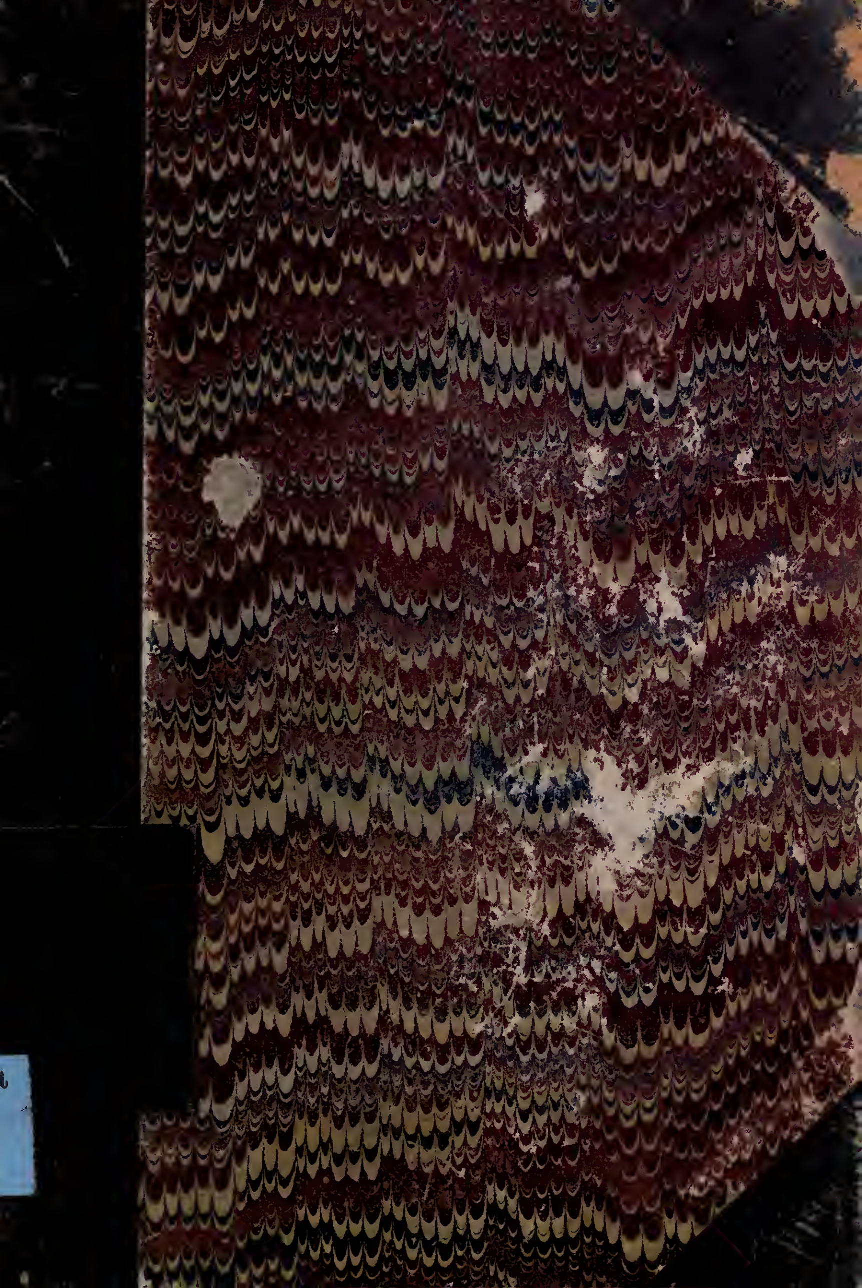

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IN PRESS.

A New Novel

By the Author of this Volume

ENTITLED

TASHLENE.

VICTOIRE.

A Novel.

He that ruleth his spirit, is greater than he that taketh a city.

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VICTOIRE.

THE PARTING.

It was a fearful night. I shall never forget it. Without, we heard the tramp of horses, the muffled sound of marching troops, the boom of cannon, the groan of the affrighted and maddened populace. Within, love still reigned, but accompanied by woe and desolation of heart. "Marie! my own Marie!" exclaimed my father, "God knows what this costs me; yet I must leave you; the people are frantic; they must have a commander. If I die, be brave as the Spartan women who rejoiced to see husband or son brought back upon his shield when he died for liberty. Only promise me one thing. If I perish, take our children to Les Delices. In Languedoc, where we were so happy, educate them for their country and for God." "I promise," said my mother; "but you must not die, you shall not die; I cannot live without you!" "You speak from the heart of love," said my father, with a quivering voice; "yet I know that you would not have me sit here, and not stretch out my hand, nor lift up my voice to save my country." "No!" said my mother. "Go, go! my beloved." As she spoke, the convulsions which shook her frame told how great was the sacrifice. My father arose to depart. "Oh, Marie! my Marie! my precious wife, the joy, the very life of my life, can it be that I shall never see thee more!" he exclaimed, turning back once again and bowing over my mother. "Frederick," he said, turning to my brother; "my boy, be a blessing to your mother; be brave, be noble, be true!" "Victoire!" he added, taking me into his arms, holding me close to his breast, "child of my heart, be like your mother!"

He said no more. The strong form bowed and shook.

Tears, which in such a moment betrayed no weakness, bedewed the faces of his wife and children. Then followed silence, dread as that in which we watch a pair of beloved eyes close in death. At last he murmured: "It is past! The bitterest drop is tasted; adieu! my idols; *pensez à moi, adieu!*" He lifted his plumed hat and was gone.

As the door closed, my mother made no sound. The time for tears had passed. Drawing both of her children to her heart, she hastened to a window, and there, amid deepening darkness, looked down upon that most dire of all sights, a people revelling in blood. The great clocks of the city struck the last hour of night; still she stood in the same spot, her forehead pressed against the cold window-pane, with her children strained to her heart. The day dawned, and she had not stirred, although we, but half conscious of the woe which hung over us, in our childish weariness had fallen asleep.

The morning awoke without a smile. No gleam of sunshine shot athwart the sullen sky; through the leaden light we looked down upon a scene full of horror. The mob had spent the night in storming and entering the houses of the nobility. Many mansions were half demolished; their costly furniture, broken and defaced, lay piled upon the side-walks. The pavements were torn up and formed into barricades. Dead bodies, gory, ghastly, masses of human flesh, were lying thick amid the ruins. Women, with dishevelled hair, wringing their hands, shrieking and moaning piteously, wandered back and forth amid the dead; now bending over a wounded man, now holding up a livid corpse, seeking vainly perchance to recognise a beloved face. And still we heard the roar of cannon, the shout of officers, the fierce cries of the mob, mingled with the groans of the dying.

The conflict was between the nobility and the people. The soldiers were fighting for their king, the people for a phantom which they called liberty. But a little before noon we heard in universal acclaim, the shout "Vive la République!" The moment our mother heard this cry, she relinquished her hold upon us, and turned from the window for the first time. "Your father's fate is decided," she said. "I must go and see if he yet lives—Frederick, be a brave boy, and take care of your sister." "I will be brave," I cried. "Yes," she answered, "I might have known that you do not fear, you are your father's own child," and kissing us both, she went from the room. In a few moments we saw her slight form threading its way through the mass of rude and frantic beings

below; we saw her join the mourners who were looking for their dead. With tears in our young eyes, we watched her, till in the vast crowd she was lost to our sight.

"O, dear!" said Frederick, "what shall we do if dear papa is dead?" "Do! we shall kill the wicked men who took his life," I answered, my little heart almost bursting with rage and grief. "That we could not do, Victoire, and if we could, it would be wicked, and it would not bring our dear papa back." "No, but I would like to hurt those cruel men just as bad as they hurt him," I answered. "It would be wrong, Victoire. Don't you remember mamma read last night about Christ, how He asked His Father to forgive the Jews even when they were piercing him?" "But I can't! I can't ask God to forgive these wicked soldiers—if they hurt only *me*, I will; but if they hurt papa, or mamma, or you, Frederick," I can't;" and, at the thought, I burst into tears. We sank into silence. The terrible thought had taken possession of us, that we should never see either father or mother more. At last, overcome with grief and weariness, we fell asleep in the window seat, locked in each other's arms.

We were awakened by the heavy tramp of feet in the halls below. "Dear papa, you have come," I murmured, half aroused from a dream, in which I had been clasped in his arms, and had heard his dear voice again call me his "brave little Victoire." Just then the door opened, and our mother entered. We hastened to meet her, but drew back aghast as we saw the change which had come over her since morning. Her garments were soiled and torn; the veil which she had worn was rent from her head; her hair fell in dishevelled masses below her waist; her face was like that of death; her eyes tearless and full of woe. Four soldiers followed her, bearing a body, which we instantly recognised as that of our father. They laid it upon the table, and without a word withdrew, shutting us in with our dead. Our mother's anguish found no relief in tears. She staunched the blood which flowed from his wounds, she lifted the mass of auburn curls from the chill brow; she clasped the stiff hands, she covered the white face with kisses,—but save an occasional groan breathed no sound. Frederick, too, hung over the body, moaning piteously; but I stood apart and shrieked in passionate, terrified grief. Two ideas possessed my soul. My noble father, the idol of my childish heart, my ideal of all beauty and perfection, a few hours before so full of generous life, of living love, was cold and dead; he could never speak,

never smile upon me more. Mingled with this was a throbbing hate, a fierce desire for revenge toward his murderers.

When in Paris first sounded the cry of liberty, which penetrated into the very heart of the nation, drawing together the untaught and ardent lovers of their country from every province of France, my paternal grandfather, then in the prime of strength, left his inheritance of vineyards in the vales of Languedoc, and, hastening to the capital, joined the cause of the people. He was a true enthusiast for liberty. He hated the corrupt government which had entailed such a fearful curse upon his native land; but, unwilling that the unfortunate Louis, the radiant Antoinette, with their innocent children, should be sacrificed for the crimes of their ancestors, did all in his power to avert their gloomy fate. This brought upon him the hatred of the Jacobins; and when Robespierre came into possession of unlimited power, a speedy flight was all that saved him from lying down under the guillotine amid the thousand victims sacrificed to the new republic. He took refuge with his wife and child in America; and here our father, an only child, educated in the principles of a true democracy, grew up to manhood, a warm admirer of the institutions of his adopted country.

Shortly after his marriage to an American girl, he was called to France to take possession of the small remnant left of the once large inheritance of his fathers. It was when Napoleon's star was on the wane, before the government was again established, that he arrived in his native country. Notwithstanding his affection for America, he loved the land of his ancestors; and the hope that he should yet see it a healthful republic induced him to take up his residence in France. He foresaw and awaited the approaching crisis. And when, at last, the long smothered fires of the revolution burst forth anew in 1830, Henri Vernoid, as his father before him, became a champion for the people. He possessed the tragic energy, the enthusiasm, the chivalrous love of freedom which characterizes peculiarly the sons of southern France. The unison of a logical and disciplined intellect with these characteristics, eminently fitted him for a commander, and enabled him not only to lead, but to quell, the fury of the turbulent masses. He never used his eloquence to incite them to deeds of blood, but to prompt them to deliberate and temperate action. On the day in which he fell, his presence stilled the wild tumult of the people wherever he went. Amid this labor of love, he received a bayonet wound which caused his

instant death. He was buried with martial honors. Hundreds of soldiers who, the morning before, would gladly have pierced him to the heart, now that the power was in the hands of the people, followed reverently to the grave the people's friend. But what was the vast concourse, the lines of soldiery, the martial music, the solemn charge, to the widow and her children? Proofs only of their utter desolation.

In Père la Chaise, that peerless necropolis, where beauty and valor, where honor and dishonor, the lofty and lowly, find like repose, we buried our dead.

LES DELICES.

A month had scarcely passed after our father's death before we found ourselves at Les Delices. If you cross the ocean, you can find it standing amid ripening vineyards in a delicious valley near where the arrowy Rhone flows into the southern sea. The Cevennes tower above it; some resting their cheeks of snow upon the farthest sky; others rising softly below, crowned with furs and girdled with vines. The Rhone, rushing from rocky fastnesses, pours its waters with mad impetuosity into the lap of this tranquil valley. On its banks, far as the eye can reach, you may see magnificent chateaux, picturesque cottages, and blossoming vineyards. The river is instinct with life. White-winged boats are for ever flitting by, while the boatman's song and the boatman's call make the music of its night and of its day.

Les Delices, half chateau, half cottage, with a single red turret, an overhanging roof and verandah, stands at the base of a mountain upon an eminence sloping down to the Rhone. Above it, upon the mountain side, the firs of Languedoc extend their great arms of shade. A cascade, leaping from a lofty gorge breaking upon the rock-ledges at its side, falls a rapid stream, watering the vineyard below. Manifold vines fasten to the low verandah, and, striving upward, cling with their delicate festoons and blossoms around the ruddy neck of the turret. Bountiful trees shade the lawn down to the river's brink; fountains play with a dreamy lull amid their shadows; quaint seats, arbors girdled with flowers, calm-faced statues, rest under their far-spreading boughs, perfect ideals of beauty and repose. At the entrance of the green arcade

leading to the house, a marble Ceres, garland-crowned, her white arms over-flowing with pallid fruits, offers welcome to all who enter the precinct of Les Delices.

In this perfect abode, in spite of our own grief and the woe-smitten face of our mother, we began to grow happy. Ours was the elastic heart of childhood, in which the sunshine of to-day absorbs the grief of yesterday. Only children, we were unconscious of the desolation which the sight of Les Delices brought to our mother's heart. Our father had adorned it with especial reference to her love for the beautiful. Here she spent the first years of her wedded life, which passed an unbroken dream of happiness. She left it, a proud and happy woman, with every earthly wish gratified in her noble husband and infant children. Now she had come back a widowed mother, a broken-hearted mourner, reminded at every step of the idolized dead. She taught us to believe that he was not far away, that he still loved and watched over his children, till gradually the horror connected with his violent death wore away, and our father became to us a spiritual friend—unseen, smiling upon our childish sports, and kissing our little brows amid our sweet night visions. Our mother gave us all the vintage time in which to recruit our health and spirits. Hand in hand, Frederick and I wandered through the vineyards, assisting the merry peasants to gather their delicious harvest. When the day was closing we would go to the village green, not far away, to watch their evening dance. There was no feasting nor drunkenness. Aged people and children in neat attire sat under the trees, while youths and maidens in holiday dress danced and sang upon the sward, blithe as birds in their native air.

But these glad days rapidly fled. The vintage was gathered. Fierce winds swept through the valley. The voice of music and of dancing was heard only by cottage hearths. And Frederick and I sat busy with our books, by our mother's side, in our beautiful but lonely home. She was fully competent to superintend our education. To her quick and retentive mind, study had ever been a pastime. She loved knowledge for itself, for the vast world of thought which it opened to her intellectual vision. And her daily life was a contradiction of the false assertion that the highest intellectual development unfits woman for domestic duty; for no art had she mastered so perfectly as the beautiful one which enabled her, at all times, to make a happy home. Our mother gave us a portion of every day to wander about at our will. In these

hours I forgot all the trouble I had had with my studies, forgot all my naughty tempers, forgot everything in the exuberant joy which seemed to overflow in every heart-throb. We wandered through the vineyards and forests; climbed the rock sides after the pale flowers which grew in their mossy clefts. But our favorite retreat was a small grove of firs, which from one side of Les Delices stretched down to the Rhone. Here upon rude seats we would sit and gaze upon the river far up and down the valley; upon the mountains which soared above us, till their silvery summits seemed to melt away in the soft heavens.

To this retreat Frederick would bring a book, occasionally feeding his eyes upon the glory around him. To me books were a mockery. Beneath a tranquil sky, in the fragrant air, the insatiable demand of my nature for harmony was gratified. I was a child, and could not analyse my satisfaction. I did not know that in nature I beheld embodied the half-defined yet all-pervading idea of the Beautiful which haunted my childish brain. The many changes of the sky, the tints upon the clouds, the outline of every mountain, the hue of every flower, the light and shadow upon the foliage—every phase of the sublime picture which nature each day presented to my childish eyes, was as familiar to me as my mother's face. Within our home were a few rare works of art. The portraits of my father and mother, and the exquisite statue of a young girl, kneeling, clasping a wayside cross, her pure face uplifted to heaven, were my especial delight. Indeed, I never wearied in gazing upon them, and they grew upon my soul until they became a part of its being.

Amid the joy which I felt in studying them was born the desire to produce something which should be their kin. Could I not give a tangible form to the vague images of beauty which were for ever shifting before my mental vision? Many, many times I asked this question, until, one day, in the excitement of feeling, I resolved to try. I endeavored to draw the outline of the scene before my window, and, to my delight, succeeded beyond my hopes. I carried the rude sketch to my own little room, there to complete it at my leisure. And when, at last, it was finished, to my childish eyes it was the fac-simile of the mountains, the river, the valley, which lay outside our door. A new delight was now open to me, all the more keenly enjoyed because enjoyed in secret. For I had resolved to say nothing of my new art until I had produced something which should command the

unbounded admiration of my mother and brother. Child though I was, I made everything bow to my new object. I performed my allotted tasks with great alacrity, in order to gain time for the beloved employment. At such an hour of every day, with throbbing heart and winged feet, I flew to my little sanctuary, and there, with leaden pencil upon broken cards, vainly attempted to portray the gorgeous skies, the purple landscape, the airy palaces, and the lovely faces which brightened my sleeping and waking visions. Sketch after sketch was added to my treasures. Each day, as I took them from their hiding-place, holding them before my eyes in every possible light and shade, I was intoxicated with delight. They were not so much the objects of my admiration as of my affection. I loved them all. Each was connected with some cherished thought, each the palpable form which I had given to the beautiful ghost of the ideal.

Spring came with redundant and ecstatic life; summer, in voluptuous glory; and each season brought a joy to my life which it had never brought before. I had become a deeper student of nature. With the eye of an artist I watched the sun in scarlet, white, and violet flame, ascend above the dusky arch of the mountains—watched the cloud-armies marshal their hosts upon the blue plains of ether. When they rushed together at the zenith, and, from the blackness of darkness, sent their forked lightnings into the heart of the valley; when their thunders, leaping from the parapets of heaven, shook the foundations of the defiant hills, my whole nature expanded, the storm carnival seemed to make me great. After my mother had given me her good-night kiss, and *ma bonne*, *bonne* Nanette had tucked me securely in my crib, telling me that if I dared to open my eyes again, the fairies would drag me up the mountain and shut me in a cave, where I could cry for ever and never be heard, I only waited for the last click of her wooden shoes to break my cerements and escape to the window, to find the twilight and the night—to watch the moonlight sheen flowing over mountain and valley—the myriad stars shimmering up from the dark face of the river, or glittering in a million points of fire on the white crests of the mountains.

There was no picture to me so beautiful as my mother's face, as I saw it every day before me in its chastened loveliness. I was never weary of gazing upon the white brow, shaded with waves of brown hair; upon the hazel eyes, in which shone so serene a light; upon the mouth, in whose

exquisite curves trembled so sweet a smile. "When I can draw the perfect outline of her face, then she shall know my secret," I said to myself, while vainly attempting to convey it to paper.

"Why do you look at me so earnestly, my child?" she inquired one day, as she lifted her eyes from a book which she was reading in the open air. I was lying at a little distance from her, under a tree, gazing intently into her face. "For nothing much, mamma," I answered, embarrassed to have my scrutiny observed. "There was a purpose in your look. Come here, Victoire." I reluctantly obeyed, vainly endeavoring to hide from sight the pencil and cards which I held in my hands. The anticipated exultation which was to attend the *denouement* of my secret I did not realize. I began to tremble at the thought of exposing my rude attempts to my mother's cultivated eye. "This little heart is throbbing with some hope which it dare not breathe, even to its best friend," she said, as she drew me tenderly to her.

I could never withstand the sweetness of my mother's manner. Every doubt died at the first sound of her melodious voice. "Let me go! Let me go! mamma, only a minute," I exclaimed, bursting from her embrace. I ran for my treasures, and in a moment returned to pour them all into her lap. I could not interpret every emotion which passed over her face, as she gazed at them one by one; but at last was certain that I read pleasure, unmistakable pleasure, in her eye. Yet she only said: "Do you like to draw, Victoire?" "Oh, yes, mamma; you must know that I do!" "I am glad that you are fond of it. I will give you lessons every day, if you please." "Will you, dearest mamma?" I exclaimed; "Will you teach me; and may Frederick learn too? Oh, how happy we shall be?" And with these words upon my lips, I bounded away in search of my brother.

I sang aloud for joy, as I ran on toward the little grove of firs where of late I had left him to spend many of his afternoons alone. I discovered him under one of the trees, and without waiting to reach his side, in my enthusiasm, exclaimed: "Frederick! I have learned to draw! Mamma says that I shall take lessons every day. Who knows but that I can learn to paint pictures as beautiful as those which hang in the parlor? Who knows but that I may go to Italy some day, and paint pictures which will live for ever!" Here I had reached my climax, and was obliged to stop. Frederick looked amazed at my sudden appearance and strange

proclamation, but answered presently: "Have you learned to draw, Victoire? I am glad. And if you live, and have resolved to be, I am sure that you will become, a great painter." There was nothing in his words, but something in his tone, which made me look in his face to see how he felt. He looked pale and sad. And a pang of remorse shot through my heart when I remembered that I had spoken only of myself, while my noble and gentle brother, also, had hopes and aspirations dear to his soul as were mine to me.

"Frederick, what are you going to be when you get to be a man?" I suddenly asked. "I cannot tell," he said; "life does not flow as proudly through my veins as yours; but if I am never great, I hope that I may be good." "You will be both," I said, as I looked into his eyes and threw my arms around his neck. Heavy masses of chestnut curls clustered around the pure, high brow. A crimson flush played upon his cheek. His eyes, of limpid grey, grew luminous with an unuttered thought.

"Frederick," again I asked, "what would you *like* to be?" "Like to be!" he murmured, as if to himself; "I would like to be an orator. One to startle, to move, to sway human masses by the pathos of my voice and the poetry and grandeur of my thought. *Then* I would wake all who heard me to a love of truth, to a worship of the beautiful, to enthusiasm for virtue, a devotion to duty, an undying faith in their own immortality." He had forgotten himself, forgotten all, save the grand idea which absorbed him. His eyes seemed to emit a divine fire; his slight frame expanded, his whole being was inspired. I could hardly believe it to be Frederick, my quiet, my gentle brother. But, as he concluded, the glow faded from his cheek; his eyes assumed their wonted soft expression. "You will think me very vain, Victoire; but you asked me what I would *like* to be." "And what you will be, Frederick," I said, again folding my arms around his neck and covering his face with kisses. "I know that you will be both great and good."

From that hour, for his sake, I became interested in Demosthenes and Cicero, in Homer and Virgil; while he was only too ready to appreciate and to commend the crude sketches of my pencil. Our hours of recreation were too short in which to discuss our hopes and plans for the future. The days glided happily away till Frederick reached his eighteenth and I my fifteenth birthday.

"I am weak in delaying to speak to you upon an import-

ant subject," said our mother, one day in early autumn. "We have spent so many happy days in this valley, I dread the thought of leaving it; yet it is necessary that we go." Frederick and I started in astonishment. Both answered in a breath: "Why must we leave it? why go from our beautiful home?" "Because it is for your highest good. Frederick needs the discipline of the Academy. He needs to come in contact with the actual world. And you, Victoire, need the instructions of a master in your art." "O mamma!" I exclaimed, "I shall be so happy! Can we go?" "Yes, you shall go, my child," she said, smiling at the sudden change which had come over me. Both exclaimed: "But when shall we go?" "As soon as possible. Before winter comes we must be housed in Paris." Now came the busy days of preparation. Upon Frederick's brain and mine dawned such visions of promise we almost wondered to see tears gather in our mother's eyes whenever our departure was mentioned. But when the last day at Les Delices came; when all my treasures had been taken from their sacred nooks; when, instead of cherished paintings and beloved furniture, I saw bare walls and desolated rooms; when I bade good bye to the cloud-crowned mountains; to the Rhone, to the garden, the grove of firs where so many sunny dreams had been born—so intense was my girlish grief I would gladly have sacrificed my visions of Parisian life to have lived over again the days of my just departed childhood.

PARIS.

In the very heart of its tumultuous life, in the Rue St. Honoré, towered the gloomy dwelling which we now called home. To us, who had basked so long in the soft airs of vine-clad Languedoc, it seemed a very prison. The dingy walls, the narrow windows, presented a gloomy contrast to the bright, frescoed rooms of the home which we had left. The windows of the parlor opened into a tiny court paved with rude mosaics. In its centre stood a mouldy fountain whose basin was fringed with a narrow border of myrtle and violets. But my eye had so long been accustomed to the broad, tree-shaded, river-zoned lawn of Delices, with its statues, its fountains, its aromatic flowers, its sun-lighted nooks, I could see no beauty in this meagre little court. But how soon

every gloomy impression vanished; how soon beauty blossomed around us; how soon the old rooms grew full of a soft light, filled with an infinite grace beneath the touch of our mother's hand and the illuminations of our mother's smile. Beloved paintings looked upon us again. My snowy statuette—the young girl clasping the wayside cross—once more greeted me when I came. The crimson curtains, which used to attemper the scintillations from the crystal armors of the hills, now lent a rosy flush to the sombre walls. A warm carpet glowed beneath our feet. Bright fires danced in the newly-polished grate. There was warmth, and beauty, and cheer; there was love in our home.

Almost immediately after our arrival in Paris, Frederick entered the Academy, and I the studio of Monsieur Savone, an eminent artist. He was a grand old man, with a soul full of enthusiasm for all that is beautiful and good. His life had been consecrated to art. He had studied the beautiful in every form, both in foreign lands and in his own. My passion for painting won a place for me in his heart. He knew every fine picture in Paris, and resolved that my young eyes should feast upon the glorious productions of the masters. With delight I revert to those enchanted days when, with throbbing heart and trembling steps, I wandered with my master through the galleries of the Tuileries and of the Louvre. There I gazed upon the miraculous conceptions of sculptor and painter. There I beheld the embodiment of my own most glorious imaginings. Yet the divine forms and faces filled me with pain. They filled me with an insatiate longing, with an undying purpose to produce forms of beauty which, like them, would be immortal. This thought possessed me wholly, nerving me to ceaseless toil by day, filling all my dreams at night.

Thus the winter passed, and I had no eyes to see that our mother was often silent, and sometimes sad. Spring came, and I had ceased to pine for the green vales, for the purple vines, for the mountains, the river, the sunshine of Languedoc. In the tumult, the pride, the glory of the world's metropolis, I found that which seemed to feed my restless, ambitious spirit. I had ceased to despise the little court, with its dingy mosaics and mouldy fountain. It seemed pleasant now.

As the twilights lengthened almost every evening, Frederick and I wandered to the Champs Elysées.

There we sat one evening in June. We had wandered to

L'Arc de Triomphe d'Etoile. Both were weary, and one was sad. It was Frederick. He sat with his head resting upon his hand, and at last sighed so heavily I started with fear. "Why are you so sorrowful, Frederick?" I said, taking both his hands in mine. "My sorrow is yours, Victoire; have you noticed our mother of late?" "Not particularly; why?" "Have you not seen how pale she has grown? how her strength has failed? Victoire, she will not stay with us long." "Frederick, it cannot be! You are ill yourself, and imagine this." Passionately as I loved my mother, her very existence did not seem so completely a part of mine as it did that of Frederick. He not only knew, but felt every change which passed over that beloved face. His exquisite organization was so keenly alive to the most subtle influences of joy and of sorrow, it was not strange that he had noticed a change which had escaped my observation. His words smote my soul. I had not thought it possible that my mother could die. To me she seemed already immortal. Her life had entered into all my plans. In my dreams she had gone with me to foreign lands, had dwelt with me in a home filled with luxury and beauty. I had won laurels, and she had placed them upon my brow. Her soft hand had held me in the narrow way; her heavenly eyes, ever uplifted to the sky, had reminded me always of the abode of the blessed. And now the thought that she might die, might die soon, how terrible! "Frederick," I said, "let us go;" and, without a word, we arose to retrace our steps. It was a sibylline night. Mystery shone in the eyes of the stars; the very air seemed prescient of sorrow. The young moon, like a stranded wreck, lay on the western shore of the sky; while above it Venus waved her flaming torch. The trees stood motionless; every leaf and spray, perfectly defined, laid its dark tracery on the ground; the lapse of fountains and the slumbrous hum of insects filled the air with subdued monotones. The spell which rested upon the world did not suit my mood. Blackness of darkness would have pleased me better than the placid beauty, the brooding calmness of this night.

As we drew near our dwelling, we saw a person in white standing in one of the long windows which look out upon the court. It was our mother awaiting our return. In a moment we were in her arms. "The evening has been long, my dear ones," she said, folding us closely to her heart. "You must be weary; sit down and rest." She sat down in the open window, and we took a low seat upon either side,

as had been our wont from earliest childhood. In silence we looked out upon the petit court. The old fountain was showering its diamonds into the heart of the pansies, the mosaics glistened in the wan light, while a single tree, with its garniture of young leaves, threw a deep shadow over all. Amid the calm, my heart throbbed wildly; but I stifled its throes, while I looked steadily into my mother's face. Its attenuated outline, its transparent whiteness, the fearfully dazzling eye, the shortened breath — why had I not thought of these before? Alas! I found the answer in the selfishness of my own self-contained nature. Our mother, too, seemed to struggle to be calm. She clasped Frederick's hand and mine together, and pressed both to her heart. At last she spoke, and her words came quick, as if impatient for utterance. "This air stifles me. It consumes me. I cannot live in Paris. I cannot forget the past. In these streets I see only a maddened people, hear only the tramp of troops, the clash of swords, the roar of cannon, the shrieks of the wounded and dying. Again I lift the gory locks from the brow of my beloved; I bear him in his blood to my bereft home and orphaned children. Amid these scenes I live; do you wonder that my heart is broken! that I am dying? I cannot live in Paris!"

She soon regained her composure; and still holding our hands in hers, she opened to us her heart. "I have long dreaded this hour," she said; "for I felt that you were unprepared for it. I fear that it has never entered your mind that the time is near when you will be motherless. Your father's death gave me a shock from which I have never recovered. I staunched the bleeding, but the wound has never healed. I felt that I must live for your sake, and for years the power of will has seemed sufficient to sustain life. At Les Delices everything reminded me of the happiest hours of my life. Here all reminds me of its own woe! I feared the consequences of coming to Paris, and the result has been worse than my fears. I came for your sakes, and I am glad that I came, for you have received great profit from your advantages. I feel that it is my destiny to die in Paris, and to lie down by your father's side. I have almost reached the verge of the grave. Only for you I mourn. I would love to walk with you through life, yet I am grateful that I have lived long enough to see your characters formed, to see you almost ready to step forth into the world, full of courage and hope, believing and trusting in God as your father." Thus she spoke amid our bursting sobs.

In the morning she wore her usually sweet exterior, and greeted us with her wonted smile. I entreated permission to remain with her, and so did Frederick. "No," she said; "No; I do not need you. I would have you improve your time until I do." With heavy hearts we went to our different scenes of study. For the first time in my life, Art yielded me no satisfaction. There were pictured faces around me upon which I had never gazed before without feeling a thrill of delight in every nerve, but on that day they had no power to charm. One thought possessed me. My mother must die. I tried to banish it, tried to hope, but in vain. There was something in her looks, in her tones—something in my own soul which whispered: "Your mother will die."

