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THE WRECKER'S PRIZE



RO. ROUTLEDGE & SONS, THE BROADWAY, LUDGATE.

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LONDON:
GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND SONS,
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CHAPTER I.

THE SHIPWRECK.

A piteous, fearful sight—
A noble vessel, laboring with the storm,
Hath struck upon the rocks beneath our walls,
And by the quivering gleams of livid blue
Her deck is crowded with despairing souls,
And in the hollow pauses of the storm
We heard their piercing cries.—MATURIX'S BERTRAM.

ONE Sunday, in the month of March, the wind, which had been blowing pretty strongly from the north-west during the day, toward nightfall increased in violence, and roared in fitful gusts, driving a dark rack of clouds across a star-lit sky with inconceivable rapidity. About nine o'clock, the sound of a cannon, fired at short but regular intervals as a signal of distress, came from seaward, and attracted general attention among the inhabitants of the few scattered dwellings lying back along the sandy tract between the farm-land and the sea, who hastened down to the beach from all directions. A few large drops of rain fell from a passing cloud, as they hurried on; and the roar of the ground swell broke upon the ear with unusual force, as soon as they cleared the limits of the hamlet.

A large fire had been lighted on the beach, under the lee of an upturned jolly-boat, as a beacon of hope to the crew of the vessel in distress; it served as a guide to the muster place upon the beach. In a few minutes, there was gathered a crowd of pilots, preventive men, beachmen, and other 'long shore folk. The crew of one of the finest yawls on the station were busily employed in hauling their boat through the heavy sand of the beach to the water's edge. A flash of fire burst from the gloom of the sea, but the report of the gun was lost in the roar of the surf, which broke in tumbling masses on the level shore, and told of the powerful violence of the wave.

"What is she, Pete?" inquired an old ship-master, who had come from church across the cove.

"Hard to say," replied the questioned man, who, with a ship's glass, had been reconnoitring the vessel in distress.

"Is it the Bremen craft—the bark that was working to wind'ard this arternoon? She may have put back, fearing a sneezer, and in trying to run into the roads, have struck the tail of the rocks."

"Hard to say," again responded Pete, who, sitting on the bow of the capsized jolly-boat, kept his glass pointing seaward, waiting for the flash of the next gun.

"There was a Scotch smaek coming round the *pint* at nightfall," advanced a pilot's apprentice.

"*She's* square-rigged," said Pete, poking his glass at the stranded craft.

"I seed two 'mophrerдите brigs and a taupsel schooner a working up outside, jest as I left my craft at sundown, afore this here squall was brewed," said the Captain of a small coaster lying at anchor off the jetty.

"Mayhap it's a collier in ballast?" suggested the ship-master.

"Hard to say," responded Pete.

"It doesn't matter the vally of a stale chaw of backer what she is, bo!" exclaimed a huge, ferocious-looking wrecker, advancing toward the fire, and pitching down an armful of fuel collected from the neighboring huts. "It doesn't matter what she *is*—in an hour she'll be bursted up, and lic in bits all along the shore. Her timbers can't hold agin this heavy sea. *She's* hard and fast on the rocks; the tide is now half ebb. Nothing but a merrykill can save her from going to pieces afore the flood."

"I know'd God warn't a-going to let us starve," said an undersized anatomy of a man in a large hairy cap, which, coming down over his face, joined an enormously big pair of gray whiskers, and looked very much like an exceedingly bushy head of fox-colored hair. His small face seemed all eyes and mouth; a short black pipe projected from between his lips, and the reflected light of the burning tobacco illumined his thin and yellow face. He was clad in a pea-jacket of many patches; his nether extremities were cased in a pair of

leather breeches, which once formed part of the livery of a fashionable footman, and reverted to their present possessor as part of the proceeds of a forgotten wreck. The garment, originally intended to reach the knees of the wearer, extended half way down the skewer-like legs of the present owner, who rejoiced in the sobriquet of Skinny Jemmy, and was confessedly the most active wrecker on the coast. "I know'd God warn't a-going to let us starve, Tom," said he, kicking an unconsumed piece of drift-wood into the middle of the fire, which flared up with renewed energy. "When you was all a-croaking 'cause the fishery failed, and the foul weather kept the wisiters from coming to get pickled in the dog-days, and things was hard, and grub got short, you fell a-grumbling and a-blaspheming, all on you, in a *very* ungrateful manner, and talked about seeing your families starve afore your eyes! I put my trust in Providence, and now who's right? Here's Mareh hardly begun, and here's a bloody good wreck to begin with. The Lord never deserts them what puts their trust in him. I've been a wrecker, now, bo, man and boy, for better part of fifty year, and am perfectly satisfied of the truth of that ere blessed text of Scripture, 'The last fish on the griddle brings the first wreck on the beach.'"

During the extraordinary recital of Skinny Jemmy's experience, the flash of the gun from the wreck had been twice repeated, and the crew of the yawl stood watching for a lull or pause in the violence of the surf, to launch their boat, and proceed to the rescue of the jeopardised seamen. From twelve to fifteen of the finest specimens of humanity stood around and in the boat, awaiting the signal. A cheerful halloo was heard; a young sailor tripped lightly across the beach, and jerking one of the crew from his post, took his place, and excused his rudeness by observing:

"No, no, Jack; brother or no brother, it's my turn now. You've been out in my place three times already, because I've just got spliced. Fair's fair, old fellow, but double duty is too much for any one. I'll go this time, anyhow."

A deep and heavy wave broke over the bows of the boat, and extended high upon the beach; a short lull followed this extra violence, the word "go!" was uttered, the beachmen strained their toil-strung sinews, and the huge craft floated

upon the yeasty waters. Springing rapidly into the boat, each man seized his oar; a few rapid strokes carried them from the beach, and the crowd were absolutely rejoicing that they were safely through the dangers of the surf, when a huge breaker raised the bows of the yawl into a perpendicular attitude, and the height of the succeeding wave turned the boat completely over lengthwise. Three of the crew were unable to reach shore, although the distance was but a few yards. Among the lost hands was the young man who had insisted upon relieving his brother from an extra spell of duty in his place. His body was found, shortly afterward, frightfully disfigured—by the boat falling on him in its descent—and carried to the residence of his newly-made bride.

The rescued portion of the boat's crew congregated around the fire, after having hauled their capsized yawl beyond the reach of the waves. Not a syllable was said, but many an anxious look was silently exchanged in the fitful gleams of the fire light; and as each inquiring gaze rested on the well-known lineaments of a comrade, the hand of gratulation was extended, and the severity of the pressure told of the joy at the salvation of a companion and a friend. The sea, as if satisfied with its prey, seemed suddenly to have quieted its violence; the wind, too, changed its roaring into a steady but comparatively noiseless blow; and the next discharge of the signal gun from the periled vessel came with unexpected force upon the ears of the group of beachmen who were surrounding the fire. The sound went to their hearts; without exchanging a word, the men who had just escaped a violent death hastened up the beach, and congregating round a yawl of still larger dimensions than the former, hauled it down into the surf, and, watching the fit opportunity, again quitted the shore upon their dangerous employ, amid the hearty cheers, of the bystanders, who gave forth their impulsive roarings with an energy that over-crowded the violence of the gale. The ship-master, the laconic Pete, and the young sailor's brother supplied the places of the drowned men.

"Well," said Skinny Jemmy, as he rubbed his skeleton paws together in the warmth of the flickering flame, "habit is stronger than mustard, but if I had seen my brother drowned, though I've never had one still I couldn't have gone out to be

upset in the next boat, on such a night as this here, as that ere Jaek Browne has done, with Dick gone home dead to his three-day-old wife. That's the fourth Browne as I've seed drowned out o' that there family. There was Jem Browne, as was dragged overboard in the herring net, and Tom Browne, as was squashed between the Dutch brig's side and Gorleston pier, and Bill Browne, as was knocked overboard on a party of pleasure by the jibing o' the boom o' the *Lady o' the Lake*, and now here's Diek Browne spifflicated out o' the *Paul Pry*. Four brothers drowned out of five ain't so bad as times go; and if Jaek Browne gets any more o' the family luek out o' the *Wheel of Fortune*, as he's now gone out in, there's a end to the Brownes."

The yawl slowly but steadily progressed out to sea. The small lantern with which the adventurous boatmen had provided themselves, glistened in the stern of the boat, and danced merrily over the waves, sometimes buried in the trough of the sea, and again reared on high, as the boat sunk or rose to the action of the waves. Again, the awful sound of the minute gun came dismally across the sea.

"Aye, aye; boom—boom—boom," said Skinny Jemmy. "You'd best save your trouble, and not shake your ship to pieces. She'll part timbers soon enough, I warrant. Wonder what's she laded with? I say, Daddy Lippins, hadn't you not best look arter the body o' your boy Sam? I seed him jump aboard the *Paul Pry* jest afore she got turned over, and I ain't seen him since. Take a stick o' lighted wood, old fellow, and walk down the beach. We picked up Diek Browne jest away off here. Your old woman 'ud like her boy popped into the airth, instead of leaving him to the eods and lobsters."

The old man thus addressed had just emerged from the surrounding gloom; believing that Skinny Jemmy was endeavoring to run a joke upon him, he raised his small gray eyes from the attraction of the fire's glare, and puckered his withered lips into a smile. But the seriousness of the surrounding faces told the truth of the wrecker's statement; the old man cast a glance upon his friends, and knew that he was childless. The big tear drove the smile from his face as he mechanically obeyed Jemmy's suggestion, and picked a flaming brand from the fire, to aid his search along the beach. The

Captain of the coaster swore a commiserating oath, and, snatching another lighted stick, joined the father in his quest. The wind soon put out the flames of the torches, but the men continued their wanderings by the water's edge.

An ominous silence hovered over the fire-circling group. A whisper passed round that the bow-light of the yawl was no more visible, and the ferocious-looking wrecker grinned with delight as he noticed the cessation of the sound of the guns.

"There's room for another dozen o' beachmen," said Skinny Jemmy; "we've seed the last o' that boat load. I know'd that Browne's family luck would drown the whole biling on 'em."

"And the barkey's gone to pieces, or she wouldn't have given up squibbing, if it was only to let the shore boats know where to find her. I say, Skinny, I'll bet you a bottle o' rum that we've more bodies than bales o' goods."

The wrecker was interrupted in the delivery of his opinion by the sudden appearance of old Lippins, who rushed among the group, with his long gray hair sporting in the fierce night winds, and his eyes almost starting from his head. His violent gestures attracted the general attention; he essayed to speak, but an indistinct murmuring came forth which was lost in the roarings of the wind and the sea. He pointed toward the surf, and seemed to implore some interference; they rushed to the spot, and discovered his companion, the master of the coasting vessel, hallooing and gesticulating to an object scarcely visible in the white sheet of foam. A huge wave dashed a body upon the sandy beach; the succeeding breaker burst over it with tremendous violence, and the force of the ebb whirled it back into the depths of the sea. Again, after a few minutes' pause, the dark object was thrown upon the shore; quick as speech could phrase the idea, the beachmen joined their hands, and encouraged by the old men's cheers, they formed a line, headed by Skinny Jemmy, who snatched the body from the water ere the returning wave had power to engulf its prey.

"Blast my old shoes," said the wrecker, as he cast a half-drowned Newfoundland dog upon the ground, amid the boisterous laughter of the crowd, "there ain't no encouragement to do a virtuous action, nohow. 'Specting to save a

feller-creter's life, I've been swindled by a jiggered bow wow."

"Well, Jemmy, bo," said the ferocious-looking fellow, "he is well worth the wetting. If the wind arn't washed out of him, he can fetch you many a good prize from the deep water when there's no boat within hail. A beast as could swim from the rocks sitch a night as this, could paddle over to Halifax on a calm day, with a fair wind."

The dog, which had been panting upon the sand, now rose, and crawled toward the fire. It was observed that a rope, fastened to the animal's neck, trailed along the ground and trended seaward, hiding its continuance in the watery depths. Jemmy eagerly pulled the line ashore, expecting, doubtless, to find a prize at its extremity; but after hauling several fathoms of rope from the surf, a jagged end appeared. The dog had doubtless been forced overboard from the stranded ship, with a rope fastened to his neck, in hopes of establishing a communication with the shore; but the violence of the sea had riven the strands, and the poor animal, with exceeding difficulty, succeeded in making the land.

A low rumbling noise upon the sand attracted attention; a horse and cart, containing Captain Manby's apparatus for the relief of wrecked vessels, arrived upon the beach, but the distance of the wreck from the shore prevented the operation of the gallant Captain's scheme, the efficacy of which, in fitting positions, has been found of the first importance. A coil of thin rope is spread upon the beach, attached to a hawser of considerable length and strength; the other end of the rope is fastened to a cannon-ball, which is fired from a mortar, with sufficient force and elevation to pass over the ship in distress. The hands aboard are then enabled to haul in the hawser, and form a medium of intercourse with the land. Many a good ship has been saved from destruction, and many a valuable life has been preserved by this simple remedy.

A shout arose from the watchers at the extremest edge of the tumbling surf, a boat dashed past, beyond the influence of the breakers, its white sides glistened in the fire light, and a faint cheer from its crew was borne on the wings of the blast. Captain Manby, who had accompanied his apparatus to the beach, told them that the craft was his life-boat, which had

been lying in the harbor's mouth for the purpose of repairing. Upon hearing the first signal of distress, he had issued his orders to the crew, and the noble-hearted old fellow lifted his beaver and cheered them as they passed on their dangerous errand of humanity.

The violence of the gale and the roaring sea had now most sensibly abated. Several women, the wives and relatives of the wreckers, joined the group by the fire, and spoke in merry tones, of the expected profits of the wreck.

The dog next attracted the beachmen's notice. He rose from his *couchant* attitude by the fire, and bending his gaze toward the sea, uttered a low and melancholy whine, which gradually increased in force till it became a confirmed howl of the most dismal tone. Cajoleries, threats and blows were vainly tried to stop his hideous noise. Suddenly bounding from his resting-place, he made toward the boiling surf, and dashing rapidly into the waves, was seen struggling with a human form. A lull of longer duration than usual enabled him to drag his burden within reach, but he refused to quit his hold till the body was deposited upon the sand by the side of the fire.

The rescued form was that of a young man, of elegant exterior; flowing curls of raven-black hair, a small mustache, and the deep olive complexion, told of his foreign birth. The dog licked his hands and face with eager fondness, the women chafed his palms, and Jemmy poured moonshine spirit down his throat; but the destroyer had fastened his gripe around his victim; the eyes rolled and the breast heaved, the death-rattle sounded in the throat, like the gurgling cry of a drowning man, and the dropping of the jaw and glazing of the eye too surely told the presence of the frigid king.

The women, convinced of the futility of their exertions, quitted the senseless corpse; but the dog, unconscious of his loss, nestled closer to the form of his master, and watched the actions of the wreckers with a keen and suspicious eye. A gold chain crossed the breast of the drowned man, a breast-pin glistened in the fire light, and rings of value ornamented the fingers of either hand. Such prizes were not likely to be unnoticed by Skinny Jemmy; with much cunning, therefore, he endeavored to conciliate the dog; and, watching his

opportunity, he lifted up the head of the recumbent corpse, and endeavored to draw off the golden chain. But his greediness cost him dearly; the faithful dog flew at him with a savage fury which it was impossible to resist. The wrecker was tumbled over in the sand, and forced among the burning embers of the decaying fire. The bystanders laughed at the distress of their brother wrecker, but moved not a hand or a foot to his rescue, until one seized the dog by his throat, and tore him from his grasp; the almost suffocated Jemmy sneaked into the gloom of the surrounding darkness, and the dog returned to his useless watch by the side of his master's corpse.

An officer in the service for the prevention of smuggling, now passed the fire, and told them that the yawl had made the beach about a mile below the jetty; that the crew had informed him of the vessel's separation before they could reach her, and of the total loss of her crew.

"And in good time, too, lads," said the big wrecker; "the flood is now making, and every thing that is not swallowed by the sand must be ashore before daylight. If the ebb had lasted an hour longer, not a stick nor a rag would have been left upon our coast."

"Wonder what she's laded with," again muttered Skinny Jemmy, as he raked together the smoldering remnants of the fire. "She must be a foreigner, by the look of that cre feller what's been washed ashore—cuss his dog, say I. Not but what Scotch smaeks is good things, if there's plenty of passengers, and the luggage is not stowed away in the hold. But them colliers I 'bominates. Coals is not eatables nor walua-ables, and it takes a long time to get a sackful by picking 'em up piecemeal among the sand. Trunks and boxes are convenient, but carpet bags is a bad invention. Bob, *do* you remember them ere round-topped leather boxes what was washed ashore from the Russian? Didn't they roll along the shore nicely? There ought to be a obligation on all travelers to have sitch things, it saves trouble so."

"Get up," said Bob, as Jemmy termed the ferocious-looking wrecker. "Get up," said he, kicking a weather-beaten woman from her seat by the fire. "Light your lantern, Moll, and let us mizzle *down* the beach—every body else has gone up."

And the wrecker and his companion, journeying the opposite way to Skinny Jemmy, quitted the fire.

Scarcely had the suspieion of the destruction of the vessel been confirmed by the preventive officer, ere the main body of the wreckers dispersed themselves along the shore, in eager anticipation of gleaning a glorious harvest from the matters of wreck east up by the roaring seas. A long line of glittering lights gemmed the shore on either hand, far as the eye could reach. The glad shouts of the successful groups, and the imprecations of the disappointed, came freely on the ear, and mingled strangely with the moanings of the dying storm.

The old beachman, whose son had been lost in the upsetting of the yawl, remained by the fire-side, sobbing piteously, and gazed with sympathetic eye upon the body of the master of the dog, which began to exhibit some tokens of appreciating his loss, by whining over the immobile carcass at his side. A loud, exulting shout from Skinny Jemmy, told of his success. The old man raised his head, and dried his unavailing tears. The shout was repeated—old habits proved unconquerable—and he hastened to join his mates. Soon was heard the old man's voice, in high dispute, mixed with frequent oaths and violent objurgations; he was daring another wrecker to the fight for disputing his right to the watch of a drowned sailor, whom he had hauled from the sea.

CHAPTER II.

THE FISHERMAN'S CABIN.

“Where are now the wild
And foaming billows? Where the bursting waves,
Threatening its rider with an ocean grave?
Silence is all around us.”

As Surly Bob and his unwomanly wife trudged along their solitary path, urged by that cunning which had prompted them to look for their prizes where the competitors were not so many, their lantern soon glimmered upon an object of unexpected interest. They would sooner have beheld a bale of

goods, or a promising bit of luggage, than that which now arrested their steps; nevertheless, as long as a lingering spark of humanity remains in those who bear the form, they cannot remain utterly indifferent to the lives of their fellow-creatures, and the two came to a full stop over the scene—a young man, in the uniform of an English officer, sitting on the sands, pale, drenched and exhausted, holding in his arms, and hugging to his breast, for warmth, an infant.

“Help me, good friends,” he murmured, as they stared at him; “what a merey that I have escaped! I scarcely thought to!”

“Aye, you may well say that,” exclaimed the wrecker, taking his whisky-bottle from his pocket, “drink a sup of this, and it’ll dry you, and warm you inside. There’s not many’ll come ashore with the breath of life in ’em.”

The young man groaned, and cast a desolate look toward the sea.

“Take a bit of a sup; it’ll help to warm ye till ye get to the fire.”

His teeth were chattering so that he could hardly put the bottle to his lips; he took a deep draught of the miserable stuff.

“Thanks,” he said; “but it is not I who need attention most—it is the poor baby! Oh, you are a woman! take this poor little creature, and do what you can for her, and you shall be well rewarded—well, with gold!” and he held out the silent child to the coarse being, who, even then, hesitated about being troubled with ‘the brat.’ “I’m afraid she’s dead, she is so still.”

“Take it, Moll, and tramp home with it,” ordered her husband; “t’will pay better than keepin’ me company, if the gentleman does as he says. I’ll keep an eye out for the traps, and you mind the child. You’d better go home with Moll, sir, and dry yourself, and see how your baby is.”

“Oh, I cannot leave this spot yet,” exclaimed the stranger, though he shivered from head to foot; “I’ll take another drop from your flask, my friend, and stay here until all hope is o’er. It would be something even to secure her corpse,” he murmured, half to himself.

“And is it the child’s mother?” asked Moll, as she wrapped

her shawl closely about her little burden, and drew it to her bosom.

"Her poor mother," was the answer; "please hurry to some fire, won't you, my good woman? Every minute is precious!"

"That I will," said Moll, with heartiness; the very touch of the little cold, wet form against her heart began to thaw its selfishness.

She had nearly half a mile to run, but the wind was at her back, and she held the baby close to her; she felt it begin to gasp and quiver in the effort to revive, before she reached her house, and when she unwrapped the shawl, and the light of the fire on the hearth fell upon its face, she saw that it was likely to live. A little spirits was put to warm in a tin cup, and Moll sat down on the hearth, and began to rub her little charge briskly with the stimulant, and to force a few drops into its mouth. With awkward haste she drew off its wet clothes, wrapping it in a blanket, holding it where the fire could warm it through and through, rubbing it with her hard hand from head to foot, and giving it, occasionally, a drop of the wrecker's "eure-all." In less than half an hour, a natural warmth had returned to its body; it had looked about it with large, bright eyes, and, in a few moments more, it was sleeping on her lap.

Moll was alone; her husband and the stranger had not yet returned. No sooner was her solicitude for the safety of the child relieved, than, with that terrible covetousness engendered by her mode of life, she began to examine the little heap of wet clothing by her side. The articles were fine and costly, covered with rich embroidery; the sleeves of the little white frock were caught up with gold bracelets, and she had already observed a tiny chain about the baby's neck.

"They're rich; I'll be well paid for my trouble, as he said. Fathers don't stop at expense when people save their children's lives for 'em. I s'pose his wife's drowned, by what he said. He'll be awful took down—and with this little thing on his hands, too."

As her thoughts came back to the infant on her knees, she regarded it with still deeper interest. Now that her haste was over, she had time to observe the rare beauty of the little crea-

ture, which looked as out of place in her lap as a flower thrown in the gutter. It was still folded in the blanket, but one little waxen arm and hand had been tossed restlessly out of cover; and the innocent face looked even the more beautiful for its recent baptism, the heat of the fire having brought a pink glow to the cheeks, and the tiny ringlets of hair being all curled and darkened with the wet.

Rough Molly had never had a baby of her own, and her soul softened until she did not know herself, as she gazed fondly and admiringly at the helpless, exquisite darling lying in her brawny embrace. By-and-by she bent and kissed the dimpled hand—gently, so as not to disturb the sleeper—and, as she lifted her brown face, something like a tear glistened on the dimples.

At that moment her husband came in with the young English officer, whose quick eye had noted the kiss and the tear as he entered the door.

“Got anything, Bob?” was the woman’s first question, before she even thought whether or not there were tidings of the infant’s mother.

“Got a balc o’ Manchester shirting,” was the exulting reply. “But clear from the front, Moll, and give this drowned stranger a chance at the fire.”

