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**A BACHELOR'S STORY.**



A

# BACHELOR'S STORY

By Oliver Bunce.

NEW YORK:  
W. A. TOWNSEND AND COMPANY.  
1860.

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TALK; AND WILL SPEAK MORE IN A MINUTE THAN  
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*Romeo and Juliet.*



## P R E F A C E .



If any demand a reason why these pages are given to the world, I reply in the language of Shelley: "The spirits that I have raised haunt me until they are sent to the devil of a printer. All authors are anxious to breech their bantlings."





## I.

Maggie and I begin by being cosy—Our chats formally initiated—An introduction or two, and like French falconers, we fly at anything—I wax egotistical, philosophical, topographical, sentimental, and end by a retrospective digression.



## A BACHELOR'S STORY.



### I.

“**N**OW we are alone, Maggie, drop the curtains. Shut out the world ; shut in our quiet. Move that screen and let the fire light shine on us both. So !”

“There, sir, all done. How pleasant !”

“Then come here, little elf. I have talk for you. Nestle on that low seat ; look down into the fire ; let my words flow easily into your ear—for such an attitude is your true listener’s.

“How calm ! The clock ticks, the fire snaps, the curtains rustle slightly in little eddies of wind, but these are things that make the silence intenser. We shall need no candle. I like fire-lighted rooms, whose warm, mellow tints gently excite to reverie. The glare of gas drowns one’s thoughts ; the full

eloquence of the heart wells up only under the richer tints of the blazing fire. And so, Maggie, our nights begin."

Maggie comes weekly to take a place at my bachelor fireside, and listen to the loquacious gossip of a garrulous old fellow, who likes good talk and a good listener. She is the daughter of a neighbor, Farmer Dean, a skeptical, free-thinking fellow, who wears a long beard, an independent dress, while in his address is independence enlarged upon. But between Maggie and me there has sprung up an odd friendship. She comes to my cottage (a bachelor's dull retreat, where I live alone with my books, my dreams, and a Hibernian factotum), tumbles over my books, listens to my caprices of talk, and affords just such companionship to a world-lorn old man as his wayward sympathies require. She is a wild, impetuous creature, with depths of character I take pleasure in developing—a neglected child of genius, whose powers, long dormant, I am watching leap into life.

Maggie, with her own deep, thoughtful way, looked into the fire, yet turned a listening ear to me. I paused briefly, watching the mantel clock crisply and sharply flinging the seconds off, and fairly pelting the air with them; then lazily stretching my feet upon the fender, the talk came murmuringly.

"We are to chat, Mag, and dream, and give our fancies sportive wing; and looking down into our hearts, bring up what odd conceits and pleasant sentiments we can find; and brighten up the weapons of our wit to pierce the bubbles and vanities we shall make war upon; and you, Maggie, shall be my Greek chorus—the medium between my monologues and all outside barbarians."

"Sir," said Maggie.

Now Maggie's thoughts flow out in a keen direct line, like the blaze from a lantern—and like the lantern, with a dark side. Maggie has no humor. A riotous and hearty mirth at times, I grant you, but mirth, my masters, is not humor. Perpend! Mirth is animal briskness; the caper and frolic of a spirit whose wave of keen feelings tops to a joyous crest, and through mere excess of life and force, laughs and is merry. Mirth is a spontaneity; it springs none know whence; it may be drunk in from the atmosphere; it is the leap of exultation; the noisy (for mirth *must* be noisy) hilarity of a quick blood. But humor is the fantastic play of the fancy. It lies in the sudden collision of incongruous elements, in the ludicrous combination of fantastic images, and is purely the offspring of intellectual legerdemain. Mirth is innocent of idea, unconscious of fancy, utterly independent of the brain—

mirth is my pulse at a hundred ; humor, my fancy rippling over a mine of deep and silent emotion—for near to the laugh of all humor, is the tear of all pathos.

From this maze of dilucidation I hasten to be delivered, for emotions and fancies, not words, are the subjects I propose to dissect—the school in which I can, perhaps, best succeed as the exegete. Therefore, I come back to Maggie. I spiced my speech to Maggie with a single seed of humor, but she saw it not, and her wondering “Sir,” chilled me into the consciousness thereof. I say chilled, and I use a happy term. In the social thermometer, how often does the cold, unsympathizing “Sir,” plunge the mercury down to freezing point? “Sir,” has cut short my most eloquent harangues, clipped, ere they were fairly winged, my happiest sayings, and dragged down into dust my loftiest flights. Oh, it is a biting word in the mouths of these “envious Cascas,”—a cold North wind, that just as you slip the leash of your fancy, and bid it soar, blows it back, be-draggled and chopfallen, in your face.

I made haste to change the subject ; and here let me say, that Maggie and I reserve the privilege to be as abrupt as we please. No matter at what speed we may be driving at a subject, if we choose

to pause, even midway in our career, and amble off either to the right or to the left, the reader shall not complain. There shall be no graduating of the tints we use. From dark to light, from sadness to mirth, as our moods come and go, we shall abandon ourselves to the wanton waves of caprice—emotion, fancy, humor, whatever uppermost in thought, uppermost in expression.

“I have been to town, Maggie.”

“The city? I pine to see it. So splendid—is it not, sir?”

“Two parallels, Mag. A stream bright, flashing, gay; a rainbow upon its waves, fascination in the music of its flow; genius, life, beauty crowning it with a glory. The other, its fellow, a dark, dead current, with loathsome vices upon its surface, and the dregs of unnumbered crimes clodding its bed.”

“Alas, how wicked!”

“And yet a brave world, Mag.”

“My father says it is depraved—dishonest—hollow—false.”

“Out upon the farmer's philosophy! There is the bitter taste of all his hard materialism, and his many isms.”

“I have not found the world so bad, sir. Have you?”

“No. There are many reasons why I cling to an

old begotten faith in humanity, and among them is a rampant, active egotism."

"I can't well understand that."

"If the world is depraved I cannot exempt myself from the general infirmity. To that truth my philosophy persistently points; self-love, self-worship and self-faith, therefore, keep my judgments of the world in charitable trim; my exaltations of humanity are a mirror in which my vanity disports.

"But, indeed, Maggie, to those who look closely and well the world is not other than fair. Everywhere household gods are set up and loved; affections flourish in the most forsaken soils; love and tenderness put forth their sweetness in the abandoned places of the world; courage, fortitude, self-abnegation have their heroes every hour."

"But history, sir! My father says it is one record of crime."

"History, Mag, is a pair of seven-league boots. It stalks from war to war, from crime to crime, and does not see the smiling valleys between. It is the world's Newgate calendar, bloody with the record of passion, ambition, and power; or it is a drama wherein are crowded in a few brief scenes the crimes of generations. Ah, Maggie, the cynics do not plumb the deepest. And is it not well if we find, as I think we do, beneath the strata of wrong and



selfishness, the world's surface shows, a generous and a pure current, permeating the heart of humanity, and destined some day to lift up and purify us all? It is better to believe that the evil in us comes up to the surface. It will give us hope and heart.

“But in truth no one accepts this common, transparent satire of the world and human nature as applied to himself. Each man claps himself on the back as a brilliant exception; where all are rotten, he claims to be undefiled.

“When in town I went to see the comedy of ‘Money’ acted. The sentiment of this play is the cheapest froth in the world, but it tickles the general ear mightily. Your misanthropical dogs, who wing these baited shafts of satire, are liked; and it was strange to see the people applaud the broad, coarse hits at their own follies. Why? Because each man believed that it was not himself but his neighbor that was satirized. And so did I. When Evelyn uttered this pithy sentiment, ‘God made man, but see (pointing to a gold coin) what man has made a god,’ how magnanimously I handed over the application to everybody else! And thus it is. Do you know why the world is no better than it is? Because each of us believes that the warnings, the teachings, the wise inculcations, the hits at folly, the moral aphorisms, the shafts shot at vice and

crime from pulpit, press, and stage, are all intended for our right-hand neighbor, and our left-hand neighbor—our withers are unwrung.”

“Tell me something, sir, of the town,” broke in Maggie, apparently indifferent to my homily.

“Humph! I am not topographical, nor was I born for the style of a guide-book. I will paint the picture that I best remember—and if you are as able as I think you are, it will be to you like the single leaf by whose structure the botanist knows the whole tree.

“I was on Broadway, at the head of the great money-street, within the shadow of Trinity. On the stone base of the railing of the church-yard, a blind Scotchman was seated, playing upon a bag-pipe. He had a sad, wan countenance, whose predominant expression was that of utter and overwhelming loneliness. His music floated upon the air unheeded by the crowd, and mingled with the whirl and clatter of that busy spot in sweetness wasted. No one paused to give him a single glance. The itinerant musician's customary audience of idle boys was not there. The cold stones of the church tower were no more deaf to him than was all the world beside. Still he calmly, steadily played on, a picture of utter desolation, an object of the most pitiful loneliness and dreariness, set down where life

was busiest, gayest, swiftest. Even the church, within whose shadow he sat, made his desolation the more apparent. That grand edifice, reared in His name, seemed to repel the poor outcast from its bosom. The barred portal shut him out from its protection. The spire above him seemed to point to heaven for all the world save him. His aching heart was at the foot of the cross, at the threshold of the church, and yet it beat lonely, drearily.

“I wondered, Maggie, as I looked upon him. Was his daily life a blank like this? Was the world all black to him—to his soul as well as to his sight, with no more joy in his heart than there was sunlight upon his path? Did a pall of gloom and darkness forever close him in, through which no light whatever penetrated? Ever, ever alone, as now, playing his wasted music, with never a caress, nor a word of tenderness nor of sympathy! What a life to lead if this were so! An awe overcomes me at the thought of that man's heart plunged in such a dungeon, worse than ever invented by man, feeding its hopes, aspirations, sympathies, emotions upon perpetual and rayless darkness, where not even a star glimmers!”

“Who knows?” said Maggie, “there might have been for him somewhere those two needs, love and home.”

"Aye. But his desolate air haunts me; and it is too fearfully certain that thousands of such helpless creatures flow down to eternity through blankness, weariness and unutterable suffering."

"How terrible!"

"Terrible! Sometimes in the very top of my pleasures, when the heart is leaping quick and glad, I am hurled upon that thought with a shock that quivers through my frame, and holds me in 'bated breath. The wastes, the miseries, the beauty that blooms and fades, the life that comes so dearly and goes so cheaply, the strides of calamity, the cheap value nature everywhere seems to set upon her own creations, appall and confound me always. Time, Mag, is nothing but a lubberly boy perpetually blowing bubbles that float up into the sunshine gay and glittering, and with a puff they exhale into air. And the briefest of all things is happiness. Youth leaps up lusty and glad, but suddenly, at the very crest of joy and strength, a breath comes out of a cloud and it withers—the limbs droop, the eye pales, the brow is shadowed, and life sinks into the bent spine and the clogged heart."

"I declare, sir, you are sad."

"So I am, but will change my mood with the facility of a politician."

"You know, Mag, that by the testimony of hard measurement my study extends a few feet north and a few feet east; but to-day, surveying it leisurely, it seemed to me that bald fact never came so utterly short of general truth. Its real dimensions cannot be measured. Look to the right, and the walls open into space and back into time—old Italy, far-off Egypt, ancient Rome, carry eye and memory hence; look to the left, and sweet landscapes, meandering rivers, rare old woods, are before us, where fancy may disport and the soul fill itself with beauties. Such are pictures. Your miserable feet and inches are for rooms whose sides are not studded with these 'soul windows,' which let out the fancy into spaces that are almost infinite. Rooms like ours, Mag, cannot be compassed by a carpenter's rule—their boundaries are limited only by the reaches of imagination."

"But books, sir, are grander than pictures. Poetry for instance."

"Why, poetry, Mag, is not necessarily versification—it is simply caged when it gets into rhyme. Books are capital things—sometimes—I grant you; I have loved them more or less ever since I've been a bachelor. But books demand premeditated enjoyment; effort, purpose aforethought, preliminaries of preparation, such as cut leaves, an amiable tem-

per, and a snuffed candle. But pictures flash into the heart, flood the soul with sudden tenderness, start into life with an electric touch the sleeping sympathies—a look and presto ! upon your heart is photographed forever a new form of beauty.”

“That’s true,” said Maggie, musingly ; “but books excite me, fill me with strange feelings. I like them best, sir.”

“And I profess utter catholicity of taste, and love the universal range of the beautiful. I am perpetually asked who is my favorite author. Now that question is absurd. It always reminds me of the perturbation of a young western farmer, whose matrimonial and agricultural tendencies were perplexed by certain economical considerations, appertaining to each, and who, in consequence, gravely submitted to the village Debating Society this problem : *Which is most, a barn or a wife?*”

“Amusingly diverse as are the issues involved in this question, they are scarcely more so than this continually forcing the mind to a choice between elements of taste, pleasure, enjoyment and appreciation, so various, multiplied, and infinite as those employed or created by our various authors. I absolutely decline saying, for I cannot say, whether I weep more exquisitely over Lear, than I laugh enjoyably with Touchstone. And I here declare, that my

mind is of that variable, capricious, fantastic character, that it reflects with equal fidelity, not only all the various emotions of the poet, but all the characteristics and specific beauties of each individual poet. Must I like but one man, one book, one set of ideas, one mode of frame-work? Pshaw! My appetites are infinite—my tastes adjust themselves to innumerable qualities, and they run the gamut down from Hamlet to Paul Pry. I do not mean to pasture on one field alone; to eat nothing but roast beef; to tickle my palate with but one sauce. In the whole wide realm of creative art, sculpture, poetry, painting, I absorb idea and pleasure, and flit with utter pliancy of imagination, from the sublime to the lowly, from sweet airs to grand orchestral bursts, through all tunes, tones, phases, and modes of feeling.”

“Then you have no favorite?” said Maggie.

“Yes, Nature! Admirable when art is faithful in her reproduction; best in her unadorned simplicity.”

As I spoke the door suddenly flew open and a grotesque, comical looking lad fell into the room. I saw him fall deliberately, for he—a youngster prematurely smitten with love for Maggie—amid a multitude of modes and means of locomotion, was unconscious of that simple one known as walking. He either rolled, plunged, sidled, bounced, crept, tum-

bled, or progressed by a means composite of all these, but absolutely walk no mortal over saw him do. Upon this occasion the door flew open, his head bolted in, followed by a confusion of limbs, but in no ascertainable sequence.

Soon after my first acquaintance with Maggie (whom I used to meet in my long solitary forest rambles with such frequency that friendship grew apace between us), as we were sauntering together down a green lane, an object suddenly thrust its head and then its body over the roadside wall. It was a boy of about fifteen years of age. His hair was white, and forced itself in tangled masses through a huge rent in his hat ; his eyes were white ; his eyebrows were white ; his whole aspect was that of having been bleached. You could not look at him without serious doubts as to the color of his blood. He was from head to foot tattered and torn ; barefooted, shy ; and no creature ever so decidedly needed a tail to his coat. And this was Maggie's lover. It was the first time I ever beheld him.

He was the son and heir of a neighboring farmer, and first met Maggie at the village school. It was a case of love at first sight. He would, from that time forward, be near Maggie if it were possible ; at play hours, he would devise plans to get among the girls ; he would bring her the choicest apples and



the finest berries, and was always during school hours surreptitiously slipping fruit, cake, and such matters into her lap. After school, he would follow her at a respectful distance, until her companions would drop off, and then with an awkward, sly excuse, edge up to her side.

He would make errands to her father's house. If Maggie was alone, he would ask her to have an apple or a plum; but if others were by, he would stand and stare into her face without speaking, and with all his might.

He would roam the forest for flowers, and come staggering into Maggie's presence with bouquets of mountain laurel, and such forest growths, bigger than himself—with which Maggie would decorate the old-fashioned fireplace; and they were generally quite ample enough to entirely fill it.

He fought innumerable battles on her account; and sometimes rushed into her presence with streaming nose, that she might note and fully appreciate the greatness of his devotion.

I do not know that he ever proposed; or that they indulged in those pleasant prattlings under shady trees, which lovers delight in; or that he composed sonnets to her beauty; or that they took moonlight rambles together.

Maggie laughed at her uncouth lover, but she was too tender-hearted to let him see it.

But when Maggie and I grew intimate, and took walks and chatted over books together, fearfully grew the rage of this young Colin. When we met, he frowned at me ferociously, and looked as black as his white face permitted; or stood apart, scowling and red. He nursed in his little body a most tremendous hatred of me, and seemed to pant for some huge and terrible revenge.

Unhappy Ike! To have tasted of the grand passion, and all its bitter consequences, so early in life! Better to have stuck to your marbles and hoops, Ike.

Once when Maggie and I were hunting on the banks of a little stream for those woodland blossoms which flourish in low places upon the banks of streams, Ike suddenly rushed by us in a frantic manner, and plunged deliberately into the stream. Maggie gave a little shriek; and we both ran after him. As we came up, he had floundered through to the opposite bank, where he stood, dripping and muddy, shaking his fist in the air, and with mutterings deep declaring that he would drown himself. Maggie, suppressing a laugh, wanted to know his reason for this determination, whereupon he scowled at me with

all the ferocity he could assume, and then rushed into the brushwood that surrounded him.

He also evinced his despair in other ways equally grotesque. Once he insisted upon standing on his head for ten minutes in succession. After this, he adopted the plan of shutting his eyes tight whenever he would see Maggie coming; then, whenever her eyes were upon him, he would begin to butt whatever was at hand, whether tree or stone. But, still Maggie remained obdurate; and poor Ike, sadly forlorn, grew piteously melancholy and more dirty and ragged than ever.

But when I proposed to Maggie to sit by my lonely fireside, and listen to an old man's talk, I opened negotiations with Ike for a treaty of peace, in order that he might be Maggie's escort to and from the "farm." I began by proposing a weekly stipend of sixpence. This nearly proved victorious at the start. I then proceeded, by forcible logic reduced to his obtuse capacity, to prove how improbable and absurd it was to suppose that a gentleman aged fifty, scantily supplied with that tonsorial adornment, which, in his own case, flourished like a wilderness—upon whose features crusty Time had stamped indelible wrinkles and crow's-feet, and whose visage possessed at no time Adonian graces—could hope to supplant one of so much youth and

natural fascinations as himself in the affections of his Dulcinea.

My diplomacy was successful ; but I do not know whether it was the stipend or the logic that proved the most powerful agent.

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## II.

A dream before a Bachelor's hearth which was not  
all a dream.



## II.

**A**FTER Maggie and Ike had gone, I stood by the window, looking at the moon rising behind the forest—the ravaged forest that lifted its torn trunks, bereft of their summer offspring, mutely and pitifully to heaven. The moon was dungeoned by clouds, but gleamed through open bars, and its vast red disc seemed to set all the forest ablaze. In the morning there was a wind, and I walked forth, ushered by troops of leaves, that rushed before me and danced in my path as if I were a monarch ; some came clamoring, jostling, and eager behind me, like swarms of hungry place-seekers. But at night the wind was hushed, and upon the meadows, the garden walks, the roads, the dead leaves lay ghostly still. There was a hush everywhere. The moon came mutely up, the trees silently darkened themselves against its light, the shadows crept like ghosts, the roads lay white as grave-stones. So melancholy and death-like was

the scene that I dropped the curtain, and stepping stealthily back to my chair, wheeled it before the fire, slumberously droning in the full-mouthed grate.

Down amid the red labyrinths of burning coals, I see visions and dreams always—and at midnight hours how many, many a castle have I built out of the ashes and embers of my lonely hearth !

For I am a bachelor ruminant. Whatever I may have been in the hey-day of youth, my life, since its decline into the sere and yellow leaf, has been one of lonely reverie—an anchorite's seclusion, in which philosophy and rumination have compounded the elements of a curious melancholy. Just frosted, just struck into parti-colored white and grey, with November wrinkles upon my temples and Indian haze in my eyes, my life wanes into autumn mellowness—all the colors, tones and tints, the reminiscences merely of a blooming summer past.

The fire was low, and seizing the poker I stirred it into a sparkling and cheering blaze. The glow fell so pleasantly upon my face, that I dropped languidly back into the wide ample chair, and adjusted my limbs into a luxurious repose, fit for mellow dreams.

As I did so, my eye for an instant fell upon a little toilet mirror upon the mantel, whose angle reflected all the room behind me. I started, rubbed



my eyes, and threw a hasty glance over the back of my chair. Nothing there! It was fancy—but in that mirror I seemed distinctly to see, between me and the wall, a shapeless mass, mist-like and dim, swaying slowly to and fro.

I laughed at the fancy, and began staring at the fire. Then I thought of many ghost-stories, and fell into dreamy meditations upon the supernatural, the wild, and the wonderful. I thought of one terrible fright, experienced in my boyhood—how a wild and mischief-loving cousin, robed from “top to toe” in deathly white suddenly crossed——

A startling, reverberating clang brought me suddenly to my feet. It proved to be the poker, dropped from my relaxing grasp, as from dreaming I had begun falling away into slumber. With a laugh and a shake I drew the chair nearer the hearth, and then slowly and drowsily fell back into its comfortable depths again. As my head touched its cushioned rest, my eyes instinctively sought the little toilet glass—sought it, and were held fixed to the polished surface spell-bound.

Behind my chair I clearly and distinctly saw a huge mirror slowly rise until it nearly reached the ceiling. Its whole surface was accurately reflected in the miniature glass upon the mantel, into which I was looking. A mist seemed to shroud the sur-

face, through which dim figures appeared to flit and commingle. But suddenly, as if by magic, the misty veil vanished—and a scene appeared.

In the first impulse I would have sprung from my chair, but some mystic power transfixed me to the floor. I tried to turn upon the mysterious mirror, but my gaze was held fastened to the glass before me.

*For the scene was a life—the life mine!*

It was a vista, a long backward vista,—back to early manhood, back to youth, back to boyhood—crossed by many lights and shadows—but ah, sunshine too little—cloud too much!

There, in one single vast glance, my whole career was revealed—all the emotions I had ever known, the ambitions I had ever cherished, the stern realities against which my spirit had been broken—all as sharp and as clear as a memory of yesterday. Boyhood in its unbroken belief in the glories of a future; youth with its aspirations, ambitious, its vague yearnings so incomprehensible, its grand dreams never, never to be realized; manhood, with its fierce struggles, its poor triumphs, and worst of all that appertains to manhood, the daily bursting of the fond bubbles so industriously blown in youth!

The vista appeared to lead from myself. I

seemed in my own person and state the consummation of the story thus visioned in that strange mirror. There, lonely, grey, wrinkled, unloved, unknown—in the glass before me I saw my own figure, the startling moral to the picture—all the ambitions so earnest, the hopes so big, the promises so loud, the expectations so large—ending in nothing but *me*!

I shrunk from this truth, but it sternly forced itself upon my soul. I hunted up and down the vista for justification of this pitiful fulfillment of all the huge promises of youth, but I could only see opportunities slighted—means neglected—the golden bowl heedlessly broken.

There was boyhood, sharp and clear, like a thing of yesterday; my early home, my mother's kiss, my sister's entwining arms—those tender scenes, whose memory at times has almost new-made me. Ah, from that placid spring opening of the Vista, to turn my eyes to the stricken winter at the end!

Back, almost to boyhood, was a bower.

Mad moment, mad passions, besotted hour, why must you be recalled? Two childish, once happy, lovers, tearing from their hearts peace and love,—torn flowers, tears, anger, selfish cruelty,—love driven out, and only the dark-winged brooding Passion in its stead. Love never recalled, bruised heart never well!

And then in youth, self-indulgence seductively the master ; friendships sharply severed ; wise counsels scorned ; precipitate will and huge egotism digging pits and falls.

In manhood, the trampling down of the flowers and home-growths of boyhood—the proud head in the air, but the stumbling feet.

I longed to look elsewhere. I almost prayed for some power to extinguish memory. There were my early pledges of greatness to be accomplished, and good to be performed, sharply lettered, and seemingly pointing towards me ; there were the very occasions where I had turned from the high roads of duty and honor, to follow low desires ; there the very temptations, so mean and pitiful to this after gaze, to which I had so often yielded.

Remorse cuts sharp. No one perhaps could see his Past, suddenly in a panoramic whole, reproduced to his sense and judgment, and not feel ten thousand blades in his conscience. Few have been good and wise enough to review their career with utter placidness. Yet most men can point to something accomplished—fruit has matured upon their boughs whose taste is sweet. But not with me. With more than average expectations I had attained far less than average results.

And yet some bitter circumstances of my state

excited pity rather than condemnation. Alone and unloved—not these my crimes, assuredly.

I had loved more than once—early and late—with spring's buoyant flush, with autumn's deep and mellowed feeling. With passionate regret my eyes lingered upon these brief, sweet, hallowed scenes, in which were crowded everything of my life worth experiencing or worth remembering. Each, it is true, had been unblessed, but what moments of huge, measureless bliss this dream of them recalled. That of youth I had recklessly dashed from my lips; the other, years, many years later, was a heart passionate, despairing, beating itself against invulnerable bars—a wish that often as it winged, fell downward to the earth; a desire chained to a rock, plucked back by cruel links as often as it struggled to rise.

While I looked upon the Vista, lingering upon the tender memories, shivering before those that reproached me, I grew desirous to read the Future as well as the Past.

“Let me behold,” I exclaimed aloud—the first words my lips had been able to utter since the spell seized me. Almost instantaneously with the utterance the Vista vanished, and a mist covered the surface of the mirror. My senses grew eager now, and I strained my eyes with all my might. The mist

gradually lifted—a bleak, barren plain, dim and indistinct, seemed to grow slowly out upon the shadowy surface of the mirror—and nothing else. I bent forward, and fixed my eyes upon the glass on the mantel with eagerness intense and hushed—when suddenly a crash—the mirror appeared shivered into myriads of pieces—a cold blast struck me—

On the floor, before the hearth, I suddenly found myself, fallen from my chair, the candle flickering in the last struggle of its existence, the fire gone out, and a chill striking me to the bones.

I stood up and stretched out my arms as if to grasp the shadows that had haunted me. The cold, barren room, dimly visible in the uncertain light, was like an angular fact rudely thrust into the atmosphere of the dream. Its unimpressible rigidity, with the hard outline of every object cutting into the empty midnight air—the chairs, the tables, the book-cases looming up so stern and grim, like inexorable and conscious facts—preternaturally sharpened my senses, and while they drove the shadows of the dream from my brain, the more indelibly stamped its truth and moral.

