concerned, he stood exactly where he did when he entered the house.

"I can't bear it!" he exclaimed, impatiently, as the pair walked back toward the business centre. "I shall go to the Colonel and talk to him. It is the only way. As disagreeable as it is, I must do it. I am used to *men*. The most he can do is to kick me down stairs. I shall never be content till I have tried. At present this matter is seriously interfering with my studies. I think of it night and day. If I am led to hope that Lettie will marry me I can renew my efforts to take high rank in my class. If I find that I must give her up—well, it won't make much difference."

Morley stood on the sidewalk and took his companion by the arm, to shake him with mock anger.

"That's enough of that kind of talk, Mark," he

said. "You're not going to be made a fool of by any woman, no matter how attractive she is. The poet hit the nail on the head when he wrote—

> 'If she be not fair to me,
> What care I how fair she be.'

You want the Colonel's pretty daughter, and I hope—as long as you do want her—you'll succeed. But if you fail you won't do anything worse than pass a couple of sleepless nights and then go back to your studies with twice the vim you had before. Going to the devil for a woman is a trick of novel heroes, not of flesh and blood men! If we're to be friends, let's have no more of that sort of thing."

Melton was silent. He felt that his entire future depended on that bit of femininity he had just left. He was not the only young man in the world—even outside of novels—who has had feelings of that kind. And, for the time, they were very real to him.

He had an engagement the very next evening to play a game at Col. Fuller's, and during the time that elapsed he screwed his courage up to the task of making some sort of a beginning of introducing the subject that lay nearest his heart. The evening came. The game proceeded as usual, with Miss Lettie sitting near by, half-absorbed in a paper-covered book. Mark sat at the table so that the girl was opposite to him, and behind her father, but not by the utmost effort could he obtain the least attention from her of a surreptitious nature. Miss Fuller seemed wholly unacquainted with even the alphabet of flirtation, and Mark did not expect any exhibition that implied

a warmer feeling. The hands of the mantel clock pointed to ten when she rose, as punctual as the time-piece itself, to bid her father and his guest good-night. The kiss she gave the Colonel and the parting salutation with which she left his visitor were neither more nor less impressive than on each former occasion.

Melton had lost almost everything that evening. It was hard for him to fix his mind on such stupid things as cards in the presence of a much more important thought. He had determined to say something, though he did not know how far his courage would permit him to go.

"I shall graduate next June," he remarked, as he moved his chair back a little from the table, when the last game was finished.

"So you have told me."

Mark thought for a second how much truth there was in this quiet observation. He must have mentioned the fact to Col. Fuller a dozen times or more, since he had known him.

"To be sure," he stammered. "I was only going to say that *after* I graduate I intend to begin at once the practice of medicine in this city."

"Better go away," was the Colonel's brusque suggestion. "Boston has too many doctors now. There are some streets almost full of them."

There was not much encouragement in this.

"I am going to begin practice at once after graduating," repeated Mark, feeling like an amateur actor under the eye of a severely strict stage manager, "either in Boston or some other city. I have not much money, but I think I shall be able to make myself a position in a short time." He rather liked

the sound of that phrase. "I—I want to get established, and—as soon as I find myself able tc do so —I want—to get married."

It was out now! No, it wasn't. Col. Fuller evidently had not the least notion that this intention had any reference to his household.

"That's a foolish idea," he commented, with the freedom for which he was famous. "No man ought to marry before he is thirty. I didn't, and," his face darkened, "if I hadn't married at all, it would have been quite as well. A wife drags a young man down. He needs a number of years' start in life before he encumbers himself with extra baggage. Women of the present age want too much. Why, it has cost me six hundred dollars in the last twelve months to dress—merely to dress—that child of mine!"

Happiness! The name of Lettie had got into the conversation without Mark's bringing it there!

"Miss Fuller certainly dresses with exquisite taste," he remarked.

"Does she?" growled the military gentleman. "I don't know anything about that. I know it costs like the devil for her clothes. It's about as much as my half-pay will do to meet my bills."

Was this a point in his armor that the young aspirant for the hand of that girl might fairly puncture? It did not seem to Melton that six hundred dollars was too great an investment for the clothing of that beautiful creature. He would be most happy could the expenditure of that sum be transferred to him. The income of any half-successful physician would be ample to meet that slight drain.

"You cannot hope," he said, slowly, "that the

pleasure of paying her bills will always remain your own."

Col. Fuller, whose military bearing never entirely left him, seemed to grow more erect than ever as he listened to these audacious words.

"Will you kindly explain your meaning?" he asked, frigidly.

Now that he was near enough to the enemy—in the words of the commander at Bunker Hill—to "see the whites of his eyes," Melton felt that it was no time to falter.

"I mean, sir," he answered, respectfully, "that a young lady of your daughter's goodness and beauty will not be without suitors. And that the day must come when you will have to surrender her to the care of a husband."

Col. Fuller's eyes were fixed in no agreeable way upon the author of this sentiment and, as the young man finished, a slight shade of contempt appeared there.

"I hardly know how to understand your remarks," he said, icily. "I do not know what gives you any right to address such observations to me. My family affairs are my own. Because you have been invited here to play a game of cards is no reason why you should trench upon a subject with which you cannot possibly have anything to do."

He had gone too far to retreat now. Mark felt that he must know his fate before he left the house.

"My excuse is this, Col. Fuller," he answered, boldly. "I love your daughter. I want your permission to seek to win her. If I succeed in doing so, I shall have the best possible incentive to make a name and fortune at my profession. I consider myself a man of honor, and I cannot see anything dis-

reputable in entertaining the hope that some day, when I am in a pecuniary condition to assume the care of a wife, I may claim the only woman I have ever loved."

Col. Fuller seemed too astounded for some moments to reply. He looked like one who had heard things he could not comprehend.

"I don't know what you are talking about," he broke forth at last. "You are a lad yet—a schoolboy, to put it accurately. How old are you? Twenty-three or four. You have no money to speak of. Your success in life is still problematical. The last thing that should be in your head at present is an affair of love. But the absurdity grows greater when you talk of being allowed to whisper such things to a young girl like my Lettie. Why, she is the merest child—hardly twenty—and knows about as much what marriage means as one of the dolls she has but recently discarded. By George, Melton, I don't know whether to get angry with you or to extend you my sympathy! For, take my word for it, you are on a dangerous road. I took you for a sensible young fellow, whom I was glad to know—a creditable son to one of the bravest fathers that ever rode into battle. Are you going to turn out an addle-pated milksop, talking of girls and marriage before you are out of college? Upon my word, I thought better of you!"

The voice had become so much kinder toward the last than it was at the beginning of this philippic that Melton brightened a little.

"Forgive me, Colonel, if I have offended you," he said, earnestly, "but this is a serious thing to me. I am not talking to you about contracting marriage

at present, quite the contrary. All I wish to know is that when I am able to do so—and it will not be so far away, either—the one I have learned to love with no slight devotion will not, on account of my silence, be pledged to another. If you do not wish me to speak to her on this subject I promise not to do so. But I beg you not to treat my statement lightly, for unless I can marry Miss Lettie I shall be single to the end of my life."

The elder man looked puzzled for a moment, and then burst into a good-natured laugh.

"I cannot get over the ludicrousness of the thing," he said. "You are such a boy to come seriously with that kind of a proposition. I will say this, however. Perhaps, if it was five years later, and you were established in a paying business—had, let us say, ten thousand dollars, even, to your credit in the bank—I would not give my child to any one with more willingness than to the son of my old companion-in-arms, Maj. Melton. At present, all talk of the kind is simply ridiculous, and you will see it when you go home and quietly think it over. Let me set your mind at rest on one point, though. You have no rival to fear. I think my child has never spoken in private to a man in her life, unless it was the first evening you came here. If I were to give you full leave to say what you please to her, she would not understand a word. She would come to me when you had gone and say, 'Papa, what was Mr. Melton talking about?' And it will not be to-day nor to-morrow that she gains greater wisdom. I have enough to support her and myself in a modest way, thank God! and she shall keep her innocence a little longer."

It was not at all what Mark wanted, but he was fain to be content. He assured the Colonel that he should at some future date return with additional years and fortune to repeat his request. The father of his beloved smilingly met this proposition and they parted as usual, with the next night for cribbage the last word on the Colonel's lips.

At noon the next day Mark told Frank Morley, nearly word for word, all that had passed at the Colonel's rooms.

"You did very well," was the latter's comment. "Very well, indeed. Buoyed up by hope, the five years won't go so slow as you might think. I'm not so sure about the ten thousand, though. That's a more doubtful matter."

Mark responded that this was the least of his fears. He would get the money, if he had to amputate some fellow's head instead of an arm or a finger.

"The old man must be a fool, though," mused Morley, after he had gone his way, "if he really thinks any girl of twenty in this age is as blankly innocent as he pretends his Lettie is. I wonder if he ever reads those yellow novels of hers. Can she be merely a white page, without a pencil mark upon it? I believe I'll make it my business to find out."

CHAPTER VII.

WAS LETTIE IN LOVE?

As any one acquainted ever so little with the workings of the feminine mind may have imagined, Miss Lettie Fuller had been giving a good deal more thought to the two young men who had come to visit her father than she showed on the surface. All the repression in the world does not prevent a girl from thinking of the other sex when she has reached the age of twenty. The novels that she freely purchased told of love and lovers. They depicted the heartaches of sorrowful maidens and the restless nights of smitten swains. She had not yet reached a point where she could fully sympathize with the serious way in which these subjects were treated, but to say the least she was much interested in them. She knew that the chief end of a woman's life was marriage, and that "old maids" were seldom spoken of except in a pitying or contemptuous way. It followed, then, that she—Miss Lettie Fuller—would probably become, in the course of time, Mrs. Somebody Else. And it was very natural that she should let her thoughts roam a little into that other pasture when the only two young men she had ever had near her were *en evidence.*

To Lettie her father had always been absolute. She had obeyed him as rigidly as any of the soldiers he used to command, and if he had given out decorations for good behavior she would surely

have worn a handsome number of them. There was no friction between them, for when one orders and the other obeys without question there is little chance for that sort of thing. The Colonel had a limited income, the exact extent of which he knew. His taste were moderate and he had been quite willing, notwithstanding the sharp way in which he quoted the figures to Melton, that Lettie should use all unexpended balances in adorning herself. He did not know that she had attracted wide attention on account of the excellence of her dress, and would not have been pleased to learn the fact. He considered her still his "child," whom he purposely kept in ignorance of the world as long as he could, feeling that it was best for her to postpone the advent of responsible womanhood to the latest possible moment.

Finding his own pleasure best served at the Veterans' Club, he was glad Lettie had such a companion as Miss Bessie Bright. To him they were not "young ladies," who might attract the attention of men, but mere girls, as safe to send out of doors as they had been ten years before, when they went to the grammar school. Lettie always told him, of her own accord, where she had passed the afternoon, if she went out, and in the evening she did not go unless the landlady accompanied her, except on those rare occasions when her father went himself. When the clock pointed to ten she gave him the good-night kiss and retired to her little bedroom. Discipline could hardly be more perfect than this, according to the ideas of the retired officer, who had written a book on that very subject, as applied to the army, and ought to know what he was talking about.

Bessie and Lettie had many conversations regarding the young men, which would have been far from pleasing to the Colonel could he have heard them. Bessie was the more talkative of the twain, but Lettie proved a good listener, which is not the least important part of a good conversation.

"I wish your father didn't keep you so strict," said Bessie, on one of those afternoons when the "boys," as they called them, had been at the house. "It is such a pity that we cannot go to a matinee or to ride with them."

Lettie opened her blue eyes wider, but did not otherwise reply. She was wondering how it would seem to be riding out with two young gentlemen, and whether it was really such an improper thing as is appeared at first thought.

"They're as nice a pair of fellows as I ever met," continued Bessie. "Mr. Morley is awfully jolly, isn't he? Mr. Melton is the still one, but he looks a thousand things, if he doesn't say them. I shouldn't wonder if he went up to your august papa some day and asked him for your hand."

Lettie gave a little start.

"Oh, Bessie!" she exclaimed.

"Well, it wouldn't be so wonderful," persisted her friend. "Frank—I mean Mr. Morley—has told me a good deal about him. He is the straightest young fellow in the world, and devoted to his studies. Next summer he graduates, and will go at once to practicing medicine. Certainly if any one needs a wife it is a doctor, and he never takes his eyes off you when he is here."

Lettie shivered, not enough to attract attention. She was thinking of the inside of a doctor's office, a

surgeon's, with bandages and arnica and the general impression of suffering that goes with them. So wrapt up was she in the disagreeableness of this idea that she quite forgot to remonstrate with Miss Bright for the character of her observation, as she at first intended to do.

"You make me smile, sometimes, my dear," pursued the vivacious girl. "One would imagine you were in short clothes, to listen to you and your father. Why, you are twenty, a whole year older than I, four years older than my own mother was when she married my father."

This drew out an observation from the listener.

"Married at sixteen, Bessie? That's much too early!"

"My mamma didn't think so, bless her heart!" was the reply. "And for my part I'm glad of it, for if she had waited five or six years I should be only just entering my teens, and of all ages I think that is the meanest. Now, auntie doesn't put any particular restrictions on me. I could go with Frank—of course, I mean Mr. Morley; I wonder why I always use his first name—if I chose, to the theatre or to drive. But the fact is—I am a little afraid to go with him alone, and I should like it so well if we could make up the party of four. He hasn't really asked me to go except with you two, but I know he would if he thought it would be of any use."

Miss Fuller concluded from these statements that she was acting as a damper on the pleasures of her friend and was sorry for it.

"There is nothing to keep *you* from going with 'Frank,'" she said, putting an emphasis on the name,

"if you wish to. I don't see, myself, why *you* should hesitate."

"Well, there isn't any reason," replied the girl, laughing and blushing, "unless—you won't laugh at me, Lettie, will you?—unless it is because I *like* him too much."

Miss Fuller opened her eyes wider than ever. Was it possible that she was in the personal presence of a real Romance, like those she had read of in the books with covers of yellow? Was her friend Bessie struck with that strange complaint of which she had dreamed and wondered?

"You don't mean," she said slowly, "that you are in l-o-v-e?"

At this pointed question Bessie blushed more than ever.

"I—I don't know exactly *what* I mean," she answered, nervously. "It isn't right, I suppose, for a girl to get in love until the adored one gives some direct indication of the state of his own feelings. But—I tell you this, Lettie, because you are the only confidant I have—I *do* like Frank."

She hesitated, as the name came out and Lettie responded, simply—

"That is right, Bessie. I don't see why you should not call him Frank—to me."

"I'm afraid I shall call him that to his face next," smiled Bessie, heaving a sigh. "And I'm sure I don't want to do it just yet, though he's told me I ought. He always talks with me a little while, you know, when he first comes, before I go up to call you, and he say some very nice things. Nothing—to mean anything, though," she added ruefully.

This had become more interesting to the listener than any novel she had ever read.

"What does he say?" she asked.

"Oh, just ordinary things. Only, sometimes, he adds that I am looking well, or that I ought to take the air more. And then he asks if you could not arrange it to go with him and Mark—he says Mark—and me, on some kind of an excursion. And when I tell him that I am afraid it could not be done, he looks discouraged and I get desperate."

The Colonel's daughter was very immobile.

"I wonder why he never says anything about it when *I* am there," she said.

"I tell him it would be useless," explained Bessie. "I know your father so well that I thought it best not to let Frank trouble you with such a request."

"You are very kind."

There was irony in this response, but Bessie Bright did not notice it. It was the first bit of irony that had ever passed the lips of Lettie Fuller, and she hardly recognized its quality herself. Behind it was a faint touch of jealousy. She did not like it because Frank Morley had been so much more confidential with Miss Bright than with her; and the reason given—that his friend Melton had eyes for her alone—was no more pleasing. There arose in her breast an incipient rebellion against the strictness of her father, which would, she knew, forbid the use of their apartment for the purpose of receiving the visits of these young men, even in the presence of Miss Bright, whom he trusted implicitly. She had never broached the subject to him, but she understood the tenor of his mind too well to have any doubt about the matter. It seemed to her true, what Bessie said, that

she was quite old enough to be released a little from leading strings.

"Mr. Morley has told me a great deal about his friend," Bessie went on to say, after a momentary pause. "Do you want to hear it?"

Miss Fuller thought nothing could fail to interest her that Frank Morley had said and she indicated an affirmative.

"Well, the first time he came, that night your father was out, he conceived a great admiration for you. He told Frank about you a few days after. You were passing a club to which they belong and some of the members noticed you, and when you were out of sight Mr. Melton said he knew you a little and that your father was a friend of his. And Frank says it was easy to see even then the impression you made on him. And he says he has come to play cards with the Colonel solely on your account, and that he will be sure to speak out before a great while."

Another mental glance at the contents of an imaginary surgeon's office came to Miss Lettie, and she shuddered at the sights and scents she found there.

"I wonder why he waits so long," she said, coolly.

The irony was there again, for in the last ten minutes this girl had learned the use of that most subtle and dangerous weapon.

Miss Bessie looked at her friend with astonishment, for the double nature of her reply was lost on her.

"How can he do anything," she asked, "when he has no opportunity to meet you alone? A man can

hardly say, 'I love you,' when there are other persons present."

"*I love you!*" What strange, mysterious meaning there was in those words. For the first time in her life Lettie Fuller realized that they might mean something to her if spoken by the right lips.

"No, that is true," she said, absently, as the nature of Bessie's observation dawned upon her through the mist.

"I would not like to advise you to deceive your father," added Bessie, covertly, "but at the same time I doubt if you will ever receive a declaration of love in any other way. If you insist on telling each evening every step you have taken during the day, you can't get far. Of course, you could meet him here, in my parlor, and Frank and I could make an excuse to go out for a walk; but that would look too much like a plan. Wouldn't it?"

Miss Lettie assented, saying it would look quite too much like a plan, and that she could not think of it.

"He might write to you, as I was telling Frank yesterday," continued the young matchmaker, "but there is need of something like a preliminary talk. And he is mortally afraid of you, beside. He does not know but you would take his letter direct to the Colonel, and that his visits to your apartment—for the sake of cribbage—would be cut short in consequence."

The Colonel's daughter nodded her opinion that there was certainly something in that. She knew, however, that she should never take such a letter to her father, and that from this day forth she should never put implicit confidence in him. It seemed as

if he had set out to work her an injury, and that it had become necessary to defend herself.

"But he has had a talk with the Colonel already," said Bessie, guardedly. "Frank told me not to tell you of this yet, but I can't help it. You might as well know. He told him he loved you, night before last—"

Miss Lettie rose from her chair in sheer amazement.

"Bessie!" she exclaimed.

"It is the truth."

"Mr. Melton told my father—"

"Yes."

The blue eyes grew angry.

"Without speaking to me—"

"That is exactly what he asked leave to do," said Bessie, sorry that she had broken her promise to Morley. She had never seen Lettie with that expression on her face, and dreaded the storm that seemed to be gathering.

"And what did my father tell him?" asked Lettie, coldly.

The red lips were set close together as they awaited the reply.

"He said you were both too young to think of such matters, and that Mr. Melton must wait till he was older and had an established business."

"How long did he think he should wait? Did he set any time?"

Sarcasm, deep and strong, was in these words, but the hearer did not suspect them.

"Five or six years, I think he said. But Mr. Melton has no idea of carrying out that plan. He means to propose as soon as he feels that he has

enough business to feel certain of being able to support you."

Miss Fuller winced. Her indignation had been growing steadily stronger. At that moment she almost hated her father. What right had he to tell this impudent young man anything that implied a right to hope for her consent to marry him. "When he could *support* her," indeed! It seemed the height of assurance for him to say anything whatever to her father about her. His course might be very high-toned and honorable, but it was also very absurd. Perhaps she might have learned to like him had he pursued the usual methods, but now she was sure she should always detest him. It was lucky he had been put off by the Colonel, or he might have gained courage to come with his proposal at once. Lettie was so little acquainted with love matters that she hardly felt equal yet even to the task of refusing an applicant for her hand. She hoped Mr. Melton would not be so silly as to press his suit at present, for she would not only have to refuse him, but she might not be able to do it in the correct and graceful style of which she had read in the yellow-covered story books.

"Well, he won't trouble me for some time," she answered, with a forced laugh, "if he waits till his financial ability is equal to the emergency."

"It's better than plunging into marriage as so many do," responded Bessie, "when they've not got a penny to buy bread. Though, if *I* loved a man," and here her eyes grew dreamy, "I wouldn't care how poor he was."

Miss Fuller looked at her searchingly.

"And you *do* love one," she said.

"Oh," cried Bessie, with a start, "I don't know as I exactly *love* him! I haven't known him so very long, you know. But, really, he's nice; don't you think so?"

And Lettie said, yes, she thought he was very nice indeed, and that she hoped Bessie would marry him and that they would be happy all their lives. And when she had left her friend, and was in the seclusion of her own room, she took a tumbler that lay on the bureau and broke it between her fingers.

The art of dissimulation is one of the weapons given to women, in their contest with the world. Lettie Fuller met her father at dinner, with the quiet face with which he was so familiar, and he never dreamed that under that calm exterior a raging caldron had begun to seethe and bubble.

CHAPTER VIII.

A PICTURE OF INNOCENCE.

Another month passed away. Frank Morley no longer stayed at the Quincy House. He had a room on Shawmut avenue, where the Fullers lived and where Miss Bessie Bright's aunt officiated as landlady. When a chamber was vacated, he went up to look at it, with Bessie as his guide, and found it very pleasant indeed. The room seemed full of sunshine, partly, no doubt, because the happy young girl was there, and it contrasted favorably with the little

closet-like apartment that he occupied in the hotel. The price was less than he was paying, so there could be no objection on that score. Had it been higher he would have taken it just the same. And it augured for what was to come when he placed his arm about Bessie's waist and snatched a kiss, "to seal the bargain," (as he said) before they descended again to the lower floor.

I am not going to pretend that this was a strictly proper piece of conduct on the part of either of these young people, for Bessie deserves her full share of blame for not protesting. To be sure she said, in a surprised tone, "Oh, Frank!" but there was nothing in her voice to imply that she seriously objected to the familiarity. She had fallen so deeply in love with the young fellow that she had, in the familiar parlance, "lost her head" completely. He had said nothing to her that could be construed into a declaration—nothing, in fact, but what any man might say to any woman with whom he was acquainted. But Bessie's nature was as warm as the auburn hair on her head, and she could not resist the impulses that thronged to her giddy brain.

One kiss given and taken without protest is apt to be followed by others, and Frank was not slow in accepting the opportunities that his residence in the house gave him. Mrs. Bright, the widowed aunt of Miss Bessie, liked him from the start, and made no objection when Bessie said he had asked her to accompany him to the theatre or for a walk to the Common or Public Garden. She had been brought up—had the elder lady—in the country, where every man is supposed innocent till he is proved guilty, and she was rather flattered that such a young gen-

tleman as Mr. Morley should take such an interest in her niece. He was studying law, and would undoubtedly become a great pleader in time. Bessie must ultimately marry, and why should she discourage a friendship that seemed so auspicious? Had Mrs. Bright happened to be where she could see the frequent embraces and stolen kisses she might have whispered a word of caution in the ear of her niece, but even then she would not have considered these acts anything worthy of great denunciation. She had been a girl herself, and in the Maine town where she had married, a little love-making of this sort was not objected to by the most careful parents. All they thought necessary was to tell the girls that men were not always to be trusted, and that a great deal of common-sense must be kept in requisition.

It was November when Mr. Morley changed his lodgings, and one of the first things he did after becoming established in his new home was to get on still more intimate terms with Col. Fuller. He did not play cribbage, and consequently could not use that avenue to his good will, which Mark Melton had found so happily open. But he had a fund of humor that the Colonel began to fancy, a way of arguing with and then agreeing with him, that flattered his pride. Col. Fuller liked controversy, but could not bear contradiction. He was never happier than when he had beaten an opponent in a dispute, and Frank very early discovered this trait of his. He resolved to humor the ex-officer "to the top of his bent." When the Colonel found that Frank always had to admit that he was in the wrong, he liked his society immensely, and encouraged him

to come up and spend as many evenings as he liked in his sitting-room.

Poor Melton used to hear with a faint feeling of envy of the pleasant hours that Morley passed in this way, for the only time Mark could get into the Colonel's apartment with any show of excuse was on the cribbage nights, now reduced to one each week. On these occasions it was painfully evident that it was the game and not his visitor for which the Colonel cared, though he never let the evening pass without some allusion to his old friend, Maj. Melton, whom he had loved like a brother. Frank had that off-hand way which made it easy for him to step in at any time, for a minute or two, as he used to say, and to step out again if he saw that was the best thing to do. But he was generally welcome, and Col. Fuller began to be missed at his club quite often before the year ended.

Miss Lettie occupied the same position, to all appearance, with reference to the two gentlemen, that she did when Frank moved into the house. She seemed the same obedient daughter, the same picture of innocence and guilelessness. She always had a book in her hand or some fancy-work in her lap in front of the open grate, sometimes busy upon it and often idling with her eyes on the coals. Look up as suddenly as he might, never could Morley find her gaze fixed on him, or detect her listening to the conversation between him and her father, which she heard, to be sure, but did not seem to notice. At ten there was the invariable putting down of the work or the book, the good-night kiss for her father and the courteous adieu to himself. Night after night, when he was there, it was always these things

and nothing more, and the steady watcher found himself puzzled to know what to make of her.

"She's not a fool," he used to mutter. "She knows more than she appears to; but how well she carries off her little game!"

Melton talked with him every day about the matter so near to his heart, and the only advice he received was, the one so tiresome under all circumstances, to "have patience." Nothing was to be gained by precipitation, Morley told him. Things must take their course. It would be useless to attack the Colonel again, for the old boy was quick-tempered and might throw cold water over the whole affair. Mark could see for himself how little Lettie understood his feelings, and could judge the probability of the effect of trying to make them plain to her.

"Let things take their course," he said, repeatedly. "Study like a Trojan, and graduate with high honors. Then buy a saw and a ton of senna and proceed to make a place for yourself among the other humbugs in your line. Show that you are a man, and not the schoolboy with which he taunted you. Then come to him again, and he will make your road easy, take my word for it."

Melton tried to be encouraged by this, but did not find it exactly what he wanted.

"I wish I had your way of doing things," he answered. "If you were in my place, and had your mind fixed on Miss Fuller, you would have managed to tell her so and to secure her consent long before now. Her father would have been your ally from the first, and next spring, practice or no practice, you would have been able to call her yours."

Morley gave a shake to his head.

"If I were in your place," he corrected, "I should think of anything sooner than marriage. The old gentleman was right, after all. You need a hundred things much more than you need a wife. I have only consented to help you because I know when such a delusion strikes a man it is as real to him as if it were true."

"And you never intend to marry?"

"My dear boy," replied Morley, "what sort of a husband would *I* make? Leave my desires out of the question, you ought to have some pity for the woman I might be crazy enough to wed."

Mark looked serious.

"There is a girl who is learning to think a great deal of you," he said. "If you are indeed a confirmed bachelor, you ought to let her know it before she gets her affections too deeply enlisted."

Morley knew very well whom Melton meant, but he affected surprise for an instant.

"I can't think of any one who fits your description," he said, slowly, "unless it's the little strawberry blonde niece of my landlady."

Melton's indignation showed for an instant in his countenance.

"You're not heartless, and yet you often like to appear so," he said. "You must have noticed how much Bessie thinks of you, and you have no right to permit it unless you mean something by your attentions."

The law student elevated his eyebrows.

"Attentions, Mark?" he replied. "What do you mean—going to two or three matinees and for an occasional walk? Is Miss Bright unable to bear those 'attentions' without unsettling her brain? I

won't do her the injustice to believe you. But, to make sure, I *will* mention, the next time we are alone together, that I am cut out for a single man and shall never put the cords of wedlock about my neck."

"You ought to tell her that," said Mark, earnestly. "You ought to tell her as if you meant it, too."

Morley was struck by the sincerity of his companion's manner.

"I think my life is made up mainly of the things I should not do," he said. "I am a walking exemplification of the lines in the Episcopal prayer-book, about doing those things we ought not to have done, and leaving undone those things we ought to have done. But I'll tell Bessie, if you say so. I'll even get a card painted, containing the fact, and wear it around my throat like a dog-collar, for the benefit of all other maidens concerned. I don't mean to be frivolous, but I never cared enough about a girl to see why one should honor me with her special consideration."

Melton's thoughts flowed slower than those of his companion, and he revolved his statement for some moments in his mind before answering.

"I am surprised, Frank," he said, finally. "I thought you went to her house and took a room on purpose to be near her."

Morley laughed despairingly.

"It is ever the reward of virtue to be misunderstood," he said, dismally. "Now the fact is that I took that room so as to get on better and more intimate terms with quite another family."

Mark uttered an exclamation.

"The Fullers!" he cried. "Oh, Frank, I beg your pardon! Why did I not realize it before? Your

went there solely on *my* account, and I never had the wit to see it."

He grasped his friend's hand warmly, but as soon as he could easily do so, Frank drew it away. He did not like that sort of thing.

"I went there to be near the Fullers," he repeated. "I am succeeding very well in making their acquaintance. When the time comes for you to speak out again, it may not be so bad to have a friend and champion near the throne."

Melton's gratitude showed itself in many expressions of good-will, to which Morley paid little attention. He was thinking of Bessie and wondering how he should keep his promise. The easiest way was not to keep it at all, and after considerable debate in his mind he came to the conclusion that this was just what he probably should do. He had an idea that were he to say to Miss Bessie in so many words that he never intended marrying, it would put an end to those special privileges which he now enjoyed, and render his stay at her aunt's much less attractive. Selfishness was becoming ingrained in him. He did not wish to cause others suffering, but he did mean to make this world about as agreeable as he could for Mr. Frank Morley.

"'For this, among the rest, was I ordained,'" he quoted to himself, as he walked home that afternoon. "Nature speaks out in me, and I have decided to give her a fair trial. I have been observing the methods of the Great Mother of us all; and I do not find that her lamps bear any special signal for the benefit of moths. If my light attracts one of those gilded insects—even one whose hair is of the color of Australian gold—I shall merely let her come on

Her wings are her own, and if she chooses to singe them it is her affair. Men have evolved some silly notions which make them unique among the things of earth. I shall return to my natural state and set an example to my benighted brethren."

He walked along, noticing nothing and no one in his absorption.

"My brother Clyde would say I am a wretch to entertain such views," he mused. "My brother Clyde has been badly educated. He has been under the tutelage of priests and old men in petticoats until the natural good sense in him is distorted. My brother Clyde, were he here, and could he read my mind, would hold up before me the terrors of a hell in the next world and a remorseful death-bed in this, predicting them both to be my lot in case I allow my patron saint—Nature—to have her way. He would tell the girl with the auburn locks that I am a dangerous companion—all the more dangerous from seeming so entirely the opposite. What a fool is that twin brother of mine! Does *he* find any enjoyment in this life for himself? Does the course he preaches bring happiness to *him?* And if not, how can he have the assurance to recommend it to others?

"The next time I go to see Niagara I mean to argue with the rush of waters, just as they are about to take their plunge into the abyss, protesting that they are wrong to carry with them the sticks and straws—sometimes the men and women—who happen to get lured into their eddies. They will listen to me, I know. If they do not, I will send for Clyde, for they will hear him. I wonder where he is now. It is many months since he went from home, and

only an occasional stray letter sent via New York tells he is yet alive. The old clergyman who has filled his head with trash is beginning to worry, I hear, lest he should discern the error of his teaching and go over to the wicked world, as other men do. But Clyde will never do that. No, not Clyde. It is enough for our family that his twin brother is made of clay, and we must not be deprived of our chief glory!

"If such an absurd thing could be, that he were right and I wrong, that would change nothing in the lives of either of us. He can only be what he is, for that is his nature, and no more can I be different from what I am. There are whispers that Clyde has human blood in *his* veins, too, and that it is the struggle to keep in the path of asceticism that has given him those deep wrinkles under the eyes and that deathly white complexion. But no one who knows Clyde will believe that. The women of the church, the young girls who have talked to him as freely as if he were their grandfather, the small boys of his Sunday-school, the professors and classmates of his college—they would all look horror-stricken at the notion that Sin, as they call it, could enter into *his* pure heart. If he were here I would like to see him in the presence of Lettie Fuller, day after day, and mark how she would affect him. Little Bessie would be safe enough—she is too transparent—but that other one, what would he say to her? By heaven, he must have the opportunity! He must be told that she is in danger from his wicked brother—what a preposterous fable!—and that his presence is necessary to protect her. Yes, it must be arranged. When the right time comes, I will

find an errand out of town and give him the fullest opportunity."

The dreamer was so engrossed in his thoughts that he nearly ran over a young lady who was coming around the corner, and as he lifted his hat to apologize, he saw that her face was a very familiar one.

"Why, Miss Fuller," he said, "is it you?"

"There is not much doubt of that," she replied, in a reserved tone.

"And you are going home? May I walk there with you?"

"If you desire."

He thought her replies rather curt, but he knew her so little that he did not know whether they were unusually so.

"I did not think you ever ventured out of doors alone," he remarked, as they resumed their walk.

"But I do, you see."

"Yes, to my great surprise. I have just left our friend Melton, who is not in the best of spirits, and I was thinking of him, which made me absent-minded. He is a very good fellow, is Melton."

She nodded, half interrogatively, neither agreeing with nor disputing him.

"He is in the dumps a little," pursued Morley, "because a certain young lady whom he violently admires is oblivious to his sufferings. To be sure he has never told her of the state of his mind, but he thinks—as do all lovers, I have heard—that she ought to be able to guess that. I have cheered him up a little by telling him that when he has entered upon the practice of his profession, and has begun to make a name in the world, it will be quite time

enough to go to her with something definite ; and that then, if she is the wise little woman he thinks, she will see her way clear to accept him."

Across the girl's mind came the hateful expression used by Bessie Bright, "when he is able to support you." And the sensations she had felt when thinking of a surgeon's office followed fast upon it.

"Where is the Colonel?" asked Morley, as she made no reply, and did not even act as if she knew to whom he referred.

"I presume he is at his club."

"And does he really let his daughter go about in Boston unchaperoned?"

Miss Fuller met the look that he gave her with one that was new to him.

"His daughter," she said, "does what she pleases."

He had the temerity to brave those eyes again.

"I never should have thought it," he answered.

He could see that something was agitating her in spite of her endeavor to appear unconcerned, and he resolved upon a desperate venture.

"Might I have your company to-morrow to the new art gallery? There are to be some fine pictures there, I am told."

She looked him directly in the eyes again and said, in the briefest possible way—

"No."

He was astonished, not at her refusal so much as at the manner of it. For an instant he held his peace. Then he said:

"I fear, Miss Fuller, you do not like me. Is it true?"

For the third time she looked at him, unswervingly, and said, "Yes," in the same tone.

He unlocked the door with his latchkey as they reached the house, and silently let her pass him.

"Decidedly," he said, beneath his breath, "I must have Clyde see this paragon."

CHAPTER IX.

"MY GOD! THEY WILL BE KILLED!"

Mark Melton had heard a good deal, in one way and another, about Clyde Morley. Frank was full of allusions to his brother, whom he usually spoke of with unconcealed cynicism. Mark knew that Clyde was a professed Christian, and held himself aloof from most of those thing that are called "vanities" by the stricter sect. He knew that it was expected he would become a clergyman, and that the austerity of his life made him ridiculous in the eyes of his brother, who thought such views beneath the common-sense of the present day. Creeping through Frank's expressions were covert sarcasms, which might mean much or little, but which indicated a feeling the reverse of brotherly. When he mentioned one morning that Clyde was expected in Boston soon to spend a few days, and that he (Frank) should take the opportunity to make a little journey he had been contemplating, Melton was moved to make a few inquiries.

"I don't like to appear inquisitive," he said, "but it seems a strange time for you to go away, just when your brother is coming here. I am almost led to think there is something strained in your relations."

"That doesn't half express it," Frank admitted. "I have had nothing to do with Clyde for a long time, except to send a semi-occasional reply to his nauseating letters of advice. We fell out long ago, and the breach widens with passing time. If I knew he was coming into that door in a minute from now I should pass out of the other one in order to escape him."

Melton said, in a friendly way, that Clyde must be very disagreeable.

"No, I don't suppose he is, to any one but me," was the reply. "He has friends who think the world of him, much stronger ones than any I have. But we are so entirely dissimilar that it amounts to a positive repulsion. I am convinced that I ought to do as I please, and he is forever telling me I am going to the devil; so there can be no middle ground. I used to say to him, 'How do you know, if you had my make-up, you wouldn't act as I do?' and it shocked him almost to death. He cannot conceive of a man of intelligence following any but the very highest ideals, and he never fails on any occasion to advance his opinions."

The medical student surveyed the face of his companion with interest.

"But you wouldn't do anything very wicked," he said. "You are a pretty moral young fellow. I've watched you a good deal. You never drink to excess, nor do any of those things that undermine the moral nature. I really don't see what ground of complaint your brother has toward you."

Morley tried to explain, with indifferent success. He said Clyde was doctrinal to a degree. He had ideas that had been exploded a thousand years ago,

and held to them pertinaciously, too. Every one who disagreed with him was wrong, every man who did not follow in his path was destined to damnation.

"Oh, he makes me tired!" was his final exclamation. "Perhaps you'll like him. I'm sure I hope you will. I'll give him a letter to you. Show him about the city. Introduce him to Col. Fuller and his daughter. And above all, tell him the best story you can about me, for I need a good word, I assure you. You can't get him to go to a theatre, so don't waste your time in asking him. As far as feminine beauty is concerned he only recognizes that which shines from a saintly soul. I really think you'll like him, Mark; you are almost a saint yourself; but he wearies me terribly, that's the truth."

Much puzzled, Melton thought a great deal about this description of Frank's twin brother, until he was most anxious to behold the strange individual. Frank was in the gayest of his humors when he parted from Mark, telling him that he should be gone a month or two on a little business in the South and hoped to escape the ridge of the Boston winter that was nearing its severe stage. Even the tears of Bessie Bright, which lay undried on his shoulder, seemed to have no effect on his spirits, but Melton had no suspicion of the presence of these shining drops of the young girl's devotion. Bessie had been unable to restrain her feelings when Frank told her it would be a number of weeks before she would see him again, but the kind way in which he drew her to his bosom and soothed her sobs upon his breast did much to lessen her pain. He had never told her that he loved her, though his kisses had been frequent,

and she did not know that such demonstrations may often mean quite the reverse of what she thought them. She hated to think of long weeks without him, and when she tried to say good-bye the words stuck in her throat like the amen of Macbeth.

Frank whispered that she must not mind the absence, which would at the longest be brief, and that when his brother came she must speak well of him, if she could; and so they parted. Before the street car came to overtake him he was whistling a merry tune and his countenance was as bright as the heaps of snow that reflected the gleams of the December sun in the yards adjacent.

Yes, Frank Morley left town with every appearance of happiness, though sad hearts might be behind him. And ten days later Clyde Morley registered at the Parker House, and was given several letters that had waited for him nearly a week in the pigeon-hole that bore his final initial.

Upon receiving his card, showing that he was at the hotel, Melton lost no time in calling. Before Clyde opened his sensitive-appearing mouth, Mark was impressed by his face and bearing. He did look like his brother, and yet—he did not. Frank had the color of health, this man the ashen hue of a brooding consumption. Frank had a long moustache, somewhat lighter than his dark hair. This man was shaven like a monk. Their eyes were, it is true, quite similar, but while the laughing nature of the one shone forth in his orbs, those of the other seemed freighted with the sins and woes of a universe.

"Mr. Melton, I am glad to meet you," said Clyde, coming forward to take the hand of the young man whose card had just been brought to him. "In a

city where I am without acquaintances, it is very kind of you to make your appearance so early."

"So like and yet so unlike!" That was what others had said, and it was the uppermost thought in Mark Melton's mind. It was easy to believe that they were twins, but by what freak of nature had they grown to such contrasts?

"Your brother begged me to lose no time in calling, said Melton, when he had taken the chair offered him. "As I am, perhaps, his most intimate friend, it was natural he should ask this of me, and I am very glad to put myself at your disposal."

Clyde winced perceptibly at the words "your brother." But he answered with politeness, if not without reserve, that he had heard much of Mr. Melton and was very glad to know him.

"It is my first visit to Boston," he went on to say. "I have been spending some time in the West, resting. I studied rather hard at college—at Amherst—and wanted to recuperate."

Melton ventured to remark with concern in his voice that Mr. Morley did not seem to have been wholly successful in this endeavor. But Clyde answered that he really had improved in health, and that he must not be judged entirely by his face, which was constitutionally pale.

"You intend to enter the ministry, I think Frank told me."

The same slight wincing was visible at the mention of the word "Frank" as at the expression, "your brother."

"I used to think so," said Clyde, a little sadly, "but now I grow to doubt it every day. I feel more and more my unworthiness for that high and sacred

office. It is no light matter, Mr. Melton, to set up as a teacher of religion and morals. He who does it ought to be certain beyond peradventure that his own character is well grounded."

Melton wondered if it was a family trait of the Morleys to underrate themselves.

"Excuse me if I say you are too sensitive," he replied. "All that can be asked of any one is to do the best he can."

"But which of us does that!" asked Morley, earnestly. "Who keeps himself as perfect as he can, both in deed and in thought? Show me a man who follows his very highest conscientiousness and I will show you a miracle."

Melton was compelled to smile.

"If all men were as particular as you, there would be no teachers of morals at all. Since, as you imply temptation is universal, the wicked world would be left to make its own way unchallenged."

Clyde Morley seemed pleased to have the subject treated in this sober manner. He liked this young man already.

"Temptations must lessen with age," he answered, "if they are resisted during the period of youth. When my hair is silvered and my vitality is dimmed I may be ready to enter on the duties for which I feel myself unworthy now."

Melton wondered, if this ascetic-looking man, with spiritual light shining out of him as the beams of a beacon shine on the sea, was not fit to teach mankind goodness, who else could be. He suggested a walk in order to acquaint the stranger a little with the city, and Clyde willingly assented. Thinking that the State House was a good point from

which to begin observations, Mark bent his steps in that direction, which took him past the door of the Revere Club. Being anxious to turn the conversation upon Frank, he mentioned that this was a club to which he belonged. To his surprise and a little to his consternation Clyde asked if a stranger might be permitted to enter.

As it was at an hour when a good many of the members were probably present, Mark hesitated fearing that the impression on the mind of his guest might not be the one he desired to have made. But he saw no reason to refuse, and responded with as good grace as he could, that he should be pleased to show him the house.