In their good luck they could afford to be good-natured. The couple did all in their power to make the thoroughly-chilled and exhausted guest comfortable. A mattress was dragged to the hearth, and he lay down upon it, while Bob concocted a strong glass of whiskey, hot water and red pepper. His soaked military coat smoked in the corner, while a petticoat of the mistress occupied its place about his shoulders. The gentleman shrunk inwardly from some of these attentions but they were the best which could be given under the circumstances, and he was too worn out with his struggles, exposure and mental conflicts, to be fastidious as to means. Warmth—warmth and rest—were all he cared for.

“How is the child?” he asked, as he crept closer toward the blaze.

“Doin’ beautifully, sir; it’s slecpin’ like an angel, and as well, this minute, as if it hadn’t supped off the salt sea.”

There was a momentary silence. Moll hitched in her chair

"And your wife, sir?" she queried, "hain't you found no think of her corpus?"

"What?" asked the traveller, starting out of his half-doze.

"Is your wife drowned out-and-out, poor lady?"

"She was not my wife," he replied, beginning to comprehend. "Alas! poor lady, indeed! She was a friend of mine, a sweet and lovely woman, coming to America to join her husband. When the ship began to go to pieces, she put her child in my arms. I swore to save it, if possible. I tried to save her, too, but some drifting pieces of the wreck struck her, and she went down by my side."

"Poor baby! poor baby! How old might she be, sir?"

"She's pretty nearly two years old, I think."

"Don't bother the gentleman with questions, now, Moll. He's nigh about gin out, don't you see. Lay that youngster on the bed, d'ye hear, and get me a bit o' supper. I'm like a shark, with the work I've done to-night. I could eat knives."

"You're sharp enough without that," said his wife, with a bungling effort at a compliment—the heap of wet goods dragged inside had taken the quarrelsome quite out of both for the present.

She made a soft spot, with a dirty feather pillow, and laid the infant down, while she put cold meat and bread, with a hot potato from the fire, before her husband. While he ate, they conversed together in low and rapid tones, darting those sagacious glances, which habit had made second nature, at the two new occupants of the cabin, both of whom were now in the deep sleep of exhaustion.

It was not very long after the repast was ended that husband and wife were also sunk in slumber, the extra fatigue and exposure to the chilly wind having infected them, also, with drowsiness.

The sun was fully risen when the hungry cry of the little stranger aroused all the others from their repose. The shipwrecked traveller sprung to his feet, looking about him with a bewildered air. It was some seconds before he remembered the awful events of the previous evening; when the tide of recollection rushed over him, he was almost overwhelmed. His eyes turned sadly to the orphaned child, and the tears rose in them, as the forlorn little creature, frightened at the face of

the strange, dark woman who held her, stretched out her arms to him, whom she recognized as a friend, crying, pitifully, one word—"Ma! ma!"

He took her, kissed and caressed her passionately, soothing her fear by every tender tone and look, while Moll prepared a breakfast of warm bread and milk for her. The child was really so hungry, having been unfed since early in the afternoon of the previous day, that she returned to the strange woman willingly, when she saw the food.

The young officer watched her while she ate, feeling a sense of grief and responsibility new to his gay life. He had made the acquaintance of the child's mother on ship-board. Attracted by the beauty of the little one, and by the high-bred loveliness of the lady, who yet seemed thoughtful and solitary, he had offered such truly delicate and kind attentions as had won her gratitude, and before the voyage was over, her confidence. When she mentioned her family and circumstances, he found that he had met her father, a Baronet, and a man of wealth and education, and that he had heard of this same daughter, now before him, who had contracted a clandestine marriage which had given deep offense to her parent, and caused some talk at the time.

The young wife, her beautiful face glowing with love and pride, said that her husband had gone out to America, the year before, in the hopes of gaining a living, and, in time, a competency; and that he had written to her to join him, as he had now the assurance of an humble support for her and their dear child. She evidently loved and honored the man she had chosen, preferring him and poverty to her father's wealth and title, without him. She had spoken so prettily of the pleasure she knew the sweet little Ellen would give her father, who had not seen her since she was three months old, the good-hearted young officer, impressible to beauty and tenderness, had grown deeply interested in the unfolding romance, and had delighted in picturing the reunion of the little family.

He heaved a deep sigh as he thought of it now. That beautiful woman, with her heart full of love, was lying in the depths of the sea; for that expectant husband there was nothing but a terrible, sudden affliction; and the poor little girl!

—would it not have been better had she gone down in her mother's arms? the only fitting shelter for a helpless infant
What *was* to be done?

He now most anxiously regretted that he had not the address of the child's father. But he did not have it. He only knew him as Mr. McCloud, and that he had been of a Scotch family; he was quite certain that he had not settled in New York, though he would probably come to the city to meet the ship's expected arrival. The young officer hoped, by inquiring at the hotels, and by an advertisement, to encounter him there, and to deliver his child into his keeping. But, in the meantime, how was such a dainty little creature to be cared for? He saw no other way than to leave her in charge of the woman until he could send the father to the rescue. As this thought occurred to him, he searched the hardened faces of the two hosts. The man's was sufficiently forbidding; but he was certain that, under all the harshness and coarseness of the wife's, there was the motherly instinct; she betrayed it now, in the gentle, soothing way in which she talked to the infant, as she fed her.

"We'd better be out arly arter that trunk, stranger," said Bob, as he yawned, arose, and shook himself like a shaggy dog. It'll be pitched into by some of 'em chaps, ef we don't tote it home directly. Moll, have some coffee for us 'ginst we get back."

The young officer put on his dried, but defaced coat, and joined the wrecker at the door.

"Feel purty stiff, friend?"

"Well, not as badly as I expected. Lying by your fire has limbered me wonderfully. I think, after I have exercised a little, I shall hardly be the worse for my peril of last-night. I shall not so soon recover from the mental shock of seeing the pleasant companions of my voyage torn from me by such a fate."

"What's one man's meat's another man's poison," said his companion, carelessly; if thar warn't no wrecks thar wouldn't be no prizes, for such as we, you know."

The young man shuddered. Could it be possible that these brutal dwellers along shore delighted in the ruin and misery of a wreck, because some of the stranded treasures of the

ship were cast at their feet? Yea! and in such company must he leave the innocent little girl whom her fond mother would not allow "the winds of heaven to visit too roughly." He was perplexed beyond words, and his thoughtless heart for once was filled with care for others. Hastening on to the shore, against which the sea now rolled as calmly as if it had been guilty of no act of violence, they ran along the sands until they came to the rocks, far back in the fissures of one of which the two had deposited, the night before, a trunk. It was part of the baggage of Mrs. McCloud, which had been washed ashore, and which had been hauled in and claimed by Bob, but which the officer had insisted on as the property of the little girl, and which the wrecker had at last sullenly yielded up. He did this the more readily, as he had already secured a large bale of cloth, which he was unable to get home without assistance, upon the stranger's promising to help him home with the cloth. In order to accomplish this, they were obliged to conceal the trunk among the rocks, as they could not carry both, and they were too wet and weary to think of a second trip that night.

"The trunk is gone!" exclaimed the officer, in tones of disappointment. For an instant his eyes searched sharply the face of his companion.

"Yer needn't look as if yer thought I made way with it," cried Bob, angrily. "A bargain's a bargain, and I sticks to mine, though I don't purtend to be a holy, pious kind of a chap."

"You mustn't mind my looks," said the young man, peacefully, not wishing to offend him. "I *did*, just for a moment, suspect you; but that's gone by. Who *could* have discovered it, hidden away out of the beat of the wreckers."

"That's more'n I eau guess," answered Bob, scratching his head. "Some of them chaps has it, no doubt. If I find out which, I'll make him give it up to the little gal, if I have to choke his windpipe for him. I'll keep a sharp look-out, stranger, and if I sees any of the purty things that belongs to the little lady, she shall have 'em back."

"I'm very sorry it's gone. The contents of that trunk would have been of great value to the child's father, as relics, and to the little girl, too."

"Belike there was dimonds and gold trickery, sich as ladies wear?" insinuated Bob, with a keen look.

"There may have been some ornaments, and there certainly was clothes for the poor little child," said the officer, evasively.

"Well, there shan't a wrecker's wife or child wear them trinkets while I'm about," said Bob, emphatically, and, there being nothing more to be done in the matter, the two walked slowly back to their breakfast, the young Englishman keeping a wistful look along the shore, in the faint hope that the corpse of the ill-fated lady might have washed ashore during the night.

The sands were already dotted with eager groups, on the look-out for prizes, and who now begun to examine Bob's companion with curiosity, this being the first intimation that any one had escaped from the ship alive. He was hailed by dozens, and obliged to answer their questions. Among other things, he told them that the corpse which they had picked up, with the foreign air, was that of a young West Indian, of great wealth, who had been to England on a visit to relatives there, and was on his travels, by a round-about way, to his home in the Islands. The dog had been very fond of his master, and, at his bidding, had willingly taken to the boiling surf, with the rope in his mouth, which, alas! had been cut across some sharp rock, thus severing the faint hope of the despairing passengers. The men and women listened eagerly to the replies to their questions, and when the wealth of the young Cuban was mentioned, they wandered off, up and down the shore, looking about them vaguely, as if they expected boxes of gold to be flung at their feet. So sick at heart that he almost, for the moment, wished that his fate had been no better than that of his companions, the young man hurried away, as soon as he could escape from the crowd, assisted by Bob, back to the ugly cabin, where coffee and griddle-cakes awaited them. Hunger gave a relish to the not over-nice viands; when this was appeased, the traveller proceeded to business.

"I have to thank you most heartily for your hospitality my friends," said he, "and I have still two favors to crave. The first, and least important, is to find some means of conveyance to the city—the other, to find some one who will take

the best care of this precious little one, until I can find her father, if he is to be found."

"I can row you around, and across the bay, in my ister boat, if you say so, stranger," said Bob, glad of the job.

"I'll do the best with the baby I can," said Moll, sticking her dirty apron in the corner of her eye. "I've never had chiek of my own, and I love that un a'ready. I'll mind her as well as is in me, if you say so, sir."

"Pervided yer paid for't, ye mean, wife. You've your ivin' to make, and if you stay home to mind a baby, 'stead of istering with me, you'll have to be paid fur yer time."

"Certainly," added the young man, quickly. "I told you you should have gold for your trouble. All my little luggage is lost, but I have my purse in my pocket, and I shall, pay beforehand, for the little girl's keeping, until I send some messenger, or come for her. Only be as gentle as you can with the timid little thing, Mrs. Molly, and you'll never be sorry for it."

Knowing the power of gold, to move hearts as well as hands, he counted out a most liberal reward into the horny hand of the woman, which clutched over it so greedily, that again he felt repulsed. The next moment Moll was hugging her charge, and crying over her, and the young man felt encouraged.

"I must be going, if you are ready to take me. Indeed, that baby has wound herself about my feelings in a strange manner. I feel as if I were leaving my own baby," and he half laughed to hide his tears, as he kissed the pet of the ship, again and again, before he could force himself to leave her.

"Call her Ellen; that was her mother's name," was his last injunction, as he finally tore himself from the little creature, who had clung about his neck, as if conscious that the last tie was being severed which held her to the life and associations which should have been hers.

CHAPTER III.

THE PRIZE.

No pearl ever lay under Oman's green waters,
More pure in its shell than thy spirit in thee.—MOORE.

A FORTNIGHT passed before the inhabitants of the cabin had tidings of the stranger who had left the orphan in their care. He brought his own news, which was depressing, at least to himself. His earnest efforts had failed to discover the residence of the child's father, or to obtain any communication with him; his own business in America was finished, and he was to embark in the next ship which sailed for Liverpool.

"Little Ellen has friends in England who would welcome her," he said; "if her father were not in this country, and probably not far away, I would myself undertake the task of conveying her to her grandfather. But, as it is, perhaps I had better leave her, for the present. I have written to various cities letters addressed to her father, and have advertised. I hope that some of these means will not fail of discovering him. In the meantime, the first thing I shall do, upon my arrival in England, will be to inform her grandfather of all the circumstances, when he will take steps to do justice to her, I know. All that troubles me now is, to provide a safe haven for her till these things are accomplished. It would be best to take her to New York, and leave her with some matron, who—"

"Oh, leave her with *me!*" pleaded Moll, holding the child, as if afraid it would be taken from her. "I know I'm not fit to care for the likes of her, but I've learnt to love her so, since she stayed with me—and it's love a baby needs, more than fine things—isn't it, my beauty?" and she kissed the child, who laughed, and nestled her shining curls against Moll's brawny shoulder, with an air of confidence and affection.

"I don't know that I could do better," murmured the young officer, doubtfully; "it will be but a few months, at the worst."

"Moll's daft about that young un," said her husband, "and

a sunbeam she is, to be sure. I tell Moll she's a pearl in a yster shell. This cabin don't set her out quite proper, but the family'll have her all dressed off in gold some day. I never did see Moll make quite such a fool of herself before. She's all took up with Pearl, as I call her."

"Well, I will not take your pearl away just yet, my good friends. She shall remain here, since you wish it, until you receive word what to do with her. Here are twenty pounds to pay for her present keeping, and, before that is gone, you will hear from me."

So the young man promised, and so he thought, but "Circumstance, that unspiritual God," ordered otherwise.

"I wouldn't care if you had more babies, if they all paid as well," said the coarse-hearted 'longshoreman, after the officer had taken his lingering farewell of the lovely waif which the cruel sea had stranded on this unfriendly shore. "You make me sick with your kissing and fussing over it; but I s'pose 'twill pay. If they hear you've been extra good to it, they'll melt right over, and run money into your lap. I shouldn't wonder if this little puny baby would turn out to be the greatest prize we've ever hauled ashore. I was mad not to get any of them Cuban sovereigns; but if we lay quiet, and behave ourselves, we'll have a purse to go to that'll hold out longer, after all. Gratitude's a good pay-master, they say."

"I'd like it if nobody ever came for the child, and we never got another cent for her."

"Why, Moll, what's in your head now?"

"'Cause then she'd be my own—*mine!*" was the energetic response.

"Fool!" muttered the man, scornfully. "Wall, now, Moll, you've got money, and you must buy your time. I can't afford to let you stay idlin' to home, unless you pay for the privilege. Give me that hundred dollars."

"I shan't do it, Bob," she answered, resolutely, and, as she straightened herself, she looked fully his match, should it come to a tussle. "You'd spend it all in less'n a week, and then me and the baby might get along as we could. I'm goin' to lay it out to make the house comfortable. I'll do my part toward the homc. You'll find a good fire, and a comfortable

meal when you come back from work, and clean clo'es for Sunday, and that's your share of the money."

"Humph!" he cried, angrily, and how long'll it last *you*, when there's any whisky to be got?"

"A good while," was her grave reply. "Bob, I shan't drink a drop while that child stays in the house."

"She *will* be a blessin'," he said, jeeringly, and turning on his heel, he went, whistling, toward his boat. "She *has* slicked up wonderful sence she got that baby," he reflected, as he walked along. "She's scrubbed the floor, and washed my shirts and her own gown, and combed her hair every day, now that I think of it. I havn't smelt liquor on her, neither. It's curious how a brat like that will effect a woman. I didn't think Moll was so soft!"

The memory of an infant of twenty months is not very tenacious. Although she had fretted, moaned and pined the first week of her stay in the cabin, crying "ma, ma," constantly, in a pitiful tone, which brought tears to eyes unused to weep, yet by the time of the officer's return, little Ellen had seemed quite resigned to her surroundings. The lovely, delicate face of her lady-mother floated farther and farther away, and this new countenance, hard, brown, and homely, but kind to her, took gradually the place of the other, until the name of ma, ma, was transferred to the proud and delighted Moll.

But some influence of that dead mother never ceased to linger about the child; who saw her face in dreams, and in the clouds, and in the waters, without knowing how that fair vision was connected with herself. Even Bob—who, if not so coarse as some of his companions, was worse at heart than the most of them—could not be blind to the singular beauty of the little one, whose glittering ringlets and blue eyes, made light in his squalid home. As he said, he "nick-named" her "Pearl," and, so appropriate was the appellation that others adopted it, and to all the ragged children and the slovenly neighbors of the scattering settlement along shore, she was "Pearl" and "Pearly."

Moll had settled it in her own mind that Pearl was the daughter of a noble lady, a Countess at the least, and in this belief she was supported by the remarks of the gossips who called to see her treasure. Such linen, and lace, and

embroidery, as formed the clothing she wore at the time of the shipwreck, were worthy a Count's, and were fingered and admired, and scrutinized, as if they could tell tales and speak names, by every good wife in a circle of five miles. Yet it was not the clothing so much as the wearer which certified to the title of "lady"—a little lady could only possess such exquisitely-moulded limbs and features, such a translucent skin, fine and white, with small blue veins, and such hair—glossy as silk and bright as gold. Yet, while she gloated over the nobility of her nursling, she had angry fears of the relatives who should come to claim it. She wanted it for her own. She had no children, and this had taken sole possession of her affections.

As the months slipped by, bringing no tidings, she allowed herself to consider the thing as settled. If Ellen had been a fairy, who did the neglected work of the house-maid, she could not have wrought a greater change in Bob's cabin than was worked by her unconscious influence. From being a slattern, Moll became tidy; from being a drinker and idler, she became sober and industrious. Her child, being so fine and delicate, must be kept neat and well dressed—no rags must flutter about Pearl.

For a time this seemed to be sufficiently agreeable to the man of the house; but, as the money dwindled, and no new supplies came, he grew impatient at this "burden," as he was pleased to call it, and thereupon arose new differences between the couple, who had never been distinguished for the peacefulness of their dispositions.

"To think of callin' that blessed angel a burden!" burst forth Moll, facing her husband with flashing eyes, as, upon one occasion, he rudely pushed Pearl aside, as she toddled to the door to meet him. "You're a disgrace to your sect, Bob Nelthorpe; why, most of the poor 'longshoremen has families of eight and ten to feed and clothe, and here are you grumblin' at the greatest blessin' God ever sent you—a wee bit of a cretur, too, that doesn't eat a saucerful a day, and never wears out her shoes, nor tears her aprons. *Burden*, indeed! a child that the whole neighborhood envies us, and some rich people would give a peck of gold, fur—"

"I wish they'd offer it; I'd close the bargain, mighty quick!"

"That now, yer wouldn't, while I was alive to hold on to her. She's mine, I tell you, once for all, and I mean to take care of her."

"The chit's well enough," said the surly fellow, "but she mustn't get in my way, nor call on me for vittles and clo'es."

"The meanest skit that ever dragged a net wouldn't bregedge a little fish out of it to the likes of her," rejoined Moll, contemptuously. "But I don't lay out to put sech a heavy drag on *your* shoulders, man—no, no; while Moll lives, her hands can get enough for herself and little Pearl, too," and she turned to caress the child.

"Oh, bother! give me my supper."

"It's on the table, and I reckon you can eat when the grub's before you. Here, Pearly, mother's got something nice for it," and the woman took the little one in her lap and gave her a biscuit.

"Don't be a fool, wife. The young un's well enough; but you'll own we've reason to feel disappointed. I thought, onct, she'd be the richest haul we ever made; but I'm beginnin' to think we got nothin' but a stone in our net when we drawed her in."

"We'll get our reward yet, if we do right by her," said Moll, willing to soothe the irritable temper of her companion, and to advance the interests of her charge at the same time.

Thus it was alternate storm and sunshine, darkened and lightened about little Ellen. When Moll had married Bob Nelthorpe, she knew that she was marrying a bad man; but it was not until the clear blue eyes of the child seemed to look through her soul, and awaken her conscience, that she begun to be uneasy about his manner of "making a living." That some of his acts were unlawful, she was aware; his gains were not always honest; and the only trouble this had hitherto given her, was the fear that he had fallen into the hands of the law. But now, when this little adopted child was, perhaps, to inherit the position of the parents—to be disgraced, or respectable, as their deeds should decide—she grew ambitious to lead, at last, a crimeless life.

It annoyed her, therefore, when her husband came home, as he occasionally did, with ill-gotten spoils; she would remonstrate but he met her interference with jeers at her new

“piety,” and continued on in the old way. He had trodden the paths of depravity too long to be turned aside by the smile in the eyes of a child. Indeed, it angered him to be “preached at,” on account of the “little pauper,” who sometimes shrunk, in wonder and alarm, from his rough voice and ruder touch.

He had begun to grow really ugly to the child, and to feel extremely dissatisfied at her long stay with them, when an event occurred, which, although she never understood why, relieved Moll’s mind from the apprehension that he would attempt to get rid of little Ellen.

He came in one day, a little over a year after the wreck which had stranded little Pearl on the sea-shore, and, with a triumphant chuckle, shook an elegant purse in his wife’s face, which she could see had in it a considerable quantity of gold.

“There’s enough of the shiners,” said he, “to keep the pot boiling a year.”

“Oh, Bob, that isn’t your purse, and I fear you didn’t get it in the right way.”

“Right way! Gettin’ squeamish, ain’t you, now, Moll? Ho, ho, that’s a good un! If it’ll case your mind any, I can tell you I just gently eased it out of the pocket of a young gentleman I found asleep beside the river. People with money in their pockets shouldn’t go to sleep in the road. It’s his own fault, you see, entirely. But I didn’t get it without trouble, for all that. Look at that, ducky.” He held up a large jack-knife, the blade of which was stained with blood.

Moll gave a low scream of horror.

“Oh, Bob, you didn’t, did you?”

“Didn’t what?”

“Shed blood.”

“I reckon I did; but don’t you be gabbling about it, or you’ll have the p’lice down on us.”

“Let ’em come,” said the woman, catching up little Pearl in her arms. “Let us go away from here, Ella—we will not stay—we will not touch the money. I’ve been a bad woman, Bob, but not so bad as that. What made you tell me?”

She moved toward the door; her husband burst into a loud laugh.

"Don't take such a desp'rit view of things, Molly, my girl. I've committed murder, I know, but it was only a ferocious dog that tackled me, when I slipped my hand into the gentleman's pocket.

"Is that true?" she asked, scanning his face, eagerly.

"Of course it is. I'd be a big fool to murder any body human, and then tell of it. And as to the gold, you needn't feel so delicate about it. I'll warrant the one I took it from has plenty more, and won't miss this; and it'll do us lots o' good. Little Pearl shall have a new frock to-morrow. Howsumever, I found a paper in that puss, worth a good deal more'n the money. In fact, it's a good deal like havin' a bank to run to, and draw a small check whenever I've a mind. I reckon I'll give up fishin' and the like for the rest o' my days."

In vain Moll questioned him as to the peculiar character of this important paper; all he would explain was this:

"It all came of that wreck, and little Pearl, here. I'd know'd she'd be a fort'nate ticket in the lottery when I took her. Mind your own business, wife, and take what good you can get of it."