With my head upon my breast, and a humble step, I walked silently away to bed.

### III.

I tell my dream to Maggie, philosophize thereupon, and freely branch into new fields of discussion—An audacious assertion implying the Pythagorean multiple of Hamlets—Nothing is but what is not, and certain prophecies, which it is to be hoped will prove false—A new creed—An authentic portrait warranted to be like





### III.

**I** TOLD my dream to Maggie—and yet not all. There are some corners of the human heart which shrink up and shut in their secrets at every touch, however tender, friendly or loving. Maggie shall not enter into forbidden memories, nor know all that lies behind my fiftieth winter. There shall mingle in her respect for me something of mystery, and by that token I will hold her off from any familiar knowledge that may breed commonplaces between us.

To the world I can be as free in unfolding my emotions, my memories, and my weaknesses as I choose—for the world to me and I to the world are only abstractions. While I would shrink from a single pair of eyes like Maggie's, resting, for ever so briefly, on my scars and wounds, I may dwell upon them within the gaze of the whole world with serene unconsciousness. For every reader who reads me perceives in my analysis of feeling and suffering, not me but himself. I am only to him a vague double,

a shape which he clothes with his own lineaments, in whose exposed heart he recognizes only the reflection of the secret passions concealed in his own. Therein lie my immunity and my extenuation. I may talk of myself forever, of what I suffer, what I feel, what I dream ; of hope, ambition, love, and all the warm phantoms of feeling that crowd upon the hearts of men, and still am guilty of no indelicacy, guilty of no more egotism than those who read this book—for it is only a voice that speaks, an experience finding utterance, which every man calls his own.

Something of this I said to Maggie. I am not sure that she could understand it, but I never simplify my thoughts, nor reduce my language to her experience. She must clamber up to my meaning, and get what glimpses she can. Under my tuition she shall acquire the strength for a long flight by early learning to use her wings.

And let me say to all thinkers, who fire above the heads of the people—let them be true to their mark, for the stature of the general mind will gradually grow to the level of their aim ; unless, indeed, the thinker's aim rises with the universal "progress"—for those internal forces that lift the plains nearer to the heavens, lift the mountains too.

But all this time, Maggie, in her chosen place by the fire, has been buried in a book.

Buried in a book ! What queer idioms we get into to be sure ! It is a spiritual interment, possibly, and yet the expression is more aptly true of the author than the reader. How many a writer has poured out his life upon the page—literally flung his vitality into his thoughts, and woven his breath into the frame-work of his sentences ? Thoughts that burn feed upon the fuel of being ; there is many a life-pulse subtly fused in a rhythmic line ; the pen digs sure graves.

“Maggie, what do you read ?”

Maggie looked up quickly. The fire-light was burning upon her cheek ; shadows were in her eyes ; upon her head a broad ribbon-like glow. The picture was mellow and pretty.

“Hamlet,” said she.

“Ah ! And you like it ?”

“No, sir.” And she began to read on.

“Don't like it ?”

“It is so terrible. Ghostly too ! and murders ! and funerals ! and graves !” She visibly shuddered.

“Now here, Maggie,” said I, “is an odd error in judgment. You *do* like it. The very words you use in condemnation are proof that I am right. You read it with eagerness—for I have watched you tremble and shudder, but are fascinated.”

“Why should I like terrible things ?”

"Why? You are puzzled, as philosophers are. Some of them will try to explain to you why, and drift sadly from the subject. It is a mystery of our nature, Maggie; we all like emotions of terror, of grief, of awe; we like them through the delicate semi-robing of noble poetry, and like them sometimes in the hard and vivid reality."

"I cannot understand it, sir."

"Never doubt the genuineness of a taste because it is incomprehensible. Trust to nature. The soul of man, Mag, is rich in functions, marvellously various in appetites and desires, and each faculty hungers for its own especial sustenance. But its owner is a fool. He can only look one way, and starves his soul into a skeleton with his hopeless efforts to feed it through one channel. I tell you, Maggie, we must have poetry for our imagination, humor for our mirth, approval for our approbateness, philosophy for our reason, color for our eye, beauty for our taste, aims for our energies, music for our ear; form, life, motion, speech, pathos, sadness, wit—all emotions and sensations for the thousand functions to which they apply. We should live in the light; open our souls to the passing breezes; catch upon the surface of life all pure and true things.

"Not morbid passion, which to the true sublimities is as disease to health. Enjoy heartily and well: be

no brooder over your own sensations. Self is a danger always. Look abroad, not within."

"Was Hamlet mad, sir?"

"Mad, but with a human madness such as lies deep in us all; the madness that you and I possess, and all who feel much—ready always for a spark to ignite. Heaven! shall spirits play upon the suffering and melancholy that I have in my heart and which sometimes, as it is, rise like waves that engulf, and topple not from its balance the thing I call reason? Grief has ere this so sharpened sensibility, that in the acute agony of suffering I have put an antic disposition on; words, light and wild, have broken in bubbles from the deep shaft of feeling piercing downward, and in the very choke of tears I have burst into merry 'hillos.'

"For the things we love most, tender words are too weak. We rebound from their calm, placid surface, and seize instead those rough, strong opposites, in which intensity and energy are expressed. Their meaning is at variance with our feeling, but our vigorous love needs vigorous symbols. It is so with other passions. They rush to their opposites in despair of adequate expression. The gibe and jest grin on the brink of dark pools; jocund mirth sits upon the brim of the poisoned cup; passion wreathes laughter into its wildest and shrillest utterance.

"I am Hamlet; and all men in whom mingle those two currents of philosophy and imagination, are Hamlets: for the Dane is a representative man—and such as we can understand how the light of his mind burned clearly, even while his frenzy of feeling rushed into wild words and antic disposition."

"Poor Ophelia!" murmured Maggie.

"Ah, sweet, tender, gentle, lovable Ophelia! Mighty master who limned her, too—who knew that a huge imagination like Hamlet's would be sure to fly to a magnetism like hers. Inscrutable truth of nature! Your men of the highest reach always stoop to pluck the daisy."

"You call Shakspeare mighty. Was he so very great, sir?"

"I reply in the briefest and finest eulogy ever written of him. 'If I were to prepare a dictionary,' says the scholar in Buckstone's comedy, 'I'd add a new word—Shakspeare—and define it as *poetry, art, and nature!*'"

"Do not some people say that he didn't write his plays?"

"Yes. Nothing is but what is not, are his own words—a line I never could understand until I read the different doubters, from Bishop Berkeley down. But the world is tortured by those who magnify and those who destroy; pyramid builders who ravage

the plains that their temples may be glorified ; iconoclasts who break up every image niched in your heart. The first have deified Shakspeare up into the clouds, topping Olympus itself, and others not unnaturally have attempted to pull him down to earth. These latter appear to distrust the individualization of any fame, and in every evidence of singular greatness, become inspired with a desire to discrown the individual, and trace the cause home to some abstraction—to throw it back to a mystic generalization. And after all, are those wonderful dramas his ? Is any man's book his own ? Is any thought I utter mine ? Individuals do not create nor originate ; mankind does both. We are each of us a leaf in the human forest—singly an infinitesimal nothing, but as a whole how magnificent ! What we accomplish is in aggregation. Great men are only the capitals to the pillars—the last completeness and exposition of the work that thousands have conspired to erect ; or, to use another illustration, great men are forced upon the shoulders of their contemporaries—the elevation which men see from afar, which they crown and glorify, but the forces that lift them up are underneath. The so considered giants in every science are merely those who bring a thought suddenly to light. It is new to the world, but the seed has long been germinating—unseen and unheeded.

“Take the steam engine. How many thousand minds, how many thousand experiences, how vast an aggregation of intellect has been employed in bringing it to its present perfection—and yet we associate with it only the name of Fulton.

“Take the most original book. Ten thousand minds have contributed to the art which constructs it, to the thoughts which animate it, to the graces of expression in which it is clothed.

“The world is a gallery lined with looking-glasses. A single ray is admitted—it is multiplied in reflection by thousands of surfaces, until perfect light is attained.

“Discoveries are the matured growths of the age. The world has progressed to the point when the fruit is ripe—one, more wise than the rest, steps forward, shakes the tree, and gathers in the harvest. This is evident in the fact that great discoveries are almost always simultaneous in different places.

“But I perceive no greatness in the future for any man. I am a prophet, and looking in the crystal wherein I descry all things.”

“The crystal?”

“My imagination, Mag! There I see an ocean of universal intelligence rising up and burying us all in a startling monotonous level—a dead plain of dull and wearisome equality.



“Individuals are to become nothing. In the past they have been magnified. In the future they will be utterly decimated. Results and abstractions are to be the heroes of the future. Look at war, even as it is now. It was once a splendid record of individual prowess ; it told of the might and valor of Richard, of Godfrey, of Raymond, of Bayard. It is now an affair of infernal machines, of gigantic batteries, gunpowder, bombs, and the like. Very pretty fireworks, no doubt ; but the thousands of wretches whose souls fly upward through the smoke and fire, have no compensation either in song or history. They are known only arithmetically—as so many thousand slain, and have their place in tabular figures, amid bayonets, hams, potatoes, tobacco—a part of the supplies and cost, nothing more.

“In science and art we shall see the same thing—the sinking of the individual—a falling back into the ranks—a more splendid consummation by union—a principle of aggregation in opposition to segregation—a sort of united we stand, divided we fall, by which result will be greater, but individual recognition less. For instance, the time will come, I have no doubt, when a picture will be painted by twenty men, instead of one. One will paint the face, another the drapery, a third the foliage, and so on. A like combination in the production of books

will give that higher perfection which the world demands. I tell you, Mag, the world—by which term I simply mean everybody else—is getting hugely selfish, and it will soon cease to care a fig who is who—so long as its appetites and wants are supplied up to the high standard its fastidiousness demands.

“In a hundred years from this time, we shall have the most consummate machinery, the most perfect government—which, to secure, *must* be a matter of mechanism—the highest philosophy—the greatest perfection in every branch of human effort—a race of workers in a vast hive, each busy only to a common end—all things upon a level, but freezingly clear, monotonously perfect, unendurably admirable—with no idiosyncrasy, individuality, or undulating variety; a smooth and unbearable perfection which repels me to think of.”

“But did you not say,” interposed Maggie, “that those internal forces which lift the plains nearer to the heavens, lift the mountains, too?”

“Maggie,” said I, in a tone much hurt, “your remark is preposterous. Are you so green as to exact consistency? That is a merit, if a merit, which I leave to the ordinary mind. Every subject is octagonal—or many-sided—and I bless myself that I have the faculty of looking at matters in all their aspects. Can there be two, ten, or twenty honest opinions

upon any subject ? Then I have a pliancy of imagination which can entertain them all. Hear my creed :

“ In ethics, monogamy ; in æsthetics, polygamy.”

Maggie looked so bewildered that, unlike my usual course, I proceeded to explain :

“ In my morals, Maggie, I am faithful to a single principle ; but in other matters I am a Turk, and shall wed as many opinions as I please. There is a picture hanging in yonder panel. Tell me what it is.”

“ A groom leading a horse.”

“ Which way does he approach ?”

“ This way, sir.”

“ Now cross the room. Look at the picture from the other side. What do you see ?”

“ Why, the man and horse appear to come this way now.”

“ The artist's cunning, Maggie. Every subject is like that picture, and opinion merely a matter of standpoint. To adhere to one view is nothing but perversity. It is for me to say that the groom and the horse come my way, and not yours—whereas we are both right, and I have only to shift my position a little, to see them as you do now. It is a one-sided imagination, that can only look one way, that cannot place itself in various positions, accommodating itself

to the prejudices, idiosyncrasies, habits, tastes, and modes of thoughts of other imaginations—that cannot perceive how narrow, after all, is the line which divides all opinion, and how easy to cross that line.

“I am, you know, a broker of opinions. I trade with them ; gather in what is curious ; speculate upon them. Or, what may be a better illustration, I am a rag-gatherer, searching after the valuable, or the new, or the curious, in the refuse the world leaves in its highways. I turn over and shake out what I find. One has a rent ; another has proved valueless by wear ; another is hopelessly tangled and snarled ; a fourth is ragged ; a fifth, shapeless and contemptible at the beginning, has been begrimed and fouled by long use, at the hands of demagogues and hypocrites. And these rags I amuse myself, by holding up in various lights. How fantastic in form, capricious in color, preposterous in conception many of them are—and yet, not one but in the web and woof is woven some groundwork of truth—and but few that I cannot fling my imagination into the circumstances which created them, and think for a brief moment in the same way too.

“I draw flattering consolation and a grand example from nature. Perfect light, like that of the sun, is the composite of all color. It is only when its rays are distorted through the lenses of angular imagina-

tions, that it breaks into parallel and unblending tints.

“From the sun, the monarch of nature, let me drop to an absurd extreme for another illustration. Every opinion is a plum-pudding, and the plums are the few grains of truth. You and I, Maggie, shall pick them out.”

I paused, and Maggie fell away into a dream.

What was it? Maggie has strange, vehement thoughts at times. There can be no doubt of it. Around her brain is coiled that circle of fire which inflames and sometimes maddens unresting spirits—those quickened natures whom we all recognize as children of genius. Maggie has a brow wide and bulging, but not high; a pale, thin face underneath; a delicate, quivering nostril, a mouth firm but full. Her eyes are dark, deep—not vivid nor brilliant, but with a glance of slumbering fire. They have a hungry look—a searching, eager expression, as if hunting for sympathy not yet vouchsafed. There is sometimes the unpleasant effect of a stare, but that is when the soul behind unconsciously wanders in its fancies, or drops away into some absorbing day-dream, and leaves the casement uncurtained and open to the day. Wild elfish locks, black, tangled, and heavy, hang down over her brow and cheeks. Her figure is slight, her movements sharp, vehement,

and often vibrative to passions and impulses that never find voice. She talks little, but she seems hushed in the silent awe of over-crowding thoughts—vague, shadowy, looming thoughts, which expression cannot measure nor compass. Ignorance, dull association, and the need of fructifying sympathy, have all conspired to crowd her sensibilities inward, and gnarl and knot them in their growth. The forces of her intellect find expression, therefore, through unusual channels. The subjective becomes fantastically objective. Flashes of thought or of feeling, which in others would explode in words, in her rush into oddities and impulses of action and movement. I have seen her, in spasms of emotion, toss her arms about like the limbs of a tree in the wind. She has frequently burst into my presence flushed and exhausted from some violent exertion—a race over the fields with her pursuing fancies, or a mad scamper through the forest with ten thousand imps of the brain, pricking, spurring, goading her on; for by violence of muscle the violence of passion is often cured.

I sat watching Maggie, and thinking of these things, when I observed one of those quick impetuous movements so habitually expressive of her earnest thinking. But this time she gave her thought words.

“You say that men of the highest reach always stoop to pluck the daisy. Why? why?”

"So, so! that way tend your thoughts, daughter of Eve!" This comment I solaced myself with apart, and then I spoke aloud.

"Why, Maggie, your thoughts fly backward. It is an hour since I made that remark."

"But what am I, sir? Not a daisy?"

"No."

"And yet"—she stopped short.

"You admire greatness, you worship greatness, you are awe-struck now at the grandeur with which your imagination has invested it—but take my word, Maggie, you will marry Ike."

"Ike!" a splendid flush of indignation rose to her cheek.

"Ike. The charge is audacious, but I repeat it. If one came now across your way with the step of a god, with the air and movement of majesty; an eye to subdue, a knowledge perfect, an intellect great in every function, weak in none, with a will absolute and unyielding, and a character so dominant and controlling that it moulded yours plastic to its own stamp—to such a one you would crawl up and kneel down in homage. In the atmosphere of such a man you would breathe new life. It would be your happiness to serve, to be meek, to watch with wistful eyes apart, to turn always towards him a worshipping upward look, as the sunflower follows

the sun. But to greatness less than this, you would clamber up, find out its weak places, and then turn disdainfully away from an image that proved to be only of clay. All emotions and all passions are in circles. You would rebound to the extreme; finding none to worship, you would quickly shift your ground and exact instead a worship rendered up to you. This is written in the histories of many women. From the admiration once passionately intended for others, they fly eagerly to the companionship of simple receptive natures, pliant to their will, and eager to do them homage."

"I am not convinced," said Maggie, abruptly but quietly. "Ike is a fool. He never talks to me, nor I to him. He brings me flowers, and I burn them up. I do not like him at all. It makes me angry to hear you say I do."

"Will, Maggie."

"Why, sir, he's a little boy."

"I am good at a guess, Maggie, and I venture to surmise that Ike, like most other boys, is not doomed to an existence of perpetual roundabouts."



**IV.**

**An adventure—An old man's story.**



#### IV.

“MAGGIE, to-day I had an adventure.”  
“What was it, sir?”

“You shall hear. The day was so soft and mellow with the Indian haze, that with basket and reel I wandered several miles up the banks of the stream, and flung my line in some pools a little way below the old mill, to which, you recollect, we once rambled in the summer time. There, where the hum of the mill came faintly and pleasantly down to me, with my line fallen heedlessly into the stream, I sat for an hour, half dreaming and idly watching the rippling of the water over the pebbles in the shallow places.

“In the midst of a reverie I was aroused. A footstep fell upon my ear, and with its fall scattering to oblivion certain airy nothings my vagrant fancy was weaving. I started up from my half recumbent position and looked around. An old man, so old that he tottered, and his white hair hung like a shock

around his ears, and his ample clothes bagged and flapped about his thin limbs—came down to the bank of the stream, not many feet from where I lay, and slowly, by the aid of his hickory walking-stick, let himself down upon the sod.

“ I watched him with sympathy ; for he had a fine, sad face—a manner abstracted and melancholy ; and he peered and felt about with his stick as if nearly blind. When he was seated, he threw off his hat ; a great, high, wrinkled brow loomed up, and now I could see two deep, restless eyes under white, shaggy, overhanging eyebrows.

“ His body swayed lightly to and fro, as if his senses were rocked in a dream. Presently he clutched handfuls of grass, and flung them into the stream. They came drifting slowly by me in the current, and one mass of tangled blades, in which an autumn blossom was interwoven, shifted into an eddy, and was borne directly to my feet. I reached forward and secured the flower, beaded and glittering with river drops, and rising, walked up to the old man with it in my hand.

“ He looked up nervously as I came near.

“ ‘So,’ said he, ‘you’ve got it. Why could *she* not have been saved as well as her flower? They were both upon the stream—she’—

“ ‘Was flung upon the current as this flower was,’

said I, 'torn from her home, from life, and died as this poor flower must die?'

" 'So ! so !' muttered he.

" 'You have a terrible memory burning in your heart, dear sir—give it words, and it will lighten.'

"The old man plucked fresh handfuls of grass, and flung them into the current. He muttered unintelligible words, but wild and disconnected, as I thought. I seated myself by his side, and in a little time so won upon his confidence, that with trembling lips and many silent tears he related me this story :

" 'I was alone, save a little grand-daughter. My sons and daughters were gone, every one ; my friends were in the graveyards, or far-off places. I was alone utterly, with my beautiful little grand-daughter. She always seemed to me a little child, when others told me she was a woman. Ah ! she must have been a woman, indeed, for she loved—loved so deeply, so despairingly—a love which, even when forsaken, was too big for her little heart, for it broke it.

" 'I saw them together. I thought of no danger, for looking down from my far-off age, they seemed so like little children. Him I liked—yet his smile was a false one—he was old enough to be a villain—old enough to play the frank, careless, dashing—

old enough to conceal a bad nature under as fair an exterior as ever I saw.

“ ‘Why, it is an old story. I can see now that you have guessed it all. An old, old story—repeated in palace and hamlet, in busy towns and quiet fields—how many times repeated only the graveyards can tell when they reveal their buried secrets.

“ ‘Do not be too fast. There was no crime—on her part, I mean. I thank God, for that. She was torn up and cast away, but died pure as summer blossoms. Her story—the old story repeated for its ten thousandth time—was the story of love abandoned—of love warmed and subtly fanned to a blaze by cold cunning, and patient deceit—then forsaken, then trampled and crushed into the dust !

“ ‘He was skilled in the craft of heart-winning. Grace, beauty, accomplishments, genius—these, with a reckless purpose and an unprincipled heart—making beauty everywhere his desire, and too often the bound captive to his will.

“ ‘Well, she lived awhile in his smiles—fed upon such rapture that her poor little heart could not contain all its joy. And when he had played enough with his victim—had found her in virtue superior to his craft—then, one day, with a cold word he left her—left her, and never came back. So also went from her cheek roses and smiles, never more to

return. Pale and stony-like she came and went—sad and silent. To these banks, where her happiness had dawned, where all the memories of her love were interwoven with every tree and stone, did she come and weep, and mourn—some said madly. One day she came, when heavy rains had swollen this little stream until it spread over its banks, and rolled along its course high and angrily. The hours passed by and I watched for her return. She did not come. I followed her, trembling with apprehension —

“ ‘Why dwell on what followed? I found her body a mile below’—

“ ‘Drowned?’

“ ‘Drowned! There she lay caught in a fallen willow. Over her face tangled locks and ravaged leaves had woven a veil. I did not look at it—I dared not—I never saw it again.’

“The old man stopped, and slowly pressed two heavy hands to his brow. Some minutes passed silently. Then I spoke, not to offer consolation—for grief was the old man’s friend—all that was left to him of her or of the past—but I spoke to show him that his story was not unheard.

“ ‘The poor girl, sir—her name’—

“ ‘Her name? Ah! I had forgotten. Your pardon, sir. Her name was Beatrice.’

“Then, Maggie, I sprang upon my feet and almost shrieked aloud. Beatrice! It was a name sacred to me, woven with a thousand memories of that stream, more deeply loved and treasured than any name in the wide world. It could not be. I impetuously reiterated the question, which the old man did not hear, but kept murmuringly and tenderly repeating the fond, fond name.

“Then I went home musing deeply, haunted by the old man's tale, and when I thought of the Beatrice of his story there rose up before me the fair lineaments and figure of my Beatrice, until the two became so identified, that around my story and its memories, sad, sad enough, there hovered an additional poignancy, as if she whom I had seen amid those scenes had let her spirit out upon the waters of the stream—had floated down upon the current in a web of ravaged leaves and flowers.”



V.

Slady Side and its reminiscences—Love under green  
leaves—The story of Beatrice.



## V.

“**B**UT who was Beatrice?” inquired Maggie.

“To you, Maggie, my heart is an open house. Its doors stand wide, ; day lights its chambers. I will tell you, therefore, of Beatrice.”

“You know my favorite resort—that wooded, shadowy bank of the little stream, upon which I have bestowed the name of Shady Side. There in the summer days I loiter in its rich seclusion, listen by the hour to the carol of the birds, watch the play of light and shadow in the waving tree tops, look down upon the blue waters which with their musical ripple murmur an incessant song to the flowers, or with my head laid on some ‘antique root,’ stretch my gaze through the green canopy above me, into the far blue beyond, while my thoughts mount, expand, traversing worlds celestial and terrestrial. I fancy myself, you know, a sound disciple of Izaak Walton, and with my rod and reel hang about the shores of the little stream, flinging my line into the dark pools ; and in half reverry, idly

watch it as it loosely trails upon the water. Once while seated under a moss-bannered oak, and thus dreamily employed, there came down towards me through the trees, a young girl, with her bonnet on her arm, her locks lifted and floating in the wind, a bright flush upon her cheeks, a beautiful light in her blue eyes, a radiant smile upon her lips. She paused and threw up her hands to catch a pendant bough. Her white arms glanced above her head, her white neck shone through the falling tresses. I thought it a rarely beautiful picture and held my breath to look. Her form was light but full of wonderful grace; her bust was outlined with delicate fullness; her limbs, traceable through their drapery, seemed perfect in symmetry. She came down to the water, starting as she saw me, and blushing with beautiful confusion. I said a word or two to her, and she went on her way.

“ All the rest of that day I found myself musing upon this beautiful vision. I dreamed of her at night, and awoke thinking of her. We met again the next day, and after that many times. We came to know each other well, and to pass hours together upon the banks of Shady Side. Beatrice was her name. She was the only child of a gentleman, a widower, who had come up from town to settle amid the rural beauties of our neighborhood

She was very fair, trustful, pure, gentle, loving—could I have been a mortal not to have verged upon the flowery precipice? When she would speak so soft and low, or place her hand in mine, or look up into my face with her frank, sweet eyes, or play some girlish prank, such as crowning me fantastically with flowers and oak garlands, as if she were Titania, and I Bottom—could I help the bound to my heart, and the strange thrill that went through it?

But I did penance for these heart-bounds. "Hi, old fellow," said I, "look in the glass. What do you see there? Is *there* a face for sweet sixteen? Look at the crow-feet, sir—at the furrows and the wrinkles, and the hair and beard already pepper and salt! Is that a face for beautiful Beatrice?"

I winced a little, but rigorously enforced myself to study the looking-glass every day.

"You're old, old boy, old and ugly, too. Your heart is choked with the ashes of old, dead sensations; it has burnt out its fire long ago. Shall you take a withered heart, and a withered face, and dead hopes, and sluggish brain, and tainted blood, to the pure, fresh, unstained youth of Beatrice? Out upon you, old boy! Don't you see how monstrous the thought is? Look close in the looking-glass, and you will see it fully."

"This plan was a happy one. It cured me of all thoughts of loving Beatrice, and kept down into the recesses of my heart emotions and passions that otherwise would have struggled up. Occasionally, indeed, at some word of hers, or some sweet caress—for we grew to know each other well and freely—my heart would rise in my throat, and the blood run tingling through my veins, but a rigorous course of looking-glass always succeeded in subduing the rebellious sentiment.

"Indeed, I grew to be so completely a master of what threatened at one time to be a mighty passion, and had buried my love so deeply in my bosom, that I listened one day to her frank, ingenuous confession of her betrothal to another, with no other outward emotion than a sensible paleness, which I felt spreading over my cheek. A sharp, keen blade was entering my heart as she spoke, but I kissed her on her brow, perhaps with trembling lips, and hastened away from her side. It needed all my courage, and a pertinacious contemplation of the looking-glass that day, to preserve the command over my emotions. I kept repeating, as if it were a text :

" ' You're old, old boy, old and ugly, too !'