"The club is made up of a lot of young fellows, mostly employed in the wholesale part of the city," he exclaimed,as he was fumbling for his key. "Some of them are a trifle careless in their speech, but they are well meaning. If you hear any thoughtless language, I trust you will excuse it."

Clyde made no reply. If it came into his mind to say that thoughtless language was one of the inexcusable things, he did not utter the sentiment. As they entered the hallway his eyes roved over the pictures hung there, and Melton felt a sense of shame that they were of no better quality and taste. He was like one walking on pins and needles for a few moments, lest something particularly uncouth should greet the ears of this sensitive man. At first fortune favored him. Only three or four of the boys were present, and seeing that he had a stranger in his company, they suppressed their tones until the introduction came. But even before he had uttered the

words, "This is Mr. Clyde Morley, Frank's brother," every one of them had guessed as much.

Enough had been heard of the character of this brother of Frank's to sober most of those present, but his hand was taken with a pleasant clasp by all except Silas Clarke, who contented himself with a nod. Clarke had such a thorough contempt for everything religious that he could not bear to show even the outward form of friendship for one of the "psalm-singing" tribe. Clyde did not appear to notice that his reception was any different from the others, but Melton did, and he experienced a temporary mortification. To his mind, the duty of politeness was above all, and he determined to remonstrate with Silas the first time he had him alone.

"Will you lunch with me?" he asked Mr. Morley.

"Do you lunch here, also?" said Clyde.

"Yes." Melton explained to him the various uses of the club-house to its members, including, with some inward doubts, the billiards and pool, and suppressing all reference to the occasional games of cards, though they were never played for a money stake.

"If you will put up with our limited fare, I shall be glad to have you take a slight repast."

Mark gave this invitation with a fervent hope that it would be refused, but Clyde accepted graciously and the twain took a seat a little to one side. Mark felt that he should be glad when it was over and he had this peculiar stranger out on the sidewalk again.

"Beer for two?" asked the waiter, in the most matter-of-fact manner, and Mark's heart sank again. He shook his head with a somewhat savage motion, which the attendant did not in the least understand.

Then excusing himself for a moment, Melton sought the steward, and drawing him into the next room, warned him that he had a solemn duty to fulfil for the next half hour.

"This gentleman with me is Frank Morley's brother," he said, excitedly. "He is a divinity student—a clergyman in embryo, you understand. I don't want any more waiters coming to ask if he will have *beer!* You must keep an eye on each man who enters that door and tell him to be careful to say nothing that might possibly offend. I'm in a scrape, and I rely on you to help me out."

The steward promised, with a grin, and Mark returned to his guest. He had hardly done so when Charlie Wilkins rushed into the room abruptly.

"*Oh-me-Gard!*" exclaimed that young gentleman, as the steward made a dive at him and whispered the important information in his ear. "*Is* it?" he added, quite loud enough to be heard by the parties most interested. "*Is* it? Oh, the *de*-vil!"

Clyde heard very well, though he affected not to, and his lunch arriving at that moment he proceeded to eat with deliberation, bowing gravely to the remarks with which Melton favored him. The other lunchers, from their tables on the opposite side of the room, discussed the new-comer in low tones.

"Regular gospel sharp, eh?" was the comment of the young man from the High street leather house.

"I'll bet he's a sneak," said Silas Clarke, contemptuously. "There isn't one of those fellows I'd trust when my back was turned. Why, only this morning we had a dispatch about the elopement of Rev. Mr. Harding with one of his deacon's wives. I've a

notion to call Melton up before the committee for bringing such a fellow in here."

But to this view Charlie Wilkins objected.

"A-ny bwo-ther of Fwank Morley has got a wight to come he-re," he said. "Not much like Fwank-ie, hough, is he? Bah Jove, boys! He looks like the pic-ture of St. John, in the La-st Sup-per."

"He looks like a crank, that's all I can see he looks like," growled Clarke. "If he's his twin, I think all the brains for the pair must have gone into the head of the other one."

But Wilkins resented this, and as Clarke intended to borrow ten dollars of him that afternoon, he did not press the opinion. Presently Charlie strolled over to Melton, and held out his hand.

"Beg paw-don, old boy," he drawled, "but some one te-lls me this is a bwo-ther of Fwank Morley. If that's the case, doncherknow, I want to shake with him."

Much relieved, Mark made the formal presentation.

"Fwank is a gweat favor-wite here," continued Charlie, imagining that he was saying the most agreeable thing in the world. "There isn't a more pop-ular fel-low in the cl-ub than Fwank-ie. He's told us all about you—and—and we're doocid glad to see you, doncherknow."

The heavy eyes looked up with sudden interest.

"What has my brother told you of me?"

A recollection of some of the things Frank had said came upon the mental mirror of Mr. Wilkins, embarrassing him for a moment.

"Oh," he said, recovering himself, "he said you were going to pweach the—the gos-pel, and—and

that sort of thing; but that you were a vewy good fel-low, all the same, you know. Yes, he said you were not so bad when one came to know you, you know. And," he added, with a great effort, "I more than half think he's wight. Ya-as, I do."

Mr. Clyde Morley bowed gravely again, and turned once more to Melton, who was red with vexation. Silas Clarke was smiling maliciously and some of the others could not maintain their countenances. Thinking that he had somehow "put his foot in it," Wilkins went back to his seat, where his error was explained to him in an undertone by the young man connected with the leather trade. Subdued ejaculations of "Bah Jove!" and "Oh-me-Gard!" floated across to where Clyde Morley sat.

"Shall we walk out again?" asked Melton, glad of any excuse to quit the place.

The pair went out upon Beacon street, by the State House, and across the Common and Public Garden. At the corner of Park square an unforeseen incident occurred.

It is not the easiest place in Boston to cross at any time, that same Park square, but on this day it was particularly crowded. Lettie Fuller and Bessie Bright were trying to get through the tangled maze of teams and street cars. In watching their chances they did not take into account a double team attached to a dray, and it was almost upon them before they had the least warning.

"My God! They will be killed!" cried Melton, springing to the rescue.

Morley saw them at the same instant and was not a second behind his companion. In a moment one of his arms encircled Lettie, already under the feet

of the animals, while with the other hand he caught the bridle of the horse nearest him so violently that the beast was brought to a sudden halt. Melton had at first directed his efforts to saving the same girl, but seeing that she was safe he picked Bessie from the pavement and carried her to the nearest drug-store, to which Clyde also assisted Miss Fuller. Bessie was quite unconscious, but Lettie walked without much difficulty, and after a moment's rest announced that she had sustained no serious hurt.

The druggest examined the prostrate form of Miss Bright while a boy ran for a doctor, and gave it as his opinion that she had broken one of her arms. When the doctor came he had the injured girl taken into his office in the Hotel Pelham, and applied himself to her restoration, which was soon accomplished.

"Excuse me, Miss Fuller," said Mark, as soon as he could find an opportunity, "permit me to introduce Mr. Clyde Morley, of whom you may have heard his brother speak."

Miss Fuller, who had been regarding Mr. Morley with wide-open eyes, made a confused response. Melton paused to secure the necessary recognition and then applied himself to assisting the doctor. It was, as the druggist had predicted, a case of broken arm, and the physician decided to set it at once. The operation was not difficult and soon the splints and bandages were in place. The knowledge of the medical student made his assistance of value and it was unnecessary to send for other aid. Bessie bore her pain with remarkable fortitude, though she was still very weak.

Miss Fuller, who had fastened her gaze on Mr. Morley, turned it with a strange fascination upon the

surgeon. This was the life that her would-be husband had chosen, a life that his wife would have to share, whether she liked it or not. It was this dreadful kind of thing that would enable him to "support her," to use the expression Bessie had repeated.

"Does she live far from here?" asked the deep, rich voice of Mr. Clyde Morley.

"Ten minutes' ride or so," Lettie answered. "As soon as she can travel I will have a carriage called. I have not been able to recover my thoughts enough," she added, in apology, "to thank you for the service you did me. If you will favor us with your address, I will give it to my father."

He replied that he would not trouble her father over so slight a service. But he added that his brother Frank had written to him, speaking highly of the Colonel, and he hoped some day to have the privilege of calling. Miss Lettie thanked him again, saying she was sure he would be welcome, and he rose to take his leave.

"There seems to be nothing more that I can do, Mr. Melton," he said to Mark. "I have some letters to write, and think I will return to my hotel. If you can call on me later in the evening I shall be very glad. Perhaps you will dine with me there at seven?"

The invitation was accepted, and with another bow to Miss Fuller, Clyde took his leave.

Lettie looked after him from the window as he walked up the mall.

"That is the kind of man I could love," she was saying to herself.

CHAPTER X.

HELL FIRE AND THAT SORT OF THING.

Col. Fuller was considerably excited when the carriage in which Miss Bright was reclining, supported by pillows, arrived at the house. A man may go through an engagement in the army with unfaltering heart and see his comrades falling around him with unmoved pulses, and still experience a strange sensation of giving way when some slight accident comes upon a member of his own family. When he saw from his window that men were assisting a female figure up the steps he flew down stairs.

"What has happened? Is it Lettie? She isn't killed, is she? Ah! there you are!" he cried, perceiving his daughter. "What were you doing? Tell me all about it!"

As Miss Bright was walking between the hackman and Mr. Melton there did not seem to be any reply needed to at least one of these queries. As soon as possible Miss Fuller answered the others by giving a brief account of the accident.

"By George!" exclaimed her father. "You must be more careful, Lettie! Broke her arm, you say? I hope the surgeon has set it well. It would be a deuce of a pity to have it grow out of shape! And you say Mr. Morley saved you. Why, I thought he was still out of the city."

He retained his clasp on the girl, taken in the first moment of alarm. She shrank a little from him,

not returning his pressure, but he did not notice that.

"It was not the Mr. Morley you know," she explained, "but his brother, who has recently arrived."

The Colonel gave a long, low whistle.

"Not the preacher?" he cried. "Not the one he told me about, who believes in brimstone and hell fire and that sort of thing! No, such a fellow would be too much occupied in thinking of his soul to see whether a girl was under a horse's hoofs or not. Risked his life! No canting Christian spouter would have done that."

Lettie managed to draw herself away from her father. She wanted to get a full view of his face when she told him he was mistaken.

"It was that one—the divinity student," she said, impressively. "Mr. Melton and he were out walking together when they saw our danger. He risked his life, indeed! Had it not been for him you would probably have received me in a worse plight than poor Mrs. Bright finds Bessie."

Col. Fuller was dumbfounded for a few moments at this impossible statement. He began several times with "By George!" and "What the devil!" but he could find nothing to express his feelings.

"Damn him!" he shouted at last. "He must be an out-and-outer! I'd like to see a preacher of that kind. It would be refreshing. I can't understand it. I've seen hundreds of them, and they were all no good. We had them in the army, and when the bullets began to whistle they were as scared as the weakest little dry-goods clerk in the brigade. 'What's the matter with you!' I used to say to

them. 'A rifle-ball only means quick transit to glory. Why don't you stand up and face the music as I do?' It was useless. They turned tail and skipped for the rear every time.* Bad as this world is, they were not ready to exchange it for a crown and harp. By George! If I'd had my way every one of the cowards would have been drummed out of camp to the tune of the 'Rogue's March!' And this one actually saved you! Well, Well! wonders never cease! I'll have him up here and see what kind of a specimen he is before I'm twenty-four hours older!"

Have him up there! A strange sensation of joy ran over the girl's body. She would see this handsome man again, so tall, so straight, so self-reliant, so courteous. She would see him, under her own roof, not surreptitiously, but with the approbation of her father! She felt that the harsh epithets the Colonel had used in reference to the "cloth" would be softened in the presence of this man, so different apparently from others of his profession. A friendship might be established between him and the Fullers that would ripen into something warmer as the days went by!

Lettie had once thought herself in love with Frank Morley. She had imagined it because he was almost the only interesting young man she had ever known, but when she found his attentions devoted to another, and when he coolly attempted to forward her marriage with his friend Melton, pride and self-respect fought in her favor against him. Now, in this twin brother of his, she saw all Frank's excellencies magnified, and a thousand new ones of

* I am sure the record would disprove this.—A. R.

which he had shown no evidence. Even as she reflected on these things, her heart sank. What had she to offer in exchange for these attributes? She had never felt her insignificance as she did that day, her total incapacity for winning such a man as she conceived Clyde Morley to be.

But he was coming! She could look into his face again! He had said he would come, and her erratic father had promised to give him a hearty welcome.

Bessie was delirious that night and in her troubled sleep she uttered the word "Frank" many times. Her aunt knew whose name it was, and wished with all her heart that the owner of it were there to extend his sympathy to the injured girl. The good lady had settled it in her own mind that this couple was destined to be married, and she thought a little companionship during the days of convalescence would be a valuable aid toward that end. She did not know that Frank had not left his address. She did not know that the girl had run anxiously to meet the postman every day since he went—though he had not promised definitely to write—and had been in every instance disappointed. So she whispered, "Yes, dear," fifty times during the long night. "Yes, dear, Frank will come."

Toward morning Bessie opened her eyes. She had been half conscious for some minutes, and had heard the soothing words in a vague way.

"Is Frank in Boston?" she asked, with no sign of bashfulness.

"No, my dearie," replied Mrs. Bright. "But if he knew you were hurt, he would come very quickly, I'm sure."

"I'm glad he's not here," sighed Bessie. "I would not like to have him see me like this. What does the doctor say? Shall I have to lie here long?"

Mrs. Bright encouraged her all she could and bade her be quiet, as it would tire her to talk.

Bessie had heard of Clyde, and knew he was expected in the city. She thought it a good omen that he had helped save her and her friend from the death that was so imminent. She did not know that Clyde's effort had been directed entirely to the salvation of Miss Fuller, and that had he picked her out instead she might now have been sitting up with whole limbs, though perhaps Lettie would be suffering in her place. It was pleasant to think of one belonging to Frank's family having done something for her, and in the calm quiet which the thought evolved she fell asleep again, this time a healthful, invigorating slumber.

If the girl with the broken arm managed to snatch a brief rest, the other girl who had been rescued could not get even a moment of unconsciousness. A thousand times between dark and daylight did she feel around her again the arms of Clyde Morley —that combination of strength and gentleness. He had carried her twenty steps or more before she recovered enough to tell him she was able to walk, and even then he had not ceased to support her, as if he feared she had over-estimated her strength. There was a quality in the clasp that was a revelation to her. It was the clasp of a Man—not merely of a human being of the masculine sex—of one who had the attributes of a man in mind as well as body. Resembling his brother as he did to a degree that was almost startling, they were as unlike in their

effect upon her as two total strangers could have been.

As she lay there on her sleepless couch, Lettie resolved that when she had an opportunity she would ask Clyde Morley to write to his brother of Bessie's accident, that Frank might, if there was any honor in him, send her at least one letter to say that he was sorry. None of the others could tell where he was, for Mark had said as much a few days before, but Clyde would know.

In the morning, after bathing her tired eyes and obliterating as far as possible the effects of sleeplessness from her face, Lettie went to visit Bessie. The greeting was cordial enough. Bessie said she was sure she would soon be about again, and she was glad Lettie had suffered so little harm. Then she asked a great many questions about their rescuer, until Lettie was puzzled how to reply.

They were the ordinary questions of a girl of nineteen. Was he tall? Was he handsome? What color were his eyes and his hair? Did he look so very much like his brother? She was dying of curiosity to see him. Ah, he was coming to call on Col. Fuller! Perhaps she could catch a glimpse of him through the crack in the doorway. It was such a shame she was not able to sit up and see him. But he would certainly call more than once. He must, in fact, if she had to send for him on purpose. She had a right to give him her personal thanks for his bravery, and if he remained a week in Boston she would manage to arrange it some way.

When the doctor came to examine the arm, Bessie was in such good spirits that he prophesied a speedy recovery. Before he had finished Mr. Melton called,

and by virtue of his semi-medical standing was admitted to the chamber where the injured girl lay. Mark even stretched his privilege by staying a little while after the physician departed, for he wanted to talk with Bessie about Clyde Morley, in which subject he rightly guessed she would be interested.

"I had dinner with him last evening, at the Parker House," he said, when he had finished a minute description of the stranger. "He interests me very much. I wonder what is the real basis of the trouble between him and Frank."

"Trouble?" repeated Bessie.

"Yes, the estrangement. Frank never speaks of him except in the most cynical way, and Clyde told me last night that he did not know his brother's address. Of course they are not at all alike, but that should not make them hate each other, and they come pretty near doing that."

Bessie's interest in Clyde Morley suffered a severe relapse. She did not care to know a man who hated Frank.

"I suppose *you* can't tell me where he is," said Melton, in a half interrogation. "I didn't know but he might have told you," he added, apologetically, as the color rose to her cheek. "Lodgers sometimes do leave their addresses, you know—in case of mail, or anything to be forwarded."

"I do not think he gave it to my aunt," replied Bessie, in a low voice, "and there was no reason why he should give it to me. He said he should travel so constantly that it would be useless to pretend to say where he might be on any given date. His mail never came here to the house. He paid for his room in advance, so there was nothing else required."

Mark listened to her with mild wonder. Had she then gotten entirely over that partiality for Frank that she at one time exhibited? He remembered the conversation in which he had urged his friend to be fair and straightforward with this girl, and concluded that an understanding must have been arrived at. Frank was a strange fellow, whom he had never pretended to comprehend, but he liked him immensely, and could not forget the little favors he had done him, notably the efforts put forth in his behalf with the Fuller family. He wondered a good deal over the lack of affection between the brothers, but he thought a hundred unknown reasons might account for that. Sometimes matters of property, or fondness of one over the other on the part of parents, caused such things. He determined, however, to say things in Frank's favor whenever he had a good opportunity, as a piece of fairness and loyalty.

Clyde did not have much business to occupy him in Boston. He strolled about the city and into the suburbs, and at least once every day met Melton for a lunch or a dinner, in a quiet way, where they could talk together. It was more than a week before he took occasion to visit the Fullers, though he received a written invitation from the Colonel, through the hand of Melton. He did not think there was any need of haste, he said, afterwards, and he feared it would look, if he went too early, as if he was anxious to be thanked for the little service he had done. Mark did not take him a second time to the club, for he feared that either Clarke, in his malice, or Wilkins, in his good intentions, would say something to make it unpleasant. Their lunches were taken either at Parker's or at some of the minor restaurants.

"I wonder how long it will be before your brother visits Boston again," Mark said, on one of these occasions, as they were sitting back from the table after the coffee.

"I have no idea."

Silence followed.

"He frequently spoke of you," continued Mark, "and gave me a strong desire to know you personally. When he said you were coming here I asked him to arrange some way that I could meet you, and I am much obliged to him for doing so."

Clyde met this politeness with an appreciative bow, but still his lips were sealed. Melton resolved on a bold move.

"I am afraid you do not like your brother as well as I do," he said.

Clyde looked up, as if surprised.

"I am *obliged* to like him, since he is my brother," he corrected. "It would be more correct to say I do not *approve* of him. He does not follow his best impulses; or, if he does,"—he hesitated an instant—"they are not of the highest order."

Melton paused a little while to digest this statement.

"I think you misjudge him," he answered, finally. "He may not have a nature exactly like yours, but he is a noble, generous, whole-souled fellow, who is liked by every man who meets him."

Clyde seemed to undergo a mental struggle.

"And by every woman?" he said, suggestively.

Mark caught his breath.

"It is nothing against a man because women find him attractive, I hope," said he.

"That depends. If he is honest with them, if he

says or does nothing to give them false notions of his intentions, if he treats them as he would wish other men to treat his sisters, if he had any, that is one thing. But you know very well, Mr. Melton, that all men do not follow this golden rule in their dealings with the opposite sex."

Yes, Mark knew it. He knew it, as every man who walks up and down this garden called the earth must know it. But he did not see how that statement could be connected with Frank.

"Pardon me, Mr. Morley," he replied, "if I tell you that your brother is no such person as your words imply. I have lived closely to him for many months, and I do not think a man can harbor that kind of thoughts and keep them always to himself. Never in the time I have known him has the least indelicacy manifested itself in his speech or actions. The most that could be said is that he is careless toward women—that while they lose their hearts to him he sees little to care for in them."

Clyde was giving the speaker his utmost attention.

"Let me ask you," he said, as Mark closed, "if you can conceive a more dangerous position for a young woman than the one you mention—loving a man who does not know what love is. What can help her being at his mercy if he chooses to ruin her life?"

Melton's loyalty nerved him to the task of proving to this prejudiced mind that it was laboring under a delusion.

"I tell you," he answered, "Frank Morley is as honorable in the matter of women as he is in his relations with men. I will give one instance to prove what I say, and I do it under the seal of confidence,

for perhaps I have no right to mention it at all. You saw the young girl whose arm was broken the other day, by the horses, the one I pulled from under their feet. It is not too much to say that she was smitten with Frank at first sight. He began to accompany her to matinees and walks. In conversation with me one evening he admitted that he had no idea of marrying—that a wedded life would be distasteful. I boldly alluded to Miss Bright, saying that she was learning to care too much for him, and that if he meant what he said, he should cease his attentions. He seemed to coincide fully with my opinion, when it was presented to him in that light, and though he rooms at the house I am sure his relations to this girl have become of the ordinary kind between a lodger and the family of his landlady. If he had been like some men, do you think he would have hearkened to me so readily ?"

Convinced that no argument could be stronger than this, Melton tipped back in his chair and waited for his companion to speak. Clyde's pale face was set and the weary expression in his eyes seemed more pronounced than ever.

"He is my brother," he said, as if admitting an unpleasant fact, "but that is no reason why I should be blind to his faults. How can you be sure he *has* relinquished his interest in that girl ?"

"Is it not proof enough," cried Melton, "that she does not even possess his address ? She told me yesterday that he had not given it to her, and that she knew no reason why he should write."

"But she must love him still," said Clyde, reproachfully. "He has succeeded in making her life unhappy, and then gone his way. Did you ever see

a cruel lad pull a wing from a butterfly and then decide that he would maim it no further ?"

Melton was nonplussed for a moment.

"What more could he have done," he demanded, "than to leave her, when he has resolved never to marry."

"It is an infamous resolve !" replied Morley, his eyes flashing. "Marriage is the duty of every true man. In no other state can he keep himself pure after he reaches an age like his or mine. In no other way," he added, coloring a little, "except it be by invoking the special favor of his Heavenly Father !"

The two men left the restaurant, and as Melton walked toward home he felt as he never had before what real religion might mean to an aspiring soul.

CHAPTER XI.

A DANGEROUS COMPANION.

Lettie Fuller had looked for the appearance of Clyde Morley every evening for more than a week. Her father had remained indoors with the same view, and both had grown impatient at his non-appearance. The Colonel felt a sense of something like pique. He had written to Mr. Morley inviting him to come and receive his thanks, and had received a reply stating that the young man would respond as soon as he found time. It was one of the results of his military training that made the Colonel expect a more speedy compliance with a request of this kind, and when

two or three evenings passed and Clyde did not come, he gave vent to his impatience in no very complimentary expressions.

"I wonder if that fellow expects me to stay in all winter on his account!" he blurted out. "By George, if he does, he'll find himself mistaken! I'm not in the habit of dancing attendance on any man of less rank than a general. If he isn't here by eight o'clock to-morrow evening, he'll find me out when he does come. I can't lose my time at the club on any such nonsensical business as this!"

Lettie vouchsafed no answer. She half sympathized with him, and had even begun to fear that Mr. Morley would leave the city without calling. Mark Melton had given her an idea of his excessive modesty and disinclination to be patronized. There was nothing she could do, however, but wait. And she was too used to her father's querulous moods to mind them especially.

"I suppose the confounded preacher is off attending some prayer meeting!" growled the Colonel. (He seemed to think that all the contumely in the world could be crowded into that word "preacher.") "He's down among the North End sailors, talking bosh to them about their souls, or hobnobbing with some of the lady managers of the missions. The brother of such a sensible, hard-headed fellow as Frank Morley, too!" (He forgot for the moment that he had never cared a great deal for Frank.) "If he hadn't pulled you out from under the feet of those horses I'd see him damned before I'd let him enter my door. All I want is to do the decent thing and let him go. What the devil can he be so busy

about? Does he think I'm going to stay in every night like a damned dormouse?"

Not being familiar with the habits of the animal in question, and having, in fact, an idea that it was not famed for remaining at home after nightfall, Lettie still said nothing. The next evening her father waited till half-past eight, and then went for a walk of an hour, to "show the preacher," as he expressed it, that he "couldn't make a monkey of him." When ten o'clock came and no Clyde Morley he broke out into angry epithets and sent Lettie to bed with a scowl on his brow.

"Good-night, papa," she said, kissing his cheek as usual.

"Good-night," he replied, still growling. "I sha'n't wait again for him! He can wait for *me* the next time. I'm not to be fooled like this."

The girl felt her face flush at the suggestion that Clyde might come when her father was absent. In that case she would have him for a little while to herself, a consummation not at all to her disliking. And strangely enough that is exactly the way it did turn out. When Col. Fuller had been regularly to his club as usual for three consecutive nights, having ceased to expect his visitor, Mr. Morley called.

A servant girl showed him up. Before the knock came on her door, Lettie heard his voice.

"Yes, I will wait till he returns," he was saying. "I have plenty of time."

"He will come at ten," said the domestic. "He is as regular as the clock, sir."

Miss Lettie opened the door and, suppressing her emotion, recognized the visitor only by a bow and extended hand. The usual formalities were ex-

changed and she repeated to him what ne already knew about the absense of the Colonel and the hour at which he would be expected. She felt it her duty to add that her father was undoubtedly at the Veterans Club, and that she could send a messenger thither, if he desired. But to her relief Clyde answered that he would not disturb him, and that he had quite as lief wait till his ordinary hour for returning.

"I feel that a sort of apology is due," he said, "for my delay in answering his kind letter in person, but my time has been much occupied. I knew I should have to take my chances of finding him at home. I hope," he added, "that I shall not be a hindrance to anything you may be doing, for if you will give me a book I can make the time pass very well."

She told him she was doing nothing particular, and even at the words she felt a guilty blush mantling her cheek. Perhaps he felt—this strict religionist—that idleness was in itself a fault. She knew she should be afraid of him, afraid of his opinion, afraid of saying something that had better have been left unsaid. But he seemed so kind in his manner, and drew her on so easily, that she found herself talking to him within a few minutes as if she had known him all her life.

"And so you and your father live here alone?" he said, as if much interested.

"Yes, sir, that is, in a way it is living alone, but we are really, as much as we wish to be, a part of the family of Mrs. Bright, our landlady. We get most of our meals with her. And her niece—the young lady who was injured, you know—is my companion a good deal of the time."

That moved him to inquire the condition of Miss Bessie, and he expressed his gratification at learning that she was now able to sit up in a chair.

"I have heard from her once or twice, through Mr. Melton," he said, "and knew that the case was progressing favorably. He tells me he calls here quite often—to play cribbage with your father," —he added, quickly, as she seemed about to qualify the statement.

"He comes once a week," she replied, with slight confusion. "Cribbage is a game of which my father is very fond. He acquired a taste for it in the army, many years ago. He—he never plays for money, or anything of that kind—merely for the excitement of the game, and the skill employed."

Mr. Morley set her at ease by saying that he saw no great harm in cribbage in itself, though he never played it.

"But I have had too busy a life to find the time," he said. "It was less than two years ago that I graduated from Amherst, and since then I have traveled a good deal."

She wanted to talk with him about himself, and she knew no better way than to say outright that she understood he intended to become a clergyman.

"I am not so sure of that as I once was," he replied, a little sadly, she thought. "I am coming to doubt a great deal of late."

"About your faith?" she asked, timidly.

"Oh, no! That is grounded on a rock. My doubt is whether I am called to the pulpit; whether I am fitted for so great a work. To be candid, I find myself more and more inclined to think I am not, as the days go by."

They talked in this vein for some minutes, and before they finished the subject she took occasion to mention that her father was a total disbeliever in revealed religion. She warned him that the Colonel could hardly refrain from expressing his views on all occasions, and expressed the hope that no acrimonious controversy would arise between them.

"That could hardly be," he smiled. "I should like to convince him, if he would let me, that he is wrong , but if we continued to differ, it would be, on my side at least, with good humor. If I may ask the question, Miss Fuller, I trust you do not agree with him in his conclusions?"

She had no hesitation in telling him the precise truth. They had not talked together an hour for nothing. He drew everything out of her as easily as the sun draws up the water in the pool. She had never given the matter of religion much thought. She was not an unbeliever, but hardly knew enough about it to call herself a believer. She was willing to learn. She would be glad to have some one capable of doing so teach her.

She was not at all satisfied with the outcome of this admission when he suggested that she should attend church and put herself under the guidance of the wife of the pastor or some similarly competent lady. She had half hoped that this saintly young man would offer to instruct her himself, and she knew she would believe whatever he told her, as if it came on tables of stone direct from the Invisible.

"You know my brother—my brother Frank—quite well, I believe?" he said, changing the conversation rather suddenly.

"Not so very well," she stammered. "He has been here, with Mr. Melton, to see papa."

"And not to see his daughter?" he asked, inquisitively but kindly.

She reddened deliciously.

"It was not on my account that he took lodgings here," she replied. "His attentions have all been given in another quarter—to Miss Bright."

Her old jealousy of Bessie had flown with the advent of this new-comer, and she saw no harm in telling him all about it.

"I wish to speak to you of her," said Clyde, impressively. "It is a harsh thing to say of a brother, you may think, but the fact of his relationship does not lessen in the least—it even, in fact, increases my duty. In one word, he is not a good companion for her. It would be useless for me to tell her this. She would think I had some ulterior motive. But I can say it to you, and if you can do anything to lessen their intimacy, I hope you will do so."

Never in the twenty years of her life had any person—to say nothing of any man—let fall a hint like this upon the ears of Lettie Fuller. It was a novelty of the first class to her young mind. The intimation was one not to be mistaken. It conveyed a great deal more than the mere words seemed of necessity to imply. She had thought of such things—she could not have been twenty and in good health if she had not. To hear them spoken of was a different matter, and what surprised—almost startled—her, was that she did not mind it.

"I do not know what I can say," she replied, seeing that he expected an answer. "I have seen very little of him. I know Bessie likes him, and I had

supposed, until lately, that he reciprocated her sentiments. But I hear he went away without leaving her his address, and that he has not written. And I have thought—perhaps—it would amount to nothing, after all."

The clear eyes, troubled though they seemed, were on her.

"It is true his attentions are likely to amount to nothing, so far as they might refer to *marriage*," said Clyde. "It is his boast that he is not a marrying man—that he intends to pursue a life of celibacy to the end. But that does not make him a less dangerous companion for a girl as pure and good as I believe Miss Bright to be. The most terrible results might follow if she should continue to retain her present affection for him. I cannot talk as plainly as I would like, Miss Fuller, but you understand. My brother must not be allowed to ruin that young life."

Again the knowledge that she ought to mind this kind of talk—and that she did not—swept over Lettie Fuller. The divinity student meant well in what he said; but how was it that she, so unused to hearing such things discussed, listened to him with the *sang froid* of a matron twice her age?

"I hope," she said, "you are wrong in thinking he would be willing to perpetrate any such iniquity."

Clyde Morley sighed deeply.

"Willing!" he cried, with emotion. "Who of us can say what he would be willing to do—what he could resist doing—under certain temptation? He must be kept from her—that is the only way. I wish there was some good excuse to ask him to get

another lodging. They will be thrown together too much if he comes back here. Help me in this, Miss Fuller, and earn my gratitude and the consciousness of doing a meritorious action."

His anxiety seemed intense. The girl answered that she would do anything that she could ; but she asked, with some show of diffidence, why he did not write or speak to his brother, himself, on this matter.

"I never speak to him, if I can help it, and seldom write," he replied, his brow darkening. "We are too much unlike to find pleasure in each other's company. He would not pay the least attention, and if I should give him advice, it would be more apt to lead him on in the wrong path than to dissuade him from it. No, Miss Fuller, I must rely upon you for the present. Perhaps you may do much good. Will you give me your hand upon it ?"

It was the most natural thing in the world that she should place her hand in his, as she did, without hesitation. He pressed it gently, almost absent-mindedly, and before either of them spoke again her father's step was heard on the stair.

"Col. Fuller, I presume," said Clyde, rising, and proceeding to introduce himself. "I am Clyde Morley."

The Colonel, in the presence of his guest, forgot for the moment the anger that had brooded in his heart, and met the extended palm with a warm grasp.

"I should have known you anywhere, sir," he said heartily, "from your resemblance to Frank. I am glad to see you, sir. I hope you have not been waiting long."

Clyde explained that he had feared to interrupt

some affair at the club, and had persuaded Miss Fuller not to send for her father.

"Affair at the club!" repeated the doughty Colonel. "I was doing nothing at all, sir, but throwing an evening away. I would have left fifty clubs to meet you. Why, you saved my daughter's life, sir!"

"You overstate the fact, I am sure," said Clyde, modestly. "At any rate, what I did any one else could have done had they happened to be there. It cost me nothing, and with your permission we will allude to it no more."

The Colonel brought his fist down on the centre table.

"But I *must* allude to it, sir!" he protested. "She is my only child, sir! I shall never forget it, sir! As long, sir, as I have a roof to shelter my head, you will be welcome under it!"

Clyde thanked him and adroitly turned the conversation into other channels. But before they had proceeded far, Miss Lettie came to lean over her father's shoulder and press upon his weather-beaten face the good-night kiss. The visitor watched the tableau with interest. Twenty years of age, and yet with all the simplicity of a child of ten!

Lettie knew that the rule which she was obeying was inexorable. Nothing but the presence of a guest had justified her in remaining out of bed beyond her ordinary time. She had never hated so much to leave the room, for she wanted to observe this strange man and to listen to every word he said. When she turned to say good-night to him also, he only responded with a bow, seeming to have turned all his attention to his host.

She did not know what else she could have

expected, but she was disappointed. A moment before her father arrived he had held her hand in his, and her heart beat a happy tune at the contact. It was, to be sure, over an agreement about third and fourth parties, but it was something to her, though it might have meant nothing to him. It was a drawing together, and now they were pushed apart. And by whom? By her father! The little rebellion that had arisen in her breast took on a new lease of life as she contemplated the situation.

"A preacher!" cried the Colonel, the next morning, in allusion to his guest of the preceding evening. "He ought to know better than to have anything to do with such nonsense, and I'm going to tell him so before I'm through with him. Why, he's a gentleman, damn his soul! If he ever calls when I'm out, treat him like a lord, Lettie, treat him like a lord!"

CHAPTER XII.

"NO WOMAN KNOWS HERSELF."

Bessie's arm grew better as the weeks advanced and soon she was about the house as usual, with the injured member in a sling. Her manners were not so blithesome as formerly, for the long absense of Frank Morley and the total lack of news of him wore upon her. She had conceived one of those strong first loves that time has so little effect in wearing away. He had not said very much to her. Even when he had pressed his lips to her cheek or stolen

an arm about her waist the action was more like one girl embracing another than of a sweetheart. She felt that she had no right to complain of him.

One afternoon a ring came at the front door, and Bessie, as was frequently her custom, answered it. A stranger stood at the threshold. She gave a low cry, and was about to throw herself into his arms, when she comprehended who he was. For a second she had been deceived by the remarkable similarity in the features of the brothers, and thought that Frank stood before her. The joy at seeing him again, and the unexpectedness of it, had nearly made her commit a grave error. Realizing the strangeness of her appearance, Bessie drew back instantly and Mr. Morley announced his name.

"I called to see if Col. Fuller was at home," said Clyde, gravely.

"No, sir, he is out just at present," came the trembling response, "but you may come in and wait, if you please."

"Is Miss Fuller in?"

"She is out also, but she will soon return."

"Very well, I will enter."

As he removed his hat, upon passing through the doorway, Bessie saw that the resemblance lessened. The hair combed straight back on both sides and the extraordinary paleness of the broad forehead was not at all like Frank's. And still there was the Morley look that could not be mistaken. She would have known that if Frank had a twin brother in the world this was he.

"Pardon me," spoke the full, deep voice of the stranger, "but I think you must be Miss Bright. The condition of your arm and a dim recollection of

your face as I saw it some days ago in a physician's office, tells me I am correct."

Bessie admitted the truth of his supposition and said she wished to thank him for what he had done in behalf of herself and friend that day.

"No more on that subject, I beg," he smiled. "Col. Fuller has quite satiated me with compliments for what was so easily accomplished. I will say, however, that Mr. Melton showed courage worthy of praise; and skill, also, later, in assisting the surgeon."

Try as she might she could not be easy in his presence. He did his best to relieve her of her embarrassment, but she could not forget that her manner when she first opened the street-door must have caused him suspicion. He talked to her about Boston, about the weather, about the Fullers. Then he turned the conversation into another channel.

"You know my brother," he said, "I believe. I fancied, a few moments ago, that you had been momentarily deceived by the resemblance between him and me. And I gathered that had I really been he you would have been better pleased."

This was a bold beginning, but he knew that his time with her might be brief, and that what he had to do had best be done quickly. He had seen Lettie several times since she had promised to talk with Bessie upon this matter, and she had been compelled to admit that she had not as yet made even a beginning, though she fully intended to do so.

Bessie was intensely confused, but the very abruptness of his remark was its salvation. She could not dispute that it was true in the face of such evidence as she had given him.

"I think, sir," she answered, as soon as she could recover herself, "that one is usually better pleased to see acquaintances than strangers."

He bowed as if no one could deny that proposition.

"I wish I could say to you what I feel I ought," said he.

She scented the arraignment of Frank that was in his mind and roused herself to meet the emergency.

"I think you need say nothing, if it refers in any way to your brother. I already know that you are not partial to him, that you are in the habit of speaking disparagingly of him. He is a lodger in the house, and I could not listen to anything to his disfavor. If you wish to say anything of that kind, I will call my aunt, and you can speak to her."

The dark eyes of the divinity student grew darker.

"If you prefer it, I will tell her what I know, but you had better think a little before you compel me to do that."

Bessie turned toward him, her hand on the door-knob, her cheeks aflame. What did he know? What could he say? Perhaps enough to make her aunt refuse Frank a room in the house when he returned, and to order her niece not to see or speak to him again.

"There is no need of your telling either of us anything, I assure you," she said, nervously. "Mr. Morley has behaved himself perfectly here. He is liked by every person in the house, even by Col. Fuller, who seldom makes friends with any one. There can be nothing to justify you in giving us an ill impression of him; unless he is a burglar or

murderer, or something of that kind, by which we or our lodgers are put in mortal danger."

Bessie delivered herself of this speech with a haughty air, and thought it would dispose of this disagreeable gentleman's threats, but she did not reckon aright.

"I am surprised that you should excite yourself in such a manner, Miss Bessie," was Clyde's calm reply. "I am not about to discharge an agreeable duty. I would rather speak well than ill of a brother. I do not wish to say a word to Mrs. Bright, but you will compel me to do so if you refuse to give me your attention for a few moments. Have a little patience, for I will not detain you long."

Desperate between the horns of the dilemma that confronted her, Bessie did as requested, after a brief struggle with her feelings.

"Do me the honor to believe in my sincerity," said Mr. Morley, when she had assumed again the attitude of a listener. "If my brother was what you have suggested—a burglar and a murderer—you admit that I would have the right and the duty to let you know that fact. Supposing I tell you he is capable of inflicting upon this house a wrong as great as homicide or robbery, even greater?"

Bessie's lip curled slightly with sarcasm. She understood his allusions and believed them wholly unfounded. Frank had never done anything to justify the insinuation. He had sometimes given her a quiet kiss or a half-embrace, but never had he pressed his advantage or uttered a word that all the world might not have heard without lessening its respect. He had roomed in the house some time

before his departure, and if this disposition had been in him, surely it would have come to the surface in that time. Why should his brother hate him so, when he was such a favorite with all others who knew him?

"You can go on, if you have not finished," she said, looking fearlessly into the dark eyes of her informant.

"I will do so," said he, raising his voice. "Frank Morley is not a man with whom any good girl should ever be alone. He boasts that he shall not marry, and yet he allows women to plant his image in their hearts until it is so deep-rooted that to tear it out is almost to take life itself. When he finds that his power has grown sufficient to make the effort an easy one, he will gather in the prey he has snared, breaking her heart without compunction."

The girl's face grew hard as he proceeded.

"Do you know of a single instance where he has ever done this?" she asked. "Such accusations should not be founded on a mere say-so."

He flushed faintly at the insinuation that he was not to be credited on his word alone.

"How much proof do you want?" he inquired. "Of the first half you are a living witness. Yes, for knowing—as you have been told—that he will never marry, you love him as no girl should love a man who is not to be her husband. Of the latter half I mean to keep you from knowing, if I can."

Astonished at his audacity, Bessie could not immediately reply. How did he know the deep love she had for his brother? Undoubtedly Mark Melton had told him of Frank's statements regarding marriage, and very likely of his conversations

with her upon that matter. But, admitting all this, he had no right to suppose that she would prove the easy victim he imagined. It was one thing to love—to worship—Frank Morley, and quite another to submit to unwomanly conduct at his suggestion. She believed herself fully capable of meeting such a situation, should it arise, with credit to herself and honor to her good name. The more she thought of the character of Clyde's remarks, the more indignant she became ; but she had decided that she had better endure them alone than to have her aunt hear them.

"Is that all you feel it necessary to say to me, sir?" she asked.

"That is all," he said, drawing a full breath. "Except that I would like to leave my address with you, in case I can be of service. And I assure you, Miss Bright, you will never call on me in vain."

"You may leave it."

It was better to accept the address than to talk about it. He wrote it for her on one of his visiting cards. Then he rose and took up his hat.

"You do not believe what I have told you?" he said, interrogatively, as he stood in the attitude of departure.

She looked up quickly.

"Come, my child," he said, kindly. "The truth. Do you?"

"No," she faltered.

"But you must," he said. "It will be better for you to believe it now, than by-and-by, when it is too late."

All the dislike she had conceived for this man faded suddenly away. She doubted his statements, she had no faith in his prophesies, but she felt that

his motive, inconceivable as it seemed, was a good one.

"If your brother were all you think," she said, "which I am sure he is not, it would make no difference with me. I may not know *him*, but I certainly know *myself*."

"The eternal error!" he mused. "The cardinal mistake of women, ever since Satan beguiled our common mother. No woman knows herself. No man knows himself. A word, a touch, a look, and the angel becomes a demon. On the sunny slopes of the great Italian volcano are the houses and gardens and vineyards of peasants, who lie down to sleep every night in the same fancied security as you. Then there comes the sudden stream of fire and lava and they are destroyed. People will learn something from their fate, we say: but, as soon as the earth forms again, other peasants seek the same mountain sides to court the same end. Little girl, little girl, do not wait till the eruption is heard, for then you *cannot* escape!"