The banquet of summer ended. The garlands upon her crown withered. Autumn pierced the heart of nature, and it bled. She hung a veil of ensanguined mist over the face of the sun; she changed the sapphire heavens to amber; she filled the air with slumbrous melody; filled the universe with a dreamy glory, beautiful yet sorrowful to behold. *Then* our mother died. Yet to her came not death, but transition. Most tranquil, most placid was her passage. God gave His beloved sleep. For months I could not arouse myself to the slightest action. "I have no mother," was the thought which possessed me. Then every omission, the little acts of love which I had left unperformed, the thousand tender words of love which I might have spoken, arose like fiends to fill me with torment. I thought that my ambition was dead. *I* never again could be so deeply interested in life as I had been in the past. I did not know how hard it is to still the bounding joy of a young and buoyant heart. In tides of anguish life will roll in upon the soul; but anon it flows back again into the deep, broad channels of joy. It was thus with me. As months rolled away, my anguish lost its poignancy. I thought less of my own loss, more of my mother's gain. Unconsciously I again became interested in my old pursuits. My joy was chastened, my ambition tempered, yet life was all before me. I could not sink supinely. Nothing would have grieved my mother more. I was only seventeen.

LOVE.

A year went by, and yet the old light had not come back to Frederick's face. He was not gloomy; but in the deep irides of his eyes I saw a world of unspoken sorrow, saw such a look of want, such a look of longing, it often filled my eyes with tears to look at him. Unlike most young men of his age, he had no gay companions. I was aware of his having but a single intimate friend. During our mother's life, Frederick had not seemed to need even his society; but now he often came and spent his evenings in our quiet parlor. Henri Rochelle was a number of years Frederick's senior. He was a student of medicine, and, Frederick told me, distinguished in the academy for his superior scholarship and faultless character. I remember him as a finely formed man, with a cold face and a composed mien, calmly discussing by the hour the most abstruse scientific and metaphysical themes. His discourse had no personal interest to me. I never listened. I was glad to have him come because he interested Frederick. But, quietly sewing in one corner, I busied myself with my own dreams.

One fact impressed me strangely. After his departure Frederick always seemed more than usually depressed. Henri Rochelle always seemed to leave a shadow behind him which fell upon Frederick's heart. It was a mystery to me, for Frederick seemed warmly attached to Rochelle, and, notwithstanding the after shadow, sought his company unceasingly. If he had a sorrow apart from our mutual one, I resolved to find it out. Heretofore there had been no reserve between us. One had held no secret which the other had not shared. But there was one now, I knew. I thought that it must be something in connexion with his university life, and began to question him minutely of his experience as a student. In reply, he said: "I find that very few young men have had so little contact with the jostling, every-day world; very few who have always found their highest happiness in the society of a beloved mother. She well knew that there was nothing I needed so much as to pass through a hardening process in order to acquire a little more manhood. It has been a hard task. I am not manly now in my classmates' sense of the term. They ridicule me because I know nothing of their dissipated mode of life. They despise me because I will not join them in their revels. Many of them glory in their infi-

delity, and scorn me because I love and strive to serve my mother's God. But, if I fail in everything else, the tender conscience which she guarded so long I shall seek to carry into her presence unstained. I have but one friend; Henri Rochelle I love as a brother." He laid his cheek against mine; it was hot; there was fever in his veins; there was a strange fire in his eyes quivering out from under the almost transparent lids.

"You have not told me all," I said. "The students may annoy you. But there is a sorrow lying deeper in your heart. A new shadow has fallen upon your life. What is it?—you have ever trusted me, Frederick!" "Trust you? Victoire, I trust you as I do no other creature. But why confess all my weakness? You are too strong to feel it; you cannot understand it." "Don't talk of my strength, Frederick. Remember, I have not been tried. My weakness has not been gauged; and, for understanding, have you ever had a sorrow that I did not feel?" He did not answer, but the chestnut curls shuddered closer against my cheek.

At last he spoke, and every word came low and slow, as if born with a pang down deep in his heart: "Henri Rochelle has a sister. She is the embodiment of my life-long dream—one for whose sake I would willingly be blind to the rest of the universe, could I behold her before my eyes for ever. There, Victoire, you have it—my weakness, my sin."

I was not prepared for such a revelation. What sister ever is? I supposed that I was all the world to Frederick; and was annoyed, chagrined, to find myself mistaken. A spasm of jealousy curdled my heart at the thought of a rival. My father and mother in heaven, my art, my brother upon earth, absorbed the world of my affection. My deeper nature had never been touched.

As I look back to my then undeveloped heart, I wonder that I could sympathize with Frederick at all. I did so from intuition, not from experience. I had implored his confidence. I would not recoil from it now. "Why is it a sin to love one who is lovely?" I asked. "If I could see this lady I presume that I should love her myself. At least I should wish to paint her picture. Does she love you, Frederick?"

Again I felt the curls quiver against my cheek as he answered: "I know not. I only know that her eyes follow mine for ever, and her soul is in her eyes. But it is madness, it is sin. She is the affianced of another. In one month she will be a wife, and to me the thought is hell."

"But why? If you love each other, why must she marry another?"

"It is the old tragedy, Victoire; the old tragedy which has been acted over and over since the world began. The father sells his child for gold, heedless that he sacrifices a living heart. Day and night she implores her mother to intercede with her father to save her from a man whom she loathes. But he is rich; he belongs to the nobility. Her father is unrelenting. There is no hope."

For the first time Frederick's sorrow was beyond the reach of my healing. It had struck deeper than I could penetrate. Of the pain of a love-wounded heart I knew nothing. My pleasures were purely æsthetic. My worshipping nature was content to adore the divine beings which sprang into passionless life beneath the creative hand of genius. Yet my very ignorance made me tender. I respected an emotion which I could not fathom. Long, long I pillowed that dear head upon my heart. How I loved him!

The day for the annual distribution of prizes in the Academy had come. Frederick, among the first scholars of his class, was to pronounce an oration. Nobility, royalty, the genius, the beauty of the capital had assembled. I had eyes but for two—Frederick and Beatrice Rochelle. She entered the hall with her brother. I recognised her instantly. How could I help it? She had a face which is seen but once in a life-time. Her eyes were liquid, lustrous, sad. The concentrated life of a soul, its love, its longing, its unfathomed yet immortal mystery, all seemed concentrated in those prophetic orbs. Young, I had only to look at her to see that her heart had outlived her years. No pang of jealousy stifled the pulses of my heart while I gazed upon her. Rather I longed to fold her to my heart, to call her "sister," to tell her I would love her for ever.

From her my eyes turned to Frederick; and, while I gazed upon him, I involuntarily stretched out my hand as if to break the barrier which kept asunder two beings whom the gods had created for each other. He leaned against a statue of Apollo, a breathing incarnation of more than Apollo's beauty. He belonged to that rare order of men who are beautiful without being effeminate. His was the exquisite outline, the effulgent beauty of the Greek. He dwelt in a tabernacle of etherial clay, which, while it shrouded, still emitted the spiritual fire burning within the soul's shekinah. It seemed

to surround his person with an effluence of light; it hovered about his brow, a visible panoply of superhuman glory.

The stiff declamations, the noisy eloquence of his companions had ended. As he stepped forth upon the rostrum my breath seemed suspended. Every nerve was strained to its utmost tension; my very life seemed to depend upon his triumph. His voice rose clear as the fine ring of a silver trumpet—soft as the sigh of a lute. Up! up! it went through the fretted arches, up to the arabesque dome. So soft, so searching, so sweet it was, it was easy for me to imagine that a god was speaking. His theme was: "Representative Men of France." He presented Fénelon and Mirabeau in contrast, types of one race in different eras. Mirabeau, in his shaggy strength, his lion greatness, he portrayed in language strong as the soul whose fiery lineaments he depicted.

When he spoke of Fénelon his voice softened. His words, in their silvery flowing, became melodious as the life whose story they told. He compared the great powers of the universe—Intellect, Will, Soul. The supremacy of spirit over matter. He became enthusiastic. His features seemed transfigured. Light, such as I never saw before upon a human face, hovered around his—but only for an instant. The raised hand fell. The poised form staggered. There was a gurgling sound, and blood, blood, burst from mouth and nostril in a crimson torrent. The soul was too strong for its casket—a blood-vessel had broken.

I cannot describe the scene which ensued. I indistinctly remember the confusion, the groans and cries of the audience. I only know that in a moment my brother was in my arms, and that Beatrice Rochelle was by my side, amid the crowd who had rushed to his assistance. Henri Rochelle was there also. His strong arms bore Frederick from the hall; he helped support the litter upon which he was borne to our home. "Ride with my sister," he said to me; and he gently led me to a carriage. In a moment I was by the side of Beatrice. We had no introduction. We needed none. Little she knew how well I knew her. Involuntarily I laid my hand in hers, as one gasping sob struggled up from my convulsed heart. A change had come over her face. Its whiteness was now appalling; the woe in the gazelle eyes had become most piteous, most imploring.

When we reached the house I asked Beatrice to enter and await the arrival of her brother and of mine. I would have entreated her had it been necessary, but it was not. If I had not

asked her, I think that she would have entered. I arranged a couch for Frederick in the parlor, and with fainting anxiety awaited his arrival. When the young men bore him in his eyes were closed, his face that of death. His bearers laid him softly down and departed, save Henri. Slowly his eyes opened. His gaze met that of Beatrice, who stood motionless at the foot of his couch. Again dawned the look of celestial joy. For an instant the enfeebled arms were outstretched. She went to his side. The young face bent down to his. The tresses of gold fell upon the chestnut curls, as again and again she kissed the cold brow. Not a word was spoken. They seemed unconscious of our presence—of everything but each other. The sight was inexpressibly touching. I know it, I feel it now.

These twin souls, between whom fate had thrown an impassable chasm, yet who saw life only in each other's eyes—they had mingled at last—mingled upon the border of the valley of shadows—so near, that the light from the other shore had fallen already upon their young faces, and their passionate human love seemed, even now, exalted into the glory of the divine.

But there was a coming back. There is always a *coming back*. Wander as we may, forget, as we sometimes can, the Nemesis Life, we awake from our vision to behold her stark before us, fierce, inexorable, avenging! Foolish heart! dream your dreams, life will be avenged! She will measure for you again her cankering cares, her stale routine, her every-day flatness. Again she will taunt you with illusive hope, with broken promises, with her baffling and torturing mystery.

This was a new revelation to Henri Rochelle. Amazement, pain, were depicted upon his cold features as he stood apart and looked upon his sister and his friend. He did not interfere. He spoke not. He only looked.

The delirium vanished. The reality, *her* reality, she saw face to face. With a sudden look of consciousness, the sorrowful eyes were lifted to her brother, and she stretched out her hand to him. He went to her side. Like a broken lily, the young head fell upon his breast. "Beatrice! sweet sister!" he said; and, taking Frederick's hand, he laid it within hers. "Would that I had known this before. Why have neither of you told me? Beatrice, you shall be saved!" Frederick caught the words. "Aye!" he murmured, and the white hand pointed upward.

DYING.

> "Yes! he was dying; yet
> Death seemed not like death in him;
> For the spirit of life in every limb
> Lingered, a mist of sense and thought.
> His soul! It seemed already free,
> Like the shadow of fire surrounding me."

The wasting form, the hollow cough, again inhabited our dwelling. Winter had passed; so had spring; the summer had deepened, and there was no change for the better. "It is the only hope," said the old physician who had attended our mother. "The air of Languedoc, the scenes of childhood, may revive him; yet I have little hope; he is one of those whom the gods take early." I had but one thought now—how could I save my brother; how secure for him life and Beatrice? We gave up our apartments in the Rue St. Honoré. With tearful regret I lingered in the little mosaic court. The dusky myrtles, the pansies which I had once despised, were sacred now. They had brightened the last hours of my mother's life, and their faint aroma was grateful to the soul of Frederick. Association will make the dreariest spot precious. The soul can sanctify all things. It will link a beloved name with the commonest thing, and its love make that thing immortal. Frederick and Beatrice did not meet again. She, also, was ill—too ill to leave her room. And on this account her marriage was deferred. Yet every day Henri brought to Frederick some token from her heart. Silent, eloquent messages of love were exchanged between them until the day of our departure. On that morning Henri and Frederick talked long together. They seemed to cling to each other as if the precious conference was the last. Their tones were low and sometimes broken. Once I overheard these words: "Fill my place, Henry; love her for my sake and for her own;" and also: "'Where there is neither marrying, nor giving in marriage,' you will meet. There will be no earthly bridal;" and the soft answer: "It is well."

The summer bowed beneath the burden of its prime. The trees drooped under the weight of garniture. The flowers were faint with their own perfume. The air from the southern seas, laden with the aroma of a thousand vineyards, swooned long before it reached the cool arms of the hills. Even the hours, freighted heavily with balm, moved slowly

by; yet this enervated tone in nature harmonized with that of Frederick's system. We travelled in an open carriage, the length of each day's drive being proportioned to his strength. Never before had Frederick's soul and mine come so near together. His nature had far outlived mine. In all that constitutes life, maturity of thought, and of feeling, he was many years my senior; still, as far as I knew, I gave him perfect sympathy. I had seen Beatrice. I loved her with the ardor of an impassioned soul. I had a faint conception of the sacrament of bliss which might have been their portion. But the closest link was this—he, my all, my only one, was dying. How assiduously I watched him. How eagerly I seized every fluctuation of disease as an omen of good. "He cannot, he must not die, my own, my glorious one!" was ever the silent ejaculation of my heart.

He had not given up the hope of life without a fearful struggle. Who that is young, who that knows how to live, ever does? Who that just tastes the delirious draught, does not pant to drain it to the very lees! Frederick had prayed, yea, had agonized for life—for the life that he knew, the life which he felt in his own young veins, to do, to be, to suffer, to enjoy as a mortal *can*—for this life he had prayed. But even disease is kind. When she fastens her inexorable grasp upon us she unloosens many ties which bind us to life. Our benumbed senses cling with less tenacity to earth's beautiful forms. The world is fair, yet its loveliness is not for us. We are soon to inhabit another country, and we turn our eyes thitherward. With Frederick the struggle was over. He had prayed that it might be possible, and yet the cup had not passed by. He had passed the crisis which, soon or late, must come to all. One by one life's most precious objects seemed to drop from his grasp. If, with eyes of ineffable tenderness, he still gazed upon the objects of his love, he yearned that they might follow him rather than that he might go back to them. His spiritual vision was enlarged, and, with marvellous distinctness, he seemed to see the unutterable glory of the hereafter.

"It seems a long way back to life. This body will never be any better. Cease to expect it, Victoire, and resignation will take the place of your wearing anxiety." He said these words to me one evening in a wayside inn, as we rested by an open window, watching the sun shut his eye of glory behind the hills. His words struck an open wound in my heart. I gasped before I answered: "You, who have so

much to live for, how can you speak so calmly of dying! To me death is terrible, either for myself or for others. Heaven may be beautiful; 'but I am in love with this green earth.' Oh, it seems terrible to die!" "Yes, to you, who are in full possession of life, thus it seems; but I have reached the point to which all come at last, when every object assumes its true proportions. Eternity and Time have changed places. The veil hiding the unseen world touches my face. And as I look back, I see that which men call life is not worth the ado we make about it. Life!" he added, with a touch of his old enthusiasm; "Here we only begin life. When we are prepared to live, we are called up higher to drink from its perpetual fountain. When we are developed perfectly to enjoy, we enter into its full fruition. The highest end of life is life. If we are prepared to live, we are ready to die. To me it seems sweet to go."

"Oh!" I exclaimed, "how can you speak thus! Are you willing to leave Beatrice, who loves you? Are you willing to leave me alone without a guide, without a comforter? A slight spasm passed over his face. "This," he said, "is the sting of death. I cling to my idols. But Beatrice will come to me. *We* shall not be separated. You, Victoire, I must leave. But, whether I live or die, you will fulfil your destiny. You have a destiny, and bright stars meet in your horoscope. You have a glorious soul; you must return it to God enlarged, perfected! God only can be your teacher. You will be taught by suffering. Great endeavors, great temptations, great sorrow, and a great triumph, all are in your future. You need all to teach you, yourself; to teach you God, and how to trust Him. It is a cruel world to leave you in alone. My heart grieves for you, yet my reason scarcely trembles. Your nature is strong. God is stronger. He is kind. He will keep you. If I were to live I could soothe, and love, and help you. I could not mould you. Dear one, you will miss me, but you can live without me. You could live a solitary, self-sustained life if you were the only being in the universe. You will mourn for me deeply, but you will outlive your sorrow. I shall become to you a fragrant memory. As a ministering spirit I may do more for you than if I walked by your side, fainting beneath the burden of my own humanity."

There was hope in his words, yet my heart refused to be comforted. I was so intensely human, I could see no beauty in decay, no charm in death. I could feel no pleasure in the

thought of communing with disembodied spirits, however dear. I wanted my loved ones before my eyes where I could see them, touch them, caress them, tell them how much I loved them.

The next day, just as twilight was dropping her first faint veil of shadows, we came in sight of Les Delices. How peacefully it slept in the lap of the valley! The ruddy turret gleamed through its redundant vines. There stood Ceres, my first dream of marble beauty. There tinkled the fountains, filling the air with softest euphony. There crowded the gorgeous midsummer flowers. There fell the cascade, now shrunken to a few silver threads, ever breaking, ever re-uniting over the mossy ledges of the rocks. Below swept the Rhone—bold, impetuous, glorious as ever; while above, the grand mountains stretched out their hoary hands in a perpetual benediction.

There were kind tenants to welcome us. But alas, the change! Where was our mother? Where the lost appliances of our home? As we passed the threshold, Frederick's eye glanced eagerly around as if in quest of some treasure missed. A shadow, then a gleam, passed over his transparent features. I saw that it was no longer home to him. He lay down upon a couch in the old room—the room in which his eyes first opened to the morning; the room which had first witnessed our baby-sports, our childish studies, our youthful conferences.

I sat by his side until he slumbered. Then I went out into the old garden, bending my steps toward the grove of firs. The moon had come up above the mountains, and turned the night into a paler day. In her full light the white brow of Ceres glowed like amber. The waters of the fountains seemed changed to jewels as they fell. The limpid threads of the cascade, trembling languidly over the rock ledges, looked like creeping veins of gold. Not a leaf stirred. Not a sound was heard save the lull of the fountains, the hoarse roll of the river, the calls of the boatmen coming at intervals through the trees. My eye took in every shade in nature, but I only saw it; it did not comfort me.

Three years before, I had left that spot a buoyant and believing child, with faith in the future unbounded. How had she fulfilled her promises! An orphan, I had come back to bury the last being I loved upon earth. This was my grief, my crushing sorrow. No thought of heaven, of the perfected life which he so joyfully anticipated, could lift from my soul

its weight of desolation. At midnight I stole back to Frederick's bedside. There, with his hand in mine and my head upon his pillow, I wept myself noiselessly to sleep.

He seemed no longer to belong to earth. His mortal life was fused into one vision of a diviner existence. Of the mystery of death, of eternity, of God, of Christ, he seemed to have more than a human conception. I would hold my breath and listen. And there were moments, while hearkening to his words, that my earth-fettered soul seemed to rise into the atmosphere of spiritual joy in which he breathed. But the cords would tighten again, and the bound heart fall back to its old level, moaning in anguish, while it looked hopelessly up to the beatific height toward which it had no power to soar. But the change watched for, dreaded, came. The last change which can come to the face of the living. When the features became more painfully distinct, the eyes more fearfully brilliant; when around the mouth is seen a settling—that dreadful settling, that tension of muscle—telling of the grasp of the Destroyer.

On the evening of *that* day we lifted Frederick's couch to the verandah that he might see the glory. The sun drew near his setting, and floods of splendor swept down, irradiating all things. Above the loftier mountain tops rose vast masses of cumulus cloud, dazzlingly white, flushed with violet, veined with gold. They loomed in the distant ether, and looked the flaming bastions of the illimitable city. The sun went down. The wonder deepened. The dark pines stood transfigured in fire. The river ran in blazing gold. Upon its banks, far as the eye could reach, village and vineyard, turret and tower burned with the sunset. I looked into Frederick's face. His dear head rested upon the pillows, while his eye, with indescribable eagerness, seemed drinking for the last time the wondrous glory of God's world. I watched him till the tired eyelids fell over his tired eyes. Then taking the worn Bible which lay by his side, I read, less for his consolation than my own, these words:

"Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever Thou hadst formed the earth and world, from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God. We spend our years as a tale that is told. The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is that strength labor and sorrow, for it is soon cut off, and we fly away. I know that my Redeemer liveth, and

that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God. Mine eyes shall behold him and not another. Jesus said: I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in me, though he were dead yet shall he live. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible. For this corruption must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So, when this corruption has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, *then* shall be brought to pass the saying that death is swallowed up of life. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin. Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

"'Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.' Beatrice!" It was his dear voice that spoke. And the depth of joy in the tone thrilled every fibre of my frame. His arms were outstretched; his eyes were uplifted, as if they saw other eyes; his countenance was radiated, glorified. A ray of celestial love swept over his features. The breast rose and fell in one convulsive struggle; there was a sigh—he had gone.

I thought he had fainted, and called wildly for help, for "water! water!" "Here is water," said a voice. It was not Nannette who spoke. By my side stood a stranger. He offered me water in a light urn which always stood upon the verandah, near the foot of the cascade. I bathed the dear brow; I laid the beloved head upon my breast; I covered the face with wildest kisses; I called him by every endearing name; I besought him to live—to live a little longer for my sake; that I could not, would not live without him. Madly I contended with the last enemy. He came not back. Vainly I cried: "My brother! my brother!"

How long I sat with the dead strained to my heart, I do not know. Nannette told me that it was a long time. Also she told me that we were not alone. That, beside our weeping tenants, a stranger stood there with folded arms and humid eyes. That it was he who loosened my strained arms from the dead body of my brother. When she came to this, I remembered the gentle grasp which opened my locked fingers, and the dark eyes which looked down into mine with such a depth of power; how I resisted him; and how, even then, those eyes subdued me, and I seemed powerless to

contend. He led me unresistingly to Nannette, and whether he were of heaven or of earth seemed alike to me; I was only conscious of a positive power exercised over me, to which, for the first time in my life, it seemed sweet to yield.

It was this stranger who composed Frederick's limbs; his hands which closed the lids over those glorious eyes for their last repose. Then he went silently away, no one knew whither. My grief had struck below the source of tears. I moved about as emotionless as a stone. Everything in the past, the present, the future, was a blank. "Frederick is dead." That was all I knew. I could not pray—Frederick is dead—what could I ask for now! I gathered white, unsullied flowers, laid them around his brow and upon his breast. I twined, again and again, the chestnut curls around my fingers as of old. I walked around his coffin. I sat beside it, and would not be called away. I wept not, I spoke not. I went out to the edge of the grove of firs, and watched the old man dig his grave—watched the shining spade cut down into the earth—marked the sides of the grave, so smooth and dark; looked down to its bottom, so narrow, and deep, and dreadful.

It was his request to be buried here. In his native earth, where the mountains could guard his rest; where the voice of the river, the surging arms of the firs, the lapse of fountains, the psalms of birds, and the sigh of the summer wind could sing his requiem in one grand symphony. The name of Vernoid was honored in that valley; and many came from afar to see the earth close over the last son of the race. Many eyes, which I never saw again, filled with tears (needed, perchance, for themselves and for their children), while they looked upon me in my tearless woe, alone in the world, an orphan girl whose feet had not touched their nineteenth summer.

Tears came at last, blessed tears! The day after his burial I stood beside his grave, my wild rebellion-crazing heart and brain—"Why must they die?" I cried. "The beautiful, the immortal! Why are they not transfigured before us, that our eyes might behold the glory of the incorruptible body? Why go down to darkness, and to the worm? Why pass through this loathsome gateway to enter the fields of paradise? Why do they not ascend softly, softly through the delicious ether, until they reach the bosom of the Infinite Father? Oh, why is Heaven so undefinable, so far away? Why does no golden ladder reach down from its celestial

gate, with angels descending to tell to our smitten souls sweet stories of our beatified lost ones? Then, in my agony, I felt that I must reach my arms far down into that deep grave, and bring back my idol one to life and love. Alas! I was so human, faith breathed no word to cheer me. I could not divorce the soul from that precious body. Blame me not—are we not all earthly? Are we not all slaves to the palpable? Moved so deeply by what we see, and hear, and feel—are we not torpid to comprehend, to be satisfied with the unseen, the spiritual, the immortal! Fruitless, mad, was my woe. Conscious of its impotence, with my face prone upon the grave, I lay downand wept.

A LOVE LETTER.

Before his death, Frederick had revealed to me the state of our finances. In Les Delices our entire fortune was vested. The rent which we had received from the estate, had not equalled our Paris expenses. After all incumbrances were paid, something would remain for me; but not a sum sufficient for my support. Henri Rochelle was to be executor, and it was Frederick's request that I should write to him immediately upon his decease. The illness of Beatrice prevented him from accompanying us to Languedoc. The day after the burial, I penned these words:

"Monsieur Rochelle—Frederick died August the first, at seven o'clock p.m. VICTOIRE."

By the return mail I received this reply:

"Victoire! they ascended together. The souls which had learned to live for each other upon earth, are now one in the kingdom of Heaven. Beatrice died at ten minutes before seven, on the evening of August the first. The sanctified is now also the glorified. The one link which bound me to my family is broken. The child of a former marriage, I am now alone. Victoire, I have but one care, one love left in my heart—these are for *you*. You will be startled at this sudden revelation. You have scarcely given me a thought, and never, save as your brother's friend. I love you more for your guilelessness. The morning we parted, Frederick asked

me to fill his place to you, to be to you a brother. I assured him that was impossible; that, already you were dearer to me than sister could ever be. That from the moment in which he held up to my gaze your pictured face, the conviction had entered my soul that you would yet be my wife. Although not a visionary man, since I had breathed in your living presence, this conviction had ripened into a certainty, and I asked him to speak of the subject to you. He said 'I can only ask her to allow you to fill my place. Were I to request more, through her love to me, my dying wish might be to her a command. In a choice upon which all her future depends, she should act untrammelled. I have seen enough of the bartering of hearts. I cannot influence her decision by a word. She knows that you are my only friend. You are worthy of each other, if you can win her love.' This I will do—I will win your love—Victoire. I am not of that order of men who say more than they feel. My love cannot be measured by words, but it can be *lived.* You shall yet feel the strength and depth of my devotion. Your situation justifies the promptness of this declaration. Reason commends what my heart desires. You are a woman and must have a protector. Who more fitting than your only brother's only friend?

HENRI ROCHELLE."

If this letter had dropped into my hand from the clouds, I should not have been more astonished. It aroused me from my apathy of woe. It made me look toward my future. Life stretched out before me. Life, not death, was my portion. Frederick had said that I had a destiny to fulfil; that good stars met in my horoscope. What was this destiny? Simply to marry? Marriage had not entered into my plan of life. My mind, entirely absorbed by another idea, had not reached out toward this Ultima Thule of a woman's hope. At present, art was more to me than lover or husband could possibly be. I had not the slightest intention of merging into a complacent matron, kept "low and wise" by chubby children and household care. The thought of submitting my will to the law of another, of allowing my individuality to become fused into that of one mere human being, to me was odious. I knew nothing of the self-abnegating love, which with infinite trust can look into the eye of a mortal and say—"Entreat me not to leave thee—whither thou goest I will go. Where thou diest will I die. There will I be buried. Naught but death can part thee and me."

No! Art was my chosen. I wished to live my own life, develop the soul which God had given me, without interference, without restriction. The accident of sex, the fact of being a woman did not make me less determined, nor less aspiring. Why did no mistress of sculpture and of painting sit enthroned in the centuries beside Phidias, and Angelo, and Raphael! Through all ages had woman beheld her own form upon every shrine of art, raised as the synonym of immortal beauty, without panting to embody in artistic forms the soul of the beautiful which lived within her? No! Had genius a sex? I did not believe it. Sappho, Aspasia, Zenobia, Hypatia were types of the universal soul which burned as often in the breasts of women as of men. *Then*, had I known them, I would have repeated the words of Tennyson's Lilia:

> "There are thousands now,
> Such women, but convention beats them down,
> You men have done it; how I hate you all.
> Ah! were I something great, I would shame you then,
> Who love to keep us children."

These thoughts and feelings, which sprang spontaneously in my own nature, and lived a strong life without any fostering from external circumstances, seemed entirely to possess me after reading the letter of Henri Rochelle. No girl was ever wholly displeased with her first love-letter. It was a strange, a sudden, a pleasant thought to me, that still the world contained one being who cared for me. Yet the letter chafed far more than it pleased. Its tone of calm assurance irritated me. The one sentence—"You are a woman and need a protector; who else can it be but your only brother's only friend?"—was enough to stir to its depths my defiant pride. Evidently, on my part, he thought marriage a necessity. A woman, I could not take care of myself; to whom else could I go but to him? "He shall see!" I exclaimed. "I *can* take care of myself. God will give all the help which I *need*."

What he had said of my feelings concerning him was true. If through my girlish brain there had ever floated the face of an impossible hero, certainly it was not the face of Henri Rochelle. The profound respect with which I had ever regarded him, removed him far away from me. In the chilly vacuity which separated us, love could not breathe. He was cast in the Roman mould. A dominant will, a metallic intel

lect, could be traced in the bold outlines of the commanding brow, and in the clear cold light of the penetrating eye. He was one to whom a strictly feminine nature would cling and obey, while he would sharpen to keenest antagonism one of his own kind. He was a man whose heart never proved traitor to his head. It might be a strong, a loving, a passionate, an importuning heart; yet it could not traduce the despotic will that pressed it down like a tooth of steel. The will bowed only to the higher law of conscience, and his conscience was taught by the oracles of God. Every feature, every motion, indicated power; yet it was power in reserve, a strong nature in abeyance. Possessing the largest powers of generalization, it was with an effort that he descended to discuss particulars. Plots might thicken around him; he was too far away to know it. Looks, motions, actions, all the minutiæ which form the finer shades of character which are so keenly apparent to the subtle-eyed—he was usually too concentrated, too abstracted to perceive. But when aroused to observe, nothing escaped his vision. When he took the pains to look, he saw clearly, he saw far, he saw and comprehended all! He was innately (in shame I confess it), to me he was distressingly good. If his virtues had been less clearly defined in the cold light of intellect, if they had only been warmed a little more in the sunshine of the heart, it would have been different. But every thought, every emotion, was first resolved through the crystal medium of that unbeclouded judgment, weighed in its most exquisite balance, before submitted to human gaze. The man stood before you accurately measured, startlingly defined. There were no sudden revealings, no spontaneous gushes of feeling, no certain glimpses into fathomless depths of soul beyond—no variation of rich moods; now gay, now sad, now fitful; fervent, impetuous, eloquent—the ever glancing, ever shifting light and shadow of a royally endowed nature. Calm, equable, self-poised, absorbed, great and good, his nature stood before me. There was not a point around which the imagination could play. It suggested nothing more. In its kind it was perfect. I saw it all; and in that hour it did not satisfy me.

Henri Rochelle was one of a large class of men—men of the highest honor, of the rarest virtue, who still are seldom favorites with women. With all their goodness they repel. Yet it is not their excellence which makes them disagreeable, but their defects. They cannot descend to the particulars of suavity and grace of manner; to the unbought, ever longed-

for charities of daily life. From the cool citadel of their brain, they look down with contempt upon the foibles and follies of women. The light which their souls emit, is the sheen of an iceberg which glitters and freezes in the sun. Virtue, which emanates solely from the brain, will always be below par; while a genial spirit will win its way with a thousand hearts, though it carry with it a fearful incubus of sin. It is a sad truth; but brilliant qualities will fascinate and absorb, while ungarnished goodness is often neglected, despised, forgotten!

Men, the opposite of Henri Rochelle, too often control the hearts of women. The world may follow them with hard names, and harder stories; still women love them—women who would start from the accusation of impurity as from a serpent's sting. They belong to the class of whom Byron says:—"There are some who have the reputation of being wicked, with whom we would be only too happy to spend our lives." The divine fire of poetry kindles their eye, glows in their words, inspires their whole being. A lambent eye, a word, a smile born upon beautiful lips, moves, subdues them. They may be harsh enough with men; but to women they are ever chivalric, tender. Their subtle penetration, their delicate flattery, their half disguised tenderness, their deference, and instinctive reverence of all that is womanly; the rich effluence of their hearts, sweetening even that in their nature which may be selfish or sinful, throw around women who enter the charmed circle of their personal life an irresistible fascination. Too often they exclaim in their madness of folly:

> "Alas! I know not if guilt's in thy heart;
> I but know that I love thee, whatever thou art."