"I recalled, too, Goethe's plan, who, upon the occurrence of any calamity, betook himself forthwith to the study of a new science. But, it was

sternly difficult to follow the cold abstrusities of a science, with visions of what might have been—visions of a trusting, up-looking, confiding love ever at my side, nestling in my heart—of a radiance upon my hearthstone, where only a shadow was now forever to rest—of sunlight in my heart, which now could never more enter—with visions of youth, and bloom, and beauty thrusting themselves between me and the page ! I was weaker than Goethe. The study afforded me no oblivion. I paced my floor that night until the dawn broke into my room, and then I buried my face in my pillow, and half slept, half dreamed away an hour or two.

“ In the morning, I breakfasted before the looking-glass, and I sternly said, ‘ Old and ugly ! What presumption to think of love ! Study it well, old boy ; it is your only cure.’

“ The wedding-day came, and I stood up in church, very calm and very passive, to see the ceremony. Every eye was strained to see the bride enter ; she came, and her course led her within a few feet of me. The church grew suddenly dark as she swept by. A book dropped from my hand. I could neither see nor hear.

“ It was over, and the crowd passed out. I followed staggeringly, and when I reached the porch the bride came up—so rarely beautiful—called me

her old friend, and asked my blessing. I pressed back her curls, gave the last kiss, and took the last look. Then the crowd came in between us, the old church tottered, sky and earth were commingled, and I grasped at a column for support.

“I hardly knew what followed, except that I found myself shortly afterwards hastening through the fields with a wild, irregular step, pausing mechanically to stare up at the sky, following the devious zig-zag fences abstractedly, until at last I came to the old familiar Shady Side. I flew to the water side, threw myself down upon the bank, pulled my hat over my brows, and for once allowed my pent-up grief to break, unchained and free.

“The next morning I brought out a rod, clapped a small glass in my pocket, went down to the old spot, threw my hook to the stream, and taking out the aforesaid glass, read myself a lesson, while with one eye I watched my reel.

“Old boy! Sentiment and passion at your time of life, hey! A pretty how to do, upon my word! You're a man of the world, I should think. Because you met a pair of pretty eyes, and a bright smile, and a peachy cheek, you thought they were for you, hey? And now you would like to be melancholy and sentimental, and prate about unrequited affection, I suppose. You are an old fool if



you do. Shake it off, sir. It was only a dream. Wake up, rub your eyes, dash your head in water—it will be all over with. You were weak yesterday. You must shake and tremble like a girl, or a school-boy. Bah! Can't you see beauty or loveliness without thinking they must belong to you? What are you, old, dull, senseless block, that you should dare hope for so much? Keep along with your books, and your rods, and your dogs, and don't ever aspire to so much happiness again. It wouldn't be wise. You'd only be dropped down upon earth as harshly as now. Be a man—that is, make money, love stocks, count shares, pile up acres, take to Wall street—after the manner of manhood! But don't think of beauty and youth again, old boy!

“My line suddenly shot out. Away went the glass over my head, and I sprang to my feet. A bouncer was on my line, that was certain. Now for my skill. ‘Love and such folly,’ I cried, ‘avaunt! What are you to the glorious sport in hand?’

“The fish, a splendid fellow, was safely landed, and I went back to the looking-glass.

“It was shattered into a hundred pieces!

“‘Never mind, old boy!’ said I, ‘You're old and ugly, you know, and you'll never be guilty of such folly again! Your passion is shattered as the glass is, as your foolish dream was!’”



## V.I.

Christmas Eve and holiday sadness—Maggie and Ike come laden with greens—We adorn, festoon, and philosophize—I digress into many matters, and make a confession that may cause some doors to be shut upon me.



## VI.

**O**N Christmas Eve I caused my fire to be heaped up unusually high ; and then with my own hand I stirred it with the poker until it blazed and glared from its great red heart outward to its extremest limits, with such cheer and hearty good will as wasn't outdone by Christmas fire anywhere. Then I lighted two extra candles ; drew the heavy red curtains close ; pulled out my table into the centre of the room ; flung myself into my deep, wide arm-chair, and looked around the hushed room, bright, calm, peaceful, pleasant ; and then fell staring at the fire, and listening to the silence.

Merrier and happier Christmas hearths there were than mine, God grant ; brighter ones, with the glow of generous fire, I do not believe.

But all day I had been struggling against an approaching sadness. The bells that ring in holidays, have to me a far-off melancholy cadence ; they strike upon the memory and sound the past as well as the present ; retrospection awakes at their touch, and

things dead, things gone, things a thousand times better forgotten, come up from the Dead Sea and flood me with sadness. And while Mirth clashes its cymbals, Hilarity bursts into carols, and Pleasure leaps up shaking its lusty limbs and free locks, my heart, amid the clashes and the jocund mirth, and the rich laughter, sinks deeper and deeper into its retrospective melancholy.

On these occasions I am like a traveller on a barren road, pausing at a milestone, and looking wistfully back at the flowery lanes forever past.

I fought against the sadness this Christmas Eve. I got down my pleasantest books ; I called in my dog that I might not be alone ; I tried to cheat myself into cheerfulness by recalling only mirthful thoughts—but in vain. The sadness came slowly but surely on, like a summer cloud. I began to think of Christmases past—to paint, in a contrasted picture, my lonely Christmas *now*, and the jovial, social, glad Christmas *once*—to think of old friends gone before, old hopes foregone, old happiness forever lost. The old life and the old being came up, and with that emotional egotism with which we so fondly dwell upon the life of the past, I bade the curtains up, and memory came forth to act the drama in which I was the hero and the central interest.

But in the midst of this self-art, the door opened,

and in came Maggie and Ike, each staggering under a mighty load of Christmas greens.

"Ah, Maggie, so thoughtful; kind, too."

"You said, sir," said she, "that you liked your room decked with winter-green at Christmas time, so Ike and I have been to the woods, and brought you these."

"The holly shall crown my mantel; the spruce and the cedar shall festoon the wall and entwine the door-frames and pictures. We shall sit under a green Christmas, and be merry if we can."

Maggie was in a flush of eagerness and pleasure; her dark eyes shone like jet; her cheek was warm and glowing; and her little figure undulated and vibrated with pleasurable excitement.

"Shall we begin, sir," said she, "now?"

"Yes, at once."

Ike, only half my friend, and that his politic half, scowled a moment in the doorway, then rolled or twisted himself away into the shadows beyond, and Maggie and I were alone.

Busy fingers had she; the greens grew rapidly into wreaths and prettily adjusted clusters. Together we worked at the task—intwining every salient object, crowning every point of 'vantage; festooning, garlanding, or otherwise adorning. Beauty grew beneath our hands. The gilding of the picture-frames

glistened through the green twigs ; the ruddy, bright pleasant tint of the firelight fell upon the greens richly and pleasantly ; the scene, mellow before, grew rich and eloquent now.

"After all, Maggie," said I, "not an unworthy Christmas Eve. May this pleasant custom of decking our homes with the green of the winter forests be perpetuated. The evergreen typifies the day and all the associations of the day ; it symbolizes the everlasting verdure and enduring freshness of heavenly mercy and love this day begun ; it is the outward expression of memories greener to-day than other days—for associations and recollections of loved ones dead, cling around these prominent epochs of the year, and help to make them holy. Christmas day is a memory of all things past, of all friends departed, of all joys lost, all hopes buried, and the green wreaths we hang upon our walls are *immortelles*.

"In Christmases to come, Maggie, may winter wreaths keep *our* memory green !"

Maggie, seemingly touched, hung tenderly over a portrait of my father ; and the wreath she wove and hung upon its frame was the greenest and choicest of them all.

And when the work was done, we drew seats to our accustomed places before the fire—I in my ample Voltaire, Maggie on her low ottoman by the corner



—and fell easily away into our usual discursive talk. Maggie had said something about *luck*.

“Don't use the word, Maggie. I hate it. The thing which it expresses does not exist. We are all architects, Mag. If we build wisely and well, our structures will stand; if they fall, be sure that a fundamental defect existed somewhere. To try is to succeed. That marvellous gentleman of the nursery tale who leaped into the brier-bush with all his might, performed quite a possible feat in scratching in his eyes again. With German subtlety I perceive a grand moral in his story, illustrating how much energy and resolute effort will accomplish—how if a man but jump into his purposes with ‘might and main,’ mountains may be moved. Failure, Mag, I believe to be invariably the consequence of some weakness—not always apparent, but nevertheless existing. Close and long observation has convinced me of this truth. I never failed in any undertaking that afterwards I could not trace the cause back to some incompetency or weakness.

“‘Strong will, my cousin, monarchs all.’

You will find that sentiment, Mag, in an almost forgotten play, written in the hey-day of youth.”

“Your play, sir? was it a tragedy?”

“Yes. Every young man who becomes inoculated

with literature, writes a tragedy. It is inevitable. Mine! I built hopes upon it once as high as the sky; it proved an altar upon which I burnt out all my enthusiasm—a tomb in which were buried my dreams, and my ambition. Ah, the fresh enthusiasm of youth is as delicate as a flower; roughly touched or bruised, it never revives. I have never labored upon another work as I did upon that fond, foolish, boyish hope. My courage has not been strong; it could not recover the harsh wound inflicted then.”

“ Inflicted how ?”

“ By failure.”

“ But failure is weakness, you say.”

“ Yes, but weakness is manifold in its workings. It is sometimes constitutional, and sometimes springs from inattention of means to ends. I planned a tragedy upon a grand scale; sublime in its theme, heroic in its tone, scanning the very heavens—I forgot that man is scarcely six feet high. So my tragedy went up out of sight, and exploded in the air.”

“ Then it was too good.”

“ No. I am not deceived about it ; I was once, but am not now. Its aim was above human sympathies, and therein I was a fool; while the plan was greater than the ability to perform. I chose to walk on stilts, and rightfully had a tumble for my pains. Orlando says prettily, that his love 's just as high as

his heart. A good thought. The heart is the great human level; its stature is the plain, over which you may bowl your sentiments, your fancies, your thoughts, and be sure of your aim. But he who aims higher is lost. The world feels, and never thinks. Aggregately it has no brain. Touch its heart skillfully, and its great pulse responds quickly, and surely; give it an abstraction to crack, and it will make mouths at you. As for my tragedy, in my will I shall order it to be burned. The Hindoo widow is consumed upon her husband's funeral pyre; so my child shall be immolated on its father's grave."

"Your child—I do not understand."

"The offspring of my fancy. With every poet, the product of his inspiration is linked to him by such ties of consanguinity as the world cannot comprehend, and which is paralleled alone by that intense fondness manifested by a mother for her child. Every poet knows this; all others know it not.

"But it would have been better for me, as with many other men, to have escaped the infection of literature; wiser if Parnassus, glittering in its eternal sunlight, had never dazzled and blinded me. Wiser? Ah, yes, there it is. It is always wiser to leave unattempted and undone. Wisdom, by which I mean that quality otherwise known as common sense, is, after all, a simple science. I can sum it up in one

infallible word—No! Its whole teachings are eternal variations upon this word. It is simply a huge negative. Impulse precipitates, wisdom restrains; hot young blood rushes forward and is lost; old calm wisdom pauses and is saved. Wisdom incessantly cries, 'Don't;' 'Better not;' its mottoes are, 'Look before you leap;' 'Wisely and slow;' 'A bird in the hand,' etc. It is a check-rein, and a tight one; it is a social brake; it is conservatively pledged to restrain progress and advancement, and to frown upon innovation; it is cold, calm, lofty, dignified, impressive—and its name is, No! Impulse is all daring, but great folly. Once in a while it snatches success, and accomplishes an end; ninety-nine times it tumbles in the mud. Do you point out a great poet? I will show you a hundred who have attempted the flight in defiance of wisdom's whispered 'No,' and could not keep the wing. These tremendously active *affirmative souls*, have sometimes accomplished great results; but alas! how often by the sacrifice of the individual. For wisdom, among its other qualities, has an 'eye to the main chance;' its negatives are intensely selfish; but it faithfully points out the beaten, worn, respectable, tried path, and has a holy horror of the unknown wilds on either side. Think of it, and you will see I am right. Wisdom is painted as an owl—silent, therefore negative; stolid and imperturbable—nega-

tive again! Its apostle is Solomon. What is his greatest saying—there is nothing new under the sun—but a sweeping negative?"

Maggie's cheek grew hot. With one of her quick, vehement motions, she exclaimed:

"I cannot understand you. To accomplish, seems to me the hope and glory of all. Oh, sir, I long so much to do something—to be"—She hesitated.

"Ah, Mag, I see,

" 'That fever at the core,  
Fatal to him who bears, to all who ever bore.' "

Cast it out, trample it down—hear wisdom speaking now, assuming its eternal form of No, and imploring you to come down from the clouds wherein you move; for below, here on earth, amid simple hopes and earthly things, lies happiness. Lift up your hands, and you pull down hot coals upon your head; you light the fires of reckless discontent, and unsated yearning; fires that grow upon the very tears shed to extinguish them."

Those fires seemed to be lighted even as I spoke. Her eyes gleamed, her cheeks blazed, and her lips seemed as if some unseen hand had reached down and touched them with fire. Ah, not from without, but from within came that strange Promethean heat.

"Sir, sir, I am restless, discontented now; and I

yearn miserably for things I cannot understand. I am unhappy, I don't know why, but I am unhappy."

Tears even then, gemming, pearl-like, the hem of her grand passions, broidered upon the woof and web of her swelling thoughts. Thoughts, too, with so little voice—vague, unformed, and shadowy, but convulsing with unseen, subterranean force, one day to break out into some noble utterance, or ever minning within, consume and destroy. Alas, for those who feel and think too much! Sometimes I see a glorious future for Maggie; and sometimes, alas! the universal tragedy enacted in every heart—grief, storm, passion and death! But these breakers upon which her bark of destiny seems to set—these passions and the fires that slumber in her breast, were not new to me. From the first I had detected their presence; and if the world were different from what it is; if large utterance, grand thoughts, high purposes, had known roads upon which to travel; if for women, such as Maggie will make, there were channels and currents to float them onward to their goal, then I would bid encouragement and sympathy to shine on Maggie, in whose warmth and light she would grow strong and great. But as it is, the upward atmosphere is hot and feverish—the earth alone, cool and wholesome. Her head upon the grass, and the daisy, and the violet,

then ! And from simple things let her soul draw calm content.

"Maggie," said I, with my privilege of abruptly changing a theme, "read to me. There is Montaigne. Open it anywhere. The old, quaint, garrulous, whimsical gossip never lacks interest—cool and grateful interest, too. There is not a pulse-beat in a line he has written. You can sleep after him as calmly and sweetly as after an opiate ; not a dream, nor a haunting sentiment, nor a disquieting thought in his whole work. He is like a supper of porridge, light and wholesome."

Maggie read a little, but even Montaigne could not cool the heat so unexpectedly incited. It lingered and hung about her still—plunged her into fits of abstraction, broke out into those characteristic movements which I have described ; and at last brought her to a full stop in the midst of one of Montaigne's humorous stories.

"Oh, come, Maggie," said I, "this won't do. Try Shakspeare."

She jumped up, ran to the volume, opened it hastily, and began to read Macbeth.

"Stop, Mag. Not Macbeth. The Thane's wife and Maggie Dean have elements in common, and would run full tilt against each other. Like won't cure like."

"Why, to an ambitious nature, would not the story of Macbeth prove a warning and a cure?"

"No! It would prick him on as he never was pricked before. I would not attempt to cure a thief by showing him a hanging; nor stop a murderer by the history of other murders. There are in each of us grains of perversity lying in wait for opportunity; and example stimulates them into activity. Convince a man that his crime is an isolated one, that it is out of the range of human sympathy, that depravity has never before reached a depth so low, and it will be horrible in his sight. The most forsaken cling to some link with their kind, and find consolation for their wickedness in the wickedness of others. Vice is as fond of precedents as a judge. Isolation is the great horror of humanity.

"If intending to commit murder, I would read 'Macbeth.' The sentiment of crime, with its central interest, its harrowing sensations, its sublimity, its heroic inflation of the ordinary to the extraordinary, would gradually bring me to a grim and pleasurable contemplation of my own dire purpose. There is no doubt of it in my mind, Maggie. Murder in blank verse is fascinating, but dangerous—for we cannot see the tremendous difference between it and murder in prose.

"If, indeed, all murders have not a poetical ele-



ment. De Quincey, when he considered Murder as a Fine Art, touched the very core of the subject. And I will make a bold confession. Looking back at the sensations I have at times experienced when seeing a murderer or a great criminal, and analyzing them now, I discover their main element was *envy!*"

"Envy!" exclaimed Maggy, with an incredulous stare of astonishment.

"Horror of the crime, of course, but envy of the man's keener experience of passion and feeling. Sensation is life, and any situation which can develop our emotions so as to magnify ourselves and intensify existence, is a means of a higher, and therefore superior vitality. To *live* is the great aim of nature—not merely respiration, but life vibrative, profound, intense, in which every function springs into action, every emotion throbs with ecstatic feeling, every power, quality and sensibility of the mind or heart starts into active and vital being. See how eagerly we all run after sensations and excitements. The fascination of the battle-field, the intense pleasures of the gaming-table, the delight in adventure and danger, the eagerness for society, all these evince the universal desire for enlarged experience of those powers that lie within us. Fiction, the drama, and poetry—all grew up out of this need. By the aid of the novel we not only live through our own sen-

sations, but those of others ; we extend the boundaries of life and feeling ; we transport ourselves by the aid of the imagination into heroes, who act upon a larger area and in a broader life than our own circumstances admit of. Nothing is so egotistical as the enjoyment of romance and poetry. It's nothing more than looking in a mirror. The novel-reader crawls into the skins of all the heroes he admires ; he fills them out, strides in them, and when he glorifies the original, is secretly glorifying himself.

“ But I tread upon ground too speculative. Turn to ‘As You Like It’—that is cool, dewy, pastoral and sweet.”

Maggie read, and the gentle influence of the most thoroughly beautiful production of the world, fell upon us both, benignly and deliciously.

You might extinguish all the literature of the anti-present period, if you left me *Hamlet* for my philosophy and *As You Like It* for my heart !

Unfortunately Maggie's dull perception of humor shuts out one source of pleasure in “As You Like It.” Touchstone, Audrey, and even much of Rosalind, are blank to her : but Jacques she enjoys with such relish that I envy her. I must stimulate a love of humor, however. Mr. Fowler shall tell me where to look for the phrenological development of that

faculty, and—I wonder if external applications would accomplish anything? A cataplasm for instance?

Humor is a perennial source of purity and freshness to the mind. It clears away the cobwebs; it qualifies the hot, rich draughts of sentiment; it freshens up the sated edge of appetite; it flows through the whole being like a babbling stream, with verdure always green upon its banks. Without humor, we are either hot simooms or arid plains. Your Keats and your Shelleys burn themselves out for want of it; your Shakspeares and your Dickenses are so irrigated by its delicious coolness, that they endure green and fresh forever.



## VII.

Hearts and brains—The gauntlet thrown down at the feet of facts, and Cæsar confronted with Hamlet—The Shaksperians preferred to the Romans—Birthdays hung in black—The five comparisons of life—and a hint or two for the reader about talking and listening.



## VII.

**S**CENE: Maggie and I chatting in the warm tint of my fire-lighted study; the curtains dropped against the window panes; the oaken book-cases, with open doors; the low ceiling, crossed with beams burnished by the fire-light; the walls in crimson paper and panelled pictures. A rich, dreamy atmosphere, in which the fancy delights. Maggie by the fire, one cheek in a glow, the other in shadow; and two eyes, restless and gleaming between her elf-locks, fixed with their keen light on me. In such a scene the thought makes free ventures, and plays wanton pranks. I put no check upon it; it leads where it listeth.

"Well, Maggie," I am saying to her, "we are somewhat liked, but a censorious critic has been writing to my publisher,\* declaring that my lucubrations are misnamed, inasmuch as they partake very little of *Maggie* and very much of *I*."

\* A few of these sketches first appeared in the pages of a New York periodical, under the title of "Maggie and I."

“Why, sir, what would he have?”

“I do not know. But surveying the alphabet coolly and dispassionately, up and down its full length, I frankly acknowledge to that censor, whoever he may be, that I cannot discover another letter to which I am so much attached.

“And, speaking without malice, I do believe it to be the favorite letter of mankind generally, not even excepting the unamiable critic who has taken me to task for a very natural weakness. And a mighty letter truly. It reaches from arctic to antarctic, and equatorially girdles the earth. Strike it from the vocabulary of common use, and you blind the world to a perception of its own greatness; you undo self-exultation, self-love, self-worship, and all the delightful forms of self-contemplation.

“The letter *I* is in the pupil of every man's sight, and so big that he can but just peep over it at the world outside.”

Maggie made a quick movement, and then was still.

“I understand your thought, Mag. You should have spoken it. Youth and impulse belong so naturally one to the other, that although we old fellows have learned the vices of policy and reserve, we are unwilling to see them sitting in watch upon the utterance of the young. Give thought breath, Mag;



“speak freely and openly ; some foolish things may live for brief seconds upon the air (it being the high virtue of friendship that it forgets whatever it has no pleasure to remember), but spontaneity is so inspiriting and fine, that it compensates many times for the few unwise things the unwary tongue drops off with its pearls.”

“Are you going to forget to tell me what my thought was ?” said Maggie.

“No ; but I shall approach it by what devious ways I please. The thought was this : he eternally talks about egotism—he judges by himself.

“So I do, Maggie. I have not as good opportunities for observing other people's hearts as I have my own. My heart is the only one I have in my own possession ; and very naturally, therefore, it serves as the sample by which I judge of its fellow hearts. There is the advantage, too, of always having it at hand ; of experiencing its intolerable desires, its huge aspirations, its slothful pleasures, its love of praise, its unceasing contemplation of self—of judging, in fact, from actual and mathematical demonstration. A man without a heart now could scarcely be a judge of hearts ; and if I bring my own up and scrutinize it closely, I am all the more able to accurately read other people's, which I mostly do by deciphering the signs and the outward

tokens—by watching the face, that dial whereon the movements of the works underneath are impressed in unmistakable characters, to all grown wise by their ‘penny of observation.’

“This much I have learned. Absolutely bad hearts are few ; bad heads are many. Some selfish appetites are in the heart, I grant you ; but it is the seat of all the generous emotions and noble impulses. Tenderness, sympathy, love, benevolence dwell in men’s bosoms ; in their brains, craft, cunning, cold sophistry, audacious reason.”

“Oh, sir, you must be wrong.”

“I will prove it. Milton gave shape to the universal idea of Satan when he created Lucifer the impersonation of intellect. In him existed all the forces of Mind, all the powers that create and dare and do—the will of the diplomat, the sophistry of the skeptic, the skill of the general ; intellect that soared, grasped, pierced high and looked far, but intellect without a heart. And therein alone it differs from human intellect. Our good angel sits in the bosom ; in the heart burn the holy fires of faith and charity ; it is the heart which lifts up and guides the intellect in the right, which warms with its human warmth the proud, cold, ambitious reason ; and by its ever-living humanity, makes men of

those who would otherwise be sneering, mocking, daring Lucifers. Do you see ?”

“ I try to, sir. But intellect inspires worship. The great are so grand !”

“ Yes, to youth, when life is like a new play. But I have peeped behind the scenes, and seen too often corked eyebrows, blank verse, and a strut, make a fool glitter like a god.”

“ But some are truly great,” persisted Maggie ; “ all are not hollowness behind a beautiful mask.”

“ No ; by humanity I swear it ! I shall not destroy your faith, Mag, in human excellence, but beware. Admire not intellect alone. Without a heart, it is Lucifer—and Milton’s, let me tell you, was not the last.”

——“ There are two arcs in the world, Mag. One rests on the horizons ; it spans the Visible from the right to the left. The other is not bigger than two spread hands, yet, by my soul, it outspans the first a hundred fold ; its rests are upon the very limits of space ; it reaches from to-day unto the very beginning, and vaults, in its narrow space, all the ages. I mean the brain.”

“ Oh, yes—I see.”

“ I am glad you do. Obtuseness is not pleasant. Yes, Maggie, the arc of the brain is a mighty one,

grander even than this 'brave o'erhanging firmament.' By the by, I doubt if this line is as Shakspeare wrote it. In the early editions it is 'this brave o'erhanging,' '*firmament*,' omitted and 'o'erhanging' used substantively. So written, the phrase has a true Shaksperian sweetness and richness. I like it best.

"But of this dome that tops the human architecture. It is a grand affair—in my present mode of thought, I desire you to remember, for presently I may be cynical. Who knows? There is one I see before me, I mean yours, of course. Even while I speak, how it compasses all things; how it outdoes Puck, and puts a girdle round the earth with a breath; how it reaches from things terrestrial to things celestial; how, within the busy, throbbing, dark and narrow vault, the world, in innumerable fleeting pictures, is photographed! And then, Mag, the dreams it has known. Ah, could they all appear and march before you now, like the procession of ghostly kings in *Macbeth*, how preposterous and absurd"——

"Sir!" exclaimed Maggie, a little offended.

"Grand dreams, Mag, no doubt. Ah, we are all artists. Our canvas is the future; and our palettes glow with Utopian colors. Jove! how we paint that future—in colors to which Titian is pale and

weak ! how we gild and adorn, and never touch our pencils in the colors of the past. Never, never in the past.

“ We suffer, we see hopes burst, we live through days of disappointment and weariness ; but still faith ever turns hopefully and believingly to the future. Crowd the past with what evils we may, experience throws no shadow on the great to-come, the all-h. il hereafter.”

Maggie shook her head.

“ There is my father,” said she ; “ he is very gloomy. He is always prophesying evil. He predicts bad of everything.”

“ Your father's daughter's friend declines to be beaten in a fair argument by personality. Generalities were never broken by specialties. Theories are sometimes more vital than apparent facts ; and even in the face of ocular demonstration, I choose to adhere to principle based upon comprehensive deductions of general truths.

