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LITTLE CLASSICS.

EDITED BY

ROSSITER JOHNSON.

ROMANCE.

IRIS. — THE ROSICRUCIAN. — THE SOUTH BREAKER. — THE SNOW-STORM.
THE KING OF THE PEAK.

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IRIS.

FROM "THE PROFESSOR AT THE BREAKFAST-TABLE."

BY OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES.

I.



ITOLD you that I was perfectly sure, beforehand, we should find some pleasing girlish or womanly shape to fill the blank at our table and match the dark-haired youth at the upper corner.

There she sits, at the very opposite corner, just as far off as accident could put her from this handsome fellow, by whose side she ought, of course, to be sitting. One of the "positive" blondes, as my friend, you may remember, used to call them. Tawny-haired, amber-eyed, full-throated, skin as white as a blanched almond. Looks dreamy to me, not self-conscious, though a black ribbon round her neck sets it off as a Marie-Antoinette's diamond-necklace could not do. So in her dress, there is a harmony of tints that looks as if an artist had run his eye over her and given a hint or two like the finishing touch to a picture. I can't help being struck with her, for she is at once rounded and fine in feature, looks calm, as

blondes are apt to, and as if she might run wild, if she were trifled with. — It is just as I knew it would be, — and anybody can see that our young Marylander will be dead in love with her in a week.

Then if that little man would only turn out immensely rich and have the good-nature to die and leave them all his money, it would be as nice as a three-volume novel.

The Little Gentleman is in a flurry, I suspect, with the excitement of having such a charming neighbor next him. I judge so mainly by his silence and by a certain rapt and serious look on his face, as if he were thinking of something that had happened, or that might happen, or that ought to happen, — or how beautiful her young life looked, or how hardly Nature had dealt with him, or something which struck him silent, at any rate. I made several conversational openings for him, but he did not fire up as he often does. I even went so far as to indulge in a fling at the State House, which, as we all know, is in truth a very imposing structure, covering less ground than St. Peter's, but of similar general effect. The little man looked up, but did not reply to my taunt. He said to the young lady, however, that the State House was the Parthenon of our Acropolis, which seemed to please her, for she smiled, and he reddened a little, — so I thought. I don't think it right to watch persons who are the subjects of special infirmity, — but we all do it.

I see that they have crowded the chairs a little at that end of the table, to make room for another new-comer of the lady sort. A well-mounted, middle-aged preparation, wearing her hair without a cap, — pretty wide in the

parting, though, — contours vaguely hinted, — features very quiet, — says little as yet, but seems to keep her eye on the young lady, as if having some responsibility for her.

II.

You remember, perhaps, in some papers published awhile ago, an odd poem written by an old Latin tutor? He brought up at the verb *amo*, I love, as all of us do, and by and by Nature opened her great living dictionary for him at the word *filia*, a daughter. The poor man was greatly perplexed in choosing a name for her. *Lucretia* and *Virginia* were the first that he thought of; but then came up those pictured stories of Titus Livius, which he could never read without crying, though he had read them a hundred times.

Lucretia sending for her husband and her father, each to bring one friend with him, and awaiting them in her chamber. To them her wrongs briefly. Let them see to the wretch, — she will take care of herself. Then the hidden knife flashes out and sinks into her heart. She slides from her seat, and falls dying. “Her husband and her father cry aloud.” — No, — not Lucretia.

— Virginius, — a brown old soldier, father of a nice girl. She engaged to a very promising young man. Decemvir Appius takes a violent fancy to her, — must have her at any rate. Hires a lawyer to present the arguments in favor of the view that she was another man’s daughter. There used to be lawyers in Rome that would do such things. — All right. There are two sides to everything. *Audi alteram partem*. The legal gentleman

has no opinion, — he only states the evidence. — A doubtful case. Let the young lady be under the protection of the Honorable Decemvir until it can be looked up thoroughly. — Father thinks it best, on the whole, to give in. Will explain the matter, if the young lady and her maid will step this way. *That* is the explanation, — a stab with a butcher's knife, snatched from a stall, meant for other lambs than this poor bleeding Virginia!

The old man thought over the story. Then he must have one look at the original. So he took down the first volume and read it over. When he came to that part where it tells how the young gentleman she was engaged to and a friend of his took up the poor girl's bloodless shape and carried it through the street, and how all the women followed, wailing, and asking if that was what their daughters were coming to, — if that was what they were to get for being good girls, — he melted down into his accustomed tears of pity and grief, and, through them all, of delight at the charming Latin of the narrative. But it was impossible to call his child Virginia. He could never look at her without thinking she had a knife sticking in her bosom.

Dido would be a good name, and a fresh one. She was a queen, and the founder of a great city. Her story had been immortalized by the greatest of poets, — for the old Latin tutor clove to “*Virgilius Maro*,” as he called him, as closely as ever Dante did in his memorable journey. So he took down his *Virgil*, — it was the smooth-leaved, open-lettered quarto of Baskerville, — and began reading the loves and mishaps of *Dido*. It would n't do. A lady who had not learned discretion by experience,

and came to an evil end. He shook his head, as he sadly repeated,

“ — misera ante diem, subitoque accensa furore ” ;

but when he came to the lines,

“ Ergo Iris croceis per cœlum roscida pennis
Mille trahens varios adverso Sole colores,”

he jumped up with a great exclamation, which the particular recording angel who heard it pretended not to understand, or it might have gone hard with the Latin tutor some time or other.

“ *Iris* shall be her name ! ” — he said. So her name was *Iris*.

III.

THE natural end of a tutor is to perish by starvation. It is only a question of time, just as with the burning of college libraries. These all burn up sooner or later, provided they are not housed in brick or stone and iron. I don't mean that you will see in the registry of deaths that this or that particular tutor died of well-marked, uncomplicated starvation. They *may*, even, in extreme cases, be carried off by a thin, watery kind of apoplexy, which sounds very well in the returns, but means little to those who know that it is only debility settling on the head. Generally, however, they fade and waste away under various pretexts, — calling it dyspepsia, consumption, and so on, to put a decent appearance upon the case and keep up the credit of the family and the institution where they have passed through the successive stages of inanition.

In some cases it takes a great many years to kill a

tutor by the process in question. You see, they do get food and clothes and fuel, in appreciable quantities, such as they are. You will even notice rows of books in their rooms, and a picture or two, — things that look as if they had surplus money; but these superfluities are the *water of crystallization* to scholars, and you can never get them away till the poor fellows effloresce into dust. Do not be deceived. The tutor breakfasts on coffee made of beans, edulcorated with milk watered to the verge of transparency; his mutton is tough and elastic, up to the moment when it becomes tired out and tasteless; his coal is a sullen, sulphurous anthracite, which rusts into ashes, rather than burns, in the shallow grate; his flimsy broadcloth is too thin for winter and too thick for summer. The greedy lungs of fifty hot-blooded boys suck the oxygen from the air he breathes in his recitation-room. In short, he undergoes a process of gentle and gradual starvation.

— The mother of little Iris was not called Electra, like hers of the old story, neither was her grandfather Oceanus. Her blood-name, which she gave away with her heart to the Latin tutor, was a plain old English one, and her water-name was Hannah, beautiful as recalling the mother of Samuel, and admirable as reading equally well from the initial letter forwards and from the terminal letter backwards. The poor lady, seated with her companion at the chess-board of matrimony, had but just pushed forward her one little white pawn upon an empty square, when the Black Knight, that cares nothing for castles or kings or queens, swooped down upon her and swept her from the larger board of life.

The old Latin tutor put a modest blue stone at the head of his late companion, with her name and age and *Eheu!* upon it,— a smaller one at her feet, with initials; and left her by herself, to be rained and snowed on,— which is a hard thing to do for those whom we have cherished tenderly.

About the time that the lichens, falling on the stone, like drops of water, had spread into fair, round rosettes, the tutor had starved into a slight cough. Then he began to draw the buckle of his black pantaloons a little tighter, and took another reef in his never-ample waistcoat. His temples got a little hollow, and the contrasts of color in his cheeks more vivid than of old. After a while his walks fatigued him, and he was tired, and breathed hard after going up a flight or two of stairs. Then came on other marks of inward trouble and general waste, which he spoke of to his physician as peculiar, and doubtless owing to accidental causes; to all which the doctor listened with deference, as if it had not been the old story that one in five or six of mankind in temperate climates tells, or has told for him, as if it were something new. As the doctor went out, he said to himself, — “On the rail at last. Accommodation train. A good many stops, but will get to the station by and by.” So the doctor wrote a recipe with the astrological sign of Jupiter before it (just as your own physician does, inestimable reader, as you will see, if you look at his next prescription), and departed, saying he would look in occasionally. After this, the Latin tutor began the usual course of “getting better,” until he got so much better that his face was very sharp, and when he smiled,

three crescent lines showed at each side of his lips, and when he spoke, it was in a muffled whisper, and the white of his eye glistened as pearly as the purest porcelain, — so much better, that he hoped — by spring — he — — might be able — to — attend — — — to his class again. — But he was recommended not to expose himself, and so kept his chamber, and occasionally, not having anything to do, his bed. The unmarried sister with whom he lived took care of him ; and the child, now old enough to be manageable, and even useful in trifling offices, sat in the chamber, or played about.

Things could not go on so forever, of course. One morning his face was sunken and his hands were very, very cold. He was “better,” he whispered, but sadly and faintly. After a while he grew restless and seemed a little wandering. His mind ran on his classics, and fell back on the Latin grammar.

“Iris !” he said, — “*filiola mea !*” — The child knew this meant *my dear little daughter* as well as if it had been English. — “Rainbow !” — for he would translate her name at times, — “come to me, — *veni*” — and his lips went on automatically, and murmured, “*vel venito !*” — The child came and sat by his bedside and took his hand, which she could not warm, but which shot its rays of cold all through her slender frame. But there she sat, looking steadily at him. Presently he opened his lips feebly, and whispered, “*Moribundus.*” She did not know what that meant, but she saw that there was something new and sad. So she began to cry ; but presently remembering an old book that seemed to comfort him at times, got up and

brought a Bible in the Latin version, called the Vulgate. "Open it," he said, — "I will read, — *segnius irritant*, — don't put the light out, — ah! *hæret lateri*, — I am going, — *vale, vale, vale*, good by, good by, — the Lord take care of my child! — *Domine, audi* — *vel audito!*" His face whitened suddenly, and he lay still, with open eyes and mouth. He had taken his last degree.

— Little Miss Iris could not be said to begin life with a very brilliant rainbow over her, in a worldly point of view. A limited wardrobe of man's attire, such as poor tutors wear, — a few good books, principally classics, — a print or two, and a plaster model of the Pantheon, with some pieces of furniture which had seen service, — these, and a child's heart full of tearful recollections and strange doubts and questions, alternating with the cheap pleasures which are the anodynes of childish grief; such were the treasures she inherited. — No, — I forgot. With that kindly sentiment which all of us feel for old men's first children, — frost-flowers of the early winter season, — the old tutor's students had remembered him at a time when he was laughing and crying with his new parental emotions, and running to the side of the plain crib in which his *alter ego*, as he used to say, was swinging, to hang over the little heap of stirring clothes, from which looked the minute, red, downy, still, round face, with unfixed eyes and working lips, — in that unearthly gravity which has never yet been broken by a smile, and which gives to the earliest moon-year or two of an infant's life the character of a *first old age*, to counterpoise that *second childhood* which there is one chance in a dozen it may reach by and by. The boys had remem-

bered the old man and young father at that tender period of his hard, dry life. There came to him a fair, silver goblet, embossed with classical figures, and bearing on a shield the graven words, *Ex dono pupillorum*. The handle on its side showed what use the boys had meant it for, and a kind letter in it, written with the best of feeling, in the worst of Latin, pointed delicately to its destination. Out of this silver vessel, after a long, desperate, strangling cry, which marked her first great lesson in the realities of life, the child took the blue milk, such as poor tutors and their children get, tempered with water, and sweetened a little, so as to bring it nearer the standard established by the touching indulgence and partiality of Nature, — who has mingled an extra allowance of sugar in the blameless food of the child at its mother's breast, as compared with that of its infant brothers and sisters of the bovine race.

But a willow will grow in baked sand wet with rain-water. An air-plant will grow by feeding on the winds. Nay, those huge forests that overspread great continents have built themselves up mainly from the air-currents with which they are always battling. The oak is but a foliated atmospheric crystal deposited from the aerial ocean that holds the future vegetable world in solution. The storm that tears its leaves has paid tribute to its strength, and it breasts the tornado clad in the spoils of a hundred hurricanes.

Poor little Iris! What had she in common with the great oak in the shadow of which we are losing sight of her? — She lived and grew like that, — this was all. The blue milk ran into her veins and filled them with

thin, pure blood. Her skin was fair, with a faint tinge, such as the white rosebud shows before it opens. The doctor who had attended her father was afraid her aunt would hardly be able to "raise" her, — "delicate child," — hoped she was not consumptive, — thought there was a fair chance she would take after her father.

A very forlorn-looking person, dressed in black, with a white neckcloth, sent her a memoir of a child who died at the age of two years and eleven months, after having fully indorsed all the doctrines of the particular persuasion to which he not only belonged himself, but thought it very shameful that everybody else did not belong. What with foreboding looks and dreary death-bed stories, it was a wonder the child made out to live through it. It saddened her early years, of course, — it distressed her tender soul with thoughts which, as they cannot be fully taken in, should be sparingly used as instruments of torture to break down the natural cheerfulness of a healthy child, or, what is infinitely worse, to cheat a dying one out of the kind illusions with which the Father of All has strewed its downward path.

The child would have died, no doubt, and, if properly managed, might have added another to the long catalogue of wasting children who have been as cruelly played upon by spiritual physiologists, often with the best intentions, as ever the subject of a rare disease by the curious students of science.

Fortunately for her, however, a wise instinct had guided the late Latin tutor in the selection of the partner of his life, and the future mother of his child. The

deceased tutoress was a tranquil, smooth woman, easily nourished, as such people are, — a quality which is inestimable in a tutor's wife, — and so it happened that the daughter inherited enough vitality from the mother to live through childhood and infancy and fight her way towards womanhood, in spite of the tendencies she derived from her other parent.

— Two and two do not always make four, in this matter of hereditary descent of qualities. Sometimes they make three, and sometimes five. It seems as if the parental traits at one time showed separate, at another blended, — that occasionally the force of two natures is represented in the derivative one by a diagonal of greater value than either original line of living movement, — that sometimes there is a loss of vitality hardly to be accounted for, and again a forward impulse of variable intensity in some new and unforeseen direction.

So it was with this child. She had glanced off from her parental probabilities at an unexpected angle. Instead of taking to classical learning like her father, or sliding quietly into household duties like her mother, she broke out early in efforts that pointed in the direction of Art. As soon as she could hold a pencil she began to sketch outlines of objects round her with a certain air and spirit. Very extraordinary horses, but their legs looked as if they could move. Birds unknown to Audubon, yet flying, as it were, with a rush. Men with impossible legs, which did yet seem to have a vital connection with their most improbable bodies. By and by the doctor, on his beast, — an old man with a face looking as if Time had kneaded it like dough with his knuckles,

with a rhubarb tint and flavor pervading himself and his sorrel horse and all their appurtenances. A dreadful old man! Be sure she did not forget those saddle-bags that held the detestable bottles out of which he used to shake those loathsome powders which, to virgin childish palates that find heaven in strawberries and peaches, are—— Well, I suppose I had better stop. Only she wished she was dead sometimes when she heard him coming. On the next leaf would figure the gentleman with the black coat and white cravat, as he looked when he came and entertained her with stories concerning the death of various little children about her age, to encourage her, as that wicked Mr. Arouet said about shooting Admiral Byng. Then she would take her pencil, and with a few scratches there would be the outline of a child, in which you might notice how one sudden sweep gave the chubby cheek, and two dots darted at the paper looked like real eyes.

By and by she went to school, and caricatured the schoolmaster on the leaves of her grammars and geographies, and drew the faces of her companions, and, from time to time, heads and figures from her fancy, with large eyes, far apart, like those of Raffaele's mothers and children, sometimes with wild floating hair, and then with wings and heads thrown back in ecstasy. This was at about twelve years old, as the dates of these drawings show, and, therefore, three or four years before she came among us. Soon after this time, the ideal figures began to take the place of portraits and caricatures, and a new feature appeared in her drawing-books in the form of fragments of verse and short poems.

IV.

IT was dull work, of course, for such a young girl to live with an old spinster and go to a village school. Her books bore testimony to this; for there was a look of sadness in the faces she drew, and a sense of weariness and longing for some imaginary conditions of blessedness or other, which began to be painful. She might have gone through this flowering of the soul, and, casting her petals, subsided into a sober, human berry, but for the intervention of friendly assistance and counsel.

In the town where she lived was a lady of honorable condition, somewhat past middle age, who was possessed of pretty ample means, of cultivated tastes, of excellent principles, of exemplary character, and of more than common accomplishments. The gentleman in black broadcloth and white neckerchief only echoed the common voice about her, when he called her, after enjoying, beneath her hospitable roof, an excellent cup of tea, with certain elegances and luxuries he was unaccustomed to, "The Model of all the Virtues."

She deserved this title as well as almost any woman. She did really bristle with moral excellences. Mention any good thing she had not done; I should like to see you try! There was no handle of weakness to take hold of her by; she was as unseizable, except in her totality, as a billiard-ball; and on the broad, green, terrestrial table, where she had been knocked about, like all of us, by the cue of Fortune, she glanced from every human contact, and "caromed" from one relation to another,

and rebounded from the stuffed cushion of temptation, with such exact and perfect angular movements, that the Enemy's corps of Reporters had long given up taking notes of her conduct, as there was no chance for their master.

What an admirable person for the patroness and directress of a slightly self-willed child, with the lightning zig-zag line of genius running like a glittering vein through the marble whiteness of her virgin nature! One of the lady-patroness's peculiar virtues was calmness. She was resolute and strenuous, but still. You could depend on her for every duty; she was as true as steel. She was kind-hearted and serviceable in all the relations of life. She had more sense, more knowledge, more conversation, as well as more goodness, than all the partners you have waltzed with this winter put together.

Yet no man was known to have loved her, or even to have offered himself to her in marriage. It was a great wonder. I am very anxious to vindicate my character as a philosopher and an observer of Nature by accounting for this apparently extraordinary fact.

You may remember certain persons who have the misfortune of presenting to the friends whom they meet a cold, damp hand. There are states of mind in which a contact of this kind has a depressing effect on the vital powers that makes us insensible to all the virtues and graces of the proprietor of one of these life-absorbing organs. When they touch us, virtue passes out of us, and we feel as if our electricity had been drained by a powerful negative battery, carried about by an overgrown human torpedo.

“The Model of all the Virtues” had a pair of searching eyes as clear as Wenham ice; but they were slower to melt than that fickle jewelry. Her features disordered themselves slightly at times in a surface-smile, but never broke loose from their corners and indulged in the riotous tumult of a laugh, — which, I take it, is the mob-law of the features, — and propriety the magistrate who reads the riot-act. She carried the brimming cup of her inestimable virtues with a cautious, steady hand, and an eye always on them, to see that they did not spill. Then she was an admirable judge of character. Her mind was a perfect laboratory of tests and reagents; every syllable you put into breath went into her intellectual eudiometer, and all your thoughts were recorded on litmus-paper. I think there has rarely been a more admirable woman. Of course, Miss Iris was immensely and passionately attached to her. — Well, — these are two highly oxygenated adverbs, — grateful, — suppose we say, — yes, — grateful, dutiful, obedient to her wishes for the most part, — perhaps not quite up to the concert pitch of such a perfect orchestra of the virtues.

We must have a weak spot or two in a character before we can love it much. People that do not laugh or cry, or take more of anything than is good for them, or use anything but dictionary words, are admirable subjects for biographies. But we don't always care most for those flat-pattern flowers that press best in the herbarium.

This immaculate woman, — why could n't she have a fault or two? Is n't there any old whisper which will tarnish that wearisome aureole of saintly perfection?

Does n't she carry a lump of opium in her pocket? Is n't her cologne-bottle replenished oftener than its legitimate use would require? It would be such a comfort!

V.

NOR for the world would a young creature like Iris have let such words escape her, or such thoughts pass through her mind. Whether at the bottom of her soul lies any uneasy consciousness of an oppressive presence, it is hard to say, until we know more about her. Iris sits between the little gentleman and the "Model of all the Virtues," as the black-coated personage called her. I will watch them all.

I am sure that the young girl can hide nothing from me. Her skin is so transparent that one can almost count her heart-beats by the flushes they send into her cheeks. She does not seem to be shy, either. I think she does not know enough of danger to be timid. She seems to me like one of those birds that travellers tell of, found in remote, uninhabited islands, who, having never received any wrong at the hand of man, show no alarm at and hardly any particular consciousness of his presence.

The first thing will be to see how she and our little deformed gentleman get along together. The next thing will be to keep an eye on the duenna, — the "Model" and so forth, as the white-neckcloth called her. The intention of that estimable lady is, I understand, to launch her and leave her. I suppose there is no help for it, and I don't doubt this young lady knows how to take care of

herself, but I do not like to see young girls turned loose in boarding-houses. Look here now! There is that jewel of his race, whom I have called for convenience the Koh-i-noor (you understand it is quite out of the question for me to use the family names of our boarders, unless I want to get into trouble), — I say, the gentleman with the *diamond* is looking very often and very intently, it seems to me, down toward the farther corner of the table, where sits our amber-eyed blonde. The landlady's daughter does not look pleased, it seems to me, at this, nor at those other attentions which the gentleman referred to has, as I have learned, pressed upon the newly-arrived young person. The landlady made a communication to me, within a few days after the arrival of Miss Iris, which I will repeat to the best of my remembrance.

He (the person I have been speaking of), — she said, — seemed to be kinder hankerin' round after that young woman. It had hurt her daughter's feelin's a good deal, that the gentleman she was a-keepin' company with should be offerin' tickets and tryin' to send presents to them that he'd never know'd till jest a little spell ago, — and he as good as merried, so fur as solemn promises went, to as respectable a young lady, if she did say so, as any there was round, whosomever they might be.

Tickets! presents! — said I. — What tickets, what presents, has he had the impertinence to be offering to that young lady?

Tickets to the Múseum, — said the landlady. — There is them that's glad enough to go to the Múseum, when tickets is given 'em; but some of 'em ha'n't had a

ticket sence Cenderilla was played, — and now he must be offerin' 'em to this ridiculous young paintress, or whatever she is, that 's come to make more mischief than her board's worth. But it a'n't her fault, — said the landlady, relenting; — and that aunt of hers, or whatever she is, served him right enough.

Why, what did she do?

Do? Why, she took it up in the tongs and dropped it out o' winder.

Dropped? dropped what? — I said.

Why, the *soap*, — said the landlady.

It appeared that the Koh-i-noor, to ingratiate himself, had sent an elegant package of perfumed soap, directed to Miss Iris, as a delicate expression of a lively sentiment of admiration, and that, after having met with the unfortunate treatment referred to, it was picked up by Master Benjamin Franklin, who appropriated it, rejoicing, and indulged in most unheard-of and inordinate ablutions in consequence, so that his hands were a frequent subject of maternal congratulation, and he smelt like a civet-cat for weeks after his great acquisition.

After watching daily for a time, I think I can see clearly into the relation which is growing up between the little gentleman and the young lady. She shows a tenderness to him that I can't help being interested in. If he was her crippled child, instead of being more than old enough to be her father, she could not treat him more kindly. The landlady's daughter said, the other day, she believed that girl was settin' her cap for the Little Gentleman.

Some of them young folks is very artful, — said her

mother, — and there is them that would merry Lazarus, if he'd only picked up crumbs enough. I don't think, though, this is one of that sort; she's kinder childlike, — said the landlady, — and maybe never had any dolls to play with; for they say her folks was poor before Ma'am undertook to see to her teachin' and board her and clothe her.

I could not help overhearing this conversation. “Board her and clothe her!” — speaking of such a young creature! O dear! — Yes, — she must be fed, — just like Bridget, maid-of-all-work at this establishment. Somebody must pay for it. Somebody has a right to watch her and see how much it takes to “keep” her, and growl at her, if she has too good an appetite. Somebody has a right to keep an eye on her and take care that she does not dress too prettily. No mother to see her own youth over again in those fresh features and rising reliefs of half-sculptured womanhood, and, seeing its loveliness, forget her lessons of neutral-tinted propriety, and open the cases that hold her own ornaments to find for her a necklacc or a bracelet or a pair of ear-rings, — those golden lamps that light up the deep, shadowy dimples on the cheeks of young beauties, — swinging in a semibarbaric splendor that carries the wild fancy to Abyssinian queens and musky Odalisques! I don't believe any woman has utterly given up the great firm of Mundus & Co., so long as she wears ear-rings.

I think Iris loves to hear the Little Gentleman talk. She smiles sometimes at his vehement statements, but never laughs at him. When he speaks to her, she keeps her eye always steadily upon him. This may be only

natural good-breeding, so to speak, but it is worth noticing. I have often observed that vulgar persons, and public audiences of inferior collective intelligence, have this in common: the least thing draws off their minds, when you are speaking to them. I love this young creature's rapt attention to her diminutive neighbor while he is speaking.

He is evidently pleased with it. For a day or two after she came, he was silent and seemed nervous and excited. Now he is fond of getting the talk into his own hands, and is obviously conscious that he has at least one interested listener. Once or twice I have seen marks of special attention to personal adornment, — a ruffled shirt-bosom, one day, and a diamond pin in it, — not so *very* large as the Koh-i-noor's, but more lustrous. I mentioned the death's-head ring he wears on his right hand. I was attracted by a very handsome red stone, a ruby or carbuncle or something of the sort, to notice his left hand, the other day. It is a handsome hand, and confirms my suspicion that the cast mentioned was taken from his arm. After all, this is just what I should expect. It is not very uncommon to see the upper limbs, or one of them, running away with the whole strength, and, therefore, with the whole beauty, which we should never have noticed, if it had been divided equally between all four extremities. If it is so, of course he is proud of his one strong and beautiful arm; that is human nature. I am afraid he can hardly help betraying his favoritism, as people who have any one showy point are apt to do, — especially dentists with handsome teeth, who always smile back to their last molars.

Sitting, as ne does, next to the young girl, and next but one to the calm lady who has her in charge, he cannot help seeing their relations to each other.

That is an admirable woman, Sir, — he said to me one day, as we sat alone at the table after breakfast, — an admirable woman, Sir, — and I hate her.

Of course, I begged an explanation.

An admirable woman, Sir, because she does good things, and even kind things, — takes care of this — this — young lady — we have here, talks like a sensible person, and always looks as if she was doing her duty with all her might. I hate her because her voice sounds as if it never trembled, and her eyes look as if she never knew what it was to cry. Besides, she looks at me, Sir, stares at me, as if she wanted to get an image of me for some gallery in her brain, — and we don't love to be looked at in this way, we that have — I hate her, — I hate her, — her eyes kill me, — it is like being stabbed with icicles to be looked at so, — the sooner she goes home the better. I don't want a woman to weigh me in a balance; there are men enough for that sort of work. The judicial character is n't captivating in females, Sir. A woman fascinates a man quite as often by what she overlooks as by what she sees. Love prefers twilight to daylight; and a man does n't think much of, nor care much for, a woman outside of his household, unless he can couple the idea of love, past, present, or future, with her. I don't believe the Devil would give half as much for the services of a sinner as he would for those of one of these folks that are always doing virtuous acts in a way to make them displeasing. — That young girl wants a tender na-

ture to cherish her and give her a chance to put out her leaves, — sunshine, and not east winds.

He was silent, — and sat looking at his handsome left hand with the red stone ring upon it. — Is he going to fall in love with Iris ?

VI.

THE young man John asked me to come up one day and try some “old Bourbon,” which he said was A 1. On asking him what was the number of his room, he answered, that it was forty-seven, sky-parlor floor, but that I should n’t find it, if he did n’t go ahead to show me the way. I followed him to his *habitat*, being very willing to see in what kind of warren he burrowed, and thinking I might pick up something about the boarders who had excited my curiosity.

The young man John fell into a train of reflections which ended in his producing a Bologna sausage, a plate of “crackers,” as we Boston folks call certain biscuits, and the bottle of whiskey described as being A 1.

Under the influence of the crackers and sausage, he grew cordial and communicative.

It was time, I thought, to sound him as to our boarders.

What do you think of our young Iris ? — I began.

Fust-rate little filly ; — he said. — Pootiest and nicest little chap I’ve seen since the schoolma’am left. Schoolma’am was a brown-haired one, — eyes coffee-color. This one has got wine-colored eyes, — ’n’ that’s the reason they turn a fellah’s head, I suppose.

This is a spendid blonde, — I said, — the other was a brunette. Which style do you like best?

Which do I like best, boiled mutton or roast mutton? — said the young man John. Like 'em both, — it a'n't the color of 'em makes the goodness. I've been kind of lonely since schoolma'am went away. Used to like to look at her. I never said anything particular to her, that I remember, but —

I don't know whether it was the cracker and sausage, or that the young fellow's feet were treading on the hot ashes of some longing that had not had time to cool, but his eye glistened as he stopped.

I suppose she would n't have looked at a fellah like me, — he said, — but I come pretty near tryin'. If she had said, Yes, though, I should n't have known what to have done with her. Can't marry a woman nowadays till you 're so deaf you have to cock your head like a parrot to hear what she says, and so long-sighted you can't see what she looks like nearer than arm's-length.

Here is another chance for you, — I said. — What do you want nicer than such a young lady as Iris?

It's no use, — he answered. — I look at them girls and feel as the fellah did when he missed catchin' the trout. — 'To'od 'a' cost more butter to cook him 'n' he's worth, — says the fellah. — Takes a whole piece o' goods to cover a girl up nowadays. I'd as lief undertake to keep a span of elephants, — and take an ostrich to board, too, — as to marry one of 'em. What's the use? Clerks and counter-jumpers a'n't anything. Sparragrass and green peas a'n't for them, — not while they 're young and tender. Hossback-ridin' a'n't for them, — except

once a year, — on Fast-day. And marryin' a'n't for them. Sometimes a fellah feels lonely, and would like to have a nice young woman, to tell her how lonely he feels. And sometimes a fellah, — here the young man John looked very confidential, and, perhaps, as if a little ashamed of his weakness, — sometimes a fellah would like to have one o' them small young ones to trot on his knee and push about in a little wagon, — a kind of a little Johnny, you know; — it's odd enough, but, it seems to me, nobody can afford them little articles, except the folks that are so rich they can buy everything, and the folks that are so poor they don't want anything. It makes nice boys of us young fellahs, no doubt! And it's pleasant to see fine young girls sittin', like shopkeepers behind their goods, waitin', and waitin', and waitin', 'n' no customers, — and the men lingerin' round and lookin' at the goods, like folks that want to be customers, but have n't got the money!

Do you think the deformed gentleman means to make love to Iris? — I said.

What! Little Boston ask that girl to marry him! Well, now, that's comin' of it a little too strong. Yes, I guess she will marry him and carry him round in a basket, like a lame bantam! Look here! — he said, mysteriously; — one of the boarders swears there's a woman comes to see him, and that he has heard her singin' and screechin'. I should like to know what he's about in that den of his. He lays low 'n' keeps dark, — and, I tell you, there's a good many of the boarders would like to get into his chamber, but he don't seem to want 'em. Bidy could tell somethin' about what

she's seen when she's been to put his room to rights. She's a Paddy 'n' a fool, but she knows enough to keep her tongue still. All I know is, I saw her crossin' herself one day when she came out of that room. She looked pale enough, 'n' I heard her mutterin' somethin' or other about the Blessed Virgin. If it had n't been for the double doors to that chamber of his, I'd have had a squint inside before this; but, somehow or other, it never seems to happen that they're both open at once.

What do you think he employs himself about?—said I.

The young man John winked.

I waited patiently for the thought, of which this wink was the blossom, to come to fruit in words.

I don't believe in witches,—said the young man John.

Nor I.

We were both silent for a few minutes.

—Did you ever see the young girl's drawing-books, —I said, presently.

All but one, —he answered; — she keeps a lock on that, and won't show it. Ma'am Allen (the young rogue sticks to that name, in speaking of the gentleman with the *diamond*), Ma'am Allen tried to peek into it one day when she left it on the sideboard. "If you please," says she, —'n' took it from him, 'n' gave him a look that made him curl up like a caterpillar on a hot shovel. I only wished he had n't, and had jest given her a little saas, for I've been takin' boxin'-lessons, 'n'

I've got a new way of counterin' I want to try on to somebody.

—The end of all this was, that I came away from the young fellow's room, feeling that there were two principal things that I had to live for, for the next six weeks or six months, if it should take so long. These were, to get a sight of the young girl's drawing-book, which I suspected had her heart shut up in it, and to get a look into the Little Gentleman's room.

I don't doubt you think it rather absurd that I should trouble myself about these matters. You tell me, with some show of reason, that all I shall find in the young girl's book will be some outlines of angels with immense eyes, traceries of flowers, rural sketches, and caricatures, among which I shall probably have the pleasure of seeing my own features figuring. Very likely. But I'll tell you what *I* think I shall find. If this child has idealized the strange little bit of humanity over which she seems to have spread her wings like a brooding dove, — if, in one of those wild vagaries that passionate natures are so liable to, she has fairly sprung upon him with her clasping nature, as the sea-flowers fold about the first stray shell-fish that brushes their outspread tentacles, depend upon it, I shall find the marks of it in this drawing-book of hers, — if I can ever get a look at it, — fairly, of course, for I would not play tricks to satisfy my curiosity.

Then, if I can get into this Little Gentleman's room under any fair pretext, I shall, no doubt, satisfy myself in five minutes that he is just like other people, and that there is no particular mystery about him.

VII.

I LOVE to look at this "Rainbow," as her father used sometimes to call her, of ours. Handsome creature that she is in forms and colors, fit for a sea-king's bride, it is not her beauty alone that holds my eyes upon her. Let me tell you one of my fancies, and then you will understand the strange sort of fascination she has for me.

It is in the hearts of many men and women — let me add children — that there is a *Great Secret* waiting for them, — a secret of which they get hints now and then, perhaps oftener in early than in later years. These hints come sometimes in dreams, sometimes in sudden startling flashes, — second wakings, as it were, — a waking out of the waking state, which last is very apt to be a half-sleep. I have many times stopped short and held my breath, and felt the blood leaving my cheeks, in one of these sudden clairvoyant flashes. Of course I cannot tell what kind of a secret this is; but I think of it as a disclosure of certain relations of our personal being to time and space, to other intelligences, to the procession of events, and to their First Great Cause. This secret seems to be broken up, as it were, into fragments, so that we find here a word and there a syllable, and then again only a letter of it; but it never is written out for most of us as a complete sentence, in this life. I do not think it could be; for I am disposed to consider our beliefs about such a possible disclosure rather as a kind of premonition of an enlargement of our faculties in some future state than as an expectation to be fulfilled for most of us in this life. Per-

sons, however, have fallen into trances, — as did the Reverend William Tennent, among many others, — and learned some things which they could not tell in our human words.