But Moll did not get much good of it. Her husband gave up work, as he had declared his intention of doing; he always had money in his pocket, which he never earned; but the change was not beneficial to him—the more idle he became, the more vicious he grew, and the more addicted to drink. He tolerated little Ellen in the house, for motives of his own; but he had not heart enough to love the beautiful child, whose grace and sweetness touched every soul save his. In vain his wife asked him, since he seemed to have the means, to remove from their present wretched abode and bad associations; he spent money in lounging about the city, and staying from home, but not upon the comfort of the household.

In the meantime, Ellen, as she grew older, had a vague consciousness of her misplaced destiny. She was unlike the children of the fishermen along shore. No contact with vice or rudeness could soil the purity of her mind, or disturb the gentleness of her manners. She loved brown Moll; she called her mother—yet something within her shrunk from the poverty and meanness of the fisherman's cottage. The sea—that

cruel sea which had orphaned her—was her best friend. In the sunshine, and sometimes in the storm, little Ellen strayed along the sands with her bare, slender feet, or sat on the rocks gazing oceanward for hours, with a strange feeling of desolation for a child, and a vague sense that across that mighty waste of waters was to come some marvelous new fairy-gift—some wonder-world to herself.

CHAPTER IV

THE OLD DOCTOR AND THE YOUNG.

Well, one may trail her silken robe,
 And bind her locks with pearls,
 And one may wreath the woodland rose
 Among her floating curls;
 And one may tread the dewy grass,
 And one the marble floor,
 Nor half-hid bosom heave the less,
 Nor brodered corslet more.—O. W. HOLMES.

WE must allow twelve years to pass unrecorded in our story—twelve years, in which the Pearl of the cabin grew into the loveliest maidenhood. Or rather, though pure and peerless as the gem after which she was named, she was more like the unfolding rosebud, flushing into sweeter bloom with every day. These years, which brought such changes to the growing child, passed lightly over the heads of the two whom she was accustomed to call her parents. Brown Moll was still a vigorous woman, the strength of whose nature seemed all turned to the passion of love, which she felt for this adopted child; and Bob Nelthorpe was the same idle and unreliable person, except that habits of dissipation had traced deep marks upon his face.

Quite a village had grown up, from the few wandering cabins on the sea-shore; so that the once isolated house of the Nelthorpes was now surrounded by plenty of neighbors. As for the cottage itself, though old and dilapidated, it wore no longer that dreary and barren look which had once characterized it. Ellen had planted flowers in a little yard which surrounded it, and had trained vines over it, until its weather-

beaten walls and small windows were hardly discernible through their green drapery.

Of the village, it is quite enough to say, that human faces thronged its little streets, and human hearts beat among its quiet homes, much in the same way as they throng and beat in any other village on this wide earth, marked only by those peculiarities inseparable from a community of fishermen and sea-faring men. Labor toiled, and youth dreamed, and humble duties housed beneath the humble roofs, and sat by peaceful hearths; and this, as yet, none the less that the cloud of war was rising over our beloved country, and the star of the immortal Washington was beginning to glimmer through its shadows.

The romantic history of Ellen Nelthorpe's infancy was well-known in the village, and, of course, added a charm of its own, to attractions sufficient in themselves; she was growing up so beautiful that she was called "Pearl," or "Rosbud," by general consent; and so gentle, that the dullest lips in the neighborhood grew eloquent in her praise. Already, though but little past fourteen, she was ardently admired by every fisher lad and young sailor who troubled the blue waters of the cove. Moll had sent her to the district school, so that the young girl could read, write, and had a fair idea of the world, as she could gather it from the geography, and beyond this the education of a great many more aristocratic damsels did not venture, in those days. But she seemed, from her infancy up, to have a knowledge of her own, gathered in unknown ways, from the sea, the sky, the shore, the rocks, the flowers. Certainly, whatever might be the influence descending through gentle blood, she was very different from those persons by whom she had always been surrounded. No matter how poor the setting, the pure light of the pearl shone out of it.

There is no village, settlement, or cluster of houses to be found, with rare exceptions, which does not have its great man; so that even the humble cluster of fishermen's cabins about the cove was honored by the shadow of a large white house, which stood on the outskirts of the place, beyond the barren sands of the shore, sheltered by a grove of oaks, and surrounded by a well-cultivated garden and grounds, where

dwelt the physician who ministered to the bodily ailments of the neighborhood. It was not the patronage of these poor villagers which had induced Dr. Etheridge to take up his abode in this, in one sense, unpromising locality. He was a gentleman past middle age, with wealth and reputation already made, when he settled at the cove. The death of a beloved wife, and the partial failure of his own health, had brought him here, in search of the sublime loveliness of the sea, and the invigorating influences of its salt spray. Finding the soil of Long Island as fertile as the scenery was beautiful, and that he could gratify his taste for gardening as well as enjoy the sea-shore, he purchased a small farm, built himself a pleasant house, and became one of the "fixtures" of the cove. And as he could not entirely lay aside the habits of twenty years, and was naturally benevolent, he became a self-elected parish doctor, never refusing to attend the humblest, while exacting a fee only from those well able to pay it.

Of course Dr. Etheridge had heard little Pearl's romance. And one day, when she was about twelve years of age, he had made her acquaintance. She had run to his house, and appeared before him, pale with alarm—yet full, in the midst of her excitement, of her own peculiar, charming grace—to beg him to attend "her father," who had been thrown from a wagon, and had his arm broken.

"Drunk, of course," muttered the doctor, to himself, while he surveyed, through his spectacles, the fair apparition which had burst in upon him. "So, that's the little waif I have heard of; and, surely, if she *had* a drop of that brutal being's blood in her veins, I should throw away my theories. No need to be told she's not *his* child. What a pity she should have been compelled to come up with such surroundings! I wonder if she loves him any; she looks agitated and sad. Sit down a moment, child"—to Ellen—"my gig is coming round to the door in a short time, and as you have run a good ways, you had better ride back with me."

The child thanked him, with a tremulous smile, and sat down quietly to await his movements, although she was thinking of the groans her father had uttered, and which had alarmed her so. She did *not* love that hard and repelling man whom she called father; he had never done any thing to win

her affections, and her delicate sensibilities shrunk away from his rough words and wicked ways; but she pitied him now that she saw him in pain, and it required an effort for her to remain patiently in her chair, while the old gentleman made his calm preparations. Somewhat soothed by the imperturbable composure of the physician, who evidently did not think the patient was dying, because he had broken his arm, little Ellen at length ventured to glance about an apartment novel to her narrow experience. It was the doctor's library, and her sly glance, stealing from beneath silken lashes of the darkest brown, lighted up as it wandered over pictures, curtains, and shelves gleaming with rows of books. The old gentleman, putting up his splints and bandages, and peering through his spectacles at his visitor, during his leisurely operations, remarked the intelligent light of mingled admiration and desire which sparkled in her eyes as they rested on the volumes, which were, to her, sealed caskets, full of jewels.

"Can you read?"

"Oh, yes sir, pretty well."

"Then here is a little book, not above your comprehension; it is a history. You shall take it home and read it. But mind, you are to be very cautious not to injure it, and to bring it back in due time."

"I will be very careful, sir, and bring it home safely."

Books were precious things in those days, and rather costly. The wonders of machinery and the multiplicity of patrons had not brought good reading down to its present nominal cost, a pleasure to be enjoyed in the cottage as well as the mansion. The good doctor, taking this sudden fancy to the pretty maiden, and delighted with the covetous glance she cast upon his library, was yet prudent enough to impress upon her mind the necessity for being very watchful over the treasures committed to her keeping.

He scarcely needed to warn Ellen. Neat as a lily, nothing which was her's took soil or harm from the atmosphere of home. Claspng the volume, in one hand, to her bosom, she arose eagerly, when the gig was driven around to the door, too absorbed in the thought of her father's sufferings to be the least timid about accepting the physician's offer to ride by his side, though hitherto she had contemplated him, from a distance.

with considerable awe. This was the beginning of an acquaintance between the old gentleman and the young maiden which gave them both a new delight, and was continued to their mutual satisfaction, through two or three years, up to the commencement of this chapter.

With no one but servants about him, save an elderly spinster sister, who managed his household, the presence of the beautiful child was like summer sunshine, in which Dr. Etheridge loved to bask. He had many a little artifice to beguile her to his house—flowers in the garden, a cabinet of curiosities in the library. But he needed none of these inducements, for it was one of the joys of Ellen's happiest counting, when she could set down a day for a visit to the great white house.

In the summer of which we are now writing, Ellen had experienced some melancholy days. Dr. Etheridge had not invited her so frequently to visit him. She knew that he was expecting his son home, who had been abroad to complete an education for which his native land did not present such facilities as it now might. She felt, intuitively, that the son's return would fill the father's heart full, so that there would be no place for her. The last time she had been up to the mansion, he had been so busy with painters and carpenters, as scarcely to notice her. The whole household was full of the bustle of preparation; new furniture for the heir's room had come from the city, and when she had been sent, by the doctor, with a message to his sister, she found the spinster in this room, overseeing the arrangement of it, and went away quite overwhelmed by its splendor, and by a sense of the importance of the personage to whom it was to belong.

Since then she had not been to the white house. A fortnight had gone before she heard, though the gossips of the village, that *young* Dr. Etheridge had arrived—"so handsome, so elegant, just from the medical schools of Paris." Ellen quite resigned her little queendom in the realm of the old doctor's affections; but her home looked more plain and coarse than ever, and she secretly pined for the cool rooms and the broad gardens from which she was banished. Her native delicacy of spirit taught her not to be curious; but she could not close her ears to all the talk of the village, and she did not refrain from listening with the eagerness of pleasure,

to a report that Dr. Hugh Etheridge's stay at home was to last but a few months—in the beginning of the winter he was to go to New York, and begin the practice of his profession there. The humble parish, to whose wants his father ministered, was no field for his ambition.

Selfish little Ellen! she was glad this splendid young man, who absorbed now all the thoughts and feelings of the white house, was going soon to abdicate his throne, so that she might steal back and wield again her scepter of power. In the meantime she was lonesome, sometimes sad. She thought more than ever, of the strange destiny which had thwarted her natural development. It would have been wise of poor Moll, if she had never fed the eager mind of her darling with fairy tales of her own wonderful origin, contrasting so vividly with the humble lot in which she was fixed. Countless times, when the girl was smaller, had her adopted mother taken her on her knee, showing her the embroidered robes and the gold chain in which she came to her, and telling her the story of the shipwreck, always ending with the charge to Ellen "to be a lady, for she was born one, sure—a Countess at least." The fruit of this constant tending was beginning to ripen now, in the wild dreams and melancholy musings of the quiet girl.

It was a few days after the arrival of Dr. Hugh, that Ellen took her bonnet for an afternoon on the beach. The weather was hot, and the narrow limits of the house were dull and tiresome. Her brightest hours were spent in the open air, beneath the broad arch of heaven. Her bad father was off to the city, on one of his dissipated visits; her mother was out gossiping with a friendly neighbor. Like a bird, with the door of the cage left open, she flew out into the free sunshine. A walk of half a mile, brought her to a favorite and secluded stretch of level sands at the foot of high rocks, which was sometimes covered by the tide when the wind was from the east, but now lay a white and glistening bit of shore washed by the ripples of ocean. When she reached this spot, Ellen threw off her bonnet, shaking her shining hair into a thousand strands of sunshine, which waved and rippled in golden circles like the waters at her feet. She did not fear the broad splendor of the afternoon, tempered as it was

by the salt breeze which fanned her healthful cheek. The child of nature, she was not afraid of wind or sun. Dangling her bonnet by the strings she wandered on, amusing herself by picking up shells, tossing pebbles into the water, and printing the shape of her small, slender shoe in the deep sand. When she came to a certain rock which stood up across her path, with its foot set in the sea, she climbed to a favorite shelf, which shut her out from the world as completely as if there was nothing of it but herself, the rock and the ocean stretching away from their feet. Here she had spent many an hour reading the books the doctor lent her; but she had no book this August afternoon, and it was effort enough, in that drowsily warm air, to watch the waves now sparkling in to the cove, and the white slips of clouds in the blue sea of ether above. Nothing but one blue stretch above and below! An earthly and a heavenly ocean.

The slow, delicious hours of the afternoon glided away as Ellen sat there. At first she thought of nothing, but allowed the scene before her to paint itself on her eyes; then a vague feeling of disquiet came, with remembrance of the white house, and the young gentleman who was barring it against her; that vision, too, slipped away, and in its place came one of a stormy night and sinking ship, and a fair, noble woman drowned, and a babe carried to a wretched cabin. This was a scene which Ellen often pictured in her solitary hours. After that came vague phantoms of the future, shadowy, flitting by in dimly glittering array—a fair spectacle of a fair girl's rose-tinted hopes and desires. Ellen had read no novels, but her keen imagination had grouped the bright *possibilities* of life in one vivid cluster, on her right hand, and its *probabilities* on her left, both of them obscured by a heavy atmosphere of uncertainty. Still, as she mused, the moments flitted away, the tide slipped up along the sands, climbing higher about the isolated rock, both of them so silently, so bewitchingly, as to bring only the drowse of their monotonous warmth and murmur to the young girl. Presently she was asleep, her exquisite head leant back against its hard pillow, whose somber coloring of gray threw out the tints of her glittering hair, white throat and rose-flushed face; while the tide crept higher, and began to cast little foamy serpents upon the white

sand path by which the maiden had found her way to the rock.

It was a perilous hour for pretty Ellen, threatening to put an end to all her dreams, of every kind, forever—scarcely less perilous than the more stormy one which had proved so fatal to her mother, in years long gone. And still, that slumber, induced by the heat, and the insidious murmur of the sea, wrapped her senses away from the reality. The blue, restless waves had quite washed out the footprints on the sand, when a small row-boat, guided by a single oar, shot around the point, and keeping close to the shore, made its way idly along, its occupant, with his fishing-tackle in the bottom of the little craft, seeming to find any vigorous exertion too much for the August day. Suddenly the oars received a new impetus, and the boat came up along the inlet more rapidly, its owner peering with surprise and some alarm at the unwary sleeper, being fast isolated in her dangerous seclusion. When he had approached sufficiently near to have a distinct view of the figure which had arrested his attention, the boatman suspended his oars and remained gazing upon the charming picture. It was a *tableau vivant* which deserved immortality. The attitude in which he paused, the water glistening from the side of the uplifted oar, the earnest face of the young man, kindling with admiration and curiosity, the wide stretch, of sky and ocean, the bold rock, the two graceful figures in such opposite and striking positions—the pencil of an artist might transfer it, but our pen can not do it justice.

"She'll be certainly drowned, unless she's a mermaid, which she can not be, for I see her little feet beneath the hem of her frock," murmured the young fisherman. "Some good providence must have directed me here to awaken this sleeping beauty. I know, now, why the fish refused to bite to-day."

Still he lingered, as if loth to disturb that serene slumber. Perhaps, he desired every other avenue to be cut off, so that he could rescue her from her great peril by way of his ark of refuge. And when, at length, the weary lids slowly unclosed, opened by the magnetic influence of that steady gaze, and the soft blue eyes of the girl rested on the boat and the man in it, not ten feet from her, his straw hat shading his face, bent

toward her with admiring intentness, she thought it a part of her dream for many seconds. As the truth dawned on her, a blush, the coolest possible, sprung to cheek and brow; hastily raising from her moss-tinted pillow, she gained her feet, and was about to leap from the rock into the silvery path by which she had come, to run away from this unexpected intrusion—when she drew back with a slight scream, the color fading from her countenance.

“Water, water, everywhere,”

circling and murmuring, surging and sliding about the old gray rock, with a wicked musicalness most appalling. Ellen was forced to turn and confront the intruding fisherman, now metamorphosed into a caring angel.

“You should not slumber when the tide is rising, unless you have a nautilus-shell anchored near at hand,” he called out gaily, making her a mock-heroic bow, as if she were some Undine, Venus Aphrodite, or Lady of the Lake.

How musical and well-modulated was the voice, how self-possessed the manners of the youth! She knew, in an instant, who it must be—Dr. Hugh Etheridge, of the mansion, of whom she had been thinking resentfully, as she dropped asleep. Did she feel bitter toward him now? as one who had a better right to the affections of the old friend, than herself? Her heart beat quick with innocent admiration. He might see, man of the world that he was, the shy delight in her glance—her utter, sincere surprise and pleasure. He did see it. Dr. Hugh's heart beat a little faster, also. He was only twenty-two, and looked more boyish than he was, with his black curls clustering beneath the rim of his straw hat. But, he had been a student of life and society, as well as books, since he was fifteen, and, the artless girl before him, was no match for him in reading character.

The manner in which he treated her, and her guileless admiration of himself, would prove whether the frank, generous heart which had been his, in childhood, was contaminated, or had escaped the blighting effects of too much wisdom. Now he smiled at her until she blushed again, seeming to take a rather haughty satisfaction in her dilemma.

“Oh, dear, what shall I do?” she said, in bewitching embarrassment.

"There is but one thing for you to do."

"Which is to get into your boat, I suppose."

"You are a downright Yankee at guessing."

"I don't see how I happened to fall asleep. It was very heedless of me."

"Well, it *was* a little heedless, to say the least. It might have turned out to be a fatal mistake, if I hadn't grown tired of baiting my hook for fish that wouldn't bite, and so, just rowed in this direction to examine this rock, which is of peculiar formation. I might have gone away again, and sworn, forever after, that I had seen a real mermaid, or Venus herself, if you had not awakened and spoke so very like a young lady."

"I have read about mermaids; do you really believe in them, sir?" asked Ellen, with a gravity which brought a hidden smile hovering around the fisherman's mouth.

"We will discuss that question some time when we have leisure for a calm examination of its merits. But now, you had better step down as close to the edge of the rock as possible, and I will pull my craft alongside."

Ellen did as she was bid, setting her small feet firmly on the slippery and slanting floor of her romantic sleeping apartment; her preserver, with a single stroke of the oar, was alongside, he held up his arms, she sprung lightly into them, and the next moment was deposited on the little wooden seat of the boat.

"And now, where shall I land you?" he asked, as he pushed out into the rising waters of the cove.

Never did sea and land look lovelier than at that hour. The sun was just setting, after a day of torrid splendor, a cool breeze was springing up, and every ripple on the ocean's broad breast was tinged with a rosy radiance. Ellen, flushed with the excitement of her novel adventure, was trebly beautiful. She had lost her sun-bonnet, by some freak of the wind, and her golden hair flew about her sweet face in a manner to entangle the interest of any young man whose heart was not already lost. The stranger, though his gaze was respectful, could not keep it from wandering constantly to the fair young creature beside him. He plied the oars with an indolent hand, quite willing to extend, as far as possible,

the enchantment of the hour. And when he thought of it at all, he believed that she was the daughter of some wealthy and accomplished family, for there was a high-bred air about Ellen, which warranted the supposition. Her plain white muslin frock was one which any maiden, high or low, might have worn on a sultry summer afternoon. In fact, he regarded her only as an extremely lovely child, with whom he would like to be farther acquainted.

The young doctor always made pets of pretty little girls, and his manner now was full of a tender protection and playful gayety. Ellen began to feel at home with him, and to believe that she should like the white house still more with him in than out of it. But then, Dr. Etheridge had not asked her to come there since his son's arrival. Why? the poor girl was too

"Unskilled in all the arts and wiles
That worldlings prize,"

to have the least suspicion of the real reason.

"If you don't tell me where to land my fair freight, I'll take it home to my father, and tell him I've fished up a Naaid this afternoon."

"You will not be able to impose upon your father, Dr. Hugh Etheridge," retorted Ellen, archly; "he will know your fish as soon as he sees it. We are very well acquainted."

"Indeed. I wish he'd make his pleasant friends known to me a little sooner. What may your name be, Water-sprite?"

"Ellen—Nelthorpe," she spoke the last word reluctantly, as if her heart disowned it, and immediately a shade fell over her countenance—she felt the great gulf which lay between the cottage and the mansion.

"You may land me anywhere, sir, that there is a foothold. I shall easily find my way home from any point above the cove."

"I have heard my father speak of you," continued her companion, regarding her with still more interest, "I knew you were a fairy-princess, when I discovered you asleep on the rock. But the wind is growing too chilly for that light dress. I will set you ashore on yonder little pier, and you must run home fast, so as not to take cold."

In five minutes more Ellen stood on the pier, looking wistfully after the boat, whose occupant waved his hand to her, as it shot rapidly away, feeling as if all the glory had gone suddenly out of the earth.

CHAPTER V.

LIFE AND DEATH.

“Oh, there’s nothing half so sweet in life
As love’s young dream.”—MOORE.

“Thou hast all seasons for thine own, oh, Death.”—HEMANS.

YOUNG Dr. Hugh became the idol of the little village. For a glimpse of his handsome face as he rode by, young maidens and old, would flock to the windows; the men liked him too. Though sufficiently reserved, and with an evident sense of his position, he had yet the irresistible charms of frankness and complacency. He was not selfish, nor insolent. He kissed the girl babies, when their faces were clean, and gave the boys pennies; went hunting and fishing with the rough men, and made little presents of snuff to the elderly women—and this out of real kindness, not from any set motive to make himself popular. Everybody complimented him, save one person; and she thought more of him than all the rest of them put together.

A sudden change had come over Ellen. She seemed to be a child no more, but a quiet, thinking woman. A dozen times a day she would start out of some reverie, and if she met her mother’s eye, would blush. If a step sounded suddenly at the door, she would color violently. Yet *he* never came to the cottage. Only once he had called for her father to go off with him for a day’s fishing; and then Nelthorpe had been so slovenly in his dress and so coarsely familiar in his remarks, that the sensitive girl had fairly shrunk out of the one room into her bit of a bed room, to conceal her pain and mortification.

Oh, what will he think of us!” was her inward cry, as she buried her face in her hands, remaining in tears until she

heard them depart. She almost hated then, the foul being she was obliged to call father. Wild thoughts of escaping from him, and from this miserable life, crowded into her mind. But she loved her adopted mother with a strong affection. She could not help but return a portion of the love lavished upon her by one who never wearied waiting upon her, praising her, watching her every movement with delight. Ellen's nature was too good to make her capable of ingratitude toward this more than mother. Yet she was beginning to chafe at the chains which bound her—to be wretched in the poor home, which was the witness of many rude and boisterous scenes when Nelthorpe was about. It would have been better for her peace of mind if her mother had concealed from her her origin—if she had never entered Dr. Etheridge's library to feel how much more she would be at home there than among the people with whom her destiny was wound.

Dr. Hugh did not come to her house, yet she saw him often. She could not walk out along the beach, nor in the green fields, skirted with the primeval forest, which edged the belt of sand on which the village grew, without meeting him. Always by accident. She was certain of that! For Dr. Hugh would not trouble himself to meet purposely a poor fisherman's daughter, like herself. It was curious what a fatality there was in these accidents, always bringing him to her side, when she was out for a long afternoon of walking, or reading, or gathering autumn leaves. These meetings made her so very happy, flushing her cheeks with smiles and dimples, while her eyes shone with great delight. He could tell her so much about the sea, the life within it, and the countries beyond it, so much about the grasses and flowers—he was such a pleasant talker—yet, if they sat two hours in silence, looking off over the water together, she was just as happy still.