“ Facts, I dare say, are very convincing and important things to some people, but I have very little respect for them. Julius Cæsar, no doubt, was a tremendous fact ; but, absolutely, Hamlet is much the more real personage of the two. It requires more imagination to conceive the existence

of the great Roman, than of the Dane. To dress him up, to put your fancy into the circumstances of his life ; to see him walk and hear his voice ; to shape before you his individuality and clearly perceive his character, are nothing like so easy as with the Shaksperian creation, who lives in your imagination with such reality, vividness, and circumstantiality of occupation, thoughts, looks, accent, temper, feeling and suffering, that the actuality of his existence is more positive than of any of the dim personages who move through the remote arcades of history. What are facts worth, then, if so much less vital than imagination? Let those love them who may. There are some fictions I would not exchange for half the facts in all the world. If called upon to choose, for instance, between the host of Romans and the characters of Shakspeare, I would not hesitate. Hamlet and the rest are dear to me ; Cæsar, Antony, Brutus, Portia, would have to go. And with my Shaksperians I would have the hearts of men. Beatrice would make them laugh ; Juliet and Ophelia would make them weep ; Hamlet would be every man's brother ; Romeo, Orlando, Jacques, Benedict, each should hold some inseverable link to human hearts ; and around about us would gather forever the sympathies and loves of the

world. Of Cato, or Pompey, or Portia, could this be so? A fig for facts. The richness of my soul has not been drawn from them."

"I wish I could understand you," said Maggie, "but I cannot."

"You confound *fact* with *truth*. Truth is a principle at the base of all things genuine, but facts are frequently nothing more than isolated impertinences, or physical accidents. Take Alexander and Othello. In the first part of the career of the Greek, he happened to be born. Now, matter-of-fact people take unfair advantage of this little superiority over Othello, who happened *not* to be born—but I do not. Material truth made up one; æsthetic truth the other. I do not choose to acknowledge any important difference. Profane history, which somebody says is a conspiracy against truth, gives us the conquering Grecian; poetical history, which is a conspiracy in behalf of truth, gives us the Moor."

"Please to tell me," said Maggie, "if I am an isolated impertinence, or physical accident? I am a fact, I suppose."

"Facts are impertinences, Mag, when thrust angularly into theory; when, by virtue of a perverse existence they damage beautiful dogmas built up without their aid. For instance: the philosophers have a theory that mind is an attribute of man. A good

theory. I accept it. But lol there comes along some one, my man Patrick, we'll say, utterly without mind, and where is the theory—or where would be the theory if Pat, having no manner of right to exist at all, was not set down as a perverse, though perhaps not an isolated, impertinence? Here fact and theory meet in full tilt. Fact goes down at once, of course."

"I don't know, sir, whether you are in jest or earnest."

"Let talk, Mag, have its full play; let jest season truth, and the playful mingle with the earnest. Besides, if we cannot be a little extravagant, and hang about our chat the free caprices of humor, there is very little use of talking at all. I will consent to be wise at times, but—homeopathically; for in wisdom, at least, I am sure the world is on my side, and will take its doses in infinitesimals.

"Maggie, do you not know that this is my birthday?"

"Why no, I did not."

"To-day, fifty years ago, the world begun."

"Sir?"

"Of course, Mag, that's absurd, as I see you think. You would tell me that the world's natal day was thousands of years ago. But all that is nothing to me. What was before me, to me did not exist: and



hence you see, categorically, that the world begun when I, by dint of sight, and ear, and touch, made it out. Before that we were only each a chaos to the other."

"You ought to have had a celebration, sir."

"Oh, no. Show me some way to roll back the years, and I will get up a celebration with all my heart. If birthdays commemorated years won, and not years lost, I should 'smell holyday' indeed, and have good cause. Birthdays should be hung in black, and not in festive; for they mark not what we have gained, but what we have lost. Life, unhappily, is not gradation, but retrogradation. It is a downward sweep, *from* and not *to* the ends coveted and struggled for."

When Maggie does not understand me, a look so wistful and eager crosses her countenance, that I make haste to explain without waiting for her wish to find words. In response to this look I proceeded:

"Life, my girl, has its face forever set towards a goal; but year by year, sees that goal more and more distant. It started out with hopes that it could nearly reach; with honors almost touching its brow; with glory, and fame, and happiness, seemingly falling into its upstretched hands. But with every year, those hopes, and that happiness, have slowly receded

—fading into cloudy distances, and up to inaccessible heights. Life pursues them, until age comes down upon the blood, the limbs, and the lusty vigor, and they disappear, alas, forever. Life is a perpetual labor of Sisyphus. It is the schoolboy's two steps backward to one step forward. Nothing, nothing more: I will keep no birthdays, which only mark how far I sink away from the things I have sought; which notch darkly my fall, and not my rise.

“Indeed, with me, by weakness, perversity, or what I cannot tell, misfortune hath travelled my road with persistent companionship. I have been incessantly climbing ladders with broken rounds at the top. Some spirit of my destiny has taken apparent delight in pulling the pegs out from my ventures, and bringing me to earth with concussive abruptness.

“I was about to sum up in one sentence, what life is, but I find comparisons numerous, springing to my lips. It would not be difficult to find one for each of your five fingers, Maggie. Begin and count them off.

“Life is a see-saw—one perpetual succession of hopes up, and hopes down. We keep at the game, until at some odd time, we drop off into the grave.”

“Oh, I think that's good!” exclaimed Maggie.

“Life is a pair of stairs—long, high, and steep, up which we are pricked by inexorable Time, with no turning back, and no landing-place at top.

"Life is like a picture with a far perspective, seemingly reaching to almost interminable distances ; it proves but a span from beginning to end.

"Life is a roast joint; it begins by being very well done on the outside, is poorly done in the middle, and ends miserably in a refuse bone."

"I don't think that very true."

"I do. Give me life fresh served. Youth is the only true glory, and real good of life ; the only savory, juicy portion of existence. Let me see. Where are you now, Mag ?"

"On the little finger."

"The little finger must not come poorly off. Life is like a river, in its youth rushing forward to the ocean, which is the world, full of big dreams, and swelling with the huge importance it feels itself about to confer upon the sea ; it plunges in, and is astonished to find itself swallowed up, and never more heard of."

"I declare they are all unhappy ones."

"Yes, something misanthropical ; I season my talk according to the spice of my nature. But I concede that life is not always 'as tedious as a twice-told tale.' It falls differently to different men. To some, for instance, it is like a June day, calm, agreeable, and gentle ; others seem to experience nothing but March, and to be incessantly travelling around

blustery corners. Still others know only December snows, stern and silent with great grief ; some are consumed with the passionate heat of August suns ; merry May makes up the glad natures of others ; but alas ! how few know the mellow and golden fruitage of autumn !

"But bless me, Mag, we have nearly talked the fire out. Heap it up. A dull hearth is worse than a dull friend."

"There, sir ; it blazes again."

"So ! Ah, Mag ! there is heart in a fire. I have whispered more secrets to a good blaze, than I would dare unfold to other mortals."

"Other mortals ! Are you crazy, sir ?"

"There may be nothing human in a fire, Mag ; but let me confess that if ever I should abandon Christianity, it would be to turn fire-worshipper. It is the only species of heathenism I could ever comprehend."

"I have thought of a comparison," interrupted Maggie, quickly, "which I like better than yours."

"I listen."

"Life is a maze ; we wander bewildered through its labyrinths, unable to find the clue, but still delighted with the flowers and beauties scattered along its mysterious ways ; and at last death proves our Ariadne."

"Classical and pretty. You learn aptly, Mag."

"I try to, sir."

"Who knows? In time you may turn talker, and I listener. You have matter enough, there is no doubt, but expression is the rub. The science of words is held in contempt by some. Such fellows are not ankle deep. By words both imps and angels can be stirred up; dark passions, and generous goodness, by turns, fructify under their influence. They make and unmake revolutions. Justly fitted to noble thoughts, they become their immortal framework.

"Unspoken thoughts are virgins. They must be wedded to words ere they can attain perfect existence; and once united, they live and bear fruit forever. No decree can divorce them. Or to put it another way; a thought unspoken is a seed in the mould. By due culture it will flower into words. And to despise the blossom is to despise the thought itself; for the flower, the fragrance, and the germ at the heart, are indissolubly wedded by mysterious alchemy into one whole, which live or die together.

"Words may conceal thoughts; then they are bastards. Words may paint thoughts with great exaggeration of color—then the soil is too rich, and should be tempered with clay; they may also tamely and meanly expound the hidden conception—then the soil is poor.

“There is one sin society will not forgive—silence. For there is more dogmatism, intolerance, and bigotry in your wrapt up and silent fellow, than in the most vehement zealot that ever preached. I met recently such a one. My humor, my sallies of wit, my permissible social exaggerations, my touches of sentiment, all fell like snow-flakes around a stone; while my opinions, and my rampant antagonisms, purposely shotted so as to provoke a reply, glanced from his stolid heart, making no visible impression. The fellow baffled, defeated, and sent me about my business, crest-fallen, purely because of an impassive silence, which seemed to throttle every sentence, and to sit in dogmatic condemnation upon every thought I uttered.

“I cannot talk with ease to people who employ themselves in any way; who write, or sew, or whose fingers busy themselves with occupation. I have met people, ladies particularly, who I dare say were good listeners, but whose faces and eyes have been so bent upon embroidery, or like employment, that conversation invariably flagged or died out altogether. They did not seem to understand that nothing so fills the sails of conversation, and wafts it on its way, as looks, nods, eye-glances, smiles, watchful attention, exclamations properly distributed, and other indications of an intelligent sympathy with the mat-

ter discussed. Stolid listeners are my abomination. They are almost as bad as another class of bores in society—the story-tellers. I mean those who relate embroidered, rambling, loquacious accounts of insignificant events—who travel around the world to pick up a pin; who will give you the particulars of a burnt pudding, with such circumstantiality of detail, that if every word were a pudding, and burnt at that, you would rather eat them all, than listen to the bewildering particulars.

“ Good listeners are a sort of merchandise in demand; the supply is inadequate. They are a species that the world likes; it ought to crown them, for the virtues they exhibit and the sufferings they endure are wonderful. They stand up in deserts of talk as patient and passive as the pyramids. Some day a benignant Fox will canonize them in a new book of martyrs.

“ But something too much of this. What have you read to-day, Maggie?”

“ Nothing.”

“ Why, I saw you with books.”

“ But I could not read. I could only think.”

“ Of what?”

“ I hardly know.”

“ Thought, Mag, is clear and mathematical in its processes. You dreamed rather than thought.”

"Yes, you are right. I dreamed—I wish I did not—wish I could not. My dreams do not make me happy."

"That's bad. The dreams of the young should be bright and glorious."

"Mine are sometimes, and then sometimes so strange—I cannot tell."

"Humph! morbid, I see. Too much melancholy and sentiment. I must prescribe for you."

"What, sir?"

"A puzzle. Something that will crystallize. Mathematics might do. It is an old remedy. Those ancient Greeks sharpened up their wits vastly by its use. But the clock, a stern autocrat in every household, tells a tale of late hours; I saw just now a look of weariness cross your countenance; and Ike has been stamping in the hall down-stairs for ten minutes, full. Good night."

"Good night," said Maggie; but she first put her two hands silently in mine.



## VIII.

A salutation to our companion the grate—The heart and color in the olden life—An idea of Keats which Maggie carries out—A midnight reading of Macbeth surrounded by certain dramatic accessories—Travelling down the ages—A hint to Maggie about Titania and her folly.



## VIII.

“ **M**AGGIE.”

Maggie looked up from “David Copperfield.”

“Soon, Mag, the summer sun will close up the grate, and extinguish the blaze. What shall we do then?”

Maggie glanced affectionately at the fire, and with one hand smoothed the red glow upon the other.

“But the summer is pleasant.”

“Yes; and in the soft twilight of a summer’s day, when Zephyrus, that gentlest son of Astræus, comes laden with fragrance, one drops dreamily away into the great depths of fancy, as we do now.”

“And that is as fine as our evening fire.”

“I love my hearth, and the fancies that come to life within its genial circle; so do I love the green sweetness of summer. But this I claim: the great invention of man is the chimney. When that was conceived, civilization became complete;

humanity was blessed ; the barbaric and nomadic fled before it ; peace and good will curled up in every wreath of smoke that issued from its mouth. Our chimneys open up to heaven, and through them ascend burnt incense to all the amenities of life. An old quaint writer calls them 'windpipes of hospitality.' You must not ask me who, for I should have to be frank and confess that I have quoted at second hand. I do not know.

"But I see you are reading Dickens, the new Shakspeare."

"The new Shakspeare?"

"Sacrilege, some would cry out. I do not think so. For these two men alone have given the world characters so vital that they live in the heart and brain of every man ; and sayinge so instinct with truth, and responsive to universal needs and sympathies, that they vein and permeate the whole mass of popular idioms and phrases. And I will call that man the new Shakspeare, whose knowledge of human nature is so masterly that in this one supreme test he can approach the delineator of Hamlet."

"But"——

"But me no buts. 'But' is the most envious word in the language. It is a barr which sundry people industriously stick into the side of greatness ;

a qualification which slips the pedestal from beneath the feet of the exalted, and brings them down to our own level. It is very much like Touchstone's 'If.' You can praise a man ever so highly if afterwards you stab him with a 'but.' Conrad is a wit and a scholar; he has judgment, taste, eloquence, refinement; he is honest and upright. One would think such a character a grand one as the world goes. Not so *but*. It counts all his virtues on its ten fingers—is puzzled for a moment, then looks portentous, and cries, '*but* he has no depth,' and shakes all the ten virtues in the air as worthless. 'But' manages to wriggle itself into the character of the noblest; it stops at no fame or worth; it even fastens itself upon a man like Washington. It says; yes, he was wise, prudent, just, magnanimous; but then, you see, *he had no genius*. No genius! I look up and down his career and discover this wonderful fact—his judgment, in all its ten thousand trials *was never at fault!* Find me genius of mortal growth of which this magnificent praise can be uttered, and I am down on my knees to it; I'll do salaams by the week, sprinkle my head with ashes, and transfer to it all that humility which I now feel when I stand in the historical presence of Washington.

—"I was thinking to-day, Maggie, about a

very great want—picturesqueness. The world was once in bright colors and gay figures, but they are washed out ; the hues were not fast, and the harsh attrition of labor and necessity have rubbed them into dim and undefinable tints. The objective or the external no longer has its day, and I am sorry for it. Simple, honest, healthy natures flourish with its growth ; and if we had a little more of the old grand pomp and pageantry—the medieval love for the splendid, the rich-toned and the high-colored, and the ancient passion for life and action, we should all be better and happier for it. Upon my troth, I do believe that the monster now sacking and destroying the world is Utilitarianism, and I pray daily for some St. George to appear and exterminate it. All the genial richness of life has succumbed to it ; it has white-washed red-hearted life into pale-livered money-getting ; it has substituted for broad, vigorous existence, a cramped, narrow, dull, colorless species of respiration, anatomically accurate no doubt, but meaningless and soulless as lay figures. It has knocked imagination on the head ; and poets, painters, and romancers are put in pound for fear they will transcribe the cribbed and cabined limits of a circumspect, practical, and cautious utility. Life now and once is as pale-sherry to old port ; or

as a cold, white-leaved, black-lettered book to a glorious old illuminated missal.

“ But all life is a pendulum, and vibrates to opposites. The richness of external life being denied, some have turned to the hot internal, or subjective, and fed upon sentiments, emotions, and sensations, unnatural and distorted, until their hearts are heated up as goose-livers were in epicurean Rome. Startling consequence, that on one hand shows us all the bloom and heartiness of life, extinct ; and on the other, sentiment and passion bloated into loathsome proportions for the want of natural vent and healthy action ! We have been like the scorpion. Driven into a corner and no escape, we have turned our fangs inward, and stung ourselves to death.”

“ Are you not severe upon the age ?”

“ No. I only slightly emphasize my condemnation. I cry anathema, but know none will heed me ; and perhaps for that very reason I pitch my voice a little too high. But, then, the nineteenth century pats itself so complacently, that it deserves to have its favorite bubble of ‘ progress and enlightenment ’ pretty severely pricked.”

There is a heat in my blood that sometimes bubbles. I am prone to wax warm upon a subject, and have been known to explode into indignation, to the

alarm and surprise of good-natured friends. But as there is grey in my hair, so is there silver in my blood. Both are somewhat hoar, and teach me to cool my temper in the sure bath of silence. So discovering a foam and lash upon the surface of my thoughts, I backed from controversial breakers into the placid depths of measureless meditation, and was still.

Ten minutes tripped along, and nothing spoke save the clock.

"Maggie," said I at last, "why don't you speak?"

"I don't know what to say, sir."

"Candid and blunt. You hit the core of a truth not with the point, but with the haft of your arrow. Talk of the weather, if of nothing else. An old, stripped, threadworn subject, you will say, sitting like a beggar at the portal of every man's tongue! A mistake—at least in America. For with us, its manifold and inscrutable changes render it always a fresh and piquant matter for discussion. It never ceases to astonish, puzzle and bewilder. Other countries have some sort of definable climate—fixed like their institutions. But with us Cancer, and Capricorn, and all the zones from Arctic to Antarctic, and all the winds born of Æolus and Aurora, have assembled upon our shores, in compliance no doubt



with our indiscreet national invitation to the oppressed of all nations, here to indulge in such free license and merry independence, as only some other of our guests can equal. In a free country we have the freest of climates ; the seasons disregard their allotted places ; frost and heat play at thimble-rig, and get blessedly confused as to the locality in which they really belong ; the zones and the winds are irretrievably puzzled, while the months jostle about here and there quite oblivious as to their true place in the calendar procession. In fact, our climate has read the Declaration of Independence, and with true democratic spirit defies law, order and subordination. Is it a wonder then, if twenty millions of people find the vagaries of the weather an inexhaustible source of amusing and profitable discussion ? Byron says, somewhere in his naughty 'Don Juan,' that in England they have no weather except for three months in the year—all the rest is nothing but rain. Now, with us there is no lack of weather ; it is perpetually weather ; the weather is incessantly up and doing ; and very much like Bottom, the weaver, tries to play every part all at once. Now it will bellow Boreas from the North, and, in the same breath, fairly 'roar you like a sucking dove from the South'—jumping from Pyramus to Thisbe with alacrity like that of Osrick's before the melancholy Prince. Are

you unread, and ask me what melancholy prince? I say him whose last words I seem to see written on every tombstone, 'the rest is silence!'

"But this weather. I apostrophize: O you weather—the sex is uncertain and the apostrophe in consequence rather awkward, but—O you weather! You've been an idle, vacillating, shiftless jade (but *jade* is feminine) long enough; we are tired of your tricks and pranks. You are old enough to know better, and to become that sober, grave, docile institution the venerable—bless my soul! that draught has blown the candle out!

"I make a discovery. The weather is feminine!"

\* \* \* \* \*

The night is rough; the wind shakes the cottage; the rain comes drenching down; the trees shriek in the blast, and beat their branches wildly against the window panes. I cause Maggie to open "Lear" and read me this grand passage, while the storm roars its accompaniment without:

"Blow winds, and crack your cheeks! rage! blow!  
 You cataraets and hurricanoes spout,  
 Till you have drenched our steeples, drowned the cocks!  
 You sulphurous and thought-executing fires,  
 Vau't coulters to oak-cleaving thunderbolts,  
 Singe my white head, and thou all-shaking thunder,  
 Strike flat the thick rotundity of the world!"

"Don't stop there, Maggie. Let me have the

fool's rejoinder—sweet and tender boy, though a fool.”

MAGGIE. (*Reading*), “O nuncle, court holy water in a dry house, is better than this rain water out o' door. Good nuncle, in, and ask thy daughter's blessing : here's a night pities neither wise men nor fools.”

“So the fool, Maggie, hangs his jests upon the hem of Lear's passion. Shakspeare always sets the grand in startling contrast with the grotesque, and heightens the terrible by graduations of bitter mirth. The shivering fool's doleful jests, let in between Lear's fierce outbreaks, stir mixed emotions and sympathies, terror, pity, tenderness, manifold, exquisite, and conflicting. How, too, Lear's abandonment seems intensified by the devotion of this one poor crack-brained fool with his fantastic songs, who ‘labors to out-jest his heart-struck injuries.’ I always loved the fool in Lear, and that one brief lament of the dying king—‘And my poor fool is hanged!’ moistens my eyes when I read it. Lear, Cordelia, the Fool! In the gallery of fiction, I hang green chaplets upon their memories.”

“It is strange how fond you are of tragedy.”

“No it is not. We all like tragedies ; we begin with ‘Red Riding Hood,’ and end with ‘Hamlet.’ And he who loves tragedy, Maggie, stalks a hundred feet above the cheap affairs of the world.

“ But how the storm rages ! It must have been a night like this, when Duncan was murdered. Keats once said, that he would not dare to read ‘ Macbeth ’ alone in a house, at two o’clock in the morning. One curious in sensations would find this an occasion to try it. In that long loft of ours, for instance, Maggie, with its black fathomless recesses, its vaulted roof, grim and dark with ribs of timber behind which shadows lurk, its one uncurtained window, against which the branches of the trees beat in wild and weird-like shapes ; the rain on the roof, the wind howling, shrieking, moaning through crevices—all awe-inspiring enough at this moment, I’ll be bound. It were almost worth the trial.”

“ I will do it, sir,” said Maggie, jumping up.

“ The murder scene, remember.”

“ The murder scene ; and I will go alone.”

I was at first prompted to prevent the folly ; but, after a moment’s consideration, I determined to let her whim have its way. She took the book and candle firmly enough, certainly, and walked away without the slightest evidence of hesitation or timidity.

I could not repress some anxiety as I reflected upon her peculiarly susceptible and imaginative temperament, but I knew her at heart to be exceedingly courageous.

The minutes, however, passed ; the first five slowly, the next more swiftly, and I began to wonder at her prolonged absence. Fifteen minutes, and still she did not return. I listened eagerly, and the silence of a hushed house, so peculiarly painful when you strain to catch every sound, ticked its low beat in my ear, suggestive of hidden and mysterious horrors. I jumped up at last, and seized the candle, resolved to follow her. I ran up the stairs so swiftly that my candle was extinguished, but guided by glimmers of a light through the cracks of the attic door, I hurried forward, threw it open, and took two steps into the room—two steps, and stood suddenly still. The place was all I have described it—vast, mysterious, and dismal even to terror. In the centre stood Maggie with her single candle held close to the volume in her hand, reversing the shadows on her face, and flinging over it that ghastly, strange look, always given by the upward glare of a candle ; while the dim light seemed to roll back the shadows only to pile them up in masses of opaque and Egyptian density. But Maggie's face, attitude, expression, and voice raised in passionate declamation, startled me. The scene, with all its ghostly accessories, had not terrified, but inspired her. Her face was white, her eyes flashing and burning with such fire and passion as are lighted

only in the soul of genius, while her voice poured out in thrilling accents :

“Methought I heard a voice cry, ‘sleep no more !  
 Macbeth does murder sleep’—the innocent sleep ;  
 Sleep that knits up the ravell’d sleeve of care,  
 The death of each day’s life, sore labor’s bath,  
 Balm of hurt minds, great Nature’s second course,  
 Chief nourisher in life’s feast ; . . . . .  
 Still it cried, ‘sleep no more !’ to all the house !  
 Glamis hath murdered sleep, and therefore Cawdor  
 Shall sleep no more ; Macbeth shall sleep no more !”

Accents so crowded with expression, so thrilling with passion and feeling, have rarely fallen from human lips. But then Macbeth is not usually acted with such surroundings.

I stood in silence for a few minutes ; and then, with a loud voice broke abruptly upon the recitation. Maggie gave a violent start, dropped the candle and book, the light went out, and Cimmerian darkness came down between us, out from the dark panoply of which burst peals of passionate and hysterical laughter—one of those sudden and intense reversions of feeling so common to her character.

Alarmed, I called out to her earnestly, groped my way until I reached and seized her hand, and then, as hastily as possible, led her down to my study.

"By Jupiter Tonans, Maggie," said I, with a long-drawn breath, "we'll have no more nocturnal readings of Macbeth!"

"I wasn't frightened, sir."

"I dare say, but I was, mightily. I never saw so ghostly a place in my life. In another minute that Murder Scene would have brought a host of demons, goblins, and the like, out of those mysterious nooks and impenetrable corners, just as Der Freyshutz invoked them with his charmed circle and incomprehensible incantations."

"Why, sir, you don't believe in ghosts?"

"Dr. Johnson said that all opinion is against them, but all belief for them. I do believe in ghosts, such as those that come and nightly people my room here, when you are gone, and the midnight quickens the visions of fancy into preternatural vitality.

"Ah, the shadows, then! Not merely the loved and sleeping ones haunt me, but events and impressions take to themselves human shapes, and mingle with the shadowy crowd. By the side of re-animated realities move re-animated ideals. Old boyhood fancies and wild imaginings have palpable form and historic shape. There appear in these ghostly visitations such fair forms and divine faces as once existed alone in summer dreams. And stranger still, by some mysterious reversion, the dreamed-of future is

cast back into dim shadows of a greatness that might have been. These are the ghosts, Maggie, which I not only believe in, but love. I am potent among them as Manfred was among his spirits ; they appear at my command, and we commune together ; but the mystic compact between us, unlike that of the Alpine recluse, involves no commerce with Powers who may rise some day and destroy me. And these shadows of the past are sweeter and dearer to me than all the unhallowed present.

“ I denounce the present ; so does every man ; so has all ages. Look back, and you will find every period fixing its gaze upon tradition, and worshipping those obscure virtues which loom vaguely and mistily in delusive proportions, along the backward paths of history. Time is a desert in which the sands rise and bury ten thousand lowly things, leaving only the grand and towering to lift their eternal shapes against the horizon. Or to give you another comparison, Time is a filterer, through which events and things are continually strained. Of the past there comes down to us only a pure, sweet stream of remembrances, while in the present we drink of the flood, thick with the sand and mud that agitate and ferment the passing currents, soon, however, to gravitate to the bottom. The unwise hurl their anathemas at the literature and intellect of the day, forget-



ful that time has cast away the chaff of the past, and brought to us only the grain ; forgetful that we are to sift and winnow for the future, just as previous generations have done for us.

“ For myself, I love the past, because it is a jewel set, shining upon me with a calm, pure light, and mirroring in its reflected depths, such things as neither song nor eloquence have power to depict— things which only to re-act I would take up ‘sandal shoon and scallop shell,’ and travel backward through my career.

“ If that could be so. If life were two roads, one down, and the other up the ages. If one could turn from the unknown hereafter and wander backward amid the men and things of the Once ! Should I accept it ? Would it be well to travel forth along known roads, amid giant ruins and grand memories, walking alone with all the greatness of the past through her silent arcades ? Oh, immensity of sensation ! But the future ? How its unseen grandeur thrills and fascinates me ! The past has its Babylon, its Jerusalem, its Athens, its Carthage, its Rome, its vast total of mighty accomplishment, and by these I tremble at the possibilities of the future. The very conjecture of all that shall come to pass, appalls and confounds me. I feel as one standing upon the ‘bank and shoal of time ;’ the ocean,

which is the past, thunders up to my feet, the future stretches its blank mysterious vastness beyond, while I stagger on my way, awe-struck and bewildered by both the known and the unknown.