With a courteous bow he left her and went out into the avenue. He had forgotten his intended visit to the Fullers. For a long time she stayed there in the parlor pondering on what he had said.

Frank Morley a heartless libertine! It could not be! Would he have been so cold to her if he had had these base intentions? It was not his fault if she had learned to love him. Surely a man had a right to prefer a single life if he chose. And a little hope fluttered in Bessie's brain, and would not be stilled, that the time might come when this resolution would be put aside and the intention of youth give way to the maturer judgment of later years.

Bessie mentioned Clyde's visit to Lettie when she returned, saying he had called to see her father. Something whispered to the Colonel's daughter that he would return in the evening, and when her father put on his hat and coat to go to his club she made no objection. It had happened more than once that Clyde had called very soon after Col. Fuller left the house, and he had not always waited till his return. This night he came again, was shown up by the servant, and was welcomed by Lettie.

"I am so sorry you have missed father," she said, straining her conscience for the falsehood. "He has only been gone a few minutes."

"Are you?" he replied. "Well, to tell the truth, I am not. I want to talk with you a little alone."

Her heart seemed almost to stand still. What was he going to say?

"I shall not be much longer in the city," he continued, immediately, and the anxious straining in her breast gave way to a spasm of pain. "I am much disturbed in my mind over many things, and Boston does not seem to offer me any solution of my riddles. I have been treated well here, and have made some agreeable acquaintances, yourself and father among the number, but I feel constrained to move on. You do not understand the things that trouble me, and I could hardly explain them to you. My hope is that time and frequent changes of scene will set me right. At present my chief mission is to follow the course of a certain relation of mine, and prevent, if it lies in my power, the mischief I fear he is too ready to commit. He is coming back soon, and I would not like to be here when he returns. I have heard from him.

He has been in the South and now is at New York, where I shall see him in a few days."

She was very sorry he was going and said so in a subdued tone. She did not mean he should know how deeply he had enlisted her feelings.

"It is a terrible thing," he went on, "to have a brother—a twin brother—whose whole life is the antithesis of what it should be, and be unable to turn him into the right path. The sentiment that I have for him it is impossible to explain adequately. It seems to me sometimes as if we were one personage, and that whatever sins he commits are in a sense my own. In the half hour that I spent to-day with the young woman below—did she tell you I called?—I almost felt as if I and not he was to blame for her pensive face, might yet be guilty of wrecking her fair young life. Miss Fuller, promise me still to try, after I am gone, to prevent the latter catastrophe."

Again he took her hands in his, in what seemed to be an agony of entreaty. And in a very low voice she said she would talk with Bessie about it.

"I spoke to her to-day," said he, unable to conceal the fact. "I should have thought myself to blame had I not done so when the opportunity was so good. This is a secret that I must ask you to keep. I warned her against him with all the eloquence I could use, but I do not know with how much effect. At first she was the picture of indignation. She defended him at every step, telling how circumspect had been his conduct—as if I did not know how shrewd he can be on occasion and how long he is willing to wait, so that he be sure of his quarry in the end. All that I accomplished, so far

as I could see, was to put her a little on her guard, but when I am away some one must continue to give her advice. I shall see him at New York and plead with him, but I have small faith in my efforts. He will come to this house and resume his old lodgings, and that innocent child will be in constant danger unless eternal vigilance is exercised."

Miss Fuller was gratified that he put such trust in her. She promised all he asked, and blushed as he thanked her.

"I can read human nature in men or women very well," was his next statement. "I fear for Miss Bright because I see she is one who gives her love without reservation. If my brother had devoted himself to some other woman—to you, Miss Lettie, for instance—I should have less fears of the result. Pardon me if I seem personal in saying that you show a strength of mind that would make you impervious to such dangers."

Then Lettie reddened again, partly from pleasure and partly from fear that she did not deserve such a compliment. Clyde watched her narrowly, but her eyes were bent on the carpet and she did not see him. After a brief stay he bade her good-night, saying that it might also be good-by for the present, and asking her to convey his regards to her father in case he should be unable to call before his departure. He left her trembling and weak, for he did not say when, if ever, he should return to Boston, and gave no intimation that he expected to write. Women cannot ask these things, and she saw him depart as the marooned sailor sees his ship disappear on the blue horizon.

Had she been able to look into one of the cham-

bers of the Parker House an hour later, she might have found that comfort which it is said comes from the company of misery. Half undressed, with his hair dishevelled, with his pale face whiter than ever, Clyde Morley gazed fixedly into space from his window.

"Ah, God!" he was saying. "Must this last forever? Is there no way of escape from this yawning chasm into which my soul stands in such imminent peril of being dashed to death!"

CHAPTER XIII.

MIDNIGHT AND BESSIE.

There was great rejoicing at the Revere Club when Frank Morley returned. A special lay-out was provided by the steward in the evening, and Morley, who had no idea of what was in the wind, was piloted to the club-rooms by Mark Melton and ushered suddenly into the presence of nearly the entire membership of the organization, who greeted him with three cheers and enthusiastic handshaking.

"The Revere hasn't been itself at all since you went away!" cried Silas Clarke. "Everybody has moped until I, for one, thought seriously of proposing to disband the whole thing. Hanged if it doesn't seem good to see you!"

"Doocid glad, 'pon me honah!" said Charlie Wilkins, touching Frank's fingers languidly. "It's like a—a—bweeze in the de-sert to have you he-re again, de-ar boy."

Every one, including the young man in the leather business on High street, joined in similar manifestations of pleasure, and Frank responded gracefully. He had been a little sober, but the warmth of this welcome revived him. Whatever had happened during the ten weeks of his absence, this reception made him speedily like his old self. He gave a brief account of some of the places he had visited, but returned evasive replies to questions as to the nature of the business that had taken him away.

"And how have you all been?" he asked, turning the conversation from his personal affairs as soon as he could. "There must be some news for you to give as well as for me to impart."

"There's been nothing interesting here," responded Clarke. "Nothing at all. It's been duller than Chelsea."

"You—you forget that his bwoth-er came here one da-ay," lisped Wilkins. "Bah Jove, Fwankie, that was a starter! Melton the-re bwought him. For an howah we didn't dare bweathe for fear we'd shock him."

Frank, whose face had changed at the mention of his brother, recovered himself speedily, and said he hoped things were not so bad as that.

"He didn't scare *me* any, I'll tell you," said Clarke, "If he hadn't been your brother, I should have said something on purpose to stir him up. I hate these gospel shouters so much," he explained, "that it was all I could do to keep from showing it."

"You didn't tell me Clyde had been at the club," said Frank, turning to Melton, who sat by his side drinking in every word he spoke.

"I haven't had time to tell you everything," re-

torted Mark, with a smile. "You have kept me talking pretty busily, but you must remember you have only been in town three hours."

Frank admitted the truth of this observation and then seemed to think he ought to say something in his brother's defense.

"I'm sure you found Clyde a gentleman—in his manners," said he. "We don't agree on most things—he and I—but he's generally polite, I believe. Perhaps he's the one who's right, too, on the things where we differ. Upon my word, sometimes I think he is."

This was said in a manner that attracted the notice of all present, and Frank might have been led into a vein which he would have regretted had not Charlie Wilkins come to the rescue with an account of the waiter's going up to Clyde and asking whether he would have beer.

"It was the fun-niest thing I ever heard, be-Gard!" he exclaimed, amid the laughter of the throng. "'Will you have *be-er?*' says Patsy, as innocent as a gi-rl. And Mr. Min-ister looks up at him, as much as to say, '*Be-er?* What the dooce is *be-er?*'"

The laugh was so general that it became contagious, and Frank was finally obliged to join in it. But, thinking that this might grow unpleasant, he asked what was on at the theatres; and the talk drifted away, as talk always does drift, from that to a hundred other things; and so the evening passed till they arose to separate.

"What did Clyde manage to fill up his time with in this town so long?" asked Frank of Melton, as they strolled home together through the nearly deserted streets. "I know he helped you pull a couple of

girls out from under some horses, and that he went up to Col. Fuller's to receive his adoration, but how else he spent that long time is a puzzle to me."

Mark grew grave at the recollection of the accident.

"He's a brave fellow," he said. "If he hadn't sprung to the rescue without losing a second, Miss Fuller would have been killed, I am afraid. It galled me to hear Wilkins making fun of him, but I couldn't tell this story there without running the risk of some more nonsensical pleasantry. He is so modest, too. It was more than a week before he went to the Colonel's, and then he laughed at the notion that he had done anything worth talking about."

Frank said nothing to show that he disagreed with these statements, and Melton was gratified. The truth was that Frank's mind was wandering at the moment and he hardly heard what was being said.

"And Bessie's arm was broken," he mused, aloud.

"Yes," responded Mark. Then he went on to explain that had not both he and Clyde sprung at first for Lettie, the injury might have been prevented, possibly. "But we had no time to make plans," he added. "He had no means of knowing how dear she was to me, and his grasping her instead of the other one was a mere accident."

A cloud, thick and sombre, rested upon the brow of Frank Morley, though he did his best to drive it away.

"You haven't seen Bessie yet, I think you said," remarked Melton.

"No. She was out somewhere when I arrived, and

I stayed just long enough to put my things away, before coming down."

Melton tried to find something in the tone to show whether his friend cared especially about the matter under discussion, but he could discern nothing. He had at first thought of speaking to him again about the girl, alluding to the conversation they had had before Frank went away, but on the whole it seemed wisest not to do so. He knew Frank had not written to her, and it was a long time since Bessie had spoken of him. Probably it was all over for both of them, and it would be a mistake to rake up the recollection. Frank left Mark at the latter's door, and went on alone to Shawmut avenue, and to the house of Mrs. Bright.

It was a clear, cold evening late in November. Newly-fallen snow lined the curbs and filled the little gardens in front of the strangely-alike houses of brick. Nothing but the number on the door showed which building was the one in which he was to lodge. As he approached it he glanced up at the third floor, where the Fullers lived, and saw that no light was visible. Lettie was undoubtedly a-bed, and her father, unless something especially important had happened, was also in dreamland. Looking at his watch Frank saw that it was midnight. At the same moment the church clocks in the vicinity began to peal forth their slow strokes.

There is something about such a night—one when the stars seem set thicker than is their wont in the clear sky of winter—combined with the cold, bracing air, that is apt to affect a sensitive mind. Frank Morley let his gaze roam into space for some minutes before he left the street, and his thoughts became

too profound for utterance. Then he glanced at the pure carpet recently spread and remembered the line:

"Once I was pure as the snow."

"*Once*," he repeated bitterly. "*Once!* And now I am as that snow will be to-morrow, black with the soot of the city, mixed with the slime of the street. Ah, well! it is my destiny."

He took out his latch-key and entered the house. A dim light was burning for him—he knew no one else was out at that hour—and at the stairway he reached up and extinguished it. Feeling his way by the balustrade he ascended to his chamber, the door of which was slightly ajar. Then he lit a match and illumined the familiar room.

"Once," he said again, to himself. "'Once I was pure as the snow.' Bah! What devilish nonsense that doggerel is. As if anyone *could* keep pure in this dirty world!"

He took off his coat and hung it on a hook and proceeded to untie his shoes. As he stooped over his ear detected a slight rustle in the hallway and he remembered that he had not shut the chamber door closely. Rising to remedy the oversight he caught a glimpse of petticoats; and, throwing wide the portals, he stood face to face with the niece of his landlady.

"Bessie!" he exclaimed, in a sharp whisper. "You up! Come in here. I want to see you."

It was indeed Bessie, who had sat up late in the hope to see him, and had fallen asleep at last in the parlor, to be awakened by his entrance. She was creeping up stairs carefully, for she did not like to

have him know she had waited so late. She came back now, timidly, toward his door.

"I will see you in the morning," she replied to his invitation. "It is very late and everyone in the house has retired."

"Come here!" he said, authoritatively. "Who taught you to argue, young woman? I have been gone ten weeks and deserve a better welcome."

She approached nearer, so that whatever she said might be safe from being overheard, and he put an arm around her waist and gently but firmly drew her into his room.

"Hush!" he said, as she began to protest. "I only want a word. Look me in the face." She was hiding her blushes under one raised arm. "Are you glad to see me? Here, take that hand down. I want to look into your eyes."

He took the hand down himself, and kissed the cheek it had hidden. Poor Bessie, struggling between her sense of the proprieties and her inclinations, was quite at the mercy of this so much wiser man.

"What are you afraid of?" he went on. "If any one should come—which they won't—the door is open, and I'm not going to close it. I only want to know if there is one friend left to me in Boston. And your poor arm, too! Still lame and carried in a sling. Why wasn't I in the place of that lucky brother of mine?"

He had released her and she felt a little more at ease.

"You have not heard it right," she said. "Your brother paid all his attentions to Lettie. It was Mr.

Melton who carried me to the doctor's office and helped do up my arm."

He was all smiles and seemed quite happy.

"So it was," said he. "Clyde always had bad taste. He should have seen your beacon-light"—here he stroked her auburn hair humorously—"before anything else. I wish *I'd* been there. Well, there is no denying that it *is* late, and after one more kiss I must let you go."

He wasn't so bad, this fellow, as Clyde had represented him, Bessie thought. He had never said a word to her that could be construed as improper, and even now, at this remarkable hour, he proposed to her to go before she said the word. She began to wish he had not said it quite so soon, for she liked being there with him, after such a long separation. He was more affectionate, too, than he had been for a long time before he went away. Perhaps if he had a good opportunity he might say something of the future,—that he had altered his views on matrimony, for instance. She was thinking of these things when he put his arms around her again and sought her ripe lips, and in the preoccupation of her mind he had his own way with them.

"Is there another such mouth in the world?" he asked, lifting his eyes to hers. "Bessie, how beautiful you are!"

Surely he was about to speak! Nothing else could warrant such words, uttered with such fervor. He kissed her again, ravenously and pressed her closer to his breast. In his eagerness he forgot the injury she had sustained and the wounded arm received a wrench that made her utter a cry of pain.

"My God! How thoughtless I am!" he whispered, releasing her.

The excitement of seeing him had left her poorly prepared for the pain the arm now gave her, and to Frank's consternation she began to sway. In another moment she lay a dead weight in his arms and would have sunk to the carpet had he not placed her upon a sofa.

"Fainted, by all that's unlucky!" he exclaimed. "If any one should come now!"

He quickly applied restoratives and soon had the satisfaction of seeing her eyes open. As she realized where she was and what had happened she began to sob, and from sheer necessity he went and closed the door tightly.

"My darling!" he whispered to her, kneeling by her side. "There is no reason why you should weep. You fainted and now you are restored, that is all. In another minute you will be able to go to your room, and sleep will set you right. Did I hurt the poor arm? I am *so* sorry."

He kissed the tears from her face and soon they ceased to fall.

"Are you in much pain?" he asked.

"No," she said, shaking her head. "But this is dreadful. I ought not to have come in here at all. If anyone should ever know it, what would they say?"

He brushed away the last tear he could find on her cheek.

"*If?* That's a big word, Bessie. How are they to know? Shall *you* tell them? I assure you *I* sha'n't. There's nothing wrong about it. Are you able to go now?"

She sat up, with his help, but she was still a little dizzy.

"I wish I could go as far with you as your room," said he, "but that's impossible. I suppose you've two flights yet to climb. Get well rested before you start. Disabuse your mind of fear. Nobody ever wakes up in this house between twelve and six at night. It would be a paradise for burglars, only there's never anything to steal. If it wasn't for the danger of wagging tongues you should sleep where you are till daylight and I would sit and guard you."

"Oh, no!" The girl's strength came back to her at the bare thought of what he suggested. "I am feeling better. Good-night, Mr.—Frank."

He kissed her hair gently as they parted. Then he closed the door behind her and shut his teeth together.

"Will you do me the kindness to observe, Clyde Morley," he said, aloud, "that the devil is not as black as you have taken the pains to paint him!"

CHAPTER XIV.

A GAME OF HEARTS.

Mr. Frank Morley did not spend much of his time that winter in winning the affections of Bessie Bright. That was done already, and too well done, in fact. What occupied the most of his leisure—and he had a good deal of leisure—was the best way to get again into the good graces of Miss Fuller, who had treated him for a long time in a distant and

haughty manner. It will be remembered that Lettie had once believed herself in love with Frank, and had crushed down the feeling when she thought him devoted to Bessie. The Colonel's daughter had no experience to guide her where men were concerned. Frank and Mark Melton were the only men of anywhere near her age with whom she had ever come into close contact.

Frank suited her much better of the two than Mark, and at first she prepared to give him that torrent of affection that her heart had been storing up, waiting for some eligible comer. Then jealousy had its innings, and a feeling of pique at the loved one's presuming to speak, not for himself, but for the other less favored suitor. Even when she discovered, later, that Frank seemed to have no deep attachment for Bessie, she found that the sentiment she had entertained toward him had nearly disappeared. And then to make it more apparent to her, came the episode of the accident, the appearance of the chivalric Clyde, and the new knowledge that this, and not the other, was the man for whom she could give up her life.

It was the burning desire of Frank Morley to win again the good opinion, or at least the friendship, of Miss Lettle. He regarded her as much the more interesting of the two girls. Since she was to marry his friend Melton, it was important that she should cease holding such a distant attitude toward himself. If there were other reasons for the interest that Mr. Morley took in Lettie they need not be detailed here at this time. It is even doubtful if he fully understood them in that winter and spring-time when he found them absorbing most of his thoughts.

After studying carefully the problem that lay before him, Morley hit upon what proved to be a shrewd plan. He was still in the habit of calling frequently on Col. Fuller, and it naturally happened that Lettie was generally there. She would not have done him the honor to withdraw from the room merely because he was present, and such an action would certainly have aroused the suspicion of her father. Frank found that the Colonel could not say enough in praise of Clyde, and he was quick to notice that, with all her pretence of being deeply engrossed in novels or work, Lettie listened with suppressed eagerness to everything of which his brother was the subject.

He decided to speak in the kindest manner of Clyde whenever in Lettie's presence, with a tone quite different from the one he had previously used. It did not take long to show that he could not have hit upon anything more effective. Lettie soon ceased to treat him with hauteur, and even stopped to exchange a word when they met by accident on the stairs or in the hallway. He had withdrawn the venom from her arrows before he had tried his method a fortnight.

But with the new feeling of friendliness that Lettie re-conceived for the brother of the man she loved, there came to her also a recollection of what she had promised Clyde, in relation to Bessie. She had tried in vain to bring herself to say something to that young lady, as a note of warning. Bessie had often alluded to Frank, since his return, in such a warm-hearted manner that it seemed mere cruelty to begin a word in his dispraise. Lettie had no great stock of moral courage. Her father's rule had been so long

her only guide, that she had had no opportunity to develop those independent traits of thinking that grow with the physical growth of most girls. She had never given a person advice as to their conduct, and would have found it about as easy to prescribe for the measles or the whooping-cough, as to tell her girl companion what she should or should not do.

She had discovered, to her surprise, that Clyde Morley could say things to her without shocking her moral sense—without surprising it, rather—that she would have blushed like fire to have heard a woman repeat.

It came to her one day, when she had been talking with Frank, that she could say to him what she could not say to Bessie. She made up her mind that she would try to sound him the next time she had a good chance, and the chance came much sooner than she expected. The very next evening he rapped at her door to inquire if the Colonel was in (having seen him leave the house not fifteen minutes earlier, and go in the direction of his club). Thinking that this would be a good time to break the spell, Lettie said her father was out, but he could come in and wait, it he liked. Frank accepted with pleasure, and the girl was soon listening to expressions carefully selected to suit the temper of her mind, as he has learned to know it.

"I heard from Clyde to-day," he said, when something brought up the name of his brother. "We don't correspond a great deal, but it is because there isn't much for us to say. He's in New York, doing nothing in particular, so far as I know. Really, I wonder what will become of him. He thinks he isn't

good enough to enter the ministry, though he has studied enough to pass the examinations any time he wishes."

"He has very high ideals," remarked Lettie.

Frank admitted this with a sort of hopeless sigh.

"Almost too high, I fear, for such a world as we live in. Clyde never does a wrong thing, of course. But he always fears he will. He is subject, he says, to temptations, as if every human being wasn't! If all the clergymen were to adopt his guage, I am afraid there would be some empty pulpits."

Lettie thought it a good time to put in a little preaching.

"It is a good guage, though," she said. "All of us can't be perfect, but we ought to try, oughtn't we?"

He meant to give her the impression that she had convinced him, and so he hesitated before agreeing to this very evident proposition.

"M—m, yes, I suppose so," he said.

"There can be no doubt about it," she answered, with an air of great wisdom. "The first question to be asked when one proposes to do anything is, 'Is it right?' If it isn't, that ought to be the end of the matter."

"The devil!" thought Frank. "Clyde has done his work well in the little time he had! I think she is quoting literally one of his aphorisms."

He assumed an attitude of deep humility that encouraged her to become more personal in her allusions.

"There are certain things," pursued the girl, "that may not seem wrong in themselves, but yet are calculated to cause suffering to others. For

instance, if a man were to lead a girl to think he cared more for her than he does, and after her affections are fixed continued to trifle with them, that would be a very serious matter to her, and might cause her much misery."

Frank listened astonished. Clyde might have said this. It would have sounded natural, coming from his lips ; but from the mouth of this recluse of a girl! Had she learned to repeat things like a parrot, without comprehending their full meaning? It must have been Clyde who taught her. Nothing like it could be found between the pages of the novels with yellow covers, he was certain, and what else had she except the combined wisdom of the novels and Clyde? He resolved to meet her more than half way, however, and he answered without looking at her:

"You mean Bessie?"

It disconcerted her a little to have him put it so abruptly, but he continued in an apparently open way that immediately reassured her.

"Mark said something to me about that a long time ago. It seems ridiculous, you know, that such should be the case, but as things are *as* they are, why, it can't be helped. I found Bessie a pretty, sweet, nice-tempered girl, and I liked her. Such a thing as they call *love*—the real sort, with Marriage with a capital M at the end of it—never entered my head. I didn't dream that a man must have such intentions toward every young woman he happened to enjoy talking with an hour. But Mark says it's so, and Clyde has given me a few lectures, too, in his uncompromising way, aud now you have joined the procession. So I suppose," he added, laughing

good-naturedly, "you must all understand it a great deal better than I do."

Lettie could not help being affected by his simplicity, and flattered that he deferred so much to her opinion, and she smiled also, a very encouraging sign.

"Bessie is too sensible a girl," he went on, "to be in danger of losing her heart or her reason over any man alive. After an absence of ten or eleven weeks I find her just as lovable as ever and just as wise. If she has pined on my account her dressmaker has been quite able to conceal the effects. Had the case been otherwise I might well have reproached myself, not for my intended injury to her, but for the lack of knowledge which I had manifested. Hereafter, Miss Fuller, rest assured that I shall confine my attentions either to members of my own sex or to mature ladies who cannot possibly mistake a pleasant word or bow for the prelude to a declaration."

Miss Fuller warmly indorsed this decision, but took occasion to ask why a young man like him should have conceived such a positive aversion to matrimony.

"Oh, I should make a great failure at it!" he exclaimed. "Knowing that so well, would I not be a dunce to allow myself to bring lasting unhappiness to some unfortunate sharer of my misery? I do not dislike women. On the contrary, I admire them exceedingly. It is the conditions of what we call marriage that would make it irksome to me and probably impossible to endure."

"The conditions!" echoed Lettie.

"Yes. The necessity that two persons who are born with separate individualities must subordinate them

so that they will become one; that all their tastes must be altered to suit those of another; that he or she must learn to be, do, and appear different from what nature intended. You have perhaps seen in the country a yoke of oxen, fastened together by the necks with a ponderous affair of wood and iron, compelled to draw a heavy load. That seems to me a perfect picture of matrimony. The poor things must keep step over all kinds of road, dragging 'public opinion' after them, to the mutual discomfort of their lives."

Lettie was thinking of Clyde. She was thinking how willing she would be to bear the weight of any yoke and draw any load so that he drew it with her.

"When marriage is made of love," she said, "may not that lighten the yoke and the load until neither is felt to be a burden?"

"Oh, I suppose so," he said, doubtfully. "I imagine that some of these pairs of oxen I have pitied do not know that they arouse such a sentiment in my mind, nor that they should. But your supposition does not help me any, for I am not in love, nor am I likely to be. No," he added, looking her full in the face, for her eyes had been resting upon him for the past minute, "I came very near it once, but it can never occur again."

The girl felt a little shiver run over her frame. She felt what he meant her to feel.

"There was once a girl whom I knew," proceeded Morley, with a slight shaking in his voice, "who, if any one, would have aroused in me a true sentiment. I had learned to care more for her than for any other I had ever known, before I became aware of the depth of my feelings. But she was promised, or

almost promised—by her father—to the most intimate friend I had, a man who loved her with all his soul. I may not be the best man in the world, and I am sure my brother Clyde would say so, but from the moment I saw in what direction my steps were leading I turned them aside."

It was impossible not to understand him. Lettie Fuller, with her limited knowledge of men, never dreamed that there was anything in this statement but the confession it appeared, wrung from him by the depth of his feelings. She pitied him extremely, and thought how harshly she had judged him in her ignorance.

"You should not have told me this," she whispered, sadly. "But as long as you have done so, may I not also confide something to you? I never shall marry Mr. Melton. If he entertains a contrary belief, the sooner he ceases to hold it the better. I know he has spoken to my father. I know that my father has given him an intimation that in a few years I may give a favorable answer. It is quite wrong. I respect him, but I do not love him, and I never shall do so. As he has not said anything to me directly on this subject, it may be over-hasty to tell these things, but I count on your reticence. I feel that I have no right to permit any one to think I can take a course that I know is impossible."

He tried to interrupt her several times while she was speaking, but she waved him to silence with her hand. When she finished he expressed surprise, saying he supposed the matter as good as settled. He went further and alluded to the obedience she had always shown her father, which he thought would affect her in all matters, but she answered that it was

a woman's duty even to disobey her parents rather than marry a man for whom she could not care.

"Papa is not used to having me question his commands," she continued, "and he may bring a strong pressure to bear upon me, but I shall be firm."

He seemed unable to comprehend the situation, and both sat for some time without speaking.

"It will not do to tell Mark at present," he said at last. "He would lose his diploma, and perhaps go to the dickens. He is terribly set on marrying you. Why, you can't imagine the amount of talk he has made to me about it. I am his only close friend, you see, and he tells me everything. He has planned his whole life with you as the central figure. He is going to be successful, because his success will benefit you. He is going to become famous, because you will enjoy his fame. Withdraw his hope suddenly, at this time, and I am not sure but it would ruin him."

Miss Fuller said she was very sorry, and she spoke the truth. She added that of course she could say nothing to Mark until he spoke to her, which she knew he had promised the Colonel not to do for a long time. But before he reached the time when he felt warranted in addressing her, she hoped some means would be taken to undeceive him. She felt a sort of guilt in this tacit permission to expect a different result, though she had no hand in it.

"You lead me to bring against you the charge you brought against me," said Frank, reproachfully. "How can you wonder that *I* do not wish to marry, when *you* object to it so strongly. But, perhaps," he cried, suddenly, "perhaps your reason is the same—that you have loved, still love, another!"

How had he penetrated the inmost recesses of her heart and dragged that fact to light! Her trepidation assured him he had struck the right trail.

"It is true!" he exclaimed. "And I need not look far, either, to find the person who has won you! Had I not cause enough to hate him without this new reason?"

He had raised his voice so loud that Lettie feared it would be heard beyond the walls of the apartment, and she raised both hands deprecatingly.

He seemed to realize the danger, for he spoke in lower tones.

"Saint as he is and sinner as I am, we are both made of flesh and blood! He has found time, has he, between his prayers, to speak of human things into a human ear, and that a woman's? Well, you have put some confidence in me, give me a little more. Are you going to marry him?"

The girl paled at the question.

"Come!" he said, almost roughly. "Answer."

"You go on so fast, I can hardly follow you," she gasped. "He has never asked me to marry him, has never said anything ever remotely approaching such a thing."

He devoured her with half-shut eyes.

"How, then, do you know he loves you?"

Her confusion increased visibly.

"Oh, Mr. Morley," she gasped, "be generous and say no more. I do *not* know that he loves me!"

"But *you* love *him!*"

She covered her burning face with her hands.

"Oh, you need not be ashamed of it!" he replied, swallowing something that had stuck in his throat. "Hearts are about the same, I imagine, whether

they beat in a masculine breast or a feminine one. Well, listen to me, Miss Lettie. You have been taught to think of me as lacking in the cardinal virtues. I will show you that I have at least one decent quality. In every way that lies in my power I will help you, yes, even at the cost of disloyalty to Mark Melton. I do not know that Clyde will ever marry, for he is fanatical to a degree on the subject of religion, and may think his whole life should be devoted to that, but you may count on me at all times as your friend."

Grateful at this unexpected kindness, and at the same time overcome with mortification at the attitude in which she was placed, Lettie suffered him to take her hands from her face and impress a tender kiss upon one of them.

"I will never harbor an evil thought of you again," she stammered. "You are so good!"

"No, no, no!" he answered, shaking his head. "This is only a spasmodic attack which may never recur. But I will keep my promise. I will write to him oftener and always speak of you. I will go to see him, if he does not come here, and I shall know what to say."

An innate consciousness that there was something unmaidenly in this came into her head, but she did not know how to escape the arrangement, which she certainly thought very noble on Frank's part.

"A sister-in-law?" mused Morley, an hour later, in the solitude of his room. "I am not sure but that is the best thing of the two."

CHAPTER XV.

"IF WE'RE NOT FOUND OUT."

That spring in Boston was much like other springs. The frosts disappeared, the keen March winds blew up the Bay, the April showers brought out the green leaves on the trees and May opened the buds of the earliest flowers. The characters in our story all remained in the city. Col. Fuller pursued unaltered the course of life he had so long indulged in, rarely going far out of the beaten path that lay between his rooms and Veteran Club. Lettie read her novels, visited the shops where women's apparel was sold, talked with Bessie or with Frank Morley, and went to bed punctually as the clock struck ten with visions in her head of a divinity student who had never returned. Bessie aided her aunt about the housework as of yore, her arm entirely well, and listened for the only footsteps that had any charm for her, the footsteps of a certain student of law who lodged in the house. Mark Melton studied with all his might, determined that it should not be his fault if he did not graduate with honors, for the diploma meant a great step toward accomplishing the desire of his heart. And Frank went from the house to Court street studying not less the themes he found on Shawmut avenue than those presented to him in the musty books over which he had to pore.

The interest he now seemed to take in Lettie's wishes made him a welcome visitor to her. It was

common for him to watch till the Colonel disappeared for the afternoon or evening and then go stealthily to her room, to pass an hour or two in her company. Lettie had ceased to be the guileless girl he had once known. She knew his inquiries for her father were fictitious, for he came too frequently just after his departure to allow of the supposition that each occurrence of the kind was an accident. Finally, they used to laugh together when he made the inquiry, as she opened the door. Once, when he made a mistake, thinking the Colonel had gone out, and found him in, he asked for a book he had seen in the library, excused himself from remaining, and half an hour later, when ocular demonstration assured him that the coast was clear, he returned to secure the real object of his first visit, an uninterrupted chat with the daughter.

Lettie was becoming a past mistress of the art of double dealing. Still assuming the same demureness when her father was present, acting like the little girl he had always known, she had become quite a different creature. It would have startled the old war-horse considerably had he been able to open a window of her brain and see what went on there.

Bessie knew of very few of these visits. She generally thought Frank out of the house when they occurred. Col. Fuller's habits were so absolutely clock-like that he could be depended upon not to come home before a certain hour. Bessie, on the contrary, was liable to come in at any moment, as she and Lettie used little ceremony with each other. However, she always knocked, which gave time for a slight preparation, and after she had surprised them once, Lettie made a proposition. In case she

should come up again, Frank was to retire into her chamber, till she could arrange some excuse to get rid of the unwelcome visitor.

Frank raised no objection to this, though, to tell the truth, it more than astonished him. He could not understand the peculiar quality of mind that Miss Fuller had developed under her unusual training. With a father content to command, and with no mother to advise or direct her, Lettie had thrown down nearly every barrier that women ordinarily erect about themselves when educated in the usages of refined society. Her bedroom was pretty and well-kept, and she never dreamed of there being anything improper in telling a young man to secrete himself there in such an emergency.

Much of their talk was of Clyde, and it was never pleasant to contemplate its interruption. Bessie would think it strange if she found Frank there often, and it was just as well that she should not, as it might lead her to asking questions that no one would care to answer.

The first time Frank retreated into the bedroom he had to remain there some time, as Bessie would not understand the vague hints that Lettie threw out. He did not mind it, however, in the least. In fact, he was rather interested in his prison-house. Feeling secure from interruption as long as he could hear the girls' voices, he made quite a thorough examination of the room. He found that Lettie slept on a brass bedstead under the snowiest counterpane imaginable; that the pillows on which her head was laid were large and soft. He pinched the mattress and found it made of hair, and experienced a pleasure in learning that it was not of feathers, which he

considered unhealthy. The dressing-case was covered with trophies of her skill with the needle, but no photographs were seen except one of her father in his uniform, apparently taken in the days of the war. The counterfeit presentments of numerous male individuals, so common to young girls' bureaus were conspicuous by their absence. Neither was there a picture of herself, and he began to wonder if she had never had any. The chairs and the sofa were in as good taste as the garments she was in the habit of wearing. The few pictures on the walls were evidently the Colonel's, being devoted to military subjects.

It took some time for Frank to note all these things. As the talking in the other room continued, he opened a closet door, and saw a great array of dresses and skirts hanging from the hooks. Some of them—the gowns—he recognized as those he had seen her wear. He put his hand upon the silks and worsteds, and stroked them gently, as one strokes the back of a cat or a favorite dog. He thought the clothes of an attractive woman became a part of her—acquired a tinge of her personality. He had said once that they should no more be sold to strangers than an amputated arm. If they accumulated beyond the capacity of the receptacles intended for them, they should be cremated at a solemn ceremony.

He looked upon the floor and saw dozens of boots, slippers and gaiters, all made to fit one tiny pair of feet. A sentimental feeling oppressed him. Had he been certain he would not be detected in the act, he would have knelt and kissed them, with all the reverence that an African pays to his little wooden god.

And still he heard the voices. He prayed that Bessie might prolong her call, for his eyes turned to the drawers of a bureau, and his fingers itched to open them. Yes, the girls were talking still. One drawer was partly opened, and he drew it out a little farther. Bottles with scents that were familiar, brushes that had been passed over her hair, combs, button-hooks, gloves of many shades, handkerchiefs, knick-knacks innumerable. He paused to wonder how a girl brought up like her had learned the value of these things. Was it an instinct inherent in the feminine breast, this longing for prettiness, for delicate effects? Everything seemed arranged after a definite method, so different from the helter-skelter style of his own dressing-case on the floor below. Frank Morley had run through an exhibition of paintings, containing three hundred specimens, in half an hour. He could have gazed on the treasures of this one drawer till night fell and not have feasted his eyes half enough.

Still the voices. He pushed the drawer slowly back and opened the next one. White, white, white! Nothing but white! Did they wear so many white things, then? She must have a heavy laundry bill. In the next one, there were twenty kinds of hosiery to match the shoes. As he took one pair in his hands to see if they were silk, he heard a door open and dropped them precipitately.

It was not the door of the room he occupied, but the outer door leading to the hall. Bessie was going at last.

A blush of conscious guilt—the guilt of deceit—was on Lettie's face, as she came to release him. He sat there in a rocker, looking the picture of con-

tent, when she opened the door and shot a quick glance at him to see what she could read in his face.

"She's gone?" he asked, smiling.

"At last," said Lettie, drawing a long breath. "I thought at one time she had sent for her baggage and meant to move in."

"Why," said Frank, "it wasn't long."

"More than three-quarters of an hour!"

"By the clock?"

She nodded three or four times.

"I heard the Colonel say, the other day, that clock was fast," laughed Frank, making no move to rise. "I thought it had only been five minutes. What a bijou of a room this is!"

Lettie looked gratified. She still stood in the doorway, with her hand on the knob.

"Do you like it?"

"It is exquisite! It is almost enough to make a man forswear his intentions of being a perpetual bachelor, to see such taste. Sit down and let us proceed wherever we left off when your caller came."

But Lettie said she thought the parlor would be the best place to talk in, and Frank rose slowly to follow her.

"There is only one trouble with the parlor," said he. "We shall have to lower our voices so that any one passing through the hall cannot hear. And that gives me a feeling as if we were conspirators."

"I know it," she admitted.

"But you don't care?"

"Not a bit—if we're not found out!"

They both laughed together, then, softly; but afterwards Frank grew sober.

"Do you know what I thought, in that chamber?"

"No."

She looked at him inquiringly.

"That all the taste there displayed would go some day to adorn the home of my brother!"

When he spoke in this way, and it was not the first time he had uttered similar sentiments, she had a pity for him that was too deep for words. She could not understand how it was that she had once come so near to hating him, at that time when he urged the claims of Melton to her hand. It was mere loyalty to his friend, and she ought to have understood how little his task was to his taste.

"I don't see how you can be so sure," she said, still rosy. "I mean about him, about your brother. He never comes here, and as far as I can tell he has nearly forgotten me. He writes you to give his regards to Col. Fuller and daughter, but that is not much to build on. If I could go where he is—could make some excuse for coming into his life again—it would be something. Here I am as lost to him as if I were in the middle of Asia."

Frank Morley's eyelids grew heavy.

"You are as sure of him as you are of heaven," he answered. "He has no other woman in mind. He believes in marriage. He gave you more of his attention, according to what you tell me, than he has given to all the girls he has seen hitherto put together. He will come back here this summer—I will make him. He will call on you again; and then everything lies in your hands."

She shook her head doubtfully.

"How? How does everything lie in my hands?"

"My God!" he cried. "Are you so ignorant of

your own powers? You could make any man love you, though his nature were of the consistency of granite, and Clyde is as much clay as I am. It is his constant fear that he will be betrayed into giving way to the passions that beset him. Must I speak more plainly?"

Lettie shook her head, but in a different way.

"You have spoken almost too plainly now, but I never can win the love of your brother in that way. I cannot, even if it is the only alternative."

Not knowing how much he could say with impunity to this strange girl, Frank paused for a moment.

"It is a delicate matter," he said. "Clyde cannot be won in any ordinary fashion. He is full of odd whims, is one mass of cross-purposes. If he marries at all, it will be because he thinks it his duty. For instance, you remember his expressions relating to Bessie and me?"

She assented.

"He said, and he put the same words into your mouth, that a man had no right to make a woman love him and then think himself free from the consequences. He has dinned that into my ears, time and again, and his letters teem with it. If he returns to Boston—I should say *when* he returns—he will come to see you as he used. At the proper time I will hold up before his eyes the sermon he has read to me and see if he can get behind his own preaching."

The pretty face took on a look of deep distress. Lettie did not like the plan at all. She wanted Clyde to come to her, as men did in the novels she had read, with a nice speech telling how he had loved her

ever so long, and could not be happy unless she became his wife. And she had decided just how she would meet him, with eyes downcast and with her voice adjusted to a delicious tremble. And when the little word "Yes" had been lisped—and it always was lisped in every book she had read—she expected that the manly lips would drink a draught from hers—the first kiss, except her father's, that she had ever had from any man.

It was with a feeling of joy and pride that she remembered she could say to him with perfect truth, "Yours are the only lips, Clyde, dear, that ever touched mine." She had woven a pretty romance that she wanted carried out exactly according to programme, and she did not relish the entirely different scheme which Frank had concocted. It had one merit, perhaps, however, that should not be lost sight of—it might succeed where hers could fail, but she meant to try hers first and only adopt the other in case of dire emergency.

"When do you think he'll be likely to come here?" she asked, demurely.

"In the summer," he answered. "I am going away to the hills for several weeks and that would be his most likely time. He doesn't like me well enough to come when I'm here if he can help it. In fact, I think it is my presence in Boston that has kept him away so long."

She looked up and laughed comically.

"Oh, why couldn't you have gone away?" she said.

"I could," he answered, with a trace of bitterness. "But is it not enough for him that he is to be the final victor? Upon my life, Lettie, I fear you never

will be happy with him! I don't say this from any selfish reason, but because I honestly believe it. Suppose he should conclude that his marriage had made him the saint he aspires to be, and should take a pulpit somewhere and settle down as a pastor? Would that life suit you?"

Her face grew radiant at the suggestion.

"Any life that he thought best would suit me," she replied. "I have learned in my father's house to find my pleasure in doing what he wishes, and it would be the same with my husband."

He thought the comparison worthy of another.

"You have learned to receive a gentleman caller without your father's knowledge," said he, meaningly. "Probably it would not take you long to free yourself of irksome conditions if a husband imposed them on you."

She looked frightened at the thought he had put into her head.

"Ah! that is different," she exclaimed. "I should never do the least thing without my husband's consent. If he was unreasonable, I might argue with him, but I should obey. I cannot see how a wife can do otherwise and be safe."

"Cases have been known," he suggested, sarcastically.

She would not debate a point on which she felt so positive a conviction. A glance at his watch told him it was time to go, and he rose.

"Have patience," he said, gently, taking both her hands in his, "and your fairy god-mother will turn her stick into a mate for you. And now, if little Bessie should see me walking out of here, what shall I say?"

"You need not tell her how long you stayed," said Lettie, wisely. "You and I have a right to our secret."

He paused at the door, a place it was always hard for him to pass.

"If I understand you," he said, "a secret is all right for an unmarried woman, but a woman who weds must have none."

"I never shall if I marry," she said, decidedly.

He went out thinking how willingly he would wager all his earthly possessions that she would have plenty of them, in that case.

CHAPTER XVI.

MARK MELTON'S PROTEST.

Early in the summer Clyde Morley went home to his village of Arcadie. He had changed little in outward appearance since he left there, and the townspeople pleasantly lifted their hats to him as they had always done. Dr. Welsh took him in his arms as if he had been his real son. Indeed, he was quite the same thing to him.

"You haven't been as good a correspondent as you once were," he said to the young man, with mild reproach. "You will have a good deal to tell me of your travels. I only hope you have decided to settle down now. I long to see you fairly engaged on the work of redeeming the world before I pass away from it."

Clyde glanced at the speaker uneasily.

"You speak as if you were ill," said he.

"I am not well," replied the Doctor, "and I know that my time at the longest is brief. But that does not matter. I have done what I could, with the limited powers God gave me. You have much superior talents, and if I can leave you installed in my place I shall die content."