Now among the visible objects which hint to us fragments of this infinite secret for which our souls are waiting, the faces of women are those that carry the most legible hieroglyphics of the great mystery. There are women's faces, some real, some ideal, which contain something in them that becomes a positive element in our creed, so direct and palpable a revelation is it of the infinite purity and love. I remember two faces of women with wings, such as they call angels, of Fra Angelico, — and I just now came across a print of Raphael's Santa Apollina, with something of the same quality, — which I was sure had their prototypes in the world above ours. No wonder the Catholics pay their vows to the Queen of Heaven! The unpoetical side of Protestantism is that it has no women to be worshipped.

But mind you, it is not every beautiful face that hints the Great Secret to us, nor is it only in beautiful faces that we find traces of it. Sometimes it looks out from a sweet sad eye, the only beauty of a plain countenance; sometimes there is so much meaning in the lips of a woman, not otherwise fascinating, that we know they have a message for us, and wait almost with awe to hear their accents. But this young girl has at once the beauty of feature and the unspoken mystery of expression. Can she tell me anything? Is her life a complement of mine, with the missing element in it which I have been groping after through so many

friendships that I have tired of, and through —— Hush! Is the door fast? Talking loud is a bad trick in these curious boarding-houses.

You must have sometimes noted this fact that I am going to remind you of and to use for a special illustration. Riding along over a rocky road, suddenly the slow monotonous grinding of the crushing gravel changes to a deep heavy rumble. There is a great hollow under your feet, — a huge unsummed cavern. Deep, deep beneath you, in the core of the living rock, it arches its awful vault, and far away it stretches its winding galleries, their roofs dripping into streams where fishes have been swimming and spawning in the dark until their scales are white as milk and their eyes have withered out, obsolete and useless.

So it is in life. We jog quietly along, meeting the same faces, grinding over the same thoughts, — the gravel of the soul's highway, — now and then jarred against an obstacle we cannot crush, but must ride over or round as we best may, sometimes bringing short up against a disappointment, but still working along with the creaking and rattling and grating and jerking that belong to the journey of life, even in the smoothest-rolling vehicle. Suddenly we hear the deep underground reverberation that reveals the unsuspected depth of some abyss of thought or passion beneath us.

I wish the girl would go. I don't like to look at her so much, and yet I cannot help it. Always that same expression of something that I ought to know, — something that she was made to tell and I to hear, — lying there ready to fall off from her lips, ready to leap out of

her eyes and make a saint of me, or a devil or a lunatic, or perhaps a prophet to tell the truth and be hated of men, or a poet whose words shall flash upon the dry stubble-field of worn-out thoughts and burn over an age of lies in an hour of passion.

It suddenly occurs to me that I may have put you on the wrong track. The Great Secret that I refer to has nothing to do with the Three Words. Set your mind at ease about that, — there are reasons I could give you which settle all that matter. I don't wonder, however, that you confounded the Great Secret with the Three Words.

I LOVE YOU *is* all the secret that many, nay, most women have to tell. When that is said, they are like China-crackers on the morning of the fifth of July. And just as that little patriotic implement is made with a slender train which leads to the magazine in its interior, so a sharp eye can almost always see the train leading from a young girl's eye or lip to the "I love you" in her heart. But the Three Words are not the Great Secret I mean. No, women's faces are only one of the tablets on which that is written in its partial, fragmentary symbols. It lies deeper than Love, though very probably Love is a part of it. Some, I think, — Wordsworth might be one of them, — spell out a portion of it from certain beautiful natural objects, landscapes, flowers, and others. I can mention several poems of his that have shadowy hints which seem to me to come near the region where I think it lies. I have known two persons who pursued it with the passion of the old alchemists, — all wrong evidently, but infatuated, and never giving

up the daily search for it until they got tremulous and feeble, and their dreams changed to visions of things that ran and crawled about their floor and ceilings, and so they died. The vulgar called them drunkards.

I told you that I would let you know the mystery of the effect this young girl's face produces on me. It is akin to those influences a friend of mine has described, you may remember, as coming from certain *voices*. I cannot translate it into words, — only into feelings; and these I have attempted to shadow by showing that her face hinted that revelation of something we are close to knowing, which all imaginative persons are looking for either in this world or on the very threshold of the next.

This young girl, about whom I have talked so unintelligibly, is the unconscious centre of attraction to the whole solar system of our breakfast-table. The Little Gentleman leans towards her, and she again seems to be swayed as by some invisible gentle force towards him. That slight inclination of two persons with a strong affinity towards each other, throwing them a little out of plumb when they sit side by side, is a physical fact I have often noticed. Then there is a tendency in all the men's eyes to converge on her; and I do firmly believe, that, if all their chairs were examined, they would be found a little obliquely placed, so as to favor the direction in which their occupants love to look.

That bland, quiet old gentleman, of whom I have spoken as sitting opposite to me, is no exception to the rule. She brought down some mignonette one morning, which she had grown in her chamber. She gave a sprig

to her little neighbor, and one to the landlady, and sent another by the hand of Bridget to this old gentleman.

— Sarvant, Ma'am! Much obleeged, — he said, and put it gallantly in his buttonhole. After breakfast he must see some of her drawings. Very fine performances, — very fine! — truly elegant productions, — truly elegant! — Had seen Miss Linley's needlework in London, in the year (eighteen hundred and little or nothing, I think he said), — patronized by the nobility and gentry, and Her Majesty, — elegant, truly elegant productions, very fine performances; these drawings reminded him of them; — wonderful resemblance to Nature; an extraordinary art, painting; Mr. Copley made some very fine pictures that he remembered seeing when he was a boy. Used to remember some lines about a portrait written by Mr. Cowper, beginning, —

“O that those lips had language! Life has pass'd
With me but roughly since I heard thee last.”

And with this the old gentleman fell to thinking about a dead mother of his that he remembered ever so much younger than he now was, and looking, not as his mother, but as his daughter should look. The dead young mother was looking at the old man, her child, as she used to look at him so many, many years ago. He stood still as if in a waking dream, his eyes fixed on the drawings till their outlines grew indistinct and they ran into each other, and a pale, sweet face shaped itself out of the glimmering light through which he saw them.

How many drawing-books have you filled, — I said, — since you began to take lessons? — This was the first,

— she answered, — since she was here ; and it was not full, but there were many separate sheets of large size she had covered with drawings.

I turned over the leaves of the book before us. Academic studies, principally of the human figure. Heads of sibyls, prophets, and so forth. Limbs from statues. Hands and feet from Nature. What a superb drawing of an arm ! I don't remember it among the figures from Michel Angelo, which seem to have been her patterns mainly. From Nature, I think, or after a cast from Nature. — Oh ! —

— Your smaller studies are in this, I suppose, — I said, taking up the drawing-book with a lock on it. — Yes, — she said. — I should like to see her style of working on a small scale. — There was nothing in it worth showing, — she said ; and presently I saw her try the lock, which proved to be fast. We are all caricatured in it, I have n't the least doubt. I think, though, I could tell by her way of dealing with us what her fancies were about us boarders. Some of them act as if they were bewitched with her, but she does not seem to notice it much. Her thoughts seem to be on her little neighbor more than on anybody else. The young fellow John appears to stand second in her good graces. I think he has once or twice sent her what the landlady's daughter calls bó-kays of flowers, — somebody has, at any rate. — I saw a book she had, which must have come from the divinity-student. It had a dreary title-page, which she had enlivened with a fancy portrait of the author, — a face from memory, apparently, — one of those faces that small children loathe without knowing why,

and which give them that inward disgust for heaven so many of the little wretches betray, when they hear that these are "good men," and that heaven is full of such. — The gentleman with the *diamond* — the Koh-i-noor, so called by us — was not encouraged, I think, by the reception of his packet of perfumed soap. He pulls his purple mustache and looks appreciatingly at Iris, who never sees him as it should seem. The young Marylander, who I thought would have been in love with her before this time, sometimes looks from his corner across the long diagonal of the table, as much as to say, I wish you were up here by me, or I were down there by you, — which would, perhaps, be a more natural arrangement than the present one. But nothing comes of all this, — and nothing has come of my sagacious idea of finding out the girl's fancies by looking into her locked drawing-book.

Not to give up all the questions I was determined to solve, I made an attempt also to work into the Little Gentleman's chamber. For this purpose, I kept him in conversation, one morning, until he was just ready to go up stairs, and then, as if to continue the talk, followed him as he toiled back to his room. He rested on the landing and faced round toward me. There was something in his eye which said, Stop there! So we finished our conversation on the landing. The next day, I mustered assurance enough to knock at his door, having a pretext ready. — No answer. — Knock again. A door, as if of a cabinet, was shut softly and locked, and presently I heard the peculiar dead beat of his thick-soled, misshapen boots. The bolts and the lock of the inner

door were unfastened, — with unnecessary noise, I thought, — and he came into the passage. He pulled the inner door after him and opened the outer one at which I stood. He had on a flowered silk dressing-gown, such as “Mr. Copley” used to paint his old-fashioned merchant-princes in; and a quaint-looking key in his hand. Our conversation was short, but long enough to convince me that the Little Gentleman did not want my company in his chamber, and did not mean to have it.

I have been making a great fuss about what is no mystery at all, — a school-girl’s secrets and a whimsical man’s habits. I mean to give up such nonsense and mind my own business. — Hark! What the deuse is that odd noise in his chamber?

VIII.

— IF Iris does not love this Little Gentleman, what does love look like when one sees it? She follows him with her eyes, she leans over toward him when he speaks, her face changes with the changes of his speech, so that one might think it was with her as with Christabel, —

That all her features were resigned
To this sole image in her mind.

But she never looks at him with such intensity of devotion as when he says anything about the soul and the soul’s atmosphere, religion.

Women are twice as religious as men; — all the world knows that. Whether they are any *better*, in the eyes

of Absolute Justice, might be questioned; for the additional religious element supplied by sex hardly seems to be a matter of praise or blame. But in all common aspects they are so much above us that we get most of our religion from them, — from their teachings, from their example, — above all, from their pure affections.

Now this poor little Iris had been talked to strangely in her childhood. Especially she had been told that she hated all good things, — which every sensible parent knows well enough is not true of a great many children, to say the least. I have sometimes questioned whether many libels on human nature had not been a natural consequence of the celibacy of the clergy, which was enforced for so long a period.

The child had met this and some other equally encouraging statements as to her spiritual conditions, early in life, and fought the battle of spiritual independence prematurely, as many children do. If all she did was hateful to God, what was the meaning of the approving or else the disapproving conscience, when she had done “right” or “wrong”? No “shoulder-striker” hits out straighter than a child with its logic. Why, I can remember lying in my bed in the nursery and settling questions which all that I have heard since and got out of books has never been able to raise again. If a child does not assert itself in this way in good season, it becomes just what its parents or teachers were, and is no better than a plaster image. — How old was I at the time? — I suppose about 5823 years old, — that is, counting from Archbishop Usher’s date of the Creation, and adding the life of the race, whose accumulated

intelligence is a part of my inheritance, to my own. A good deal older than Plato, you see, and much more experienced than my Lord Bacon and most of the world's teachers. — Old books, as you well know, are books of the world's youth, and new books are fruits of its age. How many of all these ancient folios round me are like so many old cupels ! The gold has passed out of them long ago, but their pores are full of the dross with which it was mingled.

And so Iris — having thrown off that first lasso, which not only fetters, but *chokes* those whom it can hold, so that they give themselves up trembling and breathless to the great soul-subduer, who has them by the windpipe — had settled a brief creed for herself, in which love of the neighbor, whom we have seen, was the first article, and love of the Creator, whom we have not seen, grew out of this as its natural development, being necessarily second in order of time to the first unselfish emotions which we feel for the fellow-creatures who surround us in our early years.

The child must have some place of worship. What would a young girl be who never mingled her voice with the songs and prayers that rose all around her with every returning day of rest ? And Iris was free to choose. Sometimes one and sometimes another would offer to carry her to this or that place of worship ; and when the doors were hospitably opened, she would often go meekly in by herself. It was a curious fact, that two churches as remote from each other in doctrine as could well be divided her affections.

The Church of Saint Polycarp had very much the look

of a Roman Catholic chapel. I do not wish to run the risk of giving names to the ecclesiastical furniture which gave it such a Romish aspect; but there were pictures, and inscriptions in antiquated characters, and there were reading-stands, and flowers on the altar, and other elegant arrangements. Then there were boys to sing alternately in choirs responsive to each other, and there was much bowing, with very loud responding, and a long service and a short sermon, and a bag, such as Judas used to hold in the old pictures, was carried round to receive contributions. Everything was done not only "decently and in order," but, perhaps one might say, with a certain air of magnifying their office on the part of the dignified clergymen, often two or three in number. The music and the free welcome were grateful to Iris, and she forgot her prejudices at the door of the chapel. For this was a church with open doors, with seats for all classes and all colors alike, — a church of zealous worshippers after their faith, of charitable and serviceable men and women, one that took care of its children and never forgot its poor, and whose people were much more occupied in looking out for their own souls than in attacking the faith of their neighbors. In its mode of worship there was a union of two qualities, — the taste and refinement, which the educated require just as much in their churches as elsewhere, and the air of stateliness, almost of pomp, which impresses the common worshipper, and is often not without its effect upon those who think they hold outward forms as of little value. Under the half-Romish aspect of the Church of Saint Polycarp, the young

girl found a devout and loving and singularly cheerful religious spirit. The artistic sense, which betrayed itself in the dramatic proprieties of its ritual, harmonized with her taste. The mingled murmur of the loud responses, in those rhythmic phrases, so simple, yet so fervent, almost as if every tenth heart-beat, instead of its dull *tic-tac*, articulated itself as "Good Lord, deliver us!" — the sweet alternation of the two choirs, as their holy song floated from side to side, — the keen young voices rising like a flight of singing-birds that passes from one grove to another, carrying its music with it back and forward, — why should she not love these gracious outward signs of those inner harmonies which none could deny made beautiful the lives of many of her fellow-worshippers in the humble, yet not inelegant Chapel of Saint Polycarp?

The young Marylander, who was born and bred to that mode of worship, had introduced her to the chapel, for which he did the honors for such of our boarders as were not otherwise provided for. I saw them looking over the same prayer-book one Sunday, and I could not help thinking that two such young and handsome persons could hardly worship together in safety for a great while. But they seemed to mind nothing but their prayer-book. By and by the silken bag was handed round. — I don't believe she will; — so awkward, you know; — besides, she only came by invitation. There she is, with her hand in her pocket, though, — and sure enough, her little bit of silver tinkled as it struck the coin beneath. God bless her! she has n't much to give; but her eye glistens when she gives it, and that is all Heaven asks. — That was the

first time I noticed these young people together, and I am sure they behaved with the most charming propriety, — in fact, there was one of our silent lady-boarders with them, whose eyes would have kept Cupid and Psyche to their good behavior. A day or two after this I noticed that the young gentleman had left his seat, which you may remember was at the corner diagonal to that of Iris, so that they have been as far removed from each other as they could be at the table. His new seat is three or four places farther down the table. Of course I made a romance out of this, at once. So stupid not to see it! How could it be otherwise? — Did you speak, Madam? I beg your pardon. (To my lady-reader.)

I never saw anything like the tenderness with which this young girl treats her little deformed neighbor. If he were in the way of going to church, I know she would follow him. But his worship, if any, is not with the throng of men and women and staring children.

IX.

THESE young girls that live in boarding-houses can do pretty much as they will. The female *gendarmes* are off guard occasionally. The sitting-room has its solitary moments, when any two boarders who wish to meet may come together accidentally (*accidentally*, I said, Madam, and I had not the slightest intention of italicizing the word) and discuss the social or political questions of the day, or any other subject that may prove interesting. Many charming conversations take place at the foot of the stairs, or while one of the parties is holding the latch

of a door, — in the shadow of porticos, and especially on those outside balconies which some of our Southern neighbors call “stoops,” the most charming places in the world when the moon is just right and the roses and honeysuckles are in full blow, — as we used to think in eighteen hundred and never mention it.

On such a balcony or “stoop,” one evening, I walked with Iris. We were on pretty good terms now, and I had coaxed her arm under mine, — my left arm, of course. That leaves one’s right arm free to defend the lovely creature, if the rival — odious wretch! — attempt to ravish her from your side. Likewise if one’s heart should happen to beat a little, its mute language will not be without its meaning, as you will perceive when the arm you hold begins to tremble, — a circumstance like to occur, if you happen to be a good-looking young fellow, and you two have the “stoop” to yourselves.

We had it to ourselves that evening. The Koh-i-noor, as we called him, was in a corner with our landlady’s daughter. The young fellow John was smoking out in the yard. The *gendarme* was afraid of the evening air, and kept inside. The young Marylander came to the door, looked out and saw us walking together, gave his hat a pull over his forehead and stalked off. I felt a slight spasm, as it were, in the arm I held, and saw the girl’s head turn over her shoulder for a second. What a kind creature this is! She has no special interest in this youth, but she does not like to see a young fellow going off because he feels as if he were not wanted.

She had her locked drawing-book under her arm. — Let me take it, — I said.

She gave it to me to carry.

This is full of caricatures of all of us, I am sure, —
said I.

She laughed, and said, — No, — not all of you.

I was there, of course ?

Why, no, — she had never taken so much pains with me.

Then she would let me see the inside of it ?

She would think of it.

Just as we parted, she took a little key from her pocket
and handed it to me. — This unlocks my naughty book,
— she said, — you shall see it. I am not afraid of you.

I don't know whether the last words exactly pleased
me. At any rate, I took the book and hurried with it to
my room. I opened it, and saw, in a few glances, that I
held the heart of Iris in my hand.

IRIS, HER BOOK.

I pray thee by the soul of her that bore thee,
By thine own sister's spirit I implore thee,
Deal gently with the leaves that lie before thee !

For Iris had no mother to infold her,
Nor ever leaned upon a sister's shoulder,
Telling the twilight thoughts that Nature told her.

She had not learned the mystery of awaking
Those chorded keys that soothe a sorrow's aching,
Giving the dumb heart voice, that else were breaking.

Yet lived, wrought, suffered. Lo, the pictured token !
Why should her fleeting day-dreams fade unspoken,
Like daffodils that die with sheaths unbroken ?

She knew not love, yet lived in maiden fancies, —
Walked simply clad, a queen of high romances,
And talked strange tongues with angels in her trances.

Twin-souled she seemed, a twofold nature wearing, —
Sometimes a flashing falcon in her daring,
Then a poor mateless dove that droops despairing.

Questioning all things : Why her Lord had sent her ?
What were these torturing gifts, and wherefore lent her ?
Scornful as spirit fallen, its own tormentor.

And then all tears and anguish : Queen of Heaven,
Sweet Saints, and Thou by mortal sorrows riven,
Save me ! O, save me ! Shall I die forgiven ?

And then — Ah, God ! But nay, it little matters :
Look at the wasted seeds that autumn scatters,
The myriad germs that Nature shapes and shatters !

If she had — Well ! She longed, and knew not wherefore
Had the world nothing she might live to care for ?
No second self to say her evening prayer for ?

She knew the marble shapes that set men dreaming,
Yet with her shoulders bare and tresses streaming
Showed not unlovely to her simple seeming.

Vain ? Let it be so ! Nature was her teacher.
What if a lonely and unsistered creature
Loved her own harmless gift of pleasing feature,

Saying, unsaddened, — This shall soon be faded,
And double-hued the shining tresses braided,
And all the sunlight of the morning shaded ?

— This her poor book is full of saddest follies,
Of tearful smiles and laughing melancholies,
With summer roses twined and wintry hollies.

In the strange crossing of uncertain chances,
Somewhere, beneath some maiden's tear-dimmed glances
May fail her little book of dreams and fancies.

Sweet sister! Iris, who shall never name thee,
Trembling for fear her open heart may shame thee,
Speaks from this vision-haunted page to claim thee.

Spare her, I pray thee! If the maid is sleeping,
Peace with her! she has had her hour of weeping.
No more! She leaves her memory in thy keeping.

These verses were written in the first leaves of the locked volume. As I turned the pages, I hesitated for a moment. Is it quite fair to take advantage of a generous, trusting impulse to read the unsunned depths of a young girl's nature, which I can look through, as the balloon-voyagers tell us they see from their hanging-baskets through the translucent waters which the keenest eye of such as sail over them in ships might strive to pierce in vain? Why has the child trusted *me* with such artless confessions, — self-revelations, which might be whispered by trembling lips, under the veil of twilight, in sacred confessionals, but which I cannot look at in the light of day without a feeling of wronging a sacred confidence?

To all this the answer seemed plain enough after a little thought. She did not know how fearfully she had

disclosed herself; she was too profoundly innocent. Her soul was no more ashamed than the fair shapes that walked in Eden without a thought of over-liberal loveliness. Having nobody to tell her story to, — having, as she said in her verses, no musical instrument to laugh and cry with her, — nothing, in short, but the language of pen and pencil, — all the veinings of her nature were impressed on these pages, as those of a fresh leaf are transferred to the blank sheets which enclose it. It was the same thing which I remember seeing beautifully shown in a child of some four or five years we had one day at our boarding-house. This child was a deaf-mute. But its soul had the inner sense that answers to hearing, and the shaping capacity which through natural organs realizes itself in words. Only it had to talk with its face alone; and such speaking eyes, such rapid alternations of feeling and shifting expressions of thought as flitted over its face, I have never seen in any other human countenance.

I found the soul of Iris in the book that lay open before me. Sometimes it was a poem that held it, sometimes a drawing, — angel, arabesque, caricature, or a mere hieroglyphic symbol of which I could make nothing. A rag of cloud on one page, as I remember, with a streak of red zigzagging out of it across the paper as naturally as a crack runs through a china bowl. On the next page a dead bird, — some little favorite, I suppose; for it was worked out with a special love, and I saw on the leaf that sign with which once or twice in my life I have had a letter sealed, — a round spot where the paper is slightly corrugated, and, if there is writing

there, the letters are somewhat faint and blurred. Most of the pages were surrounded with emblematic traceries. It was strange to me at first to see how often she introduced those homelier wild-flowers which we call *weeds*, — for it seemed there was none of them too humble for her to love, and none too little cared for by Nature to be without its beauty for her artist eye and pencil. By the side of the garden-flowers, — of Spring's curled darlings, the hyacinths, of rosebuds, dear to sketching maidens, of flower-de-lucees and morning-glories, — nay, oftener than these, and more tenderly caressed by the colored brush that rendered them, — were those common growths which fling themselves to be crushed under our feet and our wheels, making themselves so cheap in this perpetual martyrdom that we forget each of them is a ray of the Divine beauty.

Yellow japanned buttercups and star-disked dandelions, — just as we see them lying in the grass, like sparks that have leaped from the kindling sun of summer; the profuse daisy-like flower which whitens the fields, to the great disgust of liberal shepherds, yet seems fair to loving eyes, with its button-like mound of gold set round with milk-white rays; the tall-stemmed succory, setting its pale blue flowers aflame, one after another, sparingly, as the lights are kindled in the candelabra of decaying palaces where the heirs of dethroned monarchs are dying out; the red and white clovers; the broad, flat leaves of the plantain, — “the white man's foot,” as the Indians called it, — the wiry, jointed stems of that iron creeping plant which we call “knot-grass,” and which loves its life so dearly that it is next to

impossible to murder it with a hoe, as it clings to the cracks of the pavement; — all these plants, and many more, she wove into her fanciful garlands and borders. — On one of the pages were some musical notes. I touched them from curiosity on a piano belonging to one of our boarders. Strange! There are passages that I have heard before, plaintive, full of some hidden meaning, as if they were gasping for words to interpret them. She must have heard the strains that have so excited my curiosity, coming from my neighbor's chamber. The illuminated border she had traced round the page that held these notes took the place of the words they seemed to be aching for. Above, a long monotonous sweep of waves, leaden-hued, anxious and jaded and sullen, if you can imagine such an expression in water. On one side an Alpine *needle*, as it were, of black basalt, girdled with snow. On the other a threaded waterfall. The red morning-tint that shone in the drops had a strange look, — one would say the cliff was bleeding; — perhaps she did not mean it. Below, a stretch of sand, and a solitary bird of prey, with his wings spread over some unseen object. — And on the very next page a procession wound along, after the fashion of that on the title-page of Fuller's "Holy War," in which I recognized without difficulty every boarder at our table in all the glory of the most resplendent caricature, — three only excepted, — the Little Gentleman, myself, and one other.

I confess I did expect to see something that would remind me of the girl's little deformed neighbor, if not portraits of him. — There is a left arm again, though; — no, — that is from the "Fighting Gladiator," — the

“*Jeune Héros combattant*” of the Louvre;—there is the broad ring of the shield. From a cast, doubtless. [The separate casts of the “Gladiator’s” arm look immense; but in its place the limb looks light, almost slender,—such is the perfection of that miraculous marble. I never felt as if I touched the life of the old Greeks until I looked on that statue.]—Here is something very odd, to be sure. An Eden of all the humped and crooked creatures! What could have been in her head when she worked out such a fantasy? She has contrived to give them all beauty or dignity or melancholy grace. A Bactrian camel lying under a palm. A dromedary flashing up the sands,—spray of the dry ocean sailed by the “ship of the desert.” A herd of buffaloes, uncouth, shaggy-maned, heavy in the forehead, light in the hind-quarter. [The buffalo is the *lion* of the ruminants.] And there is a Norman horse, with his huge, rough collar, echoing, as it were, the natural form of the other beast. And here are twisted serpents; and stately swans, with answering curves in their bowed necks, as if they had snake’s blood under their white feathers; and grave, high-shouldered herons, standing on one foot like cripples, and looking at life round them with the cold stare of monumental effigies.—A very odd page indeed! Not a creature in it without a curve or a twist, and not one of them a mean figure to look at. You can make your own comment; I am fanciful, you know. I believe she is trying to idealize what we vulgarly call deformity, which she strives to look at in the light of one of Nature’s eccentric curves, belonging to her system of beauty, as the hyperbola and parabola be-

long to the conic sections, though we cannot see them as symmetrical and entire figures, like the circle and ellipse. At any rate, I cannot help referring this paradise of twisted spines to some idea floating in her head connected with her friend whom Nature has warped in the moulding. — That is nothing to another transcendental fancy of mine. I believe her soul thinks itself in his little crooked body at times, — if it does not really get freed or half freed from her own. Did you ever see a case of catalepsy? You know what I mean, — transient loss of sense, will, and motion; body and limbs taking any position in which they are put, as if they belonged to a lay-figure. She had been talking with him and listening to him one day when the boarders moved from the table nearly all at once. But she sat as before, her cheek resting on her hand, her amber eyes wide open and still. I went to her, — she was breathing as usual, and her heart was beating naturally enough, — but she did not answer. I bent her arm; it was as plastic as softened wax, and kept the place I gave it. — This will never do, though, — and I sprinkled a few drops of water on her forehead. She started and looked round. — I have been in a dream, — she said; — I feel as if all my strength were in this arm; — give me your hand! — She took my right hand in her left, which looked soft and white enough, but — Good Heaven! I believe she will crack my bones! All the nervous power in her body must have flashed through those muscles; as when a crazy lady snaps her iron window-bars, — she who could hardly glove herself when in her common health. Iris turned pale, and the tears came to her eyes; — she saw

she had given pain. Then she trembled, and might have fallen but for me ; — the poor little soul had been in one of those trances that belong to the spiritual pathology of higher natures, mostly those of women.

To come back to this wondrous book of Iris. Two pages faced each other which I took for symbolical expressions of two states of mind. On the left hand, a bright blue sky washed over the page, specked with a single bird. No trace of earth, but still the winged creature seemed to be soaring upward and upward. Facing it, one of those black dungeons such as Piranesi alone of all men has pictured. I am sure she must have seen those awful prisons of his, out of which the Opium-Eater got his nightmare vision, described by another as “cemeteries of departed greatness, where monstrous and forbidden things are crawling and twining their slimy convolutions among mouldering bones, broken sculpture, and mutilated inscriptions.” Such a black dungeon faced the page that held the blue sky and the single bird ; at the bottom of it something was coiled, — what, and whether meant for dead or alive, my eyes could not make out.

I told you the young girl’s soul was in this book. As I turned over the last leaves I could not help starting. There were all sorts of faces among the arabesques which laughed and scowled in the borders that ran round the pages. They had mostly the outline of childish or womanly or manly beauty, without very distinct individuality. But at last it seemed to me that some of them were taking on a look not wholly unfamiliar to me ; there were features that did not seem new.— Can it be so ? Was there ever such innocence in a creature so full of life ?

She tells her heart's secrets as a three-years-old child betrays itself without need of being questioned! This was no common miss, such as are turned out in scores from the young-lady-factories, with parchments warranting them accomplished and virtuous, — in case anybody should question the fact. I began to understand her; — and what is so charming as to read the secret of a real *femme incomprise*? — for such there are, though they are not the ones who think themselves uncomprehended women.

I found these stanzas in the book, among many others. I give them as characterizing the tone of her sadder moments :

UNDER THE VIOLETS.

Her hands are cold ; her face is white ;
 No more her pulses come and go ;
 Her eyes are shut to life and light ; —
 Fold the white vesture, snow on snow,
 And lay her where the violets blow.

But not beneath a graven stone,
 To plead for tears with alien eyes ;
 A slender cross of wood alone
 Shall say, that here a maiden lies
 In peace beneath the peaceful skies.

And gray old trees of hugest limb
 Shall wheel their circling shadows round
 To make the scorching sunlight dim
 That drinks the greenness from the ground,
 And drop their dead leaves on her mound.

When o'er their boughs the squirrels run,
And through their leaves the robins call,
And, ripening in the autumn sun,
The acorns and the chestnuts fall,
Doubt not that she will heed them all.

For her the morning choir shall sing
Its matins from the branches high,
And every minstrel-voice of spring,
That trills beneath the April sky,
Shall greet her with its earliest cry.

When, turning round their dial-track,
Eastward the lengthening shadows pass,
Her little mourners, clad in black,
The crickets, sliding through the grass,
Shall pipe for her an evening mass.

At last the rootlets of the trees
Shall find the prison where she lies,
And bear the buried dust they seize
In leaves and blossoms to the skies.
So may the soul that warmed it rise!

If any, born of kindlier blood,
Should ask, What maiden lies below?
Say only this: A tender bud,
That tried to blossom in the snow,
Lies withered where the violets blow.

— I locked the book and sighed as I laid it down.
The world is always ready to receive talent with open
arms. Very often it does not know what to do with
genius. Talent is a docile creature. It bows its head

meekly while the world slips the collar over it. It backs into the shafts like a lamb. It draws its load cheerfully, and is patient of the bit and of the whip. But genius is always impatient of its harness; its wild blood makes it hard to train.

X.

IRIS has told me that the Scottish gift of second-sight runs in her family, and that she is afraid she has it. Those who are so endowed look upon a well man and see a shroud wrapt about him. According to the degree to which it covers him, his death will be near or more remote. It is an awful faculty; but science gives one too much like it. Luckily for our friends, most of us who have the scientific second-sight school ourselves not to betray our knowledge by word or look.

Day by day, as the Little Gentleman comes to the table, it seems to me that the shadow of some approaching change falls darker and darker over his countenance. Nature is struggling with something, and I am afraid she is under in the wrestling-match. You do not care much, perhaps, for my particular conjectures as to the nature of his difficulty. I should say, however, from the sudden flushes to which he is subject, and certain other marks which, as an expert, I know how to interpret, that his heart was in trouble; but then he presses his hand to the *right* side, as if there were the centre of his uneasiness.

When I say difficulty about the heart, I do not mean any of those sentimental maladies of that organ which figure more largely in romances than on the returns which furnish our Bills of Mortality. I mean some

actual change in the organ itself, which may carry him off by slow and painful degrees, or strike him down with one huge pang and only time for a single shriek, — as when the shot broke through the brave Captain Nolan's breast, at the head of the Light Brigade at Balaklava, and with a loud cry he dropped dead from his saddle.

I thought it only fair to say something of what I apprehended to some who were entitled to be warned. The landlady's face fell when I mentioned my fears.

Poor man! — she said. — And will leave the best room empty! Has n't he got any sisters or nieces or anybody to see to his things, if he should be took away? Such a sight of cases, full of everything! Never thought of his failin' so suddin. A complication of diseases, she expected. Liver-complaint one of 'em?

I must tell Iris that I think her poor friend is in a precarious state. She seems nearer to him than anybody.

I did tell her. Whatever emotion it produced, she kept a still face, except, perhaps, a little trembling of the lip. — Could I be certain that there was any mortal complaint? — Why, no, I could not be certain; but it looked alarming to me. — He shall have some of my life, — she said.

I suppose this to have been a fancy of hers, of a kind of magnetic power she could give out; — at any rate, I cannot help thinking she *wills* her strength away from herself, for she has lost vigor and color from that day. I have sometimes thought he gained the force she lost; but this may have been a whim, very probably.

One day she came suddenly to me, looking deadly pale. Her lips moved, as if she were speaking; but I could not

at first hear a word. Her hair looked strangely, as if lifting itself, and her eyes were full of wild light. She sunk upon a chair, and I thought was falling into one of her trances. Something had frozen her blood with fear; I thought, from what she said, half audibly, that she believed she had seen a shrouded figure.

That night, at about eleven o'clock, I was sent for to see the Little Gentleman, who was taken suddenly ill. Bridget, the servant, went before me with a light. The doors were both unfastened, and I found myself ushered, without hindrance, into the dim light of the mysterious apartment I had so longed to enter. . . .

The house was deadly still, and the night-wind, blowing through an open window, struck me as from a field of ice, at the moment I passed back again into the creaking corridor. As I turned into the common passage, a white figure, holding a lamp, stood full before me. I thought at first it was one of those images made to stand in niches and hold a light in their hands. But the illusion was momentary, and my eyes speedily recovered from the shock of the bright flame and snowy drapery to see that the figure was a breathing one. It was Iris, in one of her statue-trances. She had come down, whether sleeping or waking, I knew not at first, led by an instinct that told her she was wanted, — or, possibly, having overheard and interpreted the sound of our movements, — or, it may be, having learned from the servant that there was trouble which might ask for a woman's hand. I sometimes think women have a sixth sense, which tells them that others, whom they cannot see or hear, are in suffering. How surely we find them at the bedside of the dying! How

strongly does Nature plead for them, that we should draw our first breath in their arms, as we sigh away our last upon their faithful breasts!

With white, bare feet, her hair loosely knotted, dressed as the starlight knew her, and the morning when she rose from slumber, save that she had twisted a scarf round her long dress, she stood still as a stone before me, holding in one hand a lighted coil of wax-taper, and in the other a silver goblet. I held my own lamp close to her, as if she had been a figure of marble, and she did not stir. There was no breach of propriety then, to scare the Poor Relation with and breed scandal out of. She had been "warned in a dream," doubtless suggested by her waking knowledge and the sounds which had reached her exalted sense. There was nothing more natural than that she should have risen and girdled her waist, and lighted her taper, and found the silver goblet with "*Ex dono pupillarum*" on it, from which she had taken her milk and possets through all her childish years, and so gone blindly out to find her place at the bedside, — a Sister of Charity without the cap and rosary; nay, unknowing whither her feet were leading her, and with wide, blank eyes seeing nothing but the vision that beckoned her along. — Well, I must wake her from her slumber or trance. — I called her name, but she did not heed my voice.