These are the men whose impulses conquer their principles. The human flower whose fragrance they exhale is blighted by their touch.

I had a week in which to think, and to gather strength to resist Henri Rochelle. I knew not how to trifle. I would not use artifice. And as I saw no medium between perfect

THE REFUSAL.

He came; quiet, calm, gentle, *almost* tender. As he crossed the threshold, I saw only Frederick's friend, Beatrice's brother, and that moment forgot to be quite as cold and formal as I had intended. It was such a joy to meet one who knew and loved Frederick. It was such a comfort to have an opportunity to speak of those last hours, to repeat those last messages, and to feel that I was not utterly alone. I related every incident of Frederick's sickness from the morning of their separation until his death; every smile, every look which could be depicted, I portrayed. And he told me of Beatrice, of her beautiful passing away; how she had scarcely died, but, like a pure spirit, had been exhaled into the atmosphere of spirits. How she grew more and more wondrously beautiful until the last; how ineffable was the glory in her eyes, when, in the last moment, she breathed the name of Frederick and departed. Thus we talked of spirits—of the spirits of those we loved; and our voices were tender and low, sanctified by the very names which we uttered. But the revulsion came. It had to come. At last there came a look of kind but certain assurance into those clear eyes which brought me back to the reality. Then I knew that soon we should cease to talk of spirits, but, instead, of mortals and of their tame affairs. The thought fell upon me like frost. My manner grew rigid, my voice cold. At last his words broke the spell.

"It is pleasant to think of our lost ones," he said; "to us their names will ever be precious; but it is time that we speak of our own life, of our own future, that lies before us. We shall not love the departed less because we love each other more. It will not take long to settle your affairs, Victoire. This little estate, with its incumbrances, is your only inheritance. I will pay the mortgages; then it will be yours, free from all claims from others. My studies are completed. I am already established in my profession; I only want my wife, I only want you, Victoire. I feel already that you are mine."

For an instant he seemed not to comprehend me. He looked bewildered. His mind, concentrated upon the certainty, was slow in staggering back to the idea of uncertainty. With my first words of refusal all my strength came. When I had looked forward to this moment I had grown weak and trembled. The crisis had come, and I felt strong enough to meet it. I felt that my decision was irrevocable. He had wounded my pride poignantly. Had I loved him, I could not accept an offer which made me so great a debtor. I was not one simply to be loved and taken. I was not passive. I would at least be wooed and won by the man I married. "I will not marry you," I thought, and believe I looked it, as I lifted my eye steadily to his.

He comprehended me now. The penetrating eye looked down into my soul. Affection, passion, trembled under the iron curb of will. In the deadly pallor which swept over the strong face, I saw the surge of feeling. "Victoire! do you know what you say?" he asked calmly.

"I always know what I say; and I know also that I will not marry you, Monsieur Rochelle."

"Why will you not marry me, Victoire?"

"Because I do not wish to marry any one; because I do not love you."

"When I wrote you," he replied, "I did not think that you had learned to love me. But, since my coming, your kind manner has been to me the acceptance of the proposal in my letter."

Here spoke the man, a true representative of most men. Few men can receive simple kindness from a girl without misconstruing it into something more—into a proof of their own intense personal power, or as the effervescence of her half-concealed passion. When a man points out a woman amid the crowd, gifted or beautiful, perchance, and says, "*She* loved me," or "I might have married *her*," do you always believe it?

To Henri Rochelle I said: "I met you as Beatrice's brother, as Frederick's friend; as such I regard you tenderly; but to think of you as a lover or as a husband, turns me to marble." Again he looked amazed. "Victoire," he asked, "will you look at this matter in the light of reason, if you cannot in that of affection?"

"Yes, I am happy to look at it in the light of my own reason."

"If I cannot convince you, I shall think that you have no

reason, Victoire; but I feel certain that I shall. I am not foolishly romantic. My feelings are controlled by my judgment. I could willingly sacrifice my own desire, sacrifice the first love of my life, if I could thereby make you happier; but in doing so, I should consult your interests as little as I should my own happiness. You do not realize your situation. It is not strange. You know nothing of the world, and yet you are left in it alone. A young girl, alone! You need a protector; that protector should be your husband. Who would be more faithful to you than I?"

All that he said, doubtless, was true; yet he had not fathomed the nature which he addressed, or he would have chosen another mode to conquer; at least he would have left a few words out of his sentences, and have soothed down his tone of superiority a little. A few hours before he had seemed to me a noble and tender brother; now, I only recognised an antagonist. Still he went on—still in silence I listened, though every word which he uttered made me more determined not to submit.

"I abhor the marriage *de convenance*. I would not sell myself nor buy you. I bestow a heart—I demand a heart in return—yet I am willing to wait for it. Now, I only ask for your confidence, your affection, and the assurance that you do not love another, and for the growth of love I bide my time."

The assured tone did not alter. It was this which fretted me. It said plainer than his words, "I am willing to wait, because I am certain that you will love me."

"Our ideas of what will constitute a happy marriage differ," I replied. "Before my fate is irrevocably sealed, I wish to feel that I *do* love the man I am to marry."

"Esteem, affection, are worth infinitely more than the impulsive love of a passionate heart. The love which is the after-growth of these qualities, alone is reliable; but you have the common girl-ideas. You are romantic, Victoire."

"Perhaps I am," I said, "but time will cure my exaggerations. I shall not marry in haste."

Again he looked astonished. Evidently I was not just what he had believed me to be. Where he had expected the pliancy of the girl, he met the hard obstinacy of a time-hardened woman. Frederick had been guided by his judgment and wishes; from his sister he had received perfect acquiescence, the submissive reverence which the "true woman" is supposed to yield involuntarily to man. He was utterly disappointed.

"You are very unlike Frederick," he said, abruptly. He

touched the only cord which could vibrate with a pang. Tears started. I turned and looked through the open window toward his grave, growing green already under the shadow of the firs. My soul yearned for my brother. "Ah! if you were but here," I thought, "I should not be thus tormented."

"No! I am not like him," I murmured; "but I am not to blame for my nature."

"Your nature is noble; you have only to learn to bring it into subjection—the great lesson of life is to be willing to submit."

"Submit! I will submit to God; but I know of no law which requires me to submit to you."

"No, not to me, but to your circumstances. God makes your circumstance."

"I see no circumstance which makes it necessary that I marry against my will."

"Young, poor, ignorant of the world, without a living relative, are not these circumstances which should influence you to accept a lawful protector?"

"Protector!" I said. "God is my protector. He can take care of me without human help. He has given me a purpose of my own. I have my own destiny to fulfil. My own consciousness is a safer guide than you can be, who know neither my powers nor my needs. I do not wish to marry, and you cannot compel me."

"Compel you?" And his voice, which had not varied in its calm kindness, was now painfully mournful. "I would never take to my heart a forced bride. I have only sought to convince you. I know that if you would only acquiesce, your feelings toward me would change. I confess I was not prepared for such a state of mind. It is unprecedented in my knowledge of women. Believe me, it is not a natural one. The heart of the real woman yearns for nothing so much as to be loved. In the love of a noble man, she receives her highest exaltation. The first love of my life, the love of a man's strong heart, I have offered you, Victoire, and you spurn it with contempt."

"No, I do not spurn your heart. I am humble when I think that you deem me worthy of your love. I only resist what to me seems your purpose to coerce me into a plan of life different from that which I have chosen. I place no light estimate upon love. I have a human heart, which yearns for affection; but it must not be too dearly bought. A portion

of my best years I wish to devote exclusively to art; and to do this, if necessary, I am willing to live alone until the end of my days."

"You do not know yourself, Victoire," he said. "Your heart is an unsolved mystery. Art is a glorious mistress, but she cannot be to you, through all your life, either lover or husband. You might exist with no other friend, but it would not be life. Your nature would starve, and at last you would pine for the joy you had spurned, which had passed beyond your reach for ever."

"You do not know me, Monsieur Rochelle. You speak from the belief that all women are alike. You think only of your sister Beatrice, whom God made to show us what the angels are like. The human soul does not repeat itself. There are as many types of womanhood as of manhood. All men are not brave, and strong, and noble. All women are not weak, and soft, and loving. Athena sprang from the head of Jove in full armor. She was his equal in intellect and power. She delighted in the tumult of war. She was the leader of heroes. Her eye made Achilles tremble. The soul of her character was cold, reflective wisdom. Yet she was the patron of art, and delighted in the unbought graces of life. She represents one order of women. The world is full of Athenas."

"Athena represents a class of extreme women. But the world does not need Athena now."

"No! The world is old. Its morning freshness has departed. The lusty strength of its noon has vanished. The fiery life in its veins is spent. It wants to be warmed and nourished. It has no need of heroes now, but cries for weak and clinging things, to breathe new life into its withered soul. Aphrodite, the beautiful, the frail, the loving—light as the sea-foam from whence she sprung—*she* is needed. Men enfold her, and breathe into her ear as Zeus did of old: 'Warlike work, my love, is not thy business. It is thy sweet care to prepare the joy of the wedding feast. The care of life's wild tumult leave to Ares and Athena.' All men want is Aphrodite. She is easily found. May you find her, Monsieur Rochelle."

"Aphrodite alone would not satisfy me; not love and weakness, but tenderness combined with strength, constitutes my ideal of woman. Athena commands only my icy admiration. You are not Athena, Victoire."

"I am not Aphrodite."

"No, but there is more than *her* tenderness latent in your

heart. Never did Aphrodite love as Victoire can love, will love, some day. Victoire does not know herself."

"You do not know me—I am a peaceful Athena, devoted to art."

"You do violence to yourself. You give supremacy to intellect; you would crush, kill the heart, yet you can never be Athena. Where is the majestic form? You are delicate and slender. Where are the classic bands of hair? Yours is silken and curling. Where the blue, frozen eye? Yours is dark and liquid, breathing softness as well as fire. Where the firm, strong lips? In yours, above the curve of pride, swells the fulness of feeling. Ah! you do not know yourself; but your hour will come. You will feel yet that to love and to be loved is, after all, the joy of life."

The strong mind was concentrated upon me now. I closed my eyes beneath his penetrating gaze. An image, that he did not see, rose under the drooped lids. That rich face, those profound eyes, those tones, low and tender, which had swayed me *once*, I saw, I heard again. Again the pulses of life trembled, touched by a new power. Ah, to be loved by such a one, were it possible, were joy enough!

There was a long silence. The trance of my new vision was too pleasant to be broken. It might be madness; I knew that it was, yet how sweet to dream! Henri Rochelle did not know that the foolish child was obeying her heart after all. But *he*, sitting there in silence, was not dreaming. Chagrin, disappointment, sorrow, love, all struggled in the breast of the man, self-poised, self-sustained, strong, wise, yet baffled; baffled by a wilful girl, who had scattered his hopes, defeated his plans, refused his hand, sent his heart back to feed upon itself. He was in a place where it is hardest for a man to be magnanimous. A man can forgive his enemy, can pardon insult, treachery, wrong, in man, easier than he can forgive the woman who openly, deliberately, positively refuses the great gift of his life—his heart. He who in this position acts nobly, is magnanimous above the average of men.

Henri Rochelle saw before him an orphan girl to whom he wished to be husband, brother, friend. She was poor; he wished to satisfy every want. She loved the beautiful; he wished to surround her with beauty, to gratify every taste, to cultivate every gift, to love her as the best gift of his life, asking only in return that she should love and obey him—the two things which Victoire could not do. In that hour I could not enter the path which he opened to me and be true to my

own nature. Every soul holds an inner life, known only to itself and its Creator; and this should be allowed to expand, to grow, safe from the pressure of any outward hand. If there is a thing sacred in the universe it is a soul *as* God made it. And there is no meaner robbery than that which would strip a spirit of its individuality. Yet that bent of the mind, which can neither be given nor taken away, which distinguishes its possessor from every other human being, is generally regarded as a fault. The disposition is rampant in human beings to condemn, suppress, thwart the idiosyncrasies of their fellows. You should do so, or so; you must be this or that, is the cry. Not human voices, but the faculty dominant within us, points to our work. It is the prophecy of an individual mission, the guarantee of an individual triumph. To crush it is to defy God.

There was a long silence; both hearts were busy.

"You have plans, Victoire; what are they?" at last he asked.

"I am going to America." This was too sudden, too great a surprise.

"Impossible! Are you mad?"

"No! I am perfectly sane."

"What—what will become of you?" There was more of sorrow than of anger in his tone.

"Have you no faith in God?" Monsieur Rochelle. "He will take care of me."

"He has not promised to take care of the presumptuous—but we will talk no longer," he added. "I see that your decision is unalterable. My duty yet remains. When do you wish to embark for America?"

"As soon as possible. I do not wish to spend the winter in France."

Another expression of deep pain passed over his face, but he only said: "Well, I will do all in my power to assist you."

"I trust you," was my answer.

And he did do all in his power. He began to make arrangements for my departure, as if *that* had been his only object in coming to Les Delices. America was my mother's native country. I wished to see it. It was not a new wish either; but a long-cherished hope that some time I should cross the ocean and visit scenes which I had heard portrayed from early childhood. But, in my girlish dreams, first I had gone to Italy, to Greece—the old homes of art—won fame and riches, and then had turned to seek a home in the western

land. Could I have retained Les Delices, I should still have hoped to see my dreams fulfilled. But it was different now; if I refused Henri Rochelle, Les Delices must be sold. My ancestral home must pass into the hands of strangers. I cherished the hope of redeeming it; I could not part from it for ever. I would go to this new land, and work. I would paint pictures which would win me not only fame but gold. There, people were not sated with art. The artist was not a drug. With culminating wealth, with ripening luxury, a love for all beautiful forms was usurping the old greed for utility. Riches easily won were lavishly spent. I should find sale for pictures there. Young, unknown, I could still earn money. I could take care of myself, redeem my home, fulfil my destiny. Thus I believed—rather, thus I dreamed. I felt in haste to depart, for the presence of Henri Rochelle was a sad constraint. After the position which I had assumed, I could not breathe the same air with him without feeling stifled. No! I felt that I could not live in the same country; for I knew that, with unwearying vigilance, he would watch my course, and estimate my progress. I was resolved to have no self-appointed guardian. Even now he vexed me. If he had only appeared piqued, it would have been a relief. If he had only been haughty, it would have been delightful. If he had seemed hurt, wounded, better still; then I could at least have been kind. But no; he called out only the coldest dignity. He was kind, thoughtful as before. But his very attentions made him seem distant. It was no longer the affectionate thoughtfulness of the privileged friend, but the punctilious politeness of the stranger.

What chafed me most, I fancied that he pitied me—pitied my ignorance and folly. If there was no condescension in his manner, I was sure that there was compassion. And more; once, twice, thrice, I saw it gather in his face, his eyes; fuse his whole expression—the old assurance, the calm look of certainty saying: "You are mine! You do not believe it; but you are mine. I am your destiny." He was unconscious of this look; but I knew it, and it made me defy him. In a few days he departed for Paris, promising to make speedy arrangements for the sale of Les Delices. He said that he was intimate with a gentleman belonging to the city, who wished to purchase such an estate, and with whom he was confident a bargain could be perfected. I received a letter at an early day —a business letter, terse, laconic as a lawyer's — stating that the gentleman whom he mentioned would purchase Les

Delices at my price, promising to pay in three half-yearly instalments, giving the best of security. Thus promptly and readily was the most important of my financial affairs adjusted.

I thought that nothing remained but to make my personal arrangements before my departure, when opposition arose in an unexpected quarter. Nannette, my old bonne, thought me "crazy." As I wished to be spared her lectures, I had not spoken of my plan for the future until it was perfectly defined in my own mind and ready to be consummated. Nannette had lived in the family from my mother's marriage, had nursed both Frederick and myself, and for years had indulged in all the loquacious liberty which is generally conceded as the especial privilege of old and faithful servants.

Mademoiselle *was* mad! What, beside, could ail her? If in her right mind, could she forsake her country? Could she leave her brother's grave? Could she go from the home of her ancestors? Could she, without tears of blood, sell it to strangers? Who cared for Mademoiselle now but old Nannette? No one! She had fancied Monsieur Rochelle *might*, but it was plain that he did not—else why had he gone without asking her hand in marriage? Yet Mademoiselle was forsaking her best friend. She was going to leave old Nannette. Mademoiselle was ungrateful; she was wilful; she was always a stubborn child. Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu! What might happen to Mademoiselle! She could not take care of herself. She was only an infant. Nannette must go. Mademoiselle was ungrateful; she did not want Nannette; yet go she must, go she would, to take care of Mademoiselle; and go she did. Good old Nannette!

VICTOIRE ON THE OCEAN.

I was alone upon the ocean. The autumnal glories of the land were reflected in the resplendent colors of the sky and sea. The fitful clouds had wept their eyes dry, and now were out for a holiday. Soft, ethereal, evanescent forms, their fleecy robes all fringed with flame, they chased each other over the sky. Some, softly swaying up and down, floated idly through the hyacinth sea; and some, dim in the zenith, seemed to beat with their invisible oars the crystalline walls of the far away

spheres. Many, low down, their silvery hair outflowing far upon the blue, peacefully slept—the ocean their pillow and heaven their covering. The sun, like a blazing ship, burned against the dark horizon. Scintillant bars, uneasy bridges of flame, stretched from its sides, across the shifting waters, tempting yet mocking passengers to ascend into the golden Argo. Under this glory crept the wrinkled ocean.

Since that hour I have loved a little girl, a melodious child, with prophetic eyes sad and soft, in their beautiful mystery, who, as she sat with her arms around her father's neck, gazing out upon the measureless waters, listening to the moan of the unresting waves, sighed in the sweet sympathy of her soul: "Poor old sea! poor old sea!" The child penetrated the ocean's history. She knew that it was old, she dreamed that it was sorrowful. Yet *she* knew not of the wrecked treasures, lying upon its oozy floors, nor of the lost life locked in its coral palaces. She saw not the tresses of gold, the hair of jet, the bodies beloved and beautiful, dissolving in its slimy caves—lost, lost, lost for ever from the homes of earth, from the hearts of the living. She did not dream that the flower of the race, the wealth of centuries, had been paid as tribute to its baleful majesty. She had never heard the shriek, the prayer of human souls in their last extremity; the terror, the tragedy, which ocean had witnessed in its hours of fury beneath the lashed heavens, beneath the tranquil stars; yet she sighed—"Poor old sea! poor old sea!"

But even ocean can forget its horrors—forget that it is old, and laugh above its sepulchres. To-night it looked young. Every wave seemed agile with youth, springing up in eager emulation to see which could toss highest its fringed cap of creamy spray. Ah! how could ocean look old, when bridges of rosy flame spanned it near and far away—when every grey wave was kindled with the glory of the emblazoned sky; more than earth can look old when she wraps around her aged form the virginal robes of spring! The last bridge was withdrawn, the last blazing spar submerged, the golden ship went down—down under the dark waves. Night crept over the deep; she quenched the glory of the sky; she lit her own twinkling beacons along the dim upper shores. Still I sat upon the deck. Memories, yearnings came over me. My heart went back to France, to Les Delices—to its vineyard, its garden. I stood beside its fountains, lingered by its grave. I gazed into the fathomless world of Beatrice's eyes. I pillowed the head of my lost one upon my heart.

Again, again, dawned upon me the vision of one who seemed now to haunt me always. The calm eyes of Henri Rochelle met mine. I turned away; he was nothing to me.

The great ship struck the colliding waters. It heaved and fell; it hissed through the swelling surge; its groan answered the groan of the deep. Through the grey night my eyes wandered forth across the wilderness of waves—mighty, boundless! Vastness, sublimity, power, struck me chill with awe. An atom of life, unheeded, in the fierce clutch of the relentless sea, I was vanquished by the sense of my nothingness. What a waif upon the waters—what a waif to be tossed upon the bosom of life. And yet, ere I knew, again hope dawned within me. Courage grew. Endeavor, rooted, broad-based, seemed to make my centre. I became heroic. The night made me grand. Victory looked from the eyes of the stars. The gay young western world stretched forth its strong, free arms to receive me. My mother's land, the land of my father's love, the brave, the bold, the audacious, yet generous and glorious land—it had a place for me amid its workers.

No wonder that the ancients, with their subtle, spiritual vision, had descried, far away in the mythic west, a golden Atlantis. No wonder that Plato dreamed of it in his garden. That all generations of men, from the early twilight of time, had turned their faces toward the evening land; that the mines of Cypango, the jewelled walls of Cathay, flashed before the poet eyes of Columbus, when, in truth, upon the thither shore of Atlantic, America stretched away to the borders of sunset. The young land, which nurtured upon its beneficent bosom the weary, the hopeless, the hoping, the aspiring of all races, I believed had room for another in whose veins burned a life real, potent, yet disquieted—restless as the genius of the people whose land she sought. These were my dreams upon deck—these my dreams in sleep, when I lay rocked in my narrow berth, the great waves of ocean throbbing at my side.

It is very easy to suppose what we shall do at a certain time under certain imagined circumstances. To see ourselves very self-composed, very wise, rarely discreet, all self-sufficient. But, alas! when the occasion comes, it is just as easy to forget all our well-laid arrangements, to lose our equanimity, to shift from our balance, to find ourselves drifting hither and thither scarcely knowing what we are about. People of little imagination do not dream over emergencies;

but, when they come, they have a cool strength, a collected mind to meet them.

In my visions I had often seen myself landing in a strange country. In those visions I always saw myself calm and self-possessed. When the reality came, when the great ship touched the wharf, when the din and whirl of landing began, I was not quite the composed creature of my dreams. Friends were rushing to meet friends. Oh! what rejoicings and embracings, what kisses and tears I beheld, as people rushed into each other's arms! Happy beings led away their returned ones, to tell, in the sweet air of home, by the golden hearth-side, all the glad and sorrowful things which "happened since you went away." There was no greeting for me. I could have wept because there was none. It was a cold, gusty, leaden morning. The heavens were drab, the air was drab, the people looked drab in the dingy light. Not even sunshine, not even a genial air to say—"You are welcome." Alas! was my Atlantis a mirage? The unattainable land of visions—had it shifted farther away? On, on, still on did it lie, curtained with its own golden mist upon the dreamy borders of Hesperus?

Nannette, who had no visions, no anticipations; felt no disappointment, no misgivings, no fear. She simply looked at facts—stark, ungarnished facts. "Mademoiselle had run away to this country to seek her fortune. Nannette had come to take care of her. In Nannette's opinion Mademoiselle was a little crazy. She must look after Mademoiselle's trunks." This was the alpha and omega of Nannette's thought. She simply knew her duty, and went and did it. Nannette was wise.

In the meantime I swallowed the rising weakness, pressed back the gushing flood before it had filtered out a single tear. In less than an hour I found myself in a quiet apartment in a good hotel, looking from my window upon the sea of human life flowing through Broadway.

There was no cant in my prayers that night. No mock devotion as I bowed low at the feet of the Infinite Father. Wilful, sinful, *He* held me. He had made a path for me across the great waters. The Power who had sustained me until now, could I not trust it always? I lay down without a fear, as peacefully as if my head were nestling amid the white pillows of my little couch in the turret chamber of Les Delices. Through the glass panes at the top of my door, the light shone in from the great halls. Porters ran up and down,

calling to each other through the long passages. The click of canes, the sharp ring of metallic heels upon marble floors, the sudden laugh, single words of conversation passed my door, and died away in the distant corridors. Bells tinkled. Music floated up from the parlors. Coming, going, all the multifarious sounds of a vast hotel reached my ear. Amid all I fell asleep, and not even the shadow of a troubled dream passed over my spirit until morning.

MRS. SKINHER AND A FEW OF HER BOARDERS.

I brought a letter of introduction from M. Savonne to M. Petitman. My old teacher regarded him as a gentleman of wealth, taste, and of fine social position. The day after my arrival I despatched my letter and card, and coolly awaited a call from its recipient. M. Petitman came during the afternoon. I was summoned into the presence of a sleek, complacent, smiling man, with a smooth, pulpy face, and a shining, bald head. He possessed a great portion of what the English call "manner," which, I soon discovered, in him consisted of an odd mixture of Yankee inquisitiveness and Parisian politeness. He had a startling way of moving his bare scalp back and forth as if it were making a serious effort to open. He had the peculiar cringe of body which marks the sycophant; and he smiled and said "Ah," perpetually.

"Mademoiselle Victoire Vernoid, ah! I am most happy to meet a pupil of my dear friend, Monsieur Savonne. Happy, happy were the hours which I spent in his studio. Ah, with what delightful sensations I recall them to my memory; the most charming hours which I spent to Paris. I have a weakness for Paris, Mademoiselle Vernoid—ah."

All this was uttered with a most gracious obeisance.

"You have come to America to visit your relatives—ah, Mademoiselle?"

"No, sir. I have not a relative living."

"Ah! unfortunate, unfortunate; but you have friends whom you have come to see, ah?"

"I have not even an acquaintance in America. I have few friends living. My life has passed in great retirement."

This was a most impolitic speech. A change, so slight that it was scarcely perceptible; still a change passed over the glistening pulp of M. Petitman's features. It betrayed

the man; it said: "One who has few friends is nothing to me." M. Petitman was one to verify poor Goldsmith's assertion: "If you want friends, be sure not to need them." Had I been a distinguished genius, M. Petitman would instantly have become my devout worshipper; but an aspiring soul who had yet its way to win—to win unassisted, alone could be nothing to him. Evidently, in his estimation, I had already found my level. To him I was a silly, romantic girl, who had ran away to a strange land, scarcely knowing what for, or what I was about; and, in doing so, had done a very improper thing.

I came to these conclusions while waiting for M. Pettiman's next remark. The bland smile was remanded back. Again the lips and the tongue said: "Ah, you have a definite plan for the future, have you not, Miss Vernoid?"

"Yes, sir; I have come to America to work as an artist."

"Ah, very commendatory."

"In my mother's native country I hope to earn friends."

"Ah, doubtless you will do so. No people are more ready to acknowledge persevering talent than Americans. You will have to be patient, however, until you become known. You know our great Longfellow says:

"'Learn to labor and to wait.'"

"I am willing to labor, and expect to wait," was my curt reply.

The condescendingly patronizing manner which M. Petitman had suddenly assumed, instead of making me feel small and meek, was fast lifting me to a high altitude of contempt.

"If you are willing to labor and expect to wait, you are prepared for life, and need no assistance," was his amiable reply. "If you succeed, I will introduce you with great pleasure to many of my distinguished friends. Mrs. Petitman, who is passionately devoted to art, will then visit your studio. Ah! It would afford me pleasure to invite you to partake of the hospitalities of my house; but we are just now crowded with distinguished visitors—Professor Knowitall—you have heard of him, without doubt, even in France; Dr. Stuffhead—you probably heard his name; and the charming poetess, Miss Lillion Languish—you must have heard of *her;* with my very particular friend, Lady Magnificent, who is now on an American tour, and makes my house her home while upon

this side of the water. So it would be quite impossible—quite impossible, ah."

All this was said in a strange, hesitating tone, caused by the three desires struggling in his mind at once. The desire to mention his "distinguished" visitors, the desire to appear polite, and the special desire to remain unencumbered by the household presence of an unknown.

"M. Petitman does me great honor," I replied; "but under no circumstances could I accept his hospitality. If he will be kind enough to direct me to a private boarding-house, a quiet and refined home, he will confer the only favor I could possibly receive."

"Ah!" said the little man, suddenly radiating with benevolence, the oil of hypocrisy exuding through his unctuous skin: "It will afford me most exquisite pleasure to do you a favor. I am acquainted with a number of very genteel ladies who take a few very genteel persons into the bosom of their families. I think of one particularly, Mrs. Skinher; she accepts none but persons of the highest respectability. I will write you a note of introduction, Miss Vernoid, ah."

All names were alike to me. He wrote the note; I thanked him; and Mr. Petitman bowed himself out of my sight.

Why trouble you with particulars? I saw Mrs. Skinher, and, before another night, found myself established in an attic chamber of her house, with good old Nannette domesticated in the kitchen as "French pastry cook." This attic parlor, with its small ante-room, happened to be the only unoccupied one. My first impression of it was pleasant. It seemed a retreat. High above the world, nearer heaven than most of the rooms in the house, it suited me. A carpet of small pattern and delicate tints covered the floor. Curtains of white muslin shaded the windows. The furniture was of black walnut. A few books were scattered upon the small centre table. Some simple engravings hung upon the wall. Mrs. Jenks observed that these attic rooms were usually occupied by students or literary people, who selected them because they were cheap, and because they were quiet; that Miss de Ray, a very literary lady, occupied the room opposite; that the one adjoining belonged to Signor Orsino, an Italian gentleman, a teacher of languages. Mrs. Skinher belonged to the community of respectable widows who maintain a genteel style of living by "keeping boarders." She preferred a large house, full of strangers paying for their trouble, to a small one in which she must live pinched and wait upon

herself. Mrs. Skinher commenced her career in a poor tenement in an obscure down-town street. But patience, prudence, financial tact, had helped her on. Block by block she came up, until now she found herself in a very genteel street, in a very genteel house, filled, as she assured me, with very genteel boarders.

Do you hate dinner-eating? I do. Poetry sits down at breakfast in the young morning, before the day comes, with its care and weariness. We come fresh from our dreams to our coffee, and its fragrance is sweeter than dreams. An hour hence we must be hard at work, but the hour has not yet come; we give the moment to luxury. We slowly drink while we scan the morning paper and chat about the news. We lean over our cup, and, slowly dipping up the nectar, let it drip over the side of the spoon, a liquid rosary, each drop counting some dear plan for the day, whose blossoms lean against the cheek of to-morrow. People generally look well at breakfast, rested and simple. A beautiful woman never looks lovelier than at this hour, when, perhaps, she fancies herself "not fit to be seen." More fascinating than in ball costume is she in her early simplicity, in her graceful robe, her delicate collar, with plain bands of shining hair. There is a charm about "tea." When the day has shut its tired eyes and departed. When we have laid our burden down at the feet of night, to be lifted only by the hand of another day. How fascinating is the tea-table — its snowy, glossy damask, its delicate plate, its light repast, its balmy tea, its loving faces! Our work is done. We have earned repose. Morpheus looks from the warm fire-shadows; and, behind, Somnus opens before our yearning eyes the ivory gate of dreams. Ah, tea is delightful! but dinner—dinner is sordid, sensual. Around it no graces hover. It is grand and unnatural. Everybody looks "dressed," self-conscious, and uncomfortable. Stuffed ducks and stuffed people! Who looks handsome at dinner? Your hands swell; your nose grows pink; your eyes grow little. I have little faith in "the feast of reason and the flow of soul" at dinner.

Such were my cogitations during the first two hours' sitting at Mrs. Skinher's dinner-table. Near me, "doing the honors" of a cold ham, sat a gentleman who, had he not been noticed, certainly would have been disappointed in his expectations and preparations. He was small, slight, and possessed the precise form of that ghostly image which we see in physiologies under the title of "consumptive." His long neck

protruded over a scooped-out chest. His long hair was combed straight back from his face, every hair hanging in a mathematical line over his straight coat-collar. He had an impertinent, turned-up nose. His eyes were black and spiteful; his mouth prodigious; his long lips hung loose and thin. He wore an immaculate white neck-tie, and, I soon learned, bore the euphonious title of "Rev. Jonathan Edwards Bunkum;" that he was an incipient "divine," fast ripening in a theological school. I discovered more—that he had descended from an unadulterated Puritan stock; that his ancestors fought under Cromwell, and the remainder came over in the wonderful Mayflower, that miraculous ship which held so many people's ancestors; that he, the Reverend Jonathan, was the valedictorian of his college class; that he could say with great pomp—"When I was in Europe;" that he had spent three months in London, as many in Paris, in which he never dined at a second-class hotel, nor rode in a second-class car; that he very much admired the governments of the old country, and equally despised that of the new; that an aristocracy was the order of God, and that democracy was an absurdity; and also that, in his own estimation, "Reverend Jonathan Edwards Bunkum" was the pivot upon which the world turned.