She could not read her own heart, ignorant Ellen! but the young doctor could, and to him belonged all the wrong of allowing its innocent liking to grow—of watching it, while it turned to him as the sunflower turns to the sun.

All this time old Dr. Etheridge never once invited Ellen to visit the mansion. He called a few times, to leave a bouquet or a book for her, and when they met in the streets of the

village, was as kind, more kind, than ever,—but he did not speak to her about his son, nor bid her, in the old, cheerful way, to come and see him. Ellen doubted if he knew that she and Dr. Hugh were acquainted.

Once she was speaking of her old friend to her mother :

“ It is strange,” said she, “ that he does not ask me to visit him any more.”

Moll had a great deal more affection for her child than discretion. Her black eye flashed fiercely, as she spoke up with great vehemence :

“ Not a bit, strange, child, as you'd know, if you knew the world. Dr. Etheridge isn't as set up as some—but he's a deal too proud to let his son marry a poor, shipwrecked, nameless girl, with ugly Bob Nelthorpe for her adopted father. And he knows you're so pretty, Ellen, that if Dr. Hugh should see you, he'd fall in love with you—and that's the truth,” she added, snapping her fingers.

“ Oh, mother ! how can you talk so,” cried Ellen, in a low voice, hiding her face, scarlet with shame and surprise, in the woman's lap.

“ Here, never you mind,” said Moll, soothingly ; laying her brawny hand on the glistening hair which showered over her knee. “ Only, if you meet Dr. Hugh, any more, when you're rambling out, do you show him you are as good as he is. 'Taint honest for him to be hanging around to speak to you out of doors, and never coming nigh the house. Don't cry, darling—I've only said it to warn you.”

Her mother's words sounded strange and frightful to Ellen. She was perfectly overwhelmed by the new ideas they presented to her mind. Could it be possible there was any thing wrong—dishonorable, in the young man, in whose presence she always felt so inexpressibly happy ? Was it wrong for him to seek her company, when she was alone by the sea-shore, or along the woodland path ? or for her to be so glad to see him coming, and to welcome him with such a joyful smile ? Did Dr. Etheridge, indeed, consider that she was not a fit companion for his son ? These bitter questions cried out in her breast ; for a long time she hid her face in her mother's dress. When she arose, her cheeks and eyes were bright with a proud fire.

"I thank you, dear mother," she said; "I believe what you have spoken is partly true;" and then she kissed Moll, and went to her own tiny room, to hide the wound which she had received, until she was able to cover it over with smiles.

After that she met Hugh but a few times; when her manner was constrained, and so different from the artless maiden who had revealed her every impulse to him, that he asked her many times if she were not well—if she had any trouble. It was hard to listen to his voice, full of gentle solicitude, and to feel his keen, dark eyes on her face, and yet affect to be dull and indifferent. Those eyes, whose lightest glance thrilled her from head to foot—it was hard to have them rest upon her inquiringly, and yet have to hide the truth from them. Poor Ellen was taking the first lesson in a woman's life—the necessity for concealing and protecting her heart.

Finally, although the cabin had never been so utterly wearisome to her, she almost ceased to take her customary walks. She knew that Dr. Hugh was soon going to the city, and she waited until she heard of his departure. The tidings came, one day, by her father, that the young man had been ferried across, that morning, to New York, with a boat-load of trunks and traps. He gave the news as he came in to dinner. Ellen tried to eat, that others might not observe her emotion, but her throat swelled, and the tears arose in her eyes. She had dimly expected a farewell visit, or, at least, a message. But now he was gone; and she realized that, although "he was all the world to her" she was nothing—absolutely nothing—to him.

It was a day in late Indian Summer, mild as spring, though on the verge of winter. As soon as she could leave the table without attracting the notice and questions of her parents, Pearl threw a shawl over her head and shoulders, and slipped out of the house. She was suffocating in that close room, before those people who could not comprehend her; and once on the little path which led to the beach, she almost flew along. Unconsciously her steps took the direction toward the rock where she had first met Hugh, when he had saved her life, and where they had since spent many delicious hours. Here she sat, a long time, with her hands pressed over her eyes, then, stretching out her arms toward the sea, she called-

"Mother! mother!" in a wild, entreating voice. She yearned, in that hour of desolation—when she felt with the keenness of youthful sensibility, that no one understood her, or could console her in her doubt and sorrow—to be lying beside that unknown mother, at the bottom of the ocean, with the sea-mosses weaving funeral drapery over them, and her poor little distracted heart at peace.

"Dear Ellen, what does that bitter cry mean?"

She turned at the sound of the soft, compassionate voice, and beheld Dr. Hugh by her side. She had thought him far away; yet there he stood, his eyes searching her tremulous face with a look which she could not bear.

"Oh, Dr. Hugh," she said, turning half away from him, "I wish you had never come to this rock with your boat, that time I slumbered while the tide rose. It would be better for me to be dead!"

"Why so, little Pearl?"—he put his hands to her burning cheeks and turned her face gently back, so that he could gaze full upon the trembling lips and tearful eyes—it was cruel of him to subject her to such scrutiny, but Ellen was too overwhelmed by his sudden appearance to control herself as she might otherwise have done.

Her only answer was the rapid tears which ran down her cheeks.

"Sit down, and tell me all about it. I am surprised to find you so unhappy. I thought you a perfect butterfly of joy, Pearl."

He drew her to sit down beside him on the rock, holding her hand in his.

"I am not happy," sobbed the young creature; "how can I be? I do not love the bad man whom I call my father. My mother is very good to me, and I love her—but I am not happy *there*, in that place! it does not seem like home. I pine for my own mother—with some one to love with all *the best* there is in me. Oh, dear! you can not guess how desolate I feel sometimes. And to-day—I felt—I thought—"

"That I had gone off without saying good-by to you. Did that make you feel bad, little Pearl?"

"Yes" she whispered, looking up at him.

He smiled into those truthful eyes; but it required **more**

experience than the maiden had, to tell what manner of smile it was. It made her heart flutter, and yet it troubled her.

"I did not think of being so neglectful," he went on. "It was a mistake about my leaving to-day. I sent my baggage off, but I intended to remain and enjoy the lovely Indian Summer day to the fullest—on the shore, with the little girl by my side, who loves the sea, and the open air, as well as I do. I called at your mother's for you, and she told me that you had got the start of me; you were already off; I guessed where I should find you, and came straight here."

Her face brightened during the avowal. He *had* thought of her, and gone to the cottage to ask for her. She gave him a smile that would have melted a harder heart than Dr. Hugh's.

"I want you to promise me that you won't commit suicide when I am away," he continued, banteringly. "You know I am coming back for a holiday, next summer, and the charm will have vanished from the cove, if I don't find the pure light of my little Pearl glistening here."

"Next summer is so far away, Dr. Hugh."

"Not so very far. Time always flies more rapidly than we expect."

"To *you* it will fly fast; in the city, with every thing beautiful about you, admired, ambitious. But it is dreary on these sands in the winter."

She locked her hands together and looked off over the ocean, steadily. While she looked away, he studied her face. His own countenance was not free from an expression of pain and irresolution; some feeling, against which he struggled, was getting the mastery.

"I'll tell you how to occupy your time, so that it will no seem so dreary, my birdie. You must study and improve yourself. You know my father takes a great interest in you. He will be your teacher, and lend you books, and lecture you, too, I dare say. Will it not be all the easier for you to study, when you remember that you are pleasing Dr. Hugh?"

"I would do anything in the world, not wrong, to please you. But why do you wish me to study?" she asked, with sudden vehemence. "It is only to make me discontented with my lot in life. You say your father takes an interest in

me. You know, very well, that he does not think me good enough to step over his threshold when his son is there. And I know, now, that you and I ought not to be sitting here together."

"My dear little Ellen, what put such bitter thoughts into your heart? My father thinks you are *too good* to associate with me. That is it. He is not certain of me yet; he is afraid that Paris has spoiled me. But it has not—no! or if it *had* made me reckless and distrustful of the goodness of women, your sweet self, Ellen, would revive all my faith, all my nobility. You do not understand this talk yet; you need not try to. But one thing you can believe, little Pearl, with all your heart and soul—and that is, that there is not a woman in the world that I respect more truly or love more dearly than I do you."

A vivid blush of joy dyed her throat and forehead crimson.

"Our paths may not lie in the same direction in this world, Ella. Whether they do or not, remains yet to be seen. I am not certain of myself—I may not be proof against the influences of wealth and position—but wherever either of us may be, whether separated or within hearing of each other, I shall always think of you with affection. You must go to my father, as to your father also—let him take the place of a parent to you. And I will always be your good and dutiful brother, my pretty sister."

With a light laugh, as he concluded the sentence, he drew her face to his bosom, and kissed her.

"I have sealed our relationship, little sister."

She knew not whether she felt most pain or pleasure. It was kind, generous of him, to adopt her as his equal, his sister, to encourage her to study, to come to bid her good-by—and yet, her yearning, unsatisfied heart demanded so much more. It was so hard to see him go away to the brilliant allurements of city life; she felt how little occasion he would have to think of her, while her nights and days would be absorbed in one long dream of him. His words left a sting along with their sweetness—a vague barrier still arose between them, dimly visible, but firm as adamant.

"Come, sister Ellen, let us walk. Then we shall not grow so sad—really, we are getting sentimental over our parting."

He handed her down from the rock, and they wandered along the beach, talking of many things, and writing sentences in the sand.

“Hugh called his companion “sister” many times in the course of their ramble. Whether he meant by that to warn her against hoping to be any dearer relation, we do not know. It has been done by many men, in the height of their superfluous generosity, after letting some foolish young heart get beyond its depth in the sea of passion, to try to set it on its feet again, by stretching out the hand of “brotherhood.”

It was twilight when they came to “the place where their paths parted.” Dr. Hugh could hardly see how fast Ellen’s tears were flowing; and she was grateful for the shadows which hid them from him.

“Go often to see my father; I shall hear from you through him,” were his last words, given with a kiss.

The next day it was snowing. Ellen felt as if it had snowed upon her heart, she felt so cold and forlorn. In the long watches of the night, during which she had laid awake, she had come to several conclusions. Her womanly nature was beginning to develop under the influence of new emotions. One of the resolves was, that she would *not* go very often to Dr. Etheridge’s; another, that the next time she met Dr. Hugh, he should not have the smallest reason to think that she cared *very much* about his friendship.

These resolutions she had the pride to abide by. Dr. Hugh came over on Christmas, to spend a day or two at home. He made a brief call at the cottage, and found Ellen knitting socks for her father, who, fortunately, was not at home. Her color hardly changed when she welcomed him, so far had she progressed in her woman’s discipline already. He was pleasant and talkative; brought her a new book, and a little water-color picture of the cove, which he had ordered painted by an artist friend. But he said not a word, allowed not a tone or look to escape him, which might encourage false hopes in his “little sister.” He was discreet and kind, and faultless as usual.

When he went away he left Ellen more ill at ease than ever. His visit rather awakened Moll’s resentment than flattered her.

"He's a mighty handsome young man, and he knows it. I wish he'd stay away, with his cambric ruffles, his pocket-hankercher smelling like a posey, his elegant talk, and all that. He doesn't do no favor to us, to come here, my darling; there's a lady in this house, every bit as much a lady as he's a gentleman. I only hope and pray she'll get her rights some day, and then we'll see how the fine folks will flock around."

"Oh, mother, I'm sure he was very polite. He did not treat us as if he felt it a condescension to come here."

"I've no fault to find with his manners; he didn't go among them French for nothin'—he knows how to carry himself. But still I tell you *I don't like him*, nor I don't want to, neither."

Moll, ignorant and rough as she was, had shrewdness enough to detect the want in the conduct of the young man, whose absence she could not explain. Her wild love for Ellen—her almost defiant determination that she should be acknowledged the lady which she really was—made her very irritable on this sensitive point. Poor Moll! it would hardly have satisfied her ambition to have seen her adopted child become the President's wife.

She was a woman of powerful mind, not destitute of imagination, and the mystery clinging to "Pearl" strongly affected her fancy. She was as certain as she was of her own existence, that the mystery would one day be cleared up, and Pearl would come out a "lady of the land." Herself, as well as her husband, being of Scotch origin, some of the natural instincts of a peasant people, taught to look up to the nobility, clung to her in that democratic land where such feelings met with but little sympathy.

Moll was not destined to live to see that day to which she had looked forward for nearly fifteen years. The dull winter wore away; the spring came, with its scent of peach-orchards and violets mingled with the odor of the sea brine; summer again, with its golden, drowsy days, full of warmth and languor, descended upon the cove. In the midst of these listless days, Ellen was startled out of her dreams by the sudden, severe illness of her mother.

When Dr. Etheridge was summoned, the gravity with which he viewed the case still more alarmed the trembling girl. In

less than three days her worst fears were realized—Moll lay at the point of death.

In the poignancy of her grief, Ellen realized how much she had loved and relied upon the faithful woman, who, if not her real mother, had yet exceeded even a mother in her devotion. White and quiet, the girl sat, clasping the hand which lay, purple and icy, in hers.

For some hours Moll had lain in a stupor, from which she would only awaken at the dying moment, if at all. Under the excitement of his trouble, Bob Nelthorpe had gone off to drown his feelings in drink; some of the neighbors were in; but no one, save Ellen, was near the bed, when the dying woman opened her eyes and fixed them on her child, with an intelligent expression.

"Pearl, I'm going. I know it. There's one thing on my mind. Bend down your ear; I want to tell you. I'm not certain, but I *believe* that Bob knows all about your relatives. I've thought so for years. I've begged and plead with him to tell me, but I never got nothing but blows for answer. Perhaps he will tell you. Ask him—insist upon his telling. He isn't fit to care for you, now I'm going, and if he knows who your friends are, he must send you to 'em. That's all. Kiss me, my child. Pearly, my baby, where are you?"

The dimness of death passed over her vision; Ellen could not make her hear her words nor feel her caresses; in a few moments the doubly orphaned girl was taken away from the bed by kind neighbors.

The funeral of Molly Nelthorpe was plain and quiet; her husband was rescued from his drunken fit in time to take his place as chief mourner, though the sad, pale girl who walked by his side, held really that position.

Dr. Etheridge had been very kind to Ellen during her affliction; he was present now beside the grave, and when she looked up, as if to catch strength from his pity, when the earth began to fall upon the coffin, she dimly perceived that his son was by his side. Oh, if he would only stretch out his arms, and let her come and weep out her sorrow on his breast! She felt how utterly alone she was.

Truly she was alone. When she went back to the little cottage, life seemed too weary to bear. Humble friends came

in and set out the table, making a cup of tea, and bringing such delicacies as they had. Nelthorpe ate and drank greedily, and in morose silence. Ellen forced herself to swallow a cup of hot tea, for she felt faint. Then the neighbors went away; night came on—her father flung himself upon the bed to sleep. Long, long, Ellen sat by the little window, open to 'ct in the night breeze, for she felt suffocated, gazing up into the starry sky, and wishing she were safely up in their heavenly heights with her two mothers.

CHAPTER VI.

OUT ON THE WORLD.

My heart is very tired—my strength is low;
 My hands are full of blossoms plucked before,
 Held dead within them till myself shall die.—MRS. BROWNING.

For pleasures past I do not grieve,
 Nor perils gathering near;
 My greatest grief is that I love
 No thing that claims a tear.—CHILDE HAROLD.

It was a fortnight since the funeral. During the most of that time Nelthorpe had been at home, lounging about the village, drinking, coming irregularly to his meals, and creeping in late at night. Ellen had exerted herself to make him comfortable. She had very little experience of household matters, for her mother would never allow her to soil her hands with any thing coarse or hard; but she did the best she could, from a sense of duty, and not from any affection, for the tyrant, the sound of whose step often made her tremble.

Those two weeks had been very wretched ones. Dr. Hugh had not once come to the house to offer her the sympathy of "a brother," which now, if ever in her life, she needed.

"Brother," she said to herself, with a scornful curl of the lip; but her pride, great as it was, could not prevent her from being miserable. The young physician was home for the holiday he had spoken of the previous year; yet he came not near to fulfil the promises he had made of renewing their old, sweet talk and rambles.

Tired with the unwonted care of the house, grieving for her loss, sickened by the coarser details of labor and want, pining for companionship, for a friend to pity her, Ellen's cup was running over. She felt that she ought not to try to live on in this manner much longer. Nelthorpe was growing worse, instead of improving under the discipline of sorrow; she could not stay in his house, and take, as her mother had, curses, perhaps blows. Something she must do. One of the two resources of dependant females—sewing or teaching.

She came to the firm resolve to leave him, after a night on which he had come home just intoxicated enough to be ugly, and abused her for her cooking, which certainly was not first rate, but the best that she was capable of. But before she tried to find employment, she would fulfil the last wish of her mother—endeavor to discover if Nelthorpe knew any thing of her real parentage.

She was too prudent to attempt it in his present state. After a night of restless conjecture, passed in alternate hope and doubt, she prepared a breakfast which she believed would put him in a good humor; and, as she saw him devouring it with grim satisfaction, she summoned courage to open her case.

“Father!”

“Well, what now?—any new complaints to make? Want a new set of furniture, hey? another frock, or a girl to wash up the dishes for you, eh?”

“No, father; I wished to tell you that, since mother's death, I have made up my mind to take care of myself—not to be a burden upon you, as I have been for so many years—”

The man looked up in surprise, but presently broke into a laugh:

“Burden on me! Ha, ha; that's a good one, Nelly.”

“You have often told me so; and I do not wish to tax you any farther. But, before I make up my mind what to do, I wish to ask you a question, father. Do you know who and where my relatives are?”

“What put that into your head?” was the angry reply.

“My mother, on her dying bed, told me to ask you. Oh, sir, if you do know anything about them, I conjure you, in my dear mother's name, to tell me, that I may go to them;”

and the young girl arose to her feet, looking at him anxiously.

“That would be a — pretty move ! I guess if I’ve kept a secret fourteen years, and over, from my own wife, I ain’t going to let it out, now, to a chit of a girl.”

“Then you *do* know !” cried Ellen, eagerly.

“Pooh ! who said I knew ? Sit you down and eat your breakfast.”

“I believe you know, and that you withhold the knowledge from me for selfish purposes of your own,” answered Ellen, growing firm as she grew desperate. “I *must* know. I can endure this life no longer. Whether you reveal to me your knowledge or not, I am going to leave this house and this place. And if you will give me no satisfaction, I will go to Dr. Etheridge, and give him my reasons for my suspicions against you. I know that he will make every effort to help me to obtain my rights.”

“You dare to threaten Bob Nelthorpe, do you ?” cried the man, also rising, with a grim smile on his face. “You’d better look to yourself, you ungrateful huzzy. You’ll leave now, whether you want to or not ; you’ve been a pauper on my hands long enough. You and Dr. Etheridge are welcome to all the discoveries you can squeeze out of nothin’. I reckon you’ll find it an easy matter to get taken care of when you go from here. You’ve always wanted to be a lady, and I s’pose you think you’ll be one, if Dr. Hugh picks you up. He’ll take you, but he won’t keep you long,” with a sneer.

“Take care, sir,” said the girl, turning white ; “you shall not insult me.”

She moved toward the door of her little room, intent only on one thought—to get her bonnet, and fly forever from the presence of a man who could speak thus to her.

“Don’t be in a hurry, sis ; I want another cup of coffee,” jeered he, catching her by the arm, as she passed him.

“Let me go.”

“Go to —, if you like,” and, with that, his rage got the better of him, and he struck her a heavy blow.

She staggered, but did not fall. The next moment she had caught her bonnet and shawl, and was walking blindly along, she knew not whither. She had no intention of consulting

her only friend, Dr. Etheridge ; she was afraid to seek the mansion, lest she should encounter Dr. Hugh. She felt that she had been neglected, and her pride refused to ask assistance which had not been offered. She even turned away from the beach for fear of meeting him there ; in her present despair, she wished no eye to read her face. The blow had wounded her arm severely, but the deepest hurt was to her soul. The last tie was severed, by that cruel stroke, which bound her to the wrecker's cabin. An orphan—friendless, utterly destitute ! she hurried along the road which led back across the island. She had always been afraid to enter these gloomy forests alone ; but now she turned from the main path, and, striking off into the heart of the woods, she walked until the noon sun stood high in the heavens, and her limbs trembled, and her face was flushed with fatigue.

Then she threw herself at the mossy foot of an oak to rest. She had tasted no food before setting out on her aimless wandering. Her throat was parched with thirst, for she was feverish with excitement. She sat a long time, pondering what she could do. To linger there until she died seemed easier than to resolve upon and execute any other way out of her difficulties. She was sick of thinking ; her head ached ; she leaned it against the friendly tree—the sunshine glided through the leaves and fell upon her hair ; the birds twittered to each other, the breeze fanned her hot cheeks softly—nature, at last, seemed to be kind to the wanderer, so young and so forlorn.

Presently Ellen arose, endeavoring now to direct her steps in such a direction as would lead her back to the main road. She had decided to find her way to New York, and there offer her services as an apprentice to some cloak or dress-maker, or take any other employment which was honest, and to which her strength was fitted. She betrayed her ignorance of the dangers before her in this resolution.

Now that she had come to a definite conclusion, she felt her energies, rising to meet her necessities ; despite of hunger and exhaustion, she walked hurriedly forward, only to find herself becoming entangled more deeply in the labyrinths of the wilderness. As the twilight began to darken early, in the thick forest, she discovered, with terror and despair, that she had lost her way.

She had thought herself tired of life—ready to die—but when the appalling fact arose before her that she was lost in those lonely woods, she found that life was sweet, and death terrible. The forest was rumored not to be entirely free from wild animals; hunters still found game in its secluded recesses, and even an occasional Indian lurked in its depths. In vain the poor child labored on, seeking for some clue to guide her out of the labyrinth. Night descended, and shut her up, solitary, in that fear-haunted region.

In the meantime, Bob Nelthorpe, feeling a little ashamed of himself, and a little afraid of consequences, shut the door of his house not long after Ellen left it, and started off on a visit to the city.

“The girl will be back before bed-time, when she finds there’s no choice,” was his mental settlement of the case. I’ll not bother her any for a day or two, but go over to town, and see how my banker’s gettin’ along.”

When Bob, who rowed his own boat across to the city, pulled in among the craft which lined the shores of the river, a vessel from England was just dropping anchor in the middle of the stream.

Some of her passengers were descending the ship’s side into a yawl, which was to ferry them to the landing. Among them was a gentleman who seemed known to Bob, who uttered an exclamation of displeased surprise, and then rowed his boat as close alongside as he dared, for the purpose of scrutinizing the stranger’s countenance more closely.

That very day, so eventful to Ellen, and to some others. Dr. Hugh paid his long-deferred visit to the cottage. But he was too late; no voice responded to his knock. After waiting until convinced that no one was about the place, he walked slowly and reluctantly away. Whatever mission he came upon—whether for his own pleasure or for Ellen’s—however much that visit might have changed the orphan’s destiny or his own, he came too late.