The Devil put it into my head that I would kiss one handsome young girl before I died, and now was my chance. She never would know it, and I should carry the remembrance of it with me into the grave, and a rose perhaps grow out of my dust, as a brier did out of Lord

Lovel's, in memory of that immortal moment! Would it wake her from her trance? and would she see me in the flush of my stolen triumph, and hate and despise me ever after? Or should I carry off my trophy undetected, and always from that time say to myself, when I looked upon her in the glory of youth and the splendor of beauty, "My lips have touched those roses and made their sweetness mine forever"? You think my cheek was flushed, perhaps, and my eyes were glittering with this midnight flash of opportunity. On the contrary, I believe I was pale, very pale, and I know that I trembled. Ah, it is the pale passions that are the fiercest, — it is the violence of the chill that gives the measure of the fever! The fighting-boy of our school always turned white when he went out to a pitched battle with the bully of some neighboring village; but we knew what his bloodless cheeks meant, — the blood was all in his stout heart, — he was a slight boy, and there was not enough to redden his face and fill his heart both at once.

Perhaps it is making a good deal of a slight matter, to tell the internal conflicts in the heart of a quiet person something more than juvenile and something less than senile, as to whether he should be guilty of an impropriety, and if he were, whether he would get caught in his indiscretion. And yet the memory of the kiss that Margaret of Scotland gave to Alain Chartier has lasted four hundred years, and put it into the head of many an ill-favored poet, whether Victoria or Eugénie would do as much by him, if she happened to pass him when he was asleep. And have we ever forgotten that the fresh cheek of the young John Milton tingled under the lips of

some high-born Italian beauty, who, I believe, did not think to leave her card by the side of the slumbering youth, but has bequeathed the memory of her pretty deed to all coming time? The sound of a kiss is not so loud as that of a cannon, but its echo lasts a deal longer.

There is one disadvantage which the man of philosophical habits of mind suffers, as compared with the man of action. While he is taking an enlarged and rational view of the matter before him, he lets his chance slip through his fingers. Iris woke up, of her own accord, before I had made up my mind what I was going to do about it.

When I remember how charmingly she looked, I don't blame myself at all for being tempted; but if I had been fool enough to yield to the impulse, I should certainly have been ashamed to tell of it. She did not know what to make of it, finding herself there alone, in such guise, and me staring at her. She looked down at her white robe and bare feet, and colored, — then at the goblet she held in her hand, — then at the taper; and at last her thoughts seemed to clear up.

I know it all, — she said. — He is going to die, and I must go and sit by him. Nobody will care for him as I shall, and I have nobody else to care for.

I assured her that nothing was needed for him that night but rest, and persuaded her that the excitement of her presence could only do harm. Let him sleep, and he would very probably awake better in the morning. There was nothing to be said, for I spoke with authority; and the young girl glided away with noiseless step and sought her own chamber.

XI.

— ON my second visit, I found Iris sitting by the Little Gentleman's pillow. To my disappointment, the room was darkened. He did not like the light, and would have the shutters kept nearly closed. It was good enough for me; — what business had I to be indulging my curiosity, when I had nothing to do but to exercise such skill as I possessed for the benefit of my patient? There was not much to be said or done in such a case; but I spoke as encouragingly as I could, as I think we are always bound to do. He did not seem to pay any very anxious attention, but the poor girl listened as if her own life and more than her own life were depending on the words I uttered. She followed me out of the room, when I had got through my visit.

How long? — she said.

Uncertain. Any time; to-day, — next week, — next month, — I answered. — One of those cases where the issue is not doubtful, but may be sudden or slow.

The women of the house were kind, as women always are in trouble. But Iris pretended that nobody could spare the time as well as she, and kept her place, hour after hour, until the landlady insisted that she 'd be killin' herself, if she begun at that rate, 'n' haf to give up, if she didn't want to be clean beat out in less 'n a week.

At the table we were graver than common. The high chair was set back against the wall, and a gap left between that of the young girl and her nearest neighbor's on the right. But the next morning, to our great sur-

prise, that good-looking young Marylander had very quietly moved his own chair to the vacant place. I thought he was creeping down that way, but I was not prepared for a leap spanning such a tremendous parenthesis of boarders as this change of position included. There was no denying that the youth and maiden were a handsome pair as they sat side by side. But whatever the young girl may have thought of her new neighbor, she never seemed for a moment to forget the poor little friend who had been taken from her side. There are women, and even girls, with whom it is of no use to talk. One might as well reason with a bee as to the form of his cell, or with an oriole as to the construction of his swinging nest, as try to stir these creatures from their own way of doing their own work. It was not a question with Iris, whether she was entitled by any special relation or by the fitness of things to play the part of a nurse. She was a wilful creature that must have her way in this matter. And it so proved that it called for much patience and long endurance to carry through the duties, say rather the kind offices, the painful pleasures, that she had chosen as her share in the household where accident had thrown her. She had that genius of ministration which is the special province of certain women, marked even among their helpful sisters by a soft, low voice, a quiet footfall, a light hand, a cheering smile, and a ready self-surrender to the objects of their care, which such trifles as their own food, sleep, or habits of any kind never presume to interfere with.

Day after day, and too often through the long watches of the night, she kept her place by the pillow.—That

girl will kill herself over me, Sir, — said the poor Little Gentleman to me, one day, — she will kill herself, Sir, if you don't call in all the resources of your art to get me off as soon as may be. I shall wear her out, Sir, with sitting in this close chamber and watching when she ought to be sleeping, if you leave me to the care of Nature without dosing me.

This was rather strange pleasantry, under the circumstances. But there are certain persons whose existence is so out of parallel with the larger laws in the midst of which it is moving, that life becomes to them as death and death as life.

XII.

THE apron-strings of an American mother are made of india-rubber. Her boy belongs where he is wanted; and that young Marylander of ours spoke for all our young men, when he said that his home was wherever the stars and stripes blew over his head.

And that leads me to say a few words of this young gentleman, who made that audacious movement, — jumping over the seats of I don't know how many boarders to put himself in the place which the Little Gentleman's absence had left vacant at the side of Iris. When a young man is found habitually at the side of any one given young lady, — when he lingers where she stays, and hastens when she leaves, — when his eyes follow her as she moves, and rest upon her when she is still, — when he begins to grow a little timid, he who was so bold, and a little pensive, he who was so gay, whenever accident finds them alone, — when he thinks very often

of the given young lady, and names her very seldom, —

What do you say about it, my charming young expert in that sweet science in which, perhaps, a long experience is not the first of qualifications ?

— But we don't know anything about this young man, except that he is good-looking, and somewhat high-spirited, and strong-limbed, and has a generous style of nature, — all very promising, but by no means proving that he is a proper lover for Iris, whose heart we turned inside out when we opened that sealed book of hers.

Ah, my dear young friend ! When your mamma — then, if you will believe it, a very slight young lady, with very pretty hair and figure — came and told *her* mamma that your papa had — had — asked — No, no, no ! she could n't say it ; but her mother — O, the depth of maternal sagacity ! — guessed it all without another word ! — When your mother, I say, came and told her mother she was *engaged*, and your grandmother told your grandfather, how much did they know of the intimate nature of the young gentleman to whom she had pledged her existence ? I will not be so hard as to ask how much your respected mamma knew at that time of the intimate nature of your respected papa, though, if we should compare a young girl's *man-as-she-thinks-him* with a forty-summered matron's *man-as-she-finds-him*, I have my doubts as to whether the second would be a fac-simile of the first in most cases.

I have been a good while coming at a secret, for which I wished to prepare you before telling it. I think there

is a kindly feeling growing up between Iris and our young Marylander. Not that I suppose there is any distinct understanding between them, but that the affinity which has drawn him from the remote corner where he sat to the side of the young girl is quietly bringing their two natures together. Just now she is all given up to another; but when he no longer calls upon her daily thoughts and cares, I warn you not to be surprised, if this bud of friendship open like the evening primrose, with a sound as of a sudden stolen kiss, and lo! the flower of full-blown love lies unfolded before you.

XIII.

AND now the days had come for our little friend, whose whims and weaknesses had interested us, perhaps, as much as his better traits, to make ready for that long journey which is easier to the cripple than to the strong man, and on which none enters so willingly as he who has borne the life-long load of infirmity during his earthly pilgrimage.

The divinity-student was exercised in his mind about the Little Gentleman, and, in the kindness of his heart, — for he was a good young man, — and in the strength of his convictions, — for he took it for granted that he and his crowd were right, and other folks and their crowd were wrong, — he determined to bring the Little Gentleman round to his faith before he died, if he could. So he sent word to the sick man, that he should be pleased to visit him and have some conversation with him; and received for answer that he would be welcome.

The divinity-student made him a visit, therefore, and had a somewhat remarkable interview with him, which I shall briefly relate, without attempting to justify the positions taken by the Little Gentleman. He found him weak, but calm. Iris sat silent by his pillow.

After the usual preliminaries, the divinity-student said, in a kind way, that he was sorry to find him in failing health, that he felt concerned for his soul, and was anxious to assist him in making preparations for the great change awaiting him.

I thank you, Sir, — said the Little Gentleman; — permit me to ask you, what makes you think I am not ready for it, Sir, and that you can do anything to help me, Sir?

I address you only as a fellow-man, — said the divinity-student, — and therefore a fellow-sinner.

I am *not* a man, Sir! — said the Little Gentleman. — I was born into this world the wreck of a man, and I shall not be judged with a race to which I do not belong. Look at this! — he said, and held up his withered arm. — See there! — and he pointed to his misshapen extremities. — Lay your hand here! — and he laid his own on the region of his misplaced heart. — I have known nothing of the life of your race. When I first came to my consciousness, I found myself an object of pity, or a sight to show. The first strange child I ever remember hid its face and would not come near me. I was a broken-hearted as well as broken-bodied boy. I grew into the emotions of ripening youth, and all that I could have loved shrank from my presence. I became a man in years, and had nothing

in common with manhood but its longings. My life is the dying pang of a worn-out race, and I shall go down alone into the dust, out of this world of men and women, without ever knowing the fellowship of the one or the love of the other. I will not die with a lie rattling in my throat. If another state of being has anything worse in store for me, I have had a long apprenticeship to give me strength that I may bear it. I don't believe it, Sir! I have too much faith for that. God has not left me wholly without comfort, even here. I love this old place where I was born;—the heart of the world beats under the three hills of Boston, Sir! I love this great land, with so many tall men in it, and so many good, noble women.—His eyes turned to the silent figure by his pillow.—I have learned to accept meekly what has been allotted to me, but I cannot honestly say that I think my sin has been greater than my suffering. I bear the ignorance and the evil-doing of whole generations in my single person. I never drew a breath of air nor took a step that was not a punishment for another's fault. I may have had many wrong thoughts, but I cannot have done many wrong deeds,—for my cage has been a narrow one, and I have paced it alone. I have looked through the bars and seen the great world of men busy and happy, but I had no part in their doings. I have known what it was to dream of the great passions; but since my mother kissed me before she died, no woman's lips have pressed my cheek,—nor ever will.

——The young girl's eyes glittered with a sudden film, and almost without a thought, but with a warm

human instinct that rushed up into her face with her heart's blood, she bent over and kissed him. It was the sacrament that washed out the memory of long years of bitterness, and I should hold it an unworthy thought to defend her.

The Little Gentleman repaid her with the only tear any of us ever saw him shed.

The divinity-student rose from his place, and, turning away from the sick man, walked to the other side of the room, where he bowed his head and was still. All the questions he had meant to ask had faded from his memory. The tests he had prepared by which to judge of his fellow-creature's fitness for heaven seemed to have lost their virtue. He could trust the crippled child of sorrow to the Infinite Parent. The kiss of the fair-haired girl had been like a sign from heaven, that angels watched over him whom he was presuming but a moment before to summon before the tribunal of his private judgment.

Shall I pray with you? — he said, after a pause. — A little before he would have said, Shall I pray *for* you? — The Christian religion, as taught by its Founder, is full of *sentiment*. So we must not blame the divinity-student, if he was overcome by those yearnings of human sympathy which predominate so much more in the sermons of the Master than in the writings of his successors, and which have made the parable of the Prodigal Son the consolation of mankind, as it has been the stumbling-block of all exclusive doctrines.

Pray! — said the Little Gentleman.

The divinity-student prayed, in low, tender tones, that

God would look on his servant lying helpless at the feet of his mercy; that he would remember his long years of bondage in the flesh; that he would deal gently with the bruised reed. Thou hast visited the sins of the fathers upon this their child. O, turn away from him the penalties of his own transgressions! Thou hast laid upon him, from infancy, the cross which thy stronger children are called upon to take up; and now that he is fainting under it, be Thou his stay, and do Thou succor him that is tempted! Let his manifold infirmities come between him and Thy judgment; in wrath remember mercy! If his eyes are not opened to all thy truth, let thy compassion lighten the darkness that rests upon him, even as it came through the word of thy Son to blind Bartimeus, who sat by the wayside, begging!

Many more petitions he uttered, but all in the same subdued tone of tenderness. In the presence of helpless suffering, and in the fast-darkening shadow of the Destroyer, he forgot all but his Christian humanity, and cared more about consoling his fellow-man than making a proselyte of him.

This was the last prayer to which the Little Gentleman ever listened. Some change was rapidly coming over him during this last hour of which I have been speaking. The excitement of pleading his cause before his self-elected spiritual adviser, — the emotion which overcame him, when the young girl obeyed the sudden impulse of her feelings and pressed her lips to his cheek, — the thoughts that mastered him while the divinity-student poured out his soul for him in prayer, might well hurry on the inevitable moment. When the divin-

ity-student had uttered his last petition, commending him to the Father through his Son's intercession, he turned to look upon him before leaving his chamber. His face was changed.—There is a language of the human countenance which we all understand without an interpreter, though the lineaments belong to the rudest savage that ever stammered in an unknown barbaric dialect. By the stillness of the sharpened features, by the blankness of the tearless eyes, by the fixedness of the smileless mouth, by the deadening tints, by the contracted brow, by the dilating nostril, we know that the soul is soon to leave its mortal tenement, and is already closing up its windows and putting out its fires.—Such was the aspect of the face upon which the divinity-student looked, after the brief silence which followed his prayer. The change had been rapid, though not that abrupt one which is liable to happen at any moment in these cases.—The sick man looked towards him.—Farewell,—he said—I thank you. Leave me alone with her.

When the divinity-student had gone, and the Little Gentleman found himself alone with Iris, he lifted his hand to his neck, and took from it, suspended by a slender chain, a quaint, antique-looking key,—the same key I had once seen him holding. He gave this to her, and pointed to a carved cabinet opposite his bed, one of those that had so attracted my curious eyes and set me wondering as to what it might contain.

Open it,—he said,—and light the lamp.—The young girl walked to the cabinet and unlocked the door.

A deep recess appeared, lined with black velvet, against which stood in white relief an ivory crucifix. A silver lamp hung over it. She lighted the lamp and came back to the bedside. The dying man fixed his eyes upon the figure of the dying Saviour. — Give me your hand, — he said ; and Iris placed her right hand in his left. So they remained, until presently his eyes lost their meaning, though they still remained vacantly fixed upon the white image. Yet he held the young girl's hand firmly, as if it were leading him through some deep-shadowed valley and it was all he could cling to. But presently an involuntary muscular contraction stole over him, and his terrible dying grasp held the poor girl as if she were wedged in an engine of torture. She pressed her lips together and sat still. The inexorable hand held her tighter and tighter, until she felt as if her own slender fingers would be crushed in its gripe. It was one of the tortures of the Inquisition she was suffering, and she could not stir from her place. Then, in her great anguish, she, too, cast her eyes upon that dying figure, and, looking upon its pierced hands and feet and side and lacerated forehead, she felt that she also must suffer uncomplaining. In the moment of her sharpest pain she did not forget the duties of her tender office, but dried the dying man's moist forehead with her handkerchief, even while the dews of agony were glistening on her own. How long this lasted she never could tell. *Time* and *thirst* are two things you and I talk about ; but the victims whom holy men and righteous judges used to stretch on their engines knew better what they meant than you or I! — What is that great bucket of water

for? said the Marchioness de Brinvilliers, before she was placed on the rack. — *For you to drink*, — said the torturer to the little woman. — She could not think that it would take such a flood to quench the fire in her and so keep her alive for her confession. The torturer knew better than she.

After a time not to be counted in minutes, as the clock measures, — without any warning, — there came a swift change of his features; his face turned white, as the waters whiten when a sudden breath passes over their still surface; the muscles instantly relaxed, and Iris, released at once from her care for the sufferer and from his unconscious grasp, fell senseless, with a feeble cry, — the only utterance of her long agony.

— Iris went into mourning for the Little Gentleman. Although he left the bulk of his property, by will, to a public institution, he added a codicil, by which he disposed of various pieces of property as tokens of kind remembrance. It was in this way I became the possessor of the wonderful instrument I have spoken of, which had been purchased for him out of an Italian convent. The landlady was comforted with a small legacy. The following extract relates to Iris: “ — in consideration of her manifold acts of kindness, but only in token of grateful remembrance, and by no means as a reward for services which cannot be compensated, a certain messuage, with all the land thereto appertaining, situate in — Street, at the North End, so called, of Boston, aforesaid, the same being the house in which I was born, but now inhabited by several families, and known as

‘the Rookery.’” Iris had also the crucifix, the portrait, and the red-jewelled ring. The funeral or death’s-head ring was buried with him.

XIV.

SOME of the boarders were of opinion that Iris did not return the undisguised attentions of the handsome young Marylander. Instead of fixing her eyes steadily on him, as she used to look upon the Little Gentleman, she would turn them away, as if to avoid his own. They often went to church together, it is true; but nobody, of course, supposes there is any relation between religious sympathy and those wretched “sentimental” movements of the human heart upon which it is commonly agreed that nothing better is based than society, civilization, friendship, the relation of husband and wife, and of parent and child, and which many people must think were singularly overrated by the Teacher of Nazareth, whose whole life, as I said before, was full of sentiment, loving this or that young man, pardoning this or that sinner, weeping over the dead, mourning for the doomed city, blessing, and perhaps kissing, the little children, — so that the Gospels are still cried over almost as often as the last work of fiction!

But one fine June morning there rumbled up to the door of our boarding-house a hack containing a lady inside and a trunk on the outside. It was our friend the lady-patroness of Miss Iris, the same who had been called by her admiring pastor “The Model of all the Virtues.” Once a week she had written a letter, in a

rather formal hand, but full of good advice, to her young charge. And now she had come to carry her away, thinking that she had learned all she was likely to learn under her present course of teaching. The Model, however, was to stay awhile, — a week, or more, — before they should leave together.

Iris was obedient, as she was bound to be. She was respectful, grateful, as a child is with a just, but not tender parent. Yet something was wrong. She had one of her trances, and became statue-like, as before, only the day after the Model's arrival. She was wan and silent, tasted nothing at table, smiled as if by a forced effort, and often looked vaguely away from those who were looking at her, her eyes just glazed with the shining moisture of a tear that must not be allowed to gather and fall. Was it grief at parting from the place where her strange friendship had grown up with the Little Gentleman? Yet she seemed to have become reconciled to his loss, and rather to have a deep feeling of gratitude that she had been permitted to care for him in his last weary days.

The Sunday after the Model's arrival, that lady had an attack of headache, and was obliged to shut herself up in a darkened room alone. Our two young friends took the opportunity to go together to the Church of the Galileans. They said but little going, — "collecting their thoughts" for the service, I devoutly hope. My kind good friend the pastor preached that day one of his sermons that make us all feel like brothers and sisters, and his text was that affectionate one from John, "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue,

but in deed and in truth." When Iris and her friend came out of church, they were both pale, and walked a space without speaking.

At last the young man said, — You and I are not little children, Iris!

She looked in his face an instant, as if startled, for there was something strange in the tone of his voice. She smiled faintly, but spoke never a word.

In deed and in truth, Iris, —

What shall a poor girl say or do, when a strong man falters in his speech before her, and can do nothing better than hold out his hand to finish his broken sentence?

The poor girl said nothing, but quietly laid her ungloved hand in his, — the little soft white hand which had ministered so tenderly and suffered so patiently.

The blood came back to the young man's cheeks, as he lifted it to his lips, even as they walked there in the street, touched it gently with them, and said, — "It is mine!"

Iris did not contradict him.

XV.

THE seasons pass by so rapidly, that I am startled to think how much has happened since these events I was describing. Those two young people would insist on having their own way about their own affairs, notwithstanding the good lady, so justly called the Model, insisted that the age of twenty-five years was as early as any discreet young lady should think of incurring the

responsibilities, etc., etc. Long before Iris had reached that age, she was the wife of a young Maryland engineer, directing some of the vast constructions of his native State, — where he was growing rich fast enough to be able to decline that famous Russian offer which would have made him a kind of nabob in a few years. Iris does not write verse often, nowadays, but she sometimes draws. The last sketch of hers I have seen in my Southern visits was of two children, a boy and girl, the youngest holding a silver goblet, like the one she held that evening when I — I was so struck with her statue-like beauty. If in the later summer months you find the grass marked with footsteps around a grave on Copp's Hill, and flowers scattered over it, you may be sure that Iris is here on her annual visit to the home of her childhood and that excellent lady whose only fault was, that Nature had written out her list of virtues on ruled paper, and forgotten to rub out the lines.

One thing more I must mention. Being on the Common, last Sunday, I was attracted by the cheerful spectacle of a well-dressed and somewhat youthful papa wheeling a very elegant little carriage containing a stout baby. A buxom young lady watched them from one of the stone seats, with an interest which could be nothing less than maternal. I at once recognized my old friend, the young fellow whom we called John. He was delighted to see me, introduced me to "Madam," and would have the lusty infant out of the carriage, and hold him up for me to look at.

Now, then, — he said to the two-year-old, — show the gentleman how you hit from the shoulder. — Whereupon

the little imp pushed his fat fist straight into my eye, to his father's intense satisfaction.

Fust-rate little chap, — said the papa. — Chip of the old block. Regl'r little Johnny, you know.

I was so much pleased to find the young fellow settled in life, and pushing about one of "them little articles" he had seemed to want so much, that I took my "punishment" at the hands of the infant pugilist with great equanimity. — And how is the old boarding-house? I asked.

A 1, he answered. Painted and papered as good as new. Gabs in all the rooms up to the sky-parlors. Old woman's layin' up money, they say. Means to send Ben Franklin to college. — Just then the first bell rang for church, and my friend, who, I understand, has become a most exemplary member of society, said he must be off to get ready for meetin', and told the young one to "shake dada," which he did with his closed fist, in a somewhat menacing manner. And so the young man John, as we used to call him, took the pole of the miniature carriage, and pushed the small pugilist before him homewards, followed, in a somewhat leisurely way, by his pleasant-looking lady-companion, and I sent a sigh and a smile after him.





THE ROSICRUCIAN.

BY DINAH MARIA MULLOCK CRAIK.

I.

KNOW not if men would say that the face of Basil Wolgemuth was beautiful. There were no darkly gleaming eyes, no sculptured features, no clustering raven locks; all was fair, clear, and sunny as his own soul. And what a soul was that! It lighted up his whole countenance, as the sun lights up a landscape, — making that which would else have been ordinary most glorious. It was mirrored in his eyes; it shone in his every gesture; it made music in his voice; it accompanied him like a fair presence, giving life, love, and beauty wherever he moved.

He sat in a low-roofed, half-darkened chamber, whose gloomy recesses looked almost fearful. Now and then passing sounds of human-voices rose from the street below, and ever and anon the great bell of Cologne Cathedral boomed out the hours, making the after silence deeper still. The student — for such he evidently was — leaned his slight and rather diminutive form in the

attitude of one wearied ; but there was no lassitude visible in his expressive face, and his eyes were fixed with a dreamy and thoughtful gaze on the blazing fagots that roared and sparkled on the hearth before him.

The fire was his sole companion ; and it was good company, in sooth. Not mute either ; for it seemed to talk like a human voice. How the live juices hissed out, when the damp pine-wood caught the blaze, and chattered and muttered like a vexed child ! How furiously it struggled and roared, as the flames grew stronger ! How it sunk into a low, complaining sound, and then into a dead stillness, being conquered at last, and breathing its life out in a ruddy but silent glow. Such was the voice of the fire, but the student beheld its form too. Quaint and mysterious were the long fiery alleys and red caverns which it made, mingled with black hollows, out of which mocking faces seemed to peep ; while the light flames waving to and fro were like aerial shapes moving in a fantastic dance. Beautiful and mystic appeared the fire.

Basil Wolgemuth was a student and a dreamer. He had pierced into the secrets of nature and of philosophy, not as an idle seeker, mechanically following the bent of a vague curiosity, but as an enthusiastic lover, who would fathom the depths of his beloved's soul. He knew that in this world all things bear two meanings ; one for the common observer, one for the higher mind of him who, with an earnest purpose and a steadfast but loving heart, penetrates into those mines of hidden riches, — the treasures of science and of im-

agination. Basil was still young; and yet men of learning and power listened with deference to his words; wisdom, rank, and beauty had trodden that poor chamber, and felt honored, — for it was the habitation of genius.

And was all this sunshine of fame lavished upon a barren tree, which brought forth at best only the dazzling fruits of mere intellect, beautiful to the eye but deceptive to the heart as the jewelled apples of Aladdin, or was it rich in all good fruits of human kindness? Ask the mother, to whom the very footsteps of her dutiful son brought light and gladness; ask the sister, whose pride in her noble kinsman was even less than her love for the gentle and forbearing brother who made the sunshine of their home. These would speak for Basil. There was one — one more; but he knew it not then.

The fire sank to a few embers, and through the small window at the farther end of the apartment the young moon looked with her quiet smile. At last the door was half opened, and a girlish face peeped in.

“Are you sleeping, Basil, or only musing?”

“Is that you, Margareta?” said the student, without changing his attitude.

“Yes; it is growing late, brother; will you not come to supper?”

“I do not need it, dear Margareta, thank you.”

“But we want you, Basil; my mother is asking for you; and Isilda, too, is here.”

A bright smile passed over the young man’s face; but his sister did not see it, and continued: —

“Come, brother; do come; you have studied enough for to-day.”

He rose cheerfully: “Well, then, tell my mother I will come directly.”

Margareta closed the door, and Basil stood thoughtfully by the fire. At that moment a bright flame, springing up from some stray brand yet unkindled, illumined his face, — it was radiant with the light of love. His finely curved lips, the sole beautiful feature there, were trembling with a happy smile, as they murmured in low tones one beloved name, — “Isilda, Isilda!”

II.

LET us glance at the home of Basil Wolgemuth. It was a German habitation of the Middle Ages; a comfortable but not luxurious dwelling, such a one as we see in old German pictures. In homes like this was nurtured the genius of Rembrandt, of Rubens, of Vandyck; from such a peaceful German home sprang the fiery spirit and indomitable zeal of Luther; and in like home-nests were cradled the early years of most of the rude but noble men, who, either by the sword or the pen, have made their names famous throughout the fair land of the Rhine.

Basil, his mother, Margareta, and another young girl sat round a table, spread with the ample fare of bread and fruits. The mother was worthy of such a son, — a matron of placid but noble aspect; like him, too, in the deep clear eyes and open forehead. Margareta, a sweet bud, which only needed

time to burst forth into a perfect flower, sat by her brother's side; the fourth of the group was Isilda.

I hardly know how to describe Isilda. There is one face only I have seen which pictures her to my idea; it is a Madonna of Guido Reni's. Once beheld, that face imprints itself forever on the heart. It is the embodiment of a soul so pure, so angelic, that it might have been Eve's when she was still in Eden; yet there is in the eyes that shadow of woman's intense love, the handmaid of which is ever sorrow; and those deep blue orbs seemed thoughtfully looking into the dim future with a vague sadness, as if conscious that the peace of the present would not endure. Womanly sweetness, feelings suppressed, not slumbering, a soul attuned to high thoughts like a well-strung lyre, and only needing a breath to awaken its harmonious chords, — all these are visible in that face which shone into the painter's heart, and has lived forever in the work of his hand. And such was Isilda.

Basil sat opposite to her; he looked into her eyes; he drank in her smile, and was happy. All traces of the careworn student had vanished; he was cheerful even to gayety; laughed and jested with his sister; bade her sing old ditties, and even joined in the strain, which made them all more mirthful still. Basil had little music in his voice, but much in his heart. When the songs ceased, Margareta prayed him to repeat some old ballad, he knew so many. The student looked towards Isilda; her eyes had more persuasive eloquence than even his sister's words, and he began: —

“THE ELLE-MAID GAY.*

“Ridest by the woodland, Ludwig, Ludwig,
Ridest by the woodland gay ?
Who sits by the woodland, Ludwig, Ludwig ?
It is the Elle-maid gay.

“A kiss on thy lips lies, Ludwig, Ludwig,
Pure as the dews of May :
Think on thine own love, brown-haired Ludwig,
And not on an Elle-maid gay.

“She sits 'neath a linden, singing, singing,
Though her dropped lids nothing say ;
For her beauty lures whether smiling or singing,
For she is an Elle-maid gay.

“‘Thou hast drunk of my wine-cup, Ludwig, Ludwig,
Thou hast drunk of my lips this day ;
I am no more false than thou, young Ludwig,
Though I am an Elle-maid gay.’

“‘Ride fast from the woodland, Ludwig, Ludwig,’
Her laughter tracks his way ;
‘Didst thou clasp a fair woman, Ludwig, Ludwig,
And found her an Elle-maid gay ?’

“‘Flee, flee!’ they cry, ‘he is mad, Count Ludwig ;
He rides through the street to-day
With his beard unshorn, and his cloak brier-torn :
He has met with the Elle-maid gay !’

* The Elle-maid, or wood-woman, is a kind of sprite, who in front appears as a beautiful damsel, but seen behind is hollow like a mask. She sits on the roadside, offering her wine-cup and her kiss ; but the moment a youth has tasted either, he becomes raving mad. There are many legends of this sort current in Germany.

“ ‘ I fear him not, my knight, my Ludwig ’
 (The bride’s dear lips did say),

‘ Though he comes from the woodland, he is *my* Ludwig ;
 He saw not the Elle-maid gay.

“ ‘ Welcome, my lord, my love, my Ludwig ! ’

But her smile grew ashen-gray,
 As she knew by the glare of the mad eyes’ stare,
 He had been with the Elle-maid gay.

“ ‘ God love thee — God pity thee, O my Ludwig ! ’

Nor her true arms turned she away.
 ‘ Thou art no sweet woman,’ cried fiercely Ludwig,
 ‘ But a foul Elle-maid gay.

“ ‘ I kiss thee — I slay thee ; — I thy Ludwig ’ :

And the steel flashed bright to the day :
 ‘ Better clasp a dead bride,’ laughed out Ludwig,
 ‘ Than a false Elle-maid gay.

• “ ‘ I kissed thee, I slew thee ; I — thy Ludwig ;
 And now will we sleep away.’

Still fair blooms the woodland where rode Ludwig,
 Still there sits the Elle-maid gay.”

The student ceased ; and there was a deep silence. Basil’s young sister glanced round fearfully. Isilda moved not ; but as the clear tones of Basil’s voice ended, one deep-drawn sigh was heard, as it were the unconscious relief of a full heart.

“ You have chosen a gloomy story, Basil,” said the mother, at last.

Her voice broke the spell ; and Margareta added, —

“ I do not pity that false-hearted knight ; his was a

just punishment for a heavy sin : for the poor bride to die thus in her youth and happiness, — O, it was very sad !

“ Not so,” said Isilda, and she spoke in a low dreamy tone, as if half to herself. “ It was not sad, even to be slain by him she loved, since she died in his arms, having known that he loved her. It was a happy fate.”

There was such an expression of intense feeling in the girl’s face as she spoke, that Margareta looked at her in wondering silence ; but Basil gave an involuntary start, as if a new light had broken in upon his mind. The living crimson rushed immediately over Isilda’s face and neck, she seemed shrinking into the earth with shame, and said no more. Basil, too, kept silence. No marvel was it in the timid girl who rarely gave utterance to her thoughts, but that he whose heart was so full of poetry, whose lips were ever brimming over with eloquence, should be dumb, — it was passing strange ! The student felt as though there was a finger laid on his lips, an unseen presence compelling him to silence ; but the finger and the presence were those of the Angel of Love.

There was a constraint visible in all but Margareta ; she, too young to understand what was passing in the hearts of the two she loved so much, began to sport with her friend.

“ Well ! I should not envy Count Ludwig’s bride, Isilda ; I would much rather live. Farewell, you dolorous folk. I will go spin.”

And she vanished with the swiftness of a young fawn. The mother followed her with her eyes.

“ A sunny and loving heart is thine, my child,” she murmured. “ God bless thee, and keep all care from

that gay spirit!" And Madame Wolgemuth leaned back in her chair, closing her eyes. The mother's heart seemed absorbed in the past, or else dreaming of her child's future.

But, by the two thus left together, past and future were alike unregarded. With Basil and Isilda was all the present, — the blissful present, full of hope and love. They talked but little, and in broken sentences, flitting from subject to subject, lest each should lead to the unveiling of the delicious secret that was uppermost in both their hearts and which they at once feared, yet longed to utter. At last the lamp grew dim, and the moonlight streamed in through the narrow window. Isilda noticed and spoke of it, — it was a relief.

"How lovely the moon looks, setting behind the cathedral!" And, rising, she walked to the window; it might be she was glad to escape from the passionate tenderness of Basil's gaze.

The young student followed her, moving noiselessly, for his aged mother had fallen asleep. And now the two stood together, silent, alone with their own hearts, looking up to the quiet, star-lit sky, and drinking in love, which seemed infinite as that heaven itself.

"How beautiful is this world!" murmured the girl.

"I feel it so; and most when thus with thee, Isilda," — and with what unspeakable sweetness and tenderness the name lingered on his lips, — "Isilda, — my Isilda!"

There was a moment of tremulous silence, and then the girl felt herself drawn closer, until her head rested on his bosom, and she heard his voice whispering in her ear, —

“ May I call thee *my* Isilda — all mine — mine only — mine forever ? ”

She raised her head, and looked timidly but searchingly in his countenance.

“ Is it indeed true ? dost thou then love me ? ”

“ As my own soul ! ” passionately answered the student.

Isilda hid her face again in his bosom, and burst into a shower of tears.

The girl and her lover went home together that night, through the cold, clear starlight, to Isilda's abode. Many and many a time had they trod the same path, but now everything was changed. They had become all in all to each other ; an infinity of love was around them ; all was light, hope, and trembling gladness. The crisp snow crackled under Isilda's feet, and the sharp frosty air made her shiver ; but she felt it not. She only clung the closer to Basil's arm ; he was all her own now ; he, her life's joy, her pride, the idol of her dreams, the delight of her soul. Such happiness was almost too much to bear ; and, therefore, when she first knew that he loved her, had Isilda wept, — nay, even when she had parted from Basil and was alone, her full heart poured itself forth in tears. That he, — the noble, the gifted, so rich in the greatest of all wealth, — the wealth of genius ; honored among men, with a glorious harvest of fame yet unreaped before him, — that he should love her, who had nothing to give but a heart that worshipped him ! The girl, in her humility, felt unworthy of such deep happiness ; all that her lips would utter were the blessed, joyful words, “ He loves me, — he loves me ! my

Basil, mine own!" And even in her sleep she murmured the same.