These facts I discovered from the gentleman's remarks. Near by sat a lady whom he addressed as "Mrs. Wiggins." She was magnificently attired, with a diamond upon her finger, which, as she afterward assured me, was "of the purest water." A pair of fine-colored, fine-shaped eyes, rescued her face from positive ugliness. Even these, when they emerged from their artificial smiles in their naked light, had an expression sly, selfish, snakish. Her complexion was sallow; her long, narrow chin and thin lips, sinister. She referred often to—"When I was at *boarding*-school;" and I found that she was the product of a very fashionable intellectual nursery, a plant of a very common genus. Whatever she had failed to learn, it was not the art of simpering, giggling, lisping; of saying very flat things in a whining, affected tone. Her smiles all fell upon Mr. Bunkum. Her artillery of charms were directed toward subduing him. The more pedantic, domineering, bombastic grew his tone, the softlier she sighed—"Precisely;" the oftener she simpered,—"I agree with you, Mr. Bunkum." At her right sat a little shrivelled old man, whom, when she condescended to address him, to my horror she called "Tim." *He* was Mr. Wiggins. Poor old man!

there was something kind in his eye, something pitiable in his expression, when he turned to look askance upon the magnificent Mrs. Wiggins. He, a widower, old, rich, and alone, had married Miss Euphrasia Georgiana Smith, that he might have somebody to love, somebody to love him. Why she married him I am sure I don't know. Why, do you think?

Next Mr. Wiggins sat a young man with an interesting face. He was pale, with a classic head, covered with a profusion of curling, dark hair. His eyes were full, lustrous, and wonderfully soft. They moved quickly with a startled look, as if half which they saw in the world alarmed them. Clear as translucent lakes reflecting every change upon the sky, they radiated every internal emotion, now kindling with sunshine, now deepening with shadow. Yet whatever its mood, the soul which looked from those crystal windows seemed pure, innocent as that of a little child.

Beside him sat a woman who I knew must be remarkable. She could make no pretensions to youth. Poor Miss De Ray—even now I sigh when I say it—must have been fifty! She was very tall, and very narrow, and gave one the idea of possessing no shoulders, but seemed all neck from her ears to her waist. Her face was sharp and wrinkled. Her large, restless eyes looked eager and anxious. Occasionally a wild light shot from them, which might have been fanaticism, which might have been insanity, which might have been pain.

Then followed the politician of the table. He had red hair, which stood erect. And if any of the public journals had taken the trouble to caricature his face, they would have given it the bulldog look. With vociferous voice he defended his favorite demigod, and the last pet measure of "the administration." He gesticulated violently, sometimes bringing his knife, sometimes his clenched fist, down to the table in full force. He had a favorite remark which he offered to the company, generally without much reference to its connection: "Ladies and gentlemen, take my advice—expect nothing and you'll never be disappointed." This reiterated truism I afterwards learned referred to the fact that, though he married an heiress with golden visions of an easeful future, his wife, with an income of a cool five thousand a year, kept it safe under lock and key; so the gentleman could spend not a cent of it in attending political conventions, nor to pay political sharpers for the hope of an impossible office. Beside him sat a beautiful creature, a perfect embodiment of American feminine

loveliness. Delicate, ethereal, with violet eyes, overflowing with love, and serene, spiritual light. Her abundant hair, golden brown, encircled with wavy bands the whitest of brows, and clustered in curls around the fairest of all deliciously-moulded necks. Vermeil lips, alluring in their warm sweetness, yet pure in their calm curves as a vestal's own, smiled over the pearls which they but half revealed. Bewildering laces rose and fell upon her breast; their treacherous meshes betrayed the softly curved arms, and swayed with seductive grace around the petite, snowy jewelled hands. She seemed interested in all that was being said; met all eyes with the sweetest of unconscious smiles, but took no part in conversation. I heard her called Mrs. Forrest.

"Mrs. Wiggins, I have been reading a delightful book to-day," said Mr. Bunkum. "I think it better adapted to a lady's capacity than any I have seen for a long time—Abbey's Child's History; have you read it?"

"No, I have not," simpered Mrs. Wiggins; "I shall be most happy to procure it if you recommend it, Mr. Bunkum."

"I do; ladies should know a little about history; and anything as profound as Macaulay it is not to be expected that they will read, or understand if they did."

At this remark the wild light shot from Miss De Ray's eyes, as she turned them full upon Mr. Bunkum. "Will Mr. Bunkum allow me to inquire if he thinks Macaulay's History beyond the comprehension of women?" she asked.

"I do. There is not one lady in a dozen who, if she commenced Macaulay, would have sufficient interest to read it through."

"You give woman little credit for intelligence, Mr. Bunkum."

"Intelligence! Miss De Ray; man does not need intelligence in woman; affection—affection is all-sufficient."

"You think that men should have a sufficiency of the former to supply both, do you not?"

"Certainly; of course. No man wishes to find an equal in his wife. In the lady who is to become Mrs. Bunkum, I require three essentials. Firstly, affection; secondly, beauty; thirdly, common sense. To a superior intellect I should decidedly object.

"Why! Mr. Bunkum."

"Because a woman does not need talent. The more she has, the more she detracts from her husband's glory. All that it is necessary for her to know it is his privilege to tell her."

There was an audible flutter among the ladies at the table, except Mrs. Wiggins, who said benignly: "I agree with Mr. Bunkum. Ladies should not assume to know as much as gentlemen. What do you think of those who attempt to write books?" and her eyes turned a malicious glance towards Miss De Ray.

"I think," said Mr. Bunkum, with an abortive attempt to inflate his inverted chest, "that they would be much better employed washing their children's faces. But I cannot conceive how a woman, one worthy of the name, with the shrinking, the sensitiveness, the weakness inherent to her sex, could ever allow her name to appear in a public print; she cannot, and be a true woman."

"Does Mr. Bunkum believe that all American women, who are authors, to become such have sacrificed all that is best in their womanhood?" asked Miss De Ray.

"Precisely; that is precisely what I believe. A woman, possessing the true delicacy of her sex, will shrink from having her name even mentioned by strangers."

"What do you consider to be the duty of a true woman, Mr. Bunkum?"

"To obey and love her husband, to love and to care for her children, make up the whole duty of woman."

"These are a portion of her duties, Mr. Bunkum. But a true woman is one who nurtures every faculty which God has given her until her whole nature blossoms into symmetrical beauty. Such a woman is loving, obeying, naturally the laws of love. But affection cannot absorb all her powers. Man needs sustenance for his intellect as well as his heart. So does woman. The more comprehensive is her nature, the deeper her experience, the more profound her capacity to love."

"You are transcendental, Miss De Ray. I do not understand you; and I doubt if you understand yourself. We were speaking of female authorship. I am opposed to it in toto. For two reasons; firstly, women have not talent, genius, to write books of a high order; secondly, their books are not needed."

"Women have had everything to discourage them, and yet have there not been women whose works would do honor to any man?" asked Miss De Ray.

"None whose productions I would be willing to own. Madame De Stael, I suppose, you rank among the first. *She* would have made a most flimsy man. But leaving talents out

of the question, I am opposed to female authorship, because it tempts woman from her true sphere. I had a sister once who had a passion for writing. The gift is inherent in the Bunkum family. For a woman, she wrote uncommonly well. But I knew that if she composed, she, in time, would be tempted to publish. I could not endure the thought, and forbade her the use of her pen. It came hard to her at first. She said—'That she must give some expression to her inward life or die.' I told her that she could tell her feelings to me, which would be all sufficient. She never used her pen again, except to copy household receipts and to write family letters. She died before she was twenty-three, and, although she never said so, I am certain that she thanked me to her dying day in not allowing her to unsex herself, nor to enter into competition with her brothers, who are all writers or public speakers. And I have been spared the shock of seeing the name of a female of my family in a vulgar newspaper."

"How disagreeable that would have been!" sighed Mrs. Wiggins.

"Yes, it would have been very distressing to you, Mr. Bunkum; but if you never have greater reason to be shocked with any member of your family, you will be very fortunate," said Miss De Ray.

"You need borrow no trouble on my account, Madam. I shall always be able to rule my own house. Before marriage, I intend that the future Mrs. Bunkum shall promise, in all things, to submit to the requirements of the gospel."

"She may claim the privilege of deciding for herself what the requirements of the gospel are. American women have a high spirit, and the same insatiate love for liberty which characterizes American men," said Miss De Ray.

"Grace conquers nature, Madam. The first lesson which I shall teach my wife, is that she must implicitly obey; that my will is her law; that I am not only my own master, but that I am also hers. I shall owe her this lesson as my first duty. A husband is responsible for the salvation of his wife. Indeed, I think that it is only on account of her relation to man that woman is saved. I have made it a subject of deep study. I have searched the best Greek lexicons, and find no word in the original which convinces me that females are especially included in the plan of salvation. But gallantry impels me to place as large a construction as possible upon the designs of God. On the whole, I rather desire that the frailer half of humanity should be admitted into the celestial kingdom."

As Mr. Bunkum said these words, he bowed and stretched his thin lips over his ferocious jaw in a ghastly grin, which he intended as a most gracious smile for Mrs. Wiggins.

"I intend that the future Mrs. Bunkum shall be a very happy woman," he added. "I shall seem severe at first, while I am breaking her will, but afterwards I shall teach her to see the beauty there is in entire trust, in perfect submission. When our relations are perfectly adjusted, it will be my delight to supply all her wants without ever asking her what they are."

Poor Miss De Ray was keenly excited. She twitched nervously, and her eyelids trembled over her restless eyes. But the fretted soul in that jarred frame was no match for the bulldog force, the dogged assumption of the Rev. Jonathan Bunkum; and Miss De Ray wisely said no more. She left the table before dessert, and, as the door closed upon her, Mrs. Wiggins smiled superciliously. Often, while Mr. Bunkum had been speaking, I saw resentment, nay, defiance, shoot from her eye as from a live volcano; but it was wonderful how suddenly all fire would fall back, smothered in the crater, lost in the glare of Mr. Bunkum's smile. As Miss De Ray departed, she said to that august individual—"Are you aware that Miss De Ray is an authoress, Mr. Bunkum?"

"I am aware that she looks like one—female authors are usually frights," he replied. "It is the duty of every lady to be beautiful;" and the smile and bow which accompanied these words seemed to say to Mrs. Wiggins—"*You* have done your duty."

She smirked consciously, and said: 'Oh! Mr. Bunkum, that is quite impossible for *all*, you know!"

"Well, if nature has not been kind, a woman need not make herself odious by turning into a *bas bleu*."

"Miss De Ray does not assume to be very profound. She writes children's books. She is now very busy with a silly thing which she calls the A-B-C-darian. She is very anxious to introduce it into all the public schools. For my part, I think her insane."

"Probably, or she would go and teach her brothers' and sisters' children, and leave the care of the public schools to those to whom they belong."

Thus ended the first sayings which I heard from the mouth of Rev. Jonathan Bunkum. He flourished his napkin, placed it in his silver ring with three pompous "Ahems!" and with a bow, left Mrs. Wiggins and the ham "alone in their glory."

These being the only objects which he seemed to think worthy of his undivided attention, and the only ones to which he was capable of doing perfect justice.

While passing through the last hall, as I went to my room, a sound startled me and arrested my steps. I listened. It came from Miss De Ray's room, a deep, half-suppressed, agonized sob. One followed another in slow, painful succession. It was the live sob of a convulsed heart. Within its compass seemed compressed the sorrow, the disappointment, the pain of a whole life. It smote my soul. I said to myself—"Mr. Bunkum may abuse female authors; Mrs. Wiggins may scorn you, if she pleases; I like you, poor Miss De Ray; and if I dared, would come in and tell you so." But, as it was, I entered my own silent retreat. I sat down and thought of Mr. Bunkum. He was a new specimen of a man to me. Did he represent the men of America? Did the free government engender tyrants? He was a tyrant, I knew. My last thought that night was Mr. Bunkum, after which I again devoted myself to eternal celibacy.

BOARDING-HOUSE LIFE.

An indolent, objectless, listless life seemed that of the lady boarders. If their existence had an object, it must have been already attained, for they were guiltless of either physical or mental exertion. "Nothing to Do" was stamped alike upon their delicate hands, and upon their expressionless faces. In a room warmed to a tropical heat, upon a luxurious sofa, they would lie through all the day, reading the last sensation story, playing with the rings upon their waxen fingers, dreaming the softest, it may be, the silliest of dreams. When night crept down into the beleaguered street, and the gas waved its banners of flame athwart the sombre walls of the houses, and flooded their rooms with radiance, they would languidly assume the dignity of martyrs, and allow themselves to be dressed for dinner. When variety came to their apartment it was usually in the form of a worn dressmaker, who, day after day, would sit before them, fashioning with weary fingers the most costly fabrics into faultless robes; or a lady splendidly attired would call to discuss the last opera, the last ball, the newest style, with all the prospective weddings and births within the circle of acquaintance. When the heavens

were cloudless and the day beguiling, the ladies would arouse themselves to severer exertion. The faultless robes were hung upon the faultless form, and the beautiful wearer went for a drive or promenade in Broadway. And *one*, I breathe her name most tenderly—dear Rose Forrest—whose gentle heart yearned to be a ministrant of love, *she* went and taught the children in the Ragged School. True, she went in an enamelled coach, went radiantly attired, and the poor little sinners whom she taught were too busy looking at their beautiful teacher to learn either to read or sew; but she wanted to do good, she wanted to *be* good, and this want, unuttered though it was, gave a seraphic softness to her eyes, a celestial sweetness to her smile, while, all unconsciously to herself, it lifted her into a serener atmosphere of being than that inhabited by her ephemeral companions.

But on ill-omened days, when the sky was sulky and the very air fretful and teasing, the bad temper of the weather would steal like contagion into human hearts. Then no story book, no day dream, no new dress even, could restore the lost equilibrium of amiable dulness to the fair occupants of the sofas. They would suddenly become gregarious, and, congregating in different rooms, would serve up for each other's taste minute dishes of gossip and scandal. The last dinner talk, Mr. Bunkum, Miss DeRay, the looks, manners, and foibles of each absent person would be most thoroughly masticated. Then would follow more secret revelations. Snatches of private conversation overheard in halls; family secrets, which, in some mysterious way, had penetrated into feminine ears within inviolate closets; the deplorable state of feeling existing between Mr. —— and his wife; followed by commiseration, denunciation, and doubtful sighs. All were blamed, few praised, the world itself condemned, and the ladies would separate, each meekly believing herself to be the only one of her acquaintance "fit to live." Some had children, but they were left entirely to the charge of nurses. Of the holy ministry of motherhood—the beautiful cares and hallowing joys of a home which make the sweetest life of every real woman—these ladies had read, but knew very little of them in reality, and cared less.

It was like transition from one world to another to pass from my Languedoc home to live in a New York boarding-house. The different phases of humanity afforded me entertainment, the dinner table-talk amusement, yet I instinctively felt that my actual life must be lived in the silence of my

room and the solitude of my own nature. A glowing thought, a definite purpose, had already shaped in my brain. I would begin my first great work. I would paint a picture which would command for me reputation for genius and remuneration for labor. My faith in my success amounted to presumption. It was not belief in my own power that made me confident, but love for the subject which I had chosen. I knew that in a thousand endeavors I might fail, but in this I could not, for it would be an embodiment of love. I should infuse my soul, its deepest, warmest, strongest life, into my own creation. How it glowed before my mental vision in the rarest colors of reality, my picture that was to be! It was Frederick's death scene—the mountains, the river, the cottage, the verandah, with the roseate sunset flushing all; Frederick reclining upon his couch, his dying eyes unlifted. Above, through a luminous veil of mist, shone the face of Beatrice. Suffering, yearning, longing love, looking no longer from the marvellous eyes; but love ineffable, beatified, triumphant, drawing him upward with irresistible attraction. Above her, still further withdrawn within the mysterious veil, dimly looked down two other faces—my father and mother. By my side, his eyes fixed upon the dying, stood the stranger—the one sad, sweet mystery of my life. Why did my hand tremble and my being thrill at the memory of that face? Why, in recalling each lineament until it shone palpably before me in its ideal presence, I found richer society than the company of the living could bestow, they who know best the mystery of the human heart perhaps can tell.

I commenced my picture. It absorbed me. I arose from my couch and sat down to it. I went mechanically to my meals, only to return to it. I ate in silence; simpering, hypocrisy, bombast, were nothing to me now; they neither disturbed nor amused me. I passed the lighted parlors, with their music and mirth; passed the ladies chatting in the halls, to return and gaze in silence into the dawning faces of my loved ones. Day by day they grew, gradually unfolding into the warm lineaments of life beneath my touch, until at last these faces were no longer pictures but souls; and I seemed to breathe again in the living presence of the only beings whom I had ever loved.

Winter passed. The snows melted from the house-tops, falling in warm rain from the flooded eaves. From their sooty winter covering the pavements emerged clean and warm Cumulous clouds, radiant harbingers of pleasant weather,

floated up from the region of the "Bay," and, reposing upon the pellucid ether, hung their white panoplies of promise above the waiting city. Life grew jubilant. Even the organ-grinders beneath the windows played a merrier tune. Breeze and beam, laden, I thought, with the last summer's sweets, came stealing in to woo me out into the presence of the great Mother of all. Nature said "come!" and I went. I saw no Boulevards, no Champs Elysées, no gorgeous palaces, no forest parks, with their umbrageous shade, their misery, pomp, and revelry; but found little green oases, spots of rest, lying here and there upon the dusty heart of the city.

I loved Union Park the best. I loved its bright patches of grass in which the dandelion showered its stars; its feminine maples, shaking their breezy skirts in the glad spring sunshine. And, when they were touched with hectic and leaned in love against each other, dying beautifully, meet types of the frailest and fairest of the human race who blossom and perish early, they touched my heart as nearly. There the fountain showered its liquid stars; there gay children gathered and frolicked in the sunshine; there birds warbled their sweetest idyls. I would sit in some sun-warmed spot and watch the little ones. Their music made me glad; their young life stirred my own. The pretty German frauleins in white caps, who knew me because I smiled upon their bonny baby charges, would come, and holding up a patrician rosebud, say: "Isn't *mine* the prettiest?" And I could satisfy them only by assuring them that *all* were "prettiest," when each would toss her baby in the air and go away content.

April shut her tearful eyes. May laughed above the shoulder of her weeping sister. I saw the buds burst; I saw the young leaves come out to kiss the spring; saw the fountain bathe the feverish brow of the year's adolescent days; and simply to live, to drink in sun and song and odorous air, to thrill to the touch of the electric wind till every pulse seemed surcharged with a new magnetic life—only to breathe was ecstasy.

Summer came. The butterflies flitted away from the parlors below to the breezy hills and to the invigorating sea. Only the inhabitants of the attic remained. The attic's warbler, Miss De Ray, still piped her languishing lyrics in the room opposite. Soft-eyed Orsino, the Italian teacher, still went and came from his daily tasks. While I, unchanged, sat a worshipper in the midst of my gods. No wonder Mrs. Skinner made the remark which she did: "I always have very

peculiar people in my attic." If the attics of New York would disgorge their inhabitants to-day, a greater variety of remarkable people would be seen than all the soirées, receptions, and æsthetic clubs of a season can produce. To the attic comes fallen greatness, disappointed hope, aspiring genius, the refugee from other lands, the seedy philosopher, the penniless poet. Too light of gold to gravitate to a lower level, they ascend to the attic by the force of a natural law. Here life is lived, seldom in comedy, but often in direful tragedy. How often I have lifted my eyes to the top of a stately mansion, to the narrow, prison-like windows which crown its summit, and said: "I wonder who rooms in the attic?"

ORSINO.

Orsino, the Italian teacher, was the young man whose face attracted my attention pleasantly at my first dinner at Mrs. Skinher's. There was something in his eyes which touched me. They did not move, they only touched me, stirring in my breast the slumbering pool of pity. I saw that he was one of those æolian-strung beings upon whom every passing influence can play, bringing out a wail or a melody. One of those unconscious human Christs who have come into the world to suffer for the follies and sins of others. I often met him upon the stairs, passed him in the halls, and we had learned to bow and smile upon each other, and that was all.

But one evening as I sat alone, as usual, looking at the growing faces upon the canvass before me, a shadow fell upon the threshold, and, looking up, I saw Orsino. He stood in the open door with a look of embarrassment upon his face, as if he hardly had decided whether to enter or withdraw. "Will the Signora pardon?" he asked, hesitatingly, as he caught my uplifted eye. "I have heard much of the Signora's picture; I have come to see it; I thought, perhaps, it would make me think of those I used to see in my own country."

"You are welcome," I replied; "but if you have looked upon the paintings of Italy, you will see little to please you in the work of an amateur."

"Ah, this is beauty!" he exclaimed, advancing, and gazing directly at the portrait of my mother—the same which won my childish love upon the walls of Les Delices. "This

is like the Madonna to whom I used to pray," and he crossed himself reverently.

I knew that one who had such eyes as Orsino must be a worshipper of the beautiful. He was not profuse in adulation; he did not tire me with exclamations of "How beautiful!" "Oh, how lovely!" but his changing cheek and enkindling eye betrayed a delicate appreciation more deliciously gratifying to me than a room full of compliments. I eagerly watched the impression which my own painting would make upon his susceptible mind—the one into which my utmost being was infused. When his eye fell upon it, he held his breath for an instant. He looked at Frederick, and, following the upturned eye, his gaze rested upon the mist-veiled face of Beatrice.

"Do you paint spirits?" he asked. "That is a spirit. What eyes! they were never made for earth. I wish that I could see such a pair of eyes in this world."

"They once looked upon the world; but they closed early, and no wonder."

He looked from my face to that of the Stranger. "Is this your brother?" he asked. "You have the same look in your eyes."

"No! he is not my brother. Do we look alike?"

"Yes, in your eyes. You look as if you thought of the same things."

"Perhaps we do."

I had painted that face faithfully, as it looked forth upon me from my own soul. Was it a likeness, or, after all, was it only a vision? Why had the eyes the expression of mine? Surely I had not intended to paint my own. So I thought, and in my thought forgot Orsino.

But he needed no words. Others had come to my studio, had stared and ta'ked; he gazed, felt, in silence. Mrs. Wiggins had ascended to my attic, and, after looking at each face through her lorgnette, exclaimed: "My! how tiresome it must be to sit and paint all day; but you make pretty faces; I think that I will have you paint my portrait." And I had answered: "Thank you, Mrs. Wiggins. I do not paint portraits."

Rev. Jonathan Bunkum had asked cynically if he might compare my pictures with those of the Louvre, which he believed I had had the opportunity to study. He came, and, standing before the pictures, had delivered an essay of technical criticism, duly divided by naked "heads," from firstly to

the intolerable "tenthly." He said, in conclusion, with great unction: "I think I see some faint indications of talent. Young ladies often have a taste for drawing—but there never was a woman who had genius to make her a great painter. This is pleasant amusement for the time being. You will drop it when you marry. What man would want an artist for a wife!"

What woman would want a fool for a husband, I thought; but only said: "We differ in opinion, Mr. Bunkum. Art opens a wide sphere to woman, and I think that she has a nature large enough to fill it."

He departed with a look of amazement upon his face—that any woman should have the audacity to offer an opinion differing from that of Rev. Jonathan Edwards Bunkum.

But here had come a simple spirit, who in silence looked through the visible symbol to the invisible soul. Here was no affectation, no pretension. He simply gazed and felt. And I, in silence, accepted his unspoken sympathy.

Perhaps the gratitude in my heart shone in my eyes; for when I said, as he turned to depart—"Do not be in haste, Signor Orsino," his countenance suddenly radiated. If I cannot speak sincerely, I say nothing. If the eyes which look at me do not say, "You are welcome," my soul, without a word, retires back to itself. If I hold converse, it must be beside the warm fireside of the heart. I cannot stand shivering outside, muttering through barred windows. There were no bars across Orsino's windows. I looked straight through their limpid crystal into the fair, unpeopled world within. I saw a beautiful solitude there yet to be filled.

"Are you very lonely in this strange country?" I began.

"Ah! very, very!" and a shadow dropped over the soft eyes. "Italy is my own land; all whom I love are buried there."

"France is my own country; all my kindred are buried there." All whom I love, I was about to say; but, looking up, my eyes met those of the stranger upon the canvass. "You are alone in the world; how sad!" I said.

"Yes, I am an exile. My family are dead. No one lives who cares for me."

"I do," I was almost impelled to say, he looking so unfeignedly forlorn; but a "sense of propriety" repressed with frozen touch the warm, running ripple of natural sympathy.

"Is not the Signora alone?" he asked.

"Yes;" yet I had not thought of that before.

"Are you not lonely?"

"Ah, no; I have company in the faces of my friends."

"But they cannot speak to you; they have no voice; they cannot say: 'I love you!'"

"Yes, they do say 'I love you;' they say so with their eyes; every moment of the day they whisper this sweet story. No; I am seldom lonely; when I am, I go out into God's world. The sky smiles, the sea smiles, the flowers smile, the birds sing and tell me to be happy. Sunshine, balmy air, running water, make me glad; these no wealth can take from me; they are God's; so they are also mine; mine to enjoy and to love. My Father's own rich gifts. No, Signor Orsino, I am seldom sad, never miserable."

"Yet you have lost all your kindred."

These words awakened a single pang. It hurt me while I said: "Not lost, not lost! they have only passed into another country, a radiant one. They visit me sometimes, and I know when my work is done I shall go to them."

Was it really me, saying these words—I who one little year before had been so bitter in my rebellion? Yes, the very same; thus we pass from woe to resignation.

"I wish that I could be so happy," sighed Orsino.

"Why may you not be? You own the earth as well as I; besides, you are a man, and can go forth in the great world unquestioned. Don't you find anything to amuse you, to instruct you, to make you happy? Have you no friends?"

"A few among my countrymen. But we are all exiles; we are all sad. This is a great country, Signora, great and free. But Italy is in chains. We weep for our country; we cannot save our country."

I could appreciate this sorrow. The night of my father's death came back. I remembered how he died for his country. I recollected that I was the child of a hero.

"Poor, poor Italy!" I said, "no wonder that you weep for her; no wonder that you love her, if she is your mother."

"Your words are kind, Signora. It seems strange to hear kind words."

"Why, who dares to be cruel to you! You stand up a free man, in a free country, a gentleman and a scholar besides. Why do you speak as if every one was unkind?"

"Not unkind, but cold, cold; that is the word, Signora. America is a cold country. The American is cold. He lives for himself. He is in a great hurry. He hurries to be a boy; he hurries to be a man; he hurries to be rich; he hurries into the grave."

"Can't you hurry and keep in the crowd, Signor?"

"No, no, no. I feel different. I want not to hurry. God does not hurry. The American says: 'My life has a great object.' Very often the great object is himself. He says much about duty. Duty sometimes is a pious name for selfishness. He says: 'Life is a struggle; life is a battle; he must hurry.' If his friend dies, he says: 'Poor fellow,' but has not time to go to the funeral; he seizes another friend by the arm, and hastens on; and so he hurries, hurries, Signora, till all that is left of him is muscle and eyes. I cannot live so. I want not to hurry; I feel strange and alone."

He need not have told me this. You are alone, I thought; but did not say so. I only said: "You should have many friends."

Again he went on: "The Italian has a burning heart. His friendship is devotion, his love is idolatry. He tells it in the warm words of the South. The American does not understand him. If I should speak only words of friendship to an American lady, she would think that I was making love to her. She would draw back offended. I teach the languages. I have a large class. Many of them come from a distance; and when they return to their homes I know that I shall never see them again. When the time draws near I grow sad, I grow sick. I lose my appetite; I lose my flesh. This week I have lost ten pounds from grief. They have not lost one pound."

I laughed outright. "Signor, you will vanish soon, if you are going at such a rapid rate."

He was in serious earnest, yet he did not seem offended with my mirth. He knew it was mirth, not mockery. His words were despondent, mine joyous. We were fair examples of most of the complainers and comforters which are found in the world. His words oozed from the wounds of a hurt heart. Mine flowed from the fulness of health and the depth of a buoyant temperament.

In every nature capable of the deepest emotion, there is a silent under-chord which only needs to be touched to send forth a wail of sadness. It is the faint, smothered cry of the immortal, trembling out amid the coarse hilarity of human life. There are beings so exquisitely organized that they seem one bare and aching nerve. Around them fold no harder tissues to blunt the agony which they feel from the ever-hurting pressure of external objects. Such a being trembles at the slightest touch, thrills to a look, may be wounded by a word. This is the organism of genius; and, when the crea-

tive faculty is given, such are the beings who make incarnate for the world the divine essence of Beauty. To them all life is intensated. They always live more years than are recorded for them.

Such a soul was Orsino.

IMPROPRIETIES.

A very unfortunate class is that which can never learn what the world calls "propriety." It seldom includes the world's greatest sinners, but always the world's sufferers. The law of God may be forgotten, but the law of Society must be obeyed. Yet Right has a deeper significance than Appearance; and the sin of the world is, that it seeks to seem, rather than to be good. The person who cherishes and covers sin in the soul is usually the one most deeply shocked at the slightest breach made in the bulwark of conventionalism. Innocence is its own shield; it does not need to have its hands tied with a thousand withes of custom in order to keep it from mischief. It is the impure of heart, the easily tempted, who need all the little chafing bands which society ties on so well. Society only says: "Hide. Sin as much as you please, but hide your sin." Alas! for the simple, sincere souls, who can never learn to be proper; who only ask, "Is it wrong? Is it right?" and then run into the face of the world's opinion. If they are sensitive (and they usually are), woe to their lacerated hearts. Envy, malice, and all uncharitableness will come forth from their dens in hell to punish their temerity. Woe also to those who go astray, be it ever so slightly. Society never says to such unfortunates; "Come! I will lead you into a less treacherous path; flowers will blossom there which are thornless; there you may breathe airs which are never deadly, and gather fruit which holds no lurking poison." No! It rises with a scorpion whip, and hunts its victim to the door of the grave. The lovely are sacrificed to the unlovely, the pure to the impure. Mrs. Grundy rules; gossip and scandal are her viceregents.

Mrs. Wiggins could despise and neglect her husband; could cherish evil thought in her heart till it looked like a demon through her eyes; still, to the world, Mrs. Wiggins was elegant and accomplished—one of the *beau monde*, a

"star" in society. Mrs. Wiggins thought it exceedingly improper that Signor Orsino should visit the studio of Mademoiselle Vernoid. It was a disgrace to the house. Mrs. Wiggins should leave immediately if there was not a change.

As usual in such cases, the ones most concerned were the last to learn that they were the subjects of disparaging comment. The knowledge came to me very suddenly one evening. Orsino had spent an hour after dinner reading aloud in my studio. He had been reading from the German of Ludwig Uhland, and the melodious monody of "The Passage" haunted my heart after its reader had departed, and half sadly I murmured to myself two of its verses :—

> "So, whene'er I turn my eye
> Back upon the days gone by,
> Saddening thoughts of friends come o'er me,
> Friends that closed their course before me.
>
> But what binds us, friend to friend,
> But that soul with soul can blend?
> Soul-like were those hours of yore;
> Let us walk in soul once more."

The wind was sobbing outside of my window—the autumn wind, with almost the wail of winter in it. As I listened, there stole over me that first sweet sense of comfort, that feeling of gratitude for shelter and a home, which comes to us in the autumn, when perhaps for the first time we nestle up to a ruddy fire, saying: "How pleasant it seems;" then, sinking back in our chair, yield, unconsciously, body and soul, to its soothing glow and dreamy repose.