Clyde did not like to tell the whole truth—or anything near it—to this good old man. He had never felt farther from the ministry than now, but he did not have the moral courage to own it where he knew it would give so much pain. He expressed a wish to travel another season, as a cause for postponement. When the clergyman argued against this, he brought up still other reasons, no more satisfactory, and heard them disposed of in the same way. And at last he made a partial breast of his difficulty, saying he was oppressed by his old fear that he was not good enough to set himself up as a teacher of religion.

"I am sorry for this," replied Dr. Welsh, with an expression of sadness on his venerable countenance. "My advice to you is to put all such thoughts behind you, as inventions of Satan. Enter the ministry, take a parish and go about the work of the Master, leaving the result to him. The best thing for you to do, after that is accomplished, is to find some discreet woman of godly life and conversation for a helpmate. With your duties pressing upon you, and such a wife by your side, you would go onward and upward in your calling, and laugh at the fears that have held you in bondage."

Clyde felt guilty as he listened. Why had he ever thought himself fitted for the pulpit? "A discreet

woman of godly life!" Not an atom of his composition reflected pleasure at the picture. He imagined some dowdy female, with long face and badly arranged hair, marching solemnly up a church aisle, with spectacles across the bridge of a severe nose. He had never seen but one girl who much interested him—whom he would not prefer death by the rope to marrying—and she was not at all like the old Doctor's description. Were it not for this ever-present nightmare of the ministry he would have whispered words of love in the ear of that girl, and he felt convinced it would not have been in vain. Until this question was settled, he could say nothing to her. If he had to give up all that was sweet in this life to become a better candidate for the next world, she would be included in the things sacrificed.

There had been a time when he believed the satisfaction of well-doing its own sufficient compensation. The physique that had come with growing manhood had played the devil with that. At the present moment he was neither one thing nor the other. He could not count himself a follower of Good, and still he was too much attracted by it to be a contented adherent of Evil. This could not go on forever. He must choose between the two paths. He could not do it quite yet, and so he remained in the midst of the desert, as unhappy as might have been expected from his situation.

Arcadie was duller than ever to him. He went to see "his widows," as he used to call them, certain poverty-stricken women whom he had helped financially in the past, and whom he had arranged with Dr. Welsh to aid during his absence. Their thanks grated on his ears. Their assurances that they had

never forgotten him in their supplications made him almost doubt the efficacy of prayer. There were no less than ten of them who had prayed for him, according to their own statements, twice each day. Allowing three hundred and sixty-five days to the year, he began a mental computation of the number of petitions sent upward in his behalf. The figures were appalling, considering that he had steadily grown worse instead of better all the time.

"My brother would say—my brother Frank—" he mused, "that this was proof positive of the non-existence of a Deity who has the power and the will to heed those who address him. These old women have prayed, and I have prayed, but where are the answers? Supposing it should be true that there *is* no God! That would settle the question of my duty pretty effectually. But, what am I saying? Why, this is Atheism!"

Atheism! A thought of such a thing, and in Arcadie! He wondered how such an idea could have entered his head in that village. But if it *were* so—he could not help thinking—if there was no truth in the things he had been taught to believe—if this life was all—how pleasant he could make it! Some people said this was so, and many who did not say it acted as if they believed it. Clyde thought the majority of those he met managed to get a good deal out of this world, as they were passing through. And it seemed to him that he got nothing—nothing but doubt, and distress, and temptation.

When July came he knew that Frank was away from Boston, as were most other people who could afford it in that month, though many might have

been quite as comfortable had they remained near its invigorating east winds and taken their outings on the harbor boats and the suburban street-car lines. He wanted to see the friends he had made there, and he wrote to Mark Melton, saying that he thought of coming. Mark, who had graduated from his school, responded with enthusiasm that nothing would please him better. He added, incidentally, that happening to be at Col. Fuller's after receiving Clyde's letter, he had mentioned the matter to them; and that both the Colonel and his daughter had expressed much delight at the prospect of seeing him again.

In a few days Clyde bade farewell to the good minister of Arcadie, promising to think seriously of the matter of going into the pulpit that autumn, and was met at Boston station by Melton, who grasped his hands with all the warmth of his nature.

"I never was so glad!" exclaimed Mark. "Since Frank went away I have been dying for some one to talk with. There is only one subject, you know, that really interests me, and that I cannot discuss except with you and him."

Honest fellow! It gave a twinge to the heart of Clyde Morley to think of the perfect faith of this young man. Why had fate not reversed its arrangements, letting him be the physician and Mark the priest?

"And how are our friends?" asked Clyde, as the pair strolled up Portland street together, disdaining the cars and carriages, in a way they had.

"The Colonel has had a slight attack of an old trouble dating from the late unpleasantness, but he is better now. There is a bullet or two in his body

that they cannot remove. By all that's holy, I wish I could get them out! It might give him a better opinion of me. I think I'll propose it to him!"

"But if you made a fatality of the case—" smiled Clyde.

"That's worth considering," replied Mark. "I guess I'd better let him alone. He's around again now, at any rate. And Miss Lettie, she's the same as ever. Beautiful, good, everything that's desirable; only there's no reason to think she would be any more likely to smile on a proposal of marriage from me than there was a year ago."

Clyde was not very sorry to hear this. He would have been surprised to hear the opposite. He liked Lettie, and meant to spend some of his time in her company while in the city. It was much better that she should not be engaged to be married, for that would restrict the conversation a good deal. She was destined to belong to Melton some day—he understood it was agreed on practically by her father—but there was no need of haste in making the preliminary arrangements.

"You're an impatient fellow," was his reply. "Here you are, on the sure road to preferment in everything you seek. You have your diploma, you are going to put out your shingle, you have only to get the paltry sum of ten thousand dollars together, and, presto! the girl you love is yours! And yet you are always lamenting the slowness of events. Do you know you strike me as a most ungrateful wretch, and I shall not be surprised if fortune turns her back on you in sheer disgust for your sins."

"I try to be patient," said Mark, "but it's hard work. It will be easier now you're here, for you'll

see her and talk with her, and may be able to tell me something, from time to time. I go up and play cribbage with the Colonel every Friday evening, but I never dare to allude to what we said before. Since his illness he's grown more crotchety than ever, and the least thing ruffles his plumage."

Mark went on to say that he had engaged an office, and had sat there patiently for four days without seeing a customer. As it was midsummer, and as he was wholly unknown, he did not get discouraged, however. Doctors who now had large incomes had told him that their early experience was about the same. One had offered him a small percentage to go into partnership, but he preferred to try the independent plan first.

Then they spoke of Frank, and Clyde, who never looked quite the same when he was on that subject, asked how his brother had been behaving himself.

"Why, like a gentlemen, as he always does," laughed Mark. "He has studied law the usual hours and I have had the benefit of a good many of his evenings. The most of his *mis*behavior is in your own vivid imagination."

Mark had known Clyde so long now that he spoke to him with perfect freedom. On this subject he felt that he had a right to be particularly blunt, for he could not understand the continued antipathy that Clyde exhibited.

"You feel certain it is all right with that young lady at the house, the landlady's niece?" inquired Clyde, impressively.

"Why shouldn't it be?" demanded Melton. "I don't think they are alone together three times in a month. I must remonstrate with you again, Mr.

Morley. When you get an idea into your head, it seems next to impossible to dislodge it."

Clyde did not reply to this raillery. He was occupied in deep thought.

"Does he visit the Fullers as much as ever?" he asked.

"Oh, I don't know how much. He goes in to talk with the Colonel of an evening sometimes. The Colonel likes him, too. I wish he liked me half as well. If it wasn't for the fact that my father and he were companions-in-arms I wouldn't be in it at all."

The listener paused to digest this statement.

"You talk with Miss Fuller sometimes?" he said next.

"Oh, yes."

"And not always when her father is present."

Melton reddened a little.

"It is seldom I get the chance, but if he's out and she asks me to go in, I don't refuse."

"And on such occasions—excuse the apparent inquisitiveness—what do you talk about?"

Mark stopped a moment to think.

"I hardly know," he said. "All kinds of things that come up at random, I should say. Everything except the subject I would most prefer."

"Sometimes, perhaps, of—of *him?*"

The hesitation to pronounce the name of his brother nettled Mark.

"Of Frank?" he asked. "Yes, and the last time I was there most of our time was taken up with *you.*"

The intended effect of this observation was lost on the divinity student.

"What did she say—of Frank—of my brother?" he asked.

"She couldn't say any ill of him. What she said was in his favor."

"Are you sure she *could not* say any ill of him?"

Melton protested vigorously at that.

"Come, come!" he cried. "Don't carry it too far!"

Clyde put his hand soothingly on the arm of his companion.

"I know him so well," he said. "I know what is in him, what he is capable of. And I tell you Mark, in all sincerity, if I were in love with a girl and intended to marry her, she should never be one minute alone with him."

Melton's heart gave a bound and then pulsated slower for some seconds.

"It might at least depend a little on the girl," he ventured, frigidly.

"No," was the earnest reply, "not at all. She could not come into contact with him and retain all her purity. As certain chemicals destroy by indistinguishable processes the textures of fabrics brought into connection with them, so such natures as his undermine the virtue of women without the victims having the least idea of the disintegrating process that is going on. Do you think I like to say these things, that you stare at me so? My God, Melton, he is my brother! He is the twin of my body! What does that innocent girl know of the arts of a designing man? As much as the little bird of the fascinations of the rattlesnake; no more."

But Mark refused to entertain the subject seriously. He was agitated, to be sure, but not because he thought there could be anything in the suggestions thrown out. He had long ago come to regard the

attitude of Clyde's mind as unnatural and morbid, when his brother was concerned. There were two people in the world that Mark loved above all others —Lettie Fuller and Frank Morley. He believed he knew at least one of them, the dangerous one, if Clyde was to be considered a judge, and he would have trusted him anywhere. As he had told Clyde long before, he thought a man with a depraved mind could not go on month after month in the close companionship of an intimate friend and not reveal what was in him, or at least give some hint of its existence.

As to Lettie, the sentiments of a young lover were too strong to allow him to think of his sweetheart as a possible victim to the machinations of any one. True, she was innocent, but she also had common sense, and it would require more than the suggestion of a chance acquaintance to swerve her from the path of rectitude. Beside this, she never had an opportunity to meet any man alone. She was either at her home, where her father kept a watchful eye upon her, or if she went out for any length of time it was with Bessie or Mrs. Bright. Clyde might have talked till doomsday for all the effect it would have had on Mark, so certain was he of the baselessness of the insinuations.

"If you will do all you can for me, Clyde," he said, after a long pause, in which he had been revolving these things in his mind, "it will not be a great while before your bugbears will become as impossible as they are improbable. I have recently been left a few thousand dollars by the will of a relation, and can safely marry without danger of starvation either for myself or wife. The medical practice that I expect will make it unnecessary, I hope, to draw

much on this sum, and I intend to make it larger instead of smaller as fast as I am able. My desire is to render myself independent, that I may spend the latter part of my days in rest from my profession, perhaps in foreign travel. Col. Fuller thinks a great deal of you, and a word in my behalf will count for much with him. When you meet the Colonel, if you will let him know this fact incidentally, and note its effect, I will thank you. I hope that his scruples will be overcome when he finds that the question of being fully able to support his daughter is not to be considered, and that he will allow me to speak to her very soon."

This was said in a halting way that showed how deeply the matter affected the speaker and Clyde Morley had abundant time to arrange his answer.

"I will speak to him, certainly," he said. "Your marriage would settle everything, of course. A girl who is married is safe ; everybody know that. Yes, if she marries you, that will end all danger."

No one not blindly infatuated could have heard these ironical words without penetrating the satire that lurked beneath them. Mark, however, saw nothing, and was profuse in his thanks.

Before they parted Clyde had agreed to see the Colonel that very evening, and to introduce the subject, if he could.

CHAPTER XVII.

COMPELLING A KISS.

Half an hour later, a pale figure stood in front of a mirror in a room at the Parker House.

"Is this Clyde Morley?" it was saying. "Is this the man who has existed for the past year only as a protest against the infamies of his brother? I had better have died than have lived to carry in my mind the things that have crept there. There was a time when these thoughts that now rack my brain would have been impossible. I have warned people against Frank, but which of us is now the worse? He at least does not carry about with him the garb of professed saintliness, to blind the eyes of those he would betray. They may take him for what he is, a man of the world, without pretence. If he deceives them, it is in a measure the fault of their indiscretion. But I—talking, talking, always talking about the sins of others—I am more likely to prove the real villain. Is there any escape, or has the devil got me fast in his clutches?"

He fell heavily into a chair and sat perfectly still for several minutes, oppressed by his emotions.

"I have none of his excuses—none but this mad rush of the senses, that I have striven so long to combat. *He* is an atheist. *I* believe in an all-seeing and an all-requiring God. *He* looks upon life as a flower to be picked if it meets his pleasure. *I* regard it as a sacred trust to be accepted with reverent

care and yielded up with a full account, when its little day is done. *He* could betray the friend who trusts in him, the woman who loves him, if it sufficed to gratify the whim of the moment, and feel no sting of conscience. If *I* did either, the wrong would haunt me to my dying day, and curse the bed on which my soul took flight. And yet the path he has taken is more than likely to be mine—the evil from which I have warned him *I* may yet perpetrate. I must look the possibilities in the face and not delude myself any longer."

Again there was a space of silence, while the brain of the thinker throbbed with the thoughts that filled it.

"Could I, by going directly to some distant part of the country, and taking up the profession of the ministry, shield myself from the damning temptations that have grown to seem a part of my existence? Is good Dr. Welsh right in telling me that the safest place for a professed Christian is where he can attend to his Master's business? In such a field, weighted with new and abundant cares, would that girl's face keep its distance, or would it continue to come between me and my God? Oh, there are so many questions I would like answered, and there is not one thing I am sure of!

"Let—me—think.

"Supposing I ask her to marry me. I have then done a lasting wrong to Melton, who has trusted in my honor, and who would be right in calling me a traitor and a hypocrite. It would probably be the breaking up of his career, so deep is his attachment to her. But if, on the other hand, I leave her to him, I condemn her to a life of unhappiness, for she

never has and she never can love him as a wife should. Is it a kindness to assist him to gain her under those circumstances? Is it not better, even for him, that they are never united?"

A long breath came, as he caught at this thought, and then he rejected it.

"Self, self, nothing but self!" he ejaculated. "Sophistries are they all, yes, every one of these things I am saying. I want that girl, and everything that seems to justify me in trying to win her I eagerly embrace. Trying to win her! Why, I have won her already! I have done unblushingly the thing I so condemned in Frank. Lettie loves me. It does not take a wise eye to see that. If I say the word she will leave home, father, everything to share my life. But can I take her with honor? No. Shall I take her without it, and try to blind my eyes by the fact that I am to devote my life to the service of the God I have outraged? That is equally absurd. Oh! you evil spirit, who have led me into this slough, show me some way out of it!"

Clyde rose and threw this last exclamation at the atmosphere, but there came no reply. He paused again, and a sense of dreariness came over him. He had been abandoned in the desert, and the caravan had moved on, heedless of his strait. Once he would have found refuge in prayer, but that no longer sufficed him. Say what he might, he had not the abiding faith he had formerly possessed. The strong, athletic body could no more be controlled by the overtasked brain.

The maddened horse with the bits in his teeth recks not the rein of his rider. It was too late to guide the animal, who had a taste of his own strength

and of his master's weakness. And yet, even as things seemed most desperate, Clyde did not wholly give up the fight. He had struggled too long to throw down everything in a moment of discouragement. He might be dashed in pieces over the precipice in front of him, but he would hold out till the last.

With this reflection there came new vigor into his mind. He would at least *try* to keep his word with Melton. He would go to the house on Shawmut avenue and talk with Col. Fuller and say what Mark had asked him to say. Perhaps the Colonel would refuse to give up his daughter upon any less terms than he had before stated—the years yet to elapse and the actual demonstration of Melton's ability to support her out of the profits of his profession. Perhaps he had changed his mind altogether and would not give his consent to her marrying Mark under any circumstances!

Clyde tried honestly to crush down these thoughts, for he felt that they were not the ones he ought to encourage, but they persisted in crowding themselves upon him. At least they made it easier for him to go to the Colonel's and ascertain the state of his mind. After partaking of a light repast, he walked —a conveyance would not have enabled him to take the exercise he felt so much in need of—to Mrs. Bright's, where Bessie met him at the door.

The young girl started at sight of him—she was never wholly easy in his presence, and she had not expected to see him this time—but he only bowed with gravity and inquired if Col. Fuller was at home. Bessie answered that the Colonel was out, but that

Miss Lettie was in, and Clyde said he would go up, if she pleased, and wait for him.

As he ascended the stairs it struck him as strange that he had not thought of the probability that the Colonel would be at the Veterans Club at that time of day, for he had visited there before when that knowledge was the chief reason for his coming. The rapt mood in which he had been ever since his talk with Melton was the cause of his forgetfulness. He was not sorry, however, that he should see Lettie alone a little while before her father's return. It would give him an opportunity to study her, and help him decide whether he had the strength to carry out the resolve he had been making on the way to the house.

Lettie started even more violently than Bessie had done, when she opened the door to him. She knew he had talked of coming to Boston, for Frank had written to her of this fact, and she had remained at home both afternoon and evening for more than a week in the fear that she might miss him if she went out. But now that he stood before her eyes the shock was a pronounced one, and she could not conceal her feelings. Realizing fully all that was passing in her mind, he pretended not to notice it, and taking her hand in his for one brief moment—as it hung limp at her side—he murmured the words that rose to his lips.

"It was thoughtless of me not to send a messenger earlier in the day," he said, as he took a chair. "I have been gone so long that your father's habit of spending most of his evenings out quite slipped my mind. Nevertheless, I am glad to see you, and

if you will permit me, I will rest here till his return."

Lettie came to herself suddenly. She wondered what he would think of her manner. She knew she had not even invited him to enter, that he had taken the hand she had not held out and the chair she had not offered him. She stammered an apology, saying she had been so surprised—that she had expected some one else—that she was not feeling quite well. He smiled in his grave way, affecting not to notice her abstraction, and began to ask her the ordinary questions of one who has been absent, until he had her at her ease again. He talked a little of himself, told of the places he had visited, of the idle life he had led because he could not yet bring himself to enter on anything more useful, at which he admitted his shame. But he said he believed this would be his last summer as a wanderer, that by the autumn he would have begun to atone for the sins of omission of which he was guilty.

Then he spoke of the ministry and his hope to do some good in it, though he still had great doubts of his worthiness. And Lettie listened with strange feelings, wondering if there was something more at the end, something she would much rather have heard, and to which this might be only a prelude; listened, till the step of her father was heard on the stair, and her heart sank because the man she loved had spoken nothing of what she wished to hear.

The Colonel was in a rather bad temper. His daughter noted the frown on his face the moment the door was opened. He had lost a game of cribbage before leaving the club, with a new member, and it disturbed him a good deal. When he was out

of temper everybody in his circle usually came in for their share of its effects. He had noticed for the first thing that Lettie was out of bed, and as it was past ten o'clock he had opened his mouth to ask the reason in tones that would not have been of the softest kind.

Just in time to stop him she mentioned the name of their visitor. Upon hearing it, the Colonel's face underwent an instant transformation. He strode toward Clyde and placed his hand heartily in that of the young man.

"By George, I'm glad to see you!" he cried. "What an age it is since you were here! Where have you kept yourself? Well, well! (Lettie, you can go to bed.) Hope you're not in a hurry. I want to talk with you for two hours, at least."

Lettie had felt her fondness for this father growing less and less for a long time, but at this moment she had a sense of actual outrage that she could hardly endure. He had no right to throw that order to her, in the presence of this man, as if she were a three-years' child. It degraded her, it lowered her in the estimation of him for whom she cared more than for all other men combined. The angry tears flew to her eyes, as she turned to execute her father's bidding. At her bedroom door she remembered the guest, and turning towards him, unmindful of the drops that were overflowing on her cheek, she bade him good-night in a voice that was scarcely audible.

Clyde felt a strong inclination to lift his hand and smite this blind parent, if possibly that might rouse him to a sense of what he had done. The girl had hardly left the room, when the Colonel remembered the omission of which she had been guilty. She

had not kissed him. Excusing himself he went to her door and knocked upon it.

"Lettie!"

"*Well?*"

Clyde heard the voice and noted its defiant ring. The Colonel did not notice that, however. He could not have comprehended such a thing in this child, who had never had any will of her own since he had first seen her in her mother's arms, twenty-one years before.

"Lettie, you have forgotten."

"*What have I forgotten?*"

Again the defiant ring. Clyde wished he was further away. He feared there was going to be a collision that he would rather not witness.

"You did not kiss me."

For five seconds, that seemed like five hours, there was no reply.

"Did I not?" said the voice, at last. "Well, I will do it to-morrow."

"No, I want it now."

It was a question in the girl's mind for a moment what she would do. She thought she never could kiss him again without repugnance. He had insulted her before the only person whose presence would have made her mind it. But she did not want trouble while Mr. Morley was there, and she thought perhaps he would blame her for the part she had already played.

"Wait a minute, then," she said.

Clyde tried to picture to himself the girl as she was in that room. Was the delay caused by her desire to wipe from her eyes the telltale traces of her anger and grief? Or had she already removed

some of her outer garments, making herself unfit for exhibition in the presence of one not a member of the family? Strange for a student of divinity were the pictures he drew in that brief moment before she opened the door and came into the Colonel's presence.

"Good-night."

Lettie uttered the words in the perfunctory manner she had used from childhood, and touched the bronzed cheek of her father with her lips. At the same moment she cast a look at Clyde that spoke as plainly as words what was in her mind. She could not help it. He might think less of her for the spirit of rebellion, but she wanted him to know.

"Excuse me for this interruption," said Col. Fuller affably, as his daughter disappeared again. "I hardly need apologize to you over a family matter, but I deem it of the greatest importance that there shall be no deviation from an arrangement once established."

Clyde did not utter a word, either in approval or disapproval of this sentiment, and the Colonel naturally considered that enough had been said upon that head. He turned the conversation upon other things, and as he did most of the talking, and as his guest was quite willing to have him, there was no pause in the flow of words until the hands of the mantel clock pointed to half-past eleven.

By an unaccountable freak of the intellect Clyde found himself growing stronger in his purpose of saying something in favor of Mark Melton's cause than he had ever been. When he had decided to go up to the room where Miss Fuller was sitting alone, it seemed to him a most dangerous proceeding and

one little likely to forward the enterprise he had undertaken. When the Colonel sent her to bed in that rough way, and the girl turned her wet eyes upon him, he could have murdered someone, almost, in the first flush of his sympathy. He was in no mood at that moment to ask anything of his host, and hardly able to endure even his company and his voluble discourse. But as the minutes flew by the thought of Melton grew upon him, the sentiment that he owed something to the sacred name of friendship and the cause of truth. He would do as he had agreed, allude to the subject, and see what might come of it, at any cost.

"Do you see much of Mr. Melton?" he asked, when an opportunity presented itself.

"Oh, he comes up Friday evenings, for a game," replied Col. Fuller, coldly. "I do not see much of him otherwise than that."

"He has had a little stroke of luck," said Clyde. Then, as the Colonel looked up inquiringly, he explained: "A relation has left him some money."

Col. Fuller did not seem much interested, but he inquired the amount, as a matter, apparently, of form.

"Five or six thousand dollars, I believe. A tidy windfall to a young fellow just beginning practice. It will be a great aid to him, in getting a good house to set up in; and in case he should want to—to marry—or anything of that kind."

The Colonel has ceased to be interested, when the word "marry" caught his ear.

"*He* won't get married, not right away," he replied, confidentially. "I don't mind telling you that he came to me once and asked for Lettie. You

won't say anything, of course. I told him they were both too young to talk of such a thing, but that if he did well I might think of it, five or ten years later. He hasn't spoken since, but I know it's not out of his mind. Marriage !" exclaimed the old gentleman. "What the deuce do these boys see so fine in it, I wonder? Before they're out of school they want to get a woman tied to them for life! I was thirty when I married, and I should be ninety, if I had to live my life over again. I tell you, sir, it's the biggest nonsense any man ever got into his head !"

Clyde remarked that Mark was not at all a bad sort of young fellow though.

"He's a baby !" cried the Colonel. "He's a milksop! Nothing like his father, the Major. There was a man for you! Ready to jump into any scrimmage, caring no more for a shower of bullets than any one else would for a shower of rain. If *he* wanted to marry a girl, sir, he wouldn't ask any one, not even her, I really believe. He'd ride down to her house, and take her across his saddle, sir, and gallop to the nearest minister's."

Clyde could not help a smile as he asked if this manner of procedure met with the approval of the narrator.

"Hang it, no !" laughed the Colonel. "But you couldn't help admiring the spirit of the fellow, after all. When he was a lieutenant, and under my command, he stole a pair of ducks right out of my mess-tent, in broad daylight, and I went down to have it out with him. By George, sir! I fell in love with the bravado of the cuss. I dined with him that night and let him help me to a plate of my own

birds, sir! The rascal actually talked at the table of the expense he had been to in getting them, inventing the damnedest stories you ever heard, and I never spoke out once. This boy of his is a baby; but he's his father's son and I shan't forget that. When he's old enough, and she is, he can have her, for the love I bore my dearest friend."

At the reminiscense, the Colonel wiped a suspicious looking drop of moisture from his eye, and Clyde thought it a good time to take his departure.

"You can't marry until you are five years older, Mark," he said to Melton the next day, "unless you are willing to kidnap and ride off with her."

Then, as Mark looked at him blankly, he related the gist of the Colonel's statement.

"I'm afraid there's not much hope, then," was Mark's rueful reply.

"Don't say I advised you," said Morley, with a cutting accent. "But if it was my case I'd not wait long. I'd go to her and speak up like a man. If he's not willing I'd take her without. If you've no horse to saddle, try a Pullman car. Wait five years—or one year—or one month—and you risk everything!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

"SHE WILL PROBABLY HAVE CHILDREN."

The Revere Club languished when Frank Morley was out of town. To be sure, Mark Melton had a habit of lounging in there for a lunch as of yore; Charlie Wilkins came because he had nothing else

to do; Silas Clarke dropped around whenever he wanted to borrow a dollar or two of Charlie; and the young man from the leather house on High street still made it a practice to eat there because he could get a better lunch for his money than at any of the outside restaurants. But the club as a whole became a very dull institution that summer when Frank stayed away longer than usual, and when nobody had authority to state when he would return or even where he was spending his time.

"What the de-vil do you sup-pose the fel-low is do-ing?" drawled Wilkins, one warm afternoon, addressing himself to Clarke. "He's al-ways talk-ing about study-ing law, but he ne-ver gwad-uates or o-pens an of-fice. I wish, on my so-ul, he wouldn't be so de-vilish mys-te-wious."

"Pshaw!" ejaculated Clarke. "Leave him alone to know his own business. That psalm-singing brother of his is in town and you can't get Frank to show up while they're liable to run into each other."

Wilkins looked interested.

"The de-vil!" he replied. "What is the fel-low doing he-re?"

"How the hades should I know?" was the answer. "Whenever I see him he's fooling around Melton, who thinks there's something in him worth cultivating, blessed if I can see what! I've got an idea, Charlie, that I'll tell you if you can keep your mouth shut tight enough."

Wilkins announced in his halting way that the opening referred to should be religiously kept sealed so far as this matter was concerned.

"Well, you know Melton goes a good deal to see Col. Fuller, the old ex-army officer who lives on

Shawmut avenue, the one with the pretty daughter that Frank called the best shod woman in Boston one day when we were all sitting at the window there. The old man plays cribbage, and Mark gives him a game once or twice a week. Now, it's plain enough to me that this is only a blind to get on the right side of his royal highness, and that the girl is the real object of the campaign."

Charlie could only exclaim, in a feeble voice, "The de-vil!" This being his favorite method of expressing all ideas of whatever magnitude.

"Melton goes there," pursued Clarke, with a wise expression, "with the view of capturing the pretty daughter. But another man has also set his eyes in that direction, for I happen to know that Mr. Frank Morley rooms in that very house. Now, is it the only place in Boston where he could obtain a lodging? Is it the most central one for a young man whose office work, when he does any, is on Court street? By no means. Why, then, does he room there? Because he, also, has his eye on the best shod feet in the Hub of the Universe!"

The plot thus outlined was so deep and cunning in the estimation of Mr. Wilkins that even his customary exclamation failed to satisfy him. He reclined in his favorite position, marveling at the newspaper acumen that had enabled Clarke to come to such a stupendously wise decision.

"That makes two applicants for the hand—I should say the feet—of Miss Fuller," continued Clarke, after pausing to note the effect of his guesses. "But that, it appears, is not enough. There must be a third one. And who is this third one? I have happened to pass the house twice in the last week,

at about eight o'clock in the evening, and I have seen another man at the bell. That other man—now, Charlie, if you let this out I'll kill you—was the preacher!"

Charlie roused himself enough to repeat "The devil!" a great many times, until Silas thought it best to stop him.

"Who has the best show out of this interesting party? You know what Mark is, too honest to live and too slow to breathe, almost. He has no chance at all. We'll leave him out of the combination from the start. While he and the old man are playing cribbage the girl will lose her heart to one of the other two. Which one? Well, you may put me down for a fool if I don't think it is most likely to be the minister."

Wilkins had got as far as "The de—" when he was interrupted.

"For Heaven's sake, Charlie, leave your patron saint alone for a minute and listen to me! Where a girl is at stake the fellow on the ground has a chance worth two of the other one's. This gospel-spouter is here and Frank is—the Lord only knows where. If he knew what his brother is up to he'd show up pretty sudden, you can bet your life. I'd give a dollar to get hold of his address, for I hate every form of preacher worse than I do poison. I've asked Melton and he says he doesn't know. The minister knows, of course, but that's all the good it will do me. I consider it the duty of a member of the Revere Club to protect the interests of a brother when he is away. Now, the thing to do is for one of us to go up there to that house on Shawmut avenue, engage a room, and watch proceedings."

Firmly believing that Clarke was one of the wisest men on this planet, Wilkins cordially indorsed this suggestion.

"But who the de-vil can *do* it?" he inquired.

"You can."

Charlie began to stammer, "I—I—I—"

"Yes, you—you—you! You can and you must. You have nothing else to do. Go up there and get a room. It is the summer season and you are sure to find one empty. Don't mind how good it is or how poor—engage it and send a trunk there. And when you have a key to the premises, clear out that thick head of yours and discover what is going on."

It took a good hour before Wilkins could be made to believe that this plan was really feasible. He made every excuse in the world to get out of it, but Clarke would not yield an inch. Charlie plead the hardship of having to leave his luxurious apartments on Marlboro street; the pickle he would be in if Frank returned and suspected the part he was playing; and finally, in a burst of confidence, he revealed the fact that at this present time he was devoting himself assiduously to winning the affections of a doo-cid pretty gi-rl, with whom he had recently become acquainted.

Clarke's brow was at once covered with a thundercloud.

"Again!" he exclaimed. "Goodness, Charlie, are you never going to let up on this sort of thing?"

"But—but you have-n't seen her," protested poor Charlie, with a frightened look. "She's a tweas-ure, a pos-tive tweas-ure! I'm su-re you'd say I was wight this time, de-ar boy."

Clarke shook his head rapidly.

"It's not a question of 'tweasures,'" he replied, with dignity, mocking the pronunciation of his companion. "It's a question of heredity. You will have to look on the matter as one of crossing breeds exclusively. You wanted a while ago to cross the Yankee with the Jew, and before that with the German, and I told you what the effect would be. You were wise enough to see the application. Now, what is the name of this girl that you have at present under consideration?"

With a shaking voice Wilkins imparted the information that she was called Marie Lamartine. Then Clarke's brow grew yet darker.

"French!" he cried. "French, by all that's imbecile! Heavens! If you marry that girl she will probably have children, and *what* will they be? What will they *be?* Don't evade the question. Come, what *will* those children be?"

He had not paused for the slightest moment, to give an opportunity for a reply, but his manner was so frigid as to set Wilkins' teeth to chattering.

"*What* will they be?" he repeated, for the third time. "Can you hope they will not smell of garlic? Will they occupy their time principally in catching frogs, or will they not? If they are sons, will they drink anything but absinthe when they grow up? If daughters, will they refrain on any occasion from dancing the can-can? You ought to know something of French habits, at your age. You must have read books that give an inkling of it. Do you want a wife who will feel it absolutely necessary to her position in society that she must have at least seven lovers?"

The distressed auditor could only gasp "Gwacious!"

"I ought never to be surprised at you again," continued Silas, in a tone of great severity. "You have become so used to considering marriage in the mere light of an amusement, that you forget its true meaning. Now, listen to me. You must give up seeing Mlle. Lamartine."

"Oh-me-Gard!"

"And you must go at once to engage a room on Shawnut avenue."

"The de-vil!"

Clarke enforced his direction without loss of time.

"Go up to the door as large as life, mind you, and not as if you were a pickpocket in disguise. If there is any kind of a room there, engage it, and before night get in enough baggage so you can stay. Don't talk to me about this and that, but do as I tell you. We don't want that psalm-singer to carry off the rightful bride of Frank Morley, and we are the only ones who can stop him."

Accustomed as he was to being guided by Clarke, Charlie made but a feeble resistance after this, and with grave doubts of his ability to accomplish anything he set out an hour later to the address given him. He felt much dejected as he contemplated the abandonment of his amour with pretty Marie, which had been progressing in a harmless and semi-platonic way for a fortnight. Marie, it may as well be said, was not of aristocratic lineage, but Charlie had no scruples against making love to her on that account. She was the accredited nurse to one of the babies which on pleasant days make the centre of Commonwealth avenue to blossom as the rose.

Charlie had made her acquaintance in the most off-hand fashion, and would undoubtedly have talked to her of matrimony in time had it not been for the interference of his self-constituted guardian. As he rode in a street car toward the house he sought, he recalled the bewitching ways of his charmer, and the delicious accent with which she had answered his good-mornings. He had intended to invite her to a little supper that very evening, having progressed so far as to learn that she was allowed to be out after the baby's bedtime, which occurred at six. He did not fancy the new task he had been given half as much as he did a tête-á-tête with such a little fairy as Marie. But, of course, Clarke was right. It was the duty of a Man—and Wilkins prided himself upon that title—to think of his prospective offspring above all things.

"Gwa-cious!" It was a narrow escape! "The de-vil!" He would not go so far again without seeking his friend's advice.

If Charlie was confused when he rang the door-bell at Mrs. Bright's he was much more so when, instead of a servant, Miss Bessie came to answer it. He recognized her as the young lady whom he had seen on several occasions with Miss Fuller, and as he knew nothing of her relationship to the landlady of the house, he was so much at a loss what to say, that he stood stock-still at the threshold, never uttering a word; until at last Bessie asked him, in a surprised tone, whether he wished to see any one.

"Ya-as, of course," he replied. "Ya-as. I wa-nted to know, you know, if there were any w-wooms to let, you know."

And having delivered himself of this sentence with

great difficulty, he paused to catch his breath, which bore great evidence of an intention to desert him permanently.

"There is one," said Bessie. "It is on the top floor, and the price is three dollars a week. Will you look at it?"

Charlie stared at her for some seconds in stupid surprise.

"Ya-as! Ya-as, of course!" he ejaculated, suddenly recovering himself. "Ya-as! He-re." He took out his purse. "I will pay a month in advance—and—and I will send my—my thi-ngs, you know, this eve-ning."

A fear that she was dealing with a lunatic began to enter Bessie's mind.

"You will go up and see the room first?" she asked.

"No; that is, ya-as!" said Wilkins. "But I'm not particular, you know. I'm sure it will suit me. Ya-as."

Bessie asked him to come in and wait a moment in the parlor. Then she went into the kitchen and got one of the girls to come with her, as she did not like to go up stairs with him alone. The girl, who was a very comely Irish lass, smiled broadly as she saw the new lodger, but Charlie paid no attention to her. He just peeped into the room, which he said suited him exactly, and then he tendered the money again.

"We only want one week's pay at a time," said Bessie. "If you wish to give me three dollars when you come to-night I will have a receipt ready."

Quite glad to escape from the presence of the two girls Wilkins accepted the opportunity to get out of

the house. That evening he installed himself in his room and began his role of amateur detective.

"It's doo-cid close, the box they put me in," he told Clarke, at the club, the next day. "I thought I ne-ver should get to sleep in it, you know. I don't weally fawn-cy it, bah Jove?"

"You stick to it till you find out something about that parson," said Clarke, decidedly. "And incidentally see if you can get Frank's address out of any of them. Say there is a letter for him that ought to be forwarded. If one person in the house don't know it, ask the others. Here is the first chance you have ever had to distinguish yourself, and you must make the most of it."

Wilkins was not long in getting into the good graces of at least one member of the household—the pretty servant girl who had gone up with Bessie to show him his room. Her name was Maggie and she had the duty among other things of putting his room in order. Charlie took the easiest way of making friends with her, which was by a liberal douceur, and she openly expressed her opinion below stairs that the new lodger was "a gintleman," before he had been twenty-four hours in the house. As no one suspected her reason for coming to this decision her verdict was accepted by the landlady and her niece, and they congratulated themselves on their tenant, who had turned out to be merely eccentric and not dangerous, as had at first been feared.

Charlie soon learned that Maggie knew nothing of the whereabouts of Mr. Frank Morley. He also learned that she had asked Miss Bessie about the matter and that this young lady was no wiser than herself. Maggie did chatter a good deal, however,

about the Fullers, and Mr. Clyde never made a call upon either the Colonel or his daughter that the fact was not promptly communicated to Wilkins. Still there was not much of value to this in itself, and Silas Clarke expressed great impatience with his detective when he told him how little he was learning.

A week passed by before anything transpired worthy of record. Then a strange thing occurred. Charlie came in very late one night, using his pass-key so quietly as not to disturb any one. As he ascended the stairs he noticed a dim light in the room at the left that he had been told was reserved for the use of Frank Morley, never being let in his absence. The thick coverings prevented the least sound of his feet, and, somewhat startled by the unexpected discovery, he trod as lightly as possible. As he came opposite the door he heard a heavy whisper that was unmistakeably a man's, and a lighter one that he recognized as belonging to Miss Bright. Feeling like an eavesdropper who may at any moment be unmasked, and yet anxious to penetrate the mystery which he believed was being enacted so near him, Charlie crept slowly up the second flight, and paused breathless before climbing to his chamber above.

There was something of honor in the breast of this peculiar young fellow. Had it been an ordinary matter, he would have gone straight to his room preferring not to know what was going on. But he had come into this house on a certain mission. Every day since he entered it he had been urged to renewed vigilance by the man who had sent him

there. Possibly this strange visitor, in whose room Bessie trusted herself at an hour past midnight, might be worth knowing about. He would wait a little while and see if anything was to be learned.

Should it appear that this secret had nothing to do with the matter he had in hand, horses would not drag his knowledge from him.

As he paused there, the voices grew a little louder. The girl was protesting against something—pleading in tones that quite forgot the danger of discovery. Then the man's voice increased in volume also, as if he, too, had lost the sense of time and place. The other lodgers at this house were famous for the soundness of their slumbers, or surely some of them might have been awakened now, for the noise was distinct in the hallway, and Wilkins began even to distinguish words.

"*No, no, no!*" It was Bessie's voice. "Go, I *beg* of you! I pray, I beseech you, *go!*"

"Hush!" was the reply, in an almost angry tone. "Do you want the whole house to know I am here? And you pretend to *love* me!"

Then the girl's voice again:

"I do love you, God knows I do! But you must go! Yes, you *must!* Be wise, my darling!"

All of these words could now be heard perfectly by the astonished Wilkins. It began to dawn on his brain that he had heard the man's voice somewhere before, but he could not connect it with anything definite. But as he stood there wondering, he heard the girl again, this time in a shriller voice, and with her accents evidently inspired by terror.

"Frank! Frank! *Oh, God help me!*"

For several seconds no sound that could penetrate into the hallway followed these last exclamations. Wilkins' face was white as a sheet, but his heart experienced a determination that he had never known in his life. He descended the stairs, two steps at a time, and grasped the handle of the door that led into Morley's room. The bolt was not shot and in an instant he stood in the presence of those whose conversation he had heard.

Frank Morley, for it was he, sprang to his feet in an attitude of defiance. Then, seeing who the intruder was, he clapped his hands a moment to his head and sank into a chair. Bessie threw a look at Charlie that he never forgot, and for a little space the tableau was unaltered.

"I—I beg your pawdon!" said Charlie, at last. "It was doo-cid stoo-pid of me, bah Jove! Thought I was on my own flo-or, doncherknow. Ya-as."

He withdrew instantly and the couple were alone again. Their frightened eyes sought those of each other.

"There *is* a God," whispered Morley, hoarsely, "and he has heard you! He has saved us, and I—yes, I thank him. Do not fear for Wilkins. He is a queer fellow, but true blue. He never will tell what he has seen. Good-night."

He did not offer to touch the girl in any way, but went silently down the stairs and out of doors. And the new lodger heard the latch click behind him before he retired into his own chamber.

CHAPTER XIX.

MY BROTHER'S KEEPER.

Wilkins had come so suddenly to the knowledge that Frank Morley was in the house, and Frank had disappeared so suddenly afterwards, there was no opportunity to say a word to him on the particular subject which was the cause of Charlie's being on the premises. It was not till some hours later, lying in the stillness of his room, that it came into his head what he had missed. However, he consoled himself with the reflection that he could not very well have begun a series of questions at such an inauspicious moment, nor have imparted what he wanted the young law student to hear. More than this, Charlie had a dim notion that he did not care so much to further the designs and wishes of Mr. Frank Morley as he had a few hours earlier. He began to think his late friend one whose acquaintance he had about as lief consider at an end. Charlie was no prude. He had no objection to any man's kissing a pretty girl when he liked, provided the pretty girl was willing. But he did not think the little formality of finding out whether she *was* willing wholly unworthy of attention. And he was quite certain that when it became strikingly evident that she was *not* willing, the would-be lover should reconsider his intention without loss of time.

The next day, when Silas Clarke asked him as usual if he had learned anything, he replied eva-

sively. He had been at the club for more than an hour before the time that Morley was in the habit of calling, when in the city, and had kept his eyes on the door, expecting momentarily to see him enter. He supposed the natural course would be for Frank to seek him out and apologize for, or at least attempt a palliation of his conduct, and he had determined not to make a fuss about it, though he knew he never should think the same of him again. But when the figure of Morley did not appear, Wilkins began to think the matter stranger than ever.

"It's doo-cid que-er Fwank stays so long away," he lisped, to Clarke.

"Confound him, yes! But, then, he never does things like any one else."

"He wouldn't come to town and not show up here?" ventured Wilkins, interrogatively.