Man's love is not like woman's, yet Basil was very happy, — happier than he had ever been in his life. The student, the philosopher, felt that all his wisdom was as nothing compared to the wondrous alchemy of love. So far from being weakened, his lofty mind seemed to grow richer beneath the light of beloved eyes; it was like the sunshine to the ripening corn. Basil now knew how long Isilda had filled his thoughts, and been mingled with all his hopes. He did not even then fathom the depths of her spirit, but he felt it was one with his; and man, proud man, ever rejoices to see his soul's image reflected in a woman's heart.

III.

A YEAR had passed over the head of the student of Cologne. It had been a year full of changes. Death had entered the house and taken the tender mother; the strong-hearted but gentle matron, who had filled the place of both parents toward Basil and Margareta in their fatherless youth. The student had now only his sister to cheer his desolate home; and little joy was there in the young girl's heart, or brightness on her face, for she was still in the shadow of past sorrow, her first grief, too; and heavily it weighed upon sweet Margareta.

Have we forgotten Isilda, the beautiful, the beloved? No change had taken place in her. She was now the betrothed of Basil Wolgemuth, loving him with a depth and steadfastness far beyond the first fresh love of girl-

hood and romance. And Basil himself, was he still the same? Let us see.

The student was sitting, as we first beheld him, in the room more peculiarly his own; it looked the same as in former days; and the fire, the brilliant and beautiful fire, which Basil loved to have as a companion for his solitary hours, burned brightly as ever. He kept continually feeding it with new brands, and often looked up from his book to gaze at it. If the blaze grew dim for a moment, it seemed as if his powers of intellect and comprehension grew dim with it. Basil was dull and cheerless without his beloved fire; he needed its genial warmth, its inspiring brightness; even in the summer-time he could not study without it; and so it had been from his childhood.

There was a change in the young man, more than the one short year added to his age could have effected. He looked like a man who had thought much, suffered much. An expression of pain constantly hovered over his features, and the lines of his beautiful mouth were contracted. He read intently; but at intervals laid down the book, and fixed his eyes vacantly on the fire, absorbed in thought.

A light knock at the door broke in upon the student's meditations, and a stranger entered. He was a man of middle age, tall, spare, and meagre. His face was calm, and his bearing dignified; while on his noble forehead, which bore not a single wrinkle, unmistakable intellect sat enthroned; but at times there was a wildness in his eyes, and a sudden kindling of his features, which almost belied his serene deportment. He advanced towards the young man, who arose and greeted him with deep respect.

“Michael Meyer need not stay to ask admittance of Basil Wolgemuth, I trust?” said the stranger, in tones of mingled gentleness and conscious dignity.

“My master,” answered Basil, meekly, “thou art ever most welcome; all that is mine is thine also.”

“I thank thee, gentle scholar,” returned the other, simply, with a slight inclination of the head, as he suffered the young man to take from him his outer garment, and sat down on the chair which Basil offered. The student himself continued standing until his guest pointed to a low stool, where Basil placed himself at a little distance from his master.

“And now let us talk,” said Michael Meyer; “for it is long since I have seen thee. What hast thou learned meanwhile?”

“Much, O master! I have been studying thy book.” And he pointed to the open page.

A gleam of pleasure illuminated Michael’s sallow features. “And dost thou ever regret that thou hast become one of us, one of the brethren of the Rosie Cross?”

“Never, honored master mine,” cried the student; “but I have yet so much to learn, before I am worthy even to kiss the hem of thy garment; and I am so young.”

“It may be that a young heart is purer than one which has longer mingled with the world. Thou hast not yet travelled out of sight of the home which thy spirit left at birth; the memory of that pristine existence dimly remains with thee still. Therefore it is well with thee, Basil.”

“Master, if I could only think so, — if I could only revive within me that higher life, — but I fear it is hard.”

“It is hard, my son; for it is a struggle of matter against spirit. O, didst thou but know the joys that are opened unto us who mortify the body for the sake of the soul; the glorious and beautiful world that is revealed to us, — a life within life, a double existence, our mortal eyes being strengthened to behold the Invisible, — our mortal frames endowed with the powers of angels!”

“It is glorious — glorious!” murmured the student as he gazed on his master, whose whole countenance gleamed with enthusiasm.

“It is indeed glorious,” continued Michael Meyer. “To be as a god to mankind; to bear in this human body the gift of healing; to know that the riches for which men toil, and pine, and slay one another, are at our will in such abundance that they seem to us like dust. And more than all, to have the power of holding communion with those good spirits which God created as he created man, more beautiful and yet less perfect, for they must remain as first made, while man may rise through various stages of existence, higher and higher, until he reach the footstool of divinity itself.”

“Hast thou ever seen those glorious beings?” asked Basil, glancing doubtfully round, his voice sinking into a low whisper.

“I have!” answered Michael Meyer. “But no more of this. To attain this state of perfection, thou must needs deaden thyself to all human pleasures; thou must

forsake the grossness of an appetite pampered with the flesh of beasts and the fruit of the poison-vine. As thou readest in my book, the soul must retire within itself, — must shut out all human feelings, all human love.”

A dark shadow came over the young student's face.

“Must one attain all this, O father, to be a follower of Christian Rosencreutz?”*

“All this, and more. Does thy heart fail thee?” said Michael, sternly.

Basil cast down his eyes.

“No, my noble master, no! but human will is feeble, and the steep is hard to climb.”

“Then lie down, and perish at its foot, Basil Wolgemuth,” said the Rosicrucian; and then added, with a regretful tone, “After thou hadst journeyed half-way, I had not thought thy heart would have failed thee, my son.”

“It has not failed me,” cried the student, earnestly. “I have followed implicitly all thy precepts. No food, save what nature rigorously requires, has passed these lips; I have kept myself pure as a little child, yet still I seem further than ever from that blessed state when the soul is free from all mortal longings, and the eyes are purged to behold the Invisible.”

* After the death of Christian Rosencreutz, their founder, the sect of the Rosicrucians kept their doctrines secret for a hundred and twenty years. Michael Meyer, an alchemist and physician, was the first to reveal their secrets, by a book entitled “*Themis Aurea, hoc est de legibus Fraternitatis Rosæ Crucis*,” which he published at Cologne in 1615.

“Wait, my son; wait and faint not! the time will surely come at last; and when it does, oh, what joy for thee! Thou wilt count as nothing the pleasures of taste, when thou mayst banquet on celestial food; thou wilt scorn all earthly loveliness, to bask in the smile of immortal beauty. This, indeed, is an aim worthy of man’s aspiring.”

“It is — it is! O master, I follow thee! — teach me, guide me as thou wilt.” And he knelt at the feet of the Rosicrucian, kissing his hands and his garments with deep emotion.

“Thou art worthy to become one of us, my son, — nay, my brother, — for thou wilt ere long equal the wisest of us,” answered Michael Meyer, as he raised Basil from the earth. “Go on in that noble path; thou hast little need of me, for thine own soul is thy best teacher. Now farewell, for this night I leave Cologne; my work is accomplished, and I have added one more to the brethren of the Rosie Cross.”

“And hast thou no word, no parting admonition, for me, O my father?”

“None, save this: Strive ever after the highest; content thyself with nothing below perfection; be humble in thine own eyes; and more than all, keep thy heart and hand from evil: sin clouds the soul’s aspirations; and the highest life is a life of perfect holiness. With thy noble intellect and ardent mind, keep an unspotted heart! — and so fare thee well, my son.”

Thus Michael Meyer the Rosicrucian parted from Basil Wolgemuth.

IV.

PASSIONATELY wringing his hands, or pressing them upon his hot brow, knelt the student alone in his chamber. He muttered wild tones. He had yearned after the tree of knowledge; he had penetrated within its shadow, and it had darkened his soul, yet he had not tasted of its delicious fruit for which he so longed.

“It is vain, — it is vain!” cried Basil; “I strive, but I cannot attain. I have cast all human bliss to the winds; I have poisoned my youth, — and thine, too, Isilda, joy of my life! — and all in vain. No immortal gifts are mine, — I would fain pierce into Nature’s depths, but she hides her face from me. O my master! thou didst tell me of the world of spirits which would surely be revealed unto me. I look up into the air, but no sylphs breathe soft zephyrs upon my hot cheek; I wander by the streams, but no sweet eyes, looking out from the depths of the fountains, meet my own; I am poor, but the gnomes of the earth answer not my bidding with treasures of silver and gold. And thou, O Fire, glorious element! art thou indeed peopled with these wonderful beings; or are they deaf to my voice, and invisible to my eyes alone, of all my brethren?”

And lo! as the student spoke, a bright pyramid of flame darted upward, and a voice, like that of the fire when it answers the soft breathing of the winds, replied, —

“I hear thee, — what wouldst thou with me?”

A paleness came over the young man’s cheek, and he drew back involuntarily.

“Dost thou then fear me, O mortal!” said the voice again, sadly. “Look again.”

Suddenly the pyramidal flame was cloven asunder, and there appeared in its centre a form, smaller than that of humanity, but perfect in feminine loveliness. Wavy wreaths of golden flame fell around her like a woman’s beautiful hair, and about her semi-transparent form twined an amber vesture, resembling in hue and airy substance the fire from which she sprung. Her hands were folded submissively on her breast, and her eyes were fixed earnestly on the young student’s face as she again repeated, —

“Dost thou fear me now?”

“How should I fear thee, beautiful vision?” cried Basil in ecstacy; “and what am I, that thou shouldst deign to visit me thus?”

“Thinkest thou that this is the first time I have visited thee?” said the Form. “I have been with thee, unseen, from thy childhood. When, in thy boyish days, thou wouldst sit gazing on the beautiful element which I rule, and from which I proceed, it was I who made it assume in thy fancy strange and lovely shapes. It was my voice thou heardest in the musical breathing of the flames, until thou didst love the beautiful fire; and it became to thee the source of inspiration. All this was my doing.”

“And now at last I behold thee, glorious creature!” exclaimed the student with rapture. “How shall I thank thee for thus watching over me invisibly, and at last revealing thyself to me!”

“We do but the will of our Creator,” answered

the Salamandrine. "I and my kindred are His offspring, even as man; but our being differs from thine; superior and yet how inferior! We tend thee, we influence thee, we guide thee, — in this doing alike His command who made us, and our own pleasure; for our natures are purer and better than thine."

"I feel it," said Basil. "I cannot look upon thy all-perfect loveliness without knowing that such a form must be the visible reflection of a soul equally pure and beautiful."

"A *soul!*" sighed the fire-spirit; "alas! this blessing is not ours. We see generation after generation of men perish from the face of earth; we watch them from their cradles into their graves, and still we are the same, our beauty unfaded, our power unchanged. Yet we know there must come a time when the elements from which we draw our being must vanish away, and then we perish with them, for we have no immortal souls: for us there is no after-life!"

As the Salamandrine ceased, the vapors of the fire encircled her as with a mist, and a wailing came from the red caverns of flame, as of spirits in grief, the burden of which was ever, —

"Alas for us! — we have no after-life."

"Is it even so?" said the student. "Then are ye unhappy in the midst of your divine existence?"

The mist which veiled the Salamandrine floated aside, and she stood once more revealed in her superhuman beauty.

"Not unhappy," she answered, with a radiant and celestial smile, — "not unhappy, since we are the ser-

vants of our beneficent Creator; we perform His will, and in that consists our happiness. We suffer no pain, no care; doing no sin, we have no sorrow; our life is a life of love to each other and to man, whose ministers we are. Are we not then happy?"

"It may be so," said Basil, thoughtfully. "Ye are the creatures of Him who never made aught but good." And he bowed his head in deep meditation, while there arose from the mystic fire an ethereal chorus; melodiously it pealed upon the opened ears of the enraptured student.

The spirits sang of praise; of the universal hymn which nature lifts up to the Origin of all good; of the perfect harmony of all His works, from the mighty planets that roll through illimitable space, down to the fresh green-moss that springs up at the foot of the way-faring child; of the world of spirits,—those essences which people the earth and float in the air like motes in the sunbeam, invisible, but yet powerful; how the good spirits strive with the fallen ones for dominion over man, and how the struggle must continue until evil is permitted to be overcome of good, and the earth becomes all holy, worthy to be the habitation of glorified beings.

"Happy art thou, O man!" they sang. "Even in thy infirmity, what is like unto thee? And earthly life is thine, half the sorrow of which thou mayst remove by patience and love; an earthly death is thine, which is the entrance to immortality. It is ours to guide thee to that gate of heaven which we ourselves may never enter."

And all the spirits sang in a strain that died away as the fire sunk smouldering down, "Blessed art thou, O man! — strong in thy weakness, happy in thy sufferings. Thrice blessed art thou!"

The student was roused from his trance by a light footstep. A hand was laid on his shoulder, and a soft woman's voice whispered, —

"Art thou then here all alone, and in darkness, my Basil?"

"All was light with me, — the darkness came with thee," answered the student, harshly, like one roused from delicious slumbers by an unwelcome hand; — and yet the hand was none other than Isilda's.

"Once thou used to call me thy light of life, Basil," murmured the girl. "I would not come to anger thee."

It was too dark to discern faces; but as Isilda turned to depart, Basil thought she was weeping, and his heart melted. What would he not have given, at the moment, for the days of old, — the feelings of old, when he would have drawn her to his bosom, and soothed her there with the assurances of never-ending love. But now he dared not; the link between him and earth was broken. He thought of the immortal gift just acquired, and he would not renounce its ecstatic joys, — no, not even for Isilda. He took her hand kindly, but coldly, saying, —

"Forgive me; I have been studying, — dreaming; I did not mean to say thou wert unwelcome."

"Bless thee for that, my Basil, my beloved!" cried the girl, weeping, as she pressed his hand passionately to her heart and her lips. "Thou couldst not be unkind to me, — to thy betrothed wife."

Basil turned away; he could not tell her that the tie was now only a name; and Isilda went on, —

“Thou hast not looked the same of late; thou art too anxious; or thou hast some hidden sorrow upon thee. Tell it to me, my Basil,” she continued, caressingly. “Who should share and lighten it but I, who love thee so?”

“Dost thou indeed love me so well, Isilda?”

“Thou art my all, — my life, — my soul! It were death itself to part from thee,” cried the girl, in a burst of impassioned feeling, as she knelt beside the bending form of her lover, and strove to wind her arms round his neck. She hardly dared to do so now to him who had once wooed that fondness with so many prayers.

“Woe is me, alas!” muttered the student. “Must thou also be sacrificed, Isilda?”

She did not hear his words, but she felt him unclasp her arms from his neck; and Isilda sank insensible at Basil’s feet.

The die was cast. Slowly the student laid her down, — her, the once beloved, — on the cold floor. He called “Margareta!” and before his sister entered, went out into the open air.

V.

BASIL WOLGEMUTH had now gained the summit of his wishes. He had panted for the river of knowledge, — had found it, and allayed his burning thirst in its waters, which were to him a Lethe, bringing oblivion of all else. He walked as one in a dream, or like the false prophet of old, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open.

He was gentle to his sister, and to the patient, sorrowful Isilda; but he shrank from their society, as he did from that of every living soul. He would disappear for days together, wandering in the woods and mountains, far from his home. There the student was alone, with his newly acquired sense, — there he penetrated into the marvels of the invisible world. He saw the Sylphs of the air floating over him, and fanning his slumbers with their ambrosial wings. The beautiful Undines spread their cool, wavy arms around him, and through the riven earth he beheld the Gnomes and Cobolds at work in their treasure-caves. Borne by the Salamandrines, he viewed the caves of the volcanoes; their lurid recesses were exposed to his gaze, and he saw the central fires smouldering beneath the surface of the globe, — the cradles of the earthquake.

Then, when the student returned, he would shut himself up in his chamber, and invoke the being who had first appeared to him, — the Salamandrine. He imbibed from her lips wisdom beyond that of man; he sunned himself in the light of her glorious beauty, and became insensible to all earthly things.

“O my master,” Basil would often murmur, “thou wert right! What count I now the cup of mortal pleasure while that of heaven is at my lips? I could torture, almost destroy this poor frail body for the sake of my soul.”

And while the student revelled in these ecstasies, his slight form grew more shadowy, his dreamy eyes became of a more fathomless depth, and his whole appearance was that of a spirit which had for a season assumed this

mortal coil. No thought of Isilda, no yearning for her forsaken love, crossed his memory ; the lesser feeling was all absorbed in the greater, for the one reigning passion of Basil Wolgemuth's soul was a thirst after knowledge.

And Isilda, the devoted one, how fared it with her ? She knew that no other maiden had stolen her lover's heart, and yet it was changed toward her. She saw it to be so. Some overpowering passion had extinguished that of love ; and her life's hope was gone. She did not pine nor weep ; she felt no anger towards Basil, for in her eyes he could do no wrong. Isilda had worshipped him from her girlhood, with a love mixed with idolatry, for it long seemed like "the desire of the moth for the star." None other had ever won a thought from the maiden, though many had wooed her ; but having once loved him, none else could have filled her heart forever. Even Basil, when he came to measure her love by his own, dreamed not of its intensity. So absorbing was this one passionate love, that even the sad change in him who was its object could not weaken it. She desired no more but to be near her betrothed ; to see him ; to hover round him as silently as his shadow, — only to have the blessed privilege of loving him, and the memory, sweet though mournful, that he had once loved her.

VI.

BASIL WOLGEMUTH lay asleep on his couch. He had outwatched midnight, and was very weary. The follower of Rosencrutz, the philosopher, the man of genius, had not passed the limits of mortality ; his earth-vesture

clung about him still. Fatigue had overtaken him in the midst of his vigils ; he had thrown himself down on the hard pallet, and fallen asleep, as sound as if the rude couch of the Rosicrucian were the monarch's bed of down. The morning stars looked in at his casement, and the dim light of a single lamp fell on the countenance of the student. He lay calm as a little child, with folded hands, as if his mother had lulled him to sleep with songs. O, if that mother could have beheld him now, how would she have wept over the child of so many prayers !

I have said before that there was little beauty in Basil's face, at least that mere beauty of form, which is so dazzling, — and it is good that it should be so, for a lovely face seems fresh from the impress of God's hand ; we naturally love it, cling to it, and worship it as such. But Basil's sole charm had been the genius so plainly visible in his face, and a sunny, youthful, happy look, which made it pleasant to behold. Now, all this was long gone. But while he slept, a little of his olden self returned ; a smile wandered over his lips, and his sunny hair fell carelessly, as in the days when Isilda's fingers used to part it, and kiss his white, beautiful forehead. Suddenly a red glare lighted up the still shadow of the chamber, — it flashed on the eyes of the sleeper.

“ Art thou here, O spirit ? ” murmured Basil, half roused, and dazzled by the brilliant light, which seemed a continuation of his dream.

But it was no celestial presence that shone into the student's room. He awoke fully, rose up, and looked out into the night. The city lay hushed beneath the

starlight like a palace of the dead; it seemed as though no mortal turmoil would ever more ruffle its serene repose. But far down the dark street, in a direction where Basil's eyes had in former times been fondly turned waiting for the one solitary lamp which was to him like a star, lurid flames and white smoke burst forth, and contended with the gloom around. There was in the city the fearful presence of fire, and the burning house was Isilda's.

With a sudden impulse, Basil leaped at once through the low window, and fled rather than ran to the scene. This time human love had the pre-eminence; he forgot all but Isilda, — Isilda perishing in the flames!

Wildly raged the fierce element, as if kindled by a hundred demons, who fanned it with their fiery breath, and leaped, and howled, and shouted, as it spread on with mad swiftness. Now it writhed in serpent-coils, now it darted upwards in forked tongues, and now it made itself a veil of dusky vapors, and beneath that shade went on in its devastating way. Its glare put out the dim stars overhead, and hung on the skirts of the clouds that were driven past, until the sky itself seemed in flames. House after house caught the blaze, and cries of despair, mingled with shrieks of frantic terror, rose up through the horrible stillness of night. The beautiful element which Basil had so loved — the cheering, inspiring fire — was turned into a fearful scourge.

The student reached the spot, and looked wildly up to the window he had so often watched. A passing gust blew the flames aside, and he distinguished there a white figure, — it was Isilda. Her hands were crossed on her

bosom, and her head was bowed meekly, as if she knew there was no hope, and was content to die.

Basil saw, and in a moment he had rushed into the burning dwelling. He gained the room, and with a wild cry of joy, Isilda sprung into his arms. Without a word, he bore her, insensible as she was, through the smoke and flame, to a spot where the fire had not reached. Farther he could not go, for his strength failed him. He laid his burden down, and leaned against the wall.

“I might not live for thee, Isilda,” cried the student, “but I can die for thee. Yet is there no help, — no hope? Where are the spirits that were once subject unto me? And thou, my guardian, — spirit of fire! — is this thy work? Where art thou?”

“I am here!” answered a voice; and the Salamandrine appeared. The flames drew nearer, and Basil saw myriads of aerial shapes flitting among them in mazy wreaths. They came nigh, — they hovered over his mortal love, — their robes of seeming flame swept her form.

“Touch her not!” shrieked the student, as he bent over Isilda, his human fear overpowering him.

“The good and pure like her are ever safe,” replied the Salamandrine. “We harm her not.” And she breathed over the maiden, who awoke.

“O my Basil!” murmured the girl, “is death then past? Thou didst come to save me, — thou lovest me, — thou art mine again!” And she stretched out to him her loving arms; but Basil turned away.

“Hush!” he said, “dost thou not see them, — the spirits?”

Isilda looked round fearfully. "I see nothing, — only thee."

The student's eyes flashed with insanity. "See!" he cried, "they fill the air, they gather round us, they come between thee and me. Now, — now their forms grow fainter, — they are vanishing, — it is thou, woman! who art driving them from my sight forever. Stay, glorious beings, stay! I give up all, — even her."

"Nothing shall part me from thee!" shrieked the girl, as she clung to her lover, and wound her arms round him. "No power in heaven or earth shall tear us asunder, — thou art mine, Basil, — let me live for thee, — die for thee."

"Thou shalt have thy desire!" the student cried, as he struggled in her frantic clasp.

There was the gleam of steel, — one faint, bubbling sigh, — the arms relaxed their hold, and Basil was alone, — with the dead!

The fire stayed in its dire path, and a wailing sound rose as the spirits fled away. Heaven and earth had alike forsaken the murderer.

He knelt beside his victim; he wept, he laughed, he screamed; for madness was in his brain.

"I may clasp thee now, Isilda," he shouted, "thou art all my own!" And he strained the cold, still form to his breast, kissing the lips and cheeks with passionate vehemence.

"I will make thee a pyre, — a noble funereal pyre," he continued; "I will purify this mortal clay, and thou shalt become a spirit, Isilda, — a beautiful, immortal spirit."

He bore the dead to where the fire raged fiercest; he laid his beloved on a couch; composed the frigid limbs, folded the hands, and, kissing the cold lips once more, retired to a distance, while the flames played round the still beautiful form that was once Isilda. Lovingly they inwreathed and enshrouded it, until at last they concealed it from the student's gaze. He turned and fled. The fire hid in its mysterious bosom the ashes of that noble and devoted heart. Isilda had found the death she once thought so blest, — death by the hand of the beloved.

VII.

FEARFULLY did morning dawn on the eyes of the murderer. He had regained his chamber unobserved, and there he crouched in its most gloomy nook. His frenzy had passed away, and left the freezing coldness of despair. The darkness was terrible to him, and yet when the light of morning came, he shrank from it in horror, and buried his face in his garments to shut out the fearful glare. All day he remained motionless. Margareta's loud weeping came to him from within. From her brother's bolted door, she thought he had departed on one of his usual rambles, and Basil heard his name repeated often, mingled with Isilda's, — whom all supposed to have perished in the flames.

Basil heard his sister's sobs; but they fell idly on his stony ears. Many sounds rose from the street, — the widow's cry, the orphan's moan, and the despairing lament of the houseless and homeless, — but all were nothing to him. He kept the same immovable attitude

until daylight waned, and then he rose and lit the fire on his hearth.

Brighter and brighter grew the blaze, and wilder gleamed the eyes of the student. He swayed his body to and fro with a low murmuring, and then he passionately invoked the Salamandrine.

“The sacrifice is complete — I have no bond to earth — my desire is free. Why delayest thou, O spirit? Come, teach me; let me know the past. Give me wisdom, — I thirst! — I thirst! Let me become as a god in knowledge!”

But the vision came not; there was no voice.

“Spirit of Fire! art thou deaf to me still? I have done all, — I have broken every human tie, — I have become what men would loathe. Hear me, — answer me, or I die!”

Wreaths of dusky vapor overshadowed the fire, and from them proceeded a melancholy voice: —

“O mortal, sin has entered thine heart; blood is on thy hand, and the polluted can have no fellowship with the pure. Thine eyes may behold us no more forever!”

A fearful shudder passed through the student’s frame.

“It is false! Cursed spirits, ye have deceived me!”

“It is not we who have deceived thee, but thine own soul,” answered the Salamandrine. “We are not evil; unseen, we would have watched over thee thy whole life through. It was thou who didst long after what is permitted but to few, — to hold commune with the invisible. To do this with safety, man must keep a heart pure as fearless, and such was not thine. Thou

didst seek us, — we allured not thee. Blame not us, therefore, but thy own weakness. Thou hast sinned, and henceforth we are invisible to thee!”

“Woe! woe!” cried Basil, in agony; “have I then lost all? Adorable spirit, guide of my life, have mercy! — forsake me not!”

“I do not forsake thee, O poor mortal!” answered the voice, sadly. “I am here, beautiful and tender as before; but thou art no longer able to behold me. Sin has darkened thine eyes, and thou wilt see me no more — forever.”

“No more?” echoed the student in tones of thrilling misery.

“No more,” replied the mournful accents of the Salamandrine; and a faint chorus, like the sighing of the wind, echoed plaintively, —

“No more, O, poor mortal, no more!”

The vapor swept away from the fire, and the student was left to his despair.

VIII.

Two days after the terrible fire, some who loved and pitied the desolate Margareta forcibly entered her brother's room. They found Basil dead. He lay on the floor, his marble face upturned to their horror-stricken view. There might have been agony in his last moments, for the hands were tightly pressed upon the heart; but all was calmness now. The features had settled into their eternal repose. How or when the spirit parted none knew, save Him who gave it, and who had now reclaimed his gift. The book of

Michael Meyer lay beside the student; and firmly clasped in the stiffened fingers was a long tress of woman's hair. More than this, all was mystery.

Many years after, when the memory of the student of Cologne had long been forgotten, an aged nun died in a convent not far from the city. It was Margareta, the only sister of Basil Wolgemuth the Rosicrucian.





THE SOUTH BREAKER.

BY HARRIET PRESCOTT SPOFFORD.

UST a capful of wind, and Dan shook loose the linen, and a straight shining streak with specks of foam shot after us. The mast bent like eel-grass, and our keel was half out of the water. Faith belied her name, and clung to the sides with her ten finger-nails; but as for me, I liked it.

“Take the stick, Georgie,” said Dan, suddenly, his cheeks white. “Head her up the wind. Steady. Sight the figure-head on Pearson’s loft. Here’s too much sail for a frigate.”

But before the words were well uttered, the mast doubled up and coiled like a whip-lash, there was a report like the crack of doom, and half of the thing crashed short over the bows, dragging the heavy sail in the waves.

Then there came a great laugh of thunder close above, and the black cloud dropped like a curtain round us: the squall had broken.

“Cut it off, Dan! quick!” I cried.

“Let it alone,” said he, snapping together his jack-

knife; "it's as good as a best bower-anchor. Now I'll take the tiller, Georgie. Strong little hand," said he, bending so that I didn't see his face. "And lucky it's good as strong. It's saved us all. My God, Georgie! where's Faith?"

I turned. There was no Faith in the boat. We both sprang to our feet, and so the tiller swung round and threw us broadside to the wind, and between the dragging mast and the centre-board drowning seemed too good for us.

"You'll have to cut it off," I cried again; but he had already ripped half through the canvas, and was casting it loose.

At length he gave his arm a toss. With the next moment, I never shall forget the look of horror that froze Dan's face.

"I've thrown her off!" he exclaimed,—"I've thrown her off!"

He reached his whole length over the boat, I ran to his side, and perhaps our motion impelled it, or perhaps some unseen hand; for he caught at an end of rope, drew it in a second, let go and clutched at a handful of the sail, and then I saw how it had twisted round and swept poor little Faith over, and she had swung there in it, like a dead butterfly in a chrysalis. The lightnings were slipping down into the water like blades of fire everywhere around us, with short, sharp volleys of thunder, and the waves were more than I ever rode this side of the bar before or since, and we took in water every time our hearts beat; but we never once thought of our own danger while we bent to pull dear

little Faith out of hers ; and that done, Dan broke into a great hearty fit of crying that I 'm sure he 'd no need to be ashamed of. But it did n't last long ; he just up and dashed off the tears and set himself at work again, while I was down on the floor rubbing Faith. There she lay like a broken lily, with no life in her little white face, and no breath, and maybe a pulse and maybe not. I could n't hear a word Dan said, for the wind ; and the rain was pouring through us. I saw him take out the oars, but I knew they 'd do no good in such a chop, even if they did n't break ; and pretty soon he found it so, for he drew them in and began to untie the anchor-rope and wind it round his waist. I sprang to him.

“ What are you doing, Dan ? ” I exclaimed.

“ I can swim, at least, ” he answered.

“ And tow us ? — a mile ? You know you can't ! It 's madness ! ”

“ I must try. Little Faith will die, if we don't get ashore. ”

“ She 's dead now, Dan. ”

“ What ! No, no, she is n't. Faith is n't dead. But we must get ashore. ”

“ Dan, ” I cried, clinging to his arm, “ Faith 's only one. But if you die so, — and you will ! — I shall die too. ”

“ You ? ”

“ Yes ; because, if it had n't been for me, you would n't have been here at all. ”

“ And is that all the reason ? ” he asked, still at work.

“ Reason enough, ” said I.

“ Not quite, ” said he.

“Dan, — for my sake —”

“I can’t, Georgie. Don’t ask me. I must n’t —”
And here he stopped short, with the coil of rope in his hand, and fixed me with his eye, and his look was terrible, — “*we* must n’t let Faith die.”

“Well,” I said, “try it, if you dare; and as true as there’s a Lord in heaven, I’ll cut the rope!”

He hesitated, for he saw I was resolute; and I would, I declare I would have done it; for, do you know, at the moment, I hated the little dead thing in the bottom of the boat there.

Just then there came a streak of sunshine through the gloom where we’d been plunging between wind and water, and then a patch of blue sky, and the great cloud went blowing down river. Dan threw away the rope and took out the oars again.

“Give me one, Dan,” said I; but he shook his head. “O Dan, because I’m so sorry!”

“See to her, then, — fetch Faith to,” he replied, not looking at me, and making up with great sturdy pulls.

So I busied myself, though I couldn’t do a bit of good. The instant we touched bottom, Dan snatched her, sprang through the water and up the landing. I stayed behind; as the boat recoiled, pushed in a little, fastened the anchor and threw it over, and then followed.

Our house was next the landing, and there Dan had carried Faith; and when I reached it, a great fire was roaring up the chimney, and the teakettle hung over it, and he was rubbing Faith’s feet hard enough to strike sparks. I could n’t understand exactly what made Dan

so fiercely earnest, for I thought I knew just how he felt about Faith; but suddenly, when nothing seemed to answer, and he stood up and our eyes met, I saw such a haggard, conscience-stricken face that it all rushed over me. But now we had done what we could, and then I felt all at once as if every moment that I effected nothing was drawing out murder. Something flashed by the window, I tore out of the house and threw up my arms, I don't know whether I screamed or not, but I caught the doctor's eye, and he jumped from his gig and followed me in. We had a siege of it. But at length, with hot blankets, and hot water, and hot brandy dribbled down her throat, a little pulse began to play upon Faith's temple, and a little pink to beat up and down her cheek, and she opened her pretty dark eyes and lifted herself and wrung the water out of her braids; then she sank back.

"Faith! Faith! speak to me!" said Dan, close in her ear. "Don't you know me?"

"Go away," she said hoarsely, pushing his face with her flat wet palm. "You let the sail take me over and drown me, while you kissed Georgie's hand."

I flung my hand before her eyes.

"Is there a kiss on those fingers?" I cried, in a blaze. "He never kissed my hands or my lips. Dan is your husband, Faith!"

For all answer Faith hid her head and gave a little moan. Somehow I could n't stand that; so I ran and put my arms round her neck and lifted her face and kissed it, and then we cried together. And Dan, walking the floor, took up his hat and went out, while she never cast a look after him. To think of such a great strong nature

and such a powerful depth of feeling being wasted on such a little limp rag! I cried as much for that as anything. Then I helped Faith into my bedroom, and, running home, I got her some dry clothes, — after rummaging enough, dear knows! for you'd be more like to find her nightcap in the tea-caddy than elsewhere, — and I made her a corner on the settle, for she was afraid to stay in the bedroom, and when she was comfortably covered there she fell asleep. Dan came in soon and sat down beside her, his eyes on the floor, never glancing aside nor smiling, but gloomier than the grave. As for me, I felt at ease now, so I went and laid my hand on the back of his chair and made him look up. I wanted he should know the same rest that I had, and perhaps he did; for, still looking up, the quiet smile came floating round his lips, and his eyes grew steady and sweet as they used to be before he married Faith. Then I went bustling lightly about the kitchen again.

“Dan,” I said, “if you'd just bring me in a couple of those chickens stalking out there like two gentlemen from Spain.”

While he was gone I flew round and got a cake into the bake-kettle, and a pan of biscuit down before the fire; and I set the tea to steep on the coals, because father always likes his tea strong enough to bear up an egg, after a hard day's work, and he'd had that to-day; and I put on the coffee to boil, for I knew Dan never had it at home, because Faith liked it and it did n't agree with her. And then he brought me in the chickens all ready for the pot, and so at last I sat down, but at the opposite side of the chimney. Then he rose, and, with-

out exactly touching me, swept me back to the other side, where lay the great net I was making for father; and I took the little stool by the settle, and not far from him, and went to work.

“Georgie,” said Dan, at length, after he’d watched me a considerable time, “if any word I may have said to-day disturbed you a moment, I want you to know that it hurt me first, and just as much.”

“Yes, Dan,” said I.

I’ve always thought there was something real noble between Dan and me then. There was I, — well, I don’t mind telling you. And he, — yes, I’m sure he loved me perfectly, — you must n’t be startled, I’ll tell you how it was, — and always had, only maybe he had n’t known it; but it was deep down in his heart just the same, and by and by it stirred. There we were, both of us thoroughly conscious, yet neither of us expressing it by a word, and trying not to by a look, — both of us content to wait for the next life, when we could belong to one another. In those days I contrived to have it always pleasure enough for me just to know that Dan was in the room; and though that was n’t often, I never grudged Faith her right in him, perhaps because I knew she did n’t care anything about it. You see, this is how it was.