None of the neighbors noticed the absence of the Pearl of the cabin. As for Nelthorpe, he was so habitually away, that his coming or going was scarcely remarked. It was not until a woman ran in, the next morning, to beg the loan of a basin of meal, that she found the deserted state of the house; the

dishes on the table, not removed since yesterday's meal, Ellen gone, and her bed unpressed. This did not give her any immediate concern, though she thought it strange the cabin should be left unsecured. Ellen might have taken a trip to the city with her father. But no! another neighbor assured her that she had seen Bob go off alone! The hours rolled on, and a feeling of uneasiness began to grow among the people.

Dr. Hugh, riding in from his father's house, to get some boatman to convey him to the city, was informed of the mysterious disappearance of the "pride of the village."

He turned pale at the news; a sick fear shot to his heart—a great pang of remorse.

"Can it be possible that she has drowned herself?" was his first thought.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ASSIGNMENT.

It was a dark and tempestuous night in autumn, about the year 1770, that a person carefully enveloped in a long cloak, the material of which was well calculated to defend his person from the peltings of the storm, threaded his way through the irregular and partially lighted streets of New York. He had made his way through Dock street (now Pearl,) into Broad; then, turning up an outlet of narrower dimensions, and which seemed to conduct into the principal avenue of the city, he paused before a house of considerable size. A flagging in front distinguished it from the neighboring dwellings, the foot-walks before which were paved with small round stones, a rather uncomfortable pathway for the pedestrian traveler. The house, an antiquated structure, erected probably by an early inhabitant of "New Amsterdam," was fronted with Holland brick, the peaked gable finished at the edges step-wise; large iron figures, ranged along the front, bore date 1674. A heavy double door divided into two parts, termed the upper and under door, and accommodated with a ponderous iron knocker, afforded entrance.

The hour was late; yet here and there a light was seen dimly twinkling through the storm, from the respective casements of such individuals as business, or care, or perchance pleasure, might have still kept waking.

The stranger lifted the knocker, and sounded a tolerably loud summons to those within—it remained unanswered. After waiting with as much patience as a deluging burst of rain, assisted in its effects by strong gusts of an un pitying north-easter, would allow, he applied himself again to the massive ornament which graced the portal. It was this time of some effect; in an interval of the driving rain, which pattered about his ears, the stranger imagined he heard steps approaching within. He was not mistaken; a slow, uncertain, and it would seem feeble tread, came near the door, and bolt after bolt was with difficulty withdrawn; then followed an unsuccessful struggle of some moments' duration between a rusty key and marvellously unyielding lock, which seemed exceedingly disinclined to render up its trust, even to the probably faithful hands which were now employed in inducing it to do so. At last the upper half of the door swung slowly back, creaking on its hinges, and revealed the form of a negro, who looked coeval with the building; his woolly hair was whitened by age, his form thin and withered, bent almost double by the combined effects of labor, years, and decrepitude, and his hands, one of which rested on the edge of the unopened half of the door, while the other held a lamp, resembled the large and bony claw of some immense bird.

"What massa please to want?" was the question now addressed by this ancient servitor to our friend in the cloak.

"Your master. It is Evan Bertie that I wish to see; admit me, instantly."

"My massa? him gone to bed some two hours ago—him gone 'sleep—no one see him to-night."

"But I must see him, my friend. If he is asleep you must wake him—come, no delay; see him I must, and will—so open—open quickly. And seizing the door with a strong grasp, he gave it a portentous shake. The nerves of the negro did not seem braced to opposition; stooping, he undid the lower fastening, which had hitherto maintained the only barrier between himself and the enemy, during their brief col-

loquy, and who now striding across the threshold, showed to the eyes of the sable janitor a tall, and powerfully formed man.

"If massa would but wait a little, I go see," began the negro, but the stranger interrupted him. "I have no time to wait, you can go on to the chamber of Mr. Bertie, and I'll follow."

The negro looked irresolute. He regarded the stranger with eyes of fear and suspicion; the door of a room near them stood open, but was dark within. He looked wistfully down the long passage, but no cheering voice, no friendly foot-fall, told that relief was near. Left entirely to the guidance of his own judgment, he was once more about to petition for farther delay, when either by accident or design, the opening folds of the stranger's cloak, as he carelessly re-adjusted it about his person, distinctly revealed to the startled eyes of the negro the glittering and richly embossed handle of a sword. Directing a hasty glance at his unwelcome visitor, he led the way to a flight of stairs, which conducted them to an upper passage of some length, at the end of which light appeared beneath an unopened door. And here the sable guide paused, and knocked gently. A slight rustling sound was heard within, but no invitation to enter. Again the negro tapped, and this time attempted to turn the handle of the lock—all was silent. The stranger put forth his hand, when the negro, as if grown desperate, burst open the door, and the stranger entered.

The room was extensive and gloomy; lighted only by a single lamp. The fireplace, large and ornamented with Dutch tiles, was built across one corner of the apartment; the ceiling was traversed from end to end by large beams or rafters, darkened by time; the floor carpetless. A large clock stood in one corner, and in another a gigantic chest of drawers, enriched with heavily wrought brass handles, reared its tall form. A few solid, high-backed, leather-covered chairs, a red walnut table, the bow-shaped legs of which were terminated by curiously carved claws embracing a ball, completed the furniture of the apartment, if we except a writing-desk, placed not far from the fireplace, a pair of pistols, which were suspended over the mantel-piece, and a few shelves filled chiefly with professional volumes, and which occupied that division of the wall opposite the door of the entrance.

By the fire sat an aged man, habited in a dress of antique

fashion. Thin, to a degree of emaciation, his garments hung loosely about his form. From his shoes, which was garnished with buckles of enormous size, rose a pair of thick worsted stockings, which, reaching above his knee, were carefully adjusted there in a roll or fold, while the skirts of his waistcoat depending low, half concealed the color, as well as the form of the neither garment at this period in vogue. A gown of faded damask hung from his shoulders, and from beneath a peaked cap of red cloth, which covered his head, a few grizzled locks strayed sparsely over his hollow temples. The countenance of this individual was not remarkably pleasing in its expression; it was lighted by a pair of small, keen, gray eyes, and adorned with a nose which involuntarily reminded the beholder of the beak of a vulture. A chair stood near, which, from its position, appeared to have been recently vacated. The old gentleman was seated by the fire, a hand on each knee, and his withered features lighted by the flickering blaze of a decayed fire, when the stranger made his abrupt entrance. Startling, he looked around in some trepidation, as the intruder approached, and angrily commenced an objurgation at his domestic—"Scipio, you black scoundrel."

"Stop, Mr. Bertie," said the visitor, firmly; "it is useless to blame your servant—he did his duty—that is, he obeyed your commands, I presume, when he assured me you were abed and asleep, an hour ago; I, however, ventured to differ from him in opinion in this particular, and the result does credit to my judgment. In brief, I insisted on seeing you this night, the opposition of Scipio to the contrary, notwithstanding. I have business with you that brooks little delay."

"Really, sir, it is rather a late hour for business!" answered Mr. Bertie; "I am not in the habit of sitting up after midnight—not being very well, you must really have me excused," and the old gentleman began to cough most appealingly.

"I regret disturbing you, sir, but the matter about which I come is of consequence to myself, and possibly to others—it is in your power to satisfy me in a very few minutes, on one point of major importance—the others may be left, if you choose, until to-morrow."

The old gentleman thus addressed, looked on the tall figure that stood erect before him, and his countenance betrayed

curiosity not unmixed with uneasiness. The stranger was a good-looking man, of about forty, well dressed, and with somewhat of military bearing. The sword which he carried, however, was considered a necessary appendage to the dress of a man of fashion, in the time of which we write. His forehead was high and full, and the expression of the face generous and open. His full, clear eye, rested on the old man with a calm and penetrating gaze.

"I should like to know your business, then, if you please?" said the senior, rather testily. "Scipo, you may go below."

"He may stay here, if you like," said the stranger; "what I have to say is not strictly confidential in its nature. I would know from you, Evan Bertie, particulars respecting a certain assignment placed in your hands some fourteen years since, by an English Baronet."

"An as-sign-ment?" faltered the old man, his natural paleness changing to a ghastly clay-color, while a tremor attacked every joint.

"Aye! an assignment! a deed of trust which you have long held for the benefit of a certain English heiress?"

"Deed of trust—assignment," Bertie repeated tremulously—"I don't understand—I have had a vast deal of business on my hands in the course of my life—to be sure I might have *deeds of trust* among other things, certainly; but they are no doubt all delivered over, and settled long before now."

The stranger fixed his eyes steadily on the face of the old man, while he was speaking, and when he paused he quietly said—"Whatever engagement of yours may have heretofore been faithfully kept—whatever transactions honestly settled, I know not—that there is one, and that, too, of considerable magnitude, yet to be accounted for, I believe I can prove."

"Prove it then," said Bertie; "I defy you."

"You defy me!" pursued the stranger, "it is well—you deny, then, that a certain English heritor, some fourteen years since, made over to your care sundry lands, tenements, and annual rents, for the benefit of his daughter, Ellen Meredith—you will tell me, it is supposed, that she perished on this coast in a storm, on her voyage from England; still her father assigned certain estates in trust to you, for her, in case she still survived—and for his nearest relatives, in the event of her

leaving no offspring. A provision, also, was allotted to her husband, should he be still living."

"It is an idle tale," said the old man, "got up for the purpose of wringing something out of me—but I know a little better than all that comes to—I have not followed the profession of the law so many years for nothing, I can tell you."

"You do not, you can not mean to deny that you hold an instrument, the nature of which I have just described?"

"I can, and do!"

"Bethink yourself, old man, this matter will be seriously investigated."

"I care not!"

"I, myself, am next of kin, to the father of Ellen Meredith, and should claim the property left for her, but—"

"You are an impostor, sir," exclaimed Bertie, agitated, pale, and trembling, but still wrathful, "I have not a doubt of it, I will have you prosecuted, sir, for this presumption, I will," and he sunk back in his chair, almost breathless with varied emotions.

"But," continued the stranger, carefully taking up his sentence at the precise point at which it had been interrupted, "but, that the offspring of the unfortunate girl *still survives!*"

"Ha!" exclaimed Bertie, suddenly sitting upright in his chair, and actually glaring, more than gazing, on the features of him who stood before him.

"Do you know, Nelthorpe!" asked the visitor in the same calm voice.

Again the aged lawyer sunk back in his chair, a slight convulsion passed over his features; it, however, soon subsided, but he did not speak.

"Come, Mr. Bertie," resumed the visitor, "all this is idle. I am perfectly acquainted with the ground on which I proceed, and my purpose is firm. I will say nothing further to you on the subject to-night, I see you are agitated. I shall call on you at an early hour to-morrow, when I hope to find you better prepared to satisfy me on those points on which I shall insist. He turned to leave the room; the voice of Bertie detained him.

"This is a strange business," he said, his speech rendered almost inarticulate from the combined effects of surprise, anger

and apprehension, "a very strange business, I do not comprehend it clearly, you come into my house at midnight, and accuse me—me—a poor helpless, old man, you accuse me—"

"Accuse you! no, I accused you of nothing, I asked of you certain particulars. Whether I have reason to accuse you, is best known to yourself."

"It amounts to much the same thing," continued Bertie, gaining courage by the apparent quietude of manner in his adversary; "but, is it reasonable to suppose that I, a poor, feeble man, worn out with years and care, can remember on the instant every circumstance which may have taken place throughout my life! I could not do it sir, I could not do it."

"You acknowledge, then, that it is possible you may have such instrument in your hands, such property in trust, and may have forgotten it?"

"Sir," answered the lawyer with vivacity, "I acknowledge no such thing, take notice, sir, I acknowledge nothing!"

"Very well, you will hear from me again," and the stranger retired. Bertie listened as the sound of his firm step lessened in the distance; and when the heavy door closed behind him with a vehemence that resounded throughout the building, leaned once more back in his chair, and closed his eyes.

He remained not long in this state of apparent repose. A door behind him opened gently, and a figure stepped into the room, looking cautiously around as he did so. "Is he gone?" asked in a half-whisper, this new invader of the quiet of Evan Bertie.

"Yes, and Satan go with him," replied the senior, opening his eyes and rising from his chair. "What infernal chance brought him to this part of the world? or, are you sure he is the man we wot of?"

"Quite sure—quite certain—no mistake about it—George Gower—all right! I told you he was coming here. I was sure of it, the moment I set eyes on him. The ship had just arrived, so I thought I'd step down and learn what news was stirring, when, among the passengers just coming on shore, who should I see but Colonel George Gower. I felt devilish shy. And yet there was no cause, for he does not know me though I have seen him many a time, years ago—I suspected mischief when I saw Lieutenant Moreton here some

weeks ago. They were always great friends—always cronying formerly—Moreton is at the bottom of it, I'll lay my life."

Mr. Bertie did not appear to notice what was said by his companion. He had replaced himself in his chair, and with a hand on each knee, was gazing intently on a bed of embers, that were fast dying out on the broad hearth. During the continuance of his brown study, his companion amused himself with divers half-uttered oaths, and imprecations on the wickedness of the world—on the ill-luck of people in general, and of himself in particular; intermingled with moral reflections on the folly of roguery, and the punishment due to all villains, failing not to place those foremost on the list of prying and mean-spirited scoundrels, who impertinently put themselves forward to claim their own.

"Have you done with your cursed nonsense, Nelthorpe?" croaked Evan Bertie, "because, if you haven't, I'll wait till you've finished, and then ask you what course is now best to be taken, as things stand."

"Hang me if I know," replied Nelthorpe; "and yet a way might be found, but it's dangerous."

"Tell me not of danger," said Bertie, "we must run every risk. It is useless to talk of danger."

"To you, perhaps," gloomily returned Nelthorpe, "who, sitting quietly here by the fireside, have nothing to do but to hatch projects, leaving it for such poor devils as I, to execute 'em—you may well scout at danger."

"What does the man mean?" retorted Evan, "and who runs the greater hazard? Is it not I? If ill-success betide, on whom will the storm burst? Will it not burst upon me? me—Evan Bertie? but it shall not—it shall not," he repeated, sinking his voice gradually. "For years I have held this property, it is growing more valuable every day, and now to resign it, I thought they had all been dead, all but that puling girl, what could she do with so much property if she had it? It is grown very valuable, so many broad acres, and now to give it up."

While Evan was thus, in answering his colleague, pursuing the idea most prominent in his mental vision, namely, the value of the orphan's property, Nelthorpe regarded him with an expression which it would be difficult to describe. An

assemblage of features better calculated to express villainy, than belonged to this man, it might not be easy to find. Mere ugliness was nothing; a very plain set of features may be rendered agreeable by the light which irradiates them from the soul within. But in the present subject there was no such redeeming expression, for it is to be feared there was no sunlight of the soul to cheer the worse than arid desert of Nelthorpe's countenance. His hair hung in matted locks about his face, and his eyes gleamed from beneath heavy and shaggy brows, with the vindictive and malicious spirit of a fiend; his garb was somewhat, though not decidedly, that of a seaman, and coarse and slovenly in the extreme.

"It rests with yourself to give it up or not, as you please," said Nelthorpe, when his patron had finished his half soliloquy.

"I wish I could think so, I wish I could, Nelthorpe, but, say how can it be done? say how, man?"

"Why, in the first place, is there any proof, excepting what I myself can furnish, that any such deed or assignment exists."

"Hum!" musing. "Why, no, I don't think there is. Yet stay, I believe there is a copy of the instrument somewhere, but where I do not know, and in whose hands it was placed, I quite forget; most probably though, it is lost or destroyed long ere this."

"We are not sure of it, however," said Nelthorpe, insolently, "and I advise you to rub up your rusty old memory this very night, and try if you can not put me on the right track to ferret it out by to-morrow; George Gower is no trifler, you may see that with half an eye. He means to do something, that is clear, whether to the purpose we must not leave to chance."

"By no means; I trust to you, Nelthorpe, as I have always done, and I hope—"

"Hope nothing from me more than I have done already, unless you make it more worth my while. I'll tell you what it is, dad, some more of the yellow boys are wanting. I am sadly out at elbows, as you may see." And he laughed familiarly, as he glanced over his sordid attire.

"You have had a vast deal of money from me, Nelthorpe:

said Bertie; "it is impossible to satisfy you. What you do with it, I can not imagine; some men would have made to themselves a snug independency with what you have received from me, and with all, you are still poor, and—and—"

"Wicked and rapacious as ever, you would say, I suppose," broke in the other; "just so, grandfather. What I do with the money is no business of yours; I earn it in your service, that is, I keep your secret; the moment you choose to break our compact, the game is up; you know what to expect, I care but little, I am a sort of universal genius, as they say, and can earn my bread in more ways than one, that's the beauty of it."

"I have no intention of breaking our agreement; but if I pay you well, I expect something more than mere boasting in return. Now, as to this matter; you have heard what he said about the offspring of Ellen Meredith. How he got his intelligence is a mystery to me, but it is clear that he is aware of the existence of her child."

"There is no mystery to me in the matter. The devil, in the shape of Moreton, has helped him to the knowledge; no one beside knew of the matter excepting myself. He will meet with his match in me, though."

"No doubt he will, Nelthorpe—no doubt he will—and now good night—to-morrow we will talk this matter over again, and see what is best to be done."

"Faith, I shall soon make my *own* mind up on that head," said the ruffian, and without further ceremony he departed.

Old Bertie groaned deeply when he found himself alone. He leaned back in his chair and resigned himself to painful thought. And who can say how deep and painful those thoughts might have been. How might late repentance, and perhaps remorse, struggle with guilt, in that spirit whose burning avarice more than seventy winters had failed to quell. And even now he struggled to hold his gains, unlawfully obtained though they might be, with a rigid and fearful tenacity, which death, only, it would seem, could loosen. As the gnome broods over his golden treasure in the dark bowels of the earth, so did his sullen soul revolve the possibility of securing to himself the treasures of the orphan, surrounded by midnight darkness, solitude, and storm.

It was evening of the day succeeding the night on which the events above detailed had transpired, that two persons were seated in the little parlor of a tavern, situated somewhere in the vicinity of what was then called King street. The "best inn's best room" was humble at the early period of which we write. Carpets and sofas there were none; the sifter sand with which the floor was sprinkled, was drawn by the broom of the ingenious housewife into a variety of fanciful devices. A few wooden high-backed chairs, a small looking-glass, surrounded by a scalloped mahogany frame, a few pictures, set in black mouldings, was the utmost that was attempted in the way of embellishment. The stately hotel was undreamed of—our present thriving, bustling, gay and luxurious city was then in its infancy. Yet even then, as now, the heart of man was filled with all sorts of imaginings. It was easy to recognize in the taller of the two men the fine person and gentlemanly bearing of Colonel Gower; he was in earnest conversation with a person seated beside him, at a small circular table, the centre of which was graced by a flowered China punch-bowl of overgrown dimensions, filled with that fragrant and grateful beverage—wine being then less in vogue than it became in subsequent years. Gower leaned his arm on the table with a thoughtful air.

"It is vain, Moreton," he said, addressing his friend, "to attempt reasoning with old Bertie; I saw him, as you advised, last night, and with difficulty gained access to him again this morning; indeed, I doubt whether I should have been admitted had not his only domestic, a negro, by the name of Scipio, recognized in me an old acquaintance, which the imperfect light last night, added to his fears, prevented him from doing. He has taken me into favor; in fact, the fellow is grateful to me for an act of kindness which he received from me some years ago, and which I had forgotten till he brought it to my recollection. I have hope, however, that I may render the circumstance in some way available to our present wishes."

"It is to be regretted that you have no proof to back your own personal evidence," replied his friend, a fine, hale-looking man, with a clear gray eye, and face embrowned by the sunshine of a warmer clime than the one he was at present enjoying.

"It may be most necessary," rejoined Colonel Gower. "He positively denies the existence of the assignment, and threatens to have me punished as an impostor."

"It is an unpleasant situation of affairs," said Moreton, "ye I by no means despair of ultimate success."

"Nor I—I once had a copy of this same assignment, and—"

"Yon had? my dear fellow what have you done with it?"

"Lost it in rather a singular manner—I will relate the circumstance."

"But not till you have tasted once more this excellent beverage before us, which, in faith, I think is about the best that I have ever compounded. The fruit is fresh and of the finest flavor. I brought it with me from Jamaica."

"Having now 'done yon reason,'" said Colonel Gower, smiling, as he set down the bowl, "I will proceed with my story. I had—it is now some fifteen years since—accompanied some brother officers to a dinner given by a friend, on the eve of my embarking for England. The dinner was succeeded by a ball, which, graced as it was by the presence of several beautiful and accomplished women, made time fly so swiftly that morning had fairly dawned before we broke up. I felt no inclination to sleep, and having indulged, if the truth must be told, rather freely at the table of my friend, previous to the evening party, and the lights, gaiety, and music, with, perhaps, a still farther encroachment upon the rules of sobriety, rendering my head unsettled and my blood feverish. The breath of early morning seemed delicious, and I carelessly strolled along the banks of the East River, till I found myself at least three or four miles from town. The shore at this place was picturesque and lovely. The rocky ledges at the water's edge were fringed with shrubs, intermingled with wild flowers of brilliant hues—thick woods rose in the distance—the mists were rising from the dells, and the rosy color which began to streak the Eastern horizon deepened every moment. A young man of agreeable countenance and demeanor, dressed in the garb of a hunter, with his ponch depending from his side, and carrying a rifle on his shoulder, came lightly along the path in which I was strolling. We exchanged courtesies, and entered into conversation, and being wearied with my ramble, I

seated myself on a projection of a rock which overhung the river, while he remained standing by my side. We could not have remained thus many minutes, when, bending over to examine more attentively a remarkable effect of light and shadow reflected in the glassy mirror at my feet, I was suddenly seized with vertigo, and fell into the water. I remembered nothing more, till I recovered from what I supposed a state of insensibility, and found myself lying on the bank, my clothes saturated with moisture, and my pockets completely rifled of their contents. I had a considerable sum of money with me when I left the city, it was all missing. What I most regretted was the copy of the assignment now in question, and which had disappeared with the rest. The dog of the young hunter, which I had been previously admiring, lay dead a few feet from me, having, as appeared, received several stabs with a knife, or some sharp-pointed instrument."

"And did you not immediately institute an inquiry concerning this very singular affair?"

CHAPTER VIII.

LIEUTENANT MORETON'S STORY.

"I well believe
Thou wilt not utter what thou dost not know,
And so far will I trust thee."—SHAKESPEARE.

"I COULD not. The vessel in which I had taken my passage for England, was to sail that morning, and I barely made out to reach the city in time to embark. Since then I have been, as you know, engaged in the East-India service, and had but just reached my native home, on my return, when I received your letter, intimating that my presence in this place was necessary."

"Had you no suspicion of the young hunter with whom you were conversing just before your accident?"