"Why, he might," answered Clarke. "And that's one of the reasons why your guard at Shawmut avenue is necessary. He might come home for a day or two, for something, and slip off without my seeing him. But if you are as solid with the Irish girl as you think, he couldn't do that without your knowing. And if he should come there, it wouldn't take three minutes for you to put the flea in his ear that his brother will bear watching."

No, it wouldn't take three minutes to do that, thought poor Charlie, if the three minutes were like any ordinary three. When they were filled with wholly unexpected incidents, however, that was another matter.

Charlie met Bessie in the hallway that afternoon, when he went in. She seemed about to speak to him, but apparently changed her mind at the last

moment and went into the parlor instead. He saw enough of her face to realize that it was paler than ordinary, and that she was suffering. Had he had the courage he would have stopped and said something to her, for he felt the impulse, but he did not know exactly how to do it. Arriving at his room he found Maggie there, shutting the windows on account of a thunder-storm that was rising, and when he asked her whether she had yet heard anything of Mr. Morley, she answered that she had not.

"Do you—aw—think Miss Bes-sie is, aw—particular-ly stwuck with him?"

"Well, I do be thinking sometimes that she likes him pretty well," said Maggie. "He be's a nice young fellow, and Miss Bessie ain't blind."

Mr. Clyde Morley had been at the house only once since that night when Col. Fuller insisted in his presence that his daughter should obey him. This time also the Colonel had been at home, and at the regulation hour Lettie kissed him and vanished into her chamber. But on the evening following the one when Frank was seen by Wilkins, Clyde came again. Bessie admitted him, the servants being busy at other work, and contrary to recent habit, he paused a moment to speak to her.

"Is Col. Fuller at home?"

It was his ordinary question, but he spoke in a kinder tone than he generally used when talking with her, a thing she was quick to notice.

"No, sir, he is out, but Miss Fuller is in. Will you step up and wait?"

She had said that to him more than once before, but her voice was affected by his manner, from which

she had been led to feel that he would do more than ask these questions.

"I will, but, before I do so, may I not have a word with you?"

She led the way into the parlor, trembling. She was always afraid of him, and to-day more than ever. What could he intend to say? Was it possible he had heard of the events of the previous evening?"

"You are not at ease," were his first words. "I pray you calm yourself. I have a message for you."

She looked at him with an expression of surprise. He had a message for her!

"My brother—my brother Frank," he began, and the cloud that always found its way to his forehead came with the name, "was in Boston yesterday. I had a brief interview with him—a business interview that could not well be avoided. We are not in the habit of meeting when it can be helped." His tones grew more and more severe as he proceeded. "Before we parted he inquired if I was likely to call here, and when I told him yes, he asked me to say something to you."

He waited, partly to gain a better command over his voice, and partly to allow her to compose herself.

"I was astonished, I need not say," he continued, "at such a request, and told him I should much prefer he intrusted his message to some other person. 'When you learn what it is,' he replied, 'you may be more willing to be the bearer of it. I want you to say to Bessie that I am going far away, and may not be able to bid her farewell. I want you to pay what I owe Mrs. Bright, with enough to cover a month's

notice, and send me the receipt.' And this is the message I bring."

There was a good deal of womanly courage in the breast of this young girl, and even as she heard what seemed like her death-knell, she did not forget to launch back at him an arrow of her own.

"I fear, Mr. Morley, that you could not have brought news more agreeable to yourself. And I am not sure but the decision which you report was influenced in no small measure by your own advice."

"You are much in error," he answered, mildly, "at least as to the latter intimation. If you knew my brother better you would understand that nothing would give him more pleasure than to go exactly contrary to my suggestions."

Bessie could not help asking at what time Mr. Morley had seen his brother. She could hardly believe that Frank had come to visit her after taking this resolve.

"I said 'yesterday,'" he corrected, "but to be strictly accurate it was to-day. Our business was finished in the afternoon, and I supposed he had left the city, but at some hour in the night—two or three o'clock, I should judge—he came to my room and awoke me. Something had happened to excite and make him nervous. 'You go to Col. Fuller's sometimes?' he asked. 'Yes.' 'Do you think you shall go there to-day?' 'Probably this evening.' 'Would you do me the favor to ask for Miss Bright and tell her that I am going far away, and shall give up my room? Pay what is due, with a month in advance, and tell Bessie I may not be able to say farewell to her.' I asked him no questions, but promised as requested. You have the entire conversation."

Bessie wished to close the interview. She wanted to be alone where she could relieve her overcharged feelings in tears. The cruelty of this sudden desertion was more then she could bear without some such demonstration, and she did not want this heartless brother of her lost one to know the extent of her sorrow. She rose, as if to permit him to leave.

"Listen to me a moment, little girl," said the grave voice of the man at her side, and she thought it had suddenly become surcharged with a new melody. "Your heart is sad, but believe me, this should be the brightest hour of your life. As long as Frank Morley lives he will be a menace to the tranquility of women. Beneath an attractive exterior he hides a capacity for evil incredible to one who does not know the truth. I would not say these things of him if I could do otherwise. He is blood of my blood and flesh of my flesh. And I tell you, when you thank God for especial blessings, count it his greatest that he has led that man out of your life and will never suffer him to return."

He was gone. He had ascended the stairway. She heard him knock on the door of the Fullers' apartment. She heard the door open and close. She was utterly desolate. The man she had loved—that she still loved, in spite of his faults—had gone his way, without even the consolation of a parting word. How her heart rebelled at the harsh verdict his brother had rendered? She knew why Frank had gone. He was overcome with shame at the remembrance of his actions. He could not bear to face her again, after what his passion had led him to disclose of his wild nature.

Yet this was not the conduct of a thoroughly bad

man. Had he been what his brother charged he would have returned to her, and waited a better time to renew his overtures. No, he was not all evil. She could hear his voice again declaring that there was a God, and that he thanked him for averting his dreamed of sin. She wished he had left an intimation of his future place of abode, that she might write and tell him how fully she forgave.

Poor Bessie! She would have journeyed to him, no matter what distance he was away, and let him know her feelings from her own lips.

Lettie Fuller had seen Clyde Morley sober before, but never so much so as now. For some minutes after he entered her parlor he spoke only in monosyllables, acting as if the air of the place oppressed him. She asked him finally if he was ill, for she could account for his strange manner in no other way.

"I—I don't know," was his reply. "I am hardly ill, and yet I am not well. I had a letter this morning bringing sad news, and it troubles me deeply."

She saw that he intended to tell her more, and waited patiently.

"An old man, a dear old man, who has been more than a father to me, is at the point of death. He wants to see me before he passes away, and I dread the ordeal."

Miss Fuller looked puzzled, but still she held her peace.

"It is not a long story," he went on. "This friend of mine is a minister of the gospel. I was left when a small boy in his charge. He decided that I should be educated to his profession. Under his tutelage I was prepared for college, always with this end in

view. When I graduated I entered a divinity school. In the natural course of things I should now be settled over some parish. Circumstances have made me hesitate to enter the pulpit. This has grieved my dear guardian intensely. He fears that I may ultimately abandon the profession altogether, and before he dies he wishes my solemn promise to enter upon it."

Lettie waited a moment, and as he did not speak she asked if this clergyman lived very far from Boston.

"Only a few hours' ride."

"Why do you not go to him?"

"Because I am not ready to make the promise he craves, and I do not like to stand by his dying-bed and refuse it."

"I supposed, papa supposed," she said, "that you were certain to be a minister. We did not imagine it was an open question. Papa dislikes the church so much he has had to strain every point in your favor, and the fact that he likes you so well in spite of it is much to your credit."

He thanked her by a nod and asked with some interest whether she shared her father's opinions in relation to the church in general.

"Why, really," she answered, diffidently, "I know very little about it. I never was inside a church in my life."

"Indeed! Then you cannot have a very clear idea as to what is meant by the profession of a clergyman."

She shook her head.

"I understand they preach the doctrines of their

denominations every Sunday, and sometimes visit their parishioners."

"Yes. And do you also understand that they are required to be better men—to live holier lives—than the average of their fellows?"

No, Lettie did not know that. And she did not look as if the fact made much impression upon her.

"That is my trouble," he confessed, looking her full in the eyes. "I am afraid I am not good enough to be a minister; that temptations may come which I cannot withstand, and that I may be a stumbling-block to others."

These technical terms only combined to confuse the girl's brain. He was talking of things of which she knew nothing.

"It is unfortunate," she said, finally.

"It is," he replied. "And just at present it makes it very hard for me."

They had grown so pensive upon this matter, that he turned the conversation of his own will into another channel, by referring to the events of that evening when the Colonel had called her out of her chamber.

"Pardon me for saying I was sorry for you," he said. "But in a sense he was right. He is your father and can command you."

"He has no right to insult me before others," she said, bridling at the recollection.

"But he did not think. You are to him but the child you were when you first came under his charge. He does not notice that time is passing. Then, he is of the army, and accustomed to unquestioning obedience."

Lettie had picked up a book from the table and was turning its leaves rapidly.

"You may call me very bold, Mr. Morley, but there are many times of late when it seems as if I could not bear these things much longer. I have been repressed until my spirit is nearly ready to break forth. When it comes it will be all at once, like an explosion."

He felt a sympathy for her. Was not his own life like that—always on the verge of an explosion? He also had been repressed until he could hardly endure it.

He reached over and took her hand in his without thinking what he was doing.

"Lettie!"

She looked up at him with half-parted lips.

"Lettie, I—I—think—"

There was a noise on the stairs and landing. A hurried knock at the door cut short the rest of his sentence. Miss Fuller, much chagrined at the interruption, went to see who had come, and found a little group, of which Bessie, Maggie and one of the lodgers made a part.

"Oh, Lettie!" exclaimed Bessie, "your father has been taken ill, at his club. Some men are bringing him upstairs."

Miss Fuller was so annoyed that she could hardly control herself enough to answer with politeness. But Clyde came to her rescue, and began to move the furniture out of the path of the men who were bearing the helpless form. He knew which the Colonel's room was, and opened the door that led into it, and the sick man was at once carried there and laid on the bed.

"I don't know exactly what they call it," said one of the members of the club, who had come along. "He hasn't been quite well for a good while. He's half full of lead, you know, that was shot into him by the rebels. Ah, here's the doctor. He may be able to explain the technical points better."

Dr. Brennan did not stop, however, to explain anything. He directed the men who had carried the Colonel to remove his clothing and get him into the bed as soon as possible. The patient was conscious, but very weak, and he offered no comment or resistance to anything that was prescribed by the physician, an old acquaintance of army days. In fifteen minutes the doctor came out of the bedroom and informed those gathered in the parlor that the Colonel was "comfortable," a term that always confuses laymen in such cases, for it is usually applied when the party alluded to seems very uncomfortable indeed.

Mrs. Bright's experience was brought into play, and she undertook the task of receiving and carrying out the instructions of the doctor. Lettie, who looked slightly dazed, was of no use whatever, and nobody expected much of her. Bessie, feeling that sympathy was required, put her arms around the girl's waist, but Lettie quietly released herself. The principal thought in her mind was that her father had added a new grievance to the too long list she held against him. He might have selected some other moment to have been brought home in this state, than the one she had longed for with all her soul.

"Lettie!"

It was Clyde speaking again, as they stood apart from the others. He had called her by the familiar

name once more, but it was only to say that he was going, and that he would try and look in the next day to see if he could be of any service. She saw him take his hat and leave and she thought her head would burst.

"I came very near saying something foolish, I'm afraid," Clyde remarked, mentally, as he took his way to the Parker House.

CHAPTER XX.

OFF FOR ARCADIE.

In a day or two Wilkins received a short letter from Frank Morley, dated at New York, asking him to say to the boys at the club that as he was about to remove to another part of the country—which he did not specify—he should have to sever his membership in the organization. He sent a money-order sufficient to pay his dues for six months in advance, in order to leave with the books square in his favor, and said a few trite things about regretting circumstances which made it impossible for him to say good-bye in person. There was no allusion to the affair at Shawmut avenue, for Frank had the fullest confidence that he need say nothing to keep Wilkins from divulging that secret. Charlie read the letter several times, to make sure there was no hidden meaning anywhere between the lines, and then he gave it to the treasurer of the club along with the money-order, and considered his duty ended in the matter.

Great was the dismay at the Revere when this news was disseminated. Silas Clarke could hardly be persuaded to believe it genuine at first. He thought it one of Morley's jokes, which that individual would come round in a few weeks and laugh over. It piqued him that the letter should have been sent to Wilkins, instead of to himself. He did not remember that Frank and Charlie had been on any specially intimate terms. If Frank were to write to any one a genuine letter of this kind, he said, it would be either to himself or to Mark Melton. On the whole, Mark was the person most likely to have been made the confidant of such a decision. But after Clarke had expressed this opinion freely for an hour or two to all comers, Melton entered the club, and put an end to speculation by announcing that he had received a letter of similar import and that he had no doubt—much to his regret—that it was genuine. Mark looked soberer than usual and his opinion was soon accepted by all, even the young man who worked in the High street leather house.

"Well, that's the end of this club!" exclaimed Clarke, when he could doubt no longer. "It's duller than the devil here when he's away, and if he's not coming back we might as well close up shop."

"I tell you what we could do," suggested another member, with an inclination to humor. "We might get that brother of his to join in his place."

This raised a slight laugh, but Clarke uttered such a groan of distress that the levity was very brief in its duration.

"Such a joke ought to subject its author to expulsion," he protested. "For heaven's sake, don't let's hear anything more of that kind!"

Then rising, he motioned to Wilkins to follow him, and went out upon the street.

"I suppose you've got no idea what is the cause of this," he said, watching his companion narrowly.

Charlie replied by a shake of his head.

"Well, there's no need of your staying at that house now, as I see. If Frank has abandoned the field it's not our business to interest ourselves for him. Confound it! I wish I understood what he is up to!"

Charlie did not say much at first. He was thinking that he did not want to leave Shawmut avenue just yet. The blue eyes of his chambermaid had been having an entrancing effect upon him of late. Ignorant and unsophisticated as Maggie was, he had found a charm about her that captured his susceptible imagination. He wondered if Clarke would find any fault with this entanglement, and thinking it best to put a brave front on the matter, he finally revealed his dilemma.

"I don't want to leave just yet, de-ar boy," he stammered. "There's some-body the-re that I find vewy inter-westing."

Clarke started and assumed a severe expression.

"A woman, I'll wager a dollar!" he exclaimed.

Wilkins admitted the correctness of the diagnosis.

"Nat-uwally," he said.

"What the devil have you struck now?"

Always awed when Silas spoke in that tone, Charlie manfully stood his ground and began to expatiate with considerable vehemence on the personal charms of Miss Maggie O'Donaghue.

"Such a fawm as you nev-er saw, de-ar boy! Eyes like—like the sky, you know! Teeth as

wegular as if they were bou-ght in the sto-re, 'pon honah! She's a weal beauty, perfectly entwancing!"

Silas eyed him with a look of dejection.

"And her name is Maggie O'Donaghue!" he cried, drawing a discouraged breath.

Charlie said it was.

"And you are trying to think yourself in love with her!"

Charlie, a little frightened at the ferocity of his friend's manner, asked what there was in the case to make it so very terrible.

"Oh, this fellow!" cried Clarke, apostrophizing the trees on the Common, under which the pair were now walking. "Is there any hope for him? Shall I save him once more, or shall I let him go to the dogs and have done with it?"

More and more alarmed, Wilkins begged an explanation.

"*Irish!*" cried Clarke, desperately. "Irish as Mrs. Murphy's pig! Do you know nothing of the laws of heredity as applied to a case like this? Pretty form! Blue eyes! What a narrow view to take of one of the most awful responsibilities of life!"

Reduced now to a trembling condition, Wilkins inquired humbly if his friend would kindly tell him the worst.

"I will," replied Silas, after pausing for consideration. "I will—*this* time. But if it occurs again you must go to some one beside me. Now let us imagine that you marry this Maggie. She will have seventeen children, to begin with!"

"Gwa-cious!" was Charlie's response. "You

don't m-mean she will have them a-all to *be-gin* with, de-ar boy!"

"To *begin* with!" repeated Clarke, solemnly. "Eleven of them will be boys. Before one of those lads is ten years old he will be renowned in the neighborhood as a pugilist. By the time he is fifteen he will have knocked out his father according to the Queensberry rules, from which you will have no right to appeal."

"Dwead-ful!" came in shivering accents from Wilkins' pale lips.

"The other six children that this woman will bear you—to *begin* with, remember!—will probably be girls. I do not know positively that this will be so, but it is my opinion. They will have beauty, of course, because they are Irish, but their brogue will be of a kind you can cut with a knife. They will marry, each of them, men with an O and an apostrophe in front of their surnames, and they will visit you at Christmas with nineteen kids apiece!"

Charlie took in the full terror of the picture and murmured, "Oh-me-Gard!"

"Now go ahead and marry this Miss O'Donaghue," said Clarke savagely. "I do not advise you to the contrary. But when your grandchildren come home to roost—like chickens—remember that I *t-o-l-d y-o-u!*"

He left the young man abruptly, and Wilkins walked in a very despondent mood to Shawmut avenue. With the fickleness that characterized his feelings toward the opposite sex he had come to have a great affection for Maggie. There was nothing for it now but to leave the house. He had been

criticising Frank Morley rather severely in his thoughts for going away so quietly, but he thought he would have to do the same. He knew he had made an impression on Maggie, and he could not face her astonished looks when she learned of his intention to vacate. As he blundered along the sidewalk, heedless of the passers, he ran into a pedestrian, and as he raised his hat to make an apology, he saw that it was none other than Clyde Morley.

"I *beg* your paw-don!" said Charlie, much confused at the discovery. "I was vewy careless, bah Jove!"

"Don't mention it," was the polite reply. "I think I have had the pleasure of seeing you before. Are you not a member of the Revere Club? Yes, I thought so. I was there once in company of Mr. Melton—Mr. Mark Melton."

"Ya-as," responded Wilkins, more confused than ever at the recognition. It seemed to him as if this man knew that he had been watching him for the past fortnight. "I we-member vewy well. You are —aw—Mr. Morley."

Mr. Morley admitted the correctness of the statement with a courteous bow. As they were now at the house of Mrs. Bright, both men paused, apparently to finish the conversation before entering.

"I am going to call on Col. Fuller, who lives here," said Morley. "I wonder if you know him. He was taken ill recently at his club and brought home."

"Ya-as," replied Wilkins, "I heard of it. In fact —aw—I woom in the house myself, you know."

Mr. Morley expressed his surprise.

"I suppose you know my brother—my brother

Frank, very well, then," he suggested. And the cloud came across his face.

"Ya-as. Oh, ya-as!"

"He does not room here any longer, I understand," pursued Morley.

"No. He wrote me that he should not return at pwe-sent."

Clyde looked much interested.

"Did he, indeed? And did he say anything to indicate why he departed so suddenly?"

Charlie replied in the negative.

"And—excuse me, I am his brother, you remember—have you no idea?"

The penetrating look that accompanied the inquiry brought the color to Charlie's features.

"Not the slight-est," he answered. "We were not what you call in-timate, you know. He only wote me to tell the bo-ys at the Wevere."

Finding that there was nothing to be learned in this quarter, Mr. Morley rang the bell, while Wilkins took out his key and entered. It was Maggie who came to the door, and Charlie was glad to escape from her while her attention was attracted to the caller.

"Can you tell me how the Colonel is this morning?" asked Clyde of the girl.

"Very comfortable, sir," she answered. "The doctor was here an hour ago and said he was doing well. I think, jist at this minute, sir, he's aslape."

Clyde took a card from his pocket and wrote on it, "I called to inquire about your father and am glad to learn he is no worse. Shall be out of the city for a few days. If he is able to understand, please tell him I was here."

Handing this to Maggie he left the house without going upstairs. Fifteen minutes walk brought him again to his hotel, where he packed a hand-bag with a few articles, and telling the clerk he would be absent a night or two, he started, again on foot, for one of the northern depots.

CHAPTER XXI.

"NO, I HAVE NEVER LOVED YOU."

Morley never rode if he could help it. Walking seemed to subdue the growing fever in his veins better than any other form of exercise. There were few days that he did not cover at least a dozen miles, and sometimes he walked twenty, going far out into the suburbs, and wandering through by-paths and lonely wooded roads.

That night the train that came nearest to the village of Arcadie left him at the station. There were four miles yet to cover, but he rejected with impatience the offer of a local hackman to take him over for a dollar and a half. Even a reduction of the tariff to a dollar only brought back a shake of the head from the moving figure, already a dozen rods on its way. Clyde walked with long, quick strides, using arms as well as legs, and few professional pedestrians could have passed him on that journey. When the lights of the hamlet hove in sight he was sorry that there was not yet a few more miles of walking before he reached it.

"There's his house," he whispered, looking across the fields. "There is the roof under which he taught me what my duty was, and forget to tell me what to do with this torrent, this avalanche that threatens at all seasons to engulf me. Dear old man! I don't suppose he even had a thought that ought to have been strangled since the hour of his birth! I wish I could escape seeing him again. It is going to be painful to both of us. Of course, I must not tell him the whole truth. That would be nothing less than cruelty. But if he asks me to make him a direct promise, what shall I do then? Shall I refuse, and embitter his dying moments; or shall I consent and break it as soon as he is in his grave? Here is a place at which the most conscientious might well hesitate. Ah, well! I cannot say what I shall do until the moment. I never can tell in advance what is coming. I will go to his bedside and do the best I can under the circumstances."

The woman who had the ordering of the old minister's household looked gratified when she saw whose face had brought her to the door.

"He is nearly through with this world," she said, wiping away a tear, as she sat down with the newcomer in the parlor. "He has not been able to speak for some hours, but he can still understand what is said to him. He wrote this little note with the last strength he had, and asked that it be given to you as soon as you should arrive."

Clyde took the note, and opened the envelope with fingers that seemed growing numb. He anticipated its contents and he dreaded them.

"You know the wish that lies nearest my heart.

If I am unable to converse with you when you come, you will know what I hope to hear."

The penciling was scrawly, and bore evidence of having been written with great effort. Clyde pulled himself together and asked if he could see the Doctor at once. The housekeeper went to ascertain and in a few minutes returned with the information that he might go up.

Never in his life had such emotion overcome him as when he saw the wasted form of his friend, preceptor and guardian lying on that bed. Tears he had not dreamed of shedding flew to his eyes. He clasped the thin hand and sat down by the couch unable for some minutes to utter a word. The nurse, at a signal from the housekeeper, left the room with her, and Clyde was left alone with the dying man. When he was able to raise his head and observe more closely, he saw that the ray of intelligence in the gaze of the old minister was clear, though faint. He had reached the point he expected when he penned the note. He could not speak, but his power to comprehend remained. He knew that Clyde had come, and he wanted more than anything else, in the few seconds remaining to him, to know that his ward would enter the profession which he had marked out for him.

"I have waited so long," began Clyde, tremulously, holding up the note to show that he had received and read it, "because I wanted to make sure of my fitness. I will try harder than ever to feel that I ought to begin the work you wish. I will try very, very hard."

There was a perceptible pressure in the hand he

held, and when it relaxed Clyde realized that a change had taken place—a change of which he did not at once know the full import. He summoned the attendant, who found that the feeble spark of life had fled. The old clergyman had fought Death off till he could hear the words he wanted, and then had gone peaceably to his reward.

After the funeral, Clyde returned to Boston and made arrangements for leaving the city. He learned that Col. Fuller had partially recovered from his attack and was considered in no danger of an immediate return of it. He wanted to see Lettie and say something kind to her, but he did not dare put himself under the power of her presence. The promise he had made to Dr. Welsh must be carried out at all hazards. He could not be fairly said to have "tried" if he went back to the one who was the greatest danger in his path. He wrote a letter to Melton and another to Miss Fuller, and he thought as he mailed them how much he was getting to be like that twin brother he had so denounced. There was a cowardice in both of them that was wonderfully similar. Clyde had the better reason for the course he was pursuing, but the methods used were identical. The letter to Melton was not of sufficient importance to be given here. The one to Lettie was as follows:

"Dear Miss Fuller: The one of whom I told you—my friend and former guardian—has departed this life. Just before his spirit took flight I promised him to try as hard as I could to devote what talents I possess to the profession for which he intended me. In order to keep that promise I must forget all other ties, bury all other hopes that have ever crept into my

heart. I am going to the West, and doubt if I shall return.

"Miss Fuller, one whom I know and esteem entertains the hope that you will some day become his wife. Pardon me for saying that I trust this union will be consummated, and that you both will be happy. If I am not too presumptuous, let me add that long delays are never advisable in such matters. Give my regards to your father and tell him I shall earnestly hope for his speedy recovery

"Your Friend,

"CLYDE MORLEY."

Like a blow on the head from a heavy bludgeon was this letter to its recipient. For a long time it stunned more than it pained her. When she came to herself a little she found that some of her nerves seemed to have undergone a partial paralysis. A reckless spirit, a devil-may-care vein permeated her. She had thought so much of this man, had placed so much of her hopes for the future on him, there was nothing but a blank remaining now that he was out of the picture. She was compelled to conceal the distress she felt, for there was no one to understand what ailed her. And when Mark Melton took courage one evening to hint at what he desired she surprised him by an answer that he had feared it would take a long time to win.

"Yes, I will marry you," she said, as if she were talking in her sleep.

"My darling!" he cried, attempting to embrace her. "Then you have loved me all the time?"

She drew away from him, refusing the contact with his arms.

"No. I have not loved you, and I do not now. I have heard that love and marriage are not necessary adjuncts. I will *marry* you, if you wish, but with a definite understanding that you shall wait for my *love* to grow, no matter how long it may take."

He had a momentary look of disappointment, but his face cleared again. He thought this a mere freak on the part of an inexperienced girl, that would disappear soon enough in the sunshine of her wedding morning.

"I accept you on those terms," he replied. "And now for a kiss to bind the bargain."

"Oh, I can't give you that yet!" she cried, with a little sensation of terror. "You will have to wait for—for everything, till I change my feelings. I want to be perfectly honest with you. I cannot live much longer with papa—things have grown disagreeable of late till I can't bear them. You must think of it awhile—whether you really want to take me—for I don't know as I ever should learn to love you like—like a wife." Her voice sank so low that he could hardly hear the last word. "Perhaps, when you have considered it fully, you will see that it is best we should part now, and I don't want you to make any mistake."

But, sinister as this sounded, Melton was too fond a lover to let it change his purpose. No, he told her, he should need no time for consideration. He would marry her as early as she would set the day, the earlier the better; he would take her to his home, where she should be her own mistress in everything; his only care would be to make her happy. Then he referred to her father, saying he

feared there would be his chief trouble, and the Colonel would think a very long delay advisable.

"I shall not depend on his consent," replied the girl, in a cold tone. "I am now of age and have a right to marry if I wish. But, there is one thing more. I cannot live in Boston. We must remove to some other city."

Mark had already thought of trying New York and when he suggested that city the girl said it would suit her as well as any other. Quite overjoyed, it was not so hard to break the news to Col. Fuller as he had feared. Lettie stood by his side as he imparted the information to the father of his betrothed.

"Two children! That is what you are!" was the angry exclamation of the ex-officer. "You are mad to think of such a thing for ten years yet!"

But, though he raved for days, the wedding preparations were quietly begun. And Mark's only regret during the next month was that he did not have Frank Morley there to give him his counsel and advice.

CHAPTER XXII.

"GOOD-NIGHT, MY WIFE."

If there were not abundance of evidence to the contrary it would seem incredible that any man would be willing to take a partner for life on such terms as Lettie Fuller offered to Mark Melton. The

present writer never pretended to comprehend the peculiar state of the masculine mind which is willing to enter into a compact of that duration, with a woman who does not pretend the slightest affection for the one she is to wed. The hope and belief that time will bring things around all right—that love will grow spontaneously with the passage of years—seems ingrained in such natures and no doubt the result is sometimes the one anticipated. But, on the whole, the risk is no light one.

Even with strong love at the beginning of the marriage relation, we often see the gradual change which turns it into indifference, if not dislike. What, then, is the prospect where no love is felt at all? Is there anything to assure the husband that he has not taken to his bosom one whose fealty he has no right to expect—one who may at any time repudiate the hateful bargain she has foolishly made. And if there is something so incredible in the action of the man, what can be said of that of the wife, who thus accepts the most sacred obligations given to a human being, without even the excuse of some poor girl she would despise, who gives her all to the lover who has won her heart?

But marriages of this kind happen so often that they almost cease to attract attention, and certainly do not lessen the public estimation of those who are parties to them. "Do you suppose she loves him?" is a common question, when a marriage is under discussion. "No, but she esteems him and he will be a good husband for her. Everybody says it is a suitable match."

"Everybody" says a good many things, if rumor

is to be believed, and "Everybody" has a good many sins to answer for.

Melton loved Lettie so devoutly that the mere thought of winning her nearly turned his young head. He had never cared for another girl. For the past year and more all his plans for life had been made with her as the central figure. He was not very well acquainted with the world outside his own narrow sphere. It was the nature of his mind to estimate things by appearances. He had watched the idol of his heart going about in her little apartment, obeying without question each desire of her father. When she little suspected his proximity, he had followed her upon the street at a respectful distance and noted the propriety of her conduct. It was not to spy upon her that he had done this, but because he was fascinated by the girl, and wished to lose no opportunity to observe her. Now, that she had promised to marry him, either with or without the consent of Col. Fuller, he was carried away with his joy.

Say what she might about not loving him, Mark reasoned that she could not consider him distasteful. She liked him, or she would never give her consent, and love would come later. Oh, yes, it would certainly come, for he would do everything to deserve it, and when a husband deserved his wife's love it must become his! So thought this ignorant young man, and his happiness grew as he contemplated his prospects.

Mark did not want the marriage to take place without the consent of the Colonel, if it was possible to obtain it. It was a great satisfaction to him to reflect, however, that the refusal of that gentleman was no longer an insuperable obstacle. As Lettie

had remarked, she was now of age, and could do as she pleased in such an important matter. After further consultation with Miss Fuller, Mark determined to talk again with the Colonel about it.

Col. Fuller had now recovered enough to sit up in a chair, but he was still confined to the house, and likely to be for some time, according to the opinion of his physician. Not being able to go to his club, he grew very irritable, and life with him became almost unbearable for his daughter. While she had quietly determined that she would pursue her own course hereafter, she was in no haste to precipitate a collision. Her separation from Clyde Morley, capped by his cruel letter, had made her desperate, but she still bided her time before letting her father know the state of her mind. Above all things she did not wish him to suspect the cause of her changed feelings, and she took a certain pleasure in thinking that the constant nagging which he now gave her would answer as a sufficient excuse when she should decide to throw off her submissive attitude and announce her new declaration of independence.

I think it is Dickens who speaks of an ex-army officer, somewhere in his novels, as "a retired bull-dog on half-pay." No better description can be given to Col. Horace Fuller during those weeks which followed his collapse in the club-house. Nothing suited him. His food was always too hot or too cold; his bed-room was either too stuffy or it was full of draughts. Lettie was the slowest attendant a man had ever known. The condition of the Colonel's purse did not justify him, he thought, in keeping the nurse that had been at first engaged, beyond a fortnight. Lettie had nothing else to do, the Colonel told

Dr. Brennan, and it would be a good thing for her to have a little exercise besides gadding the streets.

The girl stood by when this brutal expression was used, but not a muscle of her face quivered. Her father had degraded her once before the man she loved, and all he might say after that could not have the least effect upon her. The lead that remained in the officer's body seemed to irritate him terribly. He formed no direct resolve to be ugly to his child, but she happened to be the one in the way, and every blow descended on her head. He was entirely deceived by her submissive manner, which she did not change in any degree, and as time passed on he grew worse and worse.

"Money!" he exclaimed, when she mentioned one day that her purse was empty. "What do you do with so much money? My God, girl, I'm not a banker! You have been altogether too extravagant, and you will have to stop it! You don't need a thing. You are dressed already better than any other girl on the avenue. No, I haven't a cent to throw away, and you needn't ask me again."

Lettie made no reply, but went to his purse, which was kept in the secretary, and took out what she wanted. He always told her to go to it when the doctor, or the apothecary, or the laundress or the landlady were to be paid. She went to it now and took a hundred dollars; then she went down street and spent half of it in boots and hosiery, and the other half in a hat and some handkerchiefs.

Melton came quite frequently at first, thinking it a sort of duty to cheer the confinement of his friend, but the Colonel used him so cavalierly that he soon ceased to call. When three or four days passed

without him, Col. Fuller began to complain that he was deserted by every one, and that he should think a young man who aspired to the position of his son-in-law would find time to come occasionally and see if he needed anything. Lettie told this to Mark, whom she used to meet for short conferences in the parlor below, and he sprang up with delight and said he would go up at once.

"Oh, let him wait," said Miss Fuller, darkly. "It won't hurt him."

The next day and the next the Colonel got to harping on this string entirely. He told Lettie that he had promised her to Mark, but that he should certainly retract the promise if the young physician continued to absent himself from the house. The girl presented an immovable countenance, and her father could not tell whether the announcement was pleasing to her or otherwise. In the irritable condition in which he now was, he would have taken any ground that he thought the most likely to be distasteful to her.

"If you were married, there would be some one to care for me," he broke out, when she came in from a few minutes' walk in the open air. "If I had a son-in-law, he would not leave me hour after hour with no one to see whether I lived or died. If that young fellow is going to have you, we might as well have it over. And if he's not, the sooner we know it the better. There are other men as good as he in the world. By George! Where's that parson? With all his ministerial notions, I'd give more for him than a dozen ordinary fellows! Where the devil do you suppose he has gone? It's strange you never got to caring anything for him. I thought at one time you

would. I really did. It seemed to me that he managed to get here a good many evenings before I came home from the club. I honestly thought he was getting notions into his head about you. You could have held him if you had known enough. You'll never get another one like him, if you live a hundred years."

Lettie bit her lips with pain; but she said nothing.

"I'm going to send for Melton," continued the Colonel. "If I'm to be sick the rest of my life I want some one to see that I don't starve or freeze to death. He's not much of a man, but he'd do that. Maj. Melton's son would be decent with his father's old commander. I'm going to send for him and ask him if he wants you, and if he does I'm going to tell him he must take you now."

As Lettie still kept silence, the Colonel grew more irritable, and finally burst forth—

"What ails you? Can't you say anything?"

With a powerful effort the girl controlled herself.

"What do you wish me to say?"

"I wish you to say you'll *marry* him!" he retorted, savagely.

"I will marry him," she replied, quietly.

"And as soon as the arrangements can be made, too!"

"As soon as the arrangements can be made."

Col. Fuller was not at all pleased to find her so entirely tractable. In the state of his disease he wanted someone to quarrel with.

"What's the matter with the girl!" he exclaimed, after looking hard at her. "Is she a parrot? Do you mean to tell me you love this fellow, after all?"

She returned his look undaunted.

"I do not," she said.

"You do not."

"No."

"But you'll marry him, just the same."

"I have said so."

"What the devil do you mean!" he cried, hotly.

The exclamation jarred on her. She decided to make this man feel something of the sentiment with which he had of late inspired her.

"*I mean*," she answered, as calmly as if speaking the most ordinary things, "that I am going to marry Mr. Melton, and within a few weeks. I do not love him, and I have told him so. He accepts me as I am. *I mean* that it will not make the least difference in the matter whether it meets your approval or does not. *I mean* that before a month has passed I shall no longer be where you can address such words to me as you have been using for the past few weeks."

All at once, and so quietly that he hardly knew what had happened, Col. Fuller saw the fabric he had been years in erecting dissolve before his eyes. This girl, who had obeyed him like a slave—or, as he would have said, like a soldier—was in a state of rank mutiny. He saw also that he was helpless to prevent what she announced her intention of doing. He knew she had passed her twenty-first birthday. There was a determination about her manner quite out of accord with her calm expressions. His heart sank. He did not know what to dread. Was he to be left in his age and illness to the tender mercies of strangers and servants?

So affected was he by the discovery that he had no strength to reply to his daughter's assertions.

He turned his face from her and closed his eyes. His thoughts during the next hour was of a most bitter nature. When Lettie brought his supper, which she did exactly as usual, he refused to touch it. After it had remained by his side for a sufficient time, she removed it without speaking. The disposition to complain that he was hungry came over him, but he realized that the time for this sort of thing was past. Soon after he heard a step in the room and looked up to see Mark Melton.

"I hope you are better this evening, sir," said Mark, kindly.

A tear trickled down the old man's cheek.

"I hear that you are going to take my daughter from me," he said, tremulously.

"She has promised to marry me," replied Mark. "We shall have a nice home in New York, and I certainly hope you will live with us."

The sight he was witnessing affected him strongly.

"It is late for me to make changes," said the Colonel, shaking his head dolefully. "Beside, I don't think *she* would wish me to go."

Melton walked into the next room and persuaded Lettie to come with him.

"Tell him that is not so," he whispered. "Tell him we shall always think it a privilege to have him at our home."

There was no responsive expression on the girl's countenance.

"You can do whatever you please about it," she said, coldly.

Mark imagined that Lettie hesitated to ask him to include her father in his household, from feelings of delicacy. And he said to Col. Fuller with evident

earnestness that his house should always shelter him, if he would honor it with his presence. But the Colonel was so completely prostrated that he relapsed into silence and did not seem to hear what was said.

"Everything is nearly ready as far as I am concerned," Mark told Lettie, as he stood with her at the street-door that evening, before taking his departure. "I have engaged the flat I spoke of on Forty-third street, and an office on Sixth avenue, and have made arrangements about furniture. I wish you would go with me to see to some of the things, as I want everything to be of the kind you prefer."

"No," said Lettie, impassively, "I do not need to see them."

"And you are quite sure," asked Mark, "that you wish only the least formal ceremony? I thought girls usually like to show their orange blossoms," he added with an attempt at raillery.

"I am quite sure," she said. "I want nothing but a perfectly quiet affair with nobody there except what is absolutely necessary to cover the law."

Mark looked up inquiringly.

"You will want Mrs. Bright, of course, and Bessie."

Lettie reddened unaccountably at the mention of those names, or was it at only one of them?

"Neither. If witnesses are required, get someone else."

"Why," he exclaimed, "I did not know you felt that way toward them!"

He thought she might explain, but she did not.

"I wish Frank Morley was here," he said, presently, "or even Clyde. Say, wouldn't it be jolly if Clyde, who is probably by this time a full-fledged minister, could read the service? It's so strange

those two brothers should have left this part of the country as they did, without leaving their address to anybody. It doesn't seem a bit like Frank, who always claimed to care a great deal for me. Clyde is different. I shouldn't be surprised at anything he did. He's a sort of monomaniac on some questions. Well, perhaps they'll turn up after a while. Maybe we'll meet them in New York. They spend a good deal of time there, off and on."

He was looking at the passing street-cars, or he might have noticed the peculiar expression of her countenance. She was thinking how "awfully jolly" it would be to have Clyde Morley read the service that should bind her to this man whom she did not love; whom he had advised her to marry, knowing she did not love! Awfully, awfully jolly that would be!

On the morning when the ceremony was to be performed, Lettie had a few plain words with her prospective husband.

"It is not too late for you to retract your promise," she said, glancing at the clock. "I will not attempt to influence you in the least. When you asked me to marry you, I told you frankly and honestly that I did not love you. I do not love you now, and I doubt if I ever shall. If you should think this over once more, and decide to go your way and let me go mine, it will make no ill feeling on my part. If, on the contrary, you wish to marry me as I am, it must be with the understanding that you may have to wait a long time—perhaps forever—before I can give you more than my respect and esteem."

He was distressed that she should again allude to the subject, and at such a time. He repeated that

he was ready to take her, to win her love if he could, and if not to give her, as long as he lived, his truth and loyalty. If anything could have moved her, it would have been this proof of the deep affection he bore her, but she was callous to everything.

It was arranged that the Colonel should remain for the present at Mrs. Bright's, with a male attendant, who had been specially engaged. Lettie had stipulated that nothing in the nature of a wedding tour should be taken, that she should go directly with Melton to the apartment he had furnished at New York and take up the regular order of keeping house. When they reached it, he showed her through the rooms, and introduced her to the one servant they would find it necessary to keep, seeming fearful lest something he had bought should prove displeasing, but she made no comment.

"This is your bedroom, my dear," he said, showing her into a tastily furnished chamber. "Mine is the one adjoining, with the connecting door. A doctor is so liable to be called up in the night that I thought it would be a pity to risk disturbing you."

She thanked him with a nod, and they went into the parlor to spend the rest of the evening. At eleven o'clock he laughingly alluded to the hour, saying that she had a right to exceed her father's limits now. She arose and walked with him to the chamber he had designated as hers, and turned on the threshold to say good-night. The action was a complete dismissal. He looked crestfallen, but gallantly lifted one of her hands and kissed it.

"Good-night, *my wife*," he said, meaningly. And she answered, catching her breath, "Good-night, *my husband*."

She closed the door softly and turned the key. Then she sank upon the floor and clasped her hands together till the nails cut into her flesh.

"*What have I done! What have I done!*" she moaned, rocking herself wildly to and fro.

CHAPTER XXIII.

ANOTHER MAN'S BRIDE.

Ten weeks had passed since Clyde Morley left Boston. He had started on his Western journey with the vision of good Dr. Welsh before his eyes, and the strongest determination to crush out the passion that had grown up in him for Lettie Fuller. He knew that this love, were it permitted to get full sway, would make it impossible to devote his life to the cause of religion. There was nothing about her dainty figure, her doll-like face or her strangely impassive brain to help him on the road he had promised to follow. Everything connected with her led him away from his duty as he conceived it. His only course was to flee from the little temptress who, without speaking a word to dissuade him, could do more in holding him back from the pulpit than a legion of ordinary sirens.

Though Clyde could have gone to the proper authorities and obtained a license to preach he was not quite ready yet to do that. He felt his unworthiness more than ever. He wanted to begin as he could hold out, and he went to a mission at Chicago,

making no claims of a theological education, but only asking that he might be set to work. The men and women on the mission committee received him doubtfully at first, but his evident earnestness soon impressed them. He was sent out with another brother into some of the worst places in the city, to relieve distress and to bring comfort to the sick and dying. As Clyde always drew whatever funds he needed from his own purse, and never asked the mission to assist him in any way, the managers came to consider him a valuable assistant, and for some time he found relief for his feelings in the extreme arduousness of the work assigned him.

The mission had many branches and one of its agents, happening to come to Chicago from New York, was made cognizant of the value of the work of the new assistant. A consultation was held between him and the others as to whether such work would not be even more valuable in the metropolis of the East than in the great city of the West, and with the spirit that animates the true missionary it was decided that if Mr. Morley would consent to go to New York it was best for him to do so. Quite content, Clyde cheerfully took the journey, and was assigned to one of the hardest localities in the lower part of Manhattan Island.