When Dan was a lad of sixteen, and took care of his mother, a ship went to pieces down there on the island. It was one of the worst storms that ever whistled, and though crowds were on the shore, it was impossible to reach her. They could see the poor wretches hanging in the rigging, and dropping one by one, and they could

only stay and sieken, for the surf stove the boats, and they did n't know then how to send out ropes on rockets or on cannon-balls, and so the night fell, and the people wrung their hands and left the sea to its prey, and felt as if blue sky could never come again. And with the bright, keen morning not a vestige of the ship, but here a spar and there a door, and on the side of a sand-hill a great dog watching over a little child that he 'd kept warm all night. Dan, he 'd got up at turn of tide, and walked down, — the sea running over the road knee-deep, — for there was too much swell for boats; and when day broke, he found the little girl, and carried her up to town. He did n't take her home, for he saw that what clothes she had were the very finest, — made as delicately, — with seams like the hair-strokes on that heart's-ease there; and he concluded that he could n't bring her up as she ought to be. So he took her round to the rich men, and represented that she was the child of a lady, and that a poor fellow like himself — for Dan was older than his years, you see — could n't do her justice: she was a slight little thing, and needed dainty training and fancy food, maybe a matter of seven years old, and she spoke some foreign language, and perhaps she did n't speak it plain, for nobody knew what it was. However, everybody was very much interested, and everybody was willing to give and to help, but nobody wanted to take her, and the upshot of it was that Dan refused all their offers and took her himself.

His mother 'd been in to our house all the afternoon before, and she 'd kept taking her pipe out of her mouth, — she had the asthma, and smoked, — and kept sighing.

“This storm’s going to bring me something,” says she, in a mighty miserable tone. “I’m sure of it!”

“No harm, I hope, Miss Devereux,” said mother.

“Well, Rhody,”—mother’s father, he was a queer kind, called his girls all after the thirteen States, and there being none left for Uncle Mat, he called him after the state of matrimony,—“well, Rhody,” she replied, rather dismally, and knocking the ashes out of the bowl, “I don’t know; but I’ll have faith to believe that the Lord won’t send me no ill without distincter warning. And that it’s good I *have* faith to believe.”

And so when the child appeared, and had no name, and could n’t answer for herself, Mrs. Devereux called her Faith.

We’re a people of presentiments down here on the Flats, and well we may be. You’d own up yourself, maybe, if in the dark of the night, you locked in sleep, there’s a knock on the door enough to wake the dead, and you start up and listen and nothing follows; and falling back, you’re just dozing off, and there it is once more, so that the lad in the next room cries out, “Who’s that, mother?” No one answering, you’re half lost again, when *rap* comes the hand again, the loudest of the three, and you spring to the door and open it, and there’s naught there but a wind from the graves blowing in your face; and after a while you learn that in that hour of that same night your husband was lost at sea. Well, that happened to Mrs. Devereux. And I have n’t time to tell you the warnings I’ve known of. As for Faith, I mind that she said herself, as we were in the boat for that clear midnight sail, that the

sea had a spite against her, but third time was trying time.

So Faith grew up, and Dan sent her to school what he could, for he set store by her. She was always ailing, — a little wilful, pettish thing, but pretty as a flower; and folks put things into her head, and she began to think she was some great shakes; and she may have been a matter of seventeen years old when Mrs. Devereux died. Dan, as simple at twenty-six as he had been ten years before, thought to go on just in the old way, but the neighbors were one too many for him; and they all represented that it would never do, and so on, till the poor fellow got perplexed and vexed and half beside himself. There was n't the first thing she could do for herself, and he could n't afford to board her out, for Dan was only a laboring-man, mackerelling all summer and shoemaking all winter, less the dreadful times when he stayed out on the Georges; and then he could n't afford, either, to keep her there and ruin the poor girl's reputation; — and what did Dan do but come to me with it all?

Now for a number of years I'd been up in the other part of the town with Aunt Netty, who kept a shop that I tended between schools and before and after, and I'd almost forgotten there was such a soul on earth as Dan Devereux, — though he'd not forgotten me. I'd got through the Grammar and had a year in the High, and suppose I should have finished with an education and gone off teaching somewhere, instead of being here now, cheerful as heart could wish, with a little black-haired hussy tiltering on the back of my chair. Rolly, get

down! Her name's Laura, — for his mother. I mean I might have done all this, if at that time mother had n't been thrown on her back, and been bedridden ever since. I have n't said much about mother yet, but there all the time she was, just as she is to-day, in her little tidy bed in one corner of the great kitchen, sweet as a saint, and as patient; — and I had to come and keep house for father. He never meant that I should lose by it, father did n't; begged, borrowed, or stolen, bought or hired, I should have my books, he said: he's mighty proud of my learning, though between you and me it's little enough to be proud of; but the neighbors think I know 'most as much as the minister, — and I let 'em think. Well, while Mrs. Devereux was sick I was over there a good deal, — for if Faith had one talent, it was total incapacity, — and there had a chance of knowing the stuff that Dan was made of; and I declare to man 't would have touched a heart of stone to see the love between the two. She thought Dan held up the sky, and Dan thought she *was* the sky. It's no wonder, — the risks our men lead can't make common-sized women out of their wives and mothers. But I had n't been coming in and out, busying about where Dan was, all that time, without making any mark; though he was so lost in grief about his mother that he did n't take notice of his other feelings, or think of himself at all. And who could care the less about him for that? It always brings down a woman to see a man wrapt in some sorrow that's lawful and tender as it is large. And when he came and told me what the neighbors said he must do with Faith, the blood stood still in my heart.

“Ask mother, Dan,” says I; for I could n’t have advised him. “She knows best about everything.”

So he asked her.

“I think — I’m sorry to think, for I fear she ’ll not make you a good wife,” said mother, “but that perhaps her love for you will teach her to be — you ’d best marry Faith.”

“But I can’t marry her!” said Dan, half choking; “I don’t want to marry her, — it — it makes me uncomfortable-like to think of such a thing. I care for the child plenty — Besides,” said Dan, catching at a bright hope, “I’m not sure that she ’d have me.”

“Have you, poor boy! What else can she do?”

Dan groaned.

“Poor little Faith!” said mother. “She’s so pretty, Dan, and she’s so young, and she’s pliant. And then how can we tell what may turn up about her some day? She may be a duke’s daughter yet, — who knows? Think of the stroke of good-fortune she may give you!”

“But I don’t love her,” said Dan, as a finality.

“Perhaps — It is n’t — You don’t love any one else?”

“No,” said Dan, as a matter of course, and not at all with reflection. And then, as his eyes went wandering, there came over them a misty look, just as the haze creeps between you and some object away out at sea, and he seemed to be sifting his very soul. Suddenly the look swept off them, and his eyes struck mine, and he turned, not having meant to, and faced me entirely, and there came such a light into his countenance, such a smile round his lips, such a red stamped his cheek, and

he bent a little, — and it was just as if the angel of the Lord had shaken his wings over us in passing, and we both of us knew that here was a man and here was a woman, each for the other, in life and death; and I just hid my head in my apron, and mother turned on her pillow with a little moan. How long that lasted I can't say, but by and by I heard mother's voice, clear and sweet as a tolling bell far away on some fair Sunday morning, —

“The Lord is in his holy temple, the Lord's throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try the children of men.”

And nobody spoke.

“Thou art my Father, my God, and the rock of my salvation. Thou wilt light my candle: the Lord my God will enlighten my darkness. For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light.”

Then came the hush again, and Dan started to his feet, and began to walk up and down the room as if something drove him; but, wearying, he stood and leaned his head on the chimney there. And mother's voice broke the stillness anew, and she said, —

“Hath God forgotten to be gracious? His mercy endureth forever. And none of them that trust in him shall be desolate.”

There was something in mother's tone that made me forget myself and my sorrow, and look; and there she was, as she had n't been before for six months, half risen from the bed, one hand up, and her whole face white and shining with confident faith. Well, when I see all that such trust has buoyed mother over, I wish to goodness

I had it: I take more after Martha. But never mind, do well here and you'll do well there, say I. Perhaps you think it was n't much, the quiet and the few texts breathed through it; but sometimes when one's soul's at a white heat, it may be moulded like wax with a finger. As for me, maybe God hardened Pharaoh's heart, — though how that was Pharaoh's fault I never could see; — but Dan, — he felt what it was to have a refuge in trouble, to have a great love always extending over him like a wing; he longed for it; he could n't believe it was his now, he was so suddenly convicted of all sin and wickedness; and something sprang up in his heart, a kind of holy passion that he felt to be possible for this great and tender Divine Being; and he came and fell on his knees by the side of the bed, crying out for mother to show him the way; and mother, she put her hand on his head and prayed, — prayed, oh! so beautifully, that it makes the water stand in my eyes now to remember what she said. But I did n't feel so then, my heart and my soul were rebellious, and love for Dan alone kept me under, not love for God. And in fact, if ever I'd got to heaven then, love for Dan'd have been my only saving grace; for I was mighty high-spirited, as a girl. Well, Dan he never made open profession; but when he left the house, he went and asked Faith to marry him. •

Now Faith did n't care anything about Dan, — except the quiet attachment that she could n't help, from living in the house with him, and he'd always petted and made much of her, and dressed her like a doll, — he was n't the kind of man to take her fancy; she'd have maybe liked some slender, smooth-faced chap; but Dan was a black,

shaggy fellow, with shoulders like the cross-tree, and a length of limb like Saul's, and eyes set deep, like lamps in caverns. And he had a great, powerful heart, — and, oh! how it was lost! for she might have won it, she might have made him love her, since I would have stood wide away and aside for the sake of seeing him happy. But Faith was one of those that, if they can't get what they want, have n't any idea of putting up with what they have, — God forgive me, if I am hard on the child! And she could n't give Dan an answer right off, but was loath to think of it, and went flirting about among the other boys; and Dan, when he saw she was n't so easily gotten, perhaps set more value on her. For Faith, she grew prettier every day; her great brown eyes were so soft and clear, and had a wide, sorrowful way of looking at you; and her cheeks, that were usually pale, blossomed to roses when you spoke to her, her hair drooping over them dark and silky; and though she was slack and untidy and at loose ends about her dress, she somehow always seemed like a princess in disguise; and when she had on anything new, — a sprigged calico and her little straw bonnet with the pink ribbons and Mrs. Devereux's black scarf, for instance, — you'd have allowed that she might have been daughter to the Queen of Sheba. I don't know, but I rather think Dan would n't have said any more to Faith, from various motives, you see, notwithstanding the neighbors were still remonstrating with him, if it had n't been that Miss Brown — she that lived round the corner there; the town's well quit of her now, poor thing! — went to saying the same stuff to Faith, and telling her all that other folks said. And Faith went

home in a passion, — some of your timid kind nothing ever abashes, and nobody gets to the windward of them, — and, being perfectly furious, fell to accusing Dan of having brought her to this, so that Dan actually believed he had, and was cut to the quick with contrition, and told her that all the reparation he could make he was waiting and wishing to make, and then there came floods of tears. Some women seem to have set out with the idea that life's a desert for them to cross, and they've laid in a supply of water-bags accordingly, but it's the meanest weapon! And then, again, there's men that are iron, and not to be bent under calamities, that these tears can twist round your little finger. Well, I suppose Faith concluded 't was no use to go hungry because her bread was n't buttered on both sides, but she always acted as if she'd condescended ninety degrees in marrying Dan, and Dan always seemed to feel that he'd done her a great injury; and there it was.

I kept in the house for a time; mother was worse, — and I thought the less Dan saw of me the better; I kind of hoped he'd forget, and find his happiness where it ought to be. But the first time I saw him, when Faith had been his wife all the spring, there was the look in his eyes that told of the ache in his heart. Faith was n't very happy herself, of course, though she was careless; and she gave him trouble, — keeping company with the young men just as before; and she got into a way of flying straight to me, if Dan ventured to reprove her ever so lightly; and stormy nights, when he was gone, and in his long trips, she always locked up her doors and came over and got into my bed; and she was

one of those that never listened to reason, and it was none so easy for me, you may suppose.

Things had gone on now for some three years, and I'd about lived in my books, — I'd tried to teach Faith some, but she would n't go any further than newspaper stories, — when one day Dan took her and me to sail, and we were to have had a clam-chowder on the Point, if the squall had n't come. As it was, we'd got to put up with chicken-broth, and it could n't have been better, considering who made it. It was getting on toward the cool of the May evening, the sunset was round on the other side of the house, but all the east looked as if the sky had been stirred up with currant-juice, till it grew purple and dark, and then the two lighthouses flared out and showed us the lip of froth lapping the shadowy shore beyond, and I heard father's voice, and he came in.

There was nothing but the firelight in the room, and it threw about great shadows, so that at first entering all was indistinct; but I heard a foot behind father's, and then a form appeared, and something, I never could tell what, made a great shiver rush down my back, just as when a creature is frightened in the dark at what you don't see; and so, though my soul was unconscious, my body felt that there was danger in the air. Dan had risen and lighted the lamp that swings in the chimney, and father first of all had gone up and kissed mother, and left the stranger standing; then he turned round, saying, —

“A tough day, — it's been a tough day; and here's some un to prove it. Georgie, hope that pot's steam

don't belie it, for Mr. Gabriel Verelay and I want a good supper and a good bed."

At this, the stranger, still standing, bowed.

"Here 's the one, father," said I. "But about the bed, — Faith 'll have to stay here, — and I don't see, — unless Dan takes him over —"

"That I 'll do," said Dan.

"All right," said the stranger, in a voice that you did n't seem to notice while he was speaking, but that you remembered afterwards like the ring of any silver thing that has been thrown down; and he dropped his hat on the floor and drew near the fireplace, warming hands that were slender and brown, but shapely as a woman's. I was taking up the supper; so I only gave him a glance or two, and saw him standing there, his left hand extended to the blaze, and his eye resting lightly and then earnestly on Faith in her pretty sleep, and turning away much as one turns from a picture. At length I came to ask him to sit by, and at that moment Faith's eyes opened.

Faith always woke up just as a baby does, wide and bewildered, and the fire had flushed her cheeks, and her hair was disordered, and she fixed her gaze on him as if he had stepped out of her dream, her lips half parted and then curling in a smile; but in a second he moved off with me, and Faith slipped down and into the little bedroom.

Well, we did n't waste many words until father 'd lost the edge of his appetite, and then I told about Faith.

"'F that don't beat the Dutch!" said father. "Here 's Mr. — Mr. —"

“Gabriel,” said the stranger.

“Yes, — Mr. Gabriel Verelay been served the same trick by the same squall, only worse and more of it, — knocked off the yacht — What’s that you call her?”

“La belle Louise.”

“And left for drowned, — if they see him go at all. But he could n’t ’a’ sinked in that sea, if he’d tried. He kep’ afloat; we blundered into him; and here he is.”

Dan and I looked round in considerable surprise, for he was dry as an August leaf.

“O,” said the stranger, coloring, and with the least little turn of his words, as if he did n’t always speak English, “the good capitain reached shore, and, finding sticks, he kindled a fire, and we did dry our clothes until it made fine weather once more.”

“Yes,” said father; “but ’t would n’t been quite such fine weather, I reckon, if this’d gone to the fishes!” And he pushed something across the table.

It was a pouch with steel snaps, and well stuffed. The stranger colored again, and held his hand for it, and the snap burst, and great gold pieces, English coin and very old French ones, rolled about the table, and father shut his eyes tight; and just then Faith came back and slipped into her chair. I saw her eyes sparkle as we all reached, laughing and joking, to gather them; and Mr. Gabriel — we got into the way of calling him so, — he liked it best — hurried to get them out of sight as if he’d committed some act of ostentation. And then, to make amends, he threw off what constraint he had worn in this new atmosphere of ours, and was so gay, so full of questions and quips and conceits, all spoken in his

strange way, his voice was so sweet, and he laughed so much and so like a boy, and his words had so much point and brightness, that I could think of nothing but the showers of colored stars in fireworks. Dan felt it like a play, sat quiet, but enjoying, and I saw he liked it; — the fellow had a way of attaching every one. Father was uproarious, and kept calling out, “Mother, do you hear? — d’ you hear *that*, mother?” And Faith, she was near, taking it all in as a flower does sunshine, only smiling a little, and looking utterly happy. Then I hurried to clear up, and Faith sat in the great arm-chair, and father got out the pipes, and you could hardly see across the room for the wide tobacco-wreaths; and then it was father’s turn, and he told story after story of the hardships and the dangers and the charms of our way of living. And I could see Mr. Gabriel’s cheek blanch, and he would bend forward, forgetting to smoke, and his breath coming short, and then right himself like a boat after lurching, — he had such natural ways, and except that he’d maybe been a spoiled child, he would have had a good heart, as hearts go. And nothing would do at last but he must stay and live the same scenes for a little; and father told him ’t would n’t pay, — they were n’t so much to go through with as to tell of, — there was too much prose in the daily life, and too much dirt, and ’t wa’ n’t fit for gentlemen. O, he said, he ’d been used to roughing it, — woodsing, camping and gunning and yachting, ever since he’d been a free man. He was a Canadian, and had been cruising from the St. Lawrence to Florida; and now, as his companions would go on without him, he had a mind to

try a bit of coast-life. And could he board here? or was there any handy place? And father said, there was Dan, — Dan Devereux, a man that had n't his match at oar or helm. And Mr. Gabriel turned his keen eye and bowed again, — and could n't Dan take Mr. Gabriel? And before Dan could answer, for he'd referred it to Faith, Mr. Gabriel had forgotten all about it, and was humming a little French song and stirring the coals with the tongs. And that put father off in a fresh remembrance; and as the hours lengthened, the stories grew fearful, and he told them deep into the midnight, till at last Mr. Gabriel stood up.

“No more, good friend,” said he. “But I will have a taste of this life perilous. And now where is it that I go?”

Dan also stood up.

“My little woman,” said he, glancing at Faith, “thinks there's a corner for you, sir.”

“I beg your pardon —” And Mr. Gabriel paused, with a shadow skimming over his clear dark face.

Dan wondered what he was begging pardon for, but thought perhaps he had n't heard him, so he repeated, —

“My wife,” — nodding over his shoulder at Faith, “she's my wife, — thinks there's a —”

“She's your wife?” said Mr. Gabriel, his eyes opening and brightening the way an aurora runs up the sky, and looking first at one and then at the other, as if he could n't understand how so delicate a flower grew on so thorny a stem.

The red flushed up Dan's face, — and up mine, too,

for the matter of that, — but in a minute the stranger had dropped his glance.

“And why did you not tell me,” he said, “that I might have found her less beautiful?”

Then he raised his shoulders, gave her a saucy bow, with his hand on Dan’s arm, — Dan, who was now too well pleased at having Faith made happy by a compliment to sift it, — and they went out.

But I was angry enough; and you may imagine I was n’t much soothed by seeing Faith, who ’d been so die-away all the evening, sitting up before my scrap of looking-glass, trying in my old coral ear-rings, bowing up my ribbons, and plaiting and prinking till the clock frightened her into bed.

The next morning, mother, who was n’t used to such disturbance, was ill, and I was kept pretty busy tending on her for two or three days. Faith had insisted on going home the first thing after breakfast, and in that time I heard no more of anybody, — for father was out with the night-tides, and, except to ask how mother did, and if I ’d seen the stray from the Lobblelyese again, was too tired for talking when he came back. That had been — let me see — on a Monday, I think, — yes, on a Monday; and Thursday evening, as in-doors had begun to tell on me, and mother was so much improved, I thought I ’d run out for a walk along the sea-wall. The sunset was creeping round everything, and lying in great sheets on the broad, still river, the children were frolicking in the water, and all was so gay, and the air was so sweet, that I went lingering along farther than I ’d meant, and by and by who should I see but a couple

sauntering toward me at my own gait, and one of them was Faith. She had on a muslin with little roses blushing all over it, and she floated along in it as if she were in a pink cloud, and she 'd snatched a vine of the tender young woodbine as she went, and, throwing it round her shoulders, held the two ends in one hand like a ribbon, while with the other she swung her white sun-bonnet. She laughed, and shook her head at me, and there, large as life, under the dark braids dangled my coral ear-rings, that she 'd adopted without leave or license. She 'd been down to the lower landing to meet Dan, — a thing she 'd done before — I don't know when, — and was walking up with Mr. Gabriel while Dan stayed behind to see to things. I kept them talking, and Mr. Gabriel was sparkling with fun, for he 'd got to feeling acquainted, and it had put him in high spirits to get ashore at this hour, though he liked the sea, and we were all laughing, when Dan came up. Now I must confess I had n't fancied Mr. Gabriel over and above; I suppose my first impression had hardened into a prejudice; and after I 'd fathomed the meaning of Faith's fine feathers I liked him less than ever. But when Dan came up, he joined right in, gay and hearty, and liking his new acquaintance so much, that, thinks I, he must know best, and I'll let him look out for his interests himself. It would 'a' been no use, though, for Dan to pretend to beat the Frenchman at his own weapons, — and I don't know that I should have cared to have him. The older I grow, the less I think of your mere intellect; throw learning out of the scales, and give me a great, warm heart, — like Dan's.

Well, it was getting on in the evening, when the latch lifted, and in ran Faith. She twisted my ear-rings out of her hair, exclaiming, —

“O Georgie, are you busy? Can't you perse my ears now?”

“Pierce them yourself, Faith.”

“Well, pierce, then. But I can't, — you know I can't. Won't you now, Georgie?” And she tossed the ear-rings into my lap.

“Why, Faith,” said I, “how 'd you contrive to wear these, if your ears are n't —”

“O, I tied them on. Come now, Georgie!”

So I got the ball of yarn and the darning-needle.

“O, not such a big one!” cried she.

“Perhaps you 'd like a cambric needle,” said I.

“I don't want a winch,” she pouted.

“Well, here 's a smaller one. Now kneel down.”

“Yes, but you wait a moment, till I screw up my courage.”

“No need. You can talk, and I 'll take you at unawares.”

So Faith knelt down, and I got all ready.

“And what shall I talk about?” said she. “About Aunt Rhody, or Mr. Gabriel, or — I 'll tell you the queerest thing, Georgie! Going to now?”

“Do be quiet, Faith, and not keep your head flirting about so!” — for she 'd started up to speak. Then she composed herself once more.

“What was I saying? O, about that! Yes, Georgie, the queerest thing! You see this evening, when Dan was out, I was sitting talkin' with Mr. Gabriel, and he

was wondering how I came to be dropped down here, so I told him all about it. And he was so interested that I went and showed him the things I had on when Dan found me, — you know they 've been kept real nice. And he took them, and looked them over close, admiring them, and — and — admiring me, — and finally he started, and then held the frock to the light, and then lifted a little plait, and in the under side of the belt lining there was a name very finely wrought, — Virginie des Violets; and he looked at all the others, and in some hidden corner of every one was the initials of the same name, — V. des V.

“ ‘That should be your name, Mrs. Devereux,’ says he.

“ ‘O, no!’ says I. ‘My name’s Faith.’

“ Well, and on that he asked, was there no more; and so I took off the little chain that I’ve always worn and showed him that, and he asked if there was a face in it, in what we thought was a coin, you know; and I said, O, it did n’t open; and he turned it óver and over, and finally something snapped, and there *was* a face, — here, you shall see it, Georgie.”

And Faith drew it from her bosom, and opened and held it before me; for I’d sat with my needle poised, and forgetting to strike. And there was the face indeed, a sad, serious face, dark and sweet, yet the image of Faith, and with the same mouth, — that so lovely in a woman becomes weak in a man, — and on the other side there were a few threads of hair, with the same darkness and fineness as Faith’s hair, and under them a little picture chased in the gold and enamelled, which from what

I've read since I suppose must have been the crest of the Des Violets.

"And what did Mr. Gabriel say then?" I asked, giving it back to Faith, who put her head into the old position again.

"O, he acted real queer! Talked French, too, — O, so fast! 'The very man!' then he cried out. 'The man himself! His portrait, — I have seen it a hundred times!' And then he told me that about a dozen years ago or more, a ship sailed from — from — I forget the place exactly, somewhere up there where *he* came from, — Mr. Gabriel, I mean, — and among the passengers was this man and his wife, and his little daughter, whose name was Virginie des Violets, and the ship was never heard from again. But he says that without a doubt I'm the little daughter and my name is Virginie, though I suppose every one'll call me Faith. O, and that is n't the queerest! The queerest is, this gentleman," and Faith lifted her head, "was very rich. I can't tell you how much he owned. Lands that you can walk on a whole day and not come to the end, and ships, and gold. And the whole of it's lying idle and waiting for an heir, — and I, Georgie, am the heir."

And Faith told it with cheeks burning and eyes shining, but yet quite as if she'd been born and brought up in *the* knowledge.

"It don't seem to move you much, Faith," said I, perfectly amazed, although I'd frequently expected something of the kind.

"Well, I may never get it, and so on. If I do, I'll give you a silk dress and set you up in a bookstore. But

here's a queerer thing yet. Des Violets is the way Mr. Gabriel's own name is spelt, and his father and mine — his mother and — Well, some way or other we're sort of cousins. Only think, Georgie! is n't that — I thought, to be sure, when he quartered at our house, Dan'd begin to take me to do, if I looked at him sideways, — make the same fuss that he does if I nod to any of the other young men."

"I don't think Dan speaks before he should, Faith."

"Why don't you say Virginie?" says she, laughing.

"Because Faith you've always been, and Faith you'll have to remain, with us, to the end of the chapter."

"Well, that's as it may be. But Dan can't object now to my going where I'm a mind to with my own cousin!" And here Faith laid her ear on the ball of yarn again.

"Hasten, headsman!" said she, out of a novel, "or they'll wonder where I am."

"Well," I answered, "just let me run the needle through the emery."

"Yes, Georgie," said Faith, going back with her memories while I sharpened my steel, "Mr. Gabriel and I are kin. And he said that the moment he laid eyes on me he knew I was of different blood from the rest of the people —"

"What people?" asked I.

"Why, you, and Dan, and all these. And he said he was struck to stone when he heard I was married to Dan, — I must have been entrapped, — the courts would annul it, — any one could see the difference between us —"

Here was my moment, and I didn't spare it, but jabbed the needle into the ball of yarn, if her ear did lie between them.

"Yes!" says I, "anybody with half an eye can see the difference between you, and that 's a fact! Nobody'd ever imagine for a breath that you were deserving of Dan, — Dan, who's so noble he'd die for what he thought was right; you, who are so selfish and idle and fickle and —"

And at that Faith burst out crying.

"O, I never expected you'd talk about me so, Georgie!" said she between her sobs. "How could I tell you were such a mighty friend of Dan's? And besides, if ever I was Virginie des Violets, I'm Faith Devereux now, and Dan'll resent *any one's* speaking so about his wife!"

And she stood up, the tears sparkling like diamonds in her flashing dark eyes, her cheeks red, and her little fist clinched.

"That 's the right spirit, Faith," says I, "and I'm glad to see you show it. And as for this young Canadian, the best thing to do with him is to send him packing. I don't believe a word he says; it's more than likely nothing but to get into your good graces."

"But there 's the names," said she, so astonished that she did n't remember she was angry.

"Happened so."

"O, yes! 'Happened so'! A likely story! It's nothing but your envy, and that 's all!"

"Faith!" says I, for I forgot she did n't know how close she struck.

“Well, — I mean — There, don’t let’s talk about it any more! How under the sun am I going to get these ends tied?”

“Come here. There! Now for the other one.”

“No, I sha’ n’t let you do that; you hurt me dreadfully, and you got angry, and took the big needle.”

“I thought you expected to be hurt.”

“I did n’t expect to be stabbed.”

“Well, just as you please. I suppose you’ll go round with one ear-ring.”

“Like a little pig with his ear cropped? No, I shall do it myself. See there, Georgie!” And she threw a bit of a box into my hands.

I opened it, and there lay inside, on their velvet cushion, a pair of the prettiest things you ever saw, — a tiny bunch of white grapes, and every grape a round pearl, and all hung so that they would tinkle together on their golden stems every time Faith shook her head, — and she had a cunning little way of shaking it often enough.

“These must have cost a penny, Faith,” said I. “Where’d you get them?”

“Mr. Gabriel gave them to me just now. He went up town and bought them. And I don’t want him to know that my ears were n’t bored.”

“Mr. Gabriel? And you took them?”

“Of course I took them, and mighty glad to get them.”

“Faith dear,” said I, “don’t you know that you should n’t accept presents from gentlemen, and especially now you’re a married woman, and especially from those of higher station?”

“ But he is n’t higher.”

“ You know what I mean. And then, too, he is ; for one always takes rank from one’s husband.”

Faith looked rather downcast at this.

“ Yes,” said I ; “ and pearls and calico — ”

“ Just because you have n’t got a pair yourself ! There, be still ! I don’t want any of your instructions in duty ! ”

“ You ought to put up with a word from a friend, Faith,” said I. “ You always come to me with your grievances. And I’ll tell you what I’ll do. You used to like these coral branches of mine ; and if you’ll give those back to Mr. Gabriel, you shall have the coral.”

Well, Faith, she hesitated, standing there trying to muster her mind to the needle, and it ended by her taking the coral, though I don’t believe she returned the pearls ; but we none of us ever saw them afterwards.

We ’d been talking in a pretty low tone, because mother was asleep ; and just as she ’d finished the other ear, and a little drop of blood stood up on it like a live ruby, the door opened and Dan and Mr. Gabriel came in. There never was a prettier picture than Faith at that moment, and so the young stranger thought, for he stared at her, smiling and at ease, just as if she ’d been hung in a gallery and he ’d bought a ticket. So then he sat down and repeated to Dan and mother what she ’d told me, and he promised to send for the papers to prove it all. But he never did send for them, — delaying and delaying, till the summer wore away ; and perhaps there were such papers and perhaps there were n’t. I’ve always thought he did n’t want his own friends to know where he was.

Dan might be a rich man to-day, if he chose to look them up; but he'd scorch at a slow fire before he'd touch a copper of it. Father never believed a word about it, when we recited it again to him.

“So Faith's come into her fortune, has she?” said he. “Pretty child! She 'a'n't had so much before sence she fell heir to old Miss Devereux's best chany, her six silver spoons, and her surname.”

So the days passed, and the greater part of every one Mr. Gabriel was dabbling in the water somewhere. There was n't a brook within ten miles that he did n't empty of trout, for Dan knew the woods as well as the shores, and he knew the clear nights when the insects can keep free from the water so that next day the fish rise hungry to the surface; and so sometimes in the brightest of May noons they'd bring home a string of those beauties, speckled with little tongues of flame; and Mr. Gabriel would have them cooked, and make us all taste them, — for we don't care much for that sort, down here on the Flats; we should think we were famished if we had to eat fish. And then they'd lie in wait all day for the darting pickerel in the little Stream of Shadows above; and when it came June, up the river he went trolling for bass, and he used a different sort of bait from the rest, — bass won't bite much at clams, — and he hauled in great forty-pounders. And sometimes, in the afternoons, he took out Faith and me, — for, as Faith would go, whether or no, I always made it a point to put by everything and go too; and I used to try and get some of the other girls in, but Mr. Gabriel never would take them, though he was hail-fellow-well-met

with everybody, and was everybody's favorite, and it was known all round how he found out Faith, and that alone made him so popular, that I do believe, if he'd only taken out naturalization papers, we'd have sent him to General Court. And then it grew time for the river mackerel, and they used to bring in at sunset two or three hundred in a shining heap, together with great lobsters, that looked as if they'd been carved out of heliotrope-stone, and so old that they were barnacled. And it was so novel to Mr. Gabriel, that he used to act as if he'd fallen in fairy-land.

After all, I don't know what we should have done without him that summer; he always paid Dan or father a dollar a day and the hire of the boat; and the times were so hard, and there was so little doing, that, but for this, and packing the barrels of clam-bait, they'd have been idle and fared sorely. But we'd rather have starved: though, as for that, I've heard father say there never was a time when he couldn't go out and catch some sort of fish and sell it for enough to get us something to eat. And then this Mr. Gabriel, he had such a winning way with him, he was as quick at wit as a bird on the wing, he had a story or a song for every point, he seemed to take to our simple life as if he'd been born to it, and he was as much interested in all our trifles as we were ourselves. Then, he was so sympathetic, he felt everybody's troubles, he went to the city and brought down a wonderful doctor to see mother, and he got her queer things that helped her more than you'd have thought anything could, and he went himself and set honeysuckles out all round Dan's house, so that

before summer was over it was a bower of great sweet blows, and he had an alms for every beggar, and a kind word for every urchin, and he followed Dan about as a child would follow some big shaggy dog. He introduced, too, a lot of new-fangled games; he was what they called a gymnast, and in feats of rassing there was n't a man among them all but he could stretch as flat as a flounder. And then he always treated. Everybody had a place for him soon, — even *I* did; and as for Dan, he'd have cut his own heart out of his body, if Mr. Gabriel'd had occasion to use it. He was a different man from any Dan'd ever met before, something finer, and he might have been better, and Dan's loyal soul was glad to acknowledge him master, and I declare I believe he felt just as the Jacobites in the old songs used to feel for royal Charlie. There are some men born to rule with a haughty, careless sweetness, and others born to die for them with stern and dogged devotion.

Well, and all this while Faith was n't standing still; she was changing steadily, as much as ever the moon changed in the sky. I noticed it first one day when Mr. Gabriel'd caught every child in the region and given them a picnic in the woods of the Stack-Yard-Gate, and Faith was nowhere to be seen tiptoeing round every one as she used to do, but I found her at last standing at the head of the table, — Mr. Gabriel dancing here and there, seeing to it that all should be as gay as he seemed to be, — quiet and dignified as you please, and feeling every one of her inches. But it was n't dignity really that was the matter with Faith, — it was just gloom. She'd brighten

up for a moment or two, and then down would fall the cloud again; she took to long fits of dreaming, and sometimes she'd burst out crying at any careless word, so that my heart fairly bled for the poor child, — for one could n't help seeing that she'd some secret unhappiness or other, — and I was as gentle and soothing to her as it's in my nature to be. She was in to our house a good deal; she kept it pretty well out of Dan's way, and I hoped she'd get over it sooner or later, and make up her mind to circumstances. And I talked to her a sight about Dan, praising him constantly before her, though I could n't bear to do it; and finally, one very confidential evening, I told her that I'd been in love with Dan myself once a little, but I'd seen that he would marry her, and so had left off thinking about it; for, do you know, I thought it might make her set more price on him now, if she knew somebody else had ever cared for him. Well, that did answer awhile: whether she thought she ought to make it up to Dan, or whether he really did grow more in her eyes, Faith got to being very neat and domestic and praiseworthy. But still there was the change, and it did n't make her any the less lovely. Indeed, if I'd been a man, I should have cared for her more than ever: it was like turning a child into a woman: and I really think, as Dan saw her going about with such a pleasant gravity, her pretty figure moving so quietly, her pretty face so still and fair, as if she had thoughts and feelings now, he began to wonder what had come over Faith, and, if she were really as charming as this, why he had n't felt it before; and then, you know, whether you love a woman or not, the mere fact that

she's your wife, that her life is sunk in yours, that she's something for you to protect, and that your honor lies in doing so, gives you a certain kindly feeling that might ripen into love any day under sunshine and a south wall.

Blue-fish were about done with, when one day Dan brought in some mackerel from Boon Island: they had n't been in the harbor for some time, though now there was a probability of their return. So they were going out when the tide served—the two boys—at midnight for mackerel, and Dan had heard me wish for the experience so often, a long while ago, that he said, Why should n't they take the girls? and Faith snatched at the idea, and with that Mr. Gabriel agreed to fetch me at the hour, and so we parted. I was kind of sorry, but there was no help for it.