"I certainly have sometimes thought that he might have been guilty. And yet the death of the dog, which seemed a

great favorite with him, throws a mystery over the affair. It is possible that a straggling Indian might have done the deed, and also murdered or captured the hunter, and supposing me already dead, left me unmolested."

"But," suggested Moreton, "had the young man been murdered, most probably the body would have been seen in your vicinity."

"True, unless it had been thrown into the water by the perpetrators of the deed. The river at this spot was deep."

"Still," urged Moreton, "I am at a loss to divine how it happened that you were deposited safely upon the turf. An Indian would scarcely have had the philanthropy to have left you in the comfortable possession of your scalp." Colonel Gower smiled.

"It is one of those mysteries which time alone can unravel."

"It could not have been many months after the melancholy fate of your cousin that you arrived in New York," observed Moreton.

"It was not. Previous to taking my departure for India, where I expected to remain many years, my uncle solicited me to accompany him out to America, in search of his daughter, who had left her home to follow the fortunes of a young Scottish adventurer, to whom she had been sometime privately married."

"And it so happened," said Lieutenant Moreton, "that I embarked in the same vessel in which your cousin had taken passage with her child. The gentleness and pensiveness of her manners interested me, and, perceiving the loneliness of her situation, I strove by some few little marks of attention to relieve it. She was grateful for my kindness, and one day confided to me her story. She wept when she spoke of her father, and entreated whenever I returned to England, that I would seek him for her sake, and assure him of her ever-grateful love—of her deep regret at ever having offended him. Our voyage was prosperous till we neared the port of our destination, when a storm drove us out of our course, and ran our vessel on the rocks. A boat was lowered, into which, in the distraction of the moment, so many of the crew and passengers crowded, that before she reached the shore she swamped, and I have reason to think all perished, excepting myself and the

child, which I was providentially the means of saving. The unfortunate mother was lost."

"How did you succeed in obtaining aid for yourself and charge, in the region on which you were thrown?" inquired Colonel Gower.

Among the wreckers who crowded the shore was a man and his wife. I believe he was a fisherman. They appeared honest, and the woman, who had no offspring, was delighted with the child, and with them I left it, with many promises on my part of satisfactory remuneration if they treated it kindly, and on theirs, solemn asseverations so to do. I did not tell them the name of the child, nor any of the circumstances which related to its parents. I did not at the time consider it necessary. I visited the cottage only once after this; the infant was well, and grew finely. The man and his wife were much attached to it—particularly the latter. I placed some gold in their hands, and promised them a farther and regular supply. The man, who you are apprised is Nelthorpe, ostensibly followed the occupation of a fisherman, but I strongly suspect he was even then connected with the pirates which infested these waters. My business in New York was of a confidential nature; it was also briefly arranged, and I returned home. On my arrival in England, I sought for Sir W. Meredith, but learned that he had gone to Scotland to seek his daughter—not being able to remain in England many days, for I was under orders to proceed elsewhere, I addressed a letter to Ellen's father, communicating the circumstances, which I have just detailed to you, but which letter, I have reason to think, he never received."

"He never did. And disappointed of finding her as he had hoped in some part of the north, he was almost sinking under sorrow and disappointment, when he obtained intelligence of her having sailed for America. He sought me; I had received an appointment to India, but it wanted some months yet of the time fixed upon for my departure, and I agreed to accompany him; indeed, he was too much depressed in health and spirits to have been suffered to make so long a voyage alone. Shortly before we sailed, there was a rumor of the wreck of the vessel in which Ellen had embarked, and of the loss of all on board. Sir William would not believe the truth

of it—it was singular, the tenacity with which he held the conviction that his daughter had been saved; and even when, on our arrival in this city, he received the sad confirmation of the fact of the loss of the vessel, he still professed a belief that Ellen had not perished. Under this impression, shortly before his return to England, where he died, he made an *assignment* of valuable property, which he purchased in this place, as well as what remained in England, to Evan Bertie, Esq., for the benefit of his daughter, or her descendants, etc.”

“And you were privy to this?”

“Certainly.”

“It appears to me that your presence is a sufficient proof, and that there can be no difficulty.”

“He defies me to bring proof of the truth of my assertion.”

“He is a villain!”

“There can be little doubt of that.”

“Had Sir William much previous knowledge of this man's character, when he made him the depository of so valuable a trust?” asked Moreton.

“Personally, none; he rested his confidence chiefly on the opinion of others. Evan Bertie was said to be a man of integrity and strict attention to the business of his profession, and his manner toward the Baronet confirmed him in the good opinion which these favorable reports were calculated to inspire.”

“He must be much changed then,” said Moreton, “if all which I surmise be true. As I have already apprised you, I believe him to be in league with Nelthorpe, which was the reason I wished you to mention his name during your conversation with him, and you say the effect was electrical. There is mischief intended, and we must defeat it.”

“And this poor girl?”

“We must get her from the Nelthorpes as early as practicable. I have not been long arrived myself, you know, but I early commenced my search after Ellen's child. Nelthorpe had left his former residence, and for weeks I sought him in vain—it is only a few days since I discovered him, and so changed by a life of idleness and vice, as with difficulty to be recognized.”

“He is aware then of your being here?”

"I think not. I did not wish to be recollected by him, as I did not know what plan of action you might think it best to follow on your arrival here. Besides, there was danger, if as I suspect, there is collusion between him and Bertie, that he would put the latter on his guard, particularly if he has discovered, as by some means or other I suspect he has done, the parentage of the girl still in his power."

"But why do you suspect these men of collusion?"

"Nelthorpe's vices have dragged him down to the extreme abyss of poverty. He seems to have no visible mode of getting a livelihood, but is inveterately idle. In this state he is received, as I am credibly informed, and as I myself have seen, at the house of Bertie. That he is a perpetual hanger-on of that wretched old man, who, I have no doubt, has reasons of his own, which he would not dare avow, for supporting, while he hates and fears him. The inference which I draw from all this is, that Nelthorpe has found out the parentage of the orphan—has heard of the deed of trust, and makes the old man pay him heavily for keeping the secret."

"This looks reasonable."

"I think so." There was a pause of some minutes, when Gower spoke:

"It was said at the time of the wreck of the vessel in which my cousin sailed, that many articles were thrown up on the beach. Ellen, as I am informed, had some valuable family jewels with her when she left home, but most likely all her effects were swallowed up by the waves."

"I remember well," replied his friend, "seeing a trunk which had belonged to Mrs. Mc Cloud, laying among a number of other things on the beach, and on re-visiting the spot the day following for the purpose of securing it, it was gone. I supposed I had hidden it securely from the wreckers, in a crevice of the rocks."

"How do you account for its disappearance?"

"I can not do so satisfactorily. It is said that a solitary man resided not many miles from the coast, though in a pleasant and fertile part of the country; that he frequently visited the beach; and it was further remarked that he removed some years since to a pretty farm, which he purchased, not far from this city, and where he resides—but still in solitude."

“And you think it not unlikely that he may have secured the trunk and its contents to his own benefit?”

“It is difficult to account for the man's sudden rise from a state of poverty to comparative affluence, on any other grounds. But the hour grows late. We will think over these matters and do the best we can.” And the friends separated for the night.

We will now lay before the reader a few particulars respecting the unhappy lady who perished so long ago, on the night with which our story opened.

Ellen was the only child of Sir William Meredith, Bart., and idolized by him. She had been addressed by young McCloud, who solicited her hand, but Sir William would not sanction their marriage. He did not object to the young man on his own account, for his character was unimpeachable; neither was his want of fortune the most ostensible objection, since the father of Ellen was generous in his feelings, and the fortune intended for his child would have afforded an ample sufficiency for both. There was another cause for his aversion to the match. The father of young McCloud, a man originally of some consideration as well as fortune, in his own country, had unhappily forfeited the one by certain overt acts, which lost him the good will of the community of which he was a member; and sacrificed the other in hazardous speculations, entered into for the purpose of increasing an already ample income. Having thus succeeded in deranging his affairs, and being disencumbered of all ties, save one child, a son, (his wife having been dead some years,) he settled some provision on the youth, whom he placed at school, and abandoned the country, went, no one knew whither, nor whether he yet lived. It is true that young McCloud, when grown to manhood, gave evidence of probity, industry, and honor, equal to the best, yet the Baronet, who was tremblingly anxious for the happiness of his daughter, had fears—and, not altogether divested of ambition on her account, listened to the overtures of a noble suitor and forbade young McCloud to visit at his house. Alarmed at the prospect of coercion, and debarred the open manifestation of love for each other, the young couple contrived to meet in secret. The consequence was a private marriage, and in an evil hour the unfortunate Ellen

left her paternal roof. They struggled for some time with adverse circumstances, cheered and consoled by mutual affection, and it was not till after the birth of their first child, a lovely daughter, that James McCloud decided to seek for better fortunes in the new world, of which he had heard so much. Accordingly he embarked for America, and having safely arrived, by unremitting industry he succeeded in the course of a few months in establishing a lowly, but as he fondly thought, a secure and happy home.

In joyful obedience to his summons, Ellen embarked with her infant and what valuables she yet possessed. Their voyage was prosperous until near the destined port, when one of those terrific storms arose so frequent on our coast. It was night—and oh, the blackness of that night! Who can image to themselves the dashing of those mountain waves?—the raging of the winds—the driving fury of the storm which wrecked that gallant vessel? earthly help, there was none; the barque was driven by the violence of the gale out of her destined course, and on the eastern shore of Long Island met her fate; all on board were lost, excepting, as has been already related, Lieutenant Moreton and the infant whom, as by a miracle, he rescued from the watery grave which menaced her.

Ellen was gone—and the hopes of her husband became a desert—a desert from the arid soil of which no gem of joy, or love, or comfort, could ever spring—Ellen was gone, and James McCloud became a changed and moody man.

The vessel, broken and dismantled as she was, long remained a memento of that fatal storm. There she lay, wedged among the rocks, her sable hull washed by the waves that, sparkling in the sunshine, curled their foamy crests against her sides as in mockery—and there she lay in the calm and solemn hour of midnight, when the silent moon rose high in the heavens, and the blue vault, cloudless, with countless planets burning in its illimitable depth, showed as if storm and tempest had ever been unknown. Mild, yet majestic, was the solemn scene, that world of trackless waters over which the planet of the night cast a broad line of silvery brightness, and every wave in its quiet unquietness, caught and reflected from its crest those pure rays, as onward they went, a lengthened

phalanx toward the shore, and there they broke with low and sullen swell. And others followed, and in the distance others were still following in never-ending succession, carrying their sea-green foam high upon the beach, then retreating with still dignity to the ocean bed.

It was, and is, a desert tract, that shore. No umbrageous tree, no thriving shrub grows there; no soft verdure on which the eye may rest when aching with its gaze on the grandeur of the ocean. And yet on that wild and solitary beach a living thing appears—alone—alone! at the dead hour! it moves along the margin of the wave-beaten shore—now quickly, and now more slow—it pauses, and looks toward the wreck—its motions are those of despair. Was that a cry of sorrow which rose on the midnight breeze? Again the solitary mourner traverses the beach with hurried step, once more he stops, he raises his clasped hands toward heaven, he strains his eyes once more upon the sable wreck, then turns, and rushing wildly across the sands, is lost in the distance.

It was soon noised abroad that a young English heiress had perished in the storm on the coast, and that property belonging to her of great value had been washed on shore, but mysteriously removed, no one knew how, or by whom. The lonely individual, spoken of by Morceton, was suspected, more from the circumstance of his being a stranger, and avoiding society, than from any other reason, unless the outward appearance of improved fortunes might be deemed just cause for suspicion.

It was not long after that the circumstance occurred, related by Captain Gower to his friend, in which he was robbed of his money and pocket-book. He suspected the hunter, but, in truth, it was Nelthorpe himself, who, while the young man at the hazard of his own life, had rescued Gower from his perilous situation, and leaving him on the bank, had gone to seek aid for the purpose of restoring him, had stolen from a covert in a neighboring thicket, and rifled the pockets of the insensible man. The pocket-book, containing the assignment, he had dropped in his haste, to escape from the scene of his guilt. He had also stabbed the dog, that, faithful to the trust reposed in him, had endeavored to defend the body from the proceedings of Nelthorpe.

The hunter and the suspected solitary were one and the same. Nelthorpe, who knew the suspicion that attached to this man, gladly seized the opportunity of having the robbery also ascribed to him; for the Colonel, although he left the city immediately after the occurrence, mentioned the fact to some friends, who promised to have the affair investigated. Gower little knew that the gallant young man who saved his life, nearly periled his own, from causes which could not easily have been foreseen. When the hunter returned with the aid for which he had sought, and found the body removed, and the faithful animal lying dead, which he had left to guard it, his surprise may well be imagined. But matters did not end here; stories of a robbery were put in circulation, and that of murder was added. The hunter was arrested, and on being interrogated, could not, or would not, give any satisfactory account of himself. Nelthorpe appeared as witness against him, but could only say, that he saw him standing beside the stranger a few minutes before he fell into the water; and, as after strict examination, nothing could be proved against the prisoner, he was set at liberty, to seek deeper seclusion than before, to have his brow shaded with still murkier gloom.

All things progressed much as usual, till after the arrival of Sir W Meredith, with his nephew in the city, and his legal arrangement with Evan Bertie. Then Nelthorpe presented himself before the wily old lawyer, and communicated to him what he hoped would secure to himself competence for life. For one moment it occurred to this man to seek the Baronet himself, certain of a rich reward for the blessed intelligence which he had it in his power to impart; but the reward, though no doubt it would be ample, would be given at once, and there an end; whereas, by holding the secret of the life of Sir William's heiress in his own power, he secured to himself, as he hoped, a continual advantage.

The schemes of the wicked generally revert on themselves, and their fruits are destruction. With the means of living more comfortably, unworthily obtained, as those means were, Nelthorpe's habits of idleness and profligacy increased each day, but in the midst of his fancied security, he was suddenly alarmed at the unexpected appearance of Lieutenant Moreton; he knew what his errand must be, and when Colonel Gower

also arrived, he felt that the nefarious business, which had so long and successfully been carried on, would now, most inevitably, be discovered. Yet he succeeded so well in concealing the trepidation he felt when he first met with Morcton, that that gentleman supposed himself unrecognized.

Nelthorpe considered he no longer had only a weak and doting old man to govern, whose guilty avarice had placed him in his power, he had now to cope with men, men in the power of strength and vigor of intellect. He was certain of detection. No feigned tale would pass with them. It remained then for him to decide, and that quickly, what steps he should take which would be most conducive to his own advantage. The moral of the case formed no part of the question, he was guided solely by expediency.

Scipio had been engaged in arranging his master's study, and having finished all things to his satisfaction, was about to withdraw, when he heard Nelthorpe's voice. He was conversing with his master, they were advancing together. The negro was timid at all times, but his dread and dislike of Nelthorpe amounted to horror. He seldom met with him but to receive some mark of abuse or scorn; too often the exacerbation of a low and weak mind. Acting in accordance with his fears, instead of walking boldly out of the room, he stepped into a vacant closet in one corner of the room, though at no small risk of detection, and had barely time to close the door, when his master, accompanied by Nelthorpe, entered.

"I'll tell you what it is," said Nelthorpe, throwing himself into a chair, folding his arms, and stretching out his legs, with the air of a man quite satisfied of the truth of the facts which he is propounding, and only bestowing them upon his auditor, for that auditor's own good, "there are breakers ahead, that is certain, and steer which way you will, I don't see how we're to clear 'em."

"Gower can *prove* nothing!" grumbled Bertie.

"Maybe not; but he'll try to do so. He is the man who had a copy of this blasted deed of gift."

Bertie started.

"What do you mean, Nelthorpe? why have you never told me of this?"

"Because I never remembered it myself until the night that

the Captain called here. When I got home I began to think over former times, and I called to mind the fellow who was taken and tried for robbing Colonel Gower, as was supposed. There was no property of the Colonel's found on him, however, but a pocket-book, containing a draft of some law paper. I took no notice at the time, but I now recollect it as well as if it had happened yesterday."

"Nelthorpe," said the old man eagerly, "that must be the copy I told you of."

Nelthorpe nodded.

"Was it suffered to remain in the man's possession?"

Again Nelthorpe nodded his head.

"Where does the man live?" asked Bertie.

"He lives some distance from the town, and a comfortable place it is, that he has managed to get. Scoundrels will always flourish," added Nelthorpe, with a sneer, "while honest men can hardly earn their bread."

Bertie plunged in deep speculation, and did not notice the closing remark of his coadjutor.

"What is the name of this person, Nelthorpe?"

"No matter for his name," replied that worthy, with a sinister glance at his patron, "some people are better without any."

"I wish the fellow had been hung," said Evan, "with all my heart, but, as the case stands—"

"We must shoot him!"

"Aye!"

"You are willing, then, that I should try the goodness of my rifle on him."

"Perfectly!" replied the hardened old man

Again Nelthorpe regarded his companion with a look of the most indescribable expression. It was neither hatred, nor contempt, nor scorn, nor ridicule, but a mixture of all these, and he burst into a loud and ungovernable fit of laughter.

So unexpected, and as it seemed, unreasonable, a fit of mirth, astonished Bertie, who sat looking at him in unfeigned amazement.

"Oh Lord! oh Lord!" he exclaimed, when the violence of his cachination allowed him to take breath, "this will be something to tell of," and he indulged in another, but rather less violent exhibition of mirth.

"I really see nothing at present to laugh at," said Bertie, peevishly, "and I must say that I think your mirth exceedingly ill-timed."

"You would not, if you knew the joke."

"Well, as I do not, we will return to business, if you please."

"With all my heart."

"This Moreton—the Lieutenant—on all sides, difficulty, I think. You are sure he is the man who brought the child to your house?"

"Positive!"

"You were positive, too, that he was killed in a skirmish with the Indians years ago. I rested my chief hope in the supposed death of that man; the girl could have been disposed of, the Colonel, if he ever returned from India, which I thought doubtful, could not prove an assignment, at least I hoped so, and all might have been safe, but now—"

"Aye, now!" added Nelthorpe, "there will be the devil to pay. Gower will prove a trump card, or I'm mistaken."

The old man groaned.

"Where is the girl?" he asked, after a silence of some minutes.

"I don't know."

"Is she not at your house?"

"No!"

"Then you have—Nelthorpe, have you—you can not—ruffian, that you are—you can not—you dare not, have hurt that poor thing," stammered Evan Bertie. He had sometimes seen the child, and steeled as his bosom had long been by the indulgence of avarice and evil passions, there was something in the innocent countenance of that little girl that strangely moved him.

"What do you mean by calling me ruffian?" shouted Nelthorpe; "I have not hurt a hair of the girl's head. She left my house, of her own accord, last night. I suppose I might have found her if I had searched, but I did not take the trouble. If she is stolen by an Indian, and carried up the country, or if she has strayed away into the woods, and got eaten up by some wild beast, what odds would it make? in either case, it might be all the better for you, grandfather."

Evan Bertie shuddered.

"To say the truth," continued Nelthorpe, "since my old woman's death, which happened a few weeks ago, I have found the girl troublesome; she was for ever wanting something or other, which I had not to give her. I don't understand these things, they vex me, and I struck her once or twice; I suppose that offended her, and she ran away."

"You surprise me; I did not know that your wife was dead."

"No! very likely not. I never thought to mention it. I have other things to think of!"

"But, about this assignment?" resumed Evan Bertie.

"True!" interrupted Nelthorpe, and assuming on the instant a demeanor of far more civility than he was by any means accustomed to show toward Bertie, in a subdued tone of voice, said:

"I have been thinking that it will be for the best that you should intrust that instrument to me."

"To you!" exclaimed Bertie, "for what purpose?"

"Because you can then safely say that you hold no such paper, that will be one reason, and an all-sufficient one, I should suppose."

But Evan was silent; he by no means approved of the proposal; yet ventured not replying to the man in such tones as his effrontery deserved.

"I really do not see what advantage would arise from the transfer," he said, "however, I may think of it."

"Do so, you will find it best," said Nelthorpe, resuming his usual swagger. "But where do you keep the instrument? It is here in this drawer at your elbow, I'll lay my life."

"It's perfectly safe, wherever it may be," said Bertie, with as much calmness as he could assume.

"Well, I am now going to try and find the fellow who was suspected of robbing the Colonel, and I shall come here this evening to let you know how I succeed." He then left the room, and Evan Bertie also retired.

As soon as they were fairly out of hearing, Scipio opened the door of his retreat. Not a word of the conversation had been lost upon him; and his kind nature had been greatly outraged at the sentiments and expressions which he had

overheard. Shocked he was, and astonished that so much wickedness should exist in the world.

"Dat Nelthorpe," he soliloquized, as he slowly withdrew, "tink no more of shooting a man dan if he was a wild pigeon, and dat poor gal, too. I shall go to good Captain Gower, dis minute, and tell him de whole ting. Lor-a-gor, 'tis too much."

CHAPTER IX.

"THE GODS ARE JUST."

Absence, with all its pains
Is by this charming moment swept away.—THOMPSON.

It was the close of a soft, autumnal day, that a man clad in the garb of a respectable farmer, neat, clean and comfortable, was taking his way through a narrow and unfrequented path, which led through a small wood. The countenance of this person was grave, but expressive of kindness and benignity; his eye was good, his complexion browned by the sun and wind, and his thick, black hair somewhat streaked with gray. As he passed thoughtfully onward, his attention was drawn to something which resembled the human form, closely crouched at the foot of a tree. He approached to examine it more attentively, and discovered a sleeping girl. Surprised at finding one of her sex and age in a place so lonely and remote, he supposed she must have strayed into the woods, and lost her way. Compassionating her desolate condition, the traveller proceeded to awaken her, for the purpose of ascertaining her place of abode, and restoring her to her friends. He stirred her gently; she started, and opened a pair of large, blue eyes, with which she stared wildly upon him. She struggled to her feet, but, overcome with weakness, would have fallen, had not the man caught and supported her. She was terrified, and trembled, nor could all the kind words of the stranger reassure her. In reply to his questions, she told him her name was Ellen; that she had no parents living; that the woman who had been in the place of a mother to her, was

dead, and the woman's husband used her ill—so ill that she would remain in his house no longer. She had left the house the day previous, and passed the last night in the woods. As the good stranger looked upon the slender form and delicate features of the subject of such barbarous treatment, he felt his heart swell with pity and kindness toward her. He urged her to go with him to his comfortable home, and, half leading, half carrying her, he got her there in safety. Calling his domestic—a decent elderly woman, who officiated also as housekeeper—he gave the young wanderer into her charge, who speedily took such measures as were best calculated to restore comfort to her exhausted frame. It is, perhaps, useless to add, that this was the young orphan who had fled from the barbarity of Nelthorpe.