Thus I felt. For the first time in the season the anthracite in my little cathedral stove was all ablaze. I could fancy that a mimic sunset was streaming through its windows of isinglass. Every object in the room reflected its radiance. Golden shadows rose and fell on the white walls, and hung golden veils on the faces of the pictures. Oh! it was golden all! The half sadness which Uhland's monody had stirred in my soul had sunk back quiescent, and I was peacefully happy when the door opened and Nannette entered. I saw at a glance that she had come to lecture me. She glided like a black shadow into my little palace of golden visions. I asked no questions. Why ask the clouds if they are going to rain, when they hang low and lowering above you?

I felt happy, doubtless looked so; and there is nothing more vexatious to some people than the fact that you look happy when they think that you ought to look miserable. Nannette

evidently thought it my duty to look so at the present time, for she sat down with a very severe frown on her good old face.

"*Ma jeune demoiselle Victoire, aimez-vous Monsieur Orsino?*" she inquired, without a word of preliminary, and without a smile, looking as grim and inflexible as a lump of granite.

"Folie! Non, ma chère Nannette."

"Non, Mademoiselle?"

"*Non, je ne l'aime pas, est ce qui a mis cela en votre tete, Nannette?*"

"Ah, they say you be too much together," she groaned. "*Mon Dieu, Mademoiselle, est-il possible d'entendre tels mots de vous,*" and Nannette groaned again, as if her last friend had departed.

"'They say?' Nannette, 'They say' tells all the lies which are told in the world. I like Signor Orsino very much. He comes and reads to me, because he is alone and so am I; because he is a beautiful reader and I praise him; because I am fond of the books which he reads; but I do not love him, and he does not love me. Will you believe what I say, Nannette?"

"Mademoiselle was carefully taught," was her ambiguous reply.

"What has that to do with my question, Nannette?"

"Madame taught Mademoiselle to behave with propriety at all times," she said, gazing steadfastly into the fire.

"Nannette! what do you mean? What have I done? Propriety! Am I not a model of propriety? More, I am a perfect recluse; I go nowhere, I see no company; I have not made an acquaintance outside of this house since I came to America."

"Better if you had not made some inside of it," she interrupted.

"Nannette, if you mean Signor Orsino, I must tell you that you are very silly. You don't know what you are talking about. Not a person in this house appreciates Signor Orsino. They don't know him, for he lives in a world higher than they have ever reached."

Of course Nannette did not understand this; but, fortunately, her head was so full of her subject, she could pay little attention to the words which came from mine.

"Madame Wiggins *dit, que vous êtes mauvaise, mauvaise fille! Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!* that Nannette should live to hear Mademoiselle called *mauvaise, mauvaise!*"

"Bad? That will not make me bad, Nannette;" and the proud blood of many generations swept through my veins at the thought of being unjustly accused. "I am cross at you, sometimes, Nannette. I have been cross to-night; that is very bad, for you are my best friend, *ma chère bonne.* But I can never perjure my soul by conscious evil. I shall never be bad as Madame Wiggins means. Nannette, *mets-le-toi dans l'esprit; qui fait mal, trouve mal.* Remember it, Nannette; he who does evil finds evil. It is the secretly guilty who are most likely to accuse the innocent. I know that you love me, Nannette; it has hurt you to hear me spoken against. I am not afraid of the issue of falsehood. I am not afraid of anything but sin. But for your sake, Signor Orsino shall not come and read to me any more."

"He can read to you in the parlor, Mademoiselle?"

"No, Nannette; he cannot. He tried to do so, but Mrs. Wiggins made it intolerable. Her sly jests, her covert insinuations to those around, made it impossible that he could read or I listen. Now she slanders us, because we absent ourselves from her presence."

Mine was no uncommon case; the shrinking sensitiveness of innocence, unjustly judged, is often seized as the consciousness of guilt. I could not blame Nannette. The servants had heard Mrs. Wiggins, and with their limited range of topics, they had little else to talk about save the gossip of the house. And my poor old nurse had been tormented by hearing her foster-child made the subject of their careless comment. Good Nannette, with her French idea that a young man must not speak to a young woman save in the presence of a duenna, no wonder she was shocked.

The next afternoon Orsino came, bringing the poems of Henirich Heine. Orsino had been in Germany, and was passionately fond of German literature; especially he liked the purest and most melodious of Heine's lyrics. I remember that he read many, one the—

LORELEI.

"I know not what it presages,
 This heart with sadness fraught;
'Tis a tale of olden ages
 That will not from my thought.

'The air grows cool and darkles;
 The Rhine flows calmly on;
The mountain summit sparkles
 In the light of the setting sun."

He was as unconscious as usual. He had found a book which he knew that I would love as well as himself, and had come to read it. Whether proper or improper, he had never thought; therefore did not know. I took my work and sat down to listen. I seized my task and began very industriously, but it would fall from my relaxing fingers. My cheek would fall upon my upholding hand, until at last, leaning forward, I forgot everything in the poet's inspiration.

Orsino sat apart in his accustomed seat under the narrow window. He read long; the splendor of sunset fell upon his brow as the last words of the "Lorelei" died on his lips, and he laid down his book, leaned his face upon his hand, and looked up. Far below was the tumult, the grief, the sin, of the great city; the chafing mass of humanity moaning on—its far-away wail, fitful, dying, rose and fell, yet we heeded not its murmur. Above spread the glory of sunset, the promise of the open sky, and this was all that we could see. The eyes of Orsino seemed to penetrate heaven. An aura encircled his face and hallowed each beautiful feature. In spirit he had passed away from the book, from me, from himself. He was thinking, and his thoughts went out to the invisible. He made no sign, he spoke no word. The god in Orsino was dumb. The fact that this exquisite sensibility was always felt and never spoken, that the soul had no language by which it could convey its subtle and profound emotion, lent an inexpressible pathos to Orsino's character. There was a brow, an eye, a smile which told wondrous stories, but the lips never revealed them. Yet in his very dumbness he was closely allied to the spiritual. God's sublimest lessons come to us without a sound. Nature does not syllable her subtler teachings. Spirit may converse with spirit without an audible sign. I needed no articulate language to understand Orsino. I drank of the inspiration of his nature, although from his lips fell no winged words, betraying the mysterious beauty of the unfathomable world within. I felt an artist's delight in watching the endless variations of his face, and a woman's interest in following his soul's moods.

Thus I sat and watched him now, as the last sun rays quivered and faded on his brow; watched him in silence until he awoke from his dream. The last shaft of orange fire had pierced the attic window; glum, gray light now covered it instead. The golden vision of the sky had faded, and Orsino's soul had come back to the world. He started, looked around as if to assure himself of his identity and surroundings, stoop-

ed and picked up "Heinrich Heine," which had fallen on the carpet, looked at me as if he had just discovered my presence, and said: "Ah, Signora! will you pardon me? I forgot; I was thinking."

Then for the first time it occurred to me that I had something special to say to Orsino, and that now was the time to say it.

"Signor Orsino," I said, "I am indebted to you for many delightful hours—the most delightful which I have spent in America. You will believe me, I hope, though I tell you that you must not come and read to me any more."

"Read to you no more! No more! Have I offended you, Signora?"

"Offended me! Never! That seems impossible."

"Then why may I not read to you, Signora?"

"It is not proper."

"Proper," he said, with a bewildered air. "Proper?"

Poor fellow—he was master of a number of languages, but this word did not belong to his vocabulary.

"No—it is highly improper, so the ladies of the house declare, for Signor Orsino to visit the room of Mademoiselle Vernoid."

"It is not wrong, Signora!"

"Wrong? No, there is no wrong about it; they would not care if there were, but they choose to consider it an impropriety, and that it must not be, and we must obey, Signor."

"Why? It is not wrong, Signora."

"Wrong or right is not the question," I said again.

His simple soul could think of no other. Conventionalities he knew nothing about.

"Society is full of whims, Signor Orsino; and though at heart we may be no nobler for doing thus, for the sake of peace we cannot afford to trifle with them."

Orsino did not feel the force of my little speech, I concluded, from what he went on to say.

"When I left my country my heart was broken, and in this land I have found no one but you who has cared for me. No one else has cared for me enough to listen to me read. I have no mother, no brother, no sister, no wife. Why may I not come and read to you, Signora? Ah, America is a cold country. Americans have cold hearts. I am very sad."

He need not have told me this. Poor heart! one had only to look into his eyes to see that sadness had made them her perpetual home. It was a very little thing, a most trivial privilege, whose promised loss he was bewailing; but it was his

one social joy, the one little ewe lamb of kindred communion which made warmth in his else uninhabited soul. He clung to it with lingering love, not because he was weak, but because he was human.

Orsino never came to read in my studio again. And because it was the last time, I have loitered over its memory lovingly. Sweet Mrs. Wiggins had her way.

Not very long after, one evening at the dinner table, I met the eyes of Orsino fixed upon me with a sad, almost a tearful expression. Well as I knew those eyes, I had never seen that expression in them before. Some new, strange experience had come to Orsino. What can it be, I thought, as I stood a few moments after, looking up at the stars through my attic window. Just then came a low knock at my door, which I knew. In a moment more Orsino stood in the centre of the room, his slender figure erect, yet quivering with intense excitement, his great eye kindling and dilating with an unspoken revelation.

"Victoire!" he said (he never called me Victoire before), "I am going. I am going to Italy, to my own land. I could not go without coming to you, my sister."

"Going to Italy! and why do you go to Italy? You can do Italy no good; you are better off here," I said.

"Can you ask me why? Is there not hope? Will not Italy be free? Will she not be glorious as of old? Do not Mazzini and Garibaldi call? Fifty of my countrymen sail to-morrow, and I go with them. Rejoice, Victoire; I am going to fight for Italy. Rome shall be free."

"Rejoice! Don't ask me to rejoice. Don't ask anything so unreasonable. Signor Orsino, you are almost the only friend I have in the world. This moment I feel as if I would rather Italy stay as it is than lose you."

In perfect woman fashion, I forgot the universal in the personal.

"Oh, Victoire, you are not a Roman. The Pantheon is not yours, nor the Coliseum. You are not the daughter of an enslaved people, whose fathers were heroes, or you would not speak thus. Friendship is sweet, but liberty is sweeter. If I can die fighting for the liberty of Italy, I choose to die rather than live.

'How can a man die better
Than facing fearful odds,
For the ashes of his fathers,
For the temples of his gods?'"

All men are sometimes eloquent. The enthusiasm enkindled by a great idea will lift a man out of his every day nature and manner into something sublime. So seemed Orsino now. I made no reply, for the image of my father, as I saw him last alive when about to depart on a similar errand, stood before me; and, for an instant, I felt like the child of a hero. But only for an instant; for then I saw him as I saw him last—gory, ghastly—and I shuddered.

"Victoire," said Orsino, and now his voice was low with the womanly tenderness of his nature; "Victoire, give me this?" and he lifted one of the curls which fell upon my shoulders.

Without a word, I severed it and laid it in his hand. I had scarcely done this, when I started at a rapid pass he made with his hands, and, with the motion, a delicate chain of fretted gold fell around my neck. To it was appended an exquisitely wrought cross, piercing a tiny circlet of pearls in the form of a crown.

"Your emblem, Signora," he said, looking first at me, then at his gift encircling my throat. "This is mine;" and he held up in his hand a chain, the counterpart of the one he had given me; but, instead of a cross and crown, it held a mimic sword encircled with a golden wreath of laurel. "Amulets, both," he murmured.

"Victoire, Signora, sister *mio*, keep this for me. If you never see me more, remember that Orsino loved you as his last friend."

He pressed the tress of hair to his lips; and, taking both my hands, he gazed into my face as if his memory were taking it into everlasting keeping. Yet so rapid, so fervent were his movements, before I could speak he was gone. I never saw Orsino again.

In the morning no Orsino sat at breakfast. No Orsino came to dinner. No Orsino crossed me on the broad staircase or spoke to me in the hall. Orsino was gone. When I realized this, when I looked at his vacant chair, and missed the only pair of eyes which, amid the many there, had turned to mine with a look of affection, I was conscious, for the first time, that I had come to need that look, and to depend upon it for happiness as we do upon an every-day joy. Again came over me the dreary consciousness of loss; the feeling that all I had was taken; that nothing was left in the house or in the world for me.

Yet I did not love Orsino. Orsino did not fill my nature;

but he had his place in it. His affections were all tendrils, and clung to their object. Whereas, the nature that could absorb my love must stand strong and high, where mine must climb to reach it. My heart had never quickened its beating at Orsino's looks or words, yet I gave him the affectionate sympathy which his nature craved. It made me happier to know that I could brighten his life a little; I needed some one to care for, and to pray for, and there was nobody else who seemed to care for me, or to need me. Besides, Orsino's beautiful soul had been to me a pleasant study; it suggested lovely pictures, it kindled quiet thoughts; he was all that I had, and yet he had gone.

"The attic has lost one of its inhabitants, Miss Vernoid: you must be very lonely?" said Mrs. Wiggins at the table, with her most supercilious smile.

"Yes, I am very lonely," I said, perfectly indifferent to the construction placed upon my words, either by Mrs. Wiggins or the remainder of the company.

"Is there another one here whom I care for?" I said to myself, as my eye ran along the line of faces at the table till it fell on the wasted one of Miss De Ray. Alas, this forlorn face had always silently appealed to me; and, as I looked at it now in my own loneliness, my conscience smote me that I knew so little of its owner. Why had I not tried to kindle a little warmth in this chilly life; to make the world a little less desolate to one who seemed utterly alone in its midst? were questions which I asked myself, without receiving any satisfactory answer.

But if a dilapidated maiden of fifty, wrinkled and wild, was less an object of interest to a young girl than a young, intellectual man, it was exceedingly human, and only proves that in this respect, at least, the young girl had been true to her normal nature.

A LITERARY WOMAN.

I had never been able to get on very far with Miss De Ray. I had made slight attempts to do so, embracing every available opportunity to inquire after her health, and to offer any little courtesy of word or act which might help to convince her that somebody was interested in her welfare. She seemed to accept slight attentions from any one gratefully, yet such was the shyness of her manner that, after the usual commonplaces had been exchanged, it seemed impossible to add another word. Usually she seemed absent and melancholy. If it had not been Mrs. Wiggins's opinion, I am inclined to think that I, too, should have thought her a little crazy. I had often invited her to my studio, yet she accepted the invitation but once; when coming up the stairs with me, she came in, looked at the pictures hurriedly, and, without comment upon any of them, with a sad, half smile, walked out. Certainly she possessed far less tongue power than is usually accredited to women of her class. She never invited me into her den, for den it was, and if the excessively hot weather of the summer had not forced her to open its door, in order that she might breathe, I never should have seen what a frightful little hole it was. Write, write, write! One could easily imagine that Miss De Ray had been born with a pen in her hand, and had never relinquished it for a moment since.

Through the long, burning August days, she sat from early morning until far into the night, in the same spot bent over a little old table which held a pyramid of manuscripts, in which was excavated a slight hole, large enough to hold the sheet on which she wrote with as much zest as if the perpetuity of the universe depended on the words which it contained. How wretched the room looked! A tattered shade hung on the window. A small, bleared looking-glass hung on the wall. A scanty, ragged square of carpet was nailed on the middle of the floor, which was matted from beginning to end with old newspapers and disfigured manuscripts. A bed, a few chairs, with the old writing table in the centre of the room, completed the furniture.

For the sake of Miss De Ray, and of literary ladies in general, I was glad that the Rev. Jonathan Bunkum had never seen this apartment. Directly opposite mine, in passing to and fro before its open door, it was impossible that I should not become thoroughly acquainted with its individuality; yet

I never beheld it without an undefinable heart-sickness creeping over me, as I thought of the joyless life compressed within those four shabby walls. Miss De Ray had no hour in the day for exercise, no hour for rest, scarcely for food. In silence she wrote on through the long, languid hours of the solstice, and I was only reminded of her proximate life by the rustling of her leaves, as she turned them over, and the frequent nervous, irritating cough which tormented me, by making me think what a torment it must be to its owner.

Miss De Ray seemed to have no time for going out, and after I had given her undoubted proofs of good will, she ventured to ask me to post her letters at the nearest mail station, as I passed in my daily walk. Glad to do her this little service, every day for months I mailed for her letters directed to the most distinguished public men of the city and State, but, strange to say, never brought back any replies, and never knew of the mail-carrier leaving any for her at the door. It was evident that Miss De Ray was absorbed in a literary work of vast importance to herself, if to no one else. Could it be the A-B-C-darian which Mrs. Wiggins had said she wished to introduce into the public schools?

The winter had come, and for the first time in my life I found myself dreading the future. I had received my last remittance, and, with the utmost economy, this would not supply my wants beyond the spring. From the beginning, I had had reason to think of the time as near at hand when I should be entirely without resources; but while there was yet more money to come, that day had seemed far distant. I had all the faith which utter inexperience gives, that "something would happen" before my means utterly failed. My idea of what that something would be was vague, still I had an idea. My picture, already nearly completed, I intended to send into the annual exhibition of the Academy of Design, and, although I thought that no want would tempt me to sell it, the admiration which I fondly hoped it would win would give me reputation as an artist, and reputation, work. Foolish child! I smile pityingly upon her visions now. I had yet to learn that a paying reputation, most of all an artist's, comes only after long years of work and waiting; that his first great effort seldom establishes his fame or supplies him with the means of obtaining bread; that before these great ends are attained, usually the best years of his life have gone. Sanguine and believing as I was, as the winter advanced and my slight purse grew more and more slender, I began to think what

want might be like, and to think what I could do if I really found myself penniless. Though I tried not to see it, still a cloud seemed to be rising in my future; scarcely perceptible, it hung like a shadow over the bright horizon of my dreams.

With all my faith in the good something which was to happen, I could not quite forget the fact that if the coming year copied the first, it would not be prolific of great results. In the programme of my American life, I had recorded for the first year even "a little fame, and at least friends." The year had gone, and I had neither. I had no acquaintances, to say nothing of friends, and I knew of no safe avenue to lead me to new desirable relationships. I was just beginning to learn that there is nothing more solitary or loveless than the life of a young worker, poor, unknown, cast friendless into a great city. I was learning very fast that fame and friends do not come at our bidding. That if they are ours at last, it is because they have been *earned*, as well as desired. Usually they are the hard-bought recompense of persevering toil and of patient waiting. I am not speaking of butterfly friends, or of ephemeral honors bought by wealth or position, but of the royal heritage of genius, which she toils and suffers to win. It is not enough that you have genius; the world wants, and has a right to demand, a proof, a visible guarantee of the God-Power within you. You must embody your creations. You must transfigure into a radiant incarnation the impalpable soul of beauty conceived and born in your own secret, solitary visions. To you, beautiful and precious as it may be, with what fear and trembling you will put its garments on, lest when you have given them their last artistic touch, the world will look and see in your idol no beauty to be desired. Happy for you if you have for a friend an inspired soul with a prescient eye, who will penetrate to the beauty which the world is slow to see, but prompt to command when it does see. Holding it up to the great public eye, if that soul says in a voice which is law: "See what hath been wrought in pain and in poverty, in secret and in silence, with working and waiting. Give genius its crown." It will be received and you will triumph. But if there is no imperial soul to take your work from your hand when completed, you may wait long for an audience to do it honor, weary toiler.

But I had no just reason to accuse the world of neglect, and felt no inclination to do so. What had I done to deserve its praises? It was useless to deny it, I was living a very self-contained and selfish life. What effort did I make for any one

but myself? The picture! The world had had no chance either to praise or condemn, and that I had no friends was not the fault of people, but the result of circumstances. People were under no obligation to seek me until I had made myself an effort to be sought after.

I sat philosophizing after this fashion one afternoon, rather ill at ease withal, when I heard Miss De Ray's door open, and instantly after a faint, nervous knock on mine. This was an unusual occurrence, and, as I arose and opened it for her, I was glad to see one who needed kindness and friends more than myself. Talking with her, I thought, would make me feel more thankful. I welcomed her heartily, and, as I drew a chair for her near the fire, could not but observe how pinched, and cold, and miserable she looked. She coughed incessantly, and as I saw her wasted frame quiver to the grateful warmth of the fire, the thought struck me that Miss De Ray had none in her room that bitter day. It was evident that she had come to warm, not to talk, for she said nothing.

"How are you succeeding in your literary pursuits?" I asked, clumsily enough, eager to show my sympathy with her in the only subject in which I had any reason to suppose her to be interested.

She did not answer, and as I looked up I saw that she was weeping; she shook convulsively. I went up to her, laid my hand on her grey hair, drew her unresisting head to my breast, and there let her weep.

Poor grey head! since you lay a bonny wee thing on your mother's bosom who has ever petted, or smoothed, or loved you, I thought; while, like a soothed child, Miss De Ray wept on. At last she came to the consciousness of her strange position.

"You must think it very strange to see and hear me cry," she said. "But there is a tone in your voice so kind that it touched my heart. You must know that I am not used to kindness. I have felt a drawing towards you since I saw you first, for I felt that you have a kind feeling in your heart for me. I have not wanted to draw too near, lest I should chill you; for you know I am winter, and you are spring. I have wondered that you could feel any sympathy for me, you are so young and look as if you had been so tenderly reared. You don't know what it is to struggle on in the world alone, do you?"

"I don't know that I have a living relation; I have been alone for nearly two years."

"Well, it is hard to bury your friends; but to be alone, and old and poor, is harder still. After all, you don't know anything about the real struggle of life, my child—the fierce struggle for daily bread—and God grant that you never may."

I thought of my attenuated purse, but said nothing.

"As women are paid, it is hard for a woman to earn all that she eats, and wears, and needs. Do you suppose that I write for reputation or for pleasure, Miss Vernoid? If you believe Mr. Bunkum and Mrs. Wiggins, you must think that I belong to a very silly class. Half the world, at heart, are prejudiced against literary women. They fancy that they do from vanity what they are often compelled to do from necessity. They don't know that they write for bread. I write for bread, for shelter, for fire. Do you think that I would bend over a table, half frozen from morning till night, to write, if I could sit in a comfortable chair and sew or read instead? There is no life so comfortless as a naked literary one without the comfort of a cheerful home and of loving friends."

"Have you written all your life?" I asked.

"No, indeed. At your age, I didn't think of such a thing. I was a farmer's daughter, and taught a district school. When I commenced, I was full of energy and buoyant life. But as I taught on, year after year, in a little, close, unventilated school-house, 'boarding around,' enduring all sorts of fare, in all sorts of houses, and with all sorts of people, at last my health failed. My face grew sharp and wan. I lost my elasticity. I lost my spirits. I lost my appetite. I had a pain in my side and a cough, till at last I could scarcely realize that the forlorn and faded 'schoolma'am,' whom young women snubbed and old women pitied, and gentlemen took no notice of whatever, could be any relation to the red-lipped Mary De Ray, who used to laugh and sing, who was courted and kissed at sleigh rides and quiltings, and who dreamed such rosy dreams of husband, home, and cherub children. The 'schoolma'am' was the skeleton of that happy creature. She, in her physical and mental misery, was just what such a life makes hundreds of Mary De Rays every year. My father and mother were dead. My brothers were married to wives who could not be troubled with a sick, old maid sister-in-law; my physician said that I must leave school. Yet I must do something to live. In my long intercourse with children, I had learned to tell them stories for rewards at 'recess,' and for pastime in winter evenings, when they used to gather around me by their

home firesides. I thought that I could write one. Propped up in bed, I wrote my first child's story on little slips of paper. When completed, I sent it to the Sabbath-school Union. They purchased it; it brought me in a little money, and so all my stories have brought me in a little; enough to keep me alive until now. But my last, a school book, is a failure. Sometimes I feel as I were failing myself, as if I could not think, nor write as well as I did once. If true, it is not strange; I am growing old."

"Perhaps your book is not a failure, after all," I said.

"Yes, it is. I have applied to all the principal men who are interested in education for their influence to introduce my 'A-B-C-darian' into the public schools, but with no effect. They are too busy to look at the book, or too indifferent. I am a stranger to most of them, and to those who know me I am only a grey-haired old maid, whose books and whose presence are both a nuisance. They don't know that while I have been writing it I had not a cent to pay my last month's board nor to buy a little coal to warm my stiff fingers; that, old and homeless, I have only pain and want and the grave in my future; if they knew all this, perhaps they would be kinder. Still, they who guard their wives and children so lovingly may think that a woman who has neither father, lover, nor husband, has no business in the world. I am sure I am willing to die. Earth is bleak to me. I hope that heaven is a warmer country."

And, with these words, the forlorn, grey head nestled closer to my heart.

Poor Miss De Ray! A woman with a child's heart, she aspired to no mission higher than to write books for children. Yet even she must be hunted with the cry "literary," and be made the daily butt of an evil woman and a conceited man. As I recalled in how many nameless yet diabolical ways they managed to torment her, my ire grew warm towards both, and I believe I could have seen Mrs. Wiggins and the Rev. Bunkum thrust into a bag and then into the Hudson, after the good old fashion, provided they were drawn out after a hearty ducking, upon the promise that, in the future, they would attend to their own little souls and leave those of other people alone.

But better thoughts came to me as I sat holding that sad head. I had money enough left to pay three months' board. Miss De Ray should have enough to pay for one. I lifted her up, went and counted the gold, came and slipped it softly into her

hand. It gave her a new sensation, the touch of gold. She started, looked bewildered, then thrust it back.

"No, no, no! I cannot accept. You are too good to me," she said.

"Miss De Ray, you must. It is yours. Go and pay Mrs. Skinher."

It was the only way, by a high, peremptory tone, to compel her to take it. There are tones of voice which admit of no gainsaying. You must flee or obey them. I had resolved that Miss De Ray should have the money; take it she must, take it she did.

The next morning Miss De Ray did not come down to breakfast. It was unusual, for the poor creature seemed to depend upon her morning cup of coffee. Mrs. Skinher, who always seemed a degree more attentive to her boarders after having received their monthly stipend for the food and shelter which she gave them, told Nick, the waiter, to carry Miss De Ray her breakfast. Remembering her sensitive pain when even the servants saw the inside of her cheerless apartment, I offered to carry the cup of coffee and roll myself. Knocking at her door, I received no answer, and heard no sound; none, though the rap was repeated twice, thrice. Startled by the silence within, at last I ventured quietly to enter. Papers here, there, everywhere, were, as usual, the adornment of the little den. There was no fire, no coal visible to make one, although it was bitter cold. A slight elevation in the bed told that a human form was there, and the thought came that God had kindly taken her. But no; the meed of suffering was not full. The last pangs of disease, the sting of death, the victory of the grave, were to be felt yet.

As I drew near, I saw that Miss De Ray was sleeping—a dull, disturbed, feverish sleep which did her no good. Presently she began to cough, and opening her eyes, saw me standing beside her bed, waiter in hand. Her eyes lighted up, but she looked miserable, sick, and wasted.

"I coughed all night, or I shouldn't have slept so late," she said.

"Drink this cup of coffee; it will do you good; then lie down till a fire is made and the room is comfortable. No wonder you cough."

"Well, I shan't long. I think that my coughing is almost over. It will be easy and pleasant to die now; God has given me one to care for me while I stay."

I looked at her to tell her that she was not going to die at

present, but could not, for I saw that she was, that the story was almost told. It had been long in telling this story of daily dying; it was not short as it seemed, only I had not read it before. The thin, pinched face, the quick, hollow cough; I had seen and heard ever since I first met Miss De Ray. I had never thought till very lately but that she had always had them; to me they had been a part of Miss De Ray, and not that distinct power, death, whose work, commenced in the stifling school-room, achieved its final triumph in the failure of the "A-B-C-darian." While hope stirred in her, she could exist; when that departed, she had no vitality left.

Miss De Ray did not rise that day. For many previous ones she had sat wrapped in a thin shawl, without any fire, in fierce mid-winter, a prey to the most terrible forebodings; the appalling dread of a most sensitive nature, shrinking from the thought of utter destitution, sinking down aghast at the approach of hunger, cold, wasting sickness, and the world's cold charity. I stayed with her till I saw her quietly asleep at night. A sympathizing human presence seemed to magnetize her into a peaceful quiet. Her restless eyes grew calm, and followed me with a look of tranquil love. During the day, at her request, I gathered up the masses of manuscript scattered about and committed them to the flames; all but a few rhymes, into which I saw was written her inmost life, which I asked to keep for her sake. She was deeply touched.

"No one ever cared for my verses before," she said.

I fear that I should not, if I had not cared for their author.

Most of the manuscripts which were burned had found their way into print. They were stories of miraculous boys, and of impossible girls, who, in the eyes of their doting fathers and mothers, managed to become full-fledged angels here below; while, in the eyes of other people, they were tedious, premature little saints, every drop of childhood crushed out of their hearts. A monstrosity upon human nature is the young hot-house ascetic who complacently proclaims: "I'm going to heaven when I die, cause I'm a good boy, and give my pennies to the heathen; but Johnny'll go to hell when he dies, cause he's bad, and spends his cents for candy."

Innocent Miss De Ray thought differently. In every story she had a marvel of a child, who passed through the agonies of conviction and the ecstasies of conversion before it was old enough to know what either meant. Also a wonder of a little sinner whose mission seemed to be to torment the little Christian. Naughty Tom, Dick, and Harry, who read her

stories from the Sabbath-school library, who grow fatigued over the little saint and excited over the sinner, and think that they will not try to be so very good when it is so much more fun to be bad, can never know of the long, sad hours of privation and pain in which these brain-children of a guileless soul were born.

Miss De Ray never went down to the table again. Mrs. Wiggins and Mr. Bunkum never troubled her any more. The boarders missed her, and wondered what had become of Miss De Ray. I told them, what all might have known before, that Miss De Ray was in the last stages of consumption. Mrs. Wiggins said that people were never seized with the consumption so suddenly; that evidently it was only one of Miss De Ray's crazy freaks to attract attention. With a few questions of curiosity and ejaculations of wonder, all interest ended. None of the ladies felt equal to making an ascension to the attic.

The hearts of a few would have expanded with tears if they had realized Miss De Ray's condition; but they could not realize it without seeing her and her room. The established habit of self-indulgence seemed to render it impossible that they should overcome the inertia sufficiently to make so great an effort solely for the sake of another. To that forlorn couch neither friend nor kindred came.

But nature and God were kind. She prayed for release, and her desire was granted. As she drew near to the gate of the valley of shadows, "the rod and staff" were stretched forth for her support, and she seemed to forget the dark road of the past in the exceeding glory of the path which stretched before her. The vision of immortality was her consolation; and if it were only a vision, who would not rather behold it with their mortal eyes than to drop hopelessly from this sordid earth, an atom of dust into the bosom of nothing!

I received her last smile; her eyes were turned to mine when she died. The meagre yet bitter tragedy of her life ended with a smile. When I saw that she was dying, I went to Mrs. Skinher's room to inform her of the fact, but found that she was absent. Alone I watched the last struggle, closed the dying eyes, folded the dead hands on the becalmed breast—never more to heave with anxiety, pain, or sorrow.

All was over when I heard the click of Mrs. Skinher's lock. Trembling in every nerve with grief and excitement, I went out and encountered her in the hall, just as she was descending to her dinner-table in full costume.

"Miss De Ray is dead," I said, and burst into tears. Alone

with the departed I had not shed one, but the effort to speak broke the tension of self-restraint.

"Dead! how disagreeable! I do hate to have people die in my house; it is so inconvenient."

As Mrs. Skinher said these words, she, in her elegant brocade, and velvet basque, and blonde coiffure, full of pink roses, looked as if she would never be guilty of so uncomfortable an act as dying.

"Has she left anything for funeral expenses?" she inquired.

"Not a cent."

"How provoking! Now I shall have to go to the Poor Commissioner, and have all the fuss of seeing her buried."

"Can't we raise the means in the house? If each lady would contribute a small sum, it could be done. It would be a mark of respect to one who deserved more than she received when alive."

"Nonsense! the most absurd nonsense! She is nothing to any one in this house. She belongs to the city poor; it is the duty of the city to bury her."

"She is a fellow creature," I ventured to say; "a lonely, neglected fellow creature, who had no one to love her while she lived."

"That is not my fault nor yours, and it would not alter the fact whether we paid for her coffin or the city; and I am sure it will make no difference to her."