When we started, it was in that clear crystal dark that looks as if you could see through it forever till you reached infinite things, and we seemed to be in a great hollow sphere, and the stars were like living beings who had the night to themselves. Always, when I'm up late, I feel as if it were something unlawful, as if affairs were in progress which I had no right to witness, a kind of grand freemasonry. I've felt it nights when I've been watching with mother, and there has come up across the heavens the great caravan of constellations, and a star that I'd pulled away the curtain on the east side to see came by and by and looked in at the south window; but I never felt it as I did this night. The tide was near the full, and so we went slipping down the dark water by the starlight; and as we saw them shining above us, and

then looked down and saw them sparkling up from beneath, — the stars, — it really seemed as if Dan's oars must be two long wings, as if we swam on them through a motionless air. By and by we were in the island creek, and far ahead, in a streak of wind that did n't reach us, we could see a pointed sail skimming along between the banks, as if some ghost went before to show us the way; and when the first hush and mystery wore off, Mr. Gabriel was singing little French songs in tunes like the rise and fall of the tide. While he sang he rowed, and Dan was ganging the hooks. At length Dan took the oars again, and every now and then he paused to let us float along with the tide as it slacked, and take the sense of the night. And all the tall grass that edged the side began to wave in a strange light, and there blew on a little breeze, and over the rim of the world tipped up a waning moon. If there'd been anything needed to make us feel as if we were going to find the Witch of Endor, it was this. It was such a strange moon, pointing such a strange way, with such a strange color, so remote, and so glassy, — it was like a dead moon, or the spirit of one, and was perfectly awful.

“She has come to look at Faith,” said Mr. Gabriel; for Faith, who once would have been nodding here and there all about the boat, was sitting up pale and sad, like another spirit, to confront it. But Dan and I both felt a difference.

Mr. Gabriel, he stepped across and went and sat down behind Faith, and laid his hand lightly on her arm. Perhaps he did n't mind that he touched her, — he had a kind of absent air; but if any one had looked at the

nervous pressure of the slender fingers, they would have seen as much meaning in that touch as in many an embrace; and Faith lifted her face to his, and they forgot that I was looking at them, and into the eyes of both there stole a strange, deep smile, — and my soul groaned within me. It made no odds to me then that the air blew warm off the land from scented hay-ricks, that the moon hung like some exhumed jewel in the sky, that all the perfect night was widening into dawn. I saw and felt nothing but the wretchedness that must break one day on Dan's head. Should I warn him? I could n't do that. And what then?

The sail was up, we had left the headland and the hills, and when they furled it and cast anchor we were swinging far out on the back of the great monster that was frolicking to itself and thinking no more of us than we do of a mote in the air. Elder Snow, he says that it's singular we regard day as illumination and night as darkness, — day that really hems us in with narrow light and shuts us upon ourselves, night that sets us free and reveals to us all the secrets of the sky. I thought of that when one by one the stars melted and the moon became a breath, and up over the wide grayness crept color and radiance and the sun himself, — the sky soaring higher and higher, like a great thin bubble of flaky hues, — and, all about, nothing but the everlasting wash of waters broke the sacred hush. And it seemed as if God had been with us, and withdrawing we saw the trail of his splendid garments; and I remembered the words mother had spoken to Dan once before, and why could n't I leave him in heavenly hands? And then it came into my heart

to pray. I knew I had n't any right to pray expecting to be heard; but yet mine would be the prayer of the humble, and was n't Faith of as much consequence as a sparrow? By and by, as we all sat leaning over the gunwale, the words of a hymn that I'd heard at camp-meetings came into my mind, and I sang them out, loud and clear. I always had a good voice, though Dan'd never heard me do anything with it except hum little low things, putting mother to sleep; but here I had a whole sky to sing in, and the hymns were trumpet-calls. And one after another they kept thronging up, and there was a rush of feeling in them that made you shiver, and as I sang them they thrilled me through and through. Wide as the way before us was, it seemed to widen; I felt myself journeying with some vast host towards the city of God, and its light poured over us, and there was nothing but joy and love and praise and exulting expectancy in my heart. And when the hymn died on my lips because the words were too faint and the tune was too weak for the ecstacy, and when the silence had soothed me back again, I turned and saw Dan's lips bitten, and his check white, and his eyes like stars, and Mr. Gabriel's face fallen forward in his hands, and he shaking with quick sobs; and as for Faith, — Faith, she had dropped asleep, and one arm was thrown above her head, and the other lay where it had slipped from Mr. Gabriel's loosened grasp. There's a contagion, you know, in such things, but Faith was never of the catching kind.

Well, this was n't what we'd come for, — turning all out-doors into a church, — though what's a church but a place of God's presence? and for my part, I never see

high blue sky and sunshine without feeling that. And all of a sudden there came a school of mackerel splashing and darkening and curling round the boat, after the bait we'd thrown out on anchoring. 'T would have done you good to see Dan just at that moment; you'd have realized what it was to have a calling. He started up, forgetting everything else, his face all flushed, his eyes like coals, his mouth tight and his tongue silent; and how many hooks he had out I'm sure I don't know, but he kept jerking them in by twos and threes, and finally they bit at the bare barb and were taken without any bait at all, just as if they'd come and asked to be caught. Mr. Gabriel, he did n't pay any attention at first, but Dan called to him to stir himself, and so gradually he worked back into his old mood; but he was more still and something sad all the rest of the morning. Well, when we'd gotten about enough, and they were dying in the boat there, as they cast their scales, like the iris, we put in-shore; and building a fire, we cooked our own dinner and boiled our own coffee. Many's the icy winter night I've wrapped up Dan's bottle of hot coffee in rolls on rolls of flannel, that he might drink it hot and strong far out at sea in a wherry at daybreak!

But as I was saying, — all this time, Mr. Gabriel, he scarcely looked at Faith. At first she did n't comprehend, and then something swam all over her face as if the very blood in her veins had grown darker, and there was such danger in her eye that before we stepped into the boat again I wished to goodness I had a life-preserver. But in the beginning the religious impression lasted and gave him great resolutions; and then strolling

off and along the beach, he fell in with some men there and did as he always did, scraped acquaintance. I verily believe that these men were total strangers, that he'd never laid eyes on them before, and after a few words he wheeled about. As he did so, his glance fell on Faith standing there alone against the pale sky, for the weather'd thickened, and watching the surf break at her feet. He was motionless, gazing at her long, and then, when he had turned once or twice irresolutely, he ground his heel into the sand and went back. The men rose and wandered on with him, and they talked together for a while, and I saw money pass; and pretty soon Mr. Gabriel returned, his face vividly pallid, but smiling, and he had in his hand some little bright shells that you don't often find on these Northern beaches, and he said he had bought them of those men. And all this time he'd not spoken with Faith, and there was the danger yet in her eye. But nothing came of it, and I had accused myself of nearly every crime in the Decalogue, and on the way back we had put up the lines, and Mr. Gabriel had hauled in the lobster-net for the last time. He liked that branch of the business; he said it had all the excitement of gambling, — the slow settling downwards, the fading of the last ripple, the impenetrable depth and shade and the mystery of the work below, five minutes of expectation, and it might bring up a scale of the sea-serpent, or the king of the crabs might have crept in for a nap in the folds, or it might come up as if you'd dredged for pearls, or it might hold the great backward-crawling lobsters, or a tangle of sea-weed, or the long yellow locks of some drowned girl, — or nothing at all. So he always drew

in that net, and it needed muscle, and his was like steel, — not good for much in the long pull, but just for a breathing could handle the biggest boatman in the harbor. Well, — and we'd hoisted the sail and were in the creek once more, for the creek was only to be used at high-water, and I'd told Dan I could n't be away from mother over another tide and so we must n't get aground, and he'd told me not to fret, there was nothing too shallow for us on the coast. "This boat," said Dan, "she'll float in a heavy dew." And he began singing a song he liked: —

" I east my line in Largo Bay,
And fishes I caught nine:
There 's three to boil, and three to fry,
And three to bait the line."

And Mr. Gabriel'd never heard it before, and he made him sing it again and again.

" The boatie rows, the boatie rows,
The boatie rows indeed,"

repeated Mr. Gabriel, and he said it was the only song he knew that held the click of the oar in the rowlock.

The little birds went skimming by us, as we sailed, their breasts upon the water, and we could see the gunners creeping through the marshes beside them.

"The wind changes," said Mr. Gabriel. "The equinox treads close behind us. Sst! Is it that you do not feel its breath? And you hear nothing?"

"It's the Soul of the Bar," said Dan; and he fell to telling us one of the wild stories that fishermen can tell each other by the lantern, rocking outside at night in the dory.

The wind was dead east, and now we flew before it, and now we tacked in it, up and up the winding stream, and always a little pointed sail came skimming on in suit.

“What sail is that, Dan?” asked I. “It looks like the one that flitted ahead this morning.”

“It *is* the one,” said Dan, — for he’d brought up a whole horde of superstitious memories, and a gloom that had been hovering off and on his face settled there for good. “As much of a one as that was. It’s no sail at all. It’s a death-sign. And I’ve never been down here and seen it but trouble was on its heels. Georgie! there’s two of them!”

We all looked, but it was hidden in a curve, and when it stole in sight again there *were* two of them, filmy and faint as spirits’ wings; and while we gazed they vanished, whether supernaturally or in the mist that was rising mast-high I never thought, for my blood was frozen as it ran.

“You have fear?” asked Mr. Gabriel, — his face perfectly pale, and his eye almost lost in darkness. “If it is a phantom, it can do you no harm.”

Faith’s teeth chattered, — I saw them. He turned to her, and as their look met, a spot of carnation burned into his cheek almost as a brand would have burned. He seemed to be balancing some point, to be searching her and sifting her; and Faith half rose, proudly, and pale, as if his look pierced her with pain. The look was long, — but before it fell, a glow and sparkle filled the eyes, and over his face there curled the deep, strange smile of the morning, till the long lids and heavy lashes dropped and made it sad. And Faith, — she started in

a new surprise, the darkness gathered and crept off her face as cream wrinkles from milk, and spleen or venom or what-not became absorbed again and lost, and there was nothing in her glance but passionate forgetfulness. Some souls are like the white river-lilies, — fixed, yet floating; but Mr. Gabriel had no firm root anywhere, and was blown about with every breeze, like a leaf on the flood. His purposes melted and made with his moods.

The wind got round more to the north, the mist fell upon the waters or blew away over the meadows, and it was cold. Mr. Gabriel wrapped the cloak about Faith and fastened it, and tied her bonnet. Just now Dan was so busy handling the boat, — and it's rather risky, you have to wriggle up the creek so, — that he took little notice of us. Then Mr. Gabriel stood up, as if to change his position; and taking off his hat, he held it aloft, while he passed the other hand across his forehead. And leaning against the mast, he stood so, many minutes.

“Dan,” I said, “did your spiritual craft ever hang out a purple pennant?”

“No,” said Dan.

“Well,” says I. And we all saw a little purple ribbon running up the rope and streaming on the air behind us.

“And why do we not hoist our own?” said Mr. Gabriel, putting on his hat. And suiting the action to the word, a little green signal curled up and flaunted above us like a bunch of the weed floating there in the water beneath and dyeing all the shallows so that they looked like caves of cool emerald, and wide off and over

them the west burned smoulderingly red like a furnace. Many a time since, I've felt the magical color between those banks and along those meadows, but then I felt none of it; every wit I had was too awake and alert and fast-fixed in watching.

"Is it that the phantoms can be flesh and blood?" said Mr. Gabriel, laughingly; and, lifting his arm again, he hailed the foremost.

"Boat ahoy! What names?" said he.

The answer came back on the wind full and round.

"Speed, and Follow."

"Where from?" asked Dan, with just a glint in his eye: for usually he knew every boat on the river, but he did n't know these.

"From the schooner Flyaway, taking in sand over at Black Rocks."

Then Mr. Gabriel spoke again, as they drew near; but whether he spoke so fast that I could n't understand, or whether he spoke French, I never knew; and Dan, with some kind of feeling that it was Mr. Gabriel's acquaintance, suffered the one we spoke to pass us.

Once or twice Mr. Gabriel had begun some question to Dan about the approaching weather, but had turned it off again before anybody could answer. You see he had some little nobility left, and did n't want the very man he was going to injure to show him how to do it. Now, however, he asked him that was steering the Speed by, if it was going to storm.

The man thought it was.

"How is it, then, that your schooner prepares to sail?"

“O, wind’s backed in; we’ll be on blue water before the gale breaks, I reckon, and then beat off where there’s plenty of sea-room.”

“But she shall make shipwreck!”

“Not if the court know herself, and he think she do,” was the reply from another, as they passed.

Somehow I began to hate myself, I was so full of poisonous suspicions. How did Mr. Gabriel know the schooner prepared to sail? And this man, could he tell boom from bowsprit? I did n’t believe it; he had the hang of the up-river folks. But there stood Mr. Gabriel, so quiet and easy, his eyelids down, and he humming an underbreath of song; and there sat Faith, so pale and so pretty, a trifle sad, a trifle that her conscience would brew for her, whether or no. Yet, after all, there was an odd expression in Mr. Gabriel’s face, an eager, restless expectation; and if his lids were lowered, it was only to hide the spark that flushed and quenched in his eye like a beating pulse.

We had reached the draw, it was lifted for the Speed, she had passed, and the wind was in her sail once more. Yet, somehow, she hung back. And then I saw that the men in her were of those with whom Mr. Gabriel had spoken at noon. Dan’s sail fell slack, and we drifted slowly through, while he poled us along with an oar:

“Look out, Georgie!” said Dan, for he thought I was going to graze my shoulder upon the side there. I looked; and when I turned again, Mr. Gabriel was rising up from some earnest and hurried sentence to Faith. And Faith, too, was standing, standing and swaying with indecision, and gazing away out before her,—

so flushed and so beautiful, — so loath and so willing. Poor thing! poor thing! as if her rising in itself were not the whole!

Mr. Gabriel stepped across the boat, stooped a minute, and then also took an oar. How perfect he was, as he stood there that moment! — perfect like a statue, I mean, — so slender, so clean-limbed, his dark face pale to transparency in the green light that filtered through the draw! and then a ray from the sunset came creeping over the edge of the high fields and smote his eyes side-long so that they glowed like jewels, and he with his oar planted firmly hung there bending far back with it, completely full of strength and grace.

“It is not the *bateaux* in the rapids,” said he.

“What are you about?” asked Dan, with sudden hoarseness. “You are pulling the wrong way!”

Mr. Gabriel laughed, and threw down his oar, and stepped back again; gave his hand to Faith, and half led, half lifted her, over the side, and into the Speed, followed, and never looked behind him. They let go something they had held, the Speed put her nose in the water and sprinkled us with spray, plunged, and dashed off like an arrow.

It was like him, — daring and insolent coolness! Just like him! Always the soul of defiance! None but one so reckless and impetuous as he would have dreamed of flying into the teeth of the tempest in that shell of a schooner. But he was mad with love, and they — there was n't a man among them but was the worse for liquor.

For a moment Dan took it, as Mr. Gabriel had expected him to do, as a joke, and went to trim the boat

for racing, not meaning they should reach town first. But I — I saw it all.

“Dan!” I sung out, “save her! She’s not coming back! They’ll make for the schooner at Black Rocks! O Dan, he’s taken her off!”

Now one whose intelligence has never been trained, who shells his five wits and gets rid of the pods as best he can, may n’t be so quick as another, but like an animal, he feels long before he sees; and a vague sense of this had been upon Dan all day. Yet now he stood thunderstruck; and the thing went on before his very eyes. It was more than he could believe at once, — and perhaps his first feeling was, Why should he hinder? And then the flood fell. No thought of his loss, — though loss it wa’n’t, — only of his friend, — of such stunning treachery, that, if the sun fell hissing into the sea at noon, it would have mattered less, — only of *that* loss that tore his heart out with it.

“Gabriel!” he shouted, — “Gabriel!” And his voice was heart-rending. I know that Mr. Gabriel felt it, for he never turned nor stirred.

Then I don’t know what came over Dan: a blind rage swelling in his heart seemed to make him larger in every limb; he towered like a flame. He sprang to the tiller, but, as he did so, saw with one flash of his eye that Mr. Gabriel had unshipped the rudder and thrown it away. He seized an oar to steer with in its place; he saw that they, in their ignorance fast edging on the flats, would shortly be aground; more fisherman than sailor, he knew a thousand tricks of boat-craft that they had never heard of. We flew, we flew through cloven ridges, we

became a wind ourselves, and while I tell it he was beside them, had gathered himself as if to leap the chasm between time and eternity, and had landed among them in the Speed. The wherry careened with the shock and the water poured into her, and she flung headlong and away as his foot spurned her. Heaven knows why she did n't upset, for I thought of nothing but the scene before me as I drifted off from it. I shut the eyes in my soul now, that I may n't see that horrid scuffle twice. Mr. Gabriel, he rose, he turned. If Dan was the giant beside him, he himself was so well-knit, so supple, so adroit, that his power was like the blade in the hand. Dan's strength was lying round loose, but Mr. Gabriel's was trained, it hid like springs of steel between brain and wrist, and from him the clap fell with the bolt. And then, besides, Dan did not love Faith, and he did love Gabriel. Any one could see how it would go. I screamed. I'cried, "Faith! Faith!" And some natural instinct stirred in Faith's heart, for she clung to Mr. Gabriel's arm to pull him off from Dan. But he shook her away like rain. Then such a mortal weakness took possession of me that I saw everything black, and when it was clean gone, I looked, and they were locked in each other's arms, fierce, fierce and fell, a death-grip. They were staggering to the boat's edge: only this I saw, that Mr. Gabriel was inside: suddenly the helmsman interposed with an oar, and broke their grasps. Mr. Gabriel reeled away, free, for a second; then, the passion, the fury, the hate in his heart feeding his strength as youth fed the locks of Samson, he darted, and lifted Dan in his two arms and threw him like a

stone into the water. Stiffened to ice, I waited for Dan to rise; the other craft, the Follow, skimmed between us, and one man managing her that she should n't heel, the rest drew Dan in, — it's not the depth of two foot there, — tacked about, and after a minute came alongside, seized our painter, and dropped him gently into his own boat. Then — for the Speed had got afloat again — the thing stretched her two sails wing and wing, and went ploughing up a great furrow of foam before her.

I sprang to Dan. He was not senseless, but in a kind of stupor: his head had struck the fluke of a half-sunk anchor and it had stunned him, but as the wound bled he recovered slowly and opened his eyes. Ah, what misery was in them! I turned to the fugitives. They were yet in sight, Mr. Gabriel sitting and seeming to adjure Faith, whose skirts he held; but she stood, and her arms were outstretched, and, pale as a foam-wreath her face, and piercing as a night-wind her voice, I heard her cry, "O Georgie! Georgie!" It was too late for her to cry or to wring her hands now. She should have thought of that before. But Mr. Gabriel rose and drew her down, and hid her face in his arms and went over it; and so they fled up the basin and round the long line of sand, and out into the gloom and the curdling mists.

I bound up Dan's head. I could n't steer with an oar, — that was out of the question, — but, as luck would have it, could row tolerably; so I got down the little mast, and at length reached the wharves. The town-lights flickered up in the darkness and flickered back from the black rushing river, and then out blazed the great mills; and as I felt along, I remembered times

when we 'd put in by the tender sunset, as the rose faded out of the water and the orange ebbed down the west, and one by one the sweet evening-bells chimed forth, so clear and high, and each with a different tone, that it seemed as if the stars must flock, tinkling, into the sky. And here were the bells ringing out again, ringing out of the gray and the gloom, dull and brazen, as if they rang from some cavern of shadows, or from the mouth of hell, — but no, *that* was down river! Well, I made my way, and the men on the landing took up Dan, and helped him in and got him on my little bed, and no sooner there than the heavy sleep with which he had struggled fell on him like lead.

The story flew from mouth to mouth, the region rang with it; nobody had any need to add to it, or to make it out a griffin or a dragon that had gripped Faith and carried her off in his talons. But everybody declared that those boats could be no ship's yawls at all, but must belong to parties from up river camping out on the beach, and that a parcel of such must have gone sailing with some of the hands of a sand-droger: there was one in the stream now, that had got off with the tide, said the Jerdan boys who 'd been down there that afternoon, though there was no such name as "Flyaway" on her stern, and they were waiting for the master of her, who 'd gone off on a spree, — a dare-devil fellow, that used to run a smuggler between Bordeaux and Bristol, as they 'd heard say: and all agreed that Mr. Gabriel could never have had to do with them before that day, or he 'd have known what a place a sand-droger would be for a woman; and everybody made excuses for

Gabriel, and everybody was down on Faith. So there things lay. It was raw and chill when the last neighbor left us, the sky was black as a cloak, not a star to be seen, the wind had edged back to the east again and came in wet and wild from the sea and fringed with its thunder. O, poor little Faith, what a night! what a night for her!

I went back and sat down by Dan, and tried to keep his head cool. Father was up walking the kitchen floor till late, but at length he lay down across the foot of mother's bed, as if expecting to be called. The lights were put out, there was no noise in the town, every one slept, — every one, except they watched like me, on that terrible night. No noise in the town, did I say? Ah, but there was! It came creeping round the corners, it poured rushing up the street, it rose from everywhere, — a voice, a voice of woe, the heavy booming rote of the sea. I looked out, but it was pitch-dark, light had forsaken the world, we were beleaguered by blackness. It grew colder, as if one felt a fog fall, and the wind, mounting slowly, now blew a gale. It eddied in clouds of dead and whirling leaves, and sent big torn branches flying aloft; it took the house by the four corners and shook it to loosening the rafters, and I felt the chair rock under me; it rumbled down the chimney as if it would tear the life out of us. And with every fresh gust of the gale the rain slapped against the wall, the rain that fell in rivers, and went before the wind in sheets; and sheltered as I was, the torrents seemed to pour over me like cataracts, and every drop pierced me like a needle, and I put my fingers in my ears to shut out the howl of the wind and

the waves. I could n't keep my thoughts away from Faith. O, poor girl, this was n't what she 'd expected! As plainly as if I were aboard-ship I felt the scene, the hurrying feet, the slippery deck, the hoarse cries, the creaking cordage, the heaving and plunging and straining, and the wide wild night. And I was beating off those dreadful lines with them, two dreadful lines of white froth through the blackness, two lines where the horns of breakers guard the harbor, — all night long beating off the lee with them, my life in my teeth, and chill, blank, shivering horror before me. My whole soul, my whole being, was fixed in that one spot, that little vessel driving on the rocks: it seemed as if a madness took possession of me, I reeled as I walked, I forefelt the shivering shock, I waited till she should strike. And then I thought I heard cries, and I ran out in the storm, and down upon the causey, but nothing met me but the hollow night and the roaring sea and the wind. I came back, and hurried up and down and wrung my hands in an agony. Pictures of summer nights flashed upon me and faded, — where out of deep blue vaults the stars hung like lamps, great and golden, — or where soft films just hazing heaven caught the rays till all above gleamed like gauze faintly powdered and spangled with silver, — or heavy with heat, slipping over silent waters, through scented airs, under purple skies. And then storms rolled in and rose before my eyes, distinct for a moment, and breaking, — such as I 'd seen them from the Shoals in broad daylight, when tempestuous columns scooped themselves up from the green gulfs and shattered in foam on the shuddering rock, — ah! but that was day, and this was midnight and

murk! — storms as I'd heard tell of them off Cape Race, when great steamers went down with but one cry, and the waters crowded them out of sight, — storms where, out of the wilderness of waves that far and wide wasted white around, a single one came ploughing on straight to the mark, gathering its grinding masses mast-high, poisoning, plunging, and swamping and crashing them into bottomless pits of destruction, — storms where waves toss and breakers gore, where, hanging on crests that slip from under, reefs impale the hull, and drowning wretches cling to the crags with stiffening hands, and the sleet ices them, and the spray, and the sea lashes and beats them with great strokes and sucks them down to death; and right in the midst of it all there burst a gun, — one, another, and no more. “O Faith! Faith!” I cried again, and I ran and hid my head in the bed.

How long did I stay so? An hour, or maybe two. Dan was still dead with sleep, but mother had no more closed an eye than I. There was no rain now, the wind had fallen, the dark had lifted; I looked out once more, and could just see dimly the great waters swinging in the river from bank to bank. I drew the bucket fresh, and bound the cloths cold on Dan's head again. I had n't a thought in my brain, and I fell to counting the meshes in the net that hung from the wall, but in my ears there was the everlasting rustle of the sea and shore. It grew clearer, — it got to being a universal gray; there'd been no sunrise, but it was day. Dan stirred, — he turned over heavily; then he opened his eyes wide and looked about him.

“I’ve had such a fright!” he said. “Georgie! is that you?”

With that it swept over him afresh, and he fell back. In a moment or two he tried to rise, but he was weak as a child. He contrived to keep on his elbow a moment, though, and to give a look out of the window.

“It came on to blow, did n’t it?” he asked; but there he sank down again.

“I can’t stay so!” he murmured soon. “I can’t stay so! Here,—I must tell you. Georgie, get out the spy-glass, and go up on the roof and look over. I’ve had a dream, I tell you! I’ve had a dream. Not that either,—but it’s just stamped on me! It was like a storm,—and I dreamed that that schooner—the Fly-away—had parted. And the half of her’s crashed down just as she broke, and Faith and that man are high up on the bows in the middle of the South Breaker! Make haste, Georgie! Christ! make haste!”

I flew to the drawers and opened them, and began to put the spy-glass together. Suddenly he cried out again,—

“O, here’s where the fault was! What right had I ever to marry the child, not loving her? I bound her! I crushed her! I stifled her! If she lives, it is my sin; if she dies, I murder her!”

He hid his face, as he spoke, so that his voice came thick, and great choking groans rent their way up from his heart.

All at once, as I looked up, there stood mother, in her long white gown, beside the bed, and bending over and taking Dan’s hot head in her two hands.

“Behold, He cometh with clouds!” she whispered.

It always did seem to me as if mother had the imposition of hands, — perhaps every one feels just so about their mother, — but only her touch always lightens an ache for me, whether it ’s in the heart or the head.

“O Aunt Rhody,” said Dan, looking up in her face with his distracted eyes, “can’t you help me?”

“I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help,” said mother.

“There ’s no help there!” called Dan. “There ’s no God there! He would n’t have let a little child run into her damnation!”

“Hush, hush, Dan!” murmured mother. “Faith never can have been at sea in such a night as this, and not have felt God’s hand snatching her out of sin. If she lives, she ’s a changed woman; and if she dies, her soul is whitened and fit to walk with saints. Through much tribulation.”

“Yes, yes,” muttered father, in the room beyond, spitting on his hands, as if he were going to take hold of the truth by the handle, — “it ’s best to clean up a thing with the first spot, and not wait for it to get all rusty with crime.”

“And he!” said Dan, — “and he, — that man, — Gabriel!”

“Between the saddle and the ground
If mercy ’s asked, mercy ’s found,”

said I.

“Are you there yet, Georgie?” he cried, turning to me. “Here! I ’ll go myself!” But he only stumbled and fell on the bed again.

“In all the terror and the tempest of these long hours, — for there’s been a fearful storm, though you have n’t felt it,” said mother, — “in all that, Mr. Gabriel can’t have slept. But at first it must have been that great dread appalled him, and he may have been beset with sorrow. He’d brought her to this. But at last, for he’s no coward, he has looked death in the face and not flinched; and the danger, and the grandeur there is in despair, have lifted his spirit to great heights, — heights found now in an hour, but which in a whole life long he never would have gained, — heights from which he has seen the light of God’s face and been transfigured in it, — heights where the soul dilates to a stature it can never lose. O Dan, there’s a moment, a moment when the dross strikes off, and the impurities, and the grain sets, and there comes out the great white diamond! For by grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, — of Him that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning. O, I *will* believe that Mr. Gabriel had n’t any need to grope as we do, but that suddenly he saw the Heavenly Arm and clung to it, and the grasp closed round him, and death and hell can have no power over him now! Dan, poor boy, is it better to lie in the earth with the ore than to be forged in the furnace and beaten to a blade fit for the hands of archangels?”

And mother stopped, trembling like a leaf.

I’d been wiping and screwing the glass, and I’d waited a breath, for mother always talked so like a preacher; but when she’d finished, after a second or two Dan looked up, and said, as if he’d just come in, —

“Aunt Rhody, how come you out of bed?”

And then mother, she got upon the bed, and she took Dan's head on her breast and fell to stroking his brows, laying her cool palms on his temples and on his eyelids, as once I'd have given my ears to do, — and I slipped out of the room.

O, I hated to go up those stairs, to mount that ladder, to open the scuttle! And once there, I waited and waited before I dared to look. The night had unnerved me. At length I fixed the glass. I swept the broad swollen stream, to the yellowing woods, and over the meadows, where a pale transient beam crept under and pried up the haycocks, — the smoke that began to curl from the chimneys and fall as soon, — the mists blowing off from Indian Hill, but brooding blue and dense down the turnpike, and burying the red spark of the moon, that smothered like a half-dead coal in her ashes, — anywhere, anywhere but that spot! I don't know why it was, but I could n't level the glass there, — my arm would fall, my eye haze. Finally I brought it round nearer and tried again. Everywhere, as far as your eye could reach, the sea was yeasty and white with froth, and great streaks of it were setting up the inky river, and against it there were the twin lighthouses quivering their little yellow rays as if to mock the dawn, and far out on the edge of day the great light at the Isles of Shoals blinked and blinked, crimson and gold, fainter and fainter, and lost at last. It was no use, I did n't dare point it, my hand trembled so I could see nothing plain, when suddenly an engine went thundering over the bridge and startled me into stillness. The tube

slung in my hold and steadied against the chimney, and there — What was it in the field? what ghastly picture?

The glass crashed from my hand, and I staggered shrieking down the ladder.

The sound was n't well through my lips, when the door slammed, and Dan had darted out of the house and to the shore. I after him. There was a knot sitting and standing round there in the gray, shivering, with their hands in their pockets and their pipes set in their teeth; but the gloom was on them as well, and the pipes went out between the puffs.

“Where's Dennis's boat?” Dan demanded, as he strode.

“The six-oar's all the one not —”

“The six-oar I want. Who goes with me?”

There was n't a soul in the ward but would have followed Dan's lead to the end of the world and jumped off; and before I could tell their names there were three men on the thwart, six oars in the air, Dan stood in the bows, a word from him, and they shot away.

I watched while I could see, and then in and up to the attic, forgetting to put mother in her bed, forgetting all things but the one. And there lay the glass broken. I sat awhile with the pieces in my hand, as if I'd lost a kingdom; then down, and mechanically put things to rights, and made mother comfortable, — and she's never stood on her feet from that day to this. At last I seated myself before the fire, and stared into it to blinding.

“Won't some one lend you a glass, Georgie?” said mother.

“Of course they will!” I cried, — for, you see, I had n’t a wit of my own, — and I ran out.

There’s a glass behind every door in the street, you should know, and there’s no day in the year that you’ll go by and not see one stretching from some roof where the heart of the house is out on the sea. O, sometimes I think all the romance of the town is clustered down here on the Flats and written in pale cheeks and starting eyes! But what’s the use? After one winter, one, I gave mine away, and never got another. It’s just an emblem of despair. Look, and look again, and look till your soul sinks, and the thing you want never crosses it; but you’re down in the kitchen stirring a porridge, or you’re off at a neighbor’s asking the news, and somebody shouts at you round the corner, and there, black and dirty and dearer than gold, she lies between the piers.

All the world was up on their house-tops spying, that morning, but there was nobody would keep their glass while I had none; so I went back armed, and part of it all I saw, and part of it father told me.

I waited till I thought they were ’most across, and then I rubbed the lens. At first I saw nothing, and I began to quake with a greater fear than any that had yet taken root in me. But with the next moment there they were, pulling close up. I shut my eyes for a flash with some kind of a prayer that was most like an imprecation, and when I looked again they had dashed over and dashed over, taking the rise of the long roll, and were in the midst of the South Breaker. O God! that terrible South Breaker! The oars bent lithe as willow-switches,

a moment they skimmed on the caps, a moment were hid in the snow of the spray. Dan, red-shirted, still stood there, his whole soul on the aim before him, like that of some leaper flying through the air; he swayed to the stroke, he bowed, he rose, perfectly balanced, and flexile as the wave. The boat behaved beneath their hands like a live creature: she bounded so that you almost saw the light under her; her whole stem lifted itself slowly out of the water, caught the back of a roller and rode over upon the next; the very things that came rushing in with their white rage to devour her bent their necks and bore her up like a bubble. Constantly she drew nearer that dark and shattered heap up to which the fierce surf raced, and over which it leaped. And there all the time, all the time, they had been clinging, far out on the bowsprit, those two figures, her arms close-knit about him, he clasping her with one, the other twisted in the hawser whose harsh thrilling must have filled their ears like an organ-note as it swung them to and fro, — clinging to life, — clinging to each other more than to life. The wreck scarcely heaved with the stoutest blow of the tremendous surge; here and there, only, a plank shivered off and was bowled on and thrown high upon the beach beside fragments of beams broken and bruised to a powder; it seemed to be as firmly planted there as the breaker itself. Great feathers of foam flew across it, great waves shook themselves thin around it and veiled it in shrouds, and with their every breath the smothering sheets dashed over them, — the two. And constantly the boat drew nearer, as I said; they were almost within hail; Dan saw her hair streaming on the wind; he waited only for

the long wave. On it came, that long wave, — oh! I can see it now! — plunging and rearing and swelling, a monstrous billow, sweeping and swooping and roeking in. Its hollows gaped with slippery darkness, it towered and sent the scuds before its trembling crest, breaking with a mighty rainbow as the sun burst forth, it fell in a white blindness everywhere, rushed seething up the sand, — and the bowsprit was bare! —

When father came home, the rack had driven down the harbor and left clear sky; it was near nightfall; they 'd been searching the shore all day, — to no purpose. But that rainbow, — I always took it for a sign. Father was worn out, yet he sat in the chimney-side, cutting off great quids and chewing and thinking and sighing. At last he went and wound up the clock, — it was the stroke of twelve, — and then he turned to me and said, —

“Dan sent you this, Georgie. He hailed a pilot-boat, and 's gone to the Cape to join the fall fleet to the fish-'rics. And he sent you this.”

It was just a great hand-grip to make your nails purple, but there was heart's-blood in it. See, there 's the mark to-day.

So there was Dan off in the Bay of Chaleur. 'T was the best place for him. And I went about my work once more. There was a great gap in my life, but I tried not to look at it. I durst n't think of Dan, and I would n't think of them, — the two. Always in such times it 's as if a breath had come and blown across the pool and you could see down its dark depths and into the very bottom, but time scums it all over again. And I tell you it 's best to look trouble in the face; if you don't you 'll have

more of it. So I got a lot of shoes to bind, and what part of my spare time I wa' n't at my books the needle flew. But I turned no more to the past than I could help, and the future trembled too much to be seen.

Well, the two months dragged away, it got to be Thanksgiving week, and at length the fleet was due. I mind me I made a great baking that week; and I put brandy into the mince for once, instead of vinegar and dried-apple juice, — and there were the fowls stuffed and trussed on the shelf, — and the pumpkin-pies like slices of split gold, — and the cranberry-tarts, plats of crimson and puffs of snow, — and I was brewing in my mind a right-royal red Indian pudding to come out of the oven smoking hot and be soused with thick clots of yellow cream, — when one of the boys ran in and told us the fleet 'd got back, but no Dan with it, — he 'd changed over to a fore-and-after, and would n't be home at all, but was to stay down in the Georges all winter, and he 'd sent us word. Well, the baking went to the dogs, or the Thanksgiving beggars, which is the same thing.