Here he labored diligently, but each day he managed to get a brief respite from his duties—a sort of breathing spell, as it were—and was in the habit of riding on some of the street-cars as far as Central Park, where he could take a walk amid the trees. On one of these excursions he was astonished to see on the sidewalk the familiar form of Mark Melton.

His first idea was to spring from the car and accost his old friend, but on reflection he restrained himself. He did not care to enter into explanations as to the cause of his sudden withdrawal from Boston life or to state his present occupation to one who would hardly be likely to appreciate his reasons for entering upon it. It occurred to him that Mark had probably just come over to New York for a day on some business, and would be gone by the morrow. But as he thought of these things he saw the object of his reflections turn the corner of Forty-third street, and a curiosity to know what he could have to do in that residential locality took possession of the watcher. Clyde left the car and, proceeding slowly, saw his friend stop at an apartment-house, between Seventh and Eighth avenues, to open the door of which he took a key from his pocket quite in the manner of one who enters his own dwelling.

"That's mysterious!" exclaimed Clyde to himself. "Is it possible he has moved here?"

He waited long enough to be reasonably certain that Mark had left the vestibule, and then sauntered across. A colored janitor was upon the steps, engaged in polishing the brass railings. As an excuse for his questionings, Clyde inquired whether there were any suites to let in the building, and was told that there was one, up two flights of stairs, which the janitor would show him if he desired. Thinking this the best manner of finding out what he wanted, Clyde said he would look at the rooms.

"How many familes have you here?" he inquired, as he was inspecting the premises to which the man led him.

"Sixteen, sir."

"And—what sort of people are they?"

Then the janitor, after the manner of janitors the world over, began to expatiate on the particularly eligible quality of his tenants. He began at the ground-floor to name them, and to tell, as far as he was able, their business.

"Well, sir, on the lower floor there is Mr. Young's family, he's an insurance man down in Nassau street; on the other side is Mrs. Lord, she's a widow, and most respectable; over her are Dr. Melton and his wife, only been here a little while, but the nicest kind of folks; then, in the rear—"

"That is sufficient," interrupted Mr. Morley, suddenly. "I will think of the matter of engaging the flat and let you know. Here is something for your trouble."

Into the hand of the astonished janitor he slipped a five-dollar bill and hastened into the street. Several people who saw him between the house and the corner of the avenue suspected that the well-dressed gentleman had been drinking, so dizzily did he walk. At the corner he accosted the driver of a cab.

"Into the park," he said, in response to the query where he wished to go. "Into the park. Drive slowly till I tell you again."

Then he drew down the curtains and gave himself up to his emotions.

"She has married him!" he muttered. "I ought to have expected it. It was my last advice to her. But to suddenly come to the actual knowledge—that is hard!"

He sank as low in the seat he occupied as the contour of the carriage would permit, and buried his face in his hands.

"Married! Oh, God!" he groaned. "Married! And they are living here in New York! I may meet them together at any hour! I told her to do it, but I did not think she would. I thought the love she seemed to have for me would have lasted a *little* longer. Ah! It is the way with women; when one is out of sight he is forgotten. Less than three months and she is married! Married and settled down with her husband, as if she had never seen or heard of me!"

He shook as though he had the ague, though the November day was warm and he was fully clothed.

"What shall I do?" he continued, trying to think. "Shall I remain in the city, with the constant risk of seeing them at unexpected times? Or shall I go direct to them, and have it over? It will take a little preparation before I can face her, in the new relation she has assumed. But on the whole, that will be the better way. We must meet sometime, and it is best to arrange it when I can best bear the shock."

The cab reached the Park and the driver walked his horses slowly among the winding roads.

Clyde Morley's dejection was complete. All at once he saw the full extent of his passion. Could any power have sent him back three months in his life, no promise made to the dying clergyman, no belief in the duty he had to carry the Gospel to a lost world, would have prevented his marrying this girl. It was not until he found her irretrievably lost to him that he realized the extent of the love he had for her.

Married! He repeated the word a hundred times as if it were some fearful spectre that would not be

laid. Married! He thought of that form lying in the arms of another, the kisses of another on her lips, the—oh, it was unbearable! How could it be accomplished so quickly? Why had there not been some way to warn him, that he might have flown, even as Melton stood with her at the altar, and snatched the prize from his hands?

He lifted the curtain and told the driver to take him to a station of the L road on Third avenue. Arriving there he dismissed the cab and took a train to his lodgings, which he had located in the poorer quarter, in order to be nearer his work. How uninteresting it all seemed to him now! He climbed the staircase and entered his chamber with a positive feeling of nausea for his plain surroundings.

A letter lay on the table, sent by one of his companions in the mission work, referring to certain details, and closing with the words: "And now, my dear brother, may God have you in his holy keeping."

Bah! How sickening the expression seemed!

"God will *never* have me in his keeping!" he cried, in mental agony. "He never has had me in it. I have been all my life in the power of the Evil One, and my struggles to escape have availed me nothing."

He sat down to try to think about it—about *her*. He would wait a week or so before he called. He would need that length of time to get the requisite coolness. Yes, he would wait a week. In the meantime, however, he must make some excuse to escape the mission duties. He could not go on with them in the way he felt. He must plead illness. He looked in the mirror and knew that no one would doubt him if he said he was not well. Pale as he

had always been, his countenance was of more than ordinary whiteness to-day.

An hour later he decided that he would not wait a week. Three or four days would suffice to get himself into shape. He would not be such a coward. She was married, and he must make the best of it. All that was necessary was a formal call. There was nothing to be so frightened about. Three or four days was quite enough to wait. Two days even ought to answer; say the day after to-morrow. The sooner it was over the better. And before another hour, he had decided to call the next day, and was impatient at the long time that would elapse before the sun would rise to usher that day in.

He did not try to sleep that night. He thought in the long hours of darkness of what he would say when he met her, just how he would carry himself, what words he would use to conceal from her how much he cared for what had happened. For it would not do to let her know—now that it was too late to find a remedy. He did not want Melton there the first time he called—that might prove too embarrassing. One of them at a time was quite enough to encounter. Afterwards, when he got used to the changed order of things—and people did get used to everything, almost—he could visit them together and not mind it. But on the first call he wanted Mark to be out. It was easy to take up a position near the house where he could see him when he went away to his office. He thought it all over, just what he would say. He would pretend that he had been looking for a flat for a friend and had happened to hear the name of Melton mentioned by the janitor, and had

rung the bell just to see if possibly it was his old acquaintance. Oh, it was simple enough! He grew elated as he thought how very simple it was, and what a great bugbear he had been making of it all this time.

It was only a quarter past nine when Clyde saw Melton leave the house, and not ten minutes later when the bell to his apartment was sounded and the servant's hand withdrew the bolt after the New York method. Clyde was half inclined to run away, instead of ascending the stairs, but he summoned all his courage and went up, breathing harder as he reached the landing and wondering what had become of his resolutions. The servant, a pretty young woman of German birth, stood at the apartment-door. In response to his request to see Dr. Melton she stared slightly, as she said that gentleman had gone out. This was the first visitor they had had.

"Then I will see Mrs. Melton."

"Ees it *Meesis* Melton you weesh?" inquired the woman, surprised.

"Mrs. Melton."

He thought the words would choke him the first time and he could hardly enunciate them again, but he managed to do so. The woman showed him into the parlor, and asked if he would give her his card. It struck him that if he sent his name, Lettie might refuse to see him—he did not know why, but he thought of this—and he answered, "Tell her it is an old acquaintance."

Mrs. Melton had not yet left her room when the message was brought, though she was quite ready to do so. It was her habit to have her coffee brought to the chamber, and she never appeared until after

Mark had gone out. She was dressed in a tasty morning-gown, and her hair was becomingly arranged in a half-girlish fashion. When the girl knocked and told her that a gentleman was waiting in the parlor to see her, she could hardly believe her ears.

"A gentleman! And did he not give you a card?"

The girl repeated that the gentleman had said he was an old acquaintance, and Lettie was more puzzled than ever. She thought it might be one of the veterans that her father had sometimes brought to the house on Shawmut avenue. It must be someone from Boston, and someone who knew the Colonel, for she had no other acquaintances who could have learned her address. So she said, "Very well, I will be out directly." Then she took another look at herself in the glass, and walked into the parlor.

A night of preparation had done nothing for Clyde Morley, so far as making it any easier to meet her was concerned. He stood in the centre of the room, too nervous to remain seated, and as she stepped across the threshold, he advanced toward her with an impetuous stride. His eyes were aflame, his hands were outstretched, his nostrils dilated, his lips parted.

"*Lettie!*" he cried, in a hoarse whisper.

The girl staggered and leaned against the door that had closed behind her. She saw everything at one glance. He might talk to her for months and years and he could tell her nothing more. All that he could have said was mirrored in his suffering face.

"*Lettie!*" he repeated. And they stood there fac-

ing each other, with ten feet of space still between them.

"They call me Mrs. Melton now," she said, slowly. "Will you be seated?"

He took a step nearer, and she seemed to shrink closer to the wall against which she rested, as if to keep further from him.

"I know your name," he said, in trembling tones. "I know it too well. Forgive me, if for one moment I forgot, and called you by another that I once had the privilege of using."

She gained strength by the delay, and her voice grew a little firmer.

"Then you do, sometimes, forget?" she said, ironically. "You have occasional lapses of memory? But I have none. I remember everything." She paused a moment, and seeing that he was about to break out again, repeated, "Won't you sit down?"

He was near a sofa and he fell rather than sat upon it. Athlete as he was, something had sapped the vigor in his muscles and left him very weak.

"I am sorry my husband is not in," she pursued, taking a chair close to where she had stood. "He would be glad to see you. We did not know you were in the city."

He was like a petrified man. How could she speak to him in that way? Her husband!

"We have been married two weeks," she went on. "I suppose you saw it in the papers. We came here at once. I was tired of Boston. Dr. Melton's office is on Sixth avenue, not very far away. He will return at one o'clock to lunch, and will tell you everything. You have not taken off your outside coat. Is it not rather warm here?"

She left the chair she occupied and went to one of the windows to open it. She passed close to him and he caught his breath as the fragrance of a perfume she used came to his nostrils. The air from the window blew on his forehead gratefully. But still he sat there rigid, as if frozen.

"It is a pleasant flat, don't you think so?" said Mrs. Melton, glancing around the room. "The location is very good, too, for what we could afford to pay. Dr. Melton picked out all the furnishings. He had some extra things put in. This little bell-rope, for instance, communicates with the kitchen, so that I can call my servant at any time without rising from here. There are similar contrivances in every one of our eight rooms. It is very convenient."

Why did she give him that hint? What did he care about the bells? Did she think he intented to strangle her?

"My father has been quite ill," continued Mrs. Melton, glad that she could keep him so long from speaking. "You were there—yes, I remember—when he was brought home. He has never fully recovered. He is now at his old rooms, under the care of a nurse, but he will be taken here as soon as he feels able to travel."

He heard her and said nothing. He was gradually coming to himself, but he could not yet enter into the conversation.

"Dr. Melton was speaking of you only yesterday. He wondered why we heard nothing about you—or your brother. Frank was a great friend of my husband, and he feels much injured because he has never written him a line. One of the first things you will

be asked when he comes is if you can get his address. My husband has found it rather lonely here in New York, I am afraid. When my father arrives it will be a little better for him, as they will play cribbage together. Business is not coming very fast, I think, though he does not complain. He did not expect it would be very plenty at first."

Clyde staggered to his feet. He wanted to get out into the air. Every time she uttered those words, "My husband," it was like striking him a blow on the left breast.

"You cannot wait?" said Mrs. Melton, rising also, and much relieved, to tell the truth, at the prospect of seeing him depart so quietly. "When will you come again? I am sure my husband will be very glad to see you."

He tried to say something, tried twice, and failed. Then he crept toward the door, and went through the passageway with his lips moving. He was praying that he might not meet Mark Melton!

CHAPTER XXIV.

A CONFIDENTIAL TALK.

Mrs. Melton was hardly less excited over this visit than Clyde, though she mananged to conceal her feelings better. She said nothing to her husband about it, for she was not much in the habit of telling him things, and she was not sure it would be best.

If he ever came to know it in any other way, it would do no harm. She was not called upon to explain her actions. She lived under the same roof with Mark, his nominal wife, but no nearer to him than on the first day she entered the house. He had made no protest against the peculiar way in which she was carrying out the oaths she had taken. Besides this, he had assumed the work of a brother practitioner who had been compelled to go abroad for his health, and was so pleased with being busy that he had a compensation, in some degree, for the lack of cordiality at his home.

As the days passed Lettie Melton began to fear she should not see Clyde again. She did not want to torture this man, who had undoubtedly been punished severely already, but there arose in her heart the old longing for his companionship—the old love for the old lover, that even her marriage had not killed.

She had no intention of letting him know the condition of her mind, should he ever happen to come again. She meant to treat him merely as any acquaintance of her ante-nuptial days. She wanted very much to see him. Her life was wholly empty now, and anything that savored of the old time would be more than welcome.

Sitting in his office one afternoon, Dr. Melton received a call from a most unexpected person—Mr. Frank Morley. Delighted, he rose and grasped the hands of the young man in both his own.

"My dear boy," he exclaimed, "is it possible this is you? Sit down and tell me, for heaven's sake, where you have kept yourself all this time, and why you have never written me a single line."

Frank looked ill and it was plain that he had lost in weight. He took the proffered chair and assumed an easy position, after his old manner.

"Well, Mark," he answered, "you know it is one of my habits not to write many letters. I have been travelling over the country, and have only recently returned. As soon as I heard you were in the city I took the pains to look you up."

Mark had not borne so cheerful an expression for a long time, as he did at these words. The sight of Frank took him him back to the days of his student life.

"I won't find any fault, so long as you are here now," he said. "But, you're not looking well, old fellow. If you will accept the advice of a physician —and I sha'n't charge you anything for it—you'll take some iron without delay. How odd it is to see you here! What a lot of things have happened since you went off! It's only a few months and yet it seems a century."

Frank laughed, not quite naturally, but Melton did not notice that.

"And you've been married, in the meantime," he said. "Of course a few weeks of wedded bliss is equal to a century of ordinary life."

Melton's face sobered preceptibly. He was not a good hand at deception, and though he did not intend to reveal his secret troubles, he could not pretend a greater happiness than he felt. He did not answer the insinuation directly, but replied that he was living only a short distance away, and would be glad to have Frank go home with him to dinner.

"I'll go, as you are so kind," said Morley, "though I dread that sort of thing ordinarily, as a cat dreads

water. I mean," he explained, "that matrimony is so wholly unsuited to my tastes that I am afraid to get into very close contact with it while it is fresh. I can't imagine how you two will seem in such a relation as that. And I did all I could to bring it about, didn't I? I used to go up to the Colonel's and sing your praises, you remember, just because you wanted me to, and never because it was the thing I would have advised. Where is the old gentleman now? Here with you, I suppose."

Melton replied that Col. Fuller had been ill and had not yet felt like undertaking the journey, but that it was understood he would come later. The Doctor had a constrained air that his visitor could not help noticing, but it would not have been the part of good breeding to allude to it, and Frank said nothing on that subject. Instead, he turned the conversation toward his brother, inquiring whether Melton had seen anything of him since his marriage.

"No," was the answer. "He seemed as much taken out of the world as you. I would have liked to have had him perform the—the ceremony, could I have found him at the time, but—"

He stopped, noticing something most peculiar in Frank's expression.

"I didn't know," stammered the other, "that he was ordained yet. Has he, then, become at last a full-fledged preacher? Clyde has not used me any better than he has you of late. I have not had a line from him for ever so long. I wonder if he is settled, as they call it, anywhere."

Dr. Melton did not know and could suggest no way of discovering. He proposed that, as it was

now five o'clock, he might close the office and go around to his flat, if Frank was willing, so that they could have a little time before dinner for conversation with Mrs. Melton. Frank raised the point that perhaps he ought not to go, when the lady of the house was not expecting him, but this was overruled. Dr. Melton said there would be only the ordinary repast, to be sure, but among such old friends too much ceremony was not required. He should expect Frank to run in on them as freely as he had done when they lived in Boston, and he might as well begin in the informal fashion he would have to follow.

The young lawyer looked up at the windows of the apartment-house when the Doctor indicated the edifice, after they had turned the corner of Forty-third street. He was far from his ease, but he had summoned all his will and was certain his host and hostess would not suspect the condition of his mind. He cared a great deal for Lettie Fuller, though he had stepped aside for his brother Clyde, upon finding that she had set her heart on that individual. He wanted to hear from her own lips how it had happened that in so short a time she accepted another suitor, whom she had always professed to dislike. At the door of the residence he had a strong inclination to run away, but when Mark said, "Here we are," he made a great effort and mechanically ascended the stairs.

Dr. Melton entered his flat with a pass-key, and ushered his visitor into the parlor, which happened to be vacant at the time. Bidding him remove his wraps and make himself at home, he went in search

of Mrs. Melton. Frank, still standing in the center of the parlor, heard a knock on a panel of a door, and Lettie's voice saying :

"Yes, I will be out in a few minutes."

"A good deal of ceremony for a couple three weeks married," he muttered.

The Doctor returned, saying that Mrs. Melton would be in very shortly. He took Frank's things and put them in the little vestibule and went on talking with him as if nothing had happened so important to many lives since the former days of their meeting. Finally, after fifteen minutes or so, Mrs. Melton came.

It did not take Frank a moment to see that a great change had been wrought in her appearance. She was five years older in looks than she had seemed when he last saw her, in Boston. There was a new hardness about her mouth, a more set expression to her eyes, a greater rigidity to her figure. The only thing that was not changed was the remarkable taste of her costume. She had on a prettier dress than ever.

"I did not expect this pleasure," she murmured, looking at the carpet rather than at his face. "It is so long since we heard from you, I thought you intended to desert us altogether."

He replied by telling how busy he had been and what a poor correspondent he was. The trio talked in this manner until the dinner was announced. Before the dessert was disposed of a message came asking that Dr. Melton come immediately to a house on Seventy-fourth street.

"Business is of the first importance," said Mark, as he rose to leave the room, "and especially a busi-

ness like mine. I will try and return in an hour or so, but if I am detained make yourself agreeable to Mrs. Melton, and don't be long in giving us another call."

Mr. Morley was uncomfortable after the departure of the Doctor He ate gingerly of the fruit and sipped his black coffee as if he wanted to make it last as long as possible.

"Your brother has been here," said Mrs. Melton, suddenly.

Frank started.

"I understood from Mark that he had not seen him," he replied.

"*He* has not, but *I* have," she replied, pointedly. Then she waited a moment and added: "Mr. Morley, I have confided in you before, and I am going to do so again. There is no harmony whatever between my husband and me."

Frank swallowed the rest of the coffee, wiped his lips nervously on a napkin, and pushed back his chair a little from the table.

"Why is it necessary that I should know this?" he ventured.

"I have no other friend in the world," she answered, with dilated eyes. "It seems as if I *must* tell someone."

There was a bitterness in his tone as he uttered the next sentence.

"I suppose you told Clyde."

The doctor's wife half rose from her chair, and her face was very pale.

"Pardon me, Mr. Morley," she said. "I will trouble you no more."

"You mistake me." he responded. "I have not

forgotten how much you affected to care for that brother of mine, and I do not see anything strange in supposing that he would have had your confidence quite as quickly as myself."

She did not say a word and he went on:

"It is not to be expected that I, who know nothing at all about the matter, should be able to comprehend the strange things that have happened. The last time you and I talked together your whole heart was filled with one vision only—that of my brother. There was no place in it for any other man, and least of all for the one who has since become your husband. How did this miracle take place? How was it that you were able so soon to forget the old love and take on the new? As you say, Mrs. Melton, we were friends and confidants, and I think you might answer me."

Mrs. Melton winced and hesitated a few moments before replying.

"A most unhappy combination of events has brought me here," she said. "You are the only man in the world to whom I would take the pains to justify myself. I know I can put the fullest confidence in you. I told you the truth; I did love your brother. One day he left Boston and wrote me a farewell letter, in which he urged me to this marriage. Was there anything left for me to do but to follow his advice?"

She spoke in such a low tone that he had to pay the utmost attention in order to hear her, though they were not separated by more than five or six feet of floor space. He could see that the strongest kind of emotion possessed her.

"Well," he answered, cuttingly, "he has been here, you say."

She seemed trying, not very successfully, to grasp his meaning.

"Yes, he has been here; but he said almost nothing. He looked distressed, but his actions were as unaccountable as ever. I thought he regretted what had happened, but I am not sure even of that."

Frank Morley uttered an impatient cry.

"What could he do if he *did* regret it? A marriage is a marriage, I suppose."

"Yes," she said, drawing a long breath, "in one sense it is. But I do not think there are many marriages just like mine. I told Dr. Melton I did not love him, and that if he married he must promise to wait till that love developed before he claimed anything more than my hand. He took me at my word. With the exception that we have lived under the same roof and dined at the same table I have been no wife to him."

Morley leaned toward her with a feverish eagerness.

"Take care!" he said. "There is no need of saying anything untrue. Do you mean—"

She reddened like a peony.

"I swear it to you!" she said. "He is very kind. I do not think many men would be equally so. He has taken me at my word."

The visitor devoured the face before him with his eyes.

"And is he satisfied?"

"Ah, no! But I cannot help that. I do not love him any more than I did on my wedding-day. How can I show him an affection I do not feel?"

He still regarded her with astonishment.

"Did you tell this to Clyde?" he asked, finally.

Then she reddened more than ever.

"I could not have told him had it been necessary to save my life," she said.

"Why? Because you *love* him?"

He leaned forward again, eagerly, ready to catch the first words as they fell.

"More because I hate him, I think," she answered, the color forsaking her cheek all at once. "Love him! Ought I to love a man who has caused me such suffering?"

Morley sat upright again.

"Whether you ought or not, *you do!*" he responded. "It is he who stands between you and your husband. He, the clergyman, the priest, the teacher of morals! He, the man, but for whom you might at this moment have been my own!"

Her eyes opened wide at this statement.

"Your own!" she repeated. "Your own! You have told me a hundred times that you should never marry."

"Yes," he said. "And all the time you knew better. You knew that while I had never thought of such a thing before I met you, you had me soul and body to do with what you pleased. You could see nothing but him, but you knew enough of me for that. It took the black coat to satisfy you, and I tried to reconcile myself to the inevitable. Listen, Lettie Fuller, for I will not call you by the name you have assumed in your anger! You love Clyde Morley as well as ever, and if he comes here often enough, he will win you yet, as surely as if he did

not bear a catechism in his hand and wear the odor of sanctity upon his brow."

She shook her head with great decision.

"He could not and he would not," she said. "I am married. I fully recognize the obligations I have assumed. Your brother will not trouble me. It is a week since he came, and I have no doubt he has left the city."

The servant knocked on the door, and as she entered Mrs. Melton rose with her guest in order to allow the clearing of the table. When they were again seated in the parlor the conversation was resumed.

"Did you never care anything for me?" he asked her, in a tremulous voice.

"Yes, I liked you very much, and still do so. Remember what I said when I commenced my confession—there is no other man in the world to whom I would have made it."

Her hand lay on the arm of her chair and he pressed his own upon it.

"May you always retain your confidence," he said, with feeling. "Tell me more. You like me to-day better than you do—better than—"

"Dr. Melton? Much better," she answered, warmly. "I never have liked Dr. Melton. But this does not make me forget that he is my husband."

He raised his head with dignity.

"I have not asked you to forget it," he said.

"By no means," she replied, with some confusion.

"And you do not think I ever will?"

She shook her head with downcast eyes.

"There is one thing I would do, if it were of any use," he said, soberly. "I would ask you to leave this

man and return to your old home until a divorce could be obtained, and then—"

She stopped him, seeming frightened at the mere proposition.

"Oh, that is out of the question!" she said. "Do not say anything more like that, I beg you!"

He could no longer conceal his agitation. He rose, saying it was best he should be going, and she did not think it wise to stop him.

"I hope we shall see you often," she said, as she handed him his wraps.

"You may," he replied. "I expect to stay in New York most of the winter. You have nothing to fear from me. I know where the line is and shall keep to it. But—can I say something else?"

She waited for him to finish, wondering what it would be.

"Clyde Morley used to warn people against *me*," he said earnestly. "Things have changed now, and it is my duty to warn them against *him*. Be on your guard! He may seem a *saint* and an *angel*, but he is also a *man!*"

Lettie Melton's heart beat rapidly as she realized the full purport of those expressions.

CHAPTER XXV.

"I WANTED YOU TO SUFFER."

Clyde Morley had not left the city. He had only returned to his labors with renewed zeal, striving to bury himself in his work. He rose every morning as soon as it was light and took a long walk among the

poorer streets, or rather the streets where the poorer class live and toil. Many of them came to know his face and to feel the strength of his kindly smile and outstretched hand. After taking his breakfast in a cheap restaurant—for the purpose of imbibing at the same time as much as he could of the life of these people—he had his regular engagements until three or four o'clock, and again in the evening, unless he made special arrangements to have someone take his place.

The gospel he preached had a good deal more to do with soap and water than with theology, and he was more apt to give a caller a bottle of medicine or a pair of mittens than a tract on trinitarianism. This made him seem to some of his associates not quite up to the orthodox standard, but they found him much too useful to criticize deeply.

But, wherever he went, into whatever haunt of poverty he penetrated, a face and form went with him—the face and form of Dr. Melton's wife.

Work could not blot out her image from his mind. The miles he walked each day, the rigorousness of the plain diet he used, the hour's practise he took with the dumbbells and pulls in a gymnasium, had no effect on this problem. He wanted that girl as he had never wanted anything else in his life. And when he could bear it no longer, he posted himself one afternoon in the vicinity of her residence, waited as he had done before till her husband left the house, and then rang the bell.

The servant recognized him, and went to tell her mistress that the gentleman who had called several weeks before was in the parlor. Mrs. Melton's breath came faster, for she had wanted him to come

ever since the day his brother was there, and had hoped that each ring at the bell might be his. She realized something of the danger there was in meeting him—the uncontrollable impetuosity of his temper—but her life was so utterly empty that she welcomed even the risks that attended this meeting.

When she entered the parlor and spoke to him she saw at once that he was in a very different mood from that which he had exhibited on the former occasion.

"I am glad to see you again, Mr. Morley," she said, with cordiality. "You have been so long in coming that I feared you had left the city."

He explained his absense, in a very ordinary tone, by telling of the work in which he was engaged and of the claims it had upon his time. Then they talked of other things and she took occasion to mention the call that his brother had made upon them. He did not seem much interested in hearing about Frank, only asking if she supposed he was still in the city. She told him her husband was doing well, and that her father had not yet felt able to undertake the ride from Boston. When these topics had been discussed quite in the fashion of the ordinary caller and his hostess, Clyde began abruptly to speak of other matters.

"We ought to have a better understanding, Lettie," he said, suddenly. "Oh, don't mind my use of your Christian name; it comes more naturally to me than your new one. I have a confession to make. It won't hurt you to hear it, for it can mean nothing now. I want to tell you that I love you."

It did not surprise her to hear this, but the words sent a strange thrill through her frame.

"I want you to know," he repeated slowly, "how dearly I love you. I want you to know that I would give worlds to undo that knot which ties you to another. You permeate my life as nothing else has ever done. The loss of you is sending me rapidly to the grave."

She uttered a sharp cry, and pressed her hands over her heart.

"I am not finding fault with any one," he proceeded, with deliberation. "If any person is to blame it is undoubtedly myself, and yet—I did not know. I was trying to reconcile my duty with my desires. On one side was my promise to Dr. Welsh that I would try to embrace the ministry. On the other was you. I felt that, with you in my arms, I should have no time nor thought left for God. To be true to my highest instincts I must resolve upon a life of celibacy, since you were the only woman I had ever cared for or ever could. I am not yet sure I was wrong. I only know that the sacrifice was more than I have had the strength to endure; and that I am steadily failing in health and shall soon be among the missing."

The musical monotony of his voice acted on her like an anodyne. His words made her forget everything but the suffering he endured and the pain it caused in her own breast. She rose from the chair she had taken, and drawing a hassock to his feet, threw herself upon it and laid her head upon his knees.

A vibration caused by the contact passed over him, but he did not act otherwise perturbed. He put his hands on her head, and taking the pins out of her hair bathed his palms in it slowly.

"I have done you a great injury," he proceeded. "I advised you to marry a man you did not love—the most terrible thing conceivable, as it now appears to me. You did as I bade you, and this union can have had no other effect than to debase you. To render unto a man whom you do not love the duties of a wife must make you feel that there are no other depths to which you can sink. I was thinking only of myself, and I have killed the most sacred aspirations of the one I loved."

She wanted him to know, and yet she hesitated to tell him. Perhaps he would not believe her!

"One minute, Clyde," she said, putting an arm about his waist to hold him closer. "Listen for one minute. There is a door—between his room and mine. That door has never—been opened. He gave me—the key—and—I have lost it."

He lifted a handful of her hair and pressed it against his face.

"Poor girl!" he murmured. "You are even more unhappy than I thought you."

"No," she said. "I am not unhappy. I was—until this moment. Now there is no woman on earth so contented as I."

"But this cannot last!" he cried. "There can be no enduring happiness in such meetings as this, liable to be interrupted at any moment by one who has a legal right to claim every sign of your affection."

She drew his sad face down and looked into the anxious eyes.

"I wanted you to suffer," she whispered. "I think I even hated you, after you wrote me that letter. I was reckless and did not care what became of me. But now I would shield you from every pang.

I want you to live and to be happy again. Don't interpose your scruples. They have ruined our happiness once. Let them go. You will come here often. There will be days of sunshine for me still. Clyde! There is nothing sure in this world but love! Has a mere ceremony the power to take from me the rapture I feel when your hands touch me?"

He was silent for a long time, with her hair in his fingers. He wanted to think as she did, but between them there rose such an insurmountable wall!

"You forget a very important thing," he said, at last. "Your—"

The word was so disagreeable to him that he could not utter it.

"I am not likely to forget him," she responded. "He will not interfere with us. He has a new bride—his profession—and seems wholly bound up in her. All the time he is at home is when at meals, and from late in the evening till breakfast. Very often he is called out at night. I assure you, he will not be in our way."

But Clyde, with all his willingness to agree with her, felt the contemptible quality of the position in which he would be placed and still hesitated. Whatever of manliness there was left in him rebelled against this double dealing.

"This is not a thing to decide lightly," he said. "We—we must think it over."

She looked up at him in such a way that he was for the moment much disconcerted.

"What is there to think over?" she asked. "If you will come here, what more can we ask? I don't understand what you mean."

It was evident she did not. The divinity student

felt how little the meagre food, the long walks, the athletic exercises had done for him. With an effort he took his hands from her hair and sat upright.

"You had best get a chair," he suggested, kindly. "This position would not look well if a caller should appear."

She raised her head from his lap.

"My servant would not enter without knocking," she said, "and Dr. Melton would have to use his key. We could not well be safer. If you do not like to have me here, however, I will rise."

He assisted her to her feet.

"You do not doubt my love?" he asked earnestly.

"No. But I do not think you care as much for me as I do for you. If you *did*, you would not be so suspicious."

"We must use reason, Lettie. If Dr. Melton should enter and find us in the position we occupied a moment ago, what do you suppose he would think?"

She shrugged her shoulders as much as to say she could not answer that, and began to do up her hair at the mirror. She had hardly finished it when an event occurred which surprised both of them and startled at least one.

CHAPTER XXVI.

IN THE FACE OF DISHONOR.

Dr. Melton walked unannounced into the room.

"Well, upon my word," he exclaimed, in a pleased tone. "I did not know you were here, Mr. Morley! The servant must have left the outer door open when

she admitted you. I ran home," he went on to say to his wife, "to tell you I have had a consultation call at Harlem which will prevent my coming to dinner. The call is at half-past five, so I have a little time to visit before I go. Come, Mr. Morley, explain where you have kept yourself all this time."

Clyde was thankful for the length of these speeches, as he had felt quite a shock when the Doctor first appeared on the scene. He could not help thinking what might have happened had he come in ten minutes earlier. It was not likely that he would have relished seeing his wife sitting at the feet of his old friend, her unbound hair lying spread over his knees. He had time to notice, also, that Mark seemed to bear his matrimonial disappointment very well, and a feeling of contempt for such a man rose in his mind. But it was necessary to repress all this, and he responded to the invitation to tell where he had been by relating the particulars of the work in which he was engaged.

"And so you are sacrificing comfort, luxury, even health on the altar of public good," said Melton. "Do you know it seems to me a very noble thing of you? Well, I'll volunteer this much aid, if you care to accept it. Should any of your poor families happen to live within a mile of my office, I'll doctor them for nothing."

Clyde thanked him, saying he would certainly send him some patients. By this time the extra-pallid appearance of Mr. Morley had begun to alarm the young physician.

"Excuse me for saying so," he ejaculated, "but you need a doctor yourself as bad as any one I've seen lately. I don't think this work agrees with

your health. It's all well enough, you know, to lift up the fallen and succor the weak, but no one has a right to sacrifice himself in doing it. Seriously, Mr. Morley, I want you to take a course of medicine."

Clyde tried to smile away the idea. He reminded Dr. Melton that he had always been pale and that no amount of drugs could put the sort of ruddy color into his cheek that the Doctor had in his.

"It's no laughing matter," replied Melton, soberly. "I wish you would let me make a slight examination, just to test some things I have in mind."

"Willingly, in the interest of science," responded Mr. Morley, with another smile.

The doctor turned to his wife.

"Lettie, if you will leave us alone for a few moments—"

As she rose to leave the room, her eyes met those of the visitor. She did not like to go.

"Is it so serious a matter as to drive her away?" asked Clyde, deprecatingly.

"You will have to remove your coat," explained Melton, briefly.

Without another word Lettie took her departure, but as she closed the door, her eyes met Clyde's again.

"Your heart is very weak," said the doctor, after listening awhile at that organ. "It is unaccountably so. You are evidently overdoing. You must be careful. What you want is the most nourishing food and complete rest. You used to walk a great deal. I am afraid you still do so, and you are not able to stand it."

He looked at Clyde questioningly.

"I suppose I average ten miles a day," was the answer.

"You must quit that at once," said Dr. Melton, positively. "Where do you dine?"

Clyde smiled sarcastically.

"At some restaurant in or around the Bowery."

"In order to be among the people you seek to serve, eh? I give you strict orders to exchange those restaurants for Delmonico's, at least for awhile. What do you have for breakfast?"

"Sometimes a cup of coffee, sometimes nothing."

"Terrible! You want the best beefsteak you can find. What do you usually drink with your dinner?"

The sarcastic smile was growing bitter.

"Never anything but water."

Dr. Melton put up the watch with which he had been counting his patient's pulse.

"You will drink a bottle of Bass with your steak every morning, a pint of port and a glass of champagne with your dinner. Come, sir, I am not joking with you. It is a serious matter. Your heart needs solid food to build it up and you must let your body rest or there will be trouble. It is all well enough to try to prepare the souls of the East Side for Heaven, but you don't need to send yourself there in advance, and that is what you are doing at lightning speed."

Clyde put on his coat, wondering as he did so how he could apprise Mrs. Melton of the fact that he was again fit for her eyes to behold.

"Will you promise?" demanded Dr. Melton, with his hand on the other's shoulder.

Clyde shook his head.

"What you ask is impossible," he said. "I cannot explain, but—it is impossible."

"Very well," said the Doctor, shortly. "I give you six months to live."

"It is quite enough," responded Clyde, wearily.

Melton stared at him and then wrote out a prescription.

"You've got hypochondria, along with the rest, have you? One would think you had met with some terrible misfortune. Something must be done to get you out of this train of thought." He walked to the door and called his wife. When she made her appearance he told her of his diagnosis. "He will have to begin treatment at once," he said. "You must help me persuade him. Nothing but tonics and the best of food, taken with absolute regularity, can save him. It is not often I tell a patient so much of his condition, but I took Mr. Morley for a man of sense and I thought it best to let him know."

Mrs. Melton bowed. She felt a sense of alarm at the revelation, and wondered how much she was to blame for it.

"He has been walking ten or fifteen miles a day," continued the Doctor. "He must stop it. In his weak condition, it is simply suicidal. It won't do to trifle with a thing like this. His meals must be prescribed for him as well as his medicine. I would not say this if there was the least room for doubt. Ask any other physician in New York, if you think it open to question," he said, to Morley. "I'll tell you what to do," he added, warmly. "Come here and live with us till we get you on the right road. Drop all your mission business for a month or two,

and stay where I can have you under my own observation."

Clyde was startled at the proposition. He dared not look at Mrs. Melton, but he knew instinctively that her eyes were searching him, ready to indorse the suggestion. To his relief Dr. Melton took out his watch, saying he must be going, if he would keep his appointment.

"It's a poor fellow that there is little probability of our saving," he said. "He would not listen to his physician when he told him to drop business, three months ago, and now I fear he is booked through. Think of my proposition, Mr. Morley. Lettie, say all you can to persuade him. We haven't much room, but you'll be welcome, and if you are here I shall make sure my directions are being followed. Well, good-afternoon."

It was ten minutes later before either of the two people left in that parlor spoke an audible word. It was Mrs. Melton then.

"You will come?" she said, anxiously.

"How can I?" he cried. "How can I accept his kindness and live under his roof, and at the same time continually dishonor him?"

A strange look came into her face.

"It will not dishonor him to dine at his table and sleep in his apartment," she replied.

"Or to talk and to act to his wife as I have been doing to-day?"

"We should have to be sure of the hall-door," she responded, thoughtfully.

He was impatient to tell her of the fever that was on him, of the pains he had taken to deaden it by his long walks and his poor fare, but he could not

He felt that she would not understand without a deeper explanation than he was ready to make.

"I should always be here and he would nearly always be away," Clyde said, speaking his thoughts aloud. "I should sit with his wife at breakfast, where he never joins her; at lunch, which he takes in haste and I at leisure; at dinner, liable to be broken in upon in his case by professional calls, and in mine by nothing. In the morning I am to drink malt liquors and at night champagne! My God!"

She came to him and touched him on the arm with her soft hand.

"You will come. He is quite right, you are not well."

He pushed his chair back a little so that he could look her full in the face.

"If I do come," he said, "you must enter into a conspiracy with me."

"A conspiracy?"

"Yes. I must deceive him. I shall require your aid. I won't drink ale for breakfast. I will drink no more wine for dinner than is necessary to blind his eyes. He will insist on my following his directions. I shall rely on you to help me deceive him."

She opened her eyes very wide and asked why he wished to evade these very reasonable regulations.

"No matter why. It is enough that I do—that I will not come here unless you promise what I ask. And I shall take walks, too, walks that he must not know of—as long and tiring, perhaps even more so, than ever. If I come here you are not to question me, or to dissuade me from anything I choose to do."

Thinking this only a fancy that would wear away

in time, Lettie consented without more delay, and to her joy Clyde told her he would bring his baggage to the house within a week.

CHAPTER XXVII.

CHAMPAGNE AND GRAPES.

After the departure of Mrs. Melton from Boston Bessie Bright was in a state of dejection. She had not been as close a friend of Lettie as she once was, for a number of months, but the Colonel's daughter still came the nearest of any one to being her confidant. Now there was absolutely no one to go to with the story of her heartaches. Bessie had begun to realize how much attached Lettie had become to Clyde Morley, and at one time she had woven a dream of the day when she and her friend should be sisters-in-law, both happy in the possession of the husbands they loved. Then came the succession of events that burst the bubble. Frank went away after that unhappy evening when Charlie Wilkins surprised them in his room, and not a word had ever come to say whether he was dead or living. And Lettie, to the surprise of her friend and every one else who knew her, had consented to a hasty marriage to Dr. Melton and had left the city for New York, where she seemed as much out of the world to Bessie as if they had buried her in a tomb.

When Bessie first heard of the intended marriage she could hardly credit the report. She knew that Clyde had not been at the house for some time and

that Melton came much oftener than formerly ; she knew that Col. Fuller had expressed a preference for the medical man ; and she knew that since his latest attack of illness he had made existence almost unbearable for his child. But she had learned that Lettie had a will of her own under her calm exterior, and had never supposed she could be persuaded into marrying one man while she loved another. When there was little doubt of the correctness of the report she called Miss Fuller into the parlor one day and asked her how it could possibly be true.

"It's simple enough," replied Lettie, with an air of defiance. "Dr. Melton has asked me to marry him and I have accepted."

"But—Lettie," stammered the other, "I was so sure that you loved—"

"Were you?" was the cool retort. "You should know that in these days marriage and love are two very different things. I have no doubt you think, at this moment, that *you* love a certain person whom I will not name ; and neither have I any doubt that when you marry it will be quite another man."

The tears rose to Bessie's eyes. Here was a mystery she could not penetrate. The attitude of Lettie's mind seemed to her unutterably sad.

"You will not be happy in such a marriage," she said. "Where there is no love there will always be trouble."

"I do not expect to be happy. It is a long time since I knew the meaning of the word. My marriage is settled upon and that is the end of it."

This confession horrified Bessie extremely.

"Oh, Lettie!" she cried. "If you will not care for yourself, think how unfair this is to *him!*"

Miss Fuller laughed discordantly.

"To Dr. Melton? Recollect, my dear, that it is of his own seeking. I did not ask him to marry me. It was his proposition. He knows I do not love him; there has been no deception."

Bessie shivered at the iciness of her friend's manner.

"Does he also know," she inquired, with chattering teeth, "that you love another?"

An expression little short of anger came over Lettie's face.

"If he does," she replied, "he knows much more than I. Why do you say such things? It may happen to anyone to form attachments and then break them. A liking for a man does not necessarily compel one to be an old maid on his account. Don't be silly, Bessie. There are more men in the world than one, and you will do like me when your time comes."

Bessie shook her head as if that could never be.

"You seem so different from yourself lately, Lettie," she said, "that I hardly know what to make of you. I am sure I shall cry all night for you the day you are married. I wish you could at least postpone it for six months or a year. It is a dreadful thing to marry without love! Perhaps, if you waited, you would see it. Oh, won't you hesitate a little longer before taking a step you cannot retrace!"

Miss Fuller responded that the day was set, and that a postponement would interfere with all of her plans.