“But learning is nothing more than a man's eyes in the back of his head, with their gaze forever fixed upon the travelled road, while his face is turned sightless against a walled up future, and events slip by under his feet and startle him when they are past. Learning will not deserve to be crowned, until it can read forward as well as backward.”

“I do not understand what you say ; I love to think of the future. It is what I dream about.”

“Fancy, Mag, creates a Utopian future ; it makes to itself, paradises in which it disports—but it steals all its materials from the past.”

“Not mine, for I have no past.”

“Therefore your dreams are fantastic imaginings, bearing no human or earthly complexion ; they pierce nothing, prophesy nothing, but hang in mid-air and are made of sunbeams and cobwebs. Did you ever hear of Titania ?”

“Who was she, sir ?”

“A queen.”

“Of what country ?”

“Eden, I think. Her throne was a rose-bud, her palace a white lily. Oberon was her king and con-

sort ; Puck, their prime minister. In a strange dream once, her eyelids having been washed by juice of a flower pierced by Cupid's shaft, she fell in love with a donkey."

Maggie flushed. "What then, sir?"

"Look to your dreams, that's all. Fancy is apt to be vagrant and gipsyish ; it takes sometimes to the fantastic, and monstrous—in short, falls in love with donkeys, and awakes from its dreams down-cast and chop-fallen. [The penetrating reader sees my drift ; I am thinking all this time of Maggie's dramatic power so startlingly displayed in the old loft, and without showing her which way my fear points, I am trying to sound a caution in her ears which may at some hereafter time forewarn and forearm. She is impulsive and has tragic passion—how far from right, then, am I in fearing, to a temperament like hers, the most dangerous kind of donkey—a love of the stage ? Power and taste like to travel the same road ; and when Maggie comes to know the institution, as she will some day, the powers within her will be touched as with fire. Some such path she must climb ; the ordinary would kill her ; but other than this, with its myriad foot-falls I must guide her to.] We all of us, Mag, go through Titania's folly. I have in my time been enamored of a good many donkeys—and the recollection of

them cannot be erased from my tablets. I cannot forget ; they stick like thorns in the sides of my self-complacency ; they tingle in my cheek even now.

“ Men may sin consciously, systematically, and become hardened to it, yet be tender-hearted at remembrance of their *contretemps*, for remorse will prick more sharply at the recollection of a *faux pas* than of an innocent wronged, or a widow undone. A man will cut a throat, and blush at a word mis-spoken. The sins against society, as the world goes, overtop the sins against morals. The fact is, Mag”  
—I turned towards her with the emphasis finger up-lifted—she was asleep.

IX.

A glance at Shady Side—A summer reminiscence—  
A new *sobriquet* which I like—A story of

THE MONOMANIAC—

v. Something about novels old and new—A few private  
but rather dangerous sentiments.

■

## IX.

“MAGGIE,” said I, stretching my feet upon the fender, and preparing for a long evening’s chat, “the morning was so fine that I took a long ride in the brisk, but pleasant air. Even ‘Shady Side’ where I paused briefly, looked warm and pleasant notwithstanding the naked boughs and the brown sod. The little river rushed dun and sad, however, and seemed to mourn for the flowers.”

“That ‘Shady Side’ is your passion, sir.”

“It is. Nature everywhere is my mistress; amid the slopes and shady dells of that wooded bank, when the summer sun is in the heavens, I am happy al-ways. Few know it; rarely have other shadows than my own been thrown across its green glades. I rejoice that its seclusion is so perfect, and I wander in and out, up and down, with a certain sense of mastery, as if I were monarch of the scene. It rarely occurs to me that it is the property of John Jellaway, Builder. Indeed, if John Jellaway, Builder, should appear some day, and lay his hand upon it and call

it his, I should be tempted to ignore title-deeds, and all such miserable red-tape affairs, and defy John Jellaway, Builder, to his face."

"I think that I like the beauties of nature, too," said Maggie, "yet I am surprised that you do not find them monotonous—you who have seen so much, and are so wise."

"I am a philosopher, Maggie, by my winter hearth; but in the summer time I am such a rustic gentleman as can be found upon any green hill-side in the country, with an ambition for big cabbages, and a worthy emulation for miraculous pumpkins. I love my garden; my vines, my nurselings, and the creatures that flourish around my threshold; but more than these, I love the reverie and the noontide dreams—the woodside, the brook, the siesta under nodding elms, the far-off haze of sleeping mountains, the smell of hay, the light and shade in forest masses, the songs of birds, the flower-jewels which nature hangs upon her broad bosom, the glorious emerald of the fields, the rich shades of the forest depths, the white clouds against the fathomless blue of heaven! To him who loves these things, Mag, there is no monotony, but ever-shifting variety and change. To my eyes there is a new picture presented every morning, when, like Guiderius and Arviragus in Shakspeare's 'Cymbeline,' I stoop



through my low door-way and salute the heavens. There are the same general outlines it is true, but to my tutored perception, new combinations continually arrange themselves before me. I have a trick of separating and framing in bits of a scene—of seeing one object amid many objects, and grouping around it those accessories best suited to its disposition and effect, and by an act of will, shutting out from my vision whatever detracts or destroys. A prospect is rarely one wide grand view to me—it is a gallery of pictures, a collection of fragments and isolated portions set in frameworks of my own. Sometimes the picture is a group of cattle—that always picturesque adjunct to a landscape ; sometimes a single tree photographed, as I may term it, apart from its fellows, upon the retina of the eye ; sometimes a group of rocks ; frequently a cluster of trees in the forest. In my loved ' Shady Side ' I have innumerable such pictures, which I go to frequently and pause before—bits of the opposite shore of the stream ; some leaning, fantastically-shaped trees ; mellow patches of sun-light, flung amid dense shades ; openings in the tree-tops, where the blue of the sky seems to come down to the green fringes of the branches ; dark pools, hemmed in with wild thickets ; park-like slopes, flecked with sun-drops ; meadows that open in a rich breadth of light from your stand-point amid shrub

and shadow; cascade-bits of the stream, where the water tumbles and foams, and the shore rises tangled and wild; brook expanses (of which there are many in this neighborhood), with jutting shore, overhanging rock, picturesque bridges!

"These are the things that, with me, disarm monotony—that, with the ever-marching seasons and the progress towards summer maturity or autumn decay, present day by day new colors and forms.

• My pictures not only change in themselves, but I am always seeing them in new lights; and in that musing, dreamy way of mine, I daily walk around them, discovering differences, observing, comparing, and watching the changes and contrasts as they occur."

"Why, sir, you would make a rural poet."

"Ah, Mag, a love of these things is an inborn and instinctive passion in the hearts of the sons of Adam. It is the 'grand old gardener's' love of Eden dimly perpetuated through all his race—a shadowy, haunting, reminiscence of that first paradise.

"Do you know, Maggie, the name that some of my neighbors have got for me?"

"No, sir. What can it be?"

"They call me Jacques—melancholy Jacques. How this name became suggested to them I cannot tell, for I know of none who are readers of Shakespeare. One more learned than the rest may possi-

bly be familiar with the great poet, but the likelihood is that some city spark has discovered my habits of rumination and love of philosophic reverie, and proposed the *sobriquet*. Whoever he may be, I thank him. 'As you Like It' is a frequent poem in my hands (as it ought to be in those of all others who, like me, are wedded to woodland life), and the melancholy meditations of rare old Jacques hit my humors perfectly. How often do I, like him,

"Lay along

Under an oak, whose antique root peeps out—'

And moralize upon the 'body of country, city, court!' I, too, 'suck melancholy out of a song,' and 'love it better than laughing.' I differ only from Jacques in having a little of the lover's melancholy, which he disclaims; but mainly, like his, mine is compounded of many simples, extracted from many objects, and the 'sundry contemplation of my travels, in which my rumination often wraps me, is a most humorous sadness.'

"But as usual, Mag, I have drifted a long way from the point for which I set out. I begun to tell you of my morning ride. It led me up a mountain to which I sometimes wander; and on the brink of one of its grand precipices, where the torn, jagged, but upright wall scaled from the bed of a rocky

stream hundreds of feet, I recalled a little sketch, set down years ago, from facts which fell in my way, and I resolved to read it to you to-night. Will you listen?"

"A story?"

"Yes, I think you may call it a story."

"Then I shall listen with all my heart."

"And I begin. I will call it

"'THE MONOMANIAC.'

"An old man, not so old as threescore, nor so young as to escape whitening locks and the inevitable crow-feet, very sad in manner, abstracted perpetually in a meditative mood, which gave a ruminant glance to olive-shaped, dreamy eyes; simple and unprosperous in attire; a slow walker, with his eyes on the pebbles two yards ahead of his feet—came every day to the edge of a precipice two hundred feet high, and standing upon its brink, endeavored to wind his resolution up to the point of performance—essayed to fling himself from his rocky throne into death and eternity. But his courage, wound too high for its tender spring, daily gave way; the heart refused to comply; the flesh was weak, and shrunk from that harsh contact with the flinty rocks, which the will had assigned it to endure.

“Weary of life, poor, sad, without friends, a torn link from a chain of lost associations, the future offered only such dull monotony, and promised merely such prolongation of the terrible sadness and weariness which had gathered about his heart, that he longed to return the unprofitable gift of life, and to escape either to everlasting silence, or to a world where existence would be more tolerable than in this. But, unhappy man! He had neither the courage to live nor the courage to die. With the rising of every sun he went forth with fresh resolution; with the setting of every sun he came back with his head upon his breast—his purpose unaccomplished.

“‘It is so terrible,’ he would murmur, looking down the fearful space; ‘I dare not attempt the cold plunge into the air—I shrink from that downward, arrowy cleaving, with the still air rushing by like a gale; then, too, the sudden up-coming of the earth—the crash of the rocks through your brain—the terrible force of a world impelled upon you—for so, I have learned, are the sensations of a falling man. Yet, in these long distances, life does not hold, some assert, until the bottom is reached; the blood falls into the head, brimming it to the chin, and insensibility, catching you as you fall, wraps the body in an impenetrable panoply,

and drops it with tender unconsciousness upon the rocks.'

"And so, day after day, he took his stand upon the edge of the precipice, looked wistfully down to the dwindled shrubs, and while he longed for the courage to take the fatal plunge, curiously speculated and philosophized upon the deed, upon the Hereafter into which it would usher him, and upon the suffering he would experience by the way.

" 'How swift !' he exclaimed once as he dropped a stone over the precipice and watched it as it fell ; 'the time is almost measureless. If the way were lined with flaming swords, the ordeal would not be severe. A spring—a quick spasm—and eternity. Yet that time and space, so short to the calm looker-on, would be an age to the victim, for our measures and divisions of time convey no indication of duration—ages and moments, years and hours have their sensible span in the circumstance of the man only. An hour to the prisoner is the slow duration of sixty times sixty agonizing and prolonged respirations—to the lover a swift ecstasy.

" 'But ah, courage is all. Even insensibility is better than this over-keen perception of possibilities. If I could stunt my imagination, give my speculations wings, and see before me but the one clear fact, that death would quickly fol-

low the plunge, I should master my irresolution at once, and consummate the purpose now. But alas ! I see too far, too much ; my imagination fills up the brief period between the leap and the death with innumerable horrors ; it lines the way with undiscovered and unknown agonies ; it divides the seconds of time into thousands of sub-divisions, and for each sub-division it conjures up and creates a special and perceptible sensation. But even if all that my fancy pictures were true, I should brave them if I possessed the courage. And there it is. How well do I know my weakness ! From the beginning all that I have suffered I trace back to this one great need—the misery which prompts me to end my career, and the weakness which compels me to live on and endure, each arises from the same cause—a timid heart !

“The old man’s head fell upon his breast, and he thought of his past—of that irresolution manifested through all his life, which had robbed him of much good, and held forever the prizes of life within his eager gaze, but beyond his feeble up-reaching. Others had plucked up honor by the locks, while he stood upon the brink of the flood letting ‘I dare not wait upon I would.’ Boldness, courage, tenacious adherence to chosen paths, had brought other men mellow and fruitful autumns—with him a thou-

sand paths abandoned, enterprises of pith and moment foregone, all because of a vacillating weakness, and timid shrinking from consequences, from endurance, and from action !

“ He was a philosopher, curious and fine in speculation, subtle in reason, admirable in the reach and breadth of his intelligence ; but allied to his fine mental organization was great physical and moral timidity. He lacked the courage and the motive for exertion ; he shrunk from the collisions and antagonisms of the world. Most thoroughly unfitted for the brisk pursuits and active struggles of life, chance had thrown him into the very midst of its whirl and clamor. Thus in his old age we find him with an unhallowed past, an unhopeful future, and a present which bore down upon him with a weight almost beyond endurance. He had long since slipped from the active avenues of life, and hid himself in solitude ; his only desire was to die ; his philosophy had reasoned from the old Roman view, and sanctioned self-destruction as the privilege of his race ; he lacked only the ability to execute that which his heart desired and his reason sanctioned.

“ So the old man hovered about the precipice. Weeks, months passed away, and even a second summer found him daily ascending and descending the mountain, as infirm of purpose as at the begin-



ning. But the contemplation of one object had unsettled his mind a little ; his eye was unsteady in its gaze ; his walk was irregular ; his manner more dejected than ever. At times his fancy would now give a fantastic direction to his thoughts. He evinced great eagerness in the phenomena of falling bodies ; he searched for the written experience of those who had survived great falls ; he acted and reacted, in imagination, the sensations so likely to be experienced ; he pictured ever his crushed form upon the rocks, with upturned face white in the sunlight, and very strangely seemed to feel a horrible pleasure in the fancy.

“ One day, as he lay stretched upon a rock which projected over the precipice, a lad from the village came wandering near in search of wild berries. It was an open-faced, frank-eyed boy of about fourteen years. The solitude of the monomaniac was so rarely disturbed, that at the first sound of the boy's foot he evinced vexation ; but suddenly brightening up with a new thought, he called the lad to approach.

“ ‘ Boy,’ said he, ‘ how far can you fling a stone ?’

“ ‘ Oh ! ever so far, sir,’ replied the lad, with a proud look.

“ ‘ Let me see you. Throw it as high above you

as you can—let it fall over the edge of the precipice.'

"The boy very eagerly ran to pick up a stone, and the old man, with his finger upon his pulse, watched the missile as it flew high in the air, until it reached its utmost height, and seemed to pause suspended for an instant, and then swiftly descending, plunged into the gulf of space far below the watchers.

" 'Not ten pulses !' muttered the old man ; ' and yet better if it had been longer. The speed is too swift—the heart would start and snap at such velocity.'

" ' Shall I throw another ?' inquired the boy, who thought his companion a jolly old fellow.

" ' Roll that large stone over the edge. Stop, I will help you. It is too heavy for one.'

"The man and the lad tugged at the rock, by strained muscle got it to the edge, and toppled it over. As it slipped from the brink the old man fell upon his knees, and, with head bent down, watched the descent. The rock rushed with a noisy whirl, struck a projecting tree near the bottom, and bent it up like a twig, bounded off and fell upon the angular point of a rock with a concussion that startled the listeners above, and split the piece in twain.

" ' Terrible !' exclaimed the monomaniac with a shudder, but with his gaze eagerly fastened upon the

spot. 'If a body—how mangled, crushed, battered—nothing human in its semblance would be retained! But the blow would eject the spirit at once—the soul would fly out as body and rock came together. The terror after all is in the spectator; the horror, the agony, the suffering in the imagination and the sympathy of those who look upon the tragedy; to the actor, nothing but a tingling, and he drops into spaces which are infinite—he cleaves into eternity like an arrow, he shoots among the stars a soul fresh from earth, warm yet with the pulse of its old life. How clearly it is so,' he muttered; 'how easy to make this respiration the last! Yes, I will do so. This boy shall watch me as we watched the stone. The horror will all be his; he shall suffer, and shrink, and cover his eyes; and I shall only take wings and fly into futurity.'

"He laughed low and fearfully. Presently he resumed: 'It was well thought. To make *him* the sufferer—to have another by to experience all the pain. Now I will do it. The impulse has come at last. Bear me quickly, you pleasant airs, to my doom.'

"He stood up close on the verge, with his back to the frightful gulf, closed his eyes, and appeared to prepare for the plunge. Suddenly the arms of the boy were thrown about his limbs.

“ ‘ Oh ! sir, sir, don't ! don't ! ’ cried the boy, very white and with spread eyes. ‘ You will kill yourself. I am sure you will. Please, sir, don't. ’

“ The man tried to shake off the grasp of the boy ; but the lad, though terrified at the horrible attempt at self-destruction, was really cōrageous, and clung firmly to his knees. The struggle was brief. The elder's resolution faded away like the extinguishing of a candle ; he grew dizzy and sick, and walked away from the danger and the temptation.

“ The boy, not insensible to the horrible, and loving after the fashion of other humans whatever afforded him a sensation, came eagerly to the cliff the next day. He found the old man there, with his brow upon his hand, so abstracted that the boy had to put his hand upon his shoulder before his presence became known.

“ ‘ Ah ! ’ said the elder, looking up. ‘ It is you. I recollect. What is your name, lad ? ’

“ ‘ John Coombs. ’

“ ‘ John, ’ rising and whispering very eagerly in his ear, ‘ did you ever fall from a high place ? from a church steeple, say ? ’

“ ‘ No, sir, ’ replied the boy, laughing ; ‘ why, that would kill a fellow, wouldn't it ? ’

“ ‘ No, no, ’ said the old man ; ‘ for I fell last night down a space ten times higher than the highest

steeple, and here I am. Alive ! am I not ? This is life, boy ; is it not ?

“ The lad stared and was puzzled.

“ I will tell you my fall ; I know the way every inch. First I shot out into the air, and my heart leaped with such a bound it nearly burst ; then I felt myself cutting through an atmosphere armed with sharp points, and through my frame, from head to toe, ran a cold current which tingled in the extremities ; then my head grew swollen, and around it was wound a band which cut into my brain. My head grew hot while my heart grew cold—so terribly, horribly cold. Then a bloody film spread over my eyes ; the sun looked blood-shot, the earth like a battle-field, and the sky pressed down and around me. Then my breast became encircled with a bandage, below which I could not breathe ; respiration stopped short in the neck ; I could only get brief, agonizing gasps. My limbs grew suddenly heavy and of dead weight, my head expanded almost to bursting, and the blood trickled from ears, nose and mouth, but still down—down I clove through the air. It parted before me like waves, and closed behind with a palpable rush. Sound became magnified ; my nerves became touched as with electricity ; sight alone was confused. First, great gaunt, pendant trees swept by—it was down a rocky precipice

—then huge, seamed, riven rocks ; then smooth-hewn surfaces, rain-stained with a million storms ; then jutting, gnarled, angular trees, fantastic and hideous in form ; then vines and low shrubs, wild, tangled and clinging to crevices ; then chasms, where eternal shadows clung ; then suddenly, up-sweeping with precipitate and heedless force, rushing through the air with a velocity horrible to behold, came the earth, and with terrible force it crushed through my body—through and through—mangling and battering it, then suddenly left me floating beyond in a serene and beautiful atmosphere.'

“ ‘ A dream, sir, wasn't it ? ’ whispered the boy, awed by the tale.

“ ‘ A dream ? So, possibly. Yet it was fearfully real—real enough to have been true. All the agony, the suffering, the prolonged terror, and no result ! no death after all ! It is monstrous, boy. A life drops off into eternity every second—since we have been talking a good hundred or so have sped into heaven or hell, and yet I, who long to go, cannot escape from my prison.'

“ ‘ Oh, my ! ’ said the lad, choking down certain tendencies to fright, and trying to think the affair only a joke, ‘ why don't you shoot yourself ? I would.'

“ ‘ That's not it,' replied the old man, testily. ‘ I

know what my doom must be eventually. There is my grave.' He pointed to the foot of the precipice. 'It is not the fact I doubt, lad; I know well enough, sooner or later, that my ribs and limbs must be broken on the rocks below—but I would hasten the hour. I would have it now, and it cannot be.'

"The boy began to fear that his strange companion would make another attempt to throw himself over the precipice, and while he half wished he had stayed away, experienced no little of the strange fascination which so mastered the elder. Indeed that boy, healthy in his sympathies, but with certain uncultured appetites, might, under circumstances conducive, be educated into the old man's accomplice and sympathizer. In the heart of the lad, although a green sapling seemingly sound to the core, could rapidly have sprung up a love of blood and death—a coarse, vile, dark passion for torture, suffering and blood—such a passion as animated the spectators of old gladiatorial contests.

"How easy to see the passion working! In that boy's heart—pure, frank, fresh, and true—lay passions dormant: the passions of avarice, of power, of lust, of *blood!* Not one that could not be stimulated, not one that had not already lifted its hydra-head, half waking at some fierce temptation—

not one that had not already stirred its coils, and prepared for that struggle for mastery, so sure to come ere manhood crown him. And if the tempter played upon these passions, fed them, pricked them into activity, how soon out of his calm blue eyes would flash the blood-red glance of Murder? how soon would his brain grow hot with the thirst of Cain?

“It is not difficult to image this development, nor do we in supposing it to do violence to truth and nature. May Heaven be blessed for temptations withheld! We have many, and sin vastly, but the good that is in us is too much the unfretted surface of a stormless sea. When the winds rise, our frail crafts of Virtue sink swiftly, or float tattered wrecks upon the waves.

“But the old man was infatuated, not depressed; he sought no evil upon the boy; and the lad himself was in the main hearty and true. Like most lads, his sensibilities were unrefined, but his impulses were genial, robust, and sound, and these got the best of a temporary hot flush of morbid feeling. Moreover, in his own way, he was both intelligent and shrewd. Seeing, or fancying that he saw, a movement on the part of the monomniac which threatened the consummation of the tragedy, he suddenly clapped his hands, and shouted:



“ Oh ! look there ! Ain't it funny ? ” and darting up a little bank, seized an odd mountain growth, and waved it before the eyes of his companion. ‘ Isn't it queer, sir ? ’ continued he, with a bright glance and a laugh.

“ The old man was curiously learned in the sciences ; his attention was caught, his interest excited. An old, long dormant passion was faintly revived, and he begun with a manner gradually increasing in warmth, to explain to his listener the mysteries of the plant. The boy was receptive, and listened wide-mouthed to the learned exposition of the scholar. The fresh, clear magnetism of the boy had aroused a responsive feeling in the elder the first hour they met, and now this new relation intensified the sympathy. The old man, worn, dull, clogged, turned his heavy heart up to the sunlight of youth, and seemed slowly stirred into life by contact and collision with the crisp, sharp newness of feeling in the breast of his companion.

“ The fount thus opened was not soon exhausted. They walked down the mountain together, the would-be suicide for once forgetful of his sorrows and his sadness, the lad with such new sensations awakened as he had never known before.

“ From that hour these two met daily—magnetic opposites in harmonious unison. Both were tutors :

both scholars. The grey-beard opened his store of learning, poured into the empty vessel at his side the rich accumulations of long years spent in the academic groves, and received in return those boons more precious even than learning—the pure, fresh, vital flow of peace and health. From that humble, ignorant, half-clad boy he drew the wisdom of life—a wisdom which drove the demon of Unrest from his heart.

“It is unnecessary to follow step by step this old man’s rescue from his terrible infatuation. Affections and sympathies long dormant sprang up into vigorous life ; he turned from self, that dangerous inward brooding which to all men is a disease, and in healthful fellowship and love discovered the antidote to those corroding, self-inflicted sorrows which so long had been his bane—the clouds that obscured but did not obliterate the lights of humanity.”

“I think, sir,” said Maggie, after my little tale was told, “that you ought to write a novel.”

“Why?” inquired I, curiously.

“Because grand novels are better than anything.”

“Better than plays?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Than poems?”

“Better than anything. I don’t know why. When you read poetry, I am delighted ; when I read it my-

self, I am only half pleased. It requires so much art, and I've heard you say so, too, to read poetry well. But a novel is always intense enjoyment."

"Which do you like best, the old or the new?"

"I don't know ; I like them when they are good."

"A wise preference. There are those who can make a keener distinction, however. Novel-writing, like other matters, has changed, and perhaps progressed. When steam was discovered, not locomotion only was pricked into new activity, but the mystic force infused itself into all the affairs of men. For six thousand years the blood-human had moved sluggishly, but simultaneously with the application of this ingenious motor to the propulsion of keel and axle, the heart of civilization began to boil and bubble—steam appeared to be suddenly generated in the brains of men, and universal rush and haste exhibited itself everywhere, in science, art and even philosophy. Novel-writing did not escape. The old-fashioned stage-coach novel was tripped up, and a jaunty, fast, clever, rattling successor seized the reins and cracked his whip in our ears.

"But what a stately, grand, decorous affair the novel was, Maggie, in the olden time. How methodical in form, polished in diction, elaborate in style—moving with calm, unruffled progress as moved our grandmothers in hoops, furbelows, and powder ! No

body thought, in that blessed period, of becoming interested in a novel before the second volume. It was an understood thing that a certain quantity of dullness—a purgatory of preliminaries—was necessary before the reader could expect to experience the full interest of the story. But all this is not the modern way. We are too impatient now for preliminaries, introductions, and preparatory flourishes once so inevitable. We demand to be startled at the beginning. We must bolt at the pith at once. Indeed, it is all now very like taking a cold bath—we turn over the title page and jump in !”

“That’s true enough,” said Maggie, laughing gleefully, “and some of our modern writers see what they can do to surprise us in the first sentence.”

“I do not like, Maggie, to bolt into a parlor and astound the company. It is more agreeable to familiarize oneself to the assembly by degrees, and allow the spirits to rise as the acquaintance deepens. A novel, Mag, should be like Bridget’s broth ”

“Why, how, sir ?”

“You clap it on the fire cold, and let it warm by gradual degrees until the boiling point is reached—then wisk it off—your novel is cooked !