Then days went by, as days will, and it was well into the New Year. I used to sit there at the window, reading, — but the lines would run together, and I 'd forget what 't was all about, and gather no sense, and the image of the little fore-and-after, the Feather, raked in between the leaves, and at last I had to put all that aside; and then I sat stiching, stiching, but got into a sad habit of looking up and looking out each time I drew the thread. I felt it was a shame of me to be so glum, and mother missed my voice; but I could no more talk than I could have given conundrums to King Solomon, and

as for singing— O, I used to long so for just a word from Dan!

We 'd had dry fine weeks all along, and father said he 'd known we should have just such a season, because the goose's breast-bone was so white; but St. Valentine's day the weather broke, broke in a chain of storms that the September gale was a whisper to. Ah, it was a dreadful winter, that! You 've surely heard of it. It made forty widows in one town. Of the dead that were found on Prince Edward's Island's shores there were four corpses in the next house yonder, and two in the one behind. And what waiting and watching and cruel pangs of suspense for them that could n't have even the peace of certainty! And I was one of those.

The days crept on, I say, and got bright again; no June days ever stretched themselves to half such length; there was perfect stillness in the house,— it seemed to me that I counted every tick of the clock. In the evenings the neighbors used to drop in and sit mumbling over their fearful memories till the flesh crawled on my bones. Father, then, he wanted cheer, and he 'd get me to singing "Caller Herrin'." Once, I 'd sung the first part, but as I reached the lines,—

" When ye were sleepin' on your pillows,
Dreamt ye aught o' our pair fellows
Darklin' as they face the billows,
A' to fill our woven willows," —

as I reached those lines, my voice trembled so 's to shake the tears out of my eyes, and Jim Jerdan took it up himself and sung it through for me to words of his own

invention. He was always a kindly fellow, and he knew a little how the land lay between me and Dan.

“When I was down in the Georges,” said Jim Jerdan —

“You? When was you down there?” asked father.

“Well, — once I was. There’s worse places.”

“Can’t tell me nothing about the Georges,” said father. “’T a’n’t the rivers of Damascus exactly, but ’t a’n’t the Marlstrom neither.”

“Ever ben there, Cap’n?”

“A few. Spent more nights under cover roundabouts than Georgie’ll have white hairs in her head, — for all she’s washing the color out of her eyes now.”

You see, father knew I set by my hair, — for in those days I rolled it thick as a cable, almost as long, black as that cat’s back, — and he thought he’d touch me up a little.

“Wash the red from her cheek and the light from her look, and she’ll still have the queen’s own tread,” said Jim.

“If Loisy Currier’d heern that, you’d wish your cake was dough,” says father.

“I’ll resk it,” says Jim. “Loisy knows who’s second choice, as well as if you told her.”

“But what about the Georges, Jim?” I asked; for though I hated to hear, I could listen to nothing else.

“Georges? O, not much! Just like any other place.”

“But what do you do down there?”

“Do? Why, we fish, — in the pleasant weather.”

“And when it’s not pleasant?”

“O, then we make things taut, hoist fores’l, clap the

hellum into the lee becket, and go below and amuse ourselves."

"How?" I asked, as if I had n't heard it all a hundred times.

"One way 'n' another. Pipes, and mugs, and poker, if it a'n't too rough; and if it is, we just bunk and snooze till it gets smooth."

"Why, Jim, — how do you know when that is?"

"Well, you can judge, — 'f the pipe falls out of your pocket and don't light on the ceiling."

"And who's on deck?"

"There's no one on deck. There's no danger, no trouble, no nothing. Can't drive ashore, if you was to try: hundred miles off, in the first place. Hatches are closed, she's light as a cork, rolls over and over just like any other log in the water, and there can't a drop get into her, if she turns bottom-side up."

"But she never can right herself!"

"Can't she? You just try her. Why, I've known 'em to keel over and rake bottom and bring up the weed on the topmast. I tell you now! there was one time we knowed she'd turned a somerset, pretty well. Why? Because, when it cleared and we come up, there was her two masts broke short off!"

And Jim went home thinking he'd given me a night's sleep. But it was cold comfort; the Georges seemed to me a worse place than the Hellgate. And mother she kept murmuring, "He layeth the beams of His chambers in the waters, His pavilion round about Him is dark waters and thick clouds of the skies." And I knew by that she thought it pretty bad.

So the days went in cloud and wind. The owners of the Feather 'd been looking for her a month and more, and there were strange kind of rumors afloat; and nobody mentioned Dan's name, unless they tripped. I went glowering like a wild thing. I knew I'd never see Dan now nor hear his voice again, but I hated the Lord that had done it, and I made my heart like the nether millstone. I used to try and get out of folks's sight; and roaming about the back streets one day, as the snow went off, I stumbled on Miss Catharine. "Old Miss Catharine" everybody called her, though she was but a pauper, and had black blood in her veins. Eighty years had withered her, — a little woman at best, and now bent so that her head and shoulders hung forward and she could n't lift them, and she never saw the sky. Her face to the ground as no beast's face is turned even, she walked with a cane, and fixing it every few steps she would throw herself back, and so get a glimpse of her way and go on. I looked after her, and for the first time in weeks my heart ached for somebody beside myself. The next day mother sent me with a dish to Miss Catharine's room, and I went in and sat down. I did n't like her at first; she 'd got a way of looking sidelong that gave her an evil air; but soon she tilted herself backward, and I saw her face, — such a happy one!

"What's the matter of ye, honey?" said she. "D' ye read your Bible?"

Read my Bible!

"Is that what makes you happy, Miss Catharine?" I asked.

"Well, I can't read much myself, — I don't know the

letters," says she; "but I've got the blessed promises in my heart."

"Do you want me to read to you?"

"No, not to-day. Next time you come, maybe."

So I sat awhile and listened to her little humming voice, and we fell to talking about mother's ailments, and she said how fine it would be, if we could only afford to take mother to Bethesda.

"There's no angel there now," said I.

"I know it, dear, — but then — there might be, you know. At any rate, there's always the living waters running to make us whole: I often think of that."

"And what else do you think of, Miss Catharine?"

"Me?" said she. "O, I ha'n't got no husband nor no child to think about and hope for, and so I think of myself, and what I should like, honey. And sometimes I remember them vases, — here! you read 'em now, — Luke xiii. 11."

So I read: —

"And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself. And when Jesus saw her, he called her to him, and said unto her, 'Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity.' And he laid his hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God." -

"Ay, honey, I see that all as if it was me. And I think, as I'm setting here, What if the latch should lift, and the gracious stranger should come in, his gown a-sweepin' behind him and a-sweet'nin' the air, and he should look down on me with his heavenly eyes, and he

should smile, and lay his hands on my head, warm, — and I say to myself, ‘Lord, I am not worthy,’ — and he says, ‘Miss Catharine, thou art loosed from thine infirmity!’ And the latch lifts as I think, and I wait, — but it’s not Him.”

Well, when I went out of that place I wasn’t the same girl that had gone in. My will gave way; I came home and took up my burden and was in peace. Still I could n’t help my thoughts, — and they ran perpetually to the sea. I had n’t need to go up on the house-tops, for I did n’t shut my eyes but there it stretched before me. I stirred about the rooms and tried to make them glad once more; but I was thin and blanched as if I’d been rising from a fever. Father said it was the salt air I wanted; and one day he was going out for frost-fish, and he took me with him, and left me and my basket on the sands while he was away. It was this side of the South Breaker that he put me out, but I walked there; and where the surf was breaking in the light, I went and sat down and looked over it. I could do that now.

There was the Cape sparkling miles and miles across the way, unconcerned that he whose firm foot had rung last on its flints should ring there no more; there was the beautiful town lying large and warm along the river; here gay craft went darting about like gulls, and there up the channel sped a larger one, with all her canvas flashing in the sun, and shivering a little spritsail in the shadow, as she went; and fawning in upon my feet came the foam from the South Breaker, that still perhaps cradled Faith and Gabriel. But as I looked, my eye fell, and there came the sea-scenes again, — other scenes than

thus, coves and corners of other coasts, sky-girt regions of other waters. The air was soft, that April day, and I thought of the summer calms; and with that rose long sheets of stillness, far out from any strand, purple beneath the noon; fields slipping close in-shore, emerald-backed and scaled with sunshine; long sleepy swells that hid the light in their hollows, and came creaming along the cliffs. And if upon these broke suddenly a wild glimpse of some storm careering over a merciless mid-ocean, of a dear dead face tossing up on the surge and snatched back again into the depths, of mad wastes rushing to tear themselves to fleece above clear shallows and turbid sand-bars, — they melted and were lost in peaceful glimmers of the moon on distant flying foam-wreaths, in solemn midnight tides chanting in under hushed heavens, in twilight stretches kissing twilight slopes, in rosy morning waves flocking up the singing shores. And sitting so, with my lids still fallen, I heard a quick step on the beach, and a voice that said, “Georgie!” And I looked, and a figure, red-shirted, towered beside me, and a face, brown and bearded and tender, bent above me.

O, it was Dan!





THE SNOW-STORM.

BY JOHN WILSON.

IN summer there is beauty in the wildest moors of Scotland, and the wayfaring man who sits down for an hour's rest beside some little spring that flows unheard through the brightened moss and water-cresses feels his weary heart revived by the silent, serene, and solitary prospect. On every side sweet sunny spots of verdure smile towards him from among the melancholy heather, — unexpectedly in the solitude a stray sheep, it may be with its lamb, starts half alarmed at his motionless figure, — insects large, bright, and beautiful come careering by him through the desert air, — nor does the Wild want its own songsters, the gray linnnet, fond of the blooming furze, and now and then the lark mounting up to heaven above the summits of the green pastoral hills. During such a sunshiny hour, the lonely cottage on the waste seems to stand in a paradise ; and as he rises to pursue his journey, the traveller looks back and blesses it with a mingled emotion of delight and envy. There, thinks he, abide the children of Innocence and Contentment, the two most benign spirits that watch over human life.

But other thoughts arise in the mind of him who may chance to journey through the same scene in the desolation of winter. The cold bleak sky girdles the moor as with a belt of ice, — life is frozen in air and on earth. The silence is not of repose, but extinction; and should a solitary human dwelling catch his eye half buried in the snow, he is sad for the sake of them whose destiny it is to abide far from the cheerful haunts of men, shrouded up in melancholy, by poverty held in thrall, or pining away in unvisited and untended disease.

But, in good truth, the heart of human life is but imperfectly discovered from its countenance; and before we can know what the summer or what the winter yields for enjoyment or trial to our country's peasantry, we must have conversed with them in their fields and by their firesides, and made ourselves acquainted with the powerful ministry of the seasons, not over those objects alone that feed the eye and the imagination, but over all the incidents, occupations, and events that modify or constitute the existence of the poor.

I have a short and simple story to tell of the winter life of the moorland cottager, — a story but of one evening, — with few events and no signal catastrophe, — but which may haply please those hearts whose delight it is to think on the humble under-plots that are carrying on in the great Drama of Life.

Two cottagers, husband and wife, were sitting by their cheerful peat-fire one winter evening, in a small lonely hut on the edge of a wide moor, at some miles' distance from any other habitation. There had been, at one time, several huts of the same kind erected close together, and

inhabited by families of the poorest class of day-laborers, who found work among the distant farms, and at night returned to dwellings which were rent-free, with their little garden won from the waste. But one family after another had dwindled away, and the turf-built huts had all fallen into ruins, except one that had always stood in the centre of this little solitary village, with its summer walls covered with the richest honeysuckles, and in the midst of the brightest of all the gardens. It alone now sent up its smoke into the clear winter sky; and its little end window, now lighted up, was the only ground-star that shone towards the belated traveller, if any such ventured to cross, on a winter night, a scene so dreary and desolate. The affairs of the small household were all arranged for the night. The little rough pony that had drawn in a sledge, from the heart of the Black-moss, the fuel by whose blaze the cotters were now sitting cheerily, and the little Highland cow, whose milk enabled them to live, were standing amicably together, under cover of a rude shed, of which one side was formed by the peat-stack, and which was at once byre and stable and hen-roost. Within, the clock ticked cheerfully as the firelight reached its old oak-wood ease across the yellow-sanded floor; and a small round table stood between, covered with a snow-white cloth, on which were milk and oat-cakes, the morning, midday, and evening meal of these frugal and contented cotters. The spades and the mattocks of the laborer were collected into one corner, and showed that the succeeding day was the blessed Sabbath; while on the wooden chimney-piece was seen lying an open Bible ready for family worship.

The father and the mother were sitting together without opening their lips, but with their hearts overflowing with happiness; for on this Saturday night they were, every minute, expecting to hear at the latch the hand of their only daughter, a maiden of about fifteen years, who was at service with a farmer over the hills. This dutiful child was, as they knew, to bring home to them "her sair-worn penny fee," a pittance which, in the beauty of her girlhood, she earned singing at her work, and which, in the benignity of that sinless time, she would pour with tears into the bosoms she so dearly loved. Forty shillings a year were all the wages of sweet Hannah Lee; but though she wore at her labor a tortoise-shell comb in her auburn hair, and though in the kirk none were more becomingly arrayed than she, one half, at least, of her earnings were to be reserved for the holiest of all purposes, and her kind innocent heart was gladdened when she looked on the little purse that was, on the long-expected Saturday night, to be taken from her bosom, and put, with a blessing, into the hand of her father, now growing old at his daily toils.

Of such a child the happy cottagers were thinking in their silence. And well indeed might they be called happy. It is at that sweet season that filial piety is most beautiful. Their own Hannah had just outgrown the mere unthinking gladness of childhood, but had not yet reached that time when inevitable selfishness mixes with the pure current of love. She had begun to think on what her affectionate heart had left so long; and when she looked on the pale face and bending frame of her mother, on the deepening wrinkles and whitening

hairs of her father, often would she lie weeping for their sakes on her midnight bed, and wish that she were beside them as they slept, that she might kneel down and kiss them, and mention their names over and over again in her prayer. The parents whom before she had only loved, her expanding heart now also venerated. With gushing tenderness was now mingled a holy fear and an awful reverence. She had discerned the relation in which she, an only child, stood to her poor parents, now that they were getting old, and there was not a passage in Scripture that spake of parents or of children, from Joseph sold into slavery, to Mary weeping below the Cross, that was not written, never to be obliterated, on her uncorrupted heart.

The father rose from his seat, and went to the door, to look out into the night. The stars were in thousands, — and the full moon was risen. It was almost light as day, and the snow, that seemed incrustated with diamonds, was so hardened by the frost, that his daughter's homeward feet would leave no mark on its surface. He had been toiling all day among the distant Castle-woods, and, stiff and wearied as he now was, he was almost tempted to go to meet his child; but his wife's kind voice dissuaded him, and, returning to the fireside, they began to talk of her, whose image had been so long passing before them in their silence.

“She is growing up to be a bonnie lassie,” said the mother; “her long and weary attendance on me during my fever last spring kept her down awhile; but now she is sprouting fast and fair as a lily, and may the blessing of God be as dew and as sunshine to our sweet

flower all the days she bloometh upon this earth.” “Ay, Agnes,” replied the father, “we are not very old yet, — though we are getting older, — and a few years will bring her to woman’s estate, and what thing on this earth, think ye, human or brute, would ever think of injuring her? Why, I was speaking about her yesterday to the minister as he was riding by, and he told me that none answered at the examination in the kirk so well as Hannah. Poor thing, — I well think she has all the Bible by heart, — indeed, she has read but little else, — only some stories, — too true ones, of the blessed martyrs, and some of the auld sangs o’ Scotland, in which there is nothing but what is good, and which, to be sure, she sings, God bless her, sweeter than any laverock.” “Ay, were we both to die this very night, she would be happy. Not that she would forget us all the days of her life. But have you not seen, husband, that God always makes the orphan happy? None so little lonesome as they! They come to make friends o’ all the bonny and sweet things in the world, around them, and all the kind hearts in the world make o’ them. They come to know that God is more especially the Father o’ them on earth whose parents he has taken up to heaven; and therefore it is that they for whom so many have fears, fear not at all for themselves, but go dancing and singing along like children whose parents are both alive! Would it not be so with our dear Hannah? So douce and thoughtful a child, — but never sad nor miserable, — ready, it is true, to shed tears for little, but as ready to dry them up and break out into smiles! I know not why it is, husband, but this night

my heart warms towards her beyond usual. The moon and stars are at this moment looking down upon her, and she looking up to them, as she is glinting homewards over the snow. I wish she were but here, and taking the comb out o' her bonny hair and letting it fall down in clusters before the fire, to melt away the cran-reuch."

While the parents were thus speaking of their daughter, a loud sough of wind came suddenly over the cottage, and the leafless ash-tree, under whose shelter it stood, creaked and groaned dismally as it passed by. The father started up, and, going again to the door, saw that a sudden change had come over the face of the night. The moon had nearly disappeared, and was just visible in a dim, yellow, glimmering den in the sky. All the remote stars were obscured, and only one or two faintly seemed in a sky that half an hour before was perfectly cloudless, but that was now driving with rack and mist and sleet, the whole atmosphere being in commotion. He stood for a single moment to observe the direction of this unforeseen storm, and then hastily asked for his staff. "I thought I had been more weatherwise. A storm is coming down from the Cairnbrachwase, and we shall have nothing but a wild night." He then whistled on his dog, — an old sheep-dog, too old for its former labors, — and set off to meet his daughter, who might then, for aught he knew, be crossing the Black-moss. The mother accompanied her husband to the door, and took a long, frightened look at the angry sky. As she kept gazing, it became still more terrible. The last shred of blue was extinguished; the wind went whirling in roaring

eddies, and great flakes of snow circled about in the middle air, whether drifted up from the ground, or driven down from the clouds, the fear-stricken mother knew not, but she at last knew that it seemed a night of danger, despair, and death. "Lord have mercy on us, James, what will become of our poor bairn!" But her husband heard not her words, for he was already out of sight in the snow-storm, and she was left to the terror of her own soul in that lonesome cottage.

Little Hannah Lee had left her master's house, soon as the rim of the great moon was seen by her eyes, that had been long anxiously watching it from the window, rising, like a joyful dream, over the gloomy mountain-tops; and all by herself she tripped along beneath the beauty of the silent heaven. Still as she kept ascending and descending the knolls that lay in the bosom of the glen, she sung to herself a song, a hymn, or a psalm, without the accompaniment of the streams, now all silent in the frost; and ever and anon she stopped to try to count the stars that lay in some more beautiful part of the sky, or gazed on the constellations that she knew, and called them in her joy by the names they bore among the shepherds. There were none to hear her voice, or see her smiles, but the ear and eye of Providence. As on she glided, and took her looks from heaven, she saw her own little fireside, — her parents waiting for her arrival, — the Bible opened for worship, — her own little room kept so neatly for her, with its mirror hanging by the window, in which to braid her hair by the morning light, — her bed prepared for her by her mother's hand, — the primroses in the garden peeping through the snow, —

old Tray, who ever welcomed her home with his dim white eyes, — the pony and the cow; friends all, and inmates of that happy household. So stepped she along, while the snow diamonds glittered around her feet, and the frost wove a wreath of lucid pearls round her forehead.

She had now reached the edge of the Black-moss, which lay half-way between her master's and her father's dwelling, when she heard a loud noise coming down Glèn-Serae, and in a few seconds she felt on her face some flakes of snow. She looked up the glen, and saw the snow-storm coming down, fast as a flood. She felt no fears; but she ceased her song; and had there been a human eye to look upon her there, it might have seen a shadow on her face. She continued her course, and felt bolder and bolder every step that brought her nearer to her parents' house. But the snow-storm had now reached the Black-moss, and the broad line of light that had lain in the direction of her home was soon swallowed up, and the child was in utter darkness. She saw nothing but the flakes of snow, interminably intermingled, and furiously wafted in the air, close to her head; she heard nothing but one wild, fierce, fitful howl. The cold became intense, and her little feet and hands were fast being benumbed into insensibility.

"It is a fearful change," muttered the child to herself; but still she did not fear, for she had been born in a moorland cottage, and lived all her days among the hardships of the hills. "What will become of the poor sheep!" thought she; but still she scarcely thought of her own danger, for innocence and youth and joy are

slow to think of aught evil befalling themselves, and, thinking benignly of all living things, forget their own fear in their pity for others' sorrow. At last she could no longer discern a single mark on the snow, either of human steps, or of sheep-track, or the footprint of a wild-fowl. Suddenly, too, she felt out of breath and exhausted, — and, shedding tears for herself at last, sank down in the snow.

It was now that her heart began to quake with fear. She remembered stories of shepherds lost in the snow, — of a mother and child frozen to death on that very moor, — and in a moment she knew that she was to die. Bitterly did the poor child weep, for death was terrible to her, who, though poor, enjoyed the bright little world of youth and innocence. The skies of heaven were dearer than she knew to her, — so were the flowers of earth. She had been happy at her work, — happy in her sleep, — happy in the kirk on Sabbath. A thousand thoughts had the solitary child, — and in her own heart was a spring of happiness, pure and undisturbed as any fount that sparkles unseen all the year through in some quiet nook among the pastoral hills. But now there was to be an end of all this, — she was to be frozen to death, — and lie there till the thaw might come ; and then her father would find her body, and carry it away to be buried in the kirk-yard.

The tears were frozen on her cheeks as soon as shed ; and scarcely had her little hands strength to clasp themselves together, as the thought of an overruling and merciful Lord came across her heart. Then, indeed, the fears of this religious child were calmed, and she heard

without terror the plover's wailing cry, and the deep boom of the bittern sounding in the moss. "I will repeat the Lord's Prayer." And, drawing her plaid more closely around her, she whispered, beneath its ineffectual cover, "Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, — thy kingdom come, — thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Had human aid been within fifty yards, it could have been of no avail, — eye could not see her, — ear could not hear her in that howling darkness. But that low prayer was heard in the centre of eternity; and that little sinless child was lying in the snow, beneath the all-seeing eye of God.

The maiden having prayed to her Father in heaven, then thought of her father on earth. Alas! they were not far separated! The father was lying but a short distance from his child; he too had sunk down in the drifting snow, after having, in less than an hour, exhausted all the strength of fear, pity, hope, despair, and resignation, that could rise in a father's heart blindly seeking to rescue his only child from death, thinking that one desperate exertion might enable them to perish in each other's arms. There they lay, within a stone's throw of each other, while a huge snow-drift was every moment piling itself up into a more insurmountable barrier between the dying parent and his dying child.

There was all this while a blazing fire in the cottage, a white-spread table, and beds prepared for the family to lie down in peace. Yet was she who sat therein more to be pitied than the old man and the child stretched upon the snow. "I will not go to seek them; that would be tempting Providence, and wilfully put-

ting out the lamp of life. No! I will abide here and pray for their souls!" Then, as she knelt down, looked she at the useless fire burning away so cheerfully; when all she loved might be dying of cold; and, unable to bear the thought, she shrieked out a prayer, as if she might pierce the sky to the very throne of God, and send with it her own miserable soul to plead before him for the deliverance of her child and husband. She then fell down in blessed forgetfulness of all trouble, in the midst of the solitary cheerfulness of that bright-burning hearth; and the Bible, which she had been trying to read in the pauses of her agony, remained clasped in her hands.

Hannah Lee had been a servant for more than six months, and it was not to be thought that she was not beloved in her master's family. Soon after she had left the house, her master's son, a youth of about eighteen years, who had been among the hills looking after the sheep, came home, and was disappointed to find that he had lost an opportunity of accompanying Hannah part of the way to her father's cottage. But the hour of eight had gone by, and not even the company of young William Grieve could induce the kind-hearted daughter to delay setting out on her journey a few minutes beyond the time promised to her parents. "I do not like the night," said William; "there will be a fresh fall of snow soon, or the witch of Glen-Srae is a liar, for a snow-cloud is hanging o'er the Birch-tree-lin, and it may be down to the Black-moss as soon as Hannah Lee." So he called his two sheep-dogs that had taken their place under the long table before the win-

dow, and set out, half in joy, half in fear, to overtake Hannah, and see her safely across the Black-moss.

The snow began to drift so fast, that before he had reached the head of the glen, there was nothing to be seen but a little bit of the wooden rail of the bridge across the Sauch-burn. William Grieve was the most active shepherd in a large pastoral parish; he had often passed the night among the wintry hills for the sake of a few sheep, and all the snow that ever fell from heaven would not have made him turn back when Hannah Lee was before him, and, as his terrified heart told him, in imminent danger of being lost. As he advanced, he felt that it was no longer a walk of love or friendship, for which he had been glad of an excuse. Death stared him in the face, and his young soul, now beginning to feel all the passions of youth, was filled with frenzy. He had seen Hannah every day, — at the fireside, — at work, — in the kirk, — on holidays, — at prayers, — bringing supper to his aged parents, — smiling and singing about the house from morning till night. She had often brought his own meal to him among the hills; and he now found that though he had never talked to her about love, except smilingly and playfully, he loved her beyond father or mother, or his own soul. “I will save thee, Hannah,” he cried, with a loud sob, “or lie down beside thee in the snow; and we will die together in our youth.” A wild, whistling wind went by him, and the snow-flakes whirled so fiercely around his head, that he staggered on for a while in utter blindness. He knew the path that Hannah must have taken, and went forward shouting aloud, and stopping every twenty

yards to listen for a voice. He sent his well-trained dogs over the snow in all directions; repeating to them her name, "Hannah Lee," that the dumb animals might, in their sagacity, know for whom they were searching; and as they looked up in his face, and set off to scour the moor, he almost believed that they knew his meaning (and it is probable they did), and were eager to find in her bewilderment the kind maiden by whose hand they had so often been fed. Often went they off into the darkness, and as often returned, but their looks showed that every quest had been in vain. Meanwhile the snow was of a fearful depth, and falling without intermission or diminution. Had the young shepherd been thus alone, walking across the moor on his ordinary business, it is probable that he might have been alarmed for his own safety; nay, that, in spite of all his strength and agility, he might have sunk down beneath the inclemency of the night and perished. But now the passion of his soul carried him with supernatural strength along, and extricated him from wreath and pitfall. Still there was no trace of poor Hannah Lee: and one of his dogs at last came close to his feet, worn out entirely, and afraid to leave its master; while the other was mute, and, as the shepherd thought, probably unable to force its way out of some hollow or through some floundering drift. Then he all at once knew that Hannah Lee was dead, — and dashed himself down in the snow in a fit of passion. It was the first time that the youth had ever been sorely tried; all his hidden and unconscious love for the fair lost girl had flowed up from the bottom of his heart; and at once the sole

object which had blest his life and made him the happiest of the happy was taken away and cruelly destroyed, so that, sullen, wrathful, baffled, and despairing, there he lay, cursing his existence, and in too great agony to think of prayer. "God," he then thought, "has forsaken me, and why should he think on me, when he suffers one so good and beautiful as Hannah to be frozen to death?" God thought both of him and of Hannah, and through his infinite mercy forgave the sinner in his wild turbulence of passion. William Grieve had never gone to bed without joining in prayer; and he revered the Sabbath day and kept it holy. Much is forgiven to the human heart by him who so fearfully framed it; and God is not slow to pardon the love which one human being bears to another, in his frailty, even though that love forget or arraign his own unsleeping providence. His voice has told us to love one another; and William loved Hannah in simplicity, innocence, and truth. That she should perish, was a thought so dreadful, that, in its agony, God seemed a ruthless being — "Blow — blow — blow, and drift us up forever, — we cannot be far asunder. O Hannah, — Hannah! — think ye not that the fearful God has forsaken us?"

As the boy groaned these words passionately through his quivering lips, there was a sudden lowness in the air, and he heard the barking of his absent dog, while the one at his feet hurried off in the direction of the sound, and soon loudly joined the cry. It was not a bark of surprise, or anger, or fear, but of recognition and love. William sprang up from his bed in the snow, and with

his heart knocking at his bosom even to sickness, he rushed headlong through the drifts, with a giant's strength, and fell down half dead with joy and terror beside the body of Hannah Lee.

But he soon recovered from that fit, and, lifting the cold corpse in his arms, he kissed her lips, and her cheeks, and her forehead, and her closed eyes, till, as he kept gazing on her face in utter despair, her head fell back on his shoulder, and a long, deep sigh came from her inmost bosom. "She is yet alive, thank God!" And as that expression left his lips for the first time that night, he felt a pang of remorse. "I said, O God, that thou hadst forsaken us; I am not worthy to be saved; but let not this maiden perish, for the sake of her parents, who have no other child." The distracted youth prayed to God with the same earnestness as if he had been beseeching a fellow-creature, in whose hand was the power of life and of death. The presence of the Great Being was felt by him in the dark and howling wild, and strength was imparted to him as to a deliverer. He bore along the fair child in his arms, even as if she had been a lamb. The snow-drift blew not, — the wind fell dead, — a sort of glimmer, like that of an upbreaking and departing storm, gathered about him, — his dogs barked and jumped, and burrowed joyfully in the snow, — and the youth, strong in sudden hope, exclaimed, "With the blessing of God, who has not deserted us in our sore distress, will I carry thee, Hannah, in my arms, and lay thee down alive in the house of thy father."

At this moment there were no stars in heaven, but she

opened her dim blue eyes upon him in whose bosom she was unconsciously lying, and said, as in a dream, "Send the riband that ties up my hair as a keepsake to William Grieve."

"She thinks that she is on her death-bed, and forgets not the son of her master. It is the voice of God that tells me she will not now die, and that, under His grace, I shall be her deliverer."

The short-lived rage of the storm was soon over, and William could attend to the beloved being on his bosom. The warmth of his heart seemed to infuse life into hers; and as he gently placed her feet on the snow, till he muffled her up in his plaid, as well as in her own, she made an effort to stand, and with extreme perplexity and bewilderment faintly inquired where she was, and what fearful misfortune had befallen them. She was, however, too weak to walk; and as her young master carried her along, she murmured, "O William! what if my father be in the moor? For if you, who need care so little about me, have come hither, as I suppose, to save my life, you may be sure that my father sat not within doors during the storm."

As she spoke, it was calm below, but the wind was still alive in the upper air, and cloud, ræk, mist, and sleet were all driving about in the sky. Out shone for a moment the pallid and ghostly moon, through a rent in the gloom, and by that uncertain light came staggering forward the figure of a man. "Father, father," cried Hannah, and his gray hairs were already on her cheek. The barking of the dogs and the shouting of the young shepherd had struck his ear, as the sleep of death was

stealing over him, and with the last effort of benumbed nature he had roused himself from that fatal torpor, and pressed through the snow-wreath that had separated him from his child. As yet they knew not of the danger each had endured; but each judged of the other's suffering from their own, and father and daughter regarded one another as creatures rescued, and hardly yet rescued, from death.

But a few minutes ago, and the three human beings who loved each other so well, and now feared not to cross the moor in safety, were, as they thought, on their death-beds. Deliverance now shone upon them all like a gentle fire, dispelling that pleasant but deadly drowsiness; and the old man was soon able to assist William Grieve in leading Hannah along through the snow. Her color and her warmth returned, and her lover—for so might he well now be called—felt her heart gently beating against his side. Filled as that heart was with gratitude to God, joy in her deliverance, love to her father, and purest affection for her master's son, never before had the innocent maiden known what was happiness, and nevermore was she to forget it.

The night was now almost calm, and fast returning to its former beauty, when the party saw the first twinkle of the fire through the low window of the Cottage of the Moor. They soon were at the garden gate; and to relieve the heart of the wife and mother within, they talked loudly and cheerfully, naming each other familiarly, and laughing between, like persons who had known neither danger nor distress.

No voice answered from within, no footstep came to the door, which stood open as when the father had left it in his fear; and now he thought with affright that his wife, feeble as she was, had been unable to support the loneliness, and had followed him out into the night, never to be brought home alive. As they bore Hannah into the house, this fear gave way to worse, for there upon the hard clay floor lay the mother upon her face, as if murdered by some savage blow. She was in the same deadly swoon into which she had fallen on her husband's departure, three hours before. The old man raised her up, and her pulse was still; so was her heart; her face pale and sunken, and her body cold as ice. "I have recovered a daughter," said the old man, "but I have lost a wife." And he carried her, with a groan, to the bed, on which he laid her lifeless body. The sight was too much for Hannah, worn out as she was, and who had hitherto been able to support herself in the delightful expectation of gladdening her mother's heart by her safe arrival. She, too, now swooned away, and as she was placed on the bed, beside her mother, it seemed, indeed, that death, disappointed of his prey on the wild moor, had seized it in the cottage and by the fireside. The husband knelt down by the bedside, and held his wife's icy hand in his, while William Grieve, appalled and awe-stricken, hung over his Hannah, and inwardly implored God that the night's wild adventure might not have so ghastly an end. But Hannah's young heart soon began once more to beat; and soon as she came to her recollection, she rose with a face whiter than ashes, and free from all smiles, as if none had ever played

there, and joined her father and young master in their efforts to restore her mother to life.

It was the mercy of God that had struck her down to the earth, insensible to the shrieking winds, and the fears that would otherwise have killed her. Three hours of that wild storm had passed over her head, and she heard nothing more than if she had been asleep in a breathless night of the summer dew. Not even a dream had touched her brain; and when she opened her eyes, which, as she thought, had been but a moment shut, she had scarcely time to recall to her recollection the image of her husband rushing out into the storm and of a daughter therein lost, till she beheld that very husband kneeling tenderly by her bedside, and that very daughter smoothing the pillow on which her aching temples reclined. But she knew from the white, steadfast countenances before her that there had been tribulation and deliverance, and she looked on the beloved beings ministering by her bed, as more fearfully dear to her from the unimagined danger from which she felt assured they had been rescued by the arm of the Almighty.

There is little need to speak of returning recollection and returning strength. They had all now power to weep and power to pray. The Bible had been lying in its place ready for worship; and the father read aloud that chapter in which is narrated our Saviour's act of miraculous power, by which he saved Peter from the sea. Soon as the solemn thoughts awakened by that act of mercy, so similar to that which had rescued themselves from death, had subsided, and they had all risen from prayer, they gathered themselves in gratitude around the

little table which had stood so many hours spread; and exhausted nature was strengthened and restored by a frugal and simple meal partaken of in silent thankfulness. The whole story of the night was then recited; and when the mother heard how the stripling had followed her sweet Hannah into the storm, and borne her in his arms through a hundred drifted heaps, — and then looked upon her in her pride, so young, so innocent, and so beautiful, she knew that, were the child indeed to become an orphan, there was one who, if there was either trust in nature or truth in religion, would guard and cherish her all the days of her life.

It was not nine o'clock when the storm came down from Glen Scrae upon the Black-moss, and now in a pause of silence the clock struck twelve. Within these three hours William and Hannah had led a life of trouble and of joy, that had enlarged and kindled their hearts within them, and they felt that henceforth they were to live wholly for each other's sake. His love was the proud and exulting love of a deliverer who, under Providence, had saved from the frost and the snow, the innocence and the beauty of which his young passionate heart had been so desperately enamored; and he now thought of his own Hannah Lee evermore moving about his father's house, not as a servant, but as a daughter; and when some few happy years had gone by his own most beautiful and most loving wife. The innocent maiden still called him her young master, but was not ashamed of the holy affection which she now knew that she had long felt for the fearless youth on whose bosom she had thought herself dying in that cold and miserable moor.

Her heart leaped within her when she heard her parents bless him by his name; and when he took her hand into his before them, and vowed before that Power who had that night saved them from the snow, that Hannah Lee should ere long be his wedded wife, she wept and sobbed as if her heart would break in a fit of strange and insupportable happiness.