It was about the same hour of the same evening, that Colonel Gower and his friend, Lieutenant Moreton, in the apartment of the latter, were earnestly discoursing upon some of the circumstances which have been above related, when they were told that a person wished to be permitted to see them. He was shown up, and our friend Scipio entered. His advent, entirely unlooked for, surprised the two gentlemen, who eagerly inquired to what it might be owing. Scipio, who much circumlocution, repeated the conversation which he had lately overheard, and found ready and attentive auditors in Colonel Gower and his friend. A consultation was immediately held, and it was thought best, in the first place, to endeavor to find the residence of the ci-devant hunter, and Scipio, who had resolved not to return to the house of Evan Bertie, unless compelled by force to do so, volunteered to be their guide.

"I hab neber been dere, 'tis true," said the black, "but if 'tis 'bove de ground, I tink I ean find um."

Thus encouraged, and provided with a tolerable horse each, they set forth.

They arrived at the farm-house not long after the master of it had returned from his daily pursuits. On seeing the strangers he advanced to meet them, and invited them to enter, with a courtesy of manner so different from what the character given of him had led them to expect, that it served almost to unsettle their confidence in his identity. The appearance

of every thing in and about his house, too, indicated nothing but order, comfort, and regularity—the result, as would seem, of honesty and goodness; the furniture was neat, though plain. One object, in particular, drew the attention of the visitors, and Moreton, in a whisper, directed the attention of Colonel Gower to where, on a settee, covered with furs, the spoils of the chase, reclined a young female of exquisite delicacy of form and feature. Her face was beautiful, but her cheek was pale as the early snow-drop. There was no want of intelligence in the expression of the features, yet there was much of even childish simplicity and guilelessness. The eyes were large, blue, and uncommonly soft, and expressive of gentle feelings. The arm which lay outside the covering was of great beauty and symmetry, and its perfect whiteness beautifully contrasted with the sable richness of the coverlet. Her hair, golden and silky in its texture, fell in profuse curls about her brow and neck, in all the luxuriance of nature. The drapery of the couch was trimmed with crimson cloth, scalloped at the edges, and a portion of the folds had fallen so near her face and neck as to impart a tender glow, which added to the charm of the sylph-like beauty. Every thing, in short, was so different from what they had been led to expect, that the friends felt that it was difficult to open the business upon which they came. It was, however, necessary. Colonel Gower commenced by inquiring if he remembered to have heard of the wreck of a vessel on the coast about fifteen years since; of the loss of the young English heiress, who was coming to join her husband, who had preceded her in his arrival in this country. That it was supposed, nay, affirmed, that a trunk, containing, among other things, her family jewels, had been thrown by the waves upon the beach, but privately removed and secreted by some person or persons unknown.

“My business here,” added Colonel Gower, “is to ascertain the alleged facts, which, I have been informed, it is in your power to explain or confirm.”

The man grew deadly pale, and trembled fearfully. These symptoms were construed into signs of guilt, and Colonel Gower gathered fresh confidence to prosecute his inquiries. He mentioned the circumstance of the robbery, together with the loss of the pocket-book. The eye of the hunter flashed

lightning, as he advanced toward Colonel Gower, with startling suddenness, but paused. There was an evident struggle for self-command, and he obtained it.

"I have been," he said, "so long the object of persecution and calumny, that I ought not to be surprised at any of their results. This is only one more instance of the numerous aspersions hurled against my peace and fame. Of the money, sir, I know nothing; I am innocent of the robbery once laid to my charge; the person who suffered the injury was preserved by me from death. Here is the pocket-book you mention; I found it on the grass in the wood, near the place where the accident happened."

Colonel Gower opened the pocket-book, and drew forth the copy of the assignment; but it was without name or date. Blanks had been left for both, but in one corner was traced, in small characters, "G. Gower," written in the Colonel's own hand. This partial success gratified the Colonel and his friend. But another object now presented itself to the eyes of the latter, which riveted his attention. This was the trunk of which mention had so often been made. It stood in a corner of the room. Moreton knew it at once.

"I regret to have found cause for withdrawing any portion of the good opinion I had formed of you, he said, addressing the hunter, "but, my friend, here,"—pointing to the trunk—"is fresh subject of suspicion against you. To my positive knowledge, this was the property of Ellen Meredith."

"That you have entered my house for the purpose of aspersing my fame," said the hunter, with intrepidity, "I can not help; but never, while I have an arm left to defend it, shall you touch my property. That trunk came into my hands by a chance which I do not choose to relate—and I keep it by the right of a husband—Ellen Meredith was my wife."

The Colonel uttered an exclamation of joy at this unexpected communication, and both himself and Moreton hastened to congratulate him on brightening prospects that were about to open before him. An explanation now took place, and the Colonel asked if he had indeed forgotten the man whom he rescued from a watery grave so many years since.

The face of the hunter. or, as we must now call him,

McCloud, glowed with pleasure as he shook hands with the Colonel, in delighted recognition. And now a new surprise awaited him—a happiness which, in his most sanguine imaginings, he would not have dared to dream of—the restoration of his daughter, in the young wanderer whom he had just rescued from probable death. He could scarce believe it real, or that he was not under the influence of a dream; again and again did he pour out his grateful thanks to Morcton for having been the means of preserving to him such a treasure, and again, bending over her couch, press her forehead with his lips, and gaze on those lovely eyes, which, he said, from the very first impressed him with their resemblance to those of her mother.

But when the first ebullitions of joy, which attended this discovery, had somewhat subsided into a quiescent pleasure, it became necessary to inform McCloud of certain facts relating to the assignment. It appeared to Colonel Gower and his friend, after the circumstances had been duly commented upon, that steps ought forthwith to be taken for the purpose of obtaining possession of the property now justly devolving upon himself and daughter. The conversation overheard by Scipio proved that the enemy were on the alert, and, though despairing they might be of ultimate success, they would endeavor by every means in their power, to place obstacles in their way, and delay, if possible, the relinquishment of the property to an indefinite period. The idea of a transfer of the assignment aroused them; yet, ignorant of what Bertie's secret intentions might be, they apprehended every thing from the avaricious spirit of a man capable of acting as he had done. They concluded to set forward, then, immediately, to the city, and to the house of Evan Bertie. McCloud was to accompany them, and, in his own person, claim his own and his daughter's rights. The hour was not yet late, and a brisk trot would soon take them to town. McCloud could with difficulty bring himself to leave his late found child, though for so brief a period. And numberless were the charges with which he confided her to the care of his domestic.

We will now step onward, as we are privileged to do, and inquire how matters are proceeding at the house of the worthy old assignee.

When Nelthorpe left him he repaired to his study, where,

seating himself in his accustomed arm-chair, he gave himself up to profound thought. After some time he unlocked a private drawer of the desk beside him, and drew forth a parchment, which he unfolded and perused. He dwelt on every line, on every word, and, having finished, laid it, with a deep sigh, again on the desk. He resumed his thoughtful position, and muttered, half aloud :

“ I have been a sinful man—a very sinful man ; heaven help me. I have been for years trying to accumulate property, to scrape together all I could get hold of, and what does it amount to ? I must die and leave it all. Yes, I am old and must soon die ; there is no help—nothing can save me ; and those goodly tenements—they must all be given up now. There is no help for that, either. Nelthorpe says there is, but know he is wrong ; there is not—they must go to the rightful owner, and is it not best ? Yes, it is.”

He was silent ; but now a new train of thoughts awoke in his brain—his lips moved, and again he spoke :

“ If *he* had lived, indeed, it would be something ; but he, too, is gone—gone—and I am left a poor, forlorn, friendless old man. Well, I will see Colonel Gower ; perhaps something might be arranged. But no—at all events he shall have it—have it all.”

Wearied by anxiety, gnawed by remorse, agitated by the struggles between avarice and a sense of justice, the old man yielded in the feebleness of age and infirmity to the stupor that began to overpower him. His head dropped upon his bosom, and he fell into an unquiet slumber.

Nelthorpe, in the mean time, had concluded that it was altogether best for his interest that he should get the assignment into his own possession. By practicing on the weakness and fears of Evan, he expected to effect this, and had argued himself into the belief of a sure reward from Colonel Gower, for a safe delivery of the deed into his hands. Ignorant and short-sighted in his policy, he never dreamed that punishment, instead of reward, might possibly await him.

Satisfied, however, with his own ideas on the subject, and prompt to execute his plan, he returned in the evening to the house of Bertie ; it had been some time dark, and the parsimonious habits of Evan would not allow a lantern to be lighted

in his hall; but Nelthorpe, well acquainted with the way, found it without difficulty. He saw a light burning in the study, and repaired thither. He found the old man sleeping, and, close to him—so close that his arm rested upon it—lay a folded parchment. Was it the object of his wishes? It was; the drawer from whence it was taken remained open; he was confident that drawer had been the receptacle for the deed—there remained not a doubt. And now was his opportunity; no eye could see, no ear hear him; he stepped noiselessly onward, seized the parchment, and drew it gently from under the arm of the sleeper, when the latter awoke. The motion, slight as it was, had disturbed him, for his slumbers were unsound and full of care.

In an instant he was aware of the intention of Nelthorpe; his last reflections, ere for a moment they were lost in forgetfulness, had been *righteous*. An unwonted strength nerved for a moment his feeble frame, and, with an almost youthful quickness, he sprang and snatched the parchment from his grasp. A struggle succeeded; the ruffian was enraged—opposition had driven him to temporary frenzy. They were alone in the building—the hour was late—Nelthorpe hurled the old man to the floor; infuriated by passion and reckless of consequences, his hand was upon Evan's throat, his knee upon his breast. Evan gasped—his eyes rolled—his face grew black.

At that moment the door flew open, and several persons entered. The foremost seeing, as he supposed, a robber, attempting life, darted his quick eye around for some weapon of defense; he snatched a pistol from a shelf, and fired. The ball struck Nelthorpe, who released Bertie, and rolled over on the floor.

McCloud, for it was he, ran forward to raise the aged sufferer, but suddenly stopped as if transfixed before him. He changed color—his lips trembled—he gasped forth at last, rather than spoke:

“Mereiful heaven, my father!”

Evan Bertie had succeeded in half raising himself from the floor; he looked up on hearing these words, then shuddering, turned away his eyes, and fell back. Colonel Gower and Lieutenant Moreton also drew near; they looked inquiringly but did not speak.

"Oh, my father!" murmured the young man, with clasped hands and inward voice, "this, is, indeed, a meeting of sorrow."

And so it was, indeed. Evan Bertie was no other than the McCloud, who, leaving his native country many years before, and changing his name, had sought to raise his fallen fortunes in the new world, and, at the time, also intended by a life of honest industry to make amends for former delinquencies. And for awhile he was successful, for he was favored by fortune, and gained a character for integrity.

It was during this favorable period that Sir William Meredith constituted him his assignee. And now a desire of continual gain took possession of his soul, and avarice became his ruling passion. He heard that his son had died in Scotland. His was the grief of a moment; the love of self swallowed up every good feeling. It had become in the place of father, mother, wife, and child, to him. Originally he had no intention of endeavoring to appropriate the property of the baronet. The idea gained upon his mind gradually. At first he only thought he would detain it in his possession as long as he possibly could do so, and he finished by determining never to resign an acre of it while he had life.

He had now been replaced in his chair, and his son stood near him. The old man did not speak. The mental distress of the younger McCloud was great; his own sorrows had been borne with fortitude; the aspersions cast on his fame he had endured—for he knew himself innocent—but this was a sorrow of quite different cast. His father—whom he could have wished to love and honor—whom he wished others to love and honor—had been associated with one of the lowest of mankind; had, in conjunction with him, aimed at the most fraudulent practices. Mortification, an overwhelming sense of shame and sorrow, seized him, he covered his face with his hands and sobbed audibly.

At this juncture Colonel Gower came forward. "Let the past," said he, "be buried in oblivion. We all have errors—in doing unto others, even as we would they should do unto us, there is an exceeding great reward of an approving conscience."

"And it shall even yet be mine!" said the elder McCloud,

speaking for the first time, and with difficulty. "Colonel, ask your forgiveness—the forgiveness of you all—yours, I ask, my son, for having dishonored our name."

The son strove to speak, but the effort was ineffectual.

"Colonel, *there* is the deed of assignment. All things shall be arranged to your satisfaction."

Colonel Gower took the hand of the old McCloud, and shook it in token of amity. Moreton also drew near, and professions of mutual good-will were exchanged.

"And the girl?" asked the old man, apprehensively.

"She is safe," replied the son; "she is my daughter, and your grandchild!"

Meanwhile, Nelthorpe, badly, but not dangerously wounded, still lay upon the floor, sullen, and in pain. Moreton addressed him; but his replies were rude and brief. To the question as to the means by which he discovered the child left with him, to be the daughter of Ellen, he replied: "This alone would have told me—your haste or stupidity did not permit you to notice this string of hair which the child wore round her neck, fastened by a gold button." He plucked from his bosom as he spoke, and flung toward Lieutenant Moreton a necklace of finely woven hair, with a gold clasp, engraven with the name of "Ellen Meredith." James McCloud examined the necklace, the hair was that of his late wife. "My old woman saved the bauble," said the ruffian, "and I had intended to have given it to you to-morrow morning, together with the deed, which I was endeavoring to persuade the old gentleman to resign to my charge, as you entered."

"You gave the child the name of Ellen," said Colonel Gower.

"It was her grandfather's wish," said Nelthorpe, with a sneer; "he had some kind of right to name the child."

"You did not then know that she was his grandchild."

"True—but I well knew that James McCloud, there, was his son; I knew the whole family of them years ago in Scotland, when they held their heads a little higher than they have since done."

"Why did you not inform Mr. McCloud that he had a son near him, if he was in ignorance of his vicinity?" asked Colonel Gower.

"A profitable job that would have been for me, would it not? How long do you suppose I should have been this old gentleman's man of business after he had known that he had a son so near him? I trow, he would soon have stood in my shoes. By the bye, the old man gave me leave only this morning to pick him off," and he leered at McCloud with malicious impudence as he spoke, "only I was too teuder-hearted to do it; I laughed ready to kill myself at the time, thinking how little the old gentleman knew who he was talking about; and if I was not so weak, by the loss of this good blood, I should laugh just as much now at the recollection of it."

What the sensations of the elder McCloud could have been at hearing this speech, it is difficult to say, but may be imagined. Shame, we may suppose, and remorse, not unmixed with horror, at the consequences which must have arisen from the commission of a crime of so deep a dye. To think that he actually acceded to the death of one who was not only of his own blood, but had a lawful right to a portion of that very property which by a strange fatality he was striving to detain from him, thus periling, by iniquity, both the life and fortunes of those whose interests were intimately blended with his own.

"Thus even-handed justice
Condemns the ingredients of the poisoned chalice,
To our lips."

"You are a hardened ruffian!" said Lieutenant Moreton, and at this moment some persons entered, who had been privately sent for by Colonel Gower, and who, taking Nelthorpe into custody, conducted him to a lodging more appropriate to his misdemeanors. Some private conversation then took place. James McCloud produced documents sufficient to certify his friends of his marriage with Ellen Meredith, and they prepared to separate. Scipo, finding what turn things had taken, consented to return home, and receive his old master into favor again. James McCloud took an affectionate leave of his father, promising to be with him again at an early hour the next morning.

He came, and brought with him his daughter. Leaving her in a lower room, he ascended to the chamber of his father. He entered—he spoke to him, but received no reply—he went

to the bed, and drawing aside the curtain, looked within. There the old man lay—rigid—silent. The emotions of the past few hours had been too much for him—too much for his unfeebled frame and weight of years. In the silence of the night the spirit had departed—we hope in peace.

CHAPTER X.

FATHER AND SON.

Oh, well for the fisherman's boy,
That he shouts with his sister at play!
O, well for the sailor lad
That he sings in his boat on the bay!

And the stately ships go on
To their haven under the hill;
But, oh! for the touch of a vanished hand
And the sound of a voice that is still!—TENNYSON.

Love may come, and love may go,
And fly, like a bird, from tree to tree:
But I will love no more, no more,
Till Ellen Adair comes back to me.—IBID.

OLD Dr. Etheridge was in a high state of excitement. Back and forth through the hall of the mansion he paced with rapid steps; occasionally blowing a trumpet charge through his nose into a white silk handkerchief, which he flourished abroad. It was the fashion to take snuff in these days, and the good old physician showed the universal weakness. His son stood in the open door, leaning against the lintel, looking pale and troubled, and casting uneasy glances upon his father.

"It is all your fault, sir! you heartless young scoundrel you!"

"No, father, I deny it. It is *your* fault."

"My fault! how dare you, sir! This comes of giving children too many privileges. Impertinence and ingratitude is all we get."

"I was not aware that I was given to either of those sins, father."

"Didn't you just tell me, in the most decided manner, that

it was my fault? mine! when I thought more of that little creature than I did of my own blood. I loved her as a daughter, I tell you—and now she's gone, no one knows whither—driven away by neglect and abuse—most likely to throw herself into the ocean to escape from men's cruelty. I would have given half my estate to see her established as she ought to be—to make her safe and happy. I loved her as a daughter;" he stamped his foot on the floor, as he repeated the asseveration.

"And I loved her more than that," exclaimed the son, in a trembling voice. "I would have made her my wife. She should have been sheltered in my arms before this, if you had not prevented it—if you had not absolutely forbidden me to declare myself—until it was too late! And now my happiness is in ruins."

"Hugh," replied the elder, while a tear rolled down his cheek, "I did not do you justice. I will acknowledge it. I loved that pure young flower of maidenhood too tenderly to be willing that you should ever gaze upon it, unless with eyes of reverence. I was afraid of your Paris morals; afraid that you would scorn little Pearl, because she was poor and dependent, and yet would find her too fascinating to avoid her society. I foresaw that she would love you, because she was affectionate and pined for higher associations than surrounded her. I was alarmed for her peace of heart, if not for her safety. She was so artless, so utterly guileless, the sweet child! Therefore, I made up my mind to keep you apart—therefore, I was angry when I found out that you had become well acquainted—therefore, I forbid your seeking her, in the time of her affliction, to offer her a dangerous sympathy. But when you came to me and told me that your heart was longing to comfort her—that you loved her, and desired my consent to tell her so, and to ask her in marriage, then you know how pleased I was, and how eagerly I gave my consent. I would rather have had that sweet girl for my daughter than the most aristocratic belle you could find me in the circles of New York society."

"And I, father, supposed that you objected to her poverty, and the low associations of her adopted relatives, and would never consent to our union, which was the reason that I

hesitated so long after I felt that my own happiness depended on it. Gold could not buy such beauty, such innate refinement as hers; I felt that she would bring the richest dower which a wife can bring her husband—beauty, and a pure, confiding heart. But she was so young, and you seemed so opposed to her, that I waited, hoping and fearing, until her mother died, and I felt it to be my duty, even at the risk of your disapproval, to take her from the house of that brutal being. I went to you, with my wishes, and when you surprised me by expressing your satisfaction with them, I felt as if clothed with wings. I fairly flew to the cage of my birdling. O, father, why did she go away? It almost kills me when I think how wretched she must have been before attempting any thing so desperate as flight, or—or—”

“Nay, Hugh, don't speak the ugly word. Ellen has not killed herself. She was too pious, too conscientious to do any thing so desperate as that. I am much more afraid that she has not even left home of her own free will—that that scoundrel has taken her to the city to apprentice her to some shopkeeper, or otherwise get rid of her support.”

At this speech, the young man started as if pierced through the heart with a fierce pang; his face grew still whiter than before.

“I had not thought of anything so terrible as that.”

“I must go to the city at once,” said he, “and search out Nelthorpe.”

He went; but his eager, anxious search was unavailing. Two days he spent, almost without food or rest, and then returned, haggard and disappointed, to the cove, only to learn that no tidings of Ellen had reached the villagers, and that her father still continued away.

The excitement in the little community was very great at the sudden disappearance of “Pearl,” their pride, their pet; and this anxiety was increased by the fact that Nelthorpe, also, remained away. That the absence of both for so long a time was unpremeditated, was proved by the cottage having been left in such a condition—the door not even latched, the breakfast on the table, and all the neat, scanty articles of Ellen's little wardrobe in their place, except the garments which she wore away with her. Curiosity, of course, and the love of

gossip, mingled largely with the feelings of the humble community; yet the most prevalent and apparent sentiment was, fear that some evil had befallen the beautiful girl—for her father's hardened and desperate character was too well known for them to have any faith in his deeds, even toward this adopted daughter.

A nervous, fidgety old gentleman, and a pale, wretched-looking young man, who would have given their left hands to know what we know about the real fate of Pearl, haunted the cottage, the beach, the rocks, the fields, as if they still expected to stumble upon the object of their search—to find her dead in the fields, covered up, by the pitiful robins, with leaves—or to see, far out amid the fishing-grounds, or closer on the sands—

“A tress o' golden hair—
Of drowned maiden's hair.”

No such sight greeted their vague glances; days slipped away into weeks, and other more recent occurrences begun to take the place of the “great sensation” in the minds of the community, although regret and anxiety were still keenly alive.

Finally Dr. Hugh, weighing less by fifteen pounds, and with a restless, troubled look in those eyes, which had always been so bright, dark and cool, went back to the city, where numerous patients, despairing of the return of the good-looking physician, had already turned their patronage to older, and, perhaps, wiser professors.

But Hugh was not long in getting back all these, and many more; for he begun to attend to his work with a will. From being gay and fond of society, he begun to devote himself so exclusively to his studies and his practise, that his chums left him to himself, finally, and, before the spring arrived, Dr. Hugh had plenty of business, and some reputation. Every little gold-dust of French affectation got shaken off of him; his best, most earnest, most manly nature, came into play; all the old doctors and reverend professors took him by the hand, and told him that they saw he had it in him to “become a rising man,” and all that, which would have flattered our young hero very much, had there not been a greater indifference to such praise than was natural. A sorrow, so peculiar

for any of the ordinary consolations of grief, weighed upon his heart by day and night. We all know that of many agonies those of doubt and suspense are among the keenest. These he felt constantly. He often thought that he should be comparatively happy could he have the assurance that the innocent girl, from whom he had seemed to stand so coldly aloof in the time of her bereavement, was, indeed, dead—gone safely from the dangers of a world only too perilous to a young and friendless woman.

Her confiding eyes looked him in the face through all his dreams. Ah! he had grown to love her more than fame or a goodly position—she had won him, in spite of humble associations and poverty, until he had been willing to cast fate and fortune at her feet. Yet he did not guess her power in its fullness, until she was lost to him. Now he never ceased to blame himself for his over-caution—his reserve—for the almost cruel pleasure he had taken in reading every emotion of that pure soul, while he hid his own from her eyes.

Rightly punished he was! but rather a severe punishment he felt it, when he knew that his motives had been good from the beginning—that Ellen was a child, too young to have taken for his wife, and that he had only awaited the development of her character before committing his happiness into her keeping.

Severely as Hugh devoted himself to his duties, and small inclination as he felt for the ordinary amusements of society, he was not allowed entirely to "hide his light under a bushel." The women admired him, all the more that he was thoughtful, a shade melancholy, and decidedly indifferent to their admiration.

If little Ellen, who had purposely kept this blank of concealment between them, could have seen how the brilliant belles and stately dames of New York exerted themselves to soothe the graceful sadness of the young doctor, she might have repented herself of her plans, and not have had the courage to carry them into execution.