“But I am not disposed to accept the old way altogether. Melinda over her embroidery discussing with such transcendent sweetness all the cardinal

virtues, in wonderful syntax, or Lord Montaine making love to Clarissa in such unendurable good grammar, and receiving the lady's blushing Yes in the style of a homily—were things which delighted, no doubt, our fine old grandmothers, but would scarcely prove acceptable to an age which insists that art shall come down from her stilts and shake hands with nature! The novel of old was an essay on virtue—rich, stiff, and showy, like old brocade—a matter of grand toilettes, exasperating propriety, powder, pumps, and rose-water. But the novel of the present grasps the utmost range of philosophy and nature; it delves into the mysteries of life, and with vast subtlety dissects human motives and human passions. It is the scalpel, laying open the heart of the world!”

“ Whose novels are the best ?”

“ I cannot say. I am no umpire to venture upon absolute dicta. So many excellences commingle in the pages of all, so many spots dull the brightness of the most ambitious, that I know of none to crown above his fellows. For Dickens I have a warm corner in my heart; for Thackeray an admiration that grows upon what it feeds. He is an artist who glides into your sympathies, you scarcely know how, and by insinuation the most subtle and powerful, infuses his magnetism into your heart. He tints his pictures,

rather than paints them, but the colors are fast ; Dickens, on the contrary, lays on broad masses of color—keeps up his effects in startling lights and shades. His humor is as broad and round as a Dutchman ; his tragedy out-Rembrandts Rembrandt—opaque, dark, fearful !

“ But the man for whom I have ever an eager sympathy is Hawthorne. To him my whole nature turns up, like a peach to the sun. I ripen under the warm, rich fullness of his genius; the tint and tone of his mind flood through and through the chambers of my soul, and light them up with mellow eloquence of feeling. Under Hawthorne, I am more than myself—dead faculties spring up ; the imagination wells to the brim and overflows; the life that is in me is new-touched!”

“ I have read the *Scarlet Letter*,” broke in Maggie, “ and I think that I too had some such feelings.”

“ Possibly, Maggie; but I've observed lately that you have fallen into the way of young ladies, and have crammed yourself to repletion with various watery novels, classified, I believe, under the general name of 'domestic.'”

“ Everything that I have read has been good!” exclaimed Maggie, with some spirit.

“ I bend my neck, and believe humbly,” replied I, in a tone which flushed Maggie's cheek. “ But still,

Maggie, those novels which you have been reading, although they are applauded in parlors, commended by mild parsons, and receive the sanction of circum-spect dames, have not, ordinarily, vitality enough to agitate a smile. A heart as deep as the ribbed edge of a dime, would be beyond their fathom; they are swallow novels, that skim along the surface of society, and tip their beaks through the thin surface to catch little fishes; polite and proper novels; novels of skimmed commonplaces, with ill-cooked dinners for catastrophes, pricked fingers and soiled silks for incidents; tapery, babies, small theology, and all the milder-mannered passions for machinery—novels, without one genuine, free, hearty pulse-beat from initial to finis! They are mostly written by women”——

“Oh, but,” cried Maggie, with warmth, “women have written splendid novels—Currer Bell, for instance.”

“Of course, I shall not permit you to break your lance so zealously, Maggie; I forestall you by confessing to the fact. Noble novels have been fathered by women”——

“Why, that’s a bull, sir.”

“Let it pass. But the most astonishing of all novels are the theological ones. Women never have any difficulties: the dear, little, clear-headed angels see through the mysteries, philosophies, metaphysical

subtleties, ethical problems, that puzzle and perplex the astutest of learned and wise men, with a facility wonderful and admirable. They disentangle an awkward question in theology as easy as a snarled skein; or if the knot prove a little tough, they whip out their scissors, and clip the Gordian puzzle.

"Indeed, I must confess that the thing least to be endured with patience in a novel is a heroine scarcely out of pinafores, given to white muslin and the abstrusities, running about and disposing of grave and vexed questions with a flippant assurance deserving of nothing so much as boxed ears, and venturing, with the audacity of ignorance, into those seas where brave and wise men can find no soundings. Bread and butter theology is very fashionable, I know; but I prefer young women who can leave these things to their betters."

"But do not the novels you speak of teach a good moral?"

"Their very fault. Knowingly, I will not read a novel with a moral."

"Well, I declare! You talk so strange, sir. I would suppose a good moral novel the very thing."

"Has Niagara any moral? let me ask; or Mont Blanc? or the Mammoth Cave? or the Highlands of the Hudson? or my loved Shady Side? Such



morality as lives in the beautiful, the sentiment of the sublime, and its divine expansion of heart and soul! No more. Novels are pictures of life, and have artistically no more to do with ethics than the canvases upon my walls. We want color, vitality, movement, drama in our novels; we read them that we may put ourselves into shapes other than our own; the heroism, valor, sentiment, life, are all ours, reflected in the page before us. We do not ask nor seek for homilies; we ask merely for a photograph of life, in its exact tint and form. The novel, in short, should always be dramatic, never didactic. If it preach, it is an abomination. We might just as well look for a wise maxim pinned to Niagara, as for a moral clapped to the pages of a novel."

"My father says that amusement should always be combined with instruction; and novels therefore should do something more than entertain."

"Yes, for first and second childhood, possibly. But I deny the premises. I decline being instructed; I refuse permission for any gentleman, under cover, to trick me into the knowledge of anything. I will, of my own free will, elect what I shall learn, but no homilies, sugared over with delusive names—no vagabondizing lecturers, prosaic and soporific—no ponderous gentlemen, who flourish in amiable paragraphs in the corners of the newspapers

—none of these shall make a victim of me. I was not born to be filled up with Tom, Dick and Harry's refuse ; to be crammed with every would-be-moralist's wise saws ; to be stuffed with sage maxims at the option of every shallow-brained philanthropist who crosses my way. I ask of poets, novelists, essayists, wit and sentiment. They may make me laugh, or by skillfully touching the fount of tears, make me weep. My imagination unfolds, and will warm under the touch of every man who can bring to it sustenance and light ; but no one shall slip facts into the machinery without my consent ; no man shall choke me with proverbs 'and such small deer' while I have power to resist."

"Why, sir, you are the most incomprehensible man I ever met. Now tell me, sir, if you had a daughter, what would you begin by teaching her?"

"Trigonometry!"

"My goodness!" exclaimed Maggie, and laughed merrily.

"All mathematics," said I, resuming ; "for I tell you, Mag, that no one can think around a corner who has not thumbed Euclid in his youth. I would make my girl skilled in the subtleties of problem and theorem as thoroughly as if my offspring were a boy ; and from mathematics I would lead her into

the highest atmosphere of literature. The grandest authors should give expansion to her mind ; her imagination should put forth wide reaches under the mightiest poets and philosophers. The Titans of literature should be her teachers ; none of this frothed cream—this whipped syllabus for her, O Maggie Dean !”



**X.**

How Maggie has flourished in my fireside corner--  
Love the mighty and Lovers the monarchs—A love  
thought fancifully pursued—Life, the world, and the  
imperfect sensibilities—My hearthstone and a dream of  
the impossible.



## X.

**A**S Maggie sits where the fire-light glances up clear and full into her face, I am studying her features from my seat opposite, peering at them over the top of a journal in my hand. Maggie is reading, and the candle-light falls over her shoulder upon the page in her lap.

Vastly improved is Maggie now from that elf creature I met in the green lane. She is beautiful, I think, but by no known law of beauty ; dark, but clear ; irregular in feature, but with an expression of refinement, power, and intelligence not discernible when I first knew her. Her eyes flash bright and strangely as ever ; but the wild glance has vanished, and the weird-like movement of her limbs and body has been subdued into something refined, although still nervous and emphatic. She is taller and more rounded in outline ; and with the stature of her body the stature of her mind has more than kept pace. The whole tone and character of her intelligence has broadened and deepened. She is

far from being crammed with facts. In many directions she is sadly ignorant. But her acquirements have been dissolved into a state of fusibility—her whole nature is saturated with æsthetic feeling; and this I attribute to the course I have pursued with her. I turned her loose into my library, after the advice of the gruff old author of "Rasselas;" and I urged her to read, no matter what, so long as she put her mind in contact with other minds. I felt assured that the native purity and discernment of her character would sift the gross from the true. In her own affinities and repulsions I depended for the elements which would absorb the excellent and the congenial, and at the same time repel the false and vicious.

There is chemistry in the brain. If its spirit be true, to it will fly the beautiful, the honest, the fair; it will assimilate from everything within its circle the particles and parts apposite and consonant to its nature. Like a plant, it will draw sustenance from the atmosphere, and by processes of its own, extract even from the rottenness around it, rich contributions from which golden fruit afterwards matures.

And so Muggie flourished and ripened with a swiftness which could not have been equalled with a soil less natively rich. At first facts confounded her; the multitude of sensations opened to her



Imagination oppressed her with their regal bountifulness. But order soon came out of chaos ; deep, profound feeling matured under the crowd and wealth of the impressions which poured into her soul from every point ; from the poets for the first time unveiled ; from the grand historical drama, enacted down through the centuries by all the nations of the past ; from the wealth of human character, fancy, wit, range of passion, unfolded in the pages of the romancists ; from facts in science, bewildering in their marvellous beauty and measureless wonder !

Thinking these things, I watched Maggie by the fire, until my fancy, unusually active, conjured up a possibility which made me laugh.

But the laugh was affected, and died away into a sigh. Maggie looked up wonderingly from her book, with a smile upon her lips somewhat plaintive and tender I thought.

"Come here, Maggie," said I, "and sit by me."

"Yes, sir." She came quickly, pushing along the low seat with her foot, and took the place I pointed out.

"What are you reading ?"

"A love story."

"Ah ! your fancy leaps quick to the sentiment, I dare say. The art of the story may be low, but it warms the blood around your heart."

Maggie looked down and blushed a little.

"Love, after all, Maggie," said I, with the forefinger lifting and playing with the stray curl that fell down upon the shoulder, "love is the grand passion—the end-all and be-all. There is nothing else for which men endure so much,—nothing else which so masters the nature, and yet so spurs the faculties. Hope never soars so highly, Joy never leaps so exultingly, Peace never settles upon the heart so sweetly, Ambition never rises so mightily, as when the little cherub Love sits in the chamber of the fancy. The lover is a monarch; his heart is the world; he stalks a Colossus, with the little affairs of the universe, the wars and policies, playing at bo-peep about his legs. With a sigh in his ear, just fresh and palpitating from the bosom of love, and its fellow half-strangled in the throat as it leaps to respond, your lover has neither sense nor comprehension for the dull actualities that other men bruise their patience against. To him past and present, loss and profit, good and ill, are all merged into one sensation; a kiss blots out the universe, and the rapturous ecstasy that tingles in his blood is light, day, life, respiration—the sum of everything which makes up existence. Somebody describes love as Self merged into an idea dearer than self—a perfect solution, to my mind, of a world-old problem."

But while I speak, Maggie does not follow me as usual with her eyes. Her senses do not have that eager and absorbing aspect with which my lubrications are always greeted. Her eyes are veiled: she does not respond.

"There are few things, Maggie," I resume, watching her closely, "so well worth experiencing. I would rather be a lover, than an actor in any other field, however grand. There are no triumphs so sweet as those of love; no pleasures so deep, no experience so fruitful of profound, world-wide happiness. Fame, power, wealth—the altitude which commands worship, and the incense which ascends to the great—nothing so transfuses the weight of mortality into gossamer, nothing so essentially lifts us into an atmosphere above vulgar care and earth-born perplexity."

"In the love story I have been reading," said Maggie, without lifting her eyes from the floor, "is abundance of both care and perplexity. It is a tale of amusing cross-purposes, in which every possible adversity arises to thwart the desires of the hero and heroine. I should say, sir, that it very effectually disproves your theory."

"But you would leap into the shoes of the heroine with one bound, if the power to do so could be vouchsafed to you. And I no less would slip off my age, my philosophy, my love of idle reverie, and jump into

the individuality of the hero. I would accept the lover's tribulations even at the sacrifice of my ease, if by that transformation I could enjoy, even briefly, that broad, bristling experience of life which is his. Think of it, Maggie. I metamorphosed into youth and love, and you the Dulcinea for whom the mystic transition is effected!"

"Strange enough. But I, unlike you, would not desire the change."

"Why? Is youth so far receded that I must not turn a wistful glance backward? Or is it impossible for your imagination to conceive a poor word-broker like me, in the splendid flush of gallant youth?"

"Oh, no, no, sir!" cried Maggie, impulsively; "I do not mean either of those things. I know you as you are—is it not natural that I should prefer the real to any imaginative picture that can be portrayed?"

"Most decidedly not. You are young, and you are a woman. By those two facts I peep into the arcana of your brain—I see the dreams that hide themselves there, and the grand images you delight to bring forth, and fancy real. You have heroes in your heart, Mag, and I cannot believe that your active fancy can content itself with a man like me, with temples crow-marked, a ridged brow, and lips withered between a parenthesis of lines, set years ago by old

Time, as a signal that their best uses were past! No. While I speak there leaps into the light before you a youth of magnificent bloom; white-browed, tender-lipped, high-breasted, sun-eyed! Such a youth as maidenhood delights to paint, and your imagination starts eager and warm to the picture, but— but”——

“ But what, sir ?”

“ It glides into the peaked visage of Ike.”

“ Dear me ! I do not like Ike. I’ve told you so before.”

“ But have you noted how splendid he has grown ? He is trimmed up and put in holiday attire. His locks are clipped into comely proportion; his coat is brushed; he hath an itching to be polite. Be sure of it, Mag, he is smoothing and trimming his plumage, preparatory to a flight straight into your heart.”

“ And I,” exclaimed Maggie, with spirit, “ will shut the casement and exclude him. He can find no resting-place in my good thoughts.”

“ Why, you encourage him. You let him walk by your side; you talk to him, and send him errands; you afford him the exquisite pleasure of doing you service—rank encouragement, under which his heart waxeth resolute, and his passion roars into an unextinguishable flame.”

"Really, sir, you make me laugh. Ike is a comical, good-natured fellow, who amuses me. He likes to be in my company—to please him I permit it."

"Ah, Mag, every woman spins her webs and builds her meshes in the sun. Her game is hearts. She lays in wait and snaps them up, big and little, wise and foolish—the taste of all alike is sweet. She feeds upon them, lives by the nourishment they afford; and plans, strives, struggles, hopes to the one end of conquering them."

"Monstrous!"

"You plead not guilty?"

"A thousand times. Women love deeply, and are content; but you men dissect your tenderest impulses; you philosophize upon your most precious affections in such cold blood, that I am chilled to think of it. How *can* you, sir?"

"Not in cold blood, Mag. My philosophy, too often, is the bubble upon the boiling liquid; my fancy sometimes plays its fantastic antics upon the very surface of down-reaching sorrows. My philosophy, like other men's philosophy, is all veneering. It rarely strikes deep, but glitters with its polished surface in the eyes of the world, and may pass with some for substantial stuff."

"If you are in earnest now, sir, which I half doubt, do tell me *what* you are."

“An old man peeping from his loop-hole out upon the world and nature; a curious speculator in bubbles; a pricker and stealer into other people's thoughts. These things my occupation—the flow and set of my current of life. Beneath, more and less—a mine in which the lights of observation will not burn! I cannot, even dare not, explore into all the mysteries of passion, sin, desire, love of self, which hide themselves in the deep places of the soul; but I am conscious ever that I am an actor in my own sight; that beneath these ordinary motives, this common daily life, lie possibilities of passion, feeling, and thought, capable of some huge and grand expression. I live in expectation; the soul is poised in suspense, and appears ever to wait the striking of some signal by which it suddenly shall expand into a life the vast multiple of this. There is the feeling of insufficiency everywhere; my faculties perpetually fall short of the power at which they aim. There is some clog of earth or mortality upon my senses by which the zest of happiness and pleasure is dulled. In fact, we are all half-ripened fruit—with one-sided sensibilities and faculties.”

“But I thought you could think on every side of a subject,” said Maggie, half smiling, and with an evident reminiscence in her mind of something I

had said at another time. I did not choose to heed her retort, and pursued my subject.

“Our susceptibilities fall vastly short of all the forms and expressions of beauty, multiplied on our every side. There is not one of us that isn't a proper—stone blind or senselessly dumb in some one (if not more) of the human sensibilities. There are those who are color blind, others who are musically deaf. To some, outline is only mathematical, and grace a sealed book. Material expression in all its many phases—through form, color, grace, or whatever makes up the total which we foot under the name of Beauty, very rarely finds a catholic appreciation centered in one individual. We are gnarled, half-sunned growths, with imprisoned desires struggling for some more perfect development—eager to burst into a fuller enjoyment, but this ‘muddy vesture of decay doth grossly close them in.’

“Perhaps, indeed, a perfect man would prove an organization too exquisite for this world. Pleasure would press upon him through a thousand avenues with a keen, sharp, ecstatic relish, too rapturous for endurance. But the time may come when these forces within us, shall attain that destiny which now in mysterious mutterings they vaguely indicate. Our present is only the loam in which germinates



the seed of some great growth, which shall expand into fullness in a hereafter."

"What you say, after all, is nothing more than that which we find in the promises of religion."

"An old truth may be expressed in new ways. The most obvious things become dulled to the apprehension by their familiar front. If our gorgeous sunsets were hung in the heavens but once a year, their annual recurrence would have nations for spectators. The millions of the earth would assemble upon the high places in rapt and breathless admiration. In their daily coming they are not less beautiful, but we have sated appetites, and it is necessary to pause sometimes, and remind ourselves of their true magnificence; we must seek for new phases, fresh expletives, suggestive similes, by which our jaded senses can be stirred into a realization of their loveliness."

"That's true," said Maggie, musingly; "but will you tell me in what you believe?"

"In God, and in man the workmanship, exposition and created of Divinity. Misanthropy must be the unpardonable sin, for who doubts MAN, doubts with high audacity the wisdom and power of the Maker. I know what the history of man has been, how fierce, frenzied, sinful, but still with undying tenacity will I cling to the faith that beneath all has ever

flowed a pure, earnest current ; that evil thrusts itself up in jagged outlines upon the surface, while at heart truth and goodness warm in fruitful commerce ; that the judgment, so often deluded, has given its election to sin, while still the heart was honest ; that will has been stirred into headstrong iniquity, and still the heart was honest ; that sense has yielded to hot temptation and wrapped itself in delirious pleasure, and still the heart was honest ! These few who are altogether bad, these great rogues are simply diseased. Their condition is not normal ; good and evil, as in the healthy condition of men, are not poised. There are twists and knots in their moral growth ; they are an imperfect species, such as tri-headed monsters, deformities with duplicate legs, and the like. In the immaculate bosoms of the angels there is infinite pity for these and for all sinners."

There is a storm to-night, and Maggie has left me early. I sit alone over the grate, thrusting my poker down into the red anthracite, and shrinking from the silence which the elements that are clattering against the shutters, *do not hush*. There are sounds which intensify silence ; and there is a restless throb in the stillness of some hours which pricks and stirs like the alarms of conscience. When the

monotonous beat of utter silence is in the ear, there is an acute tension to the brain, and impression embosses itself more swiftly and surely than when the mind shrinks and half shuts its petals in the glare and stir of day.

The best pictures are not photographed upon the imagination by the sun ; dead midnight is a Rembrandt which paints its cartoons upon the walls of the brain in those vivid contrasts that live forever.

The sun, indeed, is a Gradgrind, clamorous for facts ; it exacts the practical and the real, and thrusts the mind into work-day clothes. But midnight gives wings and space to fancy ; in its dim aisles the grotesque, the wild, the fantastic pour out from cells, where they hide themselves from light, and enact their sportive antics. All bald, sharp-cut facts, commerce, thrift, mechanism, material greatness are born of the day ; but poem, art, beauty, love, eloquence, imagination, ambition, revolution, tragedy, dark aspiration, and all fitful dreams and the meteoric splendors of mind are born of starlight.

And so I, to-night, am pursuing a dream which in the day-light would hide itself.

It is of Maggie. She is sixteen and I am ——

What now, if I am not the old man I have painted myself ? Shall I tell you that I have capriciously deepened my wrinkles, multiplied the grey

hairs, and by virtue of a native melancholy drawn a sadder portrait than the truth will justify? Perhaps I am younger by a dozen years than you give me credit for; and my talk of the sere and yellow leaf only such affectation that comes upon us when youth has indeed slipped by, and the mournful consciousness thereof magnifies to our quick apprehensions the approaches of age!

The first crisp day of autumn precipitates us into the belief that winter is come. But the long, mellow Indian summer surprises us with its soft and tender beauty, and the frosts prove more remote than we supposed!

But Maggie's relation to me is not truly indexed by the difference in our years. I am younger to Maggie than I am to the world, and she older to me, in the tone and color of her mind, than her years proclaim. We have assimilated. Impressions have flowed from me to her; the growth and blossom of her intellect have drawn properties from mine; thought and sensibility have taken tint and shape from me. Companionship like ours must need ripen into something, and if Maggie, with her wonderful capacity for feeling, matures swiftly into summer verdure, and clambers up to identity of sympathy and tastes with me, may not I trip back into the briskness of younger sensation?

But Beatrice ! I almost seem to hear the name whispered audibly in the stillness of the room, and the tender recollection brings down a mist between me and the grate.

I have liked girlhood ever with strange depths of tenderness. Love, painted by the poets as a boy, always lives in my imagination in the girlish graces of Psyche ; and this sentiment, more profound than I have power to illustrate, led me once into that unwise passion for Beatrice ; on this winter night is leading me into dreams from which the sentinel, Judgment, is sounding his distinct warning.

How is it ? Can one be a lover many times ?

Many times, perhaps, but with one love ! I utter no paradox when I say, that the passion which blossomed in the glades of Shady Side, and that warm feeling which gathers sometimes around my heart when my girlish listener is by, are identical in sentiment ; a perception of the grace, tender freshness and beauty of girlhood peculiar to men like me ; perhaps a weakness, though still a sentiment which proves my advancing tide of years ; for old men are wont to fall in love with young girls. I will search my philosophy for reasons why.

I veil my dream to myself and others. I speak Maggie, but think Beatrice. It was fit that an anchorite should have his dream, which, to the last

fading away of all things earthly, should sit like a companion at his hearth, lie upon his pillow, mingle in his reverie, guide the helm of his meditation, and live in all beauty, all tender sounds, all awakening harmonies of earth and air. A dream which the heart has striven to adjust to some reality—which, at this hour, in these mellow tints of the anthracite, would fain fit to the youth and heart of Maggie as once, in a wilder way, it strove to find realization under the green leaves of Shady Side.

Let me dream on, then ; and if to-night my fancy leads me into impossible conjunctions, the daylight will restore the cold proprieties ; love, passion, sentiment—possibilities of sympathy and happiness, will lie cold amid the morning ashes of the grate.

## XI.

A portrait of John Jellaway, Builder, pen-ographed—  
An anchorite's dreams discordant amid the affairs of  
life—I declare my faith in Bishop Berkeley and the  
sovercignty of sensation—Maggie is eloquent and strong-  
minded—I act the guide-post, and point to Maggie a  
road that she may travel—Art her new aspiration.





## XI.

“**M**AGGIE, I’ve heard a rumor that alarms me.”

“What is it, sir?”

“John Jellaway, Builder, proprietor of Shady Side, has cut it up into imaginary lots, and hung a map thereof in the village post-office.”

“What can he possibly intend to do?”

“John Jellaway is a magnificent schemer, and having succeeded in erecting a railroad, by means of stock from deluded subscribers, which runs from nothing to nowhere, expects a rush from all quarters of civilization to settle, occupy, sojourn, build upon, and populate his unfruitful fields.”

“Did you ever see John Jellaway?”

“Never. But I will draw his portrait, and you shall say it is correct.”

“But I never laid eyes upon him in my life.”

“Nevertheless you have instincts. I will draw his portrait upon the air, and you shall, by impalpable conviction, applaud the sketch. He is a broad,

short fellow, massive about the mouth, chin, and the back of his head. Little, grey eyes, broad nostrils, huge perceptive faculties, with receding brow."

"Oh, I see him exactly."

"Thick limbed, coarse bearded, huge lunged, slovenly in dress, and a little proud thereof; a bad hat, and thick, unpolished boots; a tobacco chewer, and saliva copiously ejected upon everybody and everything! This is John Jellaway, Builder.

"I shall certainly try and see the man," said Maggie, "and so judge of the fidelity of your sketch. But it is such a fellow as I would imagine."

"I am as sure of the likeness as if I were the sun itself (that splendid portrait-taker!) and he had sat to me for his picture. The fact is, John Jellaway has amassed a huge fortune, and by means which to speak of will always put the heads of the sagacious in a mysterious vibration. He is, I am told, a great speculator, a financial schemer; his gods are stocks, bonds and scrips; he is a smart, nimble, go-ahead (to where?) enterprising citizen, a class so common in our country, and the eulogies to whom, so clamorously thrust upon the public ear, are to me melancholy tollings, ringing out the death in the public mind of some virtue—some love of honesty and the right. For this common weakness of our countrymen—this love of success and worship of the high-

priests of Mammon, indicate surely and painfully a decay of honorable feeling, which, though still lover of my kind, sometimes stirs in my heart gloomy fears of the future. I would have my country honest—the glitter of material greatness may succeed, not precede, this principle.

“But what shall I do if this vandal, Jellaway, attack that virgin Shady Side? How can I bear to have it ruthlessly subjugated by his vulgar crew? How patiently see it violated by axe and spade? how see its slopes dented and trampled? its shady and sacred nooks exposed and desecrated—its grand old trees ravaged and destroyed? Now, where calm and beauty and poetry have their precious home, must we see the invasion of masonry, timber, profane workers, vulgar dwellings, squalid children, mean pursuits—must we see this grand temple of nature turned to every use with which a low humanity desecrate their haunts, and render vile the atmosphere they breathe? By Diana and all gods and goddesses of grove and woodland, it must not be. John Jellaway, Builder, touch it not, I charge you, or the sacrilegious shall find its Nemesis.”

“If we could only buy it,” said Maggie.

“I am not rich; neither bonds, bankers' accounts, stocks, silver, or precious stones are mine. The vineyard I have been cultivating hath grown a fruit

unknown in husbandry. There are ripe hangings, I venture to claim, but the purple clusters have no price in mart or change. Commerce, the Prince magnificent, dusky with his oriental tiat, perfumed with precious fragrance, robed in ermine from the ice ridges, and in silk of the Indian wool—knows them not. They are not treasures for which he or his followers will bid, and so perforce, their value, if any value they possess, must exist in the secret flavor they retain for their otherwise poverty-stricken owner."