The young shepherd rose to bid them farewell. "My father will think I am lost," said he, with a grave smile, "and my Hannah's mother knows what it is to fear for a child." So nothing was said to detain him, and the family went with him to the door. The skies smiled as serenely as if a storm had never swept before the stars; the moon was sinking from her meridian, but in cloudless splendor, and the hollow of the hills was hushed as that of heaven. Danger there was none over the placid night-scene; the happy youth soon crossed the Black-moss, now perfectly still; and, perhaps, just as he was passing, with a shudder of gratitude, the very spot where his sweet Hannah Lee had so nearly perished, she was lying down to sleep in her innocence, or dreaming of one now dearer to her than all on earth but her parents.





THE KING OF THE PEAK.

BY ALLAN CUNNINGHAM.

IT happened once in a northern county that I found myself at a farmer's fireside, and in company which the four winds of heaven seemed to have blown together. The farmer was a joyous old man; and the evening, a wintry one, and wild with wind and snow, flew away with jest and mirth and tale and song. Our entertainer had no wish that our joy should subside; for he heaped the fire till the house shone to its remotest rafter, loaded his table with rustic delicacies, and once when a pause ensued after the chanting of one of Robin Hood's ballads, he called out, "Why stays the story, and what stops the rhyme? Have I heated my hearth, have I spread my tables and poured forth my strong drink, for the poor in fancy and the lame in speech? Up, up; and give me a grave tale or a gay, to gladden or sadden the present moment, and lend wings to the leaden feet of evening time. Rise, I say: else may the fire that flames so high; the table which groans with food, for which water and air and earth have been sought; and the board that perfumes you with the odor

of ale and mead, — may the first cease to warm, and the rest to nourish ye.”

“Master,” said a hale and joyous personage, whose shining and gladsome looks showed sympathy and alliance with the good cheer and fervent blood of merry old England, “since thy table smokes, and thy brown ale flows more frankly for the telling of a true old tale, then a true old tale thou shalt have; shame fall me if I balk thee, as the peasant folks say, in the dales of bonny Derby.

“Those who have never seen Haddon Hall, the ancient residence of the Vernons of Derbyshire, can have but an imperfect notion of the golden days of old England. Though now deserted and dilapidated, its halls silent, the sacred bell of its chapel mute; though its tables no longer send up the cheering smell of roasted boars and spitted oxen; though the music and the voice of the minstrel are silenced, and the light foot of the dancer no longer sounds on the floor; though no gentle knights and gentler dames go trooping hand in hand, and whispering among the twilight groves, and the portal no longer sends out its shining helms and its barbed steeds, — where is the place that can recall the stately hospitality and glory of former times, like the Hall of old Haddon?

“It happened on a summer evening, when I was a boy, that several curious old people had seated themselves on a little round knoll near the gate of Haddon Hall; and their talk was of the Vernons, the Cavendishes, the Manners, and many old names once renowned in Derbyshire. I had fastened myself to the apron-string

of a venerable dame, at whose girdle hung a mighty iron key, which commanded the entrance of the hall; her name was Dolly Foljambe; and she boasted her descent from an ancient red cross knight of that name, whose alabaster figure, in mail, may be found in Bakewell church. This high origin, which, on consulting family history, I find had not the concurrence of clergy, seemed not an idle vanity of the humble portress; she had the straight frame, and rigid, demure, and even warlike cast of face, which alabaster still retains of her ancestor; and had she laid herself by his side, she might have passed muster, with an ordinary antiquarian, for a coeval figure. At our feet the river Wye ran winding and deep; at our side rose the hall huge and gray; and the rough heathy hills, renowned in Druidic and Roman and Saxon and Norman story, bounded our wish for distant prospects, and gave us the mansion of the Vernons for our contemplation, clear of all meaner encumbrances of landscape.

“‘Ah! dame Foljambe,’ said an old husbandman, whose hair was whitened by acquaintance with seventy winters, ‘it’s a sore and a sad sight to look at that fair tower and see no smoke ascending. I remember it in a brighter day, when many a fair face gazed out at the windows, and many a gallant form appeared at the gate. Then were the days when the husbandman could live, — could whistle as he sowed, dance and sing as he reaped, and could pay his rent in fatted oxen to my lord and in fatted fowls to my lady. Ah! dame Foljambe, we remember when men could cast their lines in the Wye; could feast on the red deer and the fallow deer, on the plover and the ptarmigan; had right of the common for

their flocks, of the flood for their nets, and of the air for their harquebuss. Ah! dame, old England is no more the old England it was, than that hall, dark and silent and desolate, is the proud hall that held Sir George Vernon, the King of the Peak, and his two lovely daughters, Margaret and Dora. Those were days, dame; those were days!’ And as he ceased, he looked up to the tower, with an eye of sorrow, and shook and smoothed down his white hairs.

“‘I tell thee,’ replied the ancient portress, sorely moved in mind between present duty and service to the noble owner of Haddon and her lingering affection for the good old times, of which memory shapes so many paradises, — ‘I tell thee the tower looks as high and as lordly as ever; and there is something about its silent porch and its crumbling turrets which gives it a deeper hold of our affections than if an hundred knights even now came prancing forth at its porch, with trumpets blowing and banners displayed.’

“‘Ah! dame Foljambe,’ said the husbandman, ‘yon deer now bounding so blithely down the old chase, with his horny head held high, and an eye that seems to make naught of mountain and vale, it is a fair creature. Look at him! see how he cools his feet in the Wye, surveys his shadow in the stream, and now he contemplates his native hills again. So! away he goes, and we gaze after him, and admire his speed and his beauty. But were the hounds at his flanks, and the bullets in his side, and the swords of the hunters bared for the brittling, ah! dame, we should change our cheer; we should think that such shapely limbs and such stately antlers might

have reigned in wood and on hill for many summers. Even so we think of that stately old hall, and lament its destruction.'

“‘Dame Foljambe thinks not so deeply on the matter,’ said a rustic; ‘she thinks, the less the hall fire, the less is the chance of the hall being consumed; the less the company, the longer will the old hall floor last, which she sweeps so clean, telling so many stories of the tree that made it, that the seven Virtues in tapestry would do well in avoiding wild company; and that the lass with the long shanks, Diana, and her nymphs, will hunt more to her fancy on her dusty acre of old arras, than in the dubious society of the lords and the heroes of the court gazette. Moreover, the key at her girdle is the commission by which she is keeper of this cast-off and moth-eaten garment of the noble name of Manners; and think ye that she holds that power lightly, which makes her governess of ten thousand bats and owls, and gives her the awful responsibility of an armory containing almost an entire harquebuss, the remains of a pair of boots, and the relique of a buff jerkin?’

“What answer to this unceremonious attack on ancient things committed to her keeping the portress might have made, I had not an opportunity to learn; her darkening brow indicated little meekness of reply; a voice, however, much sweeter than the dame’s intruded on the debate. In the vicinity of the hall, at the foot of a limestone rock, the summer visitors of Haddon may and do refresh themselves at a small fount of pure water, which love of the clear element induced one of the old ladies to confine within the limits of a large stone basin.

Virtues were imputed to the spring, and the superstition of another proprietor erected beside it a cross of stone, lately mutilated and now removed, but once covered with sculptures and rude emblems, which conveyed religious instruction to an ignorant people. Towards this fountain a maiden from a neighboring cottage was observed to proceed, warbling, as she went, a fragment of one of those legendary ballads which the old minstrels, illiterate or learned, scattered so abundantly over the country.

DORA VERNON.

It happened between March and May-day,
When wood-buds wake which slumbered late,
When hill and valley grow green and gayly,
And every wight longs for a mate ;
When lovers sleep with an open eyelid,
Like nightingales on the orchard tree,
And sorely wish they had wings for flying,
So they might with their true love be ;

A knight all worthy, in this sweet season,
Went out to Carcliff with bow and gun,
Not to chase the roebuck, nor shoot the pheasant,
But hunt the fierce fox so wild and dun.
And by his side was a young maid riding,
With laughing blue eyes and sunny hair ;
And who was it but young Dora Vernon,
Young Rutland's true love, and Haddon's heir.

Her gentle hand was a good bow bearing ;

6 The deer at speed or the fowl on wing

Stayed in their flight, when the bearded arrow
Her white hand loosed from the sounding string.
Old men made bare their locks, and blest her,
As blithe she rode down the Durwood side,
Her steed rejoiced in his lovely rider,
Arched his neck proudly, and pranced in pride.

“This unexpected minstrelsy was soon interrupted by dame Foljambe, whose total devotion to the family of Rutland rendered her averse to hear the story of Dora Vernon’s elopement profaned in the familiar ballad strain of a forgotten minstrel. ‘I wonder at the presumption of that rude minion,’ said the offended portress, ‘in chanting such ungentle strains in my ear. Home to thy milk-pails, idle hussy, — home to thy distaff, foolish maiden; or, if thou wilt sing, come over to my lodge when the sun is down, and I will teach thee a strain of a higher sort, made by a great court lord, on the marriage of her late Grace. It is none of your rustic chants, but full of fine words, both long and lordly; it begins:

“Come burn your incense, ye godlike graces,
Come, Cupid, dip your darts in light;
Unloose her starry zone, chaste Venus,
And trim the bride for the bridal night.”

“None of your vulgar chants, minion, I tell thee; but stuffed with spiced words, and shining with gods and garters and stars and precious stones, and odors thickly dropping; a noble strain indeed.’ The maiden smiled, nodded acquiescence, and, tripping homeward, renewed her homely and interrupted song, till the river-

bank and the ancient towers acknowledged, with their sweetest echoes, the native charms of her voice.

“‘I marvel much,’ said the hoary portress, ‘at the idle love for strange and incredible stories which possesses as with a demon the peasants of this district. Not only have they given a saint, with a shirt of hair-cloth and a scourge, to every cavern, and a druid with his golden sickle and his mistletoe to every circle of shapeless stones, but they have made the Vernons, the Cavendishes, the Cockaynes, and the Foljambes erect on every wild place crosses or altars of atonement for crimes which they never committed; unless fighting ankle-deep in heathen blood, for the recovery of Jerusalem and the holy sepulchre, required such outlandish penance. They cast, too, a supernatural light round the commonest story; if you credit them, the ancient chapel bell of Haddon, safely lodged on the floor for a century, is carried to the top of the turret, and, touched by some invisible hand, is made to toll forth midnight notes of dolor and woe, when any misfortune is about to befall the noble family of Rutland. They tell you, too, that wailings of no earthly voice are heard around the decayed towers and along the garden terraces, on the festival night of the saint who presided of old over the fortunes of the name of Vernon. And no longer ago than yesterday, old Edgar Ferrars assured me that he had nearly as good as seen the apparition of the King of the Peak himself, mounted on his visionary steed, and with imaginary horn and hound and halloo pursuing a spectre stag over the wild chase of Haddon. Nay, so far has vulgar credulity and assurance gone, that the great gar-

den entrance, called the Knight's porch, through which Dora Vernon descended step by step among her twenty attendant maideus, all rustling in embroidered silks, and shining and sparkling like a winter sky, in diamonds, and such-like costly stones,—to welcome her noble bridegroom, Lord John Manners, who came cap in hand with his company of gallant gentlemen—'

“‘Nay, now, dame Foljambe,’ interrupted the husbandman, ‘all this is fine enough, and lordly too, I’ll warrant; but thou must not apparel a plain old tale in the embroidered raiment of thy own brain, nor adorn it in the precious stones of thy own fancy. Dora Vernon was a lovely lass, and as proud as she was lovely: she bore her head high, dame; and well she might, for she was a gallant knight’s daughter; and lords and dukes, and what not, have descended from her. But, for all that, I cannot forget that she ran away in the middle of a moonlight night with young Lord John Manners, and no other attendant than her own sweet self. Ay, dame, and for the diamonds, and what not, which thy story showers on her locks and her garments, she tied up her berry brown locks in a menial’s cap, and ran away in a mantle of Bakewell brown, three yards for a groat. Ay, dame, and instead of going out regularly by the door, she leapt out of a window; more by token she left one of her silver-heeled slippers fastened in the grating, and the place has ever since been called the Lady’s Leap.’

“Dame Foljambe, like an inexperienced rider, whose steed refuses obedience to voice and hand, resigned the contest in despair, and allowed her rustic companion to enter full career into the debatable land, where she had

so often fought and vanquished in defence of the decorum of the mode of alliance between the houses of Haddon and Rutland.

“ ‘And now, dame,’ said the husbandman, ‘I will tell thee the story in my own and my father’s way. The last of the name of Vernon was renowned far and wide for the hospitality and magnificence of his house, for the splendor of his retinue, and more for the beauty of his daughters, Margaret and Dorothy. This is speaking in thy own manner, dame Foljambe; but truth’s truth. He was much given to hunting and hawking, and jousting, with lances either blunt or sharp; and though a harquebuss generally was found in the hand of the gallant hunters of that time, the year of grace 1560, Sir George Vernon despised that foreign weapon; and well he might, for he bent the strongest bow, and shot the surest shaft, of any man in England. His chase-dogs, too, were all of the most expert and famous kinds, his falcons had the fairest and most certain flight; and though he had seen foreign lands, he chiefly prided himself in maintaining unimpaired the old baronial grandeur of his house. I have heard my grandsire say, how his great-grandsire told him, that the like of the Knight of Haddon, for a stately form and a noble, free, and natural grace of manner, was not to be seen in court or camp. He was hailed, in common tale and in minstrel song, by the name of the KING OF THE PEAK; and it is said his handsome person and witchery of tongue chiefly prevented his mistress, good Queen Bess, from abridging his provincial designation with the headman’s axe.

“It happened in the fifth year of the reign of his young and sovereign mistress, that a great hunting festival was held at Haddon, where all the beauty and high blood of Derbyshire assembled. Lords of distant counties came; for to bend a bow or brittle the deer, under the eye of Sir George Vernon, was an honor sought for by many. Over the chase of Haddon, over the Hill of Stanton, over Bakewell-Edge, over Chatsworth Hill and Hardwicke Plain, and beneath the ancient Castle of Bolsover, as far as the edge of the forest of old Sherwood, were the sounds of harquebuss and bowstring heard, and the cry of dogs and the cheering of men. The brown-mouthed and white-footed dogs of Derbyshire were there among the foremost; the snow-white hound and the coal-black, from the Scottish border and bonny Westmoreland, preserved or augmented their ancient fame; nor were the dappled hounds of old Godfrey Foljambe, of Bakewell bank, far from the throat of the red deer when they turned at bay, and gored horses and riders. The great hall floor of Haddon was soon covered with the produce of wood and wild.

“Nor were the preparations for feasting this noble hunting-party unworthy the reputation for solid hospitality which characterized the ancient King of the Peak. Minstrels had come from distant parts, as far even as the Scottish border; bold, free-spoken, rude, rough-witted men; “for the selvage of the web,” says the northern proverb, “is aye the coarsest cloth.” But in the larder the skill of man was chiefly employed, and a thousand rarities were prepared for pleasing the eye and appeasing the appetite. In the kitchen, with its huge chimneys

and prodigious spits, the menial maidens were flooded nigh ankle-deep in the richness of roasted oxen and deer; and along the passage, communicating with the hall of state, men might have slid along, because of the fat droppings of that prodigious feast, like a slider on the frozen Wye. The kitchen tables, of solid plank, groaned and yielded beneath the roasted beeves and the spitted deer; while a stream of rich smoke, massy and slow and savory, sallied out at the grated windows, and sailed round the mansion, like a mist exhaled by the influence of the moon. I tell thee, dame Foljambe, I call those the golden days of old England.

“But I wish you had seen the hall prepared for this princely feast. The floor, of hard and solid stone, was strewn deep with rushes and fern; and there lay the dogs of the chase in couples, their mouths still red with the blood of stags, and panting yet from the fervor and length of their pursuit. At the lower end of the hall, where the floor subsided a step, was spread a table for the stewards and other chiefs over the menials. There sat the keeper of the bows, the warder of the chase, and the head falconer, together with many others of lower degree, but mighty men among the retainers of the noble name of Vernon. Over their heads were hung the horns of stags, the jaws of boars, the skulls of the enormous bisons, and the foreheads of foxes. Nor were there wanting trophies, where the contest had been more bloody and obstinate, — banners and shields and helmets, won in the Civil and Scottish and Crusading wars, together with many strange weapons of annoyance or defence, borne in the Norwegian and Saxon broils.

Beside them were hung rude paintings of the most renowned of these rustie heroes, all in the picturesque habiliments of the times. Horns and harquebusses and swords and bows and buff coats and caps were thrown in negligent groups all about the floor; while their owners sat in expectation of an immediate and ample feast, which they hoped to wash down with floods of that salutary beverage, the brown blood of barley.

“‘At the upper end of the hall, where the floor was elevated exactly as much in respect as it was lowered in submission at the other, there the table for feasting the nobles stood; and well was it worthy of its station. It was one solid plank of white sycamore, shaped from the entire shaft of an enormous tree, and supported on squat columns of oak, ornamented with the arms of the Vernons, and grooved into the stone floor, beyond all chance of being upset by human powers. Benches of wood, curiously carved, and covered, in times of more than ordinary ceremony, with cushions of embroidered velvet, surrounded this ample table; while in the recess behind appeared a curious work in arras, consisting of festivals and processions and bridals, executed from the ancient poets; and for the more staid and grave, a more devout hand had wrought some scenes from the controversial fathers and the monkish legends of the ancient church. The former employed the white hands of Dora Vernon herself; while the latter were the labors of her sister Margaret, who was of a serious turn, and never happened to be so far in love as to leap from a window.’

“‘And now,’ said dame Foljambe, ‘I will describe

the Knight of Haddon, with his fair daughters and principal guests, myself.' 'A task that will last thee to doomsday, dame,' muttered the husbandman. The portress heeded not this ejaculation, but with a particular stateliness of delivery proceeded. 'The silver dinner-bell rung on the summit of Haddon Hall, the warder thrice wound his horn, and straightway the sound of silver spurs was heard in the passage, the folding-door opened, and in marched my own ancestor, Ferrars Foljambe by name. I have heard his dress too often described not to remember it. A buff jerkin, with slashed and ornamented sleeves, a mantle of fine Lincoln green, fastened round his neck with wolf-claws of pure gold, a pair of gilt spurs on the heels of his brown hunting-boots, garnished above with taslets of silver, and at the square and turned-up toes, with links of the same metal connected with the taslets. On his head was a boar-skin cap, on which the white teeth of the boar were set, tipt with gold. At his side was a hunting-horn, called the white hunting-horn of Tutbury, banded with silver in the middle, belted with black silk at the ends, set with buckles of silver, and bearing the arms of Edmund, the warlike brother of Edward Longshanks. This fair horn descended by marriage to Stanhope, of Elvaston, who sold it to Foxlowe, of Staveley. The gift of a king and the property of heroes was sold for some paltry pieces of gold.'

“‘Dame Foljambe,’ said the old man, ‘the march of thy tale is like the course of the Wye, seventeen miles of links and windings down a fair valley five miles long. A man might carve thy ancestor’s figure in alabaster in

the time thou describest him. I must resume my story, dame; so let thy description of old Ferrars Foljambe stand; and suppose the table filled about with the gallants of the chase and many fair ladies, while at the head sat the King of the Peak himself, his beard descending to his broad girdle, his own natural hair of dark brown — blessings on the head that keeps God's own covering on it, and scorns the curled inventions of man! — falling in thick masses on his broad, manly shoulders. Nor silver nor gold wore he; the natural nobleness of his looks maintained his rank and pre-eminence among men; the step of Sir George Vernon was one that many imitated, but few could attain, — at once manly and graceful. I have heard it said that he carried privately in his bosom a small rosary of precious metal, in which his favorite daughter Dora had entwined one of her mother's tresses. The ewer-bearers entered with silver basins full of water; the element came pure and returned red; for the hands of the guests were stained with the blood of the chase. The attendant minstrels vowed that no hands so shapely, nor fingers so taper and long and white and round, as those of the Knight of Haddon, were that day dipped in water.

“There is wondrous little pleasure in describing a feast of which we have not partaken: so pass we on to the time when the fair dames retired, and the red wine in cups of gold, and the ale in silver flagons, shone and sparkled as they passed from hand to lip beneath the blaze of seven massy lamps. The knights toasted their mistresses, the retainers told their exploits, and the minstrels with harp and tongue made music and song

abound. The gentles struck their drinking-vessels on the table till they rang again ; the menials stamped with the heels of their ponderous boots on the solid floor ; while the hounds, imagining they heard the call to the chase, leaped up, and bayed in hoarse but appropriate chorus.

“The ladies now reappeared in the side galleries, and overlooked the scene of festivity below. The loveliest of many counties were there ; but the fairest was a young maid of middle size, in a dress disencumbered of ornament, and possessed of one of those free and graceful forms which may be met with in other counties, but for which our own Derbyshire alone is famous. Those who admired the grace of her person were no less charmed with her simplicity and natural meekness of deportment. Nature did much for her, and art strove in vain to rival her with others ; while health, that handmaid of beauty, supplied her eye and her cheek with the purest light and the freshest roses. Her short and rosy upper lip was slightly curled, with as much of maiden sanctity, perhaps, as pride ; her white high forehead was shaded with locks of sunny brown, while her large and dark hazel eyes beamed with free and unaffected modesty. Those who observed her close might see her eyes, as she glanced about, sparkling for a moment with other lights, but scarce less holy, than those of devotion and awe. Of all the knights present, it was impossible to say who inspired her with those love-fits of flushing joy and delicious agitation ; each hoped himself the happy person ; for none could look on Dora Vernon without awe and love. She leaned her white bosom, shining through the

veil which shaded it, near one of the minstrel's harps ; and looking round on the presence, her eyes grew brighter as she looked ; at least so vowed the knights and so sang the minstrels.

“ All the knights arose when Dora Vernon appeared. “ Fill all your wine-cups, knights,” said Sir Lucas Peverel. “ Fill them to the brim,” said Sir Henry Avenel. “ And drain them out, were they deeper than the Wye,” said Sir Godfrey Gernon. “ To the health of the Princess of the Peak,” said Sir Ralph Cavendish. “ To the health of Dora Vernon,” said Sir Hugh de Wodensley ; “ beauty is above titles, she is the loveliest maiden a knight ever looked on, with the sweetest name too.” “ And yet, Sir Knight,” said Peverel, filling his cup, “ I know one who thinks so humbly of the fair name of Vernon, as to wish it charmed into that of De Wodensley.” “ He is not master of a spell so profound,” said Avenel. “ And yet he is master of his sword,” answered De Wodensley, with a darkening brow. “ I counsel him to keep it in his sheath,” said Cavendish, “ lest it prove a wayward servant.” “ I will prove its service on thy bosom where and when thou wilt, Lord of Chatsworth,” said De Wodensley. “ Lord of Darley,” answered Cavendish, “ it is a tempting moonlight, but there is a charm over Haddon to-night it would be unseemly to dispel. To-morrow, I meet Lord John Manners to try whose hawk has the fairer flight and whose love the whiter hand. That can be soon seen ; for who has so fair a hand as the love of young Rutland ? I shall be found by Durwood-Tor when the sun is three hours up, with my sword drawn, — there's my hand on 't, De Wodensley.” And he wrung the

knight's hand till the blood seemed starting from beneath his finger-nails.

“ “By the saints, Sir Knights,” said Sir Godfrey Geronon, “you may as well heard one another about the love of ‘some bright particular star and think to wed it,’ as the wild wizard of Warwick says, as quarrel about this unattainable love. Hearken, minstrels: while we drain our cups to this beauteous lass, sing some of you a kindly love-strain, wondrously mirthful and melancholy. Here’s a cup of Rhenish, and a good gold Harry in the bottom on’t, for the minstrel who pleases me.” The minstrels laid their hands on the strings, and a sound was heard like the swarming of bees before summer thunder. “Sir Knight,” said one, “I will sing ye Cannie Johnnie Armstrong with all the seventeen variations.” “He was hanged for cattle stealing,” answered the knight; “I’ll have none of him.” “What say you to Dick of the Cow, or the Harper of Lochmaben?” said another, with something of a tone of diffidence. “What! you northern knaves, can you sing of nothing but thievery and jail-breaking?” “Perhaps your knightship,” humbly suggested a third, “may have a turn for the supernatural, and I’m thinking the Fairy Legend of young Tamlane is just the thing that suits your fancy.” “I like the naïveté of the young lady very much,” answered the knight, “but the fair dames of Derbyshire prize the charms of lovers with flesh and blood, before the gayest Elfin-knight that ever ran a course from Carlisle to Caerlaverock.” “What would your worship say to William of Cloudesley?” said a Cumberland minstrel. “Or to the Friar of Orders Grey?” said a harper from the halls of the Percys.

“ “Minstrels,” said Sir Ralph Cavendish, “ the invention of sweet and gentle poesy is dead among you. Every churl in the Peak can chant us these beautiful but common ditties. Have you nothing new for the honor of the sacred calling of verse and the beauty of Dora Vernon? Fellow, — harper, — what ’s your name? — you with the long hair and the green mantle,” said the knight, beckoning to a young minstrel who sat with his harp held before him, and his face half buried in his mantle’s fold; “ come, touch your strings and sing; I ’ll wager my gold-hilted sword against that pheasant feather in thy cap, that thou hast a new and a gallant strain; for I have seen thee measure more than once the form of fair Dora Vernon with a ballad-maker’s eye. Sing, man, sing.”

“ ‘The young minstrel, as he bowed his head to this singular mode of request, blushed from brow to bosom; nor were the face and neck of Dora Vernon without an acknowledgment of how deeply she sympathized in his embarrassment. A finer instrument, a truer hand, or a more sweet and manly voice hardly ever united to lend grace to rhyme.

THE MINSTREL’S SONG.

Last night a proud page came to me;
Sir Knight, he said, I greet you free;
The moon is up at midnight hour,
All mute and lonely is the bower:
To rouse the deer my lord is gone,
And his fair daughter ’s all alone,

As lily fair, and as sweet to see ;
Arise, Sir Knight, and follow me.

The stars streamed out, the new-woke moon
O'er Chatsworth hill gleamed brightly down,
And my love's cheeks, half seen, half hid,
With love and joy blushed deeply red :
Short was our time, and chaste our bliss,
A whispered vow and a gentle kiss ;
And one of those long looks, which earth
With all its glory is not worth.

The stars beamed lovelier from the sky,
The smiling brook flowed gentlier by ;
Life, fly thou on ; I'll mind that hour
Of sacred love in greenwood bower ;
Let seas between us swell and sound,
Still at her name my heart shall bound ;
Her name — which like a spell I'll keep,
To soothe me and to charm my sleep.

“ “Fellow,” said Sir Ralph Cavendish, “thou hast not shamed my belief of thy skill ; keep that piece of gold, and drink thy cup of wine in quiet to the health of the lass who inspired thy strain, be she lordly or be she low.” The minstrel seated himself, and the interrupted mirth recommenced, which was not long to continue. When the minstrel began to sing, the King of the Peak fixed his large and searching eyes on his person, with a scrutiny from which nothing could escape, and which called a flush of apprehension to the face of his daughter Dora. Something like a cloud came upon his brow at the first verse, which, darkening down through the second, became

as dark as a December night at the close of the third, when rising, and motioning Sir Ralph Cavendish to follow, he retired into the recess of the southern window.

““ Sir Knight,” said the lord of Haddon, “thou art the sworn friend of John Manners, and well thou knowest what his presumption dares at, and what are the lets between him and me. *Caveado tutus?* ponder on thy own motto well. ‘Let seas between us swell and sound’ :— let his song be prophetic for Derbyshire, — for England has no river deep enough and broad enough to preserve him from a father’s sword, whose peace he seeks to wound.” “Knight of Haddon,” said Sir Ralph, “John Manners is indeed my friend, and the friend of a Cavendish can be no mean person; a braver and a better spirit never aspired after beauty.” “Sir Knight,” said the King of the Peak, “I court no man’s counsel; hearken to my words. Look at the moon’s shadow on Haddon-dial; there it is beside the casement; the shadow falls short of twelve. If it darkens the midnight hour, and John Manners be found here, he shall be cast fettered, neck and heel, into the deepest dungeon of Haddon.”

““ All this passed not unobserved of Dora Vernon, whose fears and affections divined immediate mischief from the calm speech and darkened brow of her father. Her heart sank within her when he beckoned her to withdraw; she followed him into the great tapestried room. “My daughter, — my love Dora,” said the not idle fears of a father, “wine has done more than its usual good office with the wits of our guests to-night; they look on thee with bolder eyes and speak of thee

with a bolder tongue than a father can wish. Retire, therefore, to thy chamber. One of thy wisest attendants shall be thy companion. Adieu, my love, till sunrise!" He kissed her white temples and white brow; and Dora clung to his neck, and sobbed in his bosom, while the secret of her heart rose near her lips. He returned to his guests, and mirth and music, and the march of the wine-cup, recommenced with a vigor which promised reparation for the late intermission.

"The chamber, or, rather, temporary prison, of Dora Vernon was nigh the cross-bow room, and had a window which looked out on the terraced garden and the extensive chase toward the hill of Haddon. All that side of the hall lay in deep shadow, and the moon, sunk to the very summit of the western heath, threw a level and a farewell beam over river and tower. The young lady of Haddon seated herself in the recessed window, and lent her ear to every sound, and her eye to every shadow that flitted over the garden and chase. Her attendant maiden — shrewd, demure, and suspicious, of the ripe age of thirty, yet of a merry pleasant look, which had its admirers — sat watching every motion with the eye of an owl.

"It was past midnight, when a foot came gliding along the passage, and a finger gave three slight scratches on the door of the chamber. The maid went out, and after a brief conference suddenly returned, red with blushes from ear to ear. "O my lady!" said the trusty maiden, — "O my sweet young lady, here's that poor young lad, — ye know his name, — who gave me three yards of crimson ribbon to trim my peach-bloom mantle,

last Bakewell fair. An honester or a kinder heart never kept a promise; and yet I may not give him the meeting. O my young lady, my sweet young lady, my beautiful young lady, could you not stay here for half an hour by yourself?" Ere her young mistress could answer, the notice of the lover's presence was renewed. The maiden again went; whispers were heard, and the audible salutation of lips; she returned again more resolute than ever to oblige her lover. "O my lady, my young lady, if ye ever hope to prosper in true love yourself, spare me but one half-hour with this harmless kind lad. He has come seven long miles to see my fair face, he says; and, O my lady, he has a handsome face of his own. O, never let it be said that Dora Vernon sundered true lovers! But I see consent written in your own lovely face, — so I will run; and, O my lady, take care of your own sweet, handsome self, when your faithful Nan's away!" And the maiden retired with her lover.

"It was half an hour after midnight when one of the keepers of the chase, as he lay beneath a holly-bush listening, with a prolonged groan, to the audible voice of revelry in the hall, from which his duty had lately excluded him, happened to observe two forms approaching; one of low stature, a light step, and muffled in a common mantle; the other with the air and in the dress of a forester, a sword at his side and pistols in his belt. The ale and the wine had invaded the keeper's brain and impaired his sight; yet he roused himself up with a hiccup and a "Hilloah," and "Where go ye, my masters?" The lesser form whispered to the other, who

immediately said, "Jasper Jugg, is this you? Heaven be praised I have found you so soon; here 's that north-country pedler, with his beads and blue ribbon, he has come and whistled out pretty Nan Malkin, the lady's favorite and the lord's trusty maid. I left them under the terrace, and came to tell you."

"The enraged keeper scarce heard this account of the faithlessness of his love to an end; he started off with the swiftness of one of the deer which he watched, making the boughs crash, as he forced his way through bush and glade direct for the hall, vowing desertion to the girl and destruction to the pedler. "Let us hasten our steps, my love," said the lesser figure, in a sweet voice; and unmantling as she spoke, turned back to the towers of Haddon the fairest face that ever left them, — the face of Dora Vernon herself. "My men and my horses are nigh, my love," said the taller figure; and taking a silver call from his pocket, he imitated the sharp, shrill cry of the plover; then turning round, he stood and gazed towards Haddon, scarcely darkened by the setting of the moon, for the festal lights flashed from turret and casement, and the sound of mirth and revelry rang with augmenting din. "Ah, fair and stately Haddon," said Lord John Manners, "little dost thou know thou hast lost thy jewel from thy brow, else thy lights would be dimmed, thy mirth would turn to wailing, and swords would be flashing from thy portals in all the haste of hot pursuit. Farewell, for a while, fair tower, farewell for a while. I shall return and bless the time I harped among thy menials and sang of my love, and charmed her out of thy little chamber window." Several armed men now

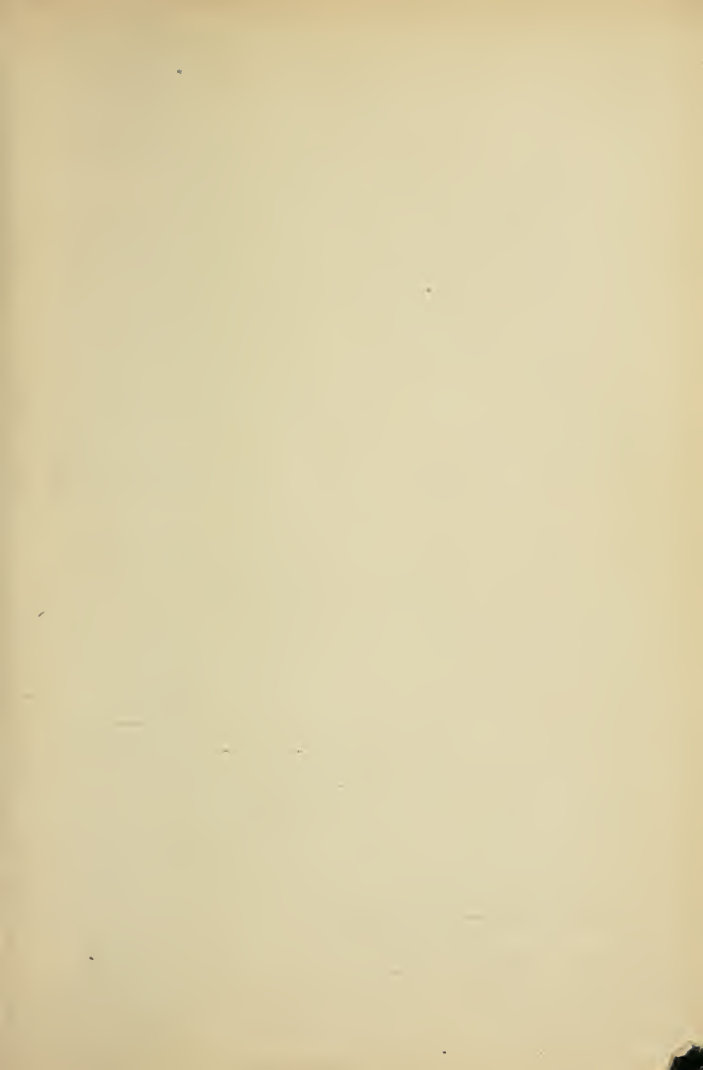
came suddenly down from the hill of Haddon, horses richly caparisoned were brought from among the trees of the chase, and the ancestors of the present family of Rutland sought shelter, for a time, in a distant land, from the wrath of the King of the Peak.' ”



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