"And now let me talk a little plainly," she added. "This is the last time I shall ever be able to discuss

this matter with you, and I know you will never debate my affairs with a third person. I loved Clyde Morley. There is no reason why I should deny that to you. I found myself caring for him before I knew what I was about. He is an ascetic, a man destined for the priesthood of his church, and as unlikely to marry as a monk. I had no business to become attached to him ; but my experience in life, as you know, is very narrow. When I realized the truth I put him out of my heart with a firm hand. As I told you, I do not love Dr. Melton. He knows it, and he takes me with no deception on my part. We are going away. Boston is distasteful to me now and I had rather live elsewhere. You have given me what you call good advice and I thank you for it, though I cannot change my plans. Now let me give a little counsel to you. Frank Morley is as little likely to marry as his brother. They are a strange pair. Don't let all the roses in your cheeks fade away because he once said pretty things to you. Cast him out of your thoughts as I have cast the other from mine. You are too young to look on the dark side of this world because some masculine voice has made your heart beat faster."

The tears that had gathered in Bessie's eyes began to fall.

"I feel that you are right—about Frank," she said, "but I care too much for him to think there ever can be any one to take the place he has held. It does not matter—I am not afraid to be an old maid—I shall live here and be with Auntie all my life. But it seems dreadful to me to think of doing as you will, vowing love and honor and truth to a man who has never touched your heart."

"He understands it," replied Lettie, quickly. "He knows that the words I am to utter in the ceremony are with a mental reservation."

"But if you should ever love some one else—*after* you are married?" suggested Bessie. "Think how awful that would be!"

Miss Fuller shrugged her shoulders.

"That is the most improbable thing your vivid imagination could have suggested," she said. "Come Bessie, we are wasting words. I am to be married. If you cannot congratulate me, don't say anything to discourage me. And when your time comes, dear, I will be equally considerate."

That was the last they said on that subject before the wedding-day. The Brights had already been informed by Col. Fuller that there would be no invitations to the ceremony. When the carriage departed with the newly-made bride and bridegroom the house seemed lonelier than it had ever been. Bessie fulfilled her promise by crying all night at what she regarded as the unhappy fate of her long-time friend. Had they taken Lettie's body to the tomb the girl could hardly have thought the event a sadder one.

About a week after the departure of Dr. and Mrs. Melton, Bessie was told that Mr. Charles Wilkins wished to see her in the parlor. The young man still retained his room, though he seldom occupied it, and Bessie supposed his errand on this particular occasion was to give notice of its intended surrender. She was rather sorry, as there were already several rooms vacant, and the prospect was that Col. Fuller's suite would soon be added to the number, but she

put the best face possible on the matter and responded at once to the call.

"I—I beg your paw-don," stammered Charlie, in his awkward way. "It is weally too bad to trouble you over such a small mat-ter. But I want to know, you know, whether you can give me the ad-dwess of —of Mr. Mor-ley."

Bessie blushed scarlet.

"Mr. Morley," she repeated. "Mr. Clyde Morley?"

It was a pardonable evasion and Wilkins so considered it.

"N-no, if you pl-ease," he answered. "Mr. Fwank Morley. You see he belongs to a cl-ub with me and there are seve-wal let-ters wait-ing the-re for him."

Miss Bessie replied that she did *not* know the address of Mr. Frank. Her agitation as she pronounced the name was not lost on the observer.

"I was afwaid—that is, I thought paw-sibly—you —you *wouldn't* know, you know," said Charlie, as if he was glad, on the whole, to hear it. "Now, there is ano-ther thing I want to see a-bout. Could I change my woom to one on a low-er floor, you know? Could I—could you let me have the one Fwank used to oc-cupy?"

Again the crimson swept over the girl's face. How could she ever forget the night when Wilkins opened the door of that room, and what he must have seen and suspected?

"I will inquire," she said, to get an excuse to leave him, even for a moment, though she knew very well that the room was to let, as she had shown it twice that day to applicants. In a short time she returned, after bathing her hot cheeks, and

said the room was at the service of Mr. Wilkins if he wished it.

"But, excuse me," she added, "you are here so little now that I was afraid we were going to lose you entirely."

Charlie smiled with gratification.

"It is vewy kind of you, you know," he managed to say, "to think about me at all. The fact is, I have another woom—in fact, sev-ewal of them—in another part of the ci-ty. But I wan-der awound so much I weally need this one, you know. Ya-as, you are vewy kind to think about it, bah Jove!"

In her straightforward way Bessie replied that as there were several rooms to let in the house she was naturally pleased to retain all of the tenants possible, and Charlie's countenance fell a little as he realized that her interest in him was of a commercial nature only. He had been building rather heavily on her statement of a few moments back.

"I can get you some fel-lows, if you wa-nt, you know," he said, rallying himself in time. "I know a fel-low who would take the woom I am giv-ing up, you know. His name is Clarke and he was a gweat fwiend of Fwank." He had no sooner said this than he wished he had omitted to mention the latter circumstance. "Of course," he explained, "we are *all* fwiends of Fwankie, at the club." And when he had said that he concluded that it would have been better to have omitted the latter statement as well as the first.

"I should be glad to let him the room," said Bessie, hiding her confusion as best she could. "My aunt depends a good deal on her rents for her living, and when there are several vacancies it is unpleasant."

Wilkins spent some seconds in digesting this fact.

"Ya-as," he said, at last. "It must be de-vilish dis-agweeable, you know, to have a lot of emp-ty wooms. Why, of course. But I'll fill them up for you. I'll make the whole cl-ub come here and woom, if you say so."

Bessie glanced at him with a feeling of uneasiness. Was he trying to make love to her? She would have stopped that in short order, but there was nothing in his face to confirm the suspicion. She concluded that it was only his good-nature that had spoken, and she thanked him, saying there were two other rooms to let at present and that Col. Fuller's three would probably be vacated before a great while.

"Oh, ya-as," he replied. "His daugh-ter has gone away, hasn't she? I knew Mel-ton. Of course, we all knew Mel-ton at the club, and we were de-vilish sorry to lose him, bah Jove! We knew he was twy-ing to get the gi-rl, you know, but we never thought he could do it, you know. He's a doo-cid lucky fel-low!"

Miss Bright began to think that the conversation was taking a wider range then she had anticipated and brought it to a close by saying that she would have Mr. Wilkins' things taken to his new room and that it would be ready for his occupancy that very evening. It was only an hour later that Charlie reappeared at the house, dragging in his triumphal procession Mr. Silas Clarke, who engaged the chamber on the upper floor with very little ado. As Clarke had recently been discharged from the *Evening Sphere*, and was relying entirely upon loans from Wilkins for his support, he was much pleased to get a chamber where his benefactor would be so

handy ; and, as Charlie was sure to have to pay for it, either directly or indirectly, it did not much matter to Silas. The next day Wilkins brought up the young man from the leather store on High street and installed him in the other vacant room, and Bessie went about the house singing for the first time in weeks.

In some way, not very clear to either of them, Wilkins managed to strike up an acquaintance with Col. Fuller. It is probable that a present of champagne and grapes which he asked Maggie to offer out of his stock one evening, when he had a little party of friends at a caterer's collation, may have been the basis of the thing. At any rate Col. Fuller and Wilkins found themselves on a very good footing with each other, and Charlie got into the habit of spending a great deal of his time in the military gentleman's apartments. The Colonel was still confined to the house by his complaints—at least as far as being able to go to his club was concerned—and he had been so mortally lonely of late that any visitor was more than welcome.

Charlie's good-nature was a sovereign balm for his host's occasional lapses into ill-temper, and they got along together famously. On some of the brightest days Wilkins had his carriage driven around to the door and begged as a special favor that the Colonel would accompany him for an hour or so into the suburbs. As the carriage was now on runners it was easy to get into and Charlie had infinite patience with the slow steps and frequent pauses of the invalid. Add to this that all the latest magazines, including a number, both native and foreign, devoted to army matters, were brought in from

Wilkins' room weekly by Maggie, and that Charlie made a martyr of himself in the game of cribbage, which he detested, it is no wonder that he filled a very important place in the dull life of the sick man.

It was to this condition of things that Mrs. Melton owed her freedom from the presence of her father much more than to his actual physical ailments. The Colonel cherished a rather bitter feeling toward his daughter. He was glad to escape having to be at her mercy, as in his weak condition he felt he would be in her New York home. She wrote to him once a week, but there was nothing of the usual exchange of endearments in the correspondence. There never had been much of that between these two, and nothing of recent occurrence was likely to make a change in that direction. Dr. Melton also wrote, and his letters were of a kinder nature. He had a real sympathy for the invalid. He did not intimate anything about the strained relations between himself and his wife, and Col. Fuller had no suspicion of the lack of cordiality that prevailed. At last came a note in which the Doctor mentioned the name of Morley; and as Wilkins happened to be in his room when the mail arrived, the Colonel read one paragraph out loud.

"Mr. Clyde Morley, whom you doubtless remember very well, is staying with us at present. I found him in a very bad state of health, and he has put himself under my care. I hope to bring him around all right in a short time."

Wilkins had difficulty in refraining from uttering an exclamation that rose to his lips. The words he came so near were "Oh-me-Gard!"

"If *I* were mar-wied to that gi-rl," he was saying to himself, "I wouldn't want that pweacher in the house, bah Jove! He was com-ing to see her every day for weeks when they were he-re, and I thought sure he would mar-wy her. I won-der if he is as sick as Melton thinks. Weally I'd like to know, you know."

A more than usually violent attack of illness made Mrs. Bright telegraph, a fortnight later, for Mrs. Melton to come to the side of her father. When the Colonel rallied and found Lettie there he asked in a harsh tone who had sent for her and plainly showed his disapproval of the proceeding. She stayed only one night, and as he seemed to have recovered from the fit, she returned to New York on the following day. Wilkins saw a good deal of her during her stay, for he was constant in his attendance on her father, and was thunderstruck in the change that time and experience had wrought in the delicate, shrinking girl he remembered.

"A weg-ular ti-ger-cat!" he said. "I'm glad it's Mel-ton and not I who's got her to look after, bah Jove!"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"THERE IS A DEVIL IN HIM!"

Clyde Morley was undoubtedly a sick man. Dr. Melton was certain of that, but what he could not understand was why no improvement took place under the regimen he had prescribed. A good rare

steak and a bottle of ale in the morning ought to make a better pulse than he found in his patient's wrist. Roast beef with port and champagne at dinner should, according to his calculations, bring a little color into the cheek, and not a particle was visible. The heartbeats were uneven, sometimes almost imperceptible, and again much too rapid. There was a trembling of the body and a slight shaking at the hands. Dr. Melton wanted to bring in a brother practitioner and get the benefit of his observations, but Clyde would not hear a word of it.

"Why, I'm all right!" he would exclaim. "I'm subject to spells of this kind. I've had them before and recovered. Give me time, that's all."

Mrs. Melton knew that Morley's morning steak was untasted and that not a drop of the ale had ever gone down his throat. She knew that when Mark was at dinner, Clyde made only a pretense of drinking wine which she had mixed with water, and that if the Doctor was out he never touched it. She plead with him more than once to obey the instructions he had received, but he turned a deaf ear to her. He had his reasons, and he would not explain, and that was all he would say. He went out every morning, pretending to take a ride only, for that Mark admitted would be good for him; and when the carriage was in the Park he left the driver to doze under the trees, while he plunged into the by-paths and walked until he could walk no longer. But the length and rapidity of these walks were curtailed now. He could not bear such promenades as those to which he had been used. He was certainly fading away.

When Mrs. Melton went to Boston, he left the

house for a day or two, promising the doctor to be careful about over-exerting himself and to keep up the full measure of his diet. He would have promised anything. He spoke of a friend whom he intended to visit, and said he would return in a few days. The truth was he dreaded the lonesomeness of the apartment while Lettie was to be away, and could not bear the thought of sitting at meals alone with Dr. Melton. Mrs. Melton guessed the cause of his departure and was much pleased thereat. When she returned there was a terrible day or two without him, as she did not know his address and he had expected she would stay longer. But something happened to break the monotony of the second day. Frank Morley sent in his card.

"What a way you have of drooping out of the clouds when one least expects to see you!" was her greeting. "If you had come at any other time I should have been able to present you to your brother, who now makes his home with us."

Frank did not seem like himself. He bowed absently and said he knew that Clyde lived there, and also that he was out of town, or she might be certain he never would have called.

"Still that unaccountable anger between you?" she said, reproachfully.

"What should have lessened it?" he asked. "Do you think it makes me like him better because he is here with you, while I—"

He paused, as if overcome by his feelings, and she felt the dampness under her eyelids.

"Hush!" she answered, soothingly. "He is an invalid, under the care of my husband."

He uttered an expression in which a sneer was unconcealed.

"Then he must be recovering rapidly," he said.

"No. He is growing worse daily. I—I wish I might ask you something, Mr. Morley."

"You know," he responded, "that you can ask me anything."

"Well, then, can you explain why he refuses to eat and drink the foods and liquids that the Doctor prescribes? He is committing suicide, to put it plainly. Those things are necessary to give him strength; and yet, knowing it, he will not let them pass his lips."

Frank smiled ironically.

"It would not take me long to assign a reason. There is a devil in him—in spite of his theological education,—and he is trying to starve him out."

She wrinkled her forehead and looked blankly at him.

"A devil?" she echoed.

"Certainly. He is troubled with a devil that your presence excites and that certain foods and drinks would make unmanageable. He is not committing suicide, Mrs. Melton. He is being murdered! You are slowly doing him to death."

She uttered a shriek.

"What am *I* doing to him!" she asked, growing white. "I have urged him with all my power to follow his physician's directions."

He laughed in her face.

"No doubt. Well, you will see what happens. Now, I am going. I only came up to take a last look of you. I am not in much better health than

he, though I may not show it so strongly. You will never see me again."

She felt a shiver passing over her, as if her hand had touched a corpse.

"You do not speak of dying?" she said, trying to smile.

"Yes. Death is sure to claim me before the end of another year, probably much sooner. I shall not outlive my brother. We are twins, we came into the world on one day. An old fortune-teller once predicted that we would leave it in like manner."

Mrs. Melton rose, and getting a shawl from the next room wrapped it about her.

"Then you think your brother—" She could not finish.

He nodded with an air of conviction.

"I saw him a week ago, when he did not know it. He is marked for the grave. Pshaw! Don't start like that! Nothing is more natural than dying. We shall go about the same time."

The shawl was not warm enough for her, and she drew closer to the fire that was burning in the grate.

"You are wrong! I know you must be wrong!" she muttered. "Dr. Melton says he will recover if he only takes the medicine and eats the food he orders. And he *must* do it. I will compel him, when he returns. He has no right to end his life in such a way."

Frank Morley laughed again, recklessly.

"He won't obey you," he said. "I know him well enough for that. It lies in his mind this way '*Shall I sacrifice my body or my soul?*'"

Slowly the thought began to dawn upon her. It was some minutes before she could speak again.

"He will not contend that he has a right to kill himself!" she said, finally.

"There are two deaths, in his belief. The physical death is the one he is now courting. To invite the other would be damnation. If there is anything in his doctrines, a legion of angels will bear his spirit aloft when it leaves its earthly tenement, and Satan will gnash his teeth with rage to find that his prey has escaped."

The bitter smile was on his lips as he finished the sentence and rose.

"Good-bye, Mrs. Melton. Good-bye for this world. If there is another, I am not so sure we may not meet again. But never here; never after to-day."

He frightened her so much that she could not even open her lips to bid him an adieu, and long after he had left the house she shivered over the grate with the shawl around her.

On the third day from this Clyde returned. He came in the morning, just after Dr. Melton had gone to his office. Lettie heard his step in the parlor and, dressed in the loose gown she usually wore only in her chamber, she came to greet him, throwing her half bare arms about his neck and covering his pale face with kisses.

"Oh, Clyde, Clyde!" she gasped. "Why have you stayed so long! I dreamed three nights together that you were dead! You *will not* die! Tell me you *will not* die! On the day they take you to the grave they will take me also!"

She talked in this wild way until the servant rang

the little bell which showed that breakfast was served, and he had no opportunity to say a word in reply.

"Your brother has been here," she said, as they were seated at the table and he had begun to sip his coffee. "He frightened me so! He was looking very ill, and he said it was predicted when you were in your cradles that you would die together! Oh, Clyde, you cannot be so cruel as to condemn yourself to death, when it would kill me to lose you!"

He motioned toward the kitchen door to warn her to lower her voice. Then he said that Frank had been very foolish to repeat old wives' tales to her. People died when their time came, regardless of soothsayers or sybils.

"No, no!" she cried. "If a man starves himself as you do, he hastens his natural time. I remember when you were strong and well. Can I forget the day you took that team of horses by the rein with one hand and dragged me from under their feet with the other, as easily as if we had all been so many toys? And now you are slowly letting the life flow out of you, because you will not take what is necessary to sustain and nourish it. For *God's* sake—for *my* sake, if you care anything for me—begin this morning to take the food you need. Try to bring back the strength you have so recklessly thrown away!"

She took the steak from under its cover and pushed it toward him. Then she drew the cork from the bottle and filled his glass with the ale.

"Drink it, I implore you!" she said, holding the tumbler to his lips. "Drink it! How can you refuse me?"

Gently but firmly he took the glass from her and put it aside. But he drew her sorrowful face closer and kissed it.

She burst into a flood of tears.

"*Won't* you drink it? *Won't* you eat the meat?" she asked, clinging to his breast.

He shook his head.

"I know your reason!" she sobbed, averting her face. "After a great deal of thinking I have guessed it. You believe you might become dangerous to me. Yes, that is it; I am sure that is it! But it is not true. I am the wife of another man. You could not make me false to him. I am certain of my own resolutions. I love you; oh, there is no need of my telling you that! Yes, I would give my life for you, but not my honor. Recover your health. We will love each other—always—and still we will never forget! You will certainly die if you do not take more nourishment. Dr. Melton is right. And it will be I who have murdered you!"

In this vein she continued talking to him until they had to leave the dining-room. In the parlor she renewed her entreaties, but they had no effect. All she could get from him in the way of answer was that slow shake of the head, when she appealed to him directly. The only time he spoke was when she told him he could not live a year if he persisted in the course he was following.

"It is better," he said, then. "It is much better."

That afternoon Dr. Melton proposed to his patient to exchange bedrooms with him. He said the one Morley occupied did not have enough sun and was better suited to a healthy man than a partial invalid. Clyde tried to refuse the kindness, for he was already

troubled by the favors he was receiving, but the transfer of his belongings had been accomplished before he was consulted, and the Doctor's things had been taken to the other chamber. The invalid did not think of the proximity of Mrs. Melton or he might have held out longer against the change. It was only when he awoke in the middle of the night and heard her stifled sobbing through the connecting door that it occurred to him how near she was now. He had not slept very well of late and it was near morning when his eyelids closed. Long before that time the sounds in the other chamber had ceased.

One evening, when Dr. Melton was out, and they were sitting, as was their wont, he in an easy chair and she on a hassock at his feet, Lettie looked up at him searchingly.

"I found something to-day," she said. "You remember I told you that I lost it, the key to the door between his room and mine."

He paused before he answered.

"The door is between *your* room and mine now," he said.

"Yes. Of course the door is the same. I found the key in the pocket of a dress I have not worn for several months. See!"

It was an ordinary looking key, that would not have attracted attention anywhere else, but he took it in his hand as if it had some kind of magic power.

"This will open the door between my room and yours?" he said, musingly.

"Yes. I tried it this morning."

Half absently he placed it in his pocket, and she laid her head again on his knees in the position she had been when she first spoke of the key. He

stroked her head with his hand for half an hour more, and then the clock struck ten and they separated.

Clyde did not go to bed till after midnight. He sat in his room, with the door-key in his hand, paler than ever in the moonlight that filled the chamber. Like a statue he sat there, moving not a muscle, with his rapt face turned toward the stars.

At last he took from a drawer a photograph and placed it on the outside of the bureau. It was the counterfeit presentment of his friend and guardian, Dr. Welsh.

The sight of the beloved and revered features seemed to give him the strength he needed. Raising a window as quietly as he could, he threw something far out into the night.

"When my sins are read out of the Great Book," he whispered to the portrait, "you will rise in my behalf and tell of *one* that I crushed down!"

CHAPTER XXIX.

A HOUSE OF SIN.

For some weeks there was no change in the condition of Dr. Melton's patient, except a steady loss of strength that could have but one ending, if continued. Mark finally had his suspicions aroused that his directions were not being followed, and set himself to ascertain if this was true. Under close examination he drew from the servant the fact that the steaks she cooked each morning were found un-

touched, and that the ale was regularly poured into the little sink in the dining-room instead of being drunk. That the dinners were not partaken of with much appetite he was himself a witness, and the sleight-of-hand tricks by which Clyde evaded drinking the wine were soon apparent. Melton grew indignant when he had completed his discoveries. He got Morley into his office, and had a straight talk with him.

"If you're bound to die it is as easy for you to do it somewhere else as in my house," he said. "I have tried to save you, but I'm not able to perform miracles. No one can build you up on weak tea and buttered toast. I don't believe you have swallowed a drop of the iron I gave you. I never heard of such a case. What's the matter with you, man? I can't understand you at all!"

"You wish me to go away?" asked Clyde, tremulously. "Very well, I will go."

"I wish you to do as you are told and become a strong, healthy man again," was the impatient reply. "You know you are more than welcome at my home. But—hang it!—you are ruining my reputation by persisting in committing suicide under my roof. People will think it's my treatment that's running you down. You look more like a ghost every day."

Morley heard him listlessly.

"Shall I go, then?" he inquired.

"No, you won't!" replied the Doctor. "You will stay. But I wish to goodness something would happen to give you the shock you need. If that clogged brain of yours could only get a good jar, you would come out of your lethargy. I'm not certain but a little work back on the East Side with your

missionaries would be of advantage. At present, you have nothing whatever to think of and your hypo is growing at a fearful rate."

Strangely enough the suggestion in reference to the mission succeeded in arousing Mr. Morley to such an extent that he went to pay a visit to his old friends that very afternoon. They had not heard from him for so long that they supposed him dead, but his explanation of illness, borne out by the appearance of his form and face, was enough for them, and they welcomed him warmly. One of the ladies had just had a call from a house of evil-repute, where a woman was said to be dying, and she asked Clyde if he was willing to accompany her, as she hesitated about going to such a place alone. Really pleased at the invitation, and glad of an opportunity to divert his mind from his troubles, he accepted with alacrity. Procuring a carriage they were driven to one of the East Side streets in the higher numbers, close to Avenue A.

The house was one of those fearful excrescences on the surface of our civilization where unhappy women spend the dullest and most miserable of lives in order that men may indulge their evil propensities, and that the "madames" who own the places may accumulate fortunes without personal labor. If every girl who thinks it fascinating to begin the downward road could be taken through one of these resorts, and comprehend its full horror, fewer of them, I opine, would leave the path of virtue. Even the best of the occupants are mere slaves, receiving literally nothing for their broken lives but the food they eat. The terms on which they are engaged prevent their accumulating money enough to enable

them to go away with anything in their purses, and the remarkable bookkeeping to which they are subjected leaves them always in debt to their landladies. Things are done every day in houses of this kind, in enlightened America, which would fill the streets with rioters could the public at large fully comprehend them. But the consciences of the male patrons are easily calloused and interference by the law is rare.

Little as the proprietors of these houses care for their inmates as a general thing, they are apt to have a superstitious fear when death approaches. Many a poor girl hears the only words of religious consolation that she has listened to in years, after her hearing has become dulled by the cold hand of the Great Destroyer. It is then that the Catholic priest, whose words of warning long ago passed unheeded; the Protestant minister, who might have saved this brand from the burning had she but come to him—step softly into the darkened chamber and hold before the glazing eyes the crucifix or the promises made for those who trust in their Saviour. The missionaries of whom Clyde Morley had been one had of late done a good deal of this work. They were more certain to respond without delay than some of the regular pastors, who could not always come as soon as wanted. Besides this, many of the girls preferred to tell their sorrowful stories to the good women of the mission rather than to men.

Before the bell could be pulled, Mr. Morley and his companion heard the sound of a piano, from which emanated a lively tune, to which soprano voices kept accompaniment. It would not do for those girls to put on sober faces merely because

Azrael had spread his dark wings over the bed on which lay one of their number. The proprietress knew that customers who might drop in wanted to be met with smiles and gaiety. In response to the ring a negress opened the street-door. Clyde saw seven or eight young women dressed in evening costume that displayed freely their arms and necks, peeping with an air of pretended mischief through the half-closed hangings of the parlor. As soon as the black dress of Miss Thompson was seen, however, there was a quick drawing back. The singing ceased abruptly, and the tune on the piano died away into silence.

"Right dis way," said the colored woman, preceding the callers up the stairs.

Mr. Morley hesitated at the door of the chamber.

"You would best go in first," he said to Miss Thompson.

The colored woman conducted Clyde to a chamber adjacent, and left him while she took his companion into the presence of the dying one. Clyde found his breath coming harder, as he realized where he was. He had no doubt this room belonged to one of the regular inmates of the establishment, and his mind conjured up a hundred pictures, as he looked about him. What sins had not been committed there! Year after year, some poor girl had used that room for the most unholy of all practices—the selling for gold of the heartless kiss, the distasteful embrace! Upon the bureau were several photographs, some of them of men. He gazed at the latter with a horrible fascination. What kind of creatures must they be whose likenesses would adorn such a chamber?

But the faces did not look as he imagined they would. Perhaps some of them were brothers, long lost—fathers now lonely in the distant home, weeping for the children who had disappeared in the great maelstrom of life and never been heard of again. Or, maybe, they were lovers of the old days, kept for the sake of what had been. Or—and here Clyde gave a gasp—even if they were patrons of the house, they might look like the rest of mankind. He knew that men were none too good, at the best. Some of those who came here were perhaps no worse than others who preyed on fresher fields, who prided themselves on their superior taste and would have shunned a house like this, as if some infectious disease lurked in its atmosphere.

And then it came over him like a heavy weight, was he himself any too good? Was the course he had pursued for the past few months much better than that of those he was mentally criticising?

He walked up and down the floor, his head beginning to whirl. There came into his mind a suggestion he had once heard of the best way to reform the world—the easy way of letting each man reform himself. What had he been thinking of? He had tried to imagine that he had a mission to regenerate the earth, and he had been unable to control the wickedest man on it. *Was* he the wickedest man on earth? In his own esteem, yes. He thought of his life since the day he left Arcadie. Had it been anything but evil? It was true he had committed no really criminal act, judged by the laws of men. though he had narrowly escaped even that. But what was he doing to-day, in the home of a man who had tried to befriend him? Was his position there any better

—was it not infinitely worse—than if he spent the same time in this house which filled him with such aversion? Surely he was alienating a wife from her duty. He was doing what he could to keep off the day when she should be reconciled to her husband. With all his good resolves, he knew he had been dangerously near to the chief offence. He had walked on the extreme edge of a cliff, from which, if he once fell, no arm could ever stretch out long enough to save him.

"But—I love her!" came the excuse ready to his hand.

"Have you any *right* to love her?" was the answer of his now aroused conscience. "Have you ever read the tenth command? Have you any more right to steal her affection than to take Melton's purse or his goods? He has invited you within his doors with full faith in your honor and integrity. You have no business to remain there with the terrible danger staring you in the face!"

Morley heard the voice of his conscience as if it was a human tongue.

"There is no real danger," he muttered "We understand our limitations. Have we not proven our strength in all this time?"

A mocking laugh answered him.

"Fool!" it cried. "Since men and women were created how many million souls have deluded themselves with this vain phantasy! Satan is amusing himself a little longer with you, but you will surely be his prey at last!"

In the midst of the agony which this reflection gave, the colored woman come to say that Miss Thompson wished to speak to him. He went into

the hall, and learned that the invalid had a message which she preferred to intrust to the gentleman. Before going to see her, he asked the attendant if there was not some other room in the house to which she could conduct Miss Thomspon, as it seemed a dreadful thing that she should be taken into the chamber he had just vacated.

He was told that it was the only one available at present. As he heard the words, the sound of music came from the floor below, and loud laughter smote like a blow upon his ears. The gaiety, suspended on account of the arrival of the missionaries, had begun again. New accessions of visitors, who had come for quite another purpose, made the tragic occurrence over their heads forgotten for the time.

CHAPTER XXX.

A MAN OF GOD.

Mr. Morley took leave of Miss Thompson, and with uneasy feelings entered the sick-room. A wasted form lay on the bed, and a face that was still beautiful looked at him from the pillow.

"The lady tells me you are a clergyman," began the invalid ; but he stopped her.

"She is not quite correct in that—I have studied but I never was ordained."

"It is just as well, so long as you are a man of God," was the feeble answer.

"A man of God! *He* a man of God!" How

little he deserved that appellation! But he saw that she spoke with difficulty, and that an argument might consume valuable time, and so he held his peace.

"I am dying," pursued the voice. "And I want you to know a little of my history. Eighteen years ago I was the wife of a respected gentleman, moving in good society. A friend of his, as he supposed him, became infatuated with me. My husband was of an exacting temper, and at the time he appeared to me tyrannical. I exchanged his severe rule for the arms of the friend I thought I loved. For ten years we lived together. Then he deserted me, and I fell lower and lower—until—I came to this."

Had she been drawing an indictment for the listener in advance, she could hardly have seemed more like an accuser.

"I want you to write to him when I am dead. If my child is living—I want her to see my face before it is laid in the earth. I wrote the address I last knew on this card, before I became too ill to hold a pencil."

She drew the card with an effort from her bosom and he put it in his pocket.

"My daughter, if she is living, must be a woman now. See her, if you can, and impress upon her the moral of her mother's end. My husband is unforgiving, but he may be glad to know I am through with suffering. That's all I wanted, sir. Only, don't let any of the people here touch me—after it is over. Ask some of the good women of the mission to prepare me for burial. I cannot harm them when the life is out of my body. Good-bye, sir."

The last words were uttered so faintly that Mr. Morley looked up in alarm. He saw that she had spoken her final farewell. Having delivered her message the sick woman had closed her eyes in their eternal sleep.

Springing up hastily he sought Miss Thompson.

"I fear she has gone," he said, hurriedly.

Verifying the suspicion was but the matter of a moment. Then Clyde told what the dead woman had asked with her last breath and Miss Thompson declared that the request must be fulfilled to the letter. She said he must notify the proprietress of the house and then she would remain with the body while he went to the mission and despatched an assistant to her aid.

The "madame," a stout, over-dressed woman of fifty-five or so, came at once. She was a little abashed at sight of the mission people, but began immediately to defend herself from all blame in the matter. The poor girl had had every attention, she said. She—the madame—had paid the bills out of her own pocket, as "Annie" had nothing. People must all die sometime, and this was the first death in her house for more than six months. She thought a great deal of "Annie," who had been with her nearly two years.

But Morley cut her short.

"She had been with you two years and still had no money of her own?"

"Oh, they are so improvident! You have no idea! If she made forty dollars one day she would spend it the next! Never had a cent left, sir—"

He stopped her as soon as he could with a sharp

look, not liking to have these explanations before Miss Thompson.

"You have no objection, I presume, to our taking charge of her now. I will send some of our people here and an undertaker."

The madame courtesied.

"None at all, sir. I should have had to send for the charity officers if you had not made the offer."

Never had he known what heartlessness this damnable trade can breed in the breasts of women who must at some time have had feeling. He told Miss Thompson he would go as fast as possible to the mission and would attend to everything. Once out of doors, he took in a long breath of the pure air of winter, with the action of one who has been in a cavern. Then he hailed a cab and was driven to his destination.

The necessary assistance was sent in the course of an hour to the aid of Miss Thompson, and an undertaker was commissioned to go to the house with one of his best caskets and by all means remove the remains to his rooms before he left them. It seemed to Clyde that the atmosphere of the place where she died would trouble the soul of the poor woman in its struggles to reach the face of that Father whose invitation, "Come unto me," has no limit or reservation. He proposed to assume all the expense and paid the undertaker a good sum on account. "Annie" had placed her last wishes in his hands to fulfill and he would not be false to them in any way.

A feeling of gratitude to the dead woman filled his breast. She had done more for him, he believed, than all the other women and men whom he had ever known. The only real danger he had passed

through was in connection with Dr. Melton's wife. That danger was now past. It had been blown away by the words he had heard that day, even as clouds are blown away by the southwind. Lettie Melton should never live to tell the story of the friend of *her* husband who had been responsible for *her* ruin. Where darkness had covered his mind for long weeks the sun now shone effulgent. He would go to her and tell her what he had heard that morning; and she would see as well as he that everything must come to an immediate end between them.

With a step more elastic than he had felt for years, Clyde Morley walked to Forty-third street. He forgot that he had eaten nothing since his meagre breakfast, though it was long past the hour of noon. His weakness seemed to have disappeared. He had his old stride. The color came, albeit faintly, to his cheek. Hope, so long a stranger to his breast, strengthened the action of his heart. At the entrance to the apartment-house where the Meltons resided he took out the key and turned the bolt with a joyousness to which he had long been a stranger. He was not afraid to meet Lettie now, and if her husband happened to be at home, he could encounter his eyes. Henceforth no power on earth could make it possible that he should dishonor him.

The wife was in the parlor. At the sound of his step she sprang with a glad cry to greet him. Something in his face made her pause before she reached his side, and she searched his features anxiously.

"What has happened?" she asked. "There is color in your cheeks. You look as if you had recovered your health. And yet, you shrink from me. Clyde, tell me, what is it?"

The bright look he had worn faded at sight of her, even at the knowledge that she was in the room.

"I have come from a deathbed," he said, huskily. "The deathbed of a woman, in what men call a house of pleasure, and what angels call a house of sin."

She uttered a gesture of great repugnance.

"Ugh! How horrible! I hope you have washed yourself well. Is it necessary you should go to such dreadful places?"

"No," he said. "It was not necessary, but I shall always thank God I went. For that poor creature showed me the pit I stood near, and aroused me to a full sense of a danger I had only imperfectly comprehended."

She tried to laugh, but the sound savored of hysteria.

"How melodramatic you can be sometimes. Pray tell me in what 'danger' you have been, for I certainly know of none."

Even then it was a struggle to escape from her. Beautiful and tempting to the last, nothing but the dead woman and her story could have kept him steadfast in his resolve. He spoke feelingly.

"Lettie, may we not be honest, just for once? This woman told me she had been an honored wife, and that a so-called *friend of her husband* had persuaded her from the path of virtue! Do you think I could see her eyes close in death without taking an oath that such a sin should never be laid at my door?"

Mrs. Melton's features contracted for an instant. Then the expression changed to contempt.

"And were *you* ever in such danger?" she asked, with a covert sneer.

"Oh, you know too well!" he groaned. "Ever since I have lived here—"

He was stopped by a slight scream from his companion.

"Are you talking of me?" she exclaimed. "Is that what has been in your heart all this time? Clyde Morley, how dare you utter such an insinuation!"

Nothing but the dead face could have stopped him, for in her anger she was more lovely in his eyes than ever. Nothing but the dead face and the story he had heard.

"I will not exchange words with you," he said. "As soon as I have finished my obligations to that dead woman I will come and take my things away. She gave me a card, with the address of her husband, and she has a daughter, too, that I must notify. Here it is."

He drew it from his pocket and read the words on it for the first time. Then he gasped and staggered, letting the card fall to the floor.

Drawn by an unaccountable fascination, Mrs. Melton took up the card and read these words:

Col. HORACE FULLER, Governor's Island.
371st Regiment.

And Clyde had to catch her in his arms, as she fell.

CHAPTER XXXI.

"I THINK YOU HAVE KILLED ME."

All that was needed to complete this tableau was the presence of Dr. Melton. To Clyde's consternation the doctor entered at this moment and stood looking with surprise at the spectacle before him.

"Your wife has fainted," said Morley, made desperately cool by the very peculiarity of his position.

"So I perceive," was the dry reply. "If you will place her upon the sofa, I will see what I can do to restore her."

Clyde had been so astonished at Mark's appearance that he stood in the centre of the room with the burden in his arms, making no move to relieve himself of it. At the suggestion of the husband he turned scarlet and complied with the idea advanced.

"She has had a severe shock," he said, thinking that the sooner he explained things the better. The position in which he was placed was certainly an awkward one. "Did you ever hear anything about her mother."

The Doctor, who had obtained a bottle of smelling-salts and was applying it to the nostrils of the unconscious woman, shook his head without looking up.

"There was a rumor which I used to hear that she was still living, apart from her husband," continued

Morley. "He never spoke of her in my presence and I had thought little about the matter till to-day. In the course of a visit that I made this afternoon with some of my old friends in the mission, I was present at the deathbed of a woman who gave me a card, asking that I notify her friends of her decease. After doing what was necessary at the undertaker's, I came home for a little rest, and happened to mention the affair to Mrs. Melton. Tired out with my exertions I had not yet taken pains to read the address. When I did so I was so affected by my astonishment that her interest was excited. She picked up the card I had let fall to the floor and read it before I could stop her."

Dr. Melton easily understood what had happened. He paused in his work of restoration to inquire, with a shiver, in what kind of place Mrs. Fuller was found.

"A very poor one," was the careful reply. "It was lucky—if we can call such things other than providential—that I happened to go there to-day, or she might have been buried by the city. Poor woman! She has suffered severely. But her body is now at the undertaker's on Fifty-fourth street and everything necessary will be done. I shall notify the Colonel at once."

Mrs. Melton opened her eyes, but still seemed in a state bordering on stupor. Dr. Melton went to call the servant, to whom he gave careful directions, and then he motioned Morley to come into the dining-room with him.

"There is nothing more for you to do, now that I have been notified," he said, with a touch of pride, "This person, whatever her faults may have been.

and I fear they were many, was the mother of my wife. It is for me to do all things necessary and to pay all expenses. I cannot allow any one to relieve me in the slightest degree of a plain obligation."

Morley bowed with politeness.

"It was certainly my intention to tell you as soon as you arrived. Had I dreamed of such a possibility as has since developed I should have gone directly to your office. But, especially in view of the illness of Mrs. Melton, which may hinder you in leaving the house, may I not be your agent in attending to some of the details. I shall be glad to serve you."

The tinge of pique that had overcast the mind of Dr. Melton when he found his wife in the arms of another man began to disappear. He knew of no reason why he ought to doubt the plain, straightforward statement he had heard.

"Thank you," he stammered. "There is one thing you can do, if you feel able to undertake it. You can go to Boston and consult with Col. Fuller. When you have learned his wishes and have notified me, I will act accordingly."

Clyde replied at once that he would gladly do this. As the boats had already departed, and as one train would answer as well as another, he went to his room, where, while waiting for the dinner to be served, he packed his things.

In spite of the sad events of the day he felt better than he had for months. A great load seemed lifted from his shoulders. The death of one person had given life to another. He would go to Boston and transact the business intrusted to him and when he returned he would remove his belongings from the house of the Meltons. He felt that he now had

the strength to begin the work of life in earnest, and that the peculiar form of temptation which had so long assailed him could never again play havoc with his brain.

Dr. Melton was so thoroughly ashamed of the momentary suspicion that had come unbidden into his mind, that he came to ask Clyde if he would dine alone and afterwards remain with Mrs. Melton while he himself dined. This request was complied with. Clyde felt so absolutely certain of himself now that he even drank a glass of the port wine which he had been in the habit of evading. His appetite was not very good, however, and he was soon ready to relieve the doctor. Mrs. Melton lay on the sofa where he had placed her, having declined to be taken to her chamber. She had not spoken, but the physician knew that she was out of danger, and went to his dinner with the conviction that she was bearing the ordeal very well.

"I think you have killed me," came from her lips, the minute the dining-room door closed after the form of her husband.

"I—I am very sorry," Clyde answered. "It was careless of me not to look at that card; but how could I suspect the dreadful truth?"

She uttered an exclamation of impatience.

"Don't tell me you mind that," she said, spitefully. "It gave you an opportunity for a melodramatic effect such as you admire. And you seem determined to misunderstand. It is not for my mother that I care so much. Now, don't assume that expression, for it is nothing strange. I have no recollection of her. She deserted me at an age when her first duty was to the helpless one she left.

She could not bear my father's harsh temper, but she was willing *I* should endure it. What troubles me is that through her I am become in your eyes a contemptible thing, capable of any infamy. I have been foolish enough to try to get a little pleasure out of an acquaintance that I ought to have known would bring wretchedness. It was all that made my existence endurable and I do not care now how soon everything ends!"

Again he felt the strong inclination to surrender, to take her hands in his and tell her he never could leave her, that he should love her as long as he lived. But the power of resistance had come, too, and he exerted it with good effect.

"There will be but a few moments for us to talk of these things," he said, gently. "I also have walked in the 'Valley of the Shadow,' and I know the terror of the road. Dr. Melton was right when he told me I was deliberately committing suicide. I purposely abstained from everything that might strengthen and build up my body. And I did more than that. A dozen times, fearing that the work I had begun was proceeding too slowly, I opened my veins."

She made a gesture of horror.

"Yes," he said, "I have tried to keep as near the grave as possible without actually plunging in, though could I have taken the leap without dread of the Hereafter I would have done it long ago. My passion for you could not be stilled except by such extreme measures. I have felt day after day that I had no business to remain here, though I could not tear myself away. But, Lettie," here his voice trembled, "the scene I witnessed this afternoon—"

She stopped him with a movement of her hand and turned her face away. Then came a torrent of tears that shook her frame. He waited till the storm had past, thinking it might be for the best, and when she had dried her eyes he proceeded:

"I have been making a great mistake. I should have known long ago that I was unfitted for the ministry, and have entered upon some secular profession less exacting in its demands. My desire to please the good clergyman in whose care I was placed led me into many difficulties. In trying to become too great a saint I was in danger of making myself one of the greatest of sinners. Should I ever recover my health I shall know what course to pursue. If you meet me in years hence—"

Mrs. Melton raised herself on her arm and looked at him.

"*If* I meet you! *If?*" she repeated.

"*When* you meet me," he corrected, "you will find a very different Clyde Morley from the one you have known. I have promised to go to Boston to-night to tell Col. Fuller what has occurred."

Had she lost him altogether? Could it be that the one bright spot in her life was to be permanently obscured?

"You will waste your journey," she answered. "He never forgives, and from the time I was an infant he has never spoken of her to me."

"It is necessary to inform him," he replied. "After that, we shall have done our duty, at least."

She seemed lost in thought for several minutes.

"When you return, you intend to leave us; is it not so?"

"I must! You know very well I must."

She put on an air of determination.

"Then I, too, shall leave," she said. "I cannot live here alone with him. It may as well end early as late."

"And where will you go? Back to your father?"

She shook her head.

"Never to him. Anywhere but there."

He looked much troubled.

"Is it not possible," he asked, earnestly, "that time will reconcile you to your husband? He loves you sincerely."

There was reproach in the eyes she turned on him.

"How little time ago it is when you would have grieved to think I might do so! Ah! Is there any constancy in men!"

Dr. Melton entered the room before Clyde could reply to this thrust and looked pleased at the evident improvement in his wife's condition.