"It would make some difference to me if I thought that the city would pay for my coffin."

"Very well, you may buy her coffin if you please; I have other uses for my money;" and the brocade rustled with a most emphatic sound.

She began to descend; I heard the stir of her costly robes growing softer and softer at each receding flight of stairs, till it ceased altogether; then I leaned my head on the baluster and wept. The attic seemed so forsaken, so desolate; life seemed so dreadful, so colored with the hue of Miss De Ray's history; hearts so hard, cold, frozen! I thought of the career of the two women, Mrs. Skinher and Miss De Ray; both nearly of an age; both left dependent upon their personal exertion. One had succeeded, the other failed; one was rich, the other had just died a pauper. The world sneered at Miss De Ray, patronized and courted Mrs. Skinher. She was made of most common material, and in that consisted its excellence. Contact with the world did not hurt, it hardened and helped her. She had practical sense, business tact; she could make

a shrewd bargain, and always in her own favor. Neither above nor below the world's every-day level, she faced it, combated it, walked with it, and succeeded.

Miss De Ray's fibre was too fine for life's common uses. Its rough friction made her sensitive and sore. The pressure of need, which had quickened Mrs. Skinher, crushed, killed her. "Poor creature!" the compassionate said, "she has no faculty to get on in the world."

"She is a silly old maid, who has taken to literature for the want of a husband," said the unfeeling, and to either class it was all the same whether she lived or died.

My sorrowful thoughts ended in one question: How can I save her from a beggar's funeral? I had resolved that no passer-by should sing for her:

> "Rattle her bones over the stones,
> It's only a pauper whom nobody owns."

Hopelessly I thought of my own almost empty purse. Still I could give half of its contents; something *would* happen before the rest was gone, but that would not be enough to defray the expenses of a funeral. Who would make up the deficiency? I thought of Mrs. Forrest, of the loving light in her eye, of the tender smile for ever playing in the mobile curves of her lovely mouth, of the poor little beggars who were the daily recipients of her pennies, of the gratuitous speech which Kate, the chambermaid, had uttered only the day before, that "Missus Forran was a juwil of a lady, an ilegant lady with natur' in her heart, fur indade she gave Mrs. O'Flaherty a shillen over, whenever she paid for her washin'."

I resolved to go to Mrs. Forrest as soon as dinner was over. The light, and warmth, and fragrance of the dining hall would have been grateful, but I felt too sick and dreary to go near it.

I went back to the sepulchral room and ghastly corpse. Miss De Ray had given me the key to her trunk (the only article in the room which she owned), saying that I would find in it the articles necessary for her interment. On opening it I found that it contained little else. A few old-fashioned, faded garments lay on the top, while at the bottom of the trunk, carefully wrapped in a napkin, I found what I sought, a muslin cap and a muslin robe. Kneeling beside the bed, I unfolded it, fold by fold, till, coming to the last, something fell upon the floor which looked like a small book. Picking it up, I discovered it to be a miniature case. I opened it and two faces looked out upon mine. Both were young, and one

was lovely. One was a fine-looking man, with an upright, sensible, tender face; the other was the picture of a girl, with full, soft, fawn-like eyes, which looked steadfastly into the face of the young man, their opal depths overflowing with love. The features were those of Miss De Ray. Was it possible? Could it be? The silken, flowing hair, the serene, satisfied eye, the perfect curve, the peachy bloom of the cheek, all belonged to early youth. Had Miss De Ray ever been young? I had never realized it before. It seemed as if she had never been. I looked from the budding face of the picture to the dead one beside me, to the grey hair, the shrunken features, shrivelled with want and woe, and knew that both belonged to one being; the stamp of the individual soul rested upon both. What shocked me so was only the difference between youth and age, between hope and despair, between life and death; the change which, in lighter or darker phase, comes alike at last to each human creature. There was a story here, one which Miss De Ray did not tell, one which she could not write nor sing, yet one which she had lived. She meant these faces to be buried with her. I kissed them reverently and laid the miniature beside her, with the cap and shroud.

I waited until I knew that the gay dinner party had dispersed, and then descended to the parlor of Mrs. Forrest, knocking timidly on the door, for I had come to ask a favor, to me a new errand. Her sweet voice responded, and I entered to find her lying on a sofa wheeled near the grate, the gas-light flickering on her pale, lovely face. Evidently she had not been down to dinner, for she still wore her rich morning *robe de chambre*, while dessert, on a little ebony stand beside her, remained untouched.

"Why don't you come oftener to see me?" she said, extending her little jewelled hand. "How I wish you would come and sit evenings. George is so often detained at the office, and I get so lonesome. Why don't you come?"

"I don't know why," I answered, "except it be that it has become so completely my habit to sit alone, it never occurs to me to visit. I only came now to ask a favor."

"A favor! how odd! You seem like one of those people who never need a favor, and who would be much happier granting than asking one. You know, if it is possible for me, it will delight me more than I can say."

"You can do me a great favor, a real kindness, Mrs. Forrest, and I knew that you would be glad to do both. Miss

De Ray died this afternoon. She has left nothing for funeral expenses. I thought that you would consider it a privilege to make up the deficiency, which I cannot at present fill. You would not see a fellow creature, a woman, go from such a house as this to be buried by the city, would you, Mrs. Forrest?"

"Oh, no, no! A woman, a sister has suffered and died in want above my very head, while I have been listless and complaining in all my luxury. I knew that Miss De Ray was sick, but I thought that she was not *very* sick. I meant to have gone to see her before she was; indeed, I thought this very morning of taking her a little wine, but became interested in a new book and forgot it. Now she is dead, and I did nothing to comfort her. Oh, dear, how careless and forgetful I am of everybody but myself! Poor Miss De Ray, how I wish I had been kind to her. I am so indolent even my good impulses die, because I don't use them till it is too late to make them a blessing. Nothing that I can do now will comfort her poor, aching human heart. Oh, Rose Forrest, why will you be such a useless creature!"

And with this self-crimination, she rocked herself to and fro on the sofa in unaffected distress.

"You wrong yourself. Yours is the sweetest kind of usefulness, for you bless others without knowing it. Your face does that. It is because I knew that you are kind to everybody that I came to you," I said to her.

"I have not been kind to Miss De Ray. I could not have been more carelessly cruel than to let her die without giving her one sisterly smile, one little comfort. I wonder why it was she always seemed so far away from me. I did not know how to talk to her when I saw her every day. It was my foolish fear that I could not please, I suppose. If I were not afraid to run the risk, I might comfort more forlorn hearts than I do. The funeral will be no trouble. George gave me a hundred dollar bill this morning to buy a dress pattern which I fancied at Stewart's. I am sure I don't want it. I have more than I can wear now, and I am tired of being fitted and fussed over by a dress-maker, though mine is one of the best women in the world, and I don't believe that George will mind. Will a hundred dollars be enough?"

Before I could reply, "George" entered the room; a young, handsome metropolitan, with laughing black eyes, and unexceptionable moustache, and that careless, graceful suavity of manner which bespeaks high breeding and an easy fortune.

"Why, pet," he said, turning from giving a cordial welcome to me, "what is the matter? You look as if some affliction had befallen you. Had some one else secured the dress pattern? or did Nell forget to come to go with you? If she did, it's too bad. But don't cry, and I'll pinch an hour out of to-morrow, to take a drive with you myself."

"Will you?" and her face shone transfigured with delight. "But, George, it isn't the dress. Nell *did* come, but some way I felt as if I didn't want it, though I know it is beautiful. I am tired of so many new dresses. They take all my time and strength, until I seem to live for nothing but to attend to my costume."

"Well, that is because you must look beautiful—you like to look beautiful, don't you, Rose? I never saw a woman but what did."

"I like to look beautiful to you, George."

"That you do, and always succeed. Then you have no objection to looking beautiful to Miss Vernoid, to sister Nell, to cousin Fred, and a host of others, have you? Come, confess, Puss; you know that you do?"

"Yes, George, I know that I like to look pretty; but I don't care about it now. I only care that I am of no use in the world, and live the most self-indulgent life possible."

"No use! Then music is of no use, nor flowers. You are useful in the manner that they are. You were born to be beautiful, to win worship and love. They are yours. You win without knowing it—you bless, when you think the least of blessing. Every one who loves you ascends to a higher level in order to meet your beautiful soul. Yet you fret in your pretty way, because your little white hands are not digging in some vulgar job of every-day usefulness. Don't you know, Rose, that the people, whom you hear making such a great fuss about doing good, are never the most useful? I don't care a fig about seeing my Rose chief lady directress of all the public city charities; to be beautiful and good as you are now is vastly more graceful. I declare your eyes are full of tears; Miss Vernoid, what is the matter?"

There was a just perceivable vibration of impatience in his tone when he made this interrogation, as if he thought that I had something to do with his darling's moist eyes.

"Miss Vernoid came in to tell me that Miss De Ray is dead. She died this afternoon, George. It makes me sad to think of her cheerless life, of her lonely death. Only think of it, George, arn't you sorry?"

"Sorry? I am very sorry that she had a bleak time of it when alive; but there is no sense in my feeling sorry that her condition is bettered. If there is a heaven, and I suppose that there is, why should I feel sorry because she has gone to it?"

"But if it were *me*, George, who died all alone, and with no money to bury me, wouldn't you be sorry?"

"*You!*" and the young man's eyes grew humid as he looked into that lovely face, "you die alone, and no money to bury you—that will never be your fate, my darling. The mere thought, crazy as it is, gives me the blues. Why do you persist in talking of such doleful things? You are not like yourself, Rose, to-night. You are far too susceptible and sympathetic. I wish that such forlorn bodies as Miss De Ray were never allowed to cross your path. Come, cheer up, pet. She is beyond the need of your sweet gifts now."

"Oh no, George; that is why I have been talking. I want the hundred dollars which you gave for the new dress to buy her a good coffin and for funeral expenses. May I have them George—may I?"

"May you? The money is not mine. Have you been all this while getting courage to ask for the privilege of spending your own money in your own way? Take the hundred dollars, and another hundred, too, if you want them; only don't redden your beautiful eyes. I want to look at them, while I am eating my dinner."

Nick had already appeared with his tray of smoking viands, and I left the young husband to enjoy the privilege, of which he seemed never to weary—that of gazing at the rare yet fragile idol which absorbed the passionate worship of his heart.

In the morning we went together and selected a tasteful coffin, Mrs. Forrest giving directions to the undertaker for an ample funeral. How gentle was her voice, how serene her face, how ennobled her whole mien! She was a loving woman now; no longer the weary, listless lady of fashion. Gazing and listening, I forgot to mourn that the power of munificence had gone from me.

When it was whispered through the house that Mrs. Forrest was interested in Miss De Ray's funeral, said funeral suddenly became the fashion. The ladies who, before, had been entirely unequal to the task of ascending the attic stairs, immediately received an accession of strength, which bore them to that upper realm apparently without effort.

"Poor thing!" "Unfortunate creature!" and "If we had only known!" were ejaculations poured out around her coffin without stint. Mrs. Wiggins came, and, lifting her eyes, said with sanctimonious unction: "God is exceedingly obliging to have taken her. Not that she was in my way; not in the least. I am never annoyed by insignificant people. But as I said, God is obliging, because, of course, such a very queer person could be no very great addition to heaven. What an odious room! If I had known just how it looked, I should have been positive that she was crazy. As it was, you know I had my suspicions. Miss Vernoid, don't you observe that the corpse is offensive?"

It was a quiet and not utterly a heartless funeral. Two women shed tears of sincere sorrow beside the open grave of Miss De Ray.

Sweet Rose Forrest, gentle, beautiful and good, here, in epitome, let her story be told.

In one little year, from amid the many coffins in that great sombre warehouse, another was selected—one of rarest rose-wood, silver-chased, satin-lined. The form laid in its softened shadow was not a faded one, but that of a young and most lovely woman. The richly embossed plate upon its cover said:—

Rose Forrest,
Aged 23.

An aristocratic assembly gathered at the splendid mansion which the young wife had called but a few months her home. There were no lack of mourners; and not the least sincere were the poor, whose wants that beloved one had relieved. Not much was it like the funeral which left the house of Mrs. Skinher one year before—the scanty funeral of the old and unloved one. Father, mother, brothers, sisters, lover, husband, bowed in their agony of grief over their lost idol. Why did she die, the beautiful, the adored!

But the old maid and the crowned wife have met upon one level of joy ere now.

ADVERSITY.

Take not this cry upon your lips, lonely toiler—"No one cares for me." Never, until we see soul to soul, with no bar-

rier of mortal clay between, shall it be revealed to us how far the sinuous roots of human relationship extend, or, in their marvellous outgoing, what distant soul they touch. You fall from the immaculate altar, to which you were lifted by love's blind idolatry, to be trampled on by your worshipper as common dust. Hearts that you cling to in love's weak dependence, weary of you; they exhaust all that your nature can give them, and then you can no longer satisfy their needs. The individuality, once your fascination, their satiety now makes a festering fault. They are tired of your faded face; they chafe under your oppressive and exacting love. The spell by which you won them is dissolved; they are wide awake now, and to their awakened eyes you have ceased to be lovely. They have never for an instant accused themselves of infidelity towards you; they would start in horror from the accusation of treason. There is an infidelity of the heart, a treason of the affections, which can never be made answerable to a human law. The world will never accuse them of infidelity or of treason; it will have no right to accuse. The wily heart does not flaunt its falseness into the face of the world; no, it only taunts in secret, with torturing, careless coldness, the sad eyes of its victim.

Where is the old, ever-present, ever watchful, ever-anticipating tenderness? Where the old eagerness at returning, the old lingering at going away! Where the rest, the blessedness, the bliss, your presence once gave? Where the trance of delight in which your loving nothings, your childish caresses, once enfolded them—where? Now your tremulous love-words fall upon abstracted ears; your shy, faltering caresses are received with cold passivity, or endured with ill-disguised impatience, which even politeness cannot hide from your keenly-quickened vision. You are robbed, hopelessly robbed. Alone, shelterless, bereft in spirit, you call in anguish for what you have lost. Not God nor angels can restore it. You can never be avenged. They who defraud you, can they give back the boundless devotion, the worshipping love which you lavished? The all-embracing hope, the infinite trust in humanity, now hopelessly shattered? Can they restore to you the ravished bloom, the lost virginity of your morning soul? Never. The love with which you have so long enriched one you cannot quickly transfer; you cannot find satisfaction in new ties; you cannot worship at strange shrines.

No! If it is your saddest of fates to watch the growth of

indifference, of alienation in one to whom you have given all, life has nothing left for you but its grandest lesson—resignation. There is no resurrection morning for a love, dead and buried. You will find work enough for head and hands; later affections, untimely November flowers, will bud amid the ruins in your breast; but only chilly winter blossoms they will remain to the end. The spring-time of the soul once lost never returns.

The friend that we believed in beyond a doubt, the one whom we set apart from all others, saying: "In flood and peril, in anguish, in disgrace, I would trust in thee and rest in thee without a fear;" when the sore need comes, the elected friend drops off. Where the anticipated fealty? where is the magnanimous royalty of love, which was to have been our assurance, our support, our all, in the hour of our extremity? Where! Not in the soul in which we believed; perhaps not in the nature that we longed most to lean upon, —not there—and it is well.

Yet Truth and Love are in God's world, and they are ours. The universe holds no power that can defraud us of our inalienable portion; somewhere in the ages we shall find it. Not very far off, perhaps there is one whom we scarcely notice in the world's crowd; one to whom we give few thoughts, little love, if love at all; that one would die for us, aye, more, that one would live for us, a life of utter abnegation to all things, save the love which it pours in consecrated incense at our feet. If life leads us along the summer path of fortune, this soul will not intrude to whisper its worship; but if she leaves us far down in the valley of sorrow, then we shall know that we have a friend; and, though all others forsake, we may say: "There is one who cares for me."

We cannot measure the cycle of a single soul; we cannot tell how widely embracing is that soul's atmosphere of attraction; we do not always know when we stand *inside* the arc of its power, irresistibly drawn by its occult force. There are rare moments in life in which we wake to find ourselves possessed with a mysterious feeling of kinship for one standing without the sphere of our individual life, with whom we are never to enter into any intimate personal relations, yet the vines of alliance, reaching out from that soul, cling closely to our own. We know not when, we know not why, was revealed to us its interior gloom or glory, nor why our own eyes are shadowless lamps by which this soul has read the secrets of our heart. Yet a little thing, a look, a smile, a word, spoken, written,

sung; an intonation of voice, an unconscious act, may have been the "open sesame," which unlocked to each the penetralia of the other's spirit. We never shall be more to each other than we are now. We shall exchange scarcely the coldest courtesies of life, never the seductive cadences of love. We shall never pull a pebble out of the great wall of conventionalism in order to look with longing eyes into an alluring elysium beyond.

Alas! yet the tropical heart languishes on in one imperishable summer, under the icy brain, whose wintry will can be melted never by the sunny efflux of a love-begotten spring. Over-leaning the frigid fastness of the mind, into each summer soul gazes the face of the other, lit with loving eyes. We know not how, we know not when, but there *was* a moment when invisible hands fastened from heart to heart, across the great gulf which divides us, the electric cord now vibrant with such mystic harmonies. So illusive is its tissue, we cannot sunder it, so tense its subtle fibre, we cannot lengthen it; we cannot draw nearer, we cannot go further apart.

> "Each is naught to each, shall we be told;
> We are fellow-mortals, and naught beside.'

We know that we are more. Marvellous intuitions of all each soul is to the other float in upon the consciousness. Reason, with harshest gesture, says: "You lie, begone!" The imperative intuition, kindling to the brilliance of a blazing truth, cuts into the indestructible, central soul the calm reply: "I know." "I know that there are moments when the face of each flashes unbidden upon the other's thought; moments when the cool, soft hand of one would lie soothing as dew upon the burdened and burning brow of the other. There are hours when longings for the absent presence pierce the soul as the wondrous vision of unattainable joy, the unattainable presence could bring shifts across its horizon of tears, the mocking glory of the 'Might Have Been.'"

Through the wearing routine of life's common care, through the fretting friction of life's daily toil, penetrates to your heart the lightning knowledge that the abysmal solitude of the other's soul is palpitant with loving thoughts, aching to be ensphered in words of love for you; that its soundless silences thrill with inarticulate tones, which yearn to break upon your breast in floods of sacred tenderness, but doomed to moan on, void and voiceless for ever to your earthly ear.

How many would start in amazement if it were certainly revealed to them *who* loves them best. How often we would turn in cold incredulity if told into whose soul the impression of our own had sunk the deepest, or into whose life our own had interwoven itself the closest.

Cease to sigh "No one cares for me," you of the pining heart, whose tired feet seem to walk so wearily in the dreary procession of the "unloved." Like the gauds of fortune, the prizes of friendship, the gifts of love are not so unequally bestowed as they sometimes seem; it is a part of the blindness of our mortal condition that we cannot see how fairly they are distributed. But we shall see. In the kingdom of heaven soul will meet soul, and say: "When you fainted under your mortal burden, when you wrestled with human fear, when you suffered and wept, and there were few to comfort and help you; when your days were long and lonesome, dreary with privation and care, and you wept because there was so little love in them, I was cognizant of your life from afar, yet you did not know it; I loved you with all the fervor of my humanity, yet you dreamed not of it; I would have enfolded and cherished you, but it was forbidden." In the calm liberty of the infinite, when our enfranchised souls shall have lifted the last veil from the face of mystery, remember *then* we shall know why here we are often so *near*, and yet so *far*, so *much* and yet so *little*, to each other.

"No one cares for me," I said, sad and low, to myself, as I stood all alone the day after Miss De Ray's funeral, with my face leaning against the window-pane, gazing listlessly on the world below. The tense winter had culminated; its mailed heart had broken into floods of wild, desolating rain, pouring from the black roofs and rusty eaves, splashing in mad rivers along the muddy channels of the streets. Grey mountains of salted snow still lifted their unmelted summits in the way of horses and vehicles, to the misery of those whom they carried. In the garden courts, patches of black earth, with vagabond bits of dishes, broken kitchen wares, and household debris, which careless servants had swept out to be covered by the unsullied ermine of winter, now protruded stark and staring through their rent and melting mantles. The world looked dirty, disgusting, forlorn. Men looked forlorn under the glazed hats and drifting umbrellas. Women looked forlorn in bedrabbled skirts and soaked gaiters, flying in the arms of policemen over deluged crossings, cramming themselves into gorged six cent coaches. Little children looked forlorn with

their weary, paddling feet—sad little street sweepers, with their scanty covering, gaping shoes, old men and women faces, and diabolic brooms. The courts, all alike in a row behind the houses, how dismal they looked with their petit garden beds, from whose hearts in summer loving hands had coaxed a few vines and flowers out into the sickly, ungenial light. A few blasted blossoms still clung to their stalks, shuddering in the winter wind; vines, scathed and still, clung to their mouldy trellises.

"No one cares for me," again I murmured; and as I spoke the wind cried outside of the window like a homeless child. I shut my eyes. I saw Les Delices. Its blossoms were not dead, its fountains were not frozen, its statues were not swathed in ice, its tidal leaves did not surge around Frederick's grave. No. Before my second inmost sight it stood in the trance of a summer noon. The mountain summits burned in smouldering clouds of electric crimson. The cascade fell in sheets of crystallized sunshine—trailed its glory over blistering rocks, dropping at last on the cool hearts of purple mosses which waited its coming in the humid gorges below. Again the fruits in the hands of Ceres flushed with mocking mellowness. More than ever the redolent flowers blushed above the mirrors of the fountains. Waters trickled in the throats of marble lilies—tinkled, gurgled in myriads of murmurous jets.

I saw a pomp of fruits, a blaze of blossoms; everywhere life was redundantly, royally riotous. The turret flamed scarlet through the effeminate vines, which bound it with their enervating arms, stifled it with ravishing yet poisonous perfume. The pines spread out their firmament of balm, exuding balsam from every odorous pore. The fervid winds seemed to faint, cloyed by the heavy fragrance which oozed from every vein in nature. The grave of Frederick was embosomed in bloom; flowers, radiant enough to have blossomed in the gardens of the blessed, waved their censers over his rest, as if the elements which once fed the tissues of that beautiful body could only be transfigured into Nature's most perfect forms.

Silence reigned. No stir of human life disturbed the trance of the dumb midsummer carnival. The doors were closed and barred. Defiant creepers had covered with veils of impenetrable emerald the shut windows through which once gazed the living faces of a dead family; aggressive weeds peered with brazen eyes through the interstices of the verandah, and flaunted their flaming falchions over the marble

pavement which once re-echoed with the fall of childhood's jubilant feet. Growths of fiery green pressed in close defile along the broad avenue which led to the house; winging, rippling, in rank luxuriance, they filled with their noxious life the sacred path once so carefully tended; and there was no tender hand to thrust aside their crowding faces; no indignant foot to crush all their vaunting splendor in the dust.

No one? Yes, one. Silent, deserted, desolate, first it stood before me, steeped in the torrid glory of that emblazoned noon; but soon I saw and felt the presence of a human soul. I saw, yes saw, the stranger, whose memory had filled my life. It was not the immobile, the impassive face upon my canvas; not a picture, nor a ghost, which I saw, but a living presence, in all the plenitude of imperial manhood, with passion, power, sorrow, love in the living eyes, which passed up the deserted walk of Les Delices. Once before he had entered that sacred precinct. Now, with folded arms, he gazed before it, reading the story which its stillness told. I saw him go to the grave of Frederick, attracted by the white marble cross at its head, which shone dazzlingly in the overflowing sunlight. I saw him gather a flower from that grave, a flower itself the incarnation of colorless flame. I saw him return; saw him stand upon the spot where once he stood before; long he lingered there. I saw him drink from the urn, still standing moss-rimmed, at the foot of the cascade. Lingering, lingering I saw him depart; saw the rippling waves of green close behind his soundless feet as he passed slowly, slowly down the deserted path, going, going—whither?

This I saw. "You don't believe that I saw it?" Very well. "Did he tear his hair or weep?" Oh, no; he did nothing so absurd.

I opened my eyes. There was the narrow attic window, the grim, grey light, the dirty, rainy outside world—*my* world.

"No one cares for me." Again I moaned, and now there was an eternity of yearning in the cry.

What ailed me? A few weeks before I could have uttered these words with mocking indifference. I could have said them, shaking my head with a laughing defiance. What if no one did care for me, it was not so terrible a thing to live alone. Besides, I never was alone. Art, nature, were my chosen, inseparable companions. My own soul seemed exhaustless in its opulence. I was drunken with the exuberant wine

of my own overflowing life. I fed upon the delectable juices of my own bounteous vitality, and was satisfied.

Now the sating sweetness in my veins seemed shrunken, dead; the tropical wine of my young life spent, quaffed to the lees; the pure, luminous atmosphere of spirit dense with clouds, heavy, black.

For weeks I had not thought of myself—had thought of nothing but Miss De Ray. The object of my care taken, the reaction had come. Life could not seem to me quite that which it had been before I knew her. It was my first contact with a hard, actual experience. I had read of sad fates, of sorrowful, desolate lives; now I had both seen and felt how dreary such a life could be. Doubt, fear, had come unbidden, stretching forth despairing hands towards my future. Would it be my lot to live such a life, to die such a death?

I thought of Henri Rochelle. I saw his calm, cold face, kind in its very coldness. Would it not have been better (certainly it would have been wiser) to have accepted his offer? Should I not have been happier, as I should surely have been quieter, to have been now the matronly mistress of his home—the loved, the protected, the dependent wife? No; still I had strength enough to resist him. I did not want his home nor him. At least he should not know of the fulfilment of his prophecy; he should not have the triumph to see how soon, how very soon, I had grown tired, had fainted under the burden of my own life. I should not write to him. I should take excellent care to hide my future from him, if it was to be unfortunate. Besides, even he had ceased to care for me. The envelope, which brought the last remittance, brought no accompanying token, no word of kind remembrance, no anxious inquiry concerning my fate, no tender warning regarding my future; nothing but the bare blank money, and that the last.

"No one cares for me!" The last cry was wilder, more desolate than all. Then I saw that face, not on the canvas, but gazing in upon the eyes of my soul. At that moment Nannette entered.

"Nannette, tell me was it so? or did we dream it? Did a stranger come to us when Frederick was dying? Did he speak *so* kind to me? Or is it a dream? Did we dream it, Nannette?" I asked, gaspingly.

"Non, non, Mademoiselle! How often must Mademoiselle be told. If only Mademoiselle had said that she saw the strange Monsieur then she might ask with propriety, then

doubt with reason. Nannette very well knew that Mademoiselle thought that she saw things which no one else ever saw. Mademoiselle had been a little crazy from her birth; had always seen visions with her eyes open. Nannette never dreamed except in bed; then of nothing but the calamities which would certainly befall Mademoiselle, if she did not get over being crazy. But this strange Monsieur, Nannette saw with her own eyes, spoke to him with her own voice; *that* settled the question. Why would Mademoiselle continue to ask?"

"Where do you think that he came from, Nannette—from heaven?"

"Why would Mademoiselle blaspheme? From heaven? Humph! He came down the Rhone valley as other travellers did."

"Why do you think he went away so soon? Frederick dead, too?"

"Would Mademoiselle *never* stop asking silly questions? How was Nannette to know other people's business? Why should Monsieur stop with strangers? Very likely he was in haste to return to Paris."

"How did he go, Nannette?"

"Would Mademoiselle *ever* cease asking that question? She was growing crazier and crazier, Nannette knew. How many hundred times must she be told that Monsieur went away on a horse. Was there more than three ways for any man to go? In a carriage, on a horse's back, or on his own feet?" And Nannette began to groan terribly over Mademoiselle's lack of common sense.

"There, don't take on, Nannette; don't! I shall surprise you by suddenly growing wise some day. See if I don't. Just answer one more question, *ma chère bonne*, and I won't annoy you any more. Did he look like this picture—did he, Nannette, I asked."

"*Plus beau! plus beau!* Was Mademoiselle so vain as to think that she could paint a face as handsome as Monsieur's? She never could; Mademoiselle never saw *such* eyes as Monsieur had; never, never such *beaux yeux*."

"Well, well, Nannette; after all it *is* a dream!"

The days crawled away—yes, they crawled. My picture was complete. Love could suggest no alteration; it stood ready to be sent to the directors of the Academy of Design for their annual exhibition. I thought it strange that I felt so hopeless about it; I who had been so believing before. I

thought of beginning some small pictures for sale. Broadway was full of picture stores, where I might offer them, yet it was almost with a feeling of terror that I contemplated doing so. Vainly I said: "I must do something." Vainly I recalled to my thought my almost penniless condition; vainly I thought of Miss De Ray, with the consciousness that, if I should sicken and die, my fate would be no better, no different. Fully conscious of my precarious situation, with a ghastly future staring me in the face, neither the sight nor consciousness moved me to anything like adequate action. I seemed apathetic, dead. The old energy, the gay activity, the buoyant hope, all were gone.

Once no bereavement could quite crush my elastic life. I shrank not, I only panted for life's coming contest. Now I felt equal to no endeavor; with everything to be done, I felt powerless to do anything. Once, everything had seemed possible to the patient hand and resolute heart; now, I felt no faith in myself; none scarcely in God. I felt nothing but a gloomy foreboding, a dread of life, a shrinking from the future, a willingness to die, because I felt an inability to live.

From the hour in which I watched Miss De Ray die, my buoyant and exultant health seemed broken. Somewhat of the death chill of that moment seemed to have penetrated my own life. The long tension of brain and heart during the lonely watchings beside her bed, seemed broken at last in utter prostration. The decay of her body seemed to have touched my own. Ah! it was a new sensation, when first I felt the virus of disease polluting the joyous current of my warm, young blood. Vainly I struggled to arrest its course; vainly I tried to shake off my lethargy. My torpid, aching limbs grew heavy as stone; icy chills crept through my veins; forked pains stabbed my brain, and punctured every nerve. One morning I fainted. I came back to consciousness only to feel that earth had shrunk far away from me; that the time when my life was a delight, when I had felt ambition and hope, belonged to another existence.

Could it be possible! Was I the same being who had felt life thrill and throb through her veins in ecstasy, the one to whom simple existence had been a delicious delirium? Now I could not move; I could not lift my hand; I could scarcely see. What was life, that which we call life, to me now? What is it to any of us, when we feel that it is no longer ours. Alas! how soon it slips away from us, this beautiful world. The eager project, the absorbing plan, the promise of success,

the life of our mortality, its pleasure, its pain, its sweet daily nothings, which are yet so much—yesterday were ours—but belong not to the abject creature of to-day.

"Not to me, not to me!" I murmured. "I am weary; I am sick. I have no hope to-day. Life is nothing. Nothing, nothing, that which I called life. Was I ever one of earth's mad crowd? Did I ever chase such phantoms? With wild avidity did I struggle for an earthly prize? It looks little now; how little! Yet for that I wrought, for that suffered, believed, lived; I can strive no longer. Life has laid me down at the mouth of the dark river, and has gone away and left me alone. And yet, yet I would live. Life, come back! In the cup within your hand, there must be a draught for me, something sweet, which I never yet have tasted. I am so weak I cannot stretch out my hand for it. Oh, pitying angels, come to me! Pour into my wasted veins the elixir of life! Let me live!"

THE COMING BACK.

Let me live! With this cry upon my lips, I had drifted out helplessly, hopelessly into that chaos of disjointed dreams which men call madness. Torn by the fierce terror which had confronted me, spent by the agonized struggle through which I had passed with spectral foes, who had glared upon me with their green, chatoyant eyes, I was lashed back upon the shore of life, an abject creature, a worn and wasted creature. Very near me still surged the waters of Death. Hungry was their roar, but they could not engulf me again, those cold, clammy waves; not now, not now, for I was uplifted in the tender arms of the angel of life. My prayer had been answered, the words had been spoken: "You shall live." My obtuse sense heard not the whisper which came after: "Live! In the fulfilment of your prayer, accept the promise of your keenest agony."