"The fruits that ripen in the mind, the clusters of wit, fancy, humor—for such, sir, I suppose you to mean—have, I am sure, some value beyond that which you give them. Will not good books sell, and make money?"

"I have ere this shaken my boughs in the public highway, but the fruit was trampled in the dust unheeded. An anchorite's dreams thrust amid the busy congregations of men, is like the appearance of some antipodean stranger. There is no sympathy, identity of purpose, commerce of intelligence, unity of feeling, between the new comer and those amid whom circumstances have launched his existence. The crowd stare, perhaps laugh, but pass with shrugged shoulders by; and he, chilled to the heart, shrinks away from the public gaze and hides himself in lowly obscurity.

"I do not complain. It is natural. I have a right to dream, and weave such fancies as I please, but I cannot demand of the public submissive patience to my small voice ; I cannot expect to hang my cobwebs in whatever chamber I elect ; or blow my bubbles, so meaningless to the many, wheresoever I list. I have not taken the right course to be popular. It would not be difficult to do so ; the applause of the people is easily within my reach. There is the ring, and here the clown's motley. The public are in the boxes. It is but a glittering bound, a brisk joke, a gay caper or two, and success is mine—the plaudits shall ring and the wreath fall."

"Fame is beautiful," exclaimed Maggie, with her eyes flashing ; "it would be worth any struggle—any sacrifice."

"So youth in its untamed fervor has said before. But neither the young, nor all of the old, are wise in the subtlest of all wisdom, the knowledge of human passion. There are land rats and water rats, as our old friend of Stratford has said, and each must nibble, burrow, steal, and flourish in his own element. They cannot 'hurly burly,' change places, and grow fat as before. And so, good Mag, there are underlying differences in human organizations, by which a poet would starve where an alderman grows boozy and rubicund ; and a philosopher would be compelled to

bury his book and break his wand, where your brisk citizen, with elastic spring to his ankle, a complacently vivacious pat upon his buttoned-up breeches pocket, and a smirk smile as greasy as the thumbed coin he covets, will roll into his plethoric bank account, his swift gains, and wax hearty under the process. These differences are all radical and chemical, and they extend into infinite ramifications. I am a man whose imagination warms in the tints of my fire-light, and under green leaves, but in the fever of busy life I am lost. My temper springs up angular and antagonistic ; I bruise myself at every turn against the habits and sharp manners of the world ; I have not the catch of popular phrases, and cannot talk with those commercial potentates who rule in cities ; I have not the manner nor the address of society, and flounder in and out of drawing-rooms like a whale out of water ; and being unable to keep afloat on that tide of eloquent small talk which meanders so ripplingly among the beaux and belles, I always find myself stranded in gloomy and ponderous silence, high and dry above the currents of conversation.

“So everywhere—so in everything, Mag. I was not born for success, nor for the battle by which the crown is won. The clamor of the universal gold-hunt stuns me ; the whirl and clatter of the world

unhitches the machinery of my philosophy. I am nothing if not ruminant, and by my utter lack of the genius to do, am driven into burrows, where I can only peep out at a world in which I have no vocation to mingle."

"Yet still," said Maggie, "I think your voice might be heard even from your obscurity."

"It would be as easy to ascend in a balloon up to the cragged edge of a cloud, and there address the world below ; or as wise to plunge into the sea, and piping my dull song in the ocean caverns, dream of listeners upon the busy surface above.

"Maggie, within these four boundaries I am Cæsar. That is enough. I tread here the universe. This is not only my world, but *the* world."

"Will you explain that?"

"The natural philosophers assert that color is only sensation—where the eye, for instance, does not rest upon the greenery of the fields, there is no greenery there—

"The gay flint that decks the vernal rose,  
Not in the flower, but in our vision glows ;  
The ripe flavor of Falernian tides,  
Not in the wine but in our taste resides."

I make this philosophy cover things material after Bishop Berkeley, and when I drop the curtains to my casements I shut the universe within. Sensation

travels out from its home in the brain, and just so much as it compasses—just so far as it extends, lie the boundaries of the world. Do you perceive?"

"Why, the doctrine is most incomprehensible," exclaimed Maggie, a little inclined to be satirical.

"Very," I exclaimed, half closing my eyes and peering at the fire; "but Maggie, if you can tell me what the world is, outside of your sensations, you may begin."

"Everything," cried Maggie, vehemently. "A past and a present"——

"Memory!" echoed the philosopher, still peering at the fire.

"Vast cities, mighty nations, wonderful physical beauty"——

"Imagination," cried the sonorous echo.

"What *do* you mean?"

"This. If the yellow gilding of yonder frame is not yellow at all, but only a sensation produced by light upon the eye, why may not the frame be no frame at all, but merely an appearance of form produced by natural phenomena upon the senses? Accepting this to be so, then this pleasant study of mine, being for the time just the flight of the conscious senses, is the world. There is no other.



“At least, Maggie, you and I must make it so. Ah! let the rest roll on unheeded. Here is our happiness; here lies abundantly the means for full, rich, munificent existence. Believe me, the wit grows sharp in the world, but the imagination sickens and dies. Here it flourishes, puts forth branches, expands into wide banners in the air, strikes deep roots into the soil. Here the passions, the desires, the will, the ambitions are chained to the heart; they can leap no further than can easily be plucked back again. But amid the struggles and the stirrings of the town, they rise up and conquer the jailer, and breaking from their bonds, rush with passionate zeal into the tempest, and are lost.

“Let the world go, Mag. Be not aspiring for me or for yourself. Take your ambitions to the window and give them wing. Let them fly from you forever.”

“I could do so, for you bid me; but I should carry a heavy heart about me ever afterwards. Oh! that I were a man! Then the sun would shine, the world exist for me! All things are for your sex; nothing for ours. We are shown fruit we cannot taste, glories we cannot claim, a life whose fullness we are shut from and expelled. Sir, the world is a feast, in which we are thrust into the kitchen.”

“A feast! If so, like many grand dinners, much show and starved guests.”

Maggie jumped to her feet, and running to the window thrust her body behind the curtains ; against the panes she thrummed with a rapid tattoo, then suddenly broke from her screen into the room, and hastily paced to and fro from wall to wall.

"In everything—everywhere," she exclaimed, "there is the same thing—honor for men ; obscurity and contempt for women. Up all the avenues you climb there are gates which bar out us ; whichever way lies preferment, there you command us not to look ; all attainments that might lead to accomplishment you debar us from. Sir, the world is not just, nor true, nor honorable to women ! It never has been !—in no age, in no country, and yet there have been Zenobias, and Joans, and Catherines, and many mighty women. We can be as great as you, why then do you exclude us from the paths you tread ?"

"Bless me, Mag ! Why I have been like a town, built with innocent security upon the side of a volcano. There is an eruption, and I am deluged with fire and ashes."

"Please do not mock me, sir."

"Maggie, hear a wise saw ; the intellect feminine can attain to no such altitude as that reached by ours, for a great woman invariably loses the distinguishing characteristics of the feminine mind. In

becoming great she ceases to be a woman! Your Elizabeths, Zenobias, Catherines were remarkable, but just so far as they approached the standard of masculine vigor and force they proved foreign to the true type of your sex."

"Can this be so?"

"Think of it. Absolute intellectuality is so far removed from the accepted and desirable condition of women, that those cases which you cite as evidence of your equality are merely monuments which prove the rule by illustrating the exceptions."

"Still, still," cried Maggie; "I have ambitions and strong wishes; they are as natural to me as to you. I long for something higher and nobler than has yet befallen me."

"To many young people, Maggie, the heart is the mirror of the brain, and they occupy themselves by perpetually measuring the capacity of the reflection. You are one of these. You sit for hours looking into the glass—a self-consciousness which is not healthy nor honest is the consequence.

"Still I judge you tenderly. Your bark has not yet sailed into that current upon which alone it can float buoyantly and true. There is but one goal, Mag, to which the nature and instincts of woman points; but one fruition that crowns her with the pure and tender glory which all the world, and all

nature applauds and worships ! And this fruition is so unmistakably the true ripeness of her being, so clearly the harvest and summer of her destiny, that all other hopes, desires, seekings, are proofs of a heart whose compass is not poised, whose needle is disordered by false attraction."

" I think I know what you mean."

" Ah, Mag ! fly your grand heights ; dream of fame, aspire to such things and attempt to win such glories as you may, still shall you be plucked back to our feet by a power by which we shall be your masters so long as the stars are lighted by the sun."

" And that is"—

" Love !"

Why did Maggie drop her head until the long curls fell in a thick screen over her face ? and why was she so suddenly hushed and still !

For three minutes the clock ticked with great briskness, and the wind, unheeded before, rose to a shrill, melancholy whistle. Then I broke the silence :

" If effort must be yours, Maggie, if that unresting heart hungers for other food than that which lies in the common paths, let me at least aid you a little—let me be to you a guide-post, pointing, with melancholy finger, the safest of many roads, and yet most unwilling to see you follow any."

"Tell me all you can, sir," said Maggie. But her voice was husky and low.

"Of the arts which are sought for as avenues that lead to that grand height upon which youth sets its wishes, there is one I will name, which to a sympathetic nature offers many sweets, even in its severest efforts. To impressibility like yours, other things being favorable, I believe it to be happily adapted. Look around you. I mean that art which tells its tales of eloquence and beauty upon my walls."

"Yes, yes!" exclaimed Maggie, eagerly.

"It is an art which allures with its promise of fame, and supplies in itself abundant delights. It absorbs completely; it takes possession of the imagination more keenly than any other, and supplies to fullness food for both heart and brain. The passions and the intellect, the sensibilities and the aspirations, are alike aroused and employed. With the poet, whether he be of canvas or verse, exists ever the necessity to create; and this necessity, which underlies and causes much of that unrest so common to genius, is afforded rich fruition with the painter. Forms of beauty daily grow into life before him; under his skillful pencil spring into vital shape and color those dreams which, with others, must still exist in the imagination only; and assuming this bodily form and pressure, they prove both his rapture and his glory."

Maggie again began that rapid tread of the floor.

"But," inquired she, "is it not an art which requires a special genius?"

"The arts, Maggie, are all of a kin—a common sensibility fathers them all. Not far from that feeling which can transport to canvas the tender beauty of a landscape, is its fellow which paints the lights, shades, blending tints and soft harmonics of a picture in the happy utterance and melodious measure of words."

"But can I be an artist?" exclaimed Maggie, abruptly. "Tell me, sir, what you think!"

"Have you feeling for color? sympathy with nature so intense, that you can read her heart and enter into her spirit better than the ordinary mortal? have you power to reproduce, in form, your impressions, and have you that vitality of imagination which can put itself, at will, into circumstances and scenes remote from its own experience? If you have all these, which I am inclined to admit, there must be added certain special, but minor qualities, which cultivation cannot create, but will vastly develop."

Maggie resumed her seat, which was still close by my side.

"I know but little of my own talents," said she; "but I recall circumstances of early tastes, which

give me hope. And I recollect, too, an old adage of yours."

"What was that?"

"*To try is to succeed!*"

"I have not suggested this path to you, Maggie," said I, "without a belief, founded upon some observation, that your talents could shape themselves that way."

Maggie parted from me that evening in great glee; and I, for once, in a parental way, kissed her forehead when I bade her good-night.





## XII.

Patrick and his epistolary passion—In grief over the remains of an old friend—A monody—An apostrophe to the elements, in the midst of which an erratic star shoots among us—The Happy Philosopher and his wise sayings—By the pricking of my thumb, shadows my way come.



## XII.

**T**HE hearth was swept, the candles lighted, and a fine aphorism just on the point of delivery, when I was interrupted by a knock at the door—a low, hesitating knock—then the entrance of Patrick with a letter between thumb and finger.

Patrick is my factotum ; my valet, when I need a valet ; my gardener, groom, butler, secretary, clerk and waiter. When I saw the letter in his hand, and observed his unusually embarrassed manner, I knew something had happened, and that the letter, indited by himself, conveyed the intelligence. For Pat is inspired with an epistolary passion. He sends me formal weekly letters upon the state of affairs. If a chicken die of the croup, the fact is decorously and solemnly communicated under seal ; if the pigs get into his corn-patch ; if any of the creatures about the place are ill ; if a litter of pups, or a family of kittens, or a colony of pigs are added to my household, Pat rushes to pen and paper. He keeps incessantly writing to me. I might meet him

at nine o'clock, and at half-past find on my table the inevitable letter, detailing events fresh in his mind at the time of the interview. This passion would not be so remarkable if he were a fluent or an easy writer, but it is evidently a huge labor for him to pen his sentences, as it is certainly a huge labor for me to decipher them.

"Well, what is it, Pat?" said I, putting out my hand to secure the letter. Its meaning if not its language was soon comprehended. It related, in Pat's own curious orthography, the death of my pony. I transcribe it literally :

"ONERED SUR—

"Yer onor dide this evenin in is staybil as i was goin To milken withe the blinde staggs yer onors hoss pone he was sik the last night i guv in the medsin yer onor tuk yerself. From the chist wich Did him no good at alle until he dide."

"Yer onors umble servant, umbly

"PATRICK."

"My favorite pony, Maggie."

"Ah, sir, and mine, too."

"Alas, poor Yorick! He hath borne me on his back a thousand times."

"Bedud, sir," exclaimed Patrick, "you've forgotten the beast's name. It was Jack, sir."

"Ah, Pat, you know nothing of Shakspeare."

“ Which, sir ?”

Maggie laughed at Pat's puzzled look, and said :  
“ You must bury him decently, Patrick. Peace to his manes !”

“ *Manes*, miss,” exclaimed Pat, for Maggie's pronunciation was scarcely classical, “ *manes* ! sure, he has but one, unless you count his tail.”

This blunder was too much for either Maggie or me ; we both laughed heartily, while we dispatched Pat with directions as to the disposition of the body.

But when Patrick withdrew, our mirth subsided, and we grew sad instead. For Jack was a favorite. Maggie never came near him without throwing her arms around his neck, and laying her smooth cheek next to his face. Many a time, in those abandonments of mirth and impulse so frequent with her, I've seen her leap upon his back, without saddle, and urge him to a free gallop around the pasturage. And Jack loved Maggie. Did he hear her voice, or detect by any means her nearness, he would hasten to her side, thrust his nose over her shoulder, and manifest in various ways his affection and sympathy

“ What do you say, Mag ?” said I after a brief pause, “ shall we go and look at Jack ? There is a moon.”

Maggie assented, and we went together.

There was scenery in the heavens. All along up the northern sky the scattered hosts of some storm-battle were fleeing with wild haste—jagged, torn, broken masses of clouds, speeding with frightened aspect from pursuing winds. The moon was high, and poured down her silver radiance between two dense train-clouds, which tore headlong by, as if picked into precipitancy by the spur of goblin, or sprite, or some cloud-bestrider of fable.

The moon glittered a sheen-path from the house-door to the straw-stretched remains of poor Jack. He lay in the air, and the moon in her marble light gleamed cold and sepulchral upon the stilled limbs.

“Oh, sir,” cried Maggie, with tears in her voice, “I loved him! Indeed I loved him!”

“Hm!” exclaimed the philosopher, just as a puff of wind leaped in his teeth, and strangled a sigh in the thorax, “he had no lordly pedigree. He was not great, nor swift, and he liked better a lazy browse on side-hill grass, than ambitious scamperings. There was always meditation in his eye, and when he bore me into woodland paths, he would pause in those secluded glades so sweet for reverie, and with reins slipped to the ears, clip the crisp herbage, patiently attendant upon my dreams. There are warlike people, Mag, who tell us of wonders of valor per-

formed in the saddle, but mild achievements were they all compared to mine upon the back of poor Jack. I've crowned myself victorious in many a battle with learned subtlety, in science or philosophy, as absorbed to my eyes in my pocket-volume, he hath trudged with me through quiet by-paths, with rein on neck. We have tilted together at hard facts, and charged upon broken-winded crotchets, and clashed lance against the brazen shield of sophistry! Could Jack speak, he would recount, I am sure, of whole battalions of false logic being put to rout by us. And now, alas! the old war-horse is dead. Mag"—

I turned, but Maggie was not there. In an instant she came running back with some evergreen branches in her hand, which she flung upon the body of Jack.

"Now, Pat," said I, when this bit of tender feeling was over, "do the rest. Give him decent burial."

"As decent burial, sir, as a Christian could want. Sure, he was a noble creature, and sorry will it be to see him no more in this world."

"Gracious, Pat," exclaimed Mag, "what do you mean by *no more in this world*?"

"Why, miss," said Pat, vigorously rubbing his ear, "I know that horses havn't no souls; but sure,

Jack was so tinder-hearted, and had such a knowin' way of lookin' at you, and would put his nose in your face so affectionate like, and his ways gincrally were so intilligent, that may be, as it would seem, his own nature got exchanged with some Christian-born gentleman, Mr. Jellaway, say, who, saving yer honor, was much the biggest baste of the two."

In Pat's circumlocutory eulogy Jack certainly was duly praised, but I am afraid if my reader attempt an exact translation it would be difficult to determine whether I, or John Jellaway, Builder, came the most honorably off. But to steer through a long sentence safely, without bull or blunder, was a marvellous thing for Pat to accomplish, and so crowning his intention with approval, I let the ambiguous compliment go.

"What a night," I uttered, as Maggie and I slowly wended our way back. "This is a balcony box; the sky is a stage, and before us move the brisk scenes, the shift and play of a drama. These tearing, termagant clouds are the actors."

"They seem inspired with the divine afflatus," said Maggie, demurely.

"Hi! By Jupiter, the heir treads upon the heel of the king. You will crowd me from my throne some day, Mag, and snatch from my hand the wand of talk. But well said, heir apparent. The jest was good."



"Heir apparent to what, sir?"

"To what? Do you not know your inheritance? To the throne by my fireside, and the realm universal, whose boundaries the telescope cannot discover. It is the grandest sovereignty in the world, Mag, and it is called Imagination."

"It has many kings," suggested Maggie.

"Yes. It is an empire in which all poets and wits are rulers; or rather, a republic of sovereigns, in which every mind is absolute just so far as it possesses native power."

"But look! this sky! By Luna, the scene is grand. How swift the moon appears to rush through the space! To what can we liken her, Mag? To a stag, let us say, and those clouds are the pursuing hounds. She has a frightened, staring look; there is bewilderment and imploring pity in her white face. She is surrounded, and yet the panting pack fall back as she speeds swiftly and surely on. This is such a race, Mag, as recalls those Olympian ones in which chariot locked with chariot, whirled around the Grecian plain. Then fair maids whipped the steeds into frantic swiftness; now it is old Boreas, from his icethrone in the north, who hurls those clouds upon the flying moon, and spurs them onward."

Just then we emerged into an open space, unprotected by house or tree, and the winds came rushing

down from the heavens and flung themselves with a shriek in our arms. Maggie's long locks they caught and flung out like a banner ; they rushed into her eyes and squeezed out a tear or two ; thrummed in her ears ; with a rollicking roar snatched free kisses from her cheeks and lips ; then, discovering no more specific gravity in my fifty years than in Maggie's sixteen, darted upon me with a howl, and whisking the breath out of my lungs and the hat from my head, rushed off with their trophies headlong.

The first I speedily succeeded in recovering, but the second taking lodgment in the upper branches of a tree, left me bare-headed in the wind, my locks streaming like pennants from a turret. But a lithe figure came rolling out of a door-way, and hurrying to the tree, soon secured the fugitive, so unceremoniously decamped with.

"It's late, and ever so cold," muttered Ike, for it was he, as he restored the hat to my hand. I did not heed him, but suddenly recollecting a passage in Thomson, I threw myself in attitude, and began :

*"Ye too, ye winds ! that now begin to blow  
With bolsterous sweep, I raise my voice to you."*

"Holloa!" cried a stentorian voice suddenly, as a figure approached and leaned on the garden-paling.

"Holloa!" exclaimed I, putting on my hat—and a little pique, at this unceremonious interruption.

"James!"

"Reuben!"

These exclamations went off simultaneously, and then, as the stranger leaped over the low fence, I ran forward with great eagerness to seize his hand. For upon the second sound of his voice, I perceived he was one for whom I cherished friendly memories.

"Once my companion; always my friend," said I, as I led him up to Maggie.

"And the luckiest chance to discover you," said he, with a free bow to Maggie, and a tremendous grasp of my hand.

Maggie scanned him curiously and with admiration. A large build, a broad, free, swinging gait, a hearty voice, a fresh complexion—comely and admirable, truly, notwithstanding a few travel-stains and rents in his garb.

"Well, sir," said I, as we all (all but Ike), entered my study together, "it is five years, by the scythe of old Time, since we met; and you, O Philosopher, are as free, happy, good-for-nothing, excellent as when I watched you mixing pigments in times of yore;—ch?"

"To be sure. I follow my humor now as then. I amuse myself by snapping my fingers at fortune; making mouths at her; I go and come as I list; I defy good and ill-luck; and I sleep soundly. But

you were one of the wise ones who worked for fame, while life and happiness tripped you up and slipped by."

"Not so much fame, Reuben, as bread and butter. I was civilized enough to eat my dough cooked, that was all."

"Pshaw!" exclaimed he, with an emphasis that sounded like the letting off a small ordnance, "civilization! If to eat my dough cooked required care enough to kill a gnat, I'd forswear bakers, and live on husks. The fact is, Muggie," (*Maggie* at the first jump!) "I'm the only philosopher in the world. I've discovered the elixir and the philosopher's stone."

Maggie, all alive, her eyes dilated, asked for an explanation.

"I create wealth by having no wants. None! A handful of pebbles serve me as well as a handful of eagles; as for the elixir—that is a compound of the simples patience and contentment. It might be called anti-worry.."

"A good specific."

"A universal panacea! It would starve grave-diggers and shut up the cemeteries."

"But there are real cares," said Maggie, "which cannot be avoided—must be borne."

"A mistake!" exclaimed the philosopher, with crushing force.

"I do not see," said Maggie, "how your philosophy can prove it."

"Suffering," said I, "as Shylock says, is the badge of our tribe."

"No!" replied the stentorian voice again; "the world is full of superfluities. Everything I own or gain is an excess above my needs, sunshine and appetite being the only positive essentials of existence. Care is nothing but anxiety about these superfluities; calamity and misfortune the loss merely of certain incumbrances of life. While the sun shines, grass grows and water runs, man has enough; the rest is only leather and prunello. 'The poorest beggar is superfluous even in his rags.' So King Lear, Maggie; don't know him, I suppose."

"Indeed I do," exclaimed Maggie, with considerable warmth.

"We cry over broken toys," resumed Reuben, "and talk of sorrow. There are no real misfortunes."

"Oh, sir! the death of our friends!"

"To die is to slip off old clothes and put on new. What misfortune is there in that?"

Maggie shook her head.

"Life!" continued he. "There is my philosophy in one word. The world is mine, and there isn't a rich man's house, or a poor man's cot, or a bit of

color, or a sweet odor, or a white cloud, or shapely tree, or odd rock, or rippling brook that isn't mine to enjoy ; and I enjoy it."

"And really never wish to be greater or richer? Have no ambition?"

"Do I cry for the moon?"

"And have no care?"

"To keep my coat dry when it rains ; no other."

"You've heard Reuben Dale's creed, Maggie," said I ; "hear mine. Poverty is the king of evil—the greatest calamity that can befall."

"No, no," exclaimed both my listeners at once.

"Yes. Other misfortunes are sorrows which dignify ; they have sweet association and holy memories. They elevate and chasten ; they are links, sometimes with heaven—sometimes with the heart of humanity. But poverty degrades ; it alone is mean, despicable, low. It thrusts men into contempt and servitude ; it robs them of manhood ; it deprives the cheek of its bloom, the step of its lightness, the soul of its courage ! It consumes heart, affection, tenderness, love, and every good and human thing about us. You little know what devils perpetual deprivation, ceaseless care and daily drudgery will make of men."

"False !" exclaimed the happy philosopher. "By

humanity, false ! Poverty is only misfortune when wishes keep the purse-strings. Poverty is the normal condition of man ; neither banks, stocks, dividends, houses, rents were dreamed of in Eden. Adam was happy, and never saw a check-book in his life."

Maggie gave more mirth to this last conceit than I thought it deserved.

"Come, Reuben," said I, "tell us how flourish the arts? How many square feet of canvas are you pledged for?"

"Is Mr. Dale an artist?" cried Maggie, with brightening eyes.

"A vagabond, Mag," said he, quietly patting her hand as it lay on her knee. (I doubt if he would not kiss the Sultan's favorite in five-and-twenty minutes' acquaintance.) "A vagabond, Mag, with caprice at the helm ; roving, halting, coming, going, idling or working as humor or impulse rule me. I love pictures, and so whistle and sing over the canvas ; but there is Gipsy in my blood. I am a growth that lives in the air, but cannot root in the soil. Adhesion is a quality unknown to my composition ; hence, unlike fellow-artists, sweating with the fear of the academy in their eyes, and waxing yellow with jaundice of hope deferred, you see me Prince of myself, playing at shuttle-cock with my

wishes ; tossing wants, temptations, sorrows into the air with thumb and finger."

"I remember," said I, "the saying of an old author—poverty is the mother of modesty. I am learning fast that he was wrong."

"By Angelo, you are right ! A divinity hedges in a man who has no wants. I am proud of my poverty."

"It sits gracefully upon you, I confess. But beware how you think to stretch your rags over another."

I saw him with his eyes greedily and widely fixed upon Maggie.

"Bless me," said he, replying to me but with his gaze still resting upon the cheek of Maggie, "bless me, they stretch over numerous others. My pictures inherit their master's poverty. The slattern brats get no pity from the world, and sit like beggars on the highway."

"Unappreciated ?"

"Not always. But there is an odd fatality about them. There is an abundance of sympathizing gentlemen with pockets as desolate as mine who are munificent in praises ; but oddly enough, these people with money inevitably lack the appreciation. There is rarely conjunction between the two qualities ; they do not jostle ; they travel different roads."



"Then let me warn you. Seek to imprison no free heart in your city dungeon"—

"Sir," said the artist, "my dungeon is a house top. You can look at the stars."

"That is not enough."