"You are a better physician for her than I," he smiled. "As your last train does not go until midnight, would you be willing to stay here while I go out on a little business?" He indicated with a look that he wanted to see the undertaker. "I shall not be gone more than an hour or two. If any one rings for me, send them to Dr. Ahern. I shall not be at my office again until—until after the—funeral."

He dropped his voice at the last word, so that it was rather understood than uttered. Mr. Morley indicated that he was glad to be of any service and Melton got on his outer clothing at once.

"You are much better, are you not?" he said coming in at the last moment, and speaking to his wife.

"Oh, yes," she said. "I shall need nothing now."

"Is there anything you have to suggest?" he inquired, constrainedly.

"No. Only that all should be arranged as quietly as possible."

Dr. Melton said "Certainly," and with another glance at his wife's face and a professional pressure on her wrist, he went out.

"I shall never have a better chance to talk to you," said Clyde, when they were again alone. "I want to arouse the best that is in you, so that you may help me to arouse my own."

A spasm passed over her face. She dreaded to hear what was coming.

"There is no need that either of us should try to deceive the other," he went on. "I have been—we have been—in imminent danger of breaking the Seventh Commandment ever since the day I moved here. I, at least, have broken the Tenth. For I have coveted you, Lettie, and have even been in such a mood at times that I would have even committed murder to obtain you!"

She interrupted him, to say that he must not imagine things like that, which could not possibly be true.

"Do you think so?" he answered. "As sure as I breathe I think I should have killed Mark Melton that day I first came here if I had encountered him in the hallway as I went out. I was temporarily insane over you. I remember praying I might not meet him, for I knew he stood between me and what I most craved. With such danger perpetually staring me in the face how could I do less than fight my inclinations with whatever weapons I could obtain?

I had no moral strength to resist you when we were thrown together. The only thing I could do was to keep my physical being as weak as possible. I have been crazy through it all. You are right about my intentions. I dare not stay here. After the shock which I had to-day I fear I should make shorter work of myself if I found that I had relapsed. I think the next time it would be a pistol at my head."

She uttered a cry and put both hands upon the arm that was nearest to her. It gave him satisfaction to find that he could endure her touch without feeling his resolution giving way.

"It is terrible," she whispered. "Yes, you must go! You must, you must!"

She had summoned all her determination to aid him, and until Dr. Melton returned they remained where he had left them, with hardly another word.

"The undertaker tells me you paid for everything in advance," was the Doctor's greeting to Mr. Morley. "Of course, I shall reimburse you for the outlay."

"As you please," responded Clyde, thinking it foolish to dispute the point. "When I settle my bill here we will consider it."

Dr. Melton did not need the expostulating look that he saw in the eyes of his wife to assist the reply that rose at once to his lips.

"You have been here as our guest, and payment is too ridiculous to think of. This is quite a different matter. I know Lettie feels as I do about it."

Mrs. Melton indicated that her husband was right.

"If we could only see you improve in health as you ought," continued Melton, "we should be more than repaid. I want you to promise that there shall

be no evasions hereafter. We want to behold the robust form of the old time, the hundred and eighty pounds you brought to Boston. If you try honestly and do all you are told, you have yet a chance."

Clyde said, with no mental reservation, that he would begin in earnest. He added, however, with a side look at Mrs. Melton—in which he begged her not to oppose him—that a Southern trip would be the best thing he could take at that season, and that he had thought of starting upon one within a few days. The doctor admitted that there was sense in the suggestion, and said if his patient would only have the right care to his diet, and take the medicines prescribed, the journey would be of decided advantage.

"But," he added, "you really ought not to go alone."

To this Clyde answered that his brother Frank would probably accompany him. He said he had heard from Frank, who had also been in very poor health, and they were more than likely to go together.

"It will surprise you to hear this," he said, "knowing that we have not always been the closest of friends, but of late we have been growing nearer to each other. He is acting in a manner of which I approve more than formerly, and I have decided to give up the ministry and take some other profession more to his taste. I am sure we shall have nothing to quarrel over now, and if both of us return with improved health and spirits we shall be satisfied."

Dr. Melton heartily approved of this arrangement. As it was growing time for Clyde to start toward

the Grand Central Station, Mrs. Melton took the advice of her husband and retired.

As she quitted the room she cast one lingering look at their guest; such a look as is seen on the faces of condemned men when the handkerchief is raised to shut out the light of the sun from their eyes forever.

CHAPTER XXXII.

CLYDE MORLEY'S DIARY.

In the haste of packing, there was one thing that Clyde Morley forgot, when he left the apartment of the Meltons. This was a diary in which he had recorded a good many things of interest to himself during the previous three years. The servant discovered it and brought it to Mrs. Melton, who said she would see that it was forwarded to its owner. But having, like all women—and some men—a certain amount of curiosity in her composition, as well as a special interest in everything concerning her late guest, Lettie could not refrain, before sending this book to Boston, from glancing at its contents. The secrecy surrounding the entries made having been thus violated, it can do no harm if the reader of this story looks over her shoulder at some of the most striking passages:

April 12, 18—. "I am every day surer that I am not fitted for the ministry. It will break the heart of my good guardian if I tell him this, but I fear I shall have to do so. I looked out of the window this

morning six times to watch some girls going by, at the hour devoted to religious meditation. I grow more and more worldly. Oh, dear! I wonder what is the matter with me."

July 21. "I must take a long vacation, where no one will know me for a student of theology, or I shall break loose in some way. The deference shown me here in Arcadie is more than I can bear. I long to see the world, to breathe the air of freedom! I have a plan, but I must think of it awhile, to make sure there are no flaws in it."

July 27. "I have studied it all out. As I have two entirely opposite natures, I must divide myself into two parts. When I leave Arcadie I will take with me only the athletic young man whom the boys at Amherst called Frank. I will leave here, tied up in a package for future use, the theological student that Dr. Welsh calls Clyde. Luckily I have two names as well as two personalities. I was christened Clyde Frank. As Frank I will go to some city where I am not known and live the life of an ordinary youth. Perhaps a little of that will be enough, but I want to see. What shall I have to do? Only to change the style of my garments, and the manner of my speech, and to grow a moustache on my smooth upper lip. It is very easy. I am delighted at the prospect of giving myself a free rein. I shall not do really wicked things, of course, but I shall be able to act naturally, which I cannot do here. But to tell the good Doctor that I am going to postpone my ministerial studies—that is the hardest thing."

Aug. 4. "It is done. Dr. Welsh has heard of my intention to go away for travel, and has reluctantly

given his consent. I can hardly contain myself for joy; and yet, there is something very sad about it, too. Next Sunday is my last one here. I can feel already the invigorating atmosphere outside my prison. Nothing can stop me now. I read yesterday of a child who was restrained so much on Sunday that he asked with a tired look if it was always Sunday in heaven; and on being told that it was, inquired if children were never allowed to go to hell a little while to play! I feel like that boy. I want a chance to stretch my limbs, even if it is in sheol."

Oct. 30. "Here I am in Boston, at the Quincy House. I am Frank Morley—no Clyde about it. I am studying law. I have joined a club, where the fellows drink and smoke and tell stories. I can walk the street without having all the men pull off their hats. I like it, ever so much. I have let my moustache grow, and it bids fair to be a beauty. There isn't a particle of black in my costume. I write to Dr. Welsh, but I send the letters via New York and he thinks I am near there. To keep my promise to him I study theology a little every day. The strangest thing is I haven't felt the faintest twinge of conscience yet. My life is one complete deceit and still it doesn't trouble me. (Is that true? Is the present life I am leading the deceitful one, or was the life I have left behind me the fraud?) Oh, I love this freedom! It makes me a liar, but I can't help it. It seems as if I never could give it up."

July 16, 18—. "I have been in Boston almost a year. Just think of it, almost a year, and no nearer going back to my intended profession than ever! In fact I have crammed my head with so much law

that I am nearer being a lawyer than a clergyman. Have I been very wicked during these eleven months? Let me see. What do I do? Smoke a cigar, go to the theatre, drink a glass of beer or wine, listen without protest to light conversation, pretend to be what I am not. A terrible list, but I don't feel its wickedness as I should have supposed. Really, I have become another person, instead of merely trying to assume to be one. And this is not all—I am growing sceptical of a good many things I once accepted without question. It doesn't do for young theological students to mix too freely with the world if they are to accept as truth all that has been told them. (Imagine dear Dr. Welsh reading these lines!)"

Aug. 9. "I have talked with a young lady, the first one since I came here, though it would surprise most of my acquaintances in Boston if I were to tell them so. Mark Melton, my dear friend, is in love with the daughter of a retired colonel, and I have volunteered to help him win her. I have been to the house where she lives and spent the evening. She is rather pretty and her boots are exquisite creations. I don't think she is the kind of girl I should ever fancy, but Mark wants her terribly. I am going to try to hire a room in the house so as to help him along."

Aug. 12. "I have been to the house where Mark's inamorata lives, but cannot get a room just yet. The niece of the landlady—Bessie Bright—entertained me nicely. She has auburn hair.

"We sat alone in the parlor for fifteen minutes and I wasn't a bit frightened? Then she called Miss

Fuller down (Mark's dear one) and we all talked together. I can't understand how I carried it off so easy. I think all there was of 'Clyde' in me has vanished. He would have been scared to death at the idea of such a frivolous conversation as we had. Poor Clyde!"

Sept. 17. "I live at Bessie's house now, on Shawmut avenne. I am certainly getting so far out of the theological rut that I never can get back. She has let me kiss her twice! She is a sweet little woman. Lettie Fuller entertains me the most, though, with her quaint expressions. She has the brain of her age (about twenty, I judge) and the experience of a child of twelve. She doesn't care a sou for Mark, poor boy! but I am going to help him all I can. I must close this now, as I hear Bessie in the hallway and I want to try for No. 3. (Am I really getting wicked?)"

Sept. 22. "Lettie doesn't like me. She told me so to-day. Well, I don't much care. I wish I never had kissed Bessie, though. She drives me insane with her pretty ways. I have had my arm around her, I wouldn't dare say how often, and every time I mean it shall be the last. If it keeps on, I am going to leave the house. She is getting to think too much of me, and it is all my fault."

Sept. 26. "Mark talked seriously with me to-night about Bessie. I told him I did not intend to marry and he gave me a lecture. I shall have to stop some of the things I have been doing. How shall I manage? I must go away on a vacation. Ah! I have an idea. I can go, and still remain in Boston! Am I not a dual personality? Certainly there are two of

me, Clyde and Frank. I wonder if I could carry it off so as to deceive these people who have seen me every day for a year. It would be worth trying. There is only one sad thing about it, my handsome moustache would have to be sacrificed. But I believe I'll do it. I want to go, on Bessie's account, and I don't want to be so far off that I shall have to give up helping Mark win Lettie. It looks as if it would take a good deal of work to accomplish that result. Perhaps Clyde can do it, though. (Ha, ha !)"

Oct. 14. What a change? I am Clyde Morley, black suit, shaven face and all ! And with the change of costume has come an entire change in feeling. I look with horror on the life my brother Frank has led. If I get an opportunity, I shall warn the women who know him against his light ideas. Mark Melton will probably call on me to-day and he will certainly invite me to Shawmut avenue. I must undo whatever Frank has committed. He has disappeared, and I trust forever. It was a dangerous experiment to let myself get into such a wild vein. I cannot understand how I could do it. I tremble when I think what might have happened had I not come to myself !"

Oct. 15. "What a day was yesterday ! It proved, for one thing, that nobody suspects I and Frank are identical. Melton took me into the Revere Club where no one recognized their old fellow-member. But what happened afterward is of more moment. The running down of Miss Fuller and Miss Bright by the horses in Park Square ; the fright I had lest Lettie should be injured ; the rescue that Melton and I accomplished ; Lettie lying in my arms ! I

cannot describe my feelings when I thought she might never speak again. Poor Mark, saving Bessie, for whom he cares nothing, was a picture of despair till he saw that Lettie had opened her eyes and was safe. I don't know what to think of myself. It is terrible to have such thoughts as run through my brain about a girl who is to be the wife of another man! A letter came this morning from her father, Col. Fuller, asking me to call that he might thank me, but I cannot go. Ah, Frank! Frank! You did not take all of your sinfulness away with your clothes and your moustache! I have got to live down this sentiment which you allowed to became implanted in your breast. I can do it—there is no doubt of that—but it will take a little time."

Oct. 26. "I have been to the Fullers'. Lettie was in and the Colonel out, when I called. She is not as dangerous to my peace of mind as I feared she would be. I talked with her about Frank, asking her to caution Bessie not to think too much of him. I did this because I know he must return, by-and-by. He will not act as he used, but every temptation must be swept out of his way. I know now, more than ever, that I cannot be a clergyman. Perhaps Frank is not as wicked, nor am I as good, as each has professed to believe. There must be a middle ground for us to meet and find our natures in accord."

Nov. 10. "I saw Bessie to-day. Poor little girl, how she loves me—I should say, how she loves Frank. I warned her in the severest language against him (against myself), but she would not believe a word. And then I went up to see Lettie and learned—in spite of her attempts at concealment—that she has

come to care a great deal more for me than she has any right to care, under the circumstances. I must go away again, leaving Frank his old field, and hoping he will use it wiser than he did. Lettie is safe from him, and if I remain here another month, she will be lost forever to Melton. He has my word, and I must keep it. Let me not begin the downward road by being false to my friend. I thought last night I never should get to sleep. It is a good thing I discovered the things that are in me before I became a minister of the Gospel. Yes, I shall go and Frank will return. He will at least be less of a hypocrite than I, and I think—yes, I am sure—I can trust him now."

Nov. 29. "I had to laugh when I read the last entry that my dear brother Clyde left in this diary. He is 'sure' he can 'trust' me! My only fear is that the false moustache which I got in New York is not a perfect counterpart of the one I shaved off to accommodate that ungrateful brother. The dealer says nothing will endanger its safety except it be a too warm kiss from some pretty girl. So I shall have to take warning when I meet Bessie. But, I forgot! I am not to kiss her again, so the moustache is safe. How glad I was to discard the black cloth and the artificial voice that Clyde affects. With this business-suit I seem like my proper self."

Nov. 30. "The boys at the club gave me a reception last night, unexpectedly, and talked about Clyde as if he were really a separate individual. Nobody noticed anything odd about my upper lip, so that is off my mind. Then I went home and Bessie was sitting up for me. Where were my reso-

lutions that I had prided myself on so much? I called her into my room. I was kissing her to distraction when I hurt her lame arm and she fainted dead away. But I bore the test very well, after all, for I immediately restored her and bade her good-night in quite the proper manner. I wish I hadn't kissed her, though, for now she will expect it all the time. Oh, I am always doing things and then wishing I hadn't!"

Dec. 10. "I have spent a good part of the afternoon with Lettie Fuller, who is desperately in love with Clyde. Of course, if she won't have Melton, nobody can make her, and if she insists on marrying Clyde I shall have to submit to the inevitable. There's something funny in it (and something not so funny, too). I do love the girl, and I know I mustn't. Oh, well, perhaps it will all come out right in time."

Dec. 30. "To-day, to escape Bessie, I was sent into Lettie's bedroom. (But I mustn't write anything about that.)"

May 27, 18—. "I am Clyde again and very miserable. I am at Arcadie and every day Dr. Welsh talks to me of my duty. If he only understood; but he cannot! At heart I am not much if any better than Frank."

July 24. "Once more in Boston. I can't sink much lower. I have thoughts that I would have believed could never enter the head of Clyde Morley. The black coat does nothing to keep them out now. This evening, when Col. Fuller spoke to Lettie as if she were a slave, and made her obey him while I sat there an unwilling witness to her shame and sorrow,

I was alarmed at the love that swept over me. Before I left the house I tried to say a word in Melton's behalf, with poor results. I shall tell Mark to-morrow to marry her as soon as he can. And even then I am not sure she will be safe from me. I ought to be locked up in a jail. And all the time I am trying—as man never tried before—to fix my mind on things religious, as I promised Dr. Welsh to do. Was there ever such a turmoil in the head of any other fellow ?"

Aug. 11, 18—. Another apparition of Frank took place last night unexpectedly. He went to call on Bessie with the laudable intention of saying good-bye to her forever, and came near making himself a candidate for State's prison. He's gone now, thank goodness ! and that danger won't occur again. Bad as Clyde is, he has some sense in his head. What was I thinking of ? If I love any one in the world it is not Bessie, but Lettie ? What does any man think of when the devil has hold of him !"

Sept. 19. "Well, something has been accomplished. Frank and Clyde have escaped from both the dangerous women, or to put it more accurately, the women have escaped them. Clyde has written a letter to Lettie, advising her to marry Mr. Melton and saying that he (Clyde) has left Boston permanently. The letter was cowardly, but there was no braver way out of the awful dilemma. Frank has sent word to Wilkins that he also has shaken the dust of Boston from his feet. The city will not be cursed with either of us henceforth. The death of my dear guardian and foster-parent has affected me greatly. The last sound his ears heard was my

promise to try once more to follow the profession for which he intended me. I am on my way to the West, where I shall be able to go on with my new work unmolested. God help me to carry it out!"

Nov. 21. "What is the use of striving? Fate has taken me back to the East, where lies my chief danger, even to the very city where Mr. and Mrs. Melton are living! I have been to see her—now the wife of another—and there is nothing of my good intentions remaining in me. I might have been a murderer to-day, had I met her husband! Love her! I would die to possess her!"

Dec. 17. "I am living under the roof with her. I have not the strength of mind to go away. Dr. Melton thinks I will improve in health there! He suspects nothing of what is killing me. Slow starvation is the only thing. I must not dishonor my friend nor the woman I adore."

Feb. 2, 18—. "I cannot write much these days. I shall be glad when the end comes. The greatest danger of all is averted. She shall never violate her marriage vows for me. I have led a life full of mistakes, but I will not add to it this crowning infamy. No, God helping me, I will escape that. But, Father in heaven, how I love her!"

These extracts and many others did Lettie Melton read. She had never dreamed of the identity of the Morleys, and her eyes opened wide as the fact came to her knowledge. But the revelation of Clyde's struggles melted her to tears. The record seemed like a voice from the grave. He had gone out of her life forever, loving her still, and yet determined to

respect her honor and his own. She had never cared as deeply for him as she did when she put down the book, but she would not have recalled him to her side could she have done so by a word.

Several days later she took a pen and added one more paragraph to those he had written.

March 1. "To-day I leave New York. I have recovered strength of will enough to live down the mad infatuation that has done me so much harm. I shall take the medicine and eat the food prescribed for me by Dr. Melton. When I have recovered my old physique I shall live, not like an anchorite, but like a rational being; not trying to achieve a saintship for which nature never designed me, but a manhood of which I need not be ashamed. And when my time comes—I shall marry" (it took a good time to write that word) "some pure, honest girl, in whose society I shall forget the temptations that once harrassed my soul."

Lettie kissed the book a thousand times, because he had held it in his hands and confided his inmost thoughts to it. And then she sent it to him by express.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"WHAT IS MARRIAGE FOR?"

When Mr. Morley reached Boston he found that a sudden change for the worse in the condition of Col. Fuller made it impossible to bring to his attention the subject that had caused the journey. The

ex-officer had fallen into a nearly unconscious state, and his old friend, the army surgeon who attended him, told Clyde that he doubted much whether he would ever rally. The Colonel had expressly forbidden that word should be sent to his daughter, remaining obdurate to the end; but a message would have been dispatched in spite of this had not Clyde appeared. By careful questioning Clyde ascertained that Dr. Brennan knew of the trouble of years ago with the young wife, and he told him what had happened.

"Remember her! I should think I did!" said the surgeon. "She was about the prettiest woman I ever saw, when he first introduced me to her. When Coles ran off with her he was the envy of every man in the regiment. To everybody's surprise Fuller made no attempt to follow them and uttered no threats of vengeance. He was never fit for a married life, and seemed almost glad to be relieved of it. Of course it made him bitter, and if he had happened to meet Coles he would have shot him without doubt; but he never spoke of the matter, not even to me. He left New York and came here, and since then he has been as you know him. It is not strange that he should fall out with his daughter, for he must connect her with the mother in his thoughts. Well, he's nearly ready to be mustered out, I fear. I don't see how he can rally from this illness. The lead in him has been there a little too long."

Even the alertness of the surgeon was not prepared for the sudden change that came that very night, which left Lettie Melton fatherless as well as motherless. Horace Fuller sank to sleep without a word or a groan; and Morley, who had been induced by some

strange presentiment to remain in the room with Charlie Wilkins, witnessed the final catastrophe.

Telegrams exchanged with New York bade Clyde have the remains sent there, and in the most unostentatious way the husband and wife were laid side by side in the cemetery at Greenwood.

"It does not matter what has happened," said Dr. Melton to Lettie, "they are married still and they should lie together. Perhaps God, who can see so much better that we, will find palliation for what seems to us so hard to understand."

Mrs. Melton was touched by his kindness, and in spite of the little love she had felt for either of her parents, she was more lonely than ever as she saw the caskets lowered into their graves.

A few days later Clyde Morley sent for his things, which he had carefully packed prior to his departure for Boston. They were to be sent to the latter city, where he said he intended to spend a short time before undertaking his Southern trip. As the expressman carried the trunks down stairs Lettie could hardly repress her tears. What was there left in life that made it worth living now?

Clyde saw a good deal of Bessie Bright during the time that he spent in Boston. She had grown prettier than ever, and much more womanly, since he had been away. As he meant to pass some weeks in the city he engaged rooms at the Shawmut avenue house, taking for the present the suite that the Colonel had occupied. Bessie found him not at all disagreeable, especially as he frequently spoke of his brother in a friendly tone, and seemed to have wholly recovered from the feeling he had once entertained in regard to him.

Indeed, Clyde Morley had changed in almost every way. He wore a brighter smile than of yore, and the abundant food and wine that he took was making a marked change in his appearance. It did not give him as high a color as might have been expected for his paleness was constitutional, but his step was more elastic and his spirits certainly much improved. He talked a good deal with Bessie about Frank, saying he was sure there had been a misunderstanding that time would right, and that he should give his brother some sage advice on the subject when he saw him in Charleston or Savannah, as he expected to do in April. And Bessie's cheeks grew rosier and her handsome eyes shone as she heard him, until he thought few girls even in Boston—the city of beauty—could equal her.

He brought home books and read a great deal and the works were not on theology, either. He had given up that study, knowing that he should never enter on the profession to which it led. He had little business to do in Boston, and early in the spring he bade good-bye for a while to his hostess, arranging, however, to have his rooms retained for him, as he said he should not be gone very long.

"And shall I tell Frank that you are still true to his memory?" he asked, with a gay air, as he was saying farewell to Miss Bessie.

She blushed beautifully.

"You may say we shall all be glad to see him if he ever returns," she replied. "The house has not seemed like itself since he went away."

"I will tell him," he said. "And," he added, becoming suddenly graver, "could you not give me

some little token for him—something that would convince him you really remember him still?"

She looked up radiantly.

"Ah, Mr. Morley, your brother has no need of that from me! I never cared for any man but him, and I never shall."

Neither of them knew exactly how it happened, and Bessie wondered after he was gone why she did not resist him. He took her face between his hands and kissed her, sweetly and tenderly, gave a long look into her eyes and went his way.

Charlie Wilkins, after the fashion which had become a habit with him, had been growing more and more tender in his feelings toward Miss Bessie for some weeks. Having been compelled, in view of the awful forecast of Silas Clarke, to abandon all intentions of wedding Miss O'Donaghue, he had turned to Bessie as a natural alternative. It was absolutely necessary that he should be very much in love at any given time with some girl, and the more he looked at Miss Bright, the more he contemplated her disposition and her personal appearance, the surer he became that he had been in error, and that this was the one who, of all he had known, was the most likely to make his life happy in a state of matrimony.

Before addressing himself definitely, however, to Miss Bright, he felt obliged to consult, as he had always done, with his Oracle. Clarke had been gradually sinking in the social scale during the past year. He had lost his position on the *Evening Sphere*, and his reputation did not suffice to obtain him one on any other newspaper. He was, therefore, in plain English, a loafer, and to tell the truth, was not par-

ticularly anxious about the matter, so long as he could "borrow" money enough to live on from his good-natured friend. He had made up his mind that nothing short of a marriage would be likely to cause Wilkins to cut off his supply of pocket-money, and was ready on all occasions to combat the least tendency in this direction.

Something led him to suspect that Miss Bessie would be the next lady upon whom Charlie would centre his affections and he was well prepared to meet the suggestion whenever it should come.

"I'm get-ting doo-cid tired of this sin-gle life bah Jove!" was the way Wilkins introduced the matter. "I've picked out a gi-rl this time, old boy, that even you cawn't find any-thing to com-plain of."

Clarke tossed his head as if to say they would see about that.

"I know I've made mis-takes be-fore," drawled Charlie, "and I am gl-ad I didn't get too far with them. But this ti-me I have se-lected some-thing quite differwent, you know. I haven't got any Jew-ess, nor Ger-man, nor I-wish gi-rl now, bah Jove! No, I've got a weal up-and-down Amer-wican, doncherknow."

The discouraged look that covered the face of Silas Clarke was astonishing to behold. Charlie felt his courage giving way as he realized that the usual opposition was to be forthcoming.

"For heaven's sake," he broke forth, "are you always to need a guardian? Have I taught you nothing in all this time? An American girl, indeed! What shall I do with this fellow?" he cried, appealing to the atmosphere about him. "Shall I go to

the commissioners of lunacy at once and have him committed to an asylum ?"

Wilkins began to shake with alarm. He had never seen his mentor so in earnest as he seemed to be now.

"W-wait a m-minute !" he gasped. "L-let me t-tell you who the y-young l-lady is. It's M-miss B-Bright."

Clarke threw up both hands and clenched his fists, as if to ward off an attack.

"Come !" he exclaimed, when he could get his breath. "Come ! That's going too far ! Say you're joking, before I quite collapse !"

"W-w-w—" began the astonished listener.

"Miss *Bright !*" cried Clarke. "*Miss* Bright ! Oh, Lord !"

Wilkins managed, with a good deal of difficulty, to stammer a request to know what objection there could be to that young lady.

For some minutes Clarke closed his mouth, declaring that he would not speak a word ; but at Charlie's earnest pleading he finally surrendered.

"Let us go back to the beginning," he said, in the voice of a man who has little hope of making his auditor understand anything. "The first girl with whom you imagined yourself in love was a German, wasn't she ?"

Wilkins bowed a meek assent.

"And what," asked Clarke, with the manner of a pedagogue, "what was my objection to *that* girl ?"

Charlie hesitated an instant, and then ventured to remark "Sauer-kwaut !"

"Sauer-kraut ? No !" thundered Clarke. "Didn't

I tell you—did I or didn't I!—that the first thing to be thought of in marriage was the offspring?"

"Y-ya-as."

"If it hadn't been for me, what would have been your fate at the present moment?" demanded Silas. "You would have been father to a miscellaneous collection of German, Hebrew, Negro, French and Hibernian children. Would you or would you not?" he demanded.

"N-no," stuttered Charlie. "Not to a-all of them, y-you know."

"To every one of them!" repeated Clarke, with emphasis. "It could not have been avoided. Your residence would have looked like a non-sectarian orphan asylum. I wish sometimes—upon my soul I do—that I had let you carry out your plans!"

Although Wilkins could not at all understand how the fearful result outlined could have come to pass, he began to feel grateful to his friend for the interest he had taken in his behalf, and also to experience a sentiment of regret at having reciprocated this kindness so badly.

"T-that's all o-ver now, de-ar boy," he said, meekly. "You cawn't say that Miss Bwight is any of those dwead-ful kinds of peo-ple."

Clarke whistled a lively tune, as if to keep himself from utter despair.

"Weally, now, *can* you?" asked Wilkins, helplessly.

Silas turned on him sharply.

"Let us go back to the beginning," he said, assuming the schoolmaster again. "What is marriage for?"

"Off-spwing."

"Is it for anything else? Is it for amusement? for instruction? for gymnastics? Is it intended to take the place of a circus? Or a ballet? Or an animal show?"

Wilkins shook his head at each pause.

"Well, tell me, if you can, how many children you expect an American girl will give you?"

This proposition was more than Charlie could meet at once.

"Do you know—or do you not?" asked Clarke, contemptuously, "that American women are rapidly ceasing to become mothers? Have you read, or haven't you, the article in last month's *Pacific Monthly* by Professor Hucklebush, on the probable extinction of the Yankee through the refusal of his mate to breed? Look (in you mind's eye) at the homes of the purely American families that you know, and count me up the children. In some you will find two, in more of them you will find one, and in most of them you will find only pugs and poodles! Marriage! The sacred institution, designed for the perpetuation of the race, reduced to this level! And *you*"—he addressed Wilkins in the tone of a judge on the bench to a culprit at the bar—"you mean to add *your* guilt to this damning record!"

It seemed very strange to Charlie that his proposal to offer his hand in marriage to pretty Bessie could be strained to this terrible offence, but he could not see any flaw in the reasoning that had been presented to him. He began to stammer that perhaps Bessie would prove an exception to the rule, and he recalled with delight an instance that he had known of in New Hampshire where an American wife with whom

he had become acquainted in the course of one of his summer outings had seven healthy children.

"Oh, go and ask her!" blurted out Silas. "Put the case to her squarely. Tell her *she* will have to have seven, if she marries you. Then come to me and tell me what she says. You'll find that such things do not enter into the calculations of the present generation of American girls. They want husbands—oh, yes! But they don't mean to have children—oh, no! Fifty years from now they will exhibit the last Yankees on this continent as they now exhibit bisons. A century later articles will be written to prove that they never existed! And it is such men as YOU!"—he said the word so loudly that Wilkins started from his chair—"that will be to blame for his extinction!"

"Gwacious!" came feebly from the pale lips of Mr. Wilkins.

"You must never think of this again!"

"Oh-me-Gard!"

Thoroughly crushed, Charlie thought the best thing he could do was to vacate his room at Mrs. Bright's, and to take Silas away also. This did not enter into the calculations of the humorist, but as he was sent with his baggage to the apartment on Marlboro street he did not protest.

Bessie was left with two chambers to let, for the young man from the leather house on High street still remained. But she did not think much about it now. She had had three letters from her old lover, Frank Morley, and was thoroughtly happy again.

CHAPTER XXXIV

A LITTLE SLEIGHT-OF-HAND.

The reconciliation of the Morley brothers seemed complete. In his letters to Bessie, Frank spoke in the pleasantest terms of Clyde, saying he thought he had misunderstood him in the past, and that he was not at all a bad fellow. In the month of May Frank came to Boston, and took the rooms that Clyde had vacated, in the house of Mrs. Bright, saying that he was to use them until his brother should return, and that perhaps after that they would share them in common.

The meeting between Frank and Bessie was most affecting. He arrived in the city on a late train, that had been delayed even beyond its usual time, and she was sitting up for him, as he had written that he would surely come that night. Whatever had been strained in their relations was dissipated by the correspondence they had exchanged, and when the door opened and the form she loved so well was discerned at the threshold, Bessie flew into the open arms.

Then they went into the parlor—as soon as they could command themselves to go anywhere—and for the next hour they acted as young lovers long separated have a right to act. Few words were uttered that evening, and fewer yet were needed. It was enough that they were again together, and that nothing could henceforth separate them from each other.

The next day they discussed the strange events that had happened since they last met, but even then there were some things over which a veil was drawn. Nothing was said, for instance, about the night when Charlie Wilkins opened the door so suddenly, "thinking he was on the floor above."

Frank went to see the boys of the Revere Club that week, and found that the organization had disbanded. One or two of the members whom he afterwards met by chance told him that it could not survive his long absence. He saw Wilkins one evening at a theatre, and grasped his hand with the utmost warmth. Charlie was not quite certain that he ought to be too intimate with a young man who had shown such a capacity for improper conduct, but he did not know how to escape without alluding to the past, and he concluded to make the best of it, and let bygones go. When they had set down together over a bottle of wine, and Frank had told him where he was located, the associations of the house, with his recently crushed love for Miss Bessie, made Charlie very sober; and this feeling was not lessened either, when Frank told him a little later—under the strict seal of confidence—that Miss Bright would become Mrs. Morley before the snow fell in the winter following.

"Gwa-cious!" exclaimed Wilkins. "Isn't that some-thing vewy new, de-ar boy?"

"Well, in one sense, yes," smiled Frank. "But in another, no. I've had a tender side for Miss Bessie for a long time. Circumstances arose to divide us, as they will with all true lovers. Now everything is all right and the day will be set for October, I hope. I'm not good enough for her, Charlie, and between

us, no other man is, either; but she has mercy. You've lived in the house and seen a good deal of her, and I think you can safely congratulate me on securing the greatest treasure in all the universe."

Wilkins was so still that Frank began to suspect the cause and was sorry for the poor fellow, who had a good heart under his peculiar exterior and had done many a friendly act for him in the past. He tried to cheer him up, without avail, however, and the pressure of Charlie's hand when they parted was very feeble indeed.

Mrs. Bright was pleased when she heard of the engagement. She had always liked Frank, and knowing that her niece would probably marry someone in the course of time, she could not have selected a husband more agreeable to her. When Frank talked with the aunt about the matter, he suggested that she give up her house and come to live with him and Bessie in an apartment block recently built on the Back Bay, but she did not like to surrender her independence. She had made a living by letting rooms and she preferred to continue to do so. Frank promised that he would do his utmost to aid her in keeping the house full, and that he and Bessie would call on her frequently and expect her at least once a week to dinner. And so it was arranged, to general satisfaction.

The wedding, when it took place, was a very quiet one. The only sensation relating to the event took place several weeks before it, and was confined to the prospective bride and groom.

"I cannot marry you, Bessie, my love," said Frank to her, one evening, "with the least element of deception between us. I am going to make a revela-

tion that will astonish you a great deal and perhaps try your nerves a little. But as it is something which you ought to know—and which it is my plain duty to tell you—I might as well have it over."

Pretty Bessie began to shiver, for she did not like the idea that there had been any such secret between them as these words implied. But she looked at the loving face of her future lord and said she would hear anything he had to say.

"Oh, it's nothing that will make you like me less," he answered, cheerfully. "But still it may shock you a little at first. I will be as careful as I can about it. Just imagine that you are witnessing an exhibition of legerdemain and you will be all right."

Not knowing exactly how to receive this speech, Bessie sat very still and waited with some trepidation for Frank to proceed.

"In the first place," he said, "according to the habit of all sleight-of-hand performers, I will preface my entertainment with a few remarks. There was once a young man in a village called Arcadie who was designed by his pastor and guardian for the ministry of the Christian church. This young man, whom we will call Clyde Morley, did not quite fancy the disposition that it was intended to make of him. He believed in the general principles of religion, but did not feel competent to fill such a place as the pulpit with credit to his denomination. At least, he thought, before he committed himself to his guardian's wishes, he ought to go forth into the world and see for himself what sort of a place it was, without being subject to the restraints that hedge a student of divinity. So he went forth accordingly,

and passed a good deal of time in such an investigation as he had contemplated.

"It happened shortly after this, that a young man made his appearance in a city that we will call Boston, who announced his name as Frank Morley, a brother of the Clyde Morley aforesaid. Those who afterwards saw the prospective clergyman were struck with the similarity of feature and stature which the brothers possessed. As they spoke of each other as twins this was, however, easily explained. While looking very much alike it would not have been easy to have mistaken one of them for the other. There was a difference in their style of clothing, for instance; Clyde wearing black invariably and Frank the brighter colors. Clyde was shaven like a priest and Frank had a fairly well developed moustache. Clyde was the paler of the twain, and his voice was differently modulated. But, more than this, Frank could always be found with a gayer set of companions than his brother. In short, though much alike in height and feature, they were very different men in everything else."

Bessie's heart had begun to beat more rapidly as she heard him. A suspicion of something—she knew not what—harrassed her. Nothing but the smile that never left the face of her beloved could have kept her from crying out with alarm.

"Do not be frightened, little woman," said Frank, tenderly. "I am going to my room for a moment, and when I return I will explain everything."

What could he be about to reveal? Bessie felt a vague fear of this prestidigitateur. She wished he

had found some way to avoid the exhibition he was giving.

"Now," he said, as he returned, with several garments on his arm, "let us compare, for instance, the clothing worn by these brothers. The coat worn by Frank you are familiar with, and if not I have it on at this instant, and you can examine it with all the care you please. The coat worn by Clyde was like this one that I have brought. I found it in his closet. It is, as you see, black. Suppose I put it on."

In a twinkling he had taken off his coat and donned the black one.

"Even in the matter of cravats these brothers differed widely," he went on to say, still assuming the tone of a public performer. "Frank wore one like this. Clyde," he stopped to remove it and substitute a plain black bow, "usually affected something in this style."

She looked so startled at the change in him that he put an arm around her and pressed her gently to his heart.

"There is only a little more, my darling," he said, speaking rapidly. "Frank had the brighter complexion. But he did not always look as he does now. Sometimes after he reached his room at night he used to take a sponge—like this—and a little mixture (like this,) and pass it over his face. As you will soon see, it left him nearly as pale as his brother."

Standing in front of the mirror he suited the action to the word, and in a moment Frank Morley wore the pale features that were such a distinguishing mark of Clyde. Bessie saw him with consternation.

The man she loved seemed to be disappearing into space.

"Then," said Frank slowly, "there was the moustache. Had Frank Morley shaved his moustache you would hardly have been able to to tell him from his brother. But as the brothers frequently appeared in the same places within one or two days of each other, and as it takes time for ordinary moustaches to grow, Frank had procured one that would lengthen to ordinary size in an incredibly short time. Should he have wished to pass for his brother—for any reason—he could have taken his moustache off in a second. When he was through with his personation he could put it on again just as quickly. Shall I show you?"

He raised his hand to his upper lip, but Bessie held out her arms to him. She felt that she must hold him once more to her breast before he quite disappeared. Her face was as pale now as his and her breath came fitfully. He sat down beside her and pressed a hundred kisses on her lips.

"They will be the same, dear, without the moustache as with them," he whispered. "It is still Frank who holds you in his arms, my darling. Let me finish the entertainment, as it is almost ended."

The moustache was gone. A man with bare upper lip was kissing her, and she was betrayed into uttering a little scream of fear.

He leaned back in his chair and laughed to reassure her.

"What a thing it is to think of," he cried, "that a little color, and a bit of hair, and a coat and necktie could so alter a man that his sweetheart shrinks from him as if he were a stranger! Those little

things are gone, it is true, but the man you have promised to wed is still with you."

Bessie's fears were soon banished under the influence of his embraces, but she began to protest that she should have to tie a string to him for identification, lest in some hapless hour she might follow his brother to the altar instead of him.

"There is absolutely nothing to distinguish you from each other," she said.

"How odd it is that you should continue to love *me*," he replied, "when Clyde made not the least impression upon you!"

He enjoyed the confusion into which this remark threw her.

"Oh, put the moustache on again!" she exclaimed, presently. "Get out your bottle of rouge and change your coat and tie. I'm sure I like you much better the other way."

"I'll have to do it for the present, at least," he answered, "to avoid talk from other people. But, with your permission, I shall let my natural moustache grow, as soon—as soon as we start on our wedding-trip. The color I hope will come in time, though the Morleys are not a ruddy race. And now, dear, do you think you understand the riddle I have read to you?"

She shook her head doubtfully.

"Well, prepare for another shock, then. I thought you would guess it. Clyde and Frank Morley are—"

It came to her like a stroke of lightning.

"Are—*one!*" she gasped.

"Exactly. My name is Clyde Frank Morley. I have been dividing myself into two parts for reasons which are now at an end. Henceforth there will be

but one of me. And as Clyde is the one my Bessie can spare best he shall be the one to disappear."

Then she wanted to know so many things that he found it hard to answer her questions. When she spoke of Lettie he grew sober, and begged that she leave that name out of their discussions for all time. There had been two elements in his nature that had warred with each other, but the struggle was ended And she believed him and trusted him, and the happiest hour of their lives up to that point came to them both.

But there were happier hours still in store for these lovers, for the truest of true unions followed. Frank was admitted to the bar of Suffolk county and is making himself a name among the attorneys in the capital of Massachusetts. His conscientious scruples lead him to take only such cases as he believes just, and his services are frequently given free of charge to help the right or secure justice for the poor. He has never regretted his decision to live a true life instead of preaching it. With his contented home there has come back to him the full measure of that health and strength which he used to fear, and two little copies of himself and Bessie play about his rooms.

We must not forget Charlie Wilkins, to whom Frank always felt grateful for the part he played on an important occasion. Charlie's next attack of the tender passion, after he recovered from his love for Miss Bright (which took him two months) was on account of a pretty girl from the Province of New Brunswick, whom he happened to meet when she was officiating as parlor-maid at the house of a friend of his. So badly smitten was he that he resolved to

ignore entirely the opinion of Mr. Silas Clarke—whether it was for or against the match—and he went boldly to the young woman and made his proposal. Not unnaturally her indignation was excited for the moment, as she had no doubt he was imposing upon her, for she knew he was a man of wealth. But when he insisted that he was in earnest she yielded, and the day was set. Wilkins kept the secret carefully, lest Clarke should manage in some way to intercept him on his way to the clergyman's, only mentioning it to the young man from the leather house on High street, whom he wanted as a witness.

When Clarke learned of the marriage he was in a state of rage. He told Wilkins that every one of his children would have noses of the very brightest blue, such as no chemical preparation could take off. But Mrs. Wilkins, who was really a sensible girl, and whose family stood very well indeed in her native town, convinced Charlie that this prediction was the result of envy and proved it later by giving him one of the loveliest little daughters ever seen. This settled the fate of Clarke as a prophet in the mind of the man he had imposed on for so long, and finding that he could not borrow any more money of his long-time banker, he left for parts unknown and has never been heard of since.

Dr. Melton has been to Boston and called on the Morleys. He declares that Bessie must have discovered a cure for Frank's ailments better than anything to be found in the materia medica. He wonders what has become of Clyde, who seems to have disappeared for good this time, and expresses a fear that the unhappy man never recovered from the troubles that afflicted him. This view is thought-

fully shared by Frank, who says he never expects to hear from his brother again.

But on a recent visit the Doctor had a great secret to tell, that he could not keep to himself, and he whispered it to Frank while holding baby Bessie on his knee. It would not be long now, he said, before such an advent would gladden his own household. Lettie was soon to become a mother!

Frank was very glad to hear that; more pleased than Dr. Melton could have imagined. He had passed many a pensive hour thinking of what might be the fate of that impulsive woman, for whose marriage he felt so great a blame. But now it would be all right. Baby hands would draw the father and mother closer.

"There must have been another key," he mused, audibly, after the doctor had gone.

THE END.