I opened my eyes one morning—I knew that it was morning, because the pulses of the eastern sunshine were throbbing through my eastern window, dilating in ripples of gold over the pictured face of my mother which hung opposite. Through its baptism of flame, it looked down upon me, the holy eyes filled with the same anxious, foreboding tenderness with which they used to gaze upon me in my wayward childhood.

All the mother's apprehensive soul seemed to have stolen anew into the pictured eyes. "Mother! *Ma mère! Ma mère!*" With this cry faltering on my lips, I came back to life. What ailed me? Had I just awakened from the dreams of a single night? Why did a great gulf seem to divide me from my past existence? Why did it seem so dim, so far away, so illusive, like the panorama of landscapes and faces which troop through our night-time visions?

What ailed my arms? Wasted and lifeless they lay upon the coverlet, their veins shrunken and dry as if fever had sucked the last drop of life from their courses. When I remembered them last, not a line had fallen from their rounded mouldings, from their flexile, warm-tinted curves; true, then I folded them across my breast in my first utter loneliness, but the sickness which had entered the heart had not then invaded their young physical fulness of beauty. Then my hands, too, so delicately wrought; dimples slept in their unwasted surface; violet veins, fibrous wine-jets traced their whiteness; their blushing, tapering nails were rose petals dropped on snow; but now, now, they lay before me, old, wasted. Joints rose hard and stark where dimples had nestled. The veins had spread into one stagnant purple pool, suffusing even the wiry, corrugated muscles, their dark currents staining the shrivelled fingers and curdling under the livid nails in blackened clots.

Slowly, lifelessly, I lifted that smitten hand to my head. Where now were the great drifts of hair? where the sweeping masses of defiant curls, which always would curl, and in their own way, in spite even of their wilful owner? Of burnished brown, in the sun flashing out the sheen of gold, was this hair of mine. How I had loved to fill its clinging rings with faint, bewildering perfumes, odors pressed from the hearts of roses; from veins of satingly sweet water-lilies, with the tears of violets and heliotropes, and then shake its loosened meshes about my face, until half intoxicated with its fragrance. With earth's own ravishing juices I had fed its opulent growth, cherished it with a woman's sacred pride, this woman's "glory" of sumptuous hair. But it was gone—I was discrowned. A few obstinate little rings clung closely to my damp forehead, but the tide of sweeping silken splendor had been swept utterly off by some ruthless power.

Slowly my hand passed over my face; anxiously, painfully I questioned its identity. The eyes seemed to have settled back into cavernous vaults; the rounded outline of the cheek

had sunken, the mobile lips had become tense, as if tightened by pain. I looked languidly around my room; when I closed my eyes to sleep, it did not look like that. Now the pictures were dusty, as if no loving hand had touched them for many a day; my pet books and trinkets were scattered about in sad confusion; I could never have sat for a moment in a room so disorderly. What demon had been making havoc in my sanctuary? What made it so suggestive of a sick chamber? My centre table was filled with vials and glasses, all mixed with my pretty treasures, and the atmosphere was stifling with the vapor of noxious draughts, and the exhalations of deadly disease.

I heard a sound, and, looking, there stood Kate, the chamber-maid, at the foot of the bed, leaning upon her broom, gazing intently upon me. She had been looking at me all the while, yet I had not seen her before.

"Kate, what's the matter?"

I did not know my own voice; it sounded broken and husky, as if all worn out.

"Mathar, indade! There's enough the mather wid *ye* I'm thinkin'. Mrs. Wiggins will be mad enough to murdther me for not attindin' to her rooms afore. But if I lost me plece I vow'd I wudn't stir a peg from this spot, till I know'd. I know'd in that slape, ye'd come, or go for good, and it sames ye've come."

"What ails me, Kate?"

"A quare question, Miss. A brain faver has had howld of ye this many a day. Ye has been as crazy as a Bidlum lunatez, and yet ye're afthur knowin' nothin' about it? No one could do nothin' wid ye but me, and indade it was as much as iver I could do to hold yè. Ye had a mighty proud way of shakin' yoursel'. You said ye wouldn't be held, and ye wouldn't. And 'twas well me arms were a bit stronger nor yourn."

"Why did you hold me, Kate?"

"Hold ye? It's pity ye're not afthur knowin'. Didn't I hold you to keep you from flyin' out of the windy, or somethin' as bad, 'cause ye was a perfect wild cat, that's why. You would go, an' you would go to Lice, to Lice, but whither it was varmin or a plece, ye meant, faith, I cudn't tell. You kept callin', and callin' some Fredrik, and some one ye called Bu-Buty, or some such outlandish neme. And you talked of some one who kem only once. 'Why didn't he come agin?' ye kept askin'. Then ye had hapes and hapes of strange talk

about your faythe an' murther, and about yoursel' starvin', and dyin', 'cause your money was all gone. Sometimes laughin' frightful-like, and sayin' you didn't care; and sometimes cryin' and wringin' your hands till it made me heart ache to hear ye; sometimes shriekin' till I declare it made the hair on me head shiver."

"Oh, Kate! why didn't you stop me?"

"Stop ye! I would like to have seen the one that could a stopped ye! You was the craziest crathur I ever seen in all me life. Didn't I tell you no one could howld ye but mesel'? There allus was a flash in your eye. I seed it long enough ago—that it made no manner o' use to say no if you said yes, nor yes if you said no. Well, that flash turned into a stidy, burnin' coal, when you were a lunatez. In my notion, very quare eyes ye have, Miss. They have all sorts o' look in thim. I seen them look soft as a baby's, and they quite tuk the heart out of me."

"Never mind my eyes, Kate. I care nothing about them, nor their looks. Where is Nannette? Where *is* Nannette, Kate? You have been very kind to me, I know; I shall pay you for it when I get well; but I want my *bonne*—will you call her, Kate?"

"Your *what?* Miss. I don't understand your haythenish nemes."

"I want my nurse, Nannette. She has taken care of me ever since I was born. Didn't she nurse me when I was ill, Kate?"

"She gave you into my keepin', Miss. Do you think she had nothin' to do but to stay wid ye all the blessed time, when she had pastry to make for all the house?"

"Kate, who cut off my hair? Who *dared* to cut off my hair? Did you?"

My head felt strangely light, bereft of its beautiful burden. My debilitated mind toiled slowly from thought to thought, entirely absorbed for the moment by each one which possessed it.

"*Me!*" exclaimed Kate, indignantly. "Me! as if I hadn't hair enough of me own on me head without stealin' other people's." And Kate shook a ferocious mop of knotted hair, rankly luxuriant, yet not unbecomingly folded around the broad Irish brow.

"Who dared to cut off yer hair? Who, indade, but the leedy of the house hersel'. She said there was no sort of use to have such a mess of curls tumblin' and tossin' on a crazy

head; that you'd never git over yer fever till they were all cut off. So she cut them off wid her own hands and her own scissors."

"She *did?* What did she do with them, Kate?"

"Do wid thim! Why she tuk thim off, to be sure. Ye don't suppose ye'r the only one in the house that would like to wear such currls, do ye? Oh, she's an ould sarpent!"

"Kate, will you ring for Nannette? I must see Nannette. She never left me so before."

"Well, she guv ye into my keepin'. 'Take care of me mam—me mam'—somethin'.' I've no power to spake your haythenish furren words. But I understood this 'take care of her.'"

A solemn, almost a tender look now pervaded Kate's face; then, for the first time, the thought slowly dawned upon me that something might ail Nannette.

"Is Nannette sick? Tell me, Kate, if anything has befallen her? She is all that I have left in the world. If she should leave me I should be utterly alone."

"Don't, don't, in the name of the Vargin, don't spake to me in that voice; it goes into my sowl like a little child's cryin', that has no murther. Well, you are not goin' to die now, that's shure. I watched you all through the turnin' slape, and while I watched, I said me prayers as fast as iver I could: 'Hail Mary, full of Grace,' and the 'Prayer for the Dyin'.' The saints forgive me, that I said thim wid me eyes open. I was lookin' to see whather ye was comin' or goin', and now ye've come, I know ye won't go. Ye couldn't die now if ye tried. So it won't kill ye, if I till ye the whole truth."

"What truth, Kate?"

"Well, well, can't ye be afthur waitin' one blessed minut?" And Kate took a long breath and seemed with difficulty to swallow something in her throat, as if, though there was no danger of its killing me, the "whole truth" was not very easy to be told.

"Faith! I dun know what's ailin' me that I'm makin' such a fuss about spakin' a few wurrds. Now ye've come, ye can't go, that's sure. Only I've no wish to be botherin' ye—that's the truth as much as the orther. (Here Kate swallowed another lump in her throat.)

"Well, from the hour ye tuk crazy, *she* was awful gloomy-like. She wouldn't say nothin' to nobody but me. To me sho talked a hape. Sure she went on making pastry jist the same, and these quare soups with everything in thim, smellin' so of

garlic, I think I'm in me own counthrie, when I stand over the pot. She cooked the same French fooleries, but as I was sayin', she talked hapes to me. She sez, 'Kate,' sez she, 'if anything happens to me, you take care of me mam—mam', sumethin'. There! I can't say your haythenish Frinch nemes. Why don't you have sinsible nemes, like other folks?"

"Never mind the name, Kate; she meant me."

"Mint you! Who ilse could she mane? Wasn't her life bound up in ye? But oh, she tuk on terrible, cryin' and gronin' about her mam—her mam, sumethin'. Her mam, mam, sumethin', had been creezy ever since she was borned into the wurld. She was allus seein' strange sights, wid her eyes wide open; allus doin' quare things, and the quarest, creeziest thing she ever done was to come to this miserable counthrie; and indade it's the creeziest thing that I ever done mesel'. Sure wasn't I a hape better off at home! Wasn't me fayther a will-to-do farmer, that niver sent his gells out to sarvice! But I heard how in this counthrie the dollars sprouted in the streets as thick as potaties, and the fool that I was, I kem to see and make me fortin'."

"Yes, Kate, you'll tell me all about it some time, please; but not now. Where's Nannette?"

"Can't ye be patient? As if I wasn't tellin', as fast as me tongue will let me, the truth, and the whole truth. Though the Lord knows, mesel' wud be the last 'un to tell it, if I hadn't watched ye through the turnin' slape, and seen ye come; so I know ye won't go, if I do tell the truth, and the whole truth."

"Tell me quick, quick, Kate? What *is* the truth, and the whole truth? Oh, do call Nannette."

"Wasn't I tellin' that she said her mam—mam, *you*, she mint, was creezy iver since ye were borrn, only in no frightful way, till ye tuk the faver. Well, well, she came up one day, mornin' it was, and sat by yer bid. She rubbit yer hands and rubbit yer hair (the sarpint hadn't tiched it thin), she callit you hapes of nemes in her murderin' Frinch, but low like so I know'd that they mint somethin' swate. The more she talked the wilder you tuk on, callin' for Lice, for Lice, for Fredrik and for Buty, mixin' Frinch and Inglish in a haythenish hape. At last you grow'd so bad I had to come and hold yer hands, and ye were so mighty strong 'twas as much as iver I could do to hold thim. Then she groaned and cried, and said agin her mam, mam somethin', allers was creezy, but niver so bad afore. Who would care for her mam when she was gone?

Who would nuss her? Who would treat her jist as well as if she wasn't creezy? Oh, if God would only take her mam, mam smethin'! Kate, Kate, she cried, take care of my —. Just thin I heard a quare sound. I looked, an' she was fallin'. I know'd she had tuk a fit sich as old folks has. A fine time I was havin' betwune ye both. I couldn't lave ye to tind to her, yet I run an' lifted her in my arms. I thought that the breath was lavin' her so I call't loud for Mrs. Skinur. She came quick enough, and skeerd too, the sarpint. When she saw all the thruble, what do ye think she said? Why she said ye must be clared out of the house; that thur had bin no luck in the attic since ye kem into it. Hadn't the tacher gone? wasn't the writer dead? and now ye was turnin' it into a Bidlum; an' worse than all, here was her cook in a fit. Who'd make the pastry for dinner? If she belaved in a divil she would sartinly say ye had brought him into her attic. Nick and Bridget Kenyon tuk your nus away in their arms an' laid her on her bed. The docthor was call't, but he said it was no fit, 'twas 'gestion of the heart; that thruble broke it; so Miss 'twas graife for ye that kilt her, for she didn't brathe agin. No, she never brathed agin. Now I've told ye the truth and the whole truth. I know'd you could bar it and not go. I know'd by the look in yer eye when ye kem out of the turnin' slape, that ye'd come back to the wurld to stay, and to be a sinsible person in it."

"Oh, Kate! Kate! Kate!"

"Ye may well cry Kate. If it hadn't bin for Kate ye'd bin dead afore now. Isn't it me that's taken care of ye this many a day? Whin I was runnin' from room to room attindin' to the ladies' babyish wants, wouldn't I make thim wait while I run up to see how ye were gettin' on. Ye was quiet as a dead lam' part of the time, when the docthor had given ye morphus or white stuff wid some sich name, for I wint for the docthor mesel' and told him if I guv him my own wages he should be paid. No, indade! there was no one but Kate to tind to ye, poor young crathur. Blessed Missus Forran, the jawel, she kem as long as she could. Every blessed day she kem an' mixed drinks for yer hot throat wid her own white little hands. I seed her kiss your forhead, too, many and many a time, but at last her husband took her away to a fine great house he had bought. He said his wife was far too deliket to be thrubled with such a sight. Rose, says he, ye musn't go to that room no more. I'll hire some 'un to take care of Miss Ver—(I can't say yer outlandish neme.) Mr. Forran, sus I,

ye needn't hire no nus. Her own nus guv her to my keepin'. I'll take care on her if I lose me plece. 'Deed I knew while I kept doin' the work of two common gels the sarpent would be in no hurry to sent me off. *She* didn't darken yer door but once; not she. Then she brought her scissors an' didn't she shear off them currls! You'd better leave that hair on the head where it belongs, I said. Kate, sez she, attind to yer own consarns; who iver got well of a faver with such a hape of hair on their head? 'Fore she went off she looked around an' samed mighty taken with the picters. The big picter, she said, should hang in her parlor; that was jest the size she wanted. When the frightful madness was gone like, and ye lay like one dead afore ye went into the turnin' slape, who should come in but Miss Wiggins. She had come to see how ye were lukin', she said. She had hearn yer hair was all cut off, and she knew ye'd look like a fright without it. There she stood in the middle of the floor, starin', her snake eyes lookin' so divilish glad I wanted more nor iver I wanted to say me prayers to knock her down. There was a wonderful contint came in her eyes as she stood lookin'. You wouldn't parade that hair no more that was sartan, she said. Ye'd niver look fit to be seen again was shure. Ye wouldn't insult her at the table no more with yer scornful eyes, sayin' nothin', but lookin' as if you owned the universe. Now, Miss, I've towld ye the truth, an' the whole truth."

"Oh, Kate! ring for Nannette. Nannette can't be dead; though it seems long, very long, since I saw her last, my dear, dear *bonne*. Oh, Kate, it is all a dreadful dream. Won't you call Nannette?"

"Drame! drame it may be to ye. But do ye think that I've bin tuggin' an' luggin' up an' down to wait on ye all these wakes in a drame? I tell ye I'm wide awake, and so ye will be afore long. Do ye think I'd stan' here, lyin', when I didn't know what word might kill ye, although I felt shure ye wouldn't go, now ye'd come. Likely I dramed it! Didn't I help lay her out wid me own hands? Didn't I take her own money that she'd saved in the toe of a stockin' and go an' attind her funeral? Wasn't she taken to the church? an' didn't I hear grand mass said for the repose of her sowl?—and didn't more rale tears run out of me eyes than I thought me whole body could howld? Wasn't I cryin' more for ye than for her, ye poor lorn lam'? I wish it was a drame"—and Kate fairly broke down, and her sobbing head found but an uncertain support on the handle of her shaking broom.

"*Now* I have towld ye the truth, and the whole truth, an' if ye hadn't come fairly back it would have kilt ye afore now; an' a great fool I am, to be makin' a noise mesel', an' ye so wake. Mrs. Wiggins may try to murther me if she pleases for not attindin' to her rooms. Mrs. Skinher may say that I may go (she'll pay me to come back as she has afore, for she knows I does the work of two common gels), I don't care the snap of me finger for ather of thim; ye shall have a warm drink afore I does another thing;" and with these words Kate went out and left me alone.

Alone! I had fancied myself alone before. I had felt alone, never dreaming the while how much I leaned on the humble but faithful heart which had given all its life to me and mine. My soul just emerging from the shadow of death; my senses still torpid and weak through suffering; think not that in that moment I realized what I had lost, in the last relic of my family. I could not make her dead. I still felt that it was all a dream. When we have possessed an object all our life, when it has been so entirely our own, that we have scarcely thought of it as a positive blessing, and then it is suddenly, irrevocably taken from us, through time only we grow into a full consciousness of our loss. Not at first when the simple knowledge breaks upon us; not then, but in the days and weeks and years that come afterwards. When, amid our life-way, we miss and sigh for the kindness, the unforgotten tenderness, which that lost one gave us; or when we recall in sad regretfulness our own lack of loving deeds, of soothing sympathy, of tender charity, weeping because of what *we did not do*, then we feel all that we have lost, and weep bitterest tears over the memory of our dead.

Do you fancy that my history is to be a cemetery lined with tombs from its morning to its evening gate? Remember, many die that one may learn how to 'live. There are beings over whose life no fierce storms ever sweep. Harmonious, benign, beautiful from their birth, nature's elect and best beloved children, they need not the pangs of bereavement, the refining fires of anguish, to winnow their souls and make them pure. Untouched by heavy sorrow, unscathed by dire temptation, from a soft cradle through a sheltered summer path, they pass to a far off, peaceful grave, beloved in life, bewept in death, their earthly calm anticipating the endless calm of Paradise. We see such beings, we mark such lives; but not to all his creatures can the Father grant such discipline. There are torrid souls, whose sultry horizon is always scintil-

lant with lurid lightnings. In their fervid atmosphere kindle all latent forms of sensuous loveliness. In their fertilizing soil lies the germ of every delight; from their exhaustless richness spring luscious fruits in prodigal profusion, mingled with poisonous growths, bewildering in their gorgeous magnificence of beauty. These are the souls in which smothered earthquakes pant; these the souls athwart whose lavish bloom the hurricane and tornado pass. Terrible is the storm which can purify the air poisoned by its own superlative sweetness, and tear away from that soul the luxuriant blossoms which poison while they fill it with their beauty. There are natures wild, importunate, imperative in their humanity. So tenacious is their earth-grasp, so absorbing their earth-love, so mad their clinging worship of the earthly idols which their own idolatry has fashioned, only by the fiercest wrenching are they torn away. It is the fate of such a soul to stand stripped and bare. Every idol taken, every fibre bleeding, in its awful isolation this soul learns how to live. Was this why I was utterly bereft that I might lay the burden of my mortal life at the feet of Infinite Pity, and there learn patiently to bear it?

Days of darkness creep into every life, but not in the same seasons. There are lives which shut in night, across whose morning never swept a cloud. There are mornings heavy with storm upon whose blackness bursts the glory of a resplendent noon, followed by the mellow splendor of a tranquil afternoon and evening, which melts like a golden dream into the supernal atmosphere of heaven. My morning had not passed; the noon, the afternoon, the evening, were yet to come. Every support torn away, my nature stood alone. Now it could lean on the Everlasting Heart and learn how to live.

Kate was right. I had "come" and could not "go." The currents of life, for a while reversed, were calmly flowing back into their courses. Still weak, yet certain in their returning force, the sorrow which confronted my dawning consciousness did not drive them back to leave me dead in my desolation. No! Life had come back, and if Kate had filled another hour with horrors, the time had passed in which they might have killed me.

"Kate, what is that lying on the table? It looks like a letter;" I asked, the morning after my return to life, as I lay weak almost to lifelessness upon my pillow.

"Sure, an' it is a letthur. Didn't the post-man bring it when you was takin' on the wust? Faith, I forgot it, wid all

the rest there was to till. An' I'm thinkin' now ye be n't strong enough to rade it."

"Kate, I can read it," and the blood thrilled feebly around my heart with undefined hope and fear, for I knew that the bliss of heaven or the pangs of hell can be folded within a paper envelope. So can be an inane nothing, or a most quiet joy, such as I found in mine. The letter bore a foreign postmark, and came from Orsino. Kate propped my head and steadied the paper, which my enfeebled hand held so tremulously, while I read:

"VICTOIRE, SISTER:

"Orsino sends you greeting! a greeting baptized in the fervor of an Italian's heart. Italy, my mother, has snatched me once more to her embrace, and all my soul blossoms. Oh, Signora, could you behold me now, you would not know me. I am no longer sad, I no longer feel alone, I drink the air of Italy and am glad. In America I was in a wrong latitude. I did not belong to it; I could not live in it. I grew chilly; I grew cold; my nature shrivelled, because there was no gracious outside warmth to wake it, to kindle it, to make it grow. Change of place will transfigure a man until he don't know himself. In the wrong place no man is great, because he must be false to himself. His nature dwindles, his soul grows stagnant, his power dies. He is cramped, he wants room, he wants air, he wants liberty. In the right place all his nature grows; it blossoms, it bears fruit; it scatters all around it rich efflorescence. When he gets again in the right spot, how he curses himself for staying so long in the wrong. Why did I stay in that cold country? Why did I creep back and forth so long from my stupid task, while all the time the sun rose and set over Italy; while Italy cried for liberty, while Rome, my best beloved, languished on her purple hills, and wept to be free? Signora, still you see I talk much of myself. You taught me to do so by listening so sweetly; by always saying, 'Tell me more; I like to hear you.' I think of your great kindness with tears. I think of you, and am no longer glad. I have a strange feeling that you are in sorrow; you whom no sorrow seemed to touch. Do you look at your amulet? The pearls in mine burn like rubies; they have caught the color of my blood; they glow with the ardor of my hopes; only when I look at them and say, 'Victoire,' then all the ruby dies, the sardine glow goes out, the pearls grow pallid white, and I feel that you too have grown sad and

alone. America is a cold country. Signora, come to Italy: you have a summer soul, and Italy is a summer country. The campagna stretches away tranquil and smiling; herdsmen and sheep are at rest on its green expanse; the Tiber flows on without a murmur of discontent, beneath its crumbling bridges, beside the wrecks of departed power; and the sun looks from the depth of the tranced heaven, as calmly as if earth never saw a storm. Yet beneath, and around, an earthquake mutters. The sounds which I hear stir all my blood, arouse all my nature; they make me heroic. What do you think that they are, Victoire? What, but '*Viva la Liberta!*' These are the shouts which I hear: '*Viva l'Independenza d'Italia!*' The terrible words of the great Danton are written on the walls of Rome. Do you wonder that my blood is stirred; that I have passed away from my common self? Italy shall be free! Victoire, does the shout reach you across the waters? Do you hear this cry? Oh, if you were here, Signora, you would put on the garb of a Roman soldier, take his sword, and, when the hour comes, strike for liberty. The nurse of the arts, the mother of the beautiful, a woman could fight gloriously for Italy! There has been a Rome of the Cæsars, a Rome of the Popes; the Rome of the people is yet to come! Italy shall be free! Do you believe it, Victoire? Signora, write and say?

"ORSINO."

I fell back upon my pillow from physical exhaustion. I should have made a sorry relay for the "Roman Legion."

GETTING WELL.

May came and looked in through my window,—looked tenderly upon me with her adolescent eyes. The earth thrilled with her presence. In the arteries of myriad trees, in the veins of countless flowers, life was all astir, touched with her mystic magnetism. Impregnated by her seminal breath, dormant seeds quickened with new life, broke from the fructuous earth, new creations of beauty. Pallid flowers awoke in their humid homes under the dense, dappled leaves of the forest, and grew warm-hued in the warmth of her smile; garden bulbs, the cherished nurslings of household hands, pushed

aside the homestead mould with their purple heads, and hung in the irradiating sunshine their prismatic blossoms. Dreamy, voluptuous May brushed with her garments the cold, proud hills, and they glowed with tender verdurous life; she passed over the stark orchards, and they burst into a passion of redolent bloom; touched with warm breath the indolent streams, and they ran garrulous with delight. Dandelions, far and near, inwrought with gold the green robes of the meadows; birds in their coverts of dædal leaves, wove all the air into song in tribute to her coming. Old men came out into the perfume, the melody of her love-enkindled air—and felt in their sunken veins the lost pulses of their youth. Men and women forgot their cares and renewed the dead courtships of their vanished springs; while in the heart of youth throbbed the old ecstasy, ever new—young men and maidens loving and longing for each other. Across vast wildernesses of bloom she came, and through the narrow, stifling window smiled upon me a prisoner, till the balsam of pines and the nectar of apple blossoms distilled over my palsied senses. One year before I had gone forth to meet her in the sunny air, beside singing fountains; there she had baptized me with her own plenitude of gladness, till all life seemed a carol, a pæan, an organ anthem of ecstatic praise. Now, through a prisoning window, she poured her fragrant blessing; shorn of its earlier promise, it was no less nature's own sacred benediction.

Languid, helpless, still I lay, longing to behold the glory of the outer world. Zephyrs stole up from the little courts below, sweet with the odor of lilacs and magnolias, and as they touched my wasted temples, I wept with regret and gratitude. I knew that the month had brought the annual exhibition of the National Academy of Design. On my weary couch I saw distinctly its cloister-like rooms; felt the warmth, the dimness, the repose which pervaded them. There walked the poet to and fro, his eyes kindling with fine disapprobation, or lost in rapt admiration, as he gazed at some dream of beauty made palpable by the artist's hand. There sat the artist, listening with throbbing heart to the spontaneous words of praise or blame concerning the creation into which he had infused his deeper soul. There stalked the critic, eager for the faults which he was about to proclaim to the world. There, lost in dreamy wonder, stood the fair young girl, daughter of poverty, perchance, who had denied herself of some needed comfort that she might feast her eye upon forms of beauty, such as visited her in dreams, but brightened not

the dark home of her daily toil. There graceful mothers, in the full bloom of matronly beauty, led about their pretty children, tricked in ringlets and plumes, living pictures rarer than any canvas could show. There stood the Broadway exquisite and the Broadway belle, in an agony of simpering appreciation and exclamatory delight. There, side by side, sat men and women who would rather gaze into each other's living eyes for one blessed minute than look upon the most wonderful miracle of beauty which ever artist's soul conceivd or artist's hand portrayed. There, upon the sombre wall, in happy or hateful shadow, hung the yearly offerings of American art. Faulty (failing oftener in physical execution than in high poetic conception); full of the inspiration of promise, seemed these works of the vigorous, masculine school of art in this youthful western world.

My picture, my long dream of beauty, of love and of sorrow, was not there to challenge either condemnation or praise. No; it stood just where it stood when last I looked upon it before I passed into the weird realm of forgetfulness, when I beheld it with loving yet foreboding eyes. The day in which it should have been sent dawned upon me, yet I knew it not; the object of my labor, of my deepest love, was no more to me than if it had never existed. Was this the end of my dream? No, not the end.

As the long, lonely hours dragged away, leaving me still a prisoner, I learned to look, and to long for nothing so much as the face of Kate, my unwearied and unfailing friend. Many, many times a day, she came and covered me with her rough yet tender kindness. The fact that she had a special object of care, of solicitude, seemed to add much to her sense of personal dignity.

"What's the use o' livin," she said, "if you ben't of no use to nobody? I feels as if I'd somethin' to do, and was o' some account in the wurld, sin' she guv ye into my keepin'. Faith, I know I'm a dale happier. I uset to spind every spare minnut, fightin' with Nick the black sarpint. Now it's mesel that's somethin' better to do. Darlint, I would not care—no, I'd like it, to have the care of ye allus; to be takin' care of some un, gives me sich a blessed feelin' here." And Kate clapped her broad hand on the capacious region where throbbed her great, warm, Irish heart.

I often wept when she had gone, thinking of my poor bonne. Poor Nannette! Why hadn't I been kinder, gentler, more thoughtful of her always? Had I cared for her, and

thought of her welfare, as my mother would have done? No, I knew that I had not, and it was too late now. In watchful, anxious care, the Irish chambermaid equalled the French nurse; but she was more bustling and breezy, brought more life with her into the room, and certainly was less pervaded with the idea that "Mademoiselle was crazy."

The hour of misfortune comes, and we find ourselves receiving every kindness from one upon whom we have no claims; one from whom we had the least right to expect sheltering care. Hard would have been my fate, utter my loneliness and my need, through that long, struggling convalescence, had it not been for the pity and womanly love of Kate, the Irish chambermaid.

I was dressed at last; another day, and I thought that I should be strong enough to walk out into the air. On that morning Mrs. Skinher called for the first time.

"You have had a long illness," she observed, as she smoothed the skirt of her gorgeous morning robe and seated herself. "A long illness, but you have had the best of care."

"Yes, Kate has been as kind as a mother."

"Kate! She could not have taken care of you without *my* permission. Of course you could not expect *me* to stay in a sick room, and have the care of this great house on my hands besides?"

"Oh, no; I could neither have expected nor have wished such a thing."

"But your tone gives all the credit to Kate. Kate is a lazy thing, and would rather be fussing in here, than doing her proper work."

"I don't think she is lazy, Mrs. Skinher."

"You don't think so? What do you know about it, pray? I think that I have some opportunity to understand the character of my servants. Kate *is* a lazy thing. She has spent twice the time in this room that she had any occasion to. Yet I endured it. I was not going to have it flung in my face that I neglected you; nor have the fuss which was made over Miss De Ray. You have made me more trouble than you can ever pay for. Nannette was the best pastry-cook that I ever had, and I have no idea that she would have died if she hadn't been so frightened and troubled about you. The doctor said that she had the heart disease, but I am sure that she would not have died when she did, if you had not been taking on at such a rate. Some people seem born to make others trouble. For my part, I have managed

to live in the world, and to take care of myself without help, and without troubling other people."

I did not disturb her complacent conclusion with a reply.

"Miss Vernoid, I suppose that you are aware you have contracted a large bill during your sickness?"

"What is its amount, Mrs. Skinher?"

"Something over three hundred dollars. A small sum, except to those who have no money. There is three months' board due. As you retained your room, and had the care of a nurse, I did not reduce the weekly charge; in justice to myself I should have charged more, but I did not. Then extras for coal and gas amount to something. Besides, here is the doctor's bill, which I paid myself. I did not wish Dr. Smirk to think that I kept a class of boarders who were not able to pay their physician. In all, it is three hundred and fifty dollars. Here is the bill, with all the charges." And she arose and handed it to me.

"I came in to give you some advice," she added, resuming her seat. "I think that you need it. And to tell you that I am prepared to make the payment of this bill very easy for you. If you will transfer the ownership of these paintings to me, I will give you a receipt in full. Nothing could be easier."

"Nothing could be harder. I shall never sell these paintings. But I will leave them as security till I can earn money to pay you. I would as soon sell myself as my mother's picture."

"Fudge! I care nothing about your mother's picture, except that it is the handsome portrait of a handsome face, and would look well in my back parlor. The large painting I want for the front one. You are not in circumstances to be sentimental, Miss Vernoid. You might as well transfer the right of ownership at once. You will never redeem them. It needs no penetration to see that you are not one of the sort to make money. If you must earn your living, it will be a hand to mouth sort of business, I know. I don't believe that you have any more faculty to get on than Miss De Ray."

"If I have not, I shall not sell my pictures."

"Oh, no; such folks are always running into the face of their own interest. I suppose that you'd rather stay in debt; a pretty way to begin life! My advice to you is: live within your means. If you have only two cents, be content with what two cents will bring. People will respect you more for it, for you won't rob them. The little you have will be your own, and you can be as independent on a crust, if it's only

paid for, as if you sat on a throne. That's my doctrine. Go to a cheap, but decent down-town boarding-house, there are lots of them, and begin life right; that's my advice, Miss Vernoid. Give me your pictures, clear yourself of debt, then you can begin life fair and square."