Winter, spring, summer rolled away. One bright September day, Dr. Hugh sat in his office, looking listlessly out into the street—which was a fashionable one, too low down to be mentioned now—when a carriage dashed by at terrific speed.

It was an open barouche, whose only occupant, at the time, was a lady. Dr. Hugh saw the vehicle flash by—comprehended that the horses were running away—sprang out the door upon the pavement, and, at that moment, a slight inequality in the street caused the carriage to be upset, and the lady was thrown to the earth, almost at his feet.

CHAPTER XI.

THE RESTORATION.

The world is full of meetings such as this—
 A thrill, a voiceless challenge and reply,
 And sudden partings after.—WILLIS.

Thinkest thou
 That I could live and let thee go.—MOORE.

THEY wore very large bonnets in those days, and the “lovely” blue-silk-and-white-feather creation, worn by the lady at the time of the accident, had been the very *height* of the fashion; but now it was bent over her face in a style not contemplated by the milliner, and so as to most effectually conceal it, as Dr. Hugh sprang forward and lifted her in his arms.

Had she fallen upon the stone pavement she must, inevitably, have been killed. Fortunately, there was a little open court, carpeted with velvet grass, in front of the row of houses of which the Doctor’s office made one, and upon this elastic cushion the lady was thrown, with a violence which deprived her of breath and consciousness for some moments, but which neither broke her limbs nor seriously injured her.

Of this Dr. Etheridge could not be immediately certain; it was with serious apprehension that he bore her into the office. Although trained to self-possession, and accustomed to sad spectacles of human suffering, the suddenness with which this woman had been hurled from life into apparent death, unnerved even him, so that his hand shook as he pulled off her bonnet, and dashed cold water in her face.

What followed was a curious proceeding for a respectable—a highly respectable, prudent and young—physician to be

guilty of. It would have been all-sufficient to have ruined his reputation, if his interesting patient across the street, Miss Croosas, aged thirty-two, had happened to be looking, as she usually was, across and into the office window.

She had gone out that afternoon, however, just for the purpose of displaying a new pink scarf, and a pair of very pink cheeks, which were not new, to her *vis-a-vis* neighbor, as she lingered in the door, and on the step, to send back her maid for the parasol she had purposely forgotten, and was now taking her customary promenade on the Battery.

But this is not telling what the doctor did. Well, then, he stared a moment into the pale, unconscious countenance of the woman, whom he still held in his arms; he saw that she was very young and very beautiful; his color rose—he uttered a low, glad, impassioned ejaculation; his eyes ran over her dress, her mantle, back to her face, in mingled doubt, joy and astonishment, and then—without even the precaution to cast a glance around him, and through the open door, to see if he were observed—he pressed his new patient rapturously to his bosom, and printed kiss after kiss on her lips, ardent enough to shock her soul back into its lovely temple, provided it had not flown entirely.

The young girl felt their warmth through all the eloud and dizziness of her trance—the lashes trembled on her cheeks—her dark-blue eyes unclosed and gazed upward into the earnest pair which burned over her; a glow, like that of morning, dawned over her pale face, something, too intense for surprise, brightened in her gaze—and thus the two regarded each other in silence, the maiden making not the slightest attempt to free herself from her novel position.

Both were wrapped in a dream—at least Dr. Hugh appeared to be, and the girl certainly was—she had not yet summoned memory to tell her where she was or what had befallen her. Often, in her sleep, she had been visited by a vision like to this, and had been very happy—

Again the doctor kissed his patient.

At that moment a shadow fell over the threshold—a gentleman sprung in at the door.

“My child—is she killed? Ah, thank God! I thought she must be dashed in pieces. Tell me, doctor is she much

hurt?" and the stranger snatched his treasure out of Hugh's arms.

"Really," was the stammered reply, "I have hardly had time to—to ascertain. She was—was unconscious, and I have just succeeded in bringing her to her senses. Whether she is—"

"Ellen, my darling, are you hurt? are you in pain anywhere? Are you injured seriously? Do speak, my darling."

"Father, I do not believe I am hurt. I do not feel a particle of pain, anywhere. But where am I? Who is this?"

"I don't know *who* it is. Never mind that, my child. He is a physician, fortunately. The horses, wild as they were, had the good sense to bestow you at the door of a doctor," and the stranger began to feel like jesting, in his joy at the sight of his daughter's safety. "Ellen, try to walk a little; let us see if you really are unharmed."

Supporting her tenderly, she walked across the floor; she trembled—probably with the shock of her fall—but the pallor had already left her face, which glowed, indeed, with a beautiful flush; her father seated her on the sofa, and asked if the doctor had any wine.

Into a glass, thin and slender, Hugh poured a thimbleful of sunshine, which had been bottled a fabulous time, to grow golden in the cool darkness of some Spanish cellar. He, too, must have been severely startled by the accident, for his hand trembled more than the young girl's as she took the draught he handed her.

In the mean time, the office began to fill with persons who had witnessed the catastrophe from distances more or less remote, crowding in to offer assistance, and to ascertain the extent of the calamity. The removal of her crushed bonnet had let loose a glittering torrent of hair, flowing down the throat and shoulders of the young lady; her embarrassment at being the object of so much attention, only rendered her the more engaging, and, as she left the sofa, and clung to her father's arm, begging him to take her away, as she was perfectly able to go, a buzz of admiration filled the apartment; the enthusiasm of the witnesses to her narrow escape arose to such a height that they were almost moved to throw up their hats and cheer.

"But how will we go, Ellen?" asked her companion, soothingly. "Don't be disquieted, my little girl, Sit here until I look after the carriage. Doubtless it is a wreck, long before this; but I must secure the horses. I will send some one to procure another conveyance, and you shall soon be safe under madame's wing again. It was inexcusable in me to leave you sitting alone in the barouche."

The horses would have behaved well enough, had they not been frightened by a fish-vender, blowing his horn suddenly, close to their heads," said the young lady; "don't blame yourself, father."

As she uttered the word "fish-vender,"—certainly not a very savory word for such delicate lips—her glance met that of the young doctor, and clearly before him, like a vision, rose a picture of wet sea sands—of the blue ocean, rolling away, through boundless stretches, to the blue sky; of bold rocks, jutting out into the foamy, rising tide; of green hills, lying along the belt of beach, and deep, dark woods, standing gloomily in the background—and of a young and happy couple, haunting these scenes through many a golden summer hour. This he saw, looking into the blue eyes before him, as if their little world were the ocean, azure, deep and infinite.

The next moment he half lost the vision, as her lashes dropped beneath his gaze; her father returned her to the sofa, going to the door to look after his runaway team, followed by most of the spectators, willing to do him a passing service in assisting him to recover it. He found carriage and horses, all uninjured, just brought up by a stout colored man, who had headed off and captured the fugitives in their mad flight around the next corner. Panting and quivering, the splendid steeds stood uneasily, still restive with their recent terror.

"I must master them now, or never," said their owner. "Ellen, remain here where you are, until I drive them around the square, and, if I think it safe, I will take you up as I come back."

And he sprung into his seat, took up the fallen reins, and spoke persuasively to the horses, who started off, the instant the negro let go of their heads, like chained lightning.

Everybody looked after the team, even the young lady, who

few alarmed for her father. Once, twice, thrice, the carriage flew around the square, before its occupant ventured to draw rein in front of the office. By that time the horses were completely subdued to his control. All admired the masterly manner in which he managed them. The negro stood, showing his ivories through dusky smiles. The spectators were as much excited as if they had a personal interest in the matter. The young lady did not remember to take possession of her battered bonnet, until her father called for her to come out. Then she attempted to get it into shape, tied it on over her beautiful hair, and stepped out, followed by the physician. Although others come forward, eager for an excuse to aid her, he grasped her hand, and lifted her into the carriage:

"Stay, do not go; not yet! Tell me your name!" cried Hugh, as she took her seat beside her companion.

"The name! Ah, yes; I had forgotten—you want your fee," remarked the gentleman, with a slight accent of sarcasm, as if the eagerness of the young physician had displeased him. "Cæsar, just hold their heads a moment, will you, till I get out my purse."

Drawing forth his wallet, he took out a guinea, and thrust it upon the doctor, throwing a half-guinea towards Cæsar, at the same time. As the gold piece fell ringing at the horses' feet, they started off anew, their owner dropped his purse in the young lady's lap, caught the reins, and carriage and occupants were whirled out of sight before Hugh could think of following them.

"Mighty fine gemman, dat, and berry pretty lady," said Cæsar chuckling over his money, in an exuberance of pleasure.

"Take that, too, and call it a good day's work," said Hugh, flinging at him the guinea which had been forced upon him in so ignominious a manner, his face red with mortification and disappointment.

"Hi, seems to burn massa's fingers—don't burn mine at all—tanke, massa. May yer get a wife as han'some and as good as dat young lady," and the negro, shuffling off down the street, as happy as a lord, while the little crowd dispersed, leaving Dr. Etheridge to his reflections.

He walked back into his office, and flung himself down in that corner of the sofa which *she* had occupied.

"It was Ellen," he murmured, "she has forgotten to care for me."

In the hour which followed, he suffered a few of the pangs which little Pearl, in her loneliness and poverty, had many times suffered through him. A thousand conjectures crowded upon him. Perhaps his deepest consciousness was joy—joy that she was alive—that no dreadful fate had befallen her—but the keener his joy the sharper grew the doubt and apprehension lest she had learned to despise him for his apparent coldness—lest, perhaps, even now she had learned to love another. She might be betrothed, on the verge of marriage, with some too-happy lover. So beautiful, so charming in every way, how could it be otherwise? She must have admirers by the score.

Hugh guessed at the truth of the change in Ellen's fortunes. He had known her infant history; she had told him, herself, that she had a firm faith she should sometime discover her relatives; and seeing her, now, surrounded by such circumstances, nothing was easier than to perceive that she must have fulfilled her presentiment.

"It was certainly Ellen—my little Ellen," he kept repeating, as if to assure himself of the truth of what he said.

This elegant young creature, dressed in the most exquisite taste, and with that air which is only to be acquired by contact with well-bred people, was different from Ellen of the sea-shore, and yet the same. Lovelier she could not be, nor more truly refined. The Pearl had always been a pearl, of "purest ray serene"—it was only displayed now in a gold setting.

Oh, how mad with jealousy Dr. Hugh was during the remaining hours of that September afternoon! Jealous of Ellen's fortune, of her friends, of her supposed lovers—jealous of the circumstances which had taken her from him, and given her a chance to find out, by comparison, whether he was, as she had once foolishly thought him:

"The foremost man of all this world."

Miss Creosas returned from her promenade on the Battery, casting a tender glance in at the office door, as she turned to cross the street, but he was not conscious of it. Stalking rapidly about the room, he thought no more of his *vis-a-vis* admirer

than he did of the little King Charles, which she led along by a pink ribbon. If Miss Creosas could have known the change which had come over the spirit of his dream, during her brief absence, she would never have put on any more artificial blushes for him, but would have walked deliberately into her father's three story brick mansion, and torn her new scarf into shreds, in a paroxysm of despair.

As Hugh wandered about his cage like a hyena, he detected something half hidden under the sofa cushion, which he seized upon and took out hungrily. It was a small cambric handkerchief, fine as a spider web bleached in moonshine and dew; in one corner was written a name—Ellen McCloud. He kissed the name and the handkerchief—they were both her's—while the sun of hope began to rise with the thought that here was something tangible by which to trace her. Now that he knew her name, he was no longer in despair. Yet his prospects were not brilliant with regard to her. If Ellen had been in the city much or any of the time during the past year, why did she not claim him as a friend, give him her address, and invite him to call upon her? Why had she never re-visited the scenes of her childhood, or troubled herself to inform his father, who had befriended her, of the good fortune which had befallen her? Nothing seemed plainer than that she wished to sever every tie which bound her to the past. Given up to the fascinations of the triumphant career before her, she did not wish to be bound by old associations.

"It's all my father's fault," said the young man, for the thousandth time, as he reviewed the past, and realized how a little more generosity on their part would have secured the confidence of the proud and retiring orphan.

"It's only a mockery to find her thus," he continued, "a mockery! I would far rather that she was poorer than ever she was in those old days, when she used to fly to meet me her sweet face glowing under her gingham bonnet. Then she would believe that I really love her—she would credit the story that I had gone to ask the privilege of protecting her—of making her my wife—when she was friendless and in trouble. But if I seek her now, she will despise me; she will be certain that I, who was not generous enough to appreciate her under adverse circumstances, am only too eager to throw

myself at her feet, now that she is my equal in worldly matters."

Curiosity to know the particulars of her change of name and fortune, to learn why Nelthorpe had disappeared entirely from his village, and all that had happened to her whom he had mourned as lost, conspired with his other emotions, to make Hugh restless. The air within doors stifled him.

"I'll go and tell my discovery to father," he resolved at last, as he locked the door of his office.

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

My heart is like the ocean shell—
 Though from the home it loves exiled
 Still echoes through its winding cell,
 The waves' sad music; soft and wild.—*Mrs. Osgood.*

OLD Dr. Etheridge sat on the piazza, enjoying the afternoon sunshine which warmed his feet. The place looked pleasant, with the autumn brightness around it, but the old gentleman felt lonely, as well he might. He sighed often, as he sat there, musing. There was no music of girls' voices or children's laughter in the halls; his good sister was becoming the victim of rheumatism, and was a little "cross" on her bad days—the doctor's thoughts ran far back to the early-made grave of the wife of his youth, and those of the two little girls who slept beside her.

"I wish Hugh would get married," he muttered half aloud. "If he don't, and that right soon, I'll adopt somebody. Curious! what he came over here to tell me, the other day. I'm half inclined to believe it was only an extraordinary resemblance. If she had been our Ellen, she would have renewed the acquaintance, of course, though the little puss always did have a full stock of quiet pride under her sweetness. That was the true blood showing itself. Pshaw! she's carrying the matter too far, to overlook us entirely."

During the latter part of his soliloquy he became interested in watching the advance of two persons, a lady and gentleman, who came along the little street of the village out into the suburbs, continuing their walk along the pleasant road in the direction of his house. He was certain they were strangers, and so followed their motions with the interest which people in country places find time to take in new comers.

Along the path and up to the gate of the mansion they come; her attendant opened the gate, the lady stepped through and began a hesitating walk up the lawn, which broke, in a moment, into a more rapid advance—she actually ran up to the piazza, and threw her arms about the neck of the good doctor, who had risen to receive his guests.

“Oh, dear!” she said, in a mingled sob and laugh, “I’m so glad to see you again! But I suppose you don’t care at all for seeing me—do you, Dr. Etheridge?”

“Is it, Ellen?” he asked, pushing back her bonnet, and gazing at her fondly, “is it my little Pearl? Oh, why did you run away, without leaving any word? you nearly broke our hearts.”

“I hadn’t much reason to think you would care. I don’t think I left many friends, Dr. Etheridge. I hardly meant to come to see you, now; but I have been to look at the old home, and at my—mother’s—grave”—crying a little—“and I wanted to see you so much, I could not keep my feet from coming. They came this way of themselves, and when I actually caught sight of these dear old spectacles again, I forgot to wonder whether you would care to see—I just ran to you, as I used to run when a child”—and she looked up at him so prettily and affectionately, brushing the silver tears from her bright cheeks, and dimpling with smiles.

“God bless you, Ellen, I could not love you better if you were my own daughter—as I once hoped you would be!”

To escape from seeming to hear this last part of the sentence, the young lady turned to the gentleman, who was waiting to be introduced:

“Dr. Etheridge, this is my father, Mr. McCloud.”

The two gentlemen shook hands.

“Let us go into the library, and hear all about it—of course you must know, sir, the anxiety I feel to hear the history of my

THE WRECKER'S PRIZE.

pet here. I congratulate you on finding such a daughter—though your gain is my loss.”

The trio went into the house. The doctor ordered in a bottle of his choicest Madeira and a basket of cake.

An hour fled rapidly by in delightful conversation, eager questions and replies, during which all the facts which are already understood by the reader were detailed to the doctor.

He was very much affected when he heard the true circumstances of Pearl's being driven from her home, though the brutality which led her into such desperate straits became one of the instruments for bringing about a meeting between her and her true father.

“Still, I shall never quite forgive you for not coming to me, little girl, in your trouble.”

Ellen gave him a glance which revealed her thoughts on that subject.

“When you're a little older, puss, you'll understand all that puzzles you now. However, I made a great mistake, and was an old goose! My boy has half killed me with reproaches. I guess you'd know whether you had any friends, if you could believe the commotion your sudden disappearance caused in the village! Nobody slept for a fortnight. As for me, I was too miserable to rest, and I know somebody who has never been the same since.”

The young lady bent suddenly over the old cabinet of curiosities to hide the blush which flamed out on her cheeks.

This is the room you have heard me talk so much of, dear father,” she said, presently; “here is where I learned nearly all the little I knew when I came to you. We owe a countless debt to my dear patient teacher;” and again the impulsive girl kissed the old physician.

“I shall make you pay it, too,” he said, slyly.

Mr. McCloud gracefully, and with the power of real emotion, expressed his gratitude to his host for the many kindnesses and the pleasant friendship which he had extended to his child when she stood so much in need of them. The two gentlemen were friends already, talking with great animation, while Ellen watched them with delight.

Dr. Etheridge now learned that Nelthorpe was dead. The wound which he had received in the house of the lawyer had

not healed properly in the bad air of a prison, and he had died in time to save himself the disgrace of a trial, and a long time in the penitentiary. He died, as he had lived, a bad man, and unregretted was his departure from earth.

Then followed a full account of the trip to the old country, and the months which were spent in establishing Ellen's claim to the large property left her by her grandfather, Sir William Meredith.

Those months had been eagerly improved by the young girl, to fit herself with every accomplishment becoming to her present position, so far as the limited time would allow, and she was still spending her mornings in study, and was indisposed to go into society. It had been a question with father and daughter, whether they should settle down on the good old English estate, or return to the New World, which both had learned to love all the more dearly, perhaps, that it had been the witness of many trials. Mr. McCloud desired to return to America, and, upon consulting Ellen, it was apparent that she, too, was home-sick for the beautiful land of her adoption. They had now been in New York a few weeks, undecided whether to purchase a home immediately in the city, or to build one on some beautiful spot on the shores of the sea.

"You came near to meeting with a serious accident," remarked Dr. Etheridge, with a keen look at Ellen.

"How did you come to hear of it?" asked Mr. McCloud.

"The physician who carried your daughter into his office informed me of it. It made quite an impression on his mind."

"I was painfully impressed with his eagerness to be rewarded for his very slight services," said the other.

"No doubt he *was* very anxious to obtain all the reward he could," said the doctor, looking at Ellen, and bursting out into a peal of laughter.

"Perhaps I don't quite understand it," continued the father, looking with a perplexed expression from the laughing friend to the embarrassed daughter.

"Is it possible that little girl has so utterly—so entirely—forgotten and ignored my son, Hugh, as never to have mentioned him to you? Ella, I did not think your memory was so short! It's not strange he wanted to know your name, sir, when he's worn crape on his hat for Miss Ella, ever since her

disappearance. He flung your guinea to the colored boy, and dashed over here to tell us all about it. You hurt his feelings terribly, sir, but little Ella hurt them still more. I expect to take him to a lunatic asylum in less than a month if matters don't clear up a little. But truly, Mr. McCloud, has Ella never talked about my boy?"

"Never; I do remember, now you tell me this, she spoke once or twice of your son, a little fellow in jackets I thought him. Why didn't you explain the other day, my dear?"

But my dear was through the window, and out on the piazza.

"Father," she called, "I'm going down on the beach a little while. I can not return to the city until I've taken a look at all the old places. The doctor will be good to you until I come back," and she fled away from the raillery which she dreaded.

"It's the best symptom yet," murmured the old physician, to himself, with a wise smile; "silence is a highly favourable symptom in such cases. I'll tell Hugh to take heart."

The new friends sipped their wine and chatted cozily, while the afternoon sun slipped down the western sky, throwing long pillars of gold across the library-floor.

In the mean time, Ellen, alone, as she wished to be, for her heart was too full to bear the glance of any eye, however affectionate, wandered once more along that pleasant path of silver sand, swept by the azure ocean. She had come to visit poor Moll's grave—Moll, so true, so devoted, so humble in her love for the child whom she had worshipped as something too good and beautiful to be really her own; and on that lonely grave she had dropped some tears of sorrow. She had walked by the old cottage, and seen it occupied by strange people; she had shaken hands with some of the old neighbors who had rushed out into the street to stare at her as she passed; she had met Dr. Etheridge, and had learned by his looks and words, that Hugh still remembered her with interest.

Now she trod the familiar path which they had paced so frequently in companionship—on, on, until she came to the rocky bower, where she had first met him, and where they had since passed so many hours together. She climbed to

the old seat; she sat and gazed at the infinite blue waters, the distant moving ships, the light clouds, the sinking sun. She recalled the day on which she had sunk to sleep, to wake amid the dangers of the insidious tide, and to greet a pair of bright eyes, to see an outstretched hand.

"He will not despise me now," she thought; "he will seek me out, will flatter me, will be proud of me; but I will keep him at a distance. He shall love as long and as hopelessly as I have, before I give him *the slightest* encouragement. I will be as frigid as an icicle;" and, in the sternness of her resolve to be colder than ice itself, she fell to musing, and that moment, when she awoke from unconsciousness in his arms, his eyes beaming into hers—oh, happy moment! which, at the time, she deemed a delicious dream—she grew very icy; indeed, as she lived it over and over, a tender smile on her face, her lips parted, her cheeks glowing, her soft eyes fixed on the tranquil sunset, she looked very indifferent, very repelling, very much as if she were able to sustain herself on pride for another year or two!

"Ellen!"

She sprung to her feet, she blushed, she thrilled and trembled. He held out his arms. She had predetermined to demand such explanation of the past—sueing at her feet so long—to yield, at last, by such stately degrees. Well, there he stood, holding out his arms, and all the answer her heart demanded written in his eager face. There they stood, alone with each other, the ocean at their feet, heaven above. It would have been a stubborn pride which could have held out against love's triumph, under such influences as held sway there and then. Her name trembling on his lips, his eyes seeking hers with a look she could not overbear; it was her happy glance which fell beneath their light; she too reached out her hands.

"Dear me! dear me! those young people will catch cold, certainly. The sun's been down an hour, and the wind is chilly this evening. I wonder what little bird told Hugh to come over here to-day. He's a fine boy, friend McCloud, don't you think so? And his heart is all right—all right! They're a splendid match, I think; I only hope they'll find it out. Pshaw! Have a pinch of snuff? I hav'n't felt as young

in ten or twenty years as I do this day. What say, George? tea—cakes getting cold? Well, there they come arm-in-arm; it takes them an age to shut the gate. Carries me back to the days when it always took me a long while to shut the gate, under similar circumstances. We'll have time to drink their health, friend, before they get to the door. Here's to our son and our daughter. God bless them!"

THE END.



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