"Enough ! It is a throne. I have an attic with a curtain of chintz which divides my art from the man natural. On one side the heavens pour down a flood of light upon my canvases ; on the other, I hide the paraphernalia which attends sleeping and eating. Here I sing, I laugh, I chat, live Empercur ; and paint most worshipfully, as I please. Enough ? If rubies cropped up in my path ; if Fortunatus shook showers of gold before my eyes ; if the Indies turned their currents of wealth through my poor chamber—hear me, sir,—there would be less, not more !"

"Solve this newest problem."

"This have I proved ; what the purse gains, the heart loses ; and the true richness of life, the sum of its wealth, is not in ingoïs but heart-bounds. By Adam ! the Ready Reckoner was unthought of in the plan of creation. The crown of completeness does not belong to rent-rolls, and plethoric money-bags, but to him whose life in its sympathies and its human ramifications is Briarean !"

"Tell me," said Maggie, "are you always as happy as you are now ?"

"I strut ; flap my wings in the face of the world ; bestride my whims and ride them where they list ; owe no man anything but politeness, in which I sometimes over-pay ; and lastly, have a quick eye for sunshine. Now *you* are melancholy."

"Sometimes."

"Your eyes are olive shaped ; the lids droop half-pendent ; the pupils swim in moist sentiment ; your mouth has the pensive curve ; in your forehead that bulges over the lines of your face lives a drowsy and down-reaching rumination : your brain, in fact, is rocked dreamily in a dim, shadowed vale. *Mine* sparkles in the sun. Do you see the difference ?"

"Yes, yes," exclaimed Maggie, with a quick, vehement gesture in the air.

"Sunshine and shadow," said I, "are the inseparable obverse and reverse of all life and substance."

"To be sure," replied the artist in his queer way ; "the obverse, sunshine, is life ; the reverse, shadow, is the under side of the sod."

I confess that when he said this thing a thrill shot through me—for the thought stalked in among our light humors like a skeleton at a feast.

"For my part," resumed he, "I crowd all the sunshine I can into my life, just as I crowd it into

ny canvases ; but you, Sir Knight of the Whimper, you—I knew him once, Maggie, as fresh and gay as a June rose—you, I say, have shut up your heart in a cavern : have put your temper in sack-cloth and ashes ; have Timoned yourself in this dull fashion !”

“No ; the fashion has not been dull. Maggie shall tell you some day how a bachelor's winter hearth can brighten and be happy.”

“I can,” replied Maggie, absently.

“With melancholy, no doubt ; with sighs that have spun themselves in a web around you. Are you not two melancholy ones ? Do you not eat the sour side of the peach ? Hence, then, upon your winter hearth have sat the Sphinx, the Raven, the melancholy Muse—grim Egyptian shadows, and weird shapes ! You have been Niobes, I dare say, all tears.”

“Infidel !” exclaimed I, with warmth. “Why, we have capered ; shook our bells and frisked in motley ! Absolutely, Mag, this fellow has stolen a bit of sunshine, and running off into a corner, fancies all the rest of the world drowned in darkness.”

“I tell you what,” cried Ike, thrusting his head through the door (and holding his head in it, so tightly that strangulation was imminent.) “I tell you what, aint Maggie going home to-night ?”

At which abrupt interruption there was a roar ; and then Reuben, divining the matter in an instant, astonished and terrified Ike by boldly seizing the arm of Maggie, and declaring his intention of accompanying her home.

Reuben, Maggie and Ike disappeared from the room ; and as I peered wistfully down into the grate, my listening ear caught a far-off silvery cadence, rising merrily and sharp upon the winter air.

And to this rising cadence my heart sunk heavily. I whistled softly as I walked the lonely passages on the way to my chamber—and slept that night with my face to the wall.

### XIII.

The trio discussive—How silence is Power—A tilt against world-wisdom in which the Philosopher breaks lances, and shows us the paces of his favorite hobby—The world in its bustling Fifth Act—Individualization philosophically considered—Hamlet—A cherub in the clouds.



### XIII.

**T**HE candles were not lighted, and twilight silence brooded in the room. Suddenly Maggie bolted out of a reverie, and said :

“Sir, your pictures will some day make you famous.”

This was to the artist, for now Maggie and I are no longer alone ; now, nightly the glow of my fire casts a new shadow on the wall ; now, by the north window there is the easel where a summer landscape daily glides upon the canvas.

“Success,” replied the artist, spreading his ten fingers to the blaze, “is up a precipice. I shall not risk my neck by climbing.”

“A miss is as good as a mile,” I remarked. “So says the old proverb ; but in literature, and perhaps art, a miss is the infinite space between heaven and—its alliterative antagonism. Upon the heights of Parnassus a few giants sit enthroned, upon whom the gaze and light of the world are turned. A little, a very little way below, are gathered thousands

in the shadows, almost unheeded. A single step would take them to the uttermost heights, but their strength just fails the last strain. The bay-wreath touches, maddens, but never crowns them ; and they sink beneath a fate worse than that of 'Tantalus.'

"The world," exclaimed Reuben, "shall take me as I am. I reject its candied promises of fame ; I will not yield to its weak passion for notorieties. I am not to be caged, stared at and petted ; I refuse the distinguished consideration which it seeks to bestow upon its lions ; I will not be elevated to those dangerous heights, where every breath of envy may blow upon me, and all the passions bespatter me at their will."

"But life should have some object."

"Life is affinity. It consists in enjoyment. It is a sponge, and he is the wisest who can absorb the most."

"Let us air your simile, a little," said I. "There are sponges various in quality and complexion ; empty sponges, dry and tough ; sponges bilged with foulness ; sponges sly and secret, that feed upon their acquisitions like rats in a corner ; then there are sponges that absorb too much, and at a touch squirt it upon you."

"I know one of the latter quality," said the



artist ; "when we meet there is a deluge. I float upon his sea of talk, and pant for Ararat."

"Silence is power," exclaimed I, abruptly.

"A paradox," cried Maggie.

"Aye, and can be broken on the back of a butterfly," said the artist.

"I am a talker," said I, "and have delivered prosperously, I hope, some fair things. Yet am I conscious that there is not a dunce stilted in stolid silence anywhere, who is not my superior. For the possibilities of wisdom that lie in matter unspoken always master in general appreciation the quality of that which is uttered."

"Fairly said," said Reuben, beating with his finger in the air a sort of critical accompaniment to my remarks.

"The talker, observe, is a tradesman with wares to market. His listeners are his patrons, and may, if they please, discard his fine fabrics ; they have the power to sit oracular upon his trip sentences, and may approve or condemn by the tyranny of capricious ignorance. The talker is an actor who makes his bow before the public, and must submit to an orange-skin from the gallery, or a hiss from the pit ; he is like a swordsman with his guard down and his breast exposed, while silence, with its sword-point up, its armor on, its visor closed, fossillated,

dull, stagnant, cut in alabaster, frowns and confronts him in conscious power ; holds the trump in the game, while his antagonist shows his hand ; by the mystery and masterly virtue of being nothing, is Dogberry judge over wit, oracle, and philosophy."

"Henceforth," said the artist, "I am in love with negation."

"It is a good mistress to woo. I have told you before, Maggie, how that monosyllable No is the Solomon of the language."

"Wise men," exclaimed Reuben, "are my abomination. I mean those apostles of the wisdom in general circulation—the coiners of this stamped metal that passes current in trade and society as the best representative of the wants and duties of man. If all the wisdom in the world—the indorsed and commonly accepted wisdom—were set before me in some consolidated form, served up, say, as a baked pudding, I should forthwith begin and eat it bottom upwards."

"Now," said Maggie, "let us see him get out of the snarl he has got himself in."

"Most men are in leading-strings ; they are tucked up under conventionalities ; they wear conservative bits and tuckers to the hour of their death  
 or burial, let me say. Custom does not forego them until the sea hides them. These men are mar-

vellously proper gentlemen ; mild-mannered, gentle-tongued, calm-brained ; they have the button-hole of society, and make laws which turn only upon the smooth and pleasant needs of her high courts. Avocation, bold performance, new roads to fame or greatness ; the genius that prompts big hearts to Do ; the philosophy that points to unknown paths ; all individualization, and out-working of nature—these things these mild gentlemen do not understand—have no experiences by which they can understand them—and hence, being crowned by that respectability whose frown the best of us dread—patch up and pass into currency certain trimmed, clipped philosophies representative of life in a negative form, expository of the wisdom of the unattempted ; cautious, prudential, narrow philosophies, that henceforth become household words and household gods among the people.”

“ He is in the maze yet,” said Maggie ; “ it is difficult to follow him, but he will lead us somewhere, let us hope.”

“ These are the social rulers. These are those whose wisdom travels in the channels of commerce ; who by the interests of property, and the influence of property, by the conservative instincts that spring up in every man's heart the moment he can count acres, obtain majorities and make laws for the world. They

begin by vagabondizing all who travel off the high way; they brand all pursuits that do not legitimately ('legitimate' is their word) carry banners upon which are inscribed those two words which, in their estimation, have civilized the world, '*Profit and Loss*;" they shut the door upon all who imply, ever so indirectly in their mode of life, that the true foundation of society is not seven per cent. per annum; or who aver, even as an abstract doctrine, that there exist, or should exist, no social distinctions between Much and Little. Let me step down from generalization to special illustration. I am an artist, as free in the bent of my impulses as the nature I study and love—hence I am itinerant, vagabond; but John Jellaway, of whom I've heard you speak, whose art is to shuffle gains, who only studies arithmetic in its one phase of addition, who puzzles and tricks, and in his daily transactions hovers on the verge of roguery—why, he is honorable, legitimate, proper, and wise to the very top of wisdom. It is monstrous to see how this class of men rule in our civilization; it is startling to behold in TRADE the modern chivalry—the art and aspiration, the hope and desire of mankind; to see it enthroned and worshipped everywhere, and Life in all its true phases prostrated at the foot of such an idol."

"The Happy Philosopher is false to his title."

"No; I am content in my own wisdom, which is

opposed to the worldly Solomons, but which is the true philosophy, and I am its prophet. I know but one rule of conduct—the impulses that are in me shall act, the nature that prompts shall be obeyed. Society, learning, the world, each and all tend to repress the energies and weaken the motive forces of the individual; it is only your free vagabond, like myself, who can walk through life the sovereign of his surroundings—whose nature, undwarfed, unstunted, thrifty and vigorous in its powers to absorb and expand, can justly claim the title of Happy—can justly fulfill the true destinies of man.”

“Egotist !” said Maggie.

“Worse, Maggie; it is not only egotism that he exhibits, but that stronger passion, *egoism* ! Let him step out of himself and his philosophies, and he will see that the world is enough—brimmed with life, thought feeling. It seems to me to have gotten into one of Shakspeare's fifth acts—all bustle and action. I am bewildered by the high-pressure rush of events; by the whirl of new things; by the many who are shouting at the world with all their might to get the world's attention ; by the new books, the new people, the new politics, the new imbroglios, the new sciences, the new arts, the new pleasures, the new revolutions, the latest catastrophes. Every page of the journals is crammed with intelligence—you turn from one column

only to find its fellow charged to the mouth, and ready to belch its bristling contents at you—until your head whirls like a whip-top, and the whole confused medley seems rushing around your cranium, heads and points together, in a sort of up-side down, whirl-a-gig steeple-chase. Absolutely something must be done by which the brain can keep pace with all these demands upon it."

"I suggest photography," cried the artist.

"It is my only hope. When the sensory becomes a camera obscura, in which the procession of events shall cast their shadows; when by some mesmeric process the last new books can be instantly photographed upon the brain"—

"Have you no mercy? *All* the new books?"

"When these things come to pass, there will be some possibility of the individual keeping pace with the age in its mad scamper into the future."

"Mr. Dale," said Maggie to the artist, "he is an anchorite; his talk belies himself; he shuts himself from the world; to him at least it is as tedious as a thrice-told tale."

"The jar of the world as it rushes by rattles our casements, Maggie; I see the smoke, the dust; the clatter breaks upon my seclusion. I speak now as one who observes; I put into my thought the sensations of those who are in the midst of the battle."

"There is noise and fury, it is true," said Reuben :  
"for life is a melo-drama. But how little character,  
wit, high sentiment ! Individualization is the un-  
known quantity."

"That is an old thought which needs airing; it has  
grown musty and moth-eaten for want of a little  
shaking up. The misery of life is not that we are  
as so many peas in a pod, but that our differences  
are angular and many. There is too much discord  
and collision of individualities as it is. We bristle  
with self-assertion, and, porcupine-like, stick our little  
quills into every antagonistic self we encounter.

"Genius and taste, in whatever direction they  
may accomplish, are perpetually addressing them-  
selves to the deaf and dumb ; thinkers, artists, poets,  
creators in all arts, famish daily in the need of  
assimilation ; their cry is for affinities. Individuali-  
zation, after all, is incompleteness. It is a warped,  
gnarled, imperfect growth, far inferior to that grand  
unity, where catholic and equal distribution of parts,  
qualities, tastes and appreciations bestow the true  
perfection of character. Completeness, the highest  
glory, can exhibit but little individuality ; it ripens  
towards all points of the compass ; its sympathies  
are comprehensive and universal. Men of whom  
this praise can be uttered might render life a little  
more monotonous, but it would be by softening down

those granite angularities upon which now so many hearts are bruised—by filling those sloughs of neglect and cold unsympathy, into which we plunge unheeded, where we struggle and die unthought of. Give me identity. Where is the man whose heart reflects the images of life and nature cast upon it as mine reflects them—while my dear soul is mistress of her choice, her election shall seal him for herself!

“These individualized people who are made up of saliences and abrupt angles are, after all, nothing but odds and ends from the workshop of humanity. It would seem as if some of nature's workmen, not to speak it profanely, had moulded for mere pastime the clippings and remnants, the chips hewn from chiselled and perfected creations, into odd semblances of men, and flung them half made up into the busy affairs of life. They are Mosaic; like grandam's patchwork, their parts do not mate nor match; the texture of their woof is motley. Do such amuse? By Momus! so does a monkey, or an obstinate donkey, or a clown, or any fantastic thing!

“Characteristics are weaknesses; they are simply the rattle and jar of ill-made machinery—the sharp friction of nature in weak adjustment of means to ends! The perfect instrument is smooth and noiseless; its functions are so equal to the per-



formance required that the task is accomplished with the repose and ease of complete and perfect strength.

“Character-drawing in fiction is as easy as lying. How often does it consist in the portrayal of dwarfed faculties—abnormal, warted, knotty developments? It is a trade; laws can be framed for it by which success can be rendered certain. For instance, go back to the old doctrine of temperaments. Select your character from any one of the five divisions, and cast him amid a series of counter-grained events—pit his nature and his surroundings against each other. You trade with his weaknesses; you scorch him in the heat of adverse circumstances until every vein and seam in his composition start out and show themselves, webbed, intercrossed—alto-relief against the plane of his level nature. This is the whole secret of Hamlet; out of his weaknesses and his melancholy arise the superstructure of character and individuality.

“Had Hamlet been less he would have been more. I explain. By this doctrine of temperaments and by phrenology I arrive at his character. His temperament was bilious, crossed by the melancholic. Had he been of the first only—of that class whom the ancients assure us are the rulers of the world, he would have walked firm the

ghost to the bed-side of his uncle-father and cut his throat on the pillow ; tripped him, that his heels might kick at heaven. Between the conception and execution of his revenge the enterprise would not have been sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought, and so turned awry. There would have been no infirm vacillation ; his will and purpose would have been single ; his clear one-sided mind would have been equal to the commands imposed upon it ; he would have been a hero such as the world's heroes are, a Cæsar or an Alexander.

“But Hamlet's intellect was complete and full ; it scaled from cause to effect ; it was all-sided, masterly, bathed like the mountain-tops in perfect light. Yet with all this splendid development of that which was purely intellectual—with that full, broad high brow, somewhat weak at the base, but swelling upward from eyebrows and temples with the inverted lines of the pyramid—there was a deficiency of what I will call alloy ; for man is like gold, which in its purest state is consumed by the friction of use ; it must be hardened by some base alloy ere it can be adapted to work-day purposes. In Hamlet the man animal was weak ; the brain bulged in its frontal lines, but the poll was flat ; the baser but active qualities, the motive forces, the brain behind the ears, the man as distinguished from

the intellect in its bold, blind self-assertion through obstinacy, tenacity, will, spirit of action—the qualities which are supreme among Great Doers, who think clearly and well, perhaps, but think only in grooves and straight lines—in all these things lay Hamlet's weakness. Upon a man who could only think was enjoined a duty which could be performed alone by a man who could only act. Yet Hamlet was not exclusively intellectual—else his philosophy by some cold and ingenious logic would have opened doors for the escape of duty. His heart was warm and rich; it over-flowed with love, and urged the reluctant will to its sacred and filial purpose. Between the equipoise of impulse and philosophy he vacillated; a purpose of revenge born of the age, education, and the dark surroundings of example and precept, tugged at his heart one way; while his philosophy, lighted by the lights of a century in advance, tugged at his heart the other way.

“Alas, for him and for all men who think too much! Melancholy is the air they breathe; doubt sits like a ghoul upon their brains; skepticism flings its misty shadow ever on their path. Impulse alone is the god-like. Mysterious Nature! so often best for being lowliest! To her”——

I turned towards my listeners, and they were

not! For during all this digressive reverie my gaze had been fixed abstractedly on a carved head of marble on the mantel over my grate. I started from the recumbent depths of my easy-chair, but the suspended cadence of my voice had startled them; the curtains rustled, and from the window recess they emerged—the fire-light casting a glow of unusual warmth over the features of Maggie.

“There is a cherub in the clouds,” I said; “you have looked for him.”

“Yes,” replied the artist; and he whistled.

I turned, and my eyes sought pensively the ashes in the grate. “It is plain,” I murmured; “my philosophies will soon whistle about the corners of the room and nobody heed them. Afar off there is a cloud; I feel its shadow grow; I see, too well, that soon it will cast its gloom athwart my hearth, and silence, perhaps forever, my winter gossip.”

#### XIV.

The artist robs my hearthstone of its winter blossom  
—Maggie and I in our parting chat—The lovers go  
forth into their future—Ike and I the abandoned and  
disconsolate—My winter fire is out.



#### XIV.

**I**T is more than two weekly cycles since the artist crossed my threshold. But in that brief time swift growths have sprung up in the heart-soils around me. In Maggie there is expansion. Her eyes glisten ; her cheeks dapple as if the fingers of Aurora played with them ; smiles crop out upon her lips in harvest bountifulness. I catch her at times before the mirror, new ribboned ; and more than all, when I talk, she does not, as before, sit at my feet with ear pricked and eye wistful. She has seized upon my suggestion and studies art—over the shoulder of Reuben Dale.

In the twilight glow of the fire, when the curtains were dropped but the candles unlighted, Maggie came alone and drew a low seat close to me. She was silent and a little sad—the sadness, however, as it seemed to me, of some complete and hopeful happiness.

I placed my hand on her head.

“ Well, Maggie, this is spring, and our winter fire

will soon be out. Our talk is fast rounding to its final period."

"Sir," said Maggie, and her voice was tremulous and low, "your books, your friendship have done so much for me!"

"I have talked, Maggie, that is all—wildly and freely, I must confess. I have called up black spirits and grey; your ear has been like the witches' caldron, into which I have cast odd ingredients. But out of sand, and loam, and clay the sun and the rain spin fine tissues, and weave them into a vast, all-beautiful robe of green for the universal face of nature. So, Maggie, has your quickening nature ripened into good and noble growths some of the seed I have cast upon your heart. But tell me. Those ambitions, do they blaze now as before?"

"I do not know, sir. I think not—at least not always. I am more contented now."

"Why?"

She blushed, then looked askance, and smiled.

"I have followed your teaching."

"Mine, Maggie, or the artist's?"

"I mean to be an artist," said she with great quickness. "Mr. Dale will teach me. The opportunity will be afforded, and if I have any genius it will appear."

"There is an art older than the art of painting—



the first of all arts. It dates back to Eden. I think sometimes, Maggie, that you are an amateur already."

"Reuben says I am very apt."

She did not or would not understand me.

"I believe him, Mag. It is an art in which girlhood—fresh, green, timid girlhood—makes the noblest adepts; an art that has been glorified in all ages, under all suns."

"I didn't mean that."

"Didn't mean what?"

No answer, and a long, eloquent pause.

"Will you tell me, sir," speaking at last, but very low, and hesitatingly, "will you tell me, sir, about Mr. Dale? Do you like him?"

"He is a thief, Maggie."

A spring upright, and a blazing eye.

"There was a flower growing on my hearth-stone. Its roots spread out, its leaves expanded under my care and nurture. Blossoms began to unfold upon its branches; I was glad; I bent over and watched for the flower which should reward me; suddenly *his* hand stretched out and robbed me of all."

She sat down softly, and looked away.

"Do not think that I repine, however. The flower will flourish better perhaps with him than with me. He is young—that is divine. He is the

summer sun, and rich fruits will ripen beneath the glory of his beams, while my winter rays, oblique and chill, fail to warm the thing they shine upon. Still I am a dreamer, one that scales all possibilities ; and sometimes, inspired by this fireside flower, I have dreamed of age rolled back into youth—ivory on my temples, raven in my locks, and nectar in my veins—the dull, clogged, heavy blood of age transfused into the fiery currents of youth !”

Maggie's head was averted and stilled into alabaster. The flickering glow from the grate, ruddy and gay, played and danced upon her cheek, her ear, her shoulder—came and went as the blaze from the coals leaped and wavered, lighting up the shadows in her curls, glancing into her eyes—but all unheeded. A stillness so profound came over us ! The clock ticked as if its steam were up, and it was off for a race with time ; the curtains hung motionless against the panes ; the fire blazed in a hushed, watchful way ; the clock alone was noisy, and rushed along pell-mell with us into the future.

Suddenly Maggie turned and put her two hands on my knee, and looked earnestly in my face.

“Sir, tell me what you mean.”

“Tut, Maggie ! I held a fireside masque—that was all. At midnight when churchyards yawn, and all the wild fancies, those gipsies of the brain,

come out and dance their fantastic revel through the mazes of the imagination, I gave caprice a brief holiday ; I conjured up sweet possibilities ; I dreamed of plucking my fireside blossom and wearing it in my left button-hole. But I am sixty, you see, and you are"—

"Seventeen—that is, in May. But you are not sixty !"

"At least I have completed three cycles equal to yours. I have spoken dreams, only, Mag. It is sweet to dream. Henceforth I shall have a new memory to cherish—that's all."

"Then you forgive, you will sanction—that is"—

\* \* \* \* \*

The artist broke in upon our talk.

"Reuben," cried I, "you are false in act and false in tongue."

"I defend myself, my guard is up. Thrust away."

"Your philosophy is a cheat, false disciple ! It proclaims the divinity which hedges in a man who has no wants, and in the very breath covets a neighbor's goods."

"Life and Nature are mine ; I did not covet— I claimed the gift demised by heaven. Such boons are clearly within the meaning of my philosophy. Property, as Proudhon says, is theft. *That* I dis-

dain, but wealth like this (he faced towards Maggie) is the gift of Eden—the primal happiness.”

“I would not trust your probity with my pocket change. I am robbed, it seems, and can get no justice.”

“The affinities alone are law-makers in a case like this—the jewel robbed elects to be stolen.”

“And I must burrow henceforth sadly and alone in the empty casket. Alas, I mourn for my deserted hearth, for the capricious fancies that must bubble up and die unheeded. Forsaken the familiar places ! the walks ! the books ! the fireside corner ! the very air—forsaken is hapless Ike !”

Maggie ran and put two fingers upon my lips.

Happy and light-tongued were they both that night ; they prophesied, and looked into the hereafter through rose-tints. The future was their grand cartoon, and on its ample spaces they limned magnificent dreams.

“To-morrow,” said the artist, “I go.”

“Whither ?”

“Townward.”

“And Maggie ?”

“Ah, dear sir,” whispered Maggie, “this is the last of our Winter Nights.”

\* \* \* \* \*

With my face against the pane I watched Richard and Maggie wend homeward in the light of the

moon. They walked side by side, and by the line of glittering sheen and by the shadow, I could trace his arm as it wound about her form—encircling, protecting, usurping !

“Come Prophecy,” I muttered, “draw your happy augury, for see, the shadows fall behind them, and they walk forward into the light !”

I turned, for there was a shuffle and a snuffle in the room, and there, wedged in between the mantel column and the grate, stood poor Ike, his spread eyes as big and red as rising moons, his hair part on end and part matted down, and his lips curved downward in the disconsolate and pitiful lines of grief.

“She’s gone,” he blubbered, and rubbed his knuckles into his eyes until they waxed bigger and redder than ever.

The room looked so drear that I drew my chair up to the grate. Ike snuffling and sidling, crept near me, as if by the magnetism of sympathy, and dropped on the floor at my feet.

“Ah, Ike !” said I, “we are the forsaken ones. We must put our two griefs together, and henceforth be sympathizing friends. What say you ?”

He sobbed, and for a moment his grief threatened to be explosive.

“Strange conjunction,” muttered I ; “by the

universal identity of human sentiment Ike and I meet upon the same plane of experience and feeling !”

Ike nestled close to my feet and was still, the candles flickered dim, a chill crept through the air, a melancholy silence settled down heavily upon us both.

The grate looked dead, and I thrust the poker down amid the coals—my winter fire was out !

This is spring. Nature, in its young greenness, is as fresh as girlhood. The air is fragrant, and the orchards are gay with apple blossoms. I am busy for the nonce in my garden—training my vines, propping my nurselings, earthing my plants, and watching with eager interest the rapid evolutions of nature's great drama. How the subterranean forces are at work ; how the juices course, the buds burst, the leaves unfold, the roots sprout, until out of this grand laboratory, the earth, spring myriad forms of beauty.

Spring is almost as much a new birth to me as it is to nature. I rejoice in it as a mother rejoices in her latest born. I watch the green as it deepens on the slopes, and the buds as they swell and expand. Shady Side, so long unfrequented, becomes my haunt again. The music of the flowing stream, so long locked in icy silence, begins once more to ripple its

unbroken song ; and as the season advances, soon do I hear the clashing leaves, swept by the summer winds, rising and falling in melodious utterance. I watch the tree-tops as they spread out and wave their green awnings, and note the shadows daily growing denser and richer, until a summer fullness rests upon all.

Then the rod, the poem, the noonday reverie ; then, while stretched under green boughs, come dreams of the past ; down through a long vista come Beatrice, and Maggie, and all memories ; then imagination is a camera-obscura, peopled by shadows cast from the teeming past.

THE END.





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