"I like your advice, all but the last sentence. I shall not transfer my paintings to you; but I will leave them as security for my debt. It is useless to ask me to sell them."

"It will be all the same to me in the end," she answered, exultingly. "When will *you* earn three hundred and fifty dollars to redeem them? With all your painting, I don't see that it brings you any money. I should throw up such a worthless business."

"Mrs. Skinher, will you be so good as to return the hair which you cut off from my head during my illness."

She started. "Wasn't it my duty to cut it off? Did you ever hear of any one getting well of a brain fever with such a mop of hair on their head? If I hadn't cut it off, it would have dropped off, every hair of it. I did my duty."

"I am not impugning your motives, nor finding fault because you cut it, though I had much rather it had dropped in my hands than have been shorn off when I did not know it. I only ask you to return it, Mrs. Skinher."

"Return it! Why, do you think that I have it? What should I want with your hair?"

"Nothing, I should think. So you will return it, will you not?"

"I am willing to help you in any reasonable way. It might make me a soft pincushion. I will give you five dollars for it."

"It is worth more than five dollars to me for its memories, and worth more than that to any one else who wants it. I am unwilling to sell it, Mrs. Skinher."

"A wonderful opinion you have of your hair," she said, red with anger and embarrassment. "I won't be mean. I will allow you ten dollars; but I want no words about it."

It was useless to attempt further to recover my lost treasure. Already Mrs. Skinher had had it transformed into a wig.

"Remember that these are all to be left," she said, with a deep emphasis on *all*, looking around on the pictures and rising to depart. "And the sooner you make a change the better. I can't keep Kate out of your room, and I need her. You don't want to increase your debt, for I cannot allow more for the paintings. You had better get another boarding place as soon as possible. I am willing to be a referee for

your respectability." And Mrs. Skinher shut the door with that sharp, hard ring, so like her.

Gone! I looked around upon my pictures, my silent sacred friends, and no tear rose to my eye. I knew that I could not lose them; they were too much a part of me to go from me for ever. I may part with you for a season, but you will all return to me again, I said, with a smile of faith, darkened by no shadow of doubt.

A new purpose came into my heart, and with it new strength into my limbs, new vitality into my veins. I took up the morning paper which Kate had brought me, and commenced reading the "Wants." I had read but a little way when I came to this advertisement:

"At No. ——— street, respectable sewing girls, or ladies with limited means, will find a comfortable home for a moderate charge. Good references given and required."

I could not wait for the morrow to find the air, nor to know my destiny. With trembling steps I sought the city cars, and the cars conveyed me to the very threshold of the "comfortable home." I found it *not* so comfortable as it might have been. It was a forbidding looking house, in a forbidding street. I found that its proprietress was a respectable widow of the rusty bombazine and wan-featured type. She looked pinched and care-worn; anxious, but not hard; nervous, but not cruel; with a piteous "where-shall-I-get-my-daily-bread" look in her faded eyes. Her house was intensely shabby, so was she, but it was the result of poverty, not of meanness. She had a kind, humane look in her eyes which prepossessed me in her favor.

"I cannot make the home as comfortable as I wish; but I do the best I can," she said. "The women who live here can afford to pay very little for their board. Some of them are rough. I fear that you would not find them the company you have been used to, still they are decent."

She seemed anxious lest I should expect more than she could give me. "I will try it. I ask only for quiet. I expect little."

"When will you come?"

"To-morrow."

In a few moments I was on my way back to Mrs. Skinher's.

Once more in my room, I made up a little package of keepsakes for Kate—a few wearing trinkets, and a small engraving of Raphael's Madonna, which I had seen her cross herself

before very often. I had scarcely done this when she entered. She had missed me, and now came full of consternation.

"Sure, afthur all," she thought, "I had gone, and kilt meself."

"No," I said. "I shall never do anything so foolish. I love to live too well; but I am going away, Kate. Here are some keepsakes for you, and some time—some time, Kate, I shall pay you for all your kindness to me. I love you, Kate, for your blessed heart; and shall never forget to be grateful. Come to No. — ——— street and see me. If I ever have a home I'd like to take care of you, Kate!"

It was the last day of May that I left Mrs. Skinher's. The sun poured into my window, flooding all my pictured faces as I stood and looked at them for the last time. I took but one away. I carried in my hand, when I passed from that door, but one thing. It was a small medallion engraving of Correggio's Christ. All women love Christ. They come to God through Him. They feel their souls drawn towards Him through the diviuest sympathy. Not so much by word as deed did Jesus prove his tender, loving compassion for women. "Daughter, thy sins are all forgiven thee; go and sin no more," were the words of the immaculate Master in the face of accusing, self-righteous, polluted men. No wonder that women followed Him from afar, touching the hem of His garment, that, by some mysterious power, a little of the God-life might be imparted to them; no wonder that Martha served Him; that Mary sat at His feet; no wonder that to-day, in the secret and silent places all over this grief-smitten earth, does the loving, longing, unfilled heart of woman pour its floods of infinite want into the bosom of the Lord and Saviour of her soul.

The sun suffused the marble vestibule with amber, as Nick opened the door for me for the last time. Brightly the sun shone on the marble steps; its gold gleamed through the shimmering maples, which shaded the broad, clean street with their refreshing green, their umbrageous, shifting shadows; the air was sweet with magnolias; and so, with my "dead Christ" in my hand, I went away.

ANOTHER BOARDING-HOUSE.

Another transition! Another change, greater than had ever come to me before. Persons who, in travelling, have accident-

ally found themselves in the sitting-room of a third-rate hotel, can, without difficulty, see the apartment in which I found myself at the "comfortable home," dingy, smutty, uncomfortable, odious. I had not the consolation of remembering that I was only a traveller; no, I had come to stay, not to live. A passive existence in such a place could not be life, at least to me. The room was large and dark; the windows, looking out upon a narrow, dismal street, were hung with cobwebs and tattered shades. The walls were hung with coarse, gaudy paper, enamelled with grease spots and holes, with powdered plastering sifting through; adorned also with colored prints, pictures of buxom ladies in red dresses, with a full-blown rose in their hair or in their bosom, bearing the euphonious name of "Nancy," or "Laura-Jane," or the more startling ones of "Star of the Evening," "Light of the Morning," or one equally poetic and sublime. A faded cotton carpet covered the floor; a coarse wooden stand stood in the middle of the room, in lieu of a more graceful centre table; on it, around a corroded lamp, were piled some torn newspapers, the current almanac for the year, a well-thumbed city directory, an abridged copy of Webster's Dictionary, and a shabby Bible. A faded lounge, a fly-specked looking-glass, and wooden chairs completed the furniture. Too weak to stand, I sank upon a chair beside the table, leaned my head upon my hand, and turned from the room to its inmates.

Alas! what weary, haggard faces! Brows prematurely wrinkled and furrowed with care. The traces of hard passion, the sullen, vacant or brazen expression on the different faces, told how the fine temper of the soul had been destroyed in the fierce furnace of their struggling life. Evidently the women who sat there were on a level with their surroundings; they looked coarse and vulgar, or sick and unhappy. All sat bowed over their work, sewing vigorously, some with contracted brows in sullen silence, others discussed loudly some topic of vulgar life, while a few seemed to derive their entertainment from ridiculing a girl who sat in silence, quite apart from the rest. I listened to the dissonant voices, to the rude laughter, to the jests, and sickened with disgust. Perhaps this sickness suffused my face, for they looked at me askance, and with little welcome in the look.

"Guess Miss Grammar has got somebody to keep her company at last," said a red-haired, red-eyed, freckle-faced girl, turning towards the solitary one whom they were ridiculing.

"Where's your manners, Nance?" said a little pert, button-eyed girl, with a nose in the air.

"Hain't got none; they ain't needed here."

"Well, folks might as well be civil," answered Pert.

"Civil! ain't I civil, I'd like to know? You know well as me that Miss Grammar thinks that we ain't none of us good enough to keep her company. I reckoned she'd like to know somebody had come what was probably good enough in their own opinion, anyhow," said Nance, with a toss of her head towards me, which she intended should be very contemptuous, but which was only ridiculous.

"You'd better leave them that hain't hurt you alone," protested little Pert. "I don't blame Grammar a snap for cutting you."

"Oh, no, you don't; but you are mad as a hare when she cuts *you*. You'd put on as many airs as she, if you know'd enough to carry them."

"I know enough to carry all the airs I please," and with these words, the nose in the air went up higher, as if infinitely insulted.

I was greatly amused. In this circle, coarse as it was, caste had entered. Here, as everywhere else, society was struggling to sustain its distinctions. Already I had heard enough to know that the girl whom they called Grammar was the butt of the rest, and a glance at her revealed the reason. She looked as much out of place as would a seraph from heaven. A slight, willowy figure sat in the low wooden chair; a slender foot, with a proudly-curved instep, rested on the bare wooden stool; small, thin hands stitched on, without ceasing, the delicate fingers stained with the dark fabric which they were sewing. That foot would have looked more at home nestled in velvet cushions; that hand was fair and lovely enough to have been shaded by ethereal laces; just the fingers those to sweep over the keys of a piano, or the cords of a harp, or to touch with grace the artistic appliances of a sumptuous home. The head and face were wonderful. The head seemed too massive, too powerful for that slender body. The heavy braids of black shining hair, wound round and round it, rendered its classical contour still more striking. Intellect was embossed upon the pale, broad brow. Genius wept in the great dark, despairing eyes. With these features the positive beauty of the face ended. The lower portion was painful. The muscles around the mouth were tense, rigid—not with harshness; it was the tension of suffering, the

rigidity of endurance. The strained lines were replete with strength. The wounded heart might throb with throes of most poignant pain, but those lines held down the quivering lips, and the proud soul would utter not a single cry.

The rude thrusts of her companions seemed not to reach her. Had they spoken in a language which she could not understand she could not have sat more impassive, more unmoved. The calm, compressed lips relaxed neither in anger, in sarcasm, nor in scorn. The great eyes looked straight at the stitching, as if stitching comprehended the universe. This composure could only be the offspring of a strong character, of a great nature; it was not the child of inanity. If ever power, capacity to suffer; if ever soul was stamped upon the human face, it was upon hers. She could not have been more than twenty, yet to look in her eyes, you felt that she had lived centuries. I saw that her nature was self-poised and solitary; saw that she lived in a region apart from her companions; one that they could not reach, nor even discern.

Still I sat by the shabby stand, studying this face, when a young girl tripped in, whom Nance instantly hailed as "Tip."

"Well, Miss Tip, have you come again to 'stonish us all?"

"Yes. Why not?" replied the young creature with a voice and a laugh gay as a running brook.

"Why not! Well, if that isn't cool! Why shouldn't one sister set herself up for her learnin', and t'other for her beauty? I'll tell you just why: 'cause decent people don't like to be imposed on; that's why. For my part I feel as good as anybody."

"I'm glad that you do; why shouldn't you, Nancy?"

"Why shouldn't I? 'cause some folks think I ain't; some folks are so big feelin' they think nobody hain't so grand as they are. Let 'em stick up. I ask nothin' of nobody. I'm's good as the grandest lady what walks the street."

Tip had no reply for Nancy's most satisfactory estimate of herself. She had dropped a bundle upon the floor at Grammar's feet, and sat down upon the low stool before her.

"What did Mr. Bertram say?" asked Grammar, in a low tone.

"He said that he was sorry, but that he couldn't treat you any better than the other 'hands;'—that he must cut down the pay."

"What have you brought?"

"Satin vests, two shillings apiece."

"And he will sell them for ten dollars," said Grammar, and I saw the muscles around the white mouth quiver. "You will have to give up your music lessons, Hope."

"Never mind; I can help you the more. I have been think ing of it all the way back that I would help you more, and it will make me so happy."

"Hope, I don't want you to help me more."

"Oh, no, you don't want her to help you, do you? We all know'd that afore. You want to make a grand lady of Miss Tip, don't you? You want to marry her to a rich man, don't you? Then Aunt Grammar can take care of the children. She needn't work for other folks no more; she can put on as many airs as she pleases," shouted Nance, who had overheard Grammar's last words.

"If I ever do have a nice house, I'll invite all you girls to a tea party," said Tip.

"Oh, yes, you'd like to crow over us, perhaps, if we hadn't made as good markets," exclaimed Nance and Pert in a breath.

"No, indeed, but how good it would seem to have one nice tea all together. No frowy butter, no skippery cheese, no chalky milk; but tea with white sugar and cream, and strawberries, and biscuit white as snow. Wouldn't it be pleasant, girls?"

"A likely story," said Nance, in a milder tone, mollified by the epicurean picture in spite of herself. "Do you think that Aunt Grammar would allow any such doin's? She won't let you keep our company now; do you think that she'll let you do it then, when you live in a fine house of your own?" And Nancy's tone unconsciously betrayed a faith in Tip's exalted destiny as well as in the life-long authority of Grammar.

During the conversation I had been gazing at Tip. No wonder that Nance had asked if she had come to astonish us. She astonished me with her rare, her radiant beauty. She was not more than fourteen. She stood on the mystic boundary which divides childhood from womanhood; dazzling as a child, I was lost in imagining what the glory of the woman would be. She wore a rose-pink calico dress, terminating at the ankle, displaying a petite, patrician foot, in a high, plain shoe. A mantle of muslin revealed the aerial outline of her undulating, girlish figure, while the broad flat upon her head shaded, yet exposed the beautiful features. Had her hair been fairer, she would have been a blonde, for her complexion

was transparently pure, the faintest of rose tints inlaying the pearly cheeks. Her hair gleamed dusky-purple in the sun; dark it was, yet it seemed infiltrated with shifting golden lights; it covered the delicate head with waves, falling around the slender waist in curls profuse and free. The young lip was glorious; the eyes enough to make an artist mad not to paint their color, but expression. The irides of deep, lucent blue were almost covered with the dark, dilating, luminous pupil, which produced the rare combination of melting softness and kindling brilliancy. Serene to sadness, they drooped under the long curled lashes, but only opened to scintillate starry sunshine, which seemed to radiate from her inmost being, to glance and play over every feature, baptizing herself and every surrounding object with its effluence of brightness. It was the outflowing light of innocence, of enthusiasm; the guileless glory of a sunny and unsullied soul, which sin had never shadowed nor sorrow dared to darken.

> "Round her she made an atmosphere of light;
> The very air seemed brighter for her eyes,
> They were so soft, and beautiful, and rife
> With all we can imagine of the skies;"

besides all that we dream over and long for in the loveliest of the earth.

Tip's story of strawberries and cream, of "biscuits white as snow," was interrupted by a *bonâ fide* ring for supper. The girls dropped their work simultaneously, and passed through a dark passage, down into a damp basement, where tea was spread. It presented a dismal contrast to the brilliant dining hall, the elegantly arranged table of Mrs. Skinher, resplendent with china and silver. When I saw the food prepared, I did not wonder that the young girl's fancy had hovered over something good to eat. Fastidious by nature and education, I could not overcome the repugnance the table appointments aroused sufficiently to eat. The soiled brown cloth, the cracked colored ware, the brassy spoons, were bad enough; but the black, leathery bread, the cake, apparently shortened with candle-grease, the rancid butter, and the sloppy tea were worse. No one but Nance seemed to partake of the food with the slightest relish. Grammar's great eyes dilated over her tea cup, as if she saw wondrous visions in it; but not a mouthful of food passed her lips. The sweet child beside her seemed to make fruitless efforts to swallow the coarse food

which I knew must hurt her delicate throat. As I compared her softly curved, blooming face with the murky, angular faces of her companions, I was almost tempted to believe that the angels fed her in secret with their own ambrosia, so much finer and ethereal seemed her composition than such poisoned nutriment could make.

After tea the girls returned to their tasks. I asked to be shown to my room. "My room!" I said again, as I stood alone gazing around it. "My room! Have I come to this?" "Yes, you have come to this," answered Fact. "You prayed for life; accept without a murmur what it gives you."

The chambers had been portioned into small sleeping closets. I stood in the midst of one of them. It was just large enough to hold a bed, a stand, a single chair, with sufficient useless space to hold a trunk. Thank God it had a window, which, though it looked out upon a reeking alley, was better than none. I knew in the day a few faint sunbeams would struggle down to bless me, and that, when I was very hungry for the sight, I could thrust my face into the air and catch a glimpse, only a glimpse, of the azure heaven above the house tops. I hung my pictured Christ on the narrow strip of wall at the foot of my bed, where the divine eyes could greet me first on waking; where I could look into them, and gather courage and comfort to bear me through my weary days.

This done, I sat down upon the edge of my low cot and began to think. If I had found nothing else to arouse my interest, I should probably have fallen back upon the consideration of my miserable self and more miserable condition; but as it was I thought only of Grammar and Tip. So unlike, yet each so intensely interesting; the one so beautiful, the other so great. Who could they be? How had they come into such a place? Alas, that I was not rich that I might paint their faces, and take them and myself away from this hateful place. But as it was, I was sure that we should be friends and love each other. How I thanked God in humble gratitude that I had never found a spot so dark but that it held some bright thing; something to bless me; something that I could love.

My meditation was broken by the opening of the door in the adjoining room. There was only a thin partition between, so that I heard distinctly. Some of the girls were retiring for the night. In a moment I recognised the voices of the sisters who had absorbed my thought.

"This has been a sad day, Hope," said Grammar.

"Yes, a little sad; very sad for you; you fee everything so much, dear Morna. Don't feel so bad about the music lessons. I shall learn them some time, and if I let them rest a little while, I can help you so much more."

"Don't speak of helping me, again, Hope; don't! You know that every stitch which you take in that wretched sewing, only hinders you so much in your preparation for the situation which you are suited to fill. Don't speak again of helping me in that way; you know that I cannot bear it."

"Well, I won't, dear Morna, if you will believe in the 'good time coming."

"The good time? it has never come to us yet, Hope."

"But it *will*. Morna, I am as sure of it as if it were here."

"You are young, Hope, and I don't know why, but you learn nothing of life even from its miseries."

"I never felt miserable, Morna. How can I, when our Father in Heaven is so kind. But I feel sad because you are so anxious about me. I have no fear. God *will* take care of us; you know that He always has. I am sure that He won't leave us, if we try to be good."

"Good! It is almost impossible to be good under some circumstances, at least for me. I cannot always be patient. I feel very rebellious to-night. I did not feel half so much so when I had to give up my own music, for then you could still continue yours. But now, to know that your lessons must be discontinued, because, work as we will, we cannot pay for them; to know that the harder we work the less we receive, and that it is all that we can possibly do to pay for our miserable shelter and unsatisfying food, seems a little more than I can silently bear. I want to believe, but to-night, I can't, that God is kind, that He rules this world justly. This moment I cannot feel that He does."

"Oh, Morna, what would our mother say to such words! If we can go to heaven, as she did, won't it be enough?"

"No! not as I now feel, it would not be enough. To go to heaven as she did would be torture. It is a great sorrow on my heart to-day that she who loved all beautiful things, who was all beauty and love herself, had nothing in this world but a hard, grinding life; nothing but poverty and pain, and died at last as ——. Oh! I cannot think of it; the thought makes me mad! Yet I am wicked, Hope, and I cannot help it. If God wanted me to grope through this world without seeing its glory or longing for its joy, He would have given

me a different nature. I cannot believe that earth is a place in which we are born simply to dig and die. Mere breath is not life. I want to live! I want life for my soul! I want to know, I want to enjoy, I want to give expression to the force within me. I cannot forget how much wisdom and beauty, how much love and happiness, there is in the world, and all locked away from me, and from you who were created to be so much happier than I. And when I think of all this, I feel that I could tear the very angels from heaven to grant me what I ask."

"Oh, Morna, I never heard you talk so before. Oh, how sad I am that you feel so bad. Don't wish me happier. I feel that I have everything when I think that I have such a sister. I thank God every day for you, Morna."

A deep groan was the only response. There was a long pause, in which I heard the deep, agonized breath of Morna. In a few moments the silence was broken by the voice of the child as she read these words:

"Now, no affliction for the present seemeth pleasant, but afterwards it worketh the peaceable fruits of righteousness."

"We want faith in the 'afterwards,' don't we, Morna?" asked the sweet, young voice.

"Yes, yes, that is what *I* want. You have enough. But God seems so far off, the way is so dark, and I am so wicked; but I can pray. No one is too wicked to pray," said the elder girl.

I heard the rustling of their robes as they knelt down, and in a moment I heard Morna say, in a deep, low tone:

"Oh, Thou Great Eternal! who hast been sought after through all the ages; Thou, whose ways are past finding out, who coverest Thyself with mystery, as with a garment, yet commandest Thy creatures to call Thee Father; help us to call Thee by that precious name; help us to believe that Thou wilt not cast us utterly away. Help us to believe that Thou wilt forgive our sins, and accept us for the sake of Thy Beloved. We come to Thee for light, for wisdom, for help, for guidance. We cry for light, for our earthly way is very dark. We fear even the unseen hand which leads us, so impenetrable is the gloom before us. Let Thy light shine in upon us that we may see the way. Oh, give us wisdom, that we may shun error, and know the truth. Oh, give us grace to quell the wild cry of our hearts, to stifle the great insatiate want which it is not Thy will to satisfy. Give us patience, that we rebel not

against Thee. Give us patience to wait until that which is in part shall be done away, believing that we, at last, shall see Thee face to face. Oh, give us patience, that however bitter the cup which the future holds in her hands for us, we may drink it without a murmur, saying only 'even so, Father, for it seemeth good in Thy sight.' Oh, save us from the faithlessness of our own hearts! We know that Thou art Infinite, that we are less than atoms in Thy sight. We are abject in our littleness. We magnify the greatness of Thy majesty. Thou art so far away, so wonderful in Thy glory, we sometimes fear that Thou art never mindful of us. Have pity on us, oh, our Father."

Her voice seemed overwhelmed with the greatness of her thought. The last words were almost inarticulate; a low, imploring, yet half despairing cry, it died; then the voice of Hope broke the stillness; sweetly it murmured:

"Precious Saviour! We come to Thee as little children, because we love Thee. We know that Thou art our best friend, and we love to tell Thee our hearts. We are homeless lambs, knocking at the fold of the Good Sheperd. Oh, dear Jesus, let us in! Take us out of the cold; carry us in Thy bosom, oh, our Saviour! There evil cannot reach us; there we shall be carried white and blameless. We cast all our care upon Thee; for Thou carest for us. We lay our burden down at Thy feet. We know that Thou wilt lift us up, and lead us always. We know that we are sinful, but Thou art all-saving. O Christ! Thou hadst no earthly home; Thou hadst not where to lay Thy holy head. But now Thou art in Thy Father's House. There, there are many mansions. We believe that Thou hast prepared one for us. Help us so to live, that with joy and gladness we may behold Thy face. O Jesus! bless Morna; comfort my dear, dear——"

Here the gentle voice broke under its burden of love; it dissolved in tears—such tears as angels weep. Yet how much those prayers comforted those hearts I knew when, a few moments after, broke upon the night the wondrous enchantment of their blended voices, singing low:

"Jesus, lover of my soul,
Let me to Thy bosom fly,
While the nearer waters roll,
While the tempest still is high.
Save me; oh, my Saviour hide!
Till the storm of life is past,
Safe into Thy haven guide,
Oh, receive my soul at last!"

I buried my head in my pillow and wept; wept as the peace of believing stole through all my soul. It was not more the words of that divine hymn than the spell of low music which stirred all the depths of my being. I had heard the best singers of the age, those who were making the melody of the century, yet I had listened to no human voices which had ever moved me like these. The singers of heaven would not have seemed more alien to that little room than did these sisters. The voice of Hope was sweet; the voice of Morna was more; it was pathos, it was passion, it was power; it was love, yearning, infinite, breaking in floods of melody, in low, impassioned, imploring gushes of music over the words of the hymn. It awoke everything in me; all that I had ever longed for, hoped for; lost sensations, buried dreams, all came thronging into my soul, while I listened to that voice. Yet over all fell the great peace. With the music still vibrating through my soul, I fell asleep.

Why must they dawn upon us, life's grim, gray mornings! Why must we come from the palaces of our dreams, from the gardens of Paradise, back to the hard tasks of the grinding day? The night is ideal; through her dusk aisles glide all fair and visionary forms; through her haunted halls troop all fantastic delights. It is one of the most painful of sensations to pass from some halcyon dream of sleep into the bald morning face of a new, forbidding reality. To open our eyes suddenly upon disagreeable surroundings, to gaze around, bewildered, only to wake to the utter consciousness of the dreaded, hated, day-time task, which is waiting impatiently to sap our energy, to drink the very blood of youth and hope. The light of some mornings, how drearily, how dreadfully, how appallingly it dawns upon our shrinking senses! How we dread the day, how hateful is our work, how we sigh for the visions which have just left us! Not when health and hope are perfect—not then, do we dread the morning; but when we have grown weak and weary, when we feel inadequate for effort, when we shrink from life's daily contest, asking only rest—then we dread the dawning day.

I shrank from the naked truth of the next morning, as it gazed stark upon me through the gray light. Sickness and poverty had overtaken me; real life had seized me. I was their slave, and must obey. I must work; more, I must go and seek work. I endeavored to bring my enfeebled frame up to the demands of this thought; still it moved languidly, so faint was its diminished vitality. How I missed my accustomed

pictures! How imploringly I looked into the eyes of my pictured Christ!

As I opened my door at the call of the breakfast bell, I encountered Hope, just issuing through hers. How lovely she looked! I saw her, and felt a throb of gratitude that at least I had this fair creature to irradiate my dark path. She looked at me, and the soft eyes beamed and the little hand was outstretched.

"I don't know your name," she said, "but I am so glad that you have come. You will comfort Morna so much. She will love you, I know. And your room next to ours? I didn't know that. I am glad."

"You say that Morna will love me; won't you a little too?"

"Oh, yes; but my love isn't worth so much as Morna's."

"Why not?"

"Oh, I'm a child. I haven't Morna's great soul. Morna garners all her love for a few, and such love! Mine couldn't be worth as much to any one."

"I love you and your sister very much already."

"You do? how glad I am. I must go and tell Morna. I thought that you would love *her*. I saw it in your eyes yesterday. Oh, it made me so happy!"

Descending into the sitting room, we found Morna in the very spot in which she sat the day before, her task already commenced. The other girls had descended to their breakfast.

"Morna, this lady says that she loves you," said Hope, leading me by the hand to her sister's low chair. The dark eyes were lifted to mine in one eager, questioning, penetrating glance; the great orbs grew dewy, the tense lines around the mouth relaxed, she stretched out her hand. "God has sent you," she murmured.

Bending down, I kissed her forehead. Hope held up her budding mouth.

These kisses sealed our blended destinies. In them a new epoch in three lives began.

VICTOIRE GOES TO WORK.—TRIES HARD TO BE SENSIBLE.

I had been dreaming long enough. I had been sneered at for my dreams, too, that hurt me quite as much as their failure. After we have persisted in our own way, after we have mark

ed out our own course and pursued it in spite of remonstrance or advice from others, after we have chased our phantom and failed to reach it, there is no state of mind more humiliating than the consciousness of that failure. To know that we have failed, to know that others know that we have failed, there is a thrust of poignant pain in the thought to a proud spirit. The words of Henri Rochelle came back to me: "A young girl, poor, ignorant of the world, you need a lawful protector." It came back to my memory, also, my lofty scorning of that good man's love. Was I sorry? No. I was only sorry that in that last hour I had not been a little kinder. Already I had learned that love's gifts are not so manifold that we can scorn the humblest, albeit 'tis not the one which we need and long for most.

"I have failed." I said these words aloud and very slow, showing no pity to my writhing heart. I felt no tender sympathy, no compassion for myself. I had failed, and the failure was my own fault. In what respect had I shown any wisdom? I had not made a single effort to secure a paying employment. I had sat in my room, painted out a dream, spent all my money; now I was penniless; worse, I was miserably in debt, worn, and wasted with sickness. Shall life be a failure to-morrow, and to-morrow, because it is a failure to-day? Because this hour is a failure, shall it remain a failure to the end? Never! I answered.

Just then an arrow of sunlight flashed down the narrow alley-way, shot into the window of my little closet where I stood, and quivered on the pearly crown of Orsino's amulet which hung upon my neck. The gray, foreshading dawn had deepened into a lustrous day. I had feared this day; I had quaked at the thought of it; for I knew that in it I must go forth and seek kindness from the hearts of strangers, and I dreaded a repulse. Then the consciousness came to me that in all my life I had never dreaded work; I had only shrunk from seeking it as a boon from others. The supercilious, inquisitive, or insolent look, bent upon me because I asked for "work," how could I brook that! Even if work were given to me with such a gaze, would it not be like me to cast it down in dire disdain, even if I knew that starvation waited for me at the door. Ah, my haughty soul! to bend it into the cramping arc of its every day action would be work enough for one poor creature! The dreaded day had come, bland, benign, beautiful it was. Its invisible fingers, dipped in balm, beckoned me out into the budding world to

meet success, yet I stood trembling, waiting, trying to gain courage and strength to go. Morna and Hope were toiling hard down stairs, their delicate fingers eagerly flying to gain upon their increased task; trying so hard, so patiently with those pretty fingers to earn the right to live.

Only a few hours before Morna had said: "God has sent you." I would accept these words as truth—as a blessed promise for the future. I would go and find work, and come with my toil, and sit down by the side of these girls, and be to them a sister.

I had been standing in bonnet and mantle all this time, a package of small drawings and paintings lying on the bed by my side. I took them in my hand, looked into the face of my pictured Christ with an inarticulate prayer, and went out. I had resolved to seek employment as a designer, and so took a package of my Paris sketches as specimens. Thanks to the philanthropy which has since opened a school of design for women, so that designing and engraving are no longer among her mooted tasks. Men are very suspicious of any new, untried employment for woman. They are fearful lest, in some way, it will make her encroach upon their masculine prerogatives. They have so long looked upon the working sisterhood as dish-washers, baby-tenders, shirt-makers, that they have learned to regard these as the only genuine female employments. They have little faith that woman would do any other work as well. But let a woman go quietly to work, without noise or pretension, to do the thing which she would, and if it so be that she does it well, and in a womanly way, though it may not be called "woman's work," she will find in men her warmest approvers and most generous friends. And it is a little odd, the man the most bitterly opposed to all female innovation in general, succumbs with a most suave grace to any such innovation in particular, if he only like the woman who, in her pretty way, is doing her best to widen a little the narrow circle of being which he calls her "sphere." If it is only "*my* Nancy" or "*my* Dolly," who wishes to do the wondrous thing, ah, that is a different matter. "Dolly is clever," "Nancy is a genius;" "nothing should trammel *them;* but the stupid mass, let them walk in the old beaten track," says Mr. Conservative.

Well, I found it the common opinion that it was a great leap out of the common track for a woman to presume to be a designer or engraver.

"You don't look as if you could carry a stidy hand; and as

for that matter, I don't believe that there is that woman in the world that can; stidy enough to make a good pictur."

"If this is your opinion, I do not wish to work for you."

"Designing isn't woman's work, anyhow."

This was my first trial in asking for work. I left the establishment without even showing my specimens.

In the second, their "designers were all men," they politely said. "They employed only the best draughtsmen."

With a sinking heart and fainting steps I tottered towards the door of the third engraver. If I was to be rebuffed here, I knew not where else to turn.

"I would like to find employment as a designer; I have a few specimens to show you," I said, in a faltering voice, I fear, to a pleasant-looking gentleman, seated beside a desk in a cheerful counting-room.

He rose and politely offered me a chair. Then opened the package, took up Monsieur Savonne's letter which lay on the top. He read it, and glanced from the letter to me. "You have been ill?" he asked, gently.

I had a splendid front of contempt wherewith to meet harshness or insolence; but at the sound of these few kind words I felt all my soul dissolving. It was with difficulty I answered,

"Yes, very ill."

Eagerly I watched his face, as he looked over my sketches. It grew more and more pleasant, I thought.

"We have not been in the habit of employing lady designers; indeed, to find one, is very unusual," he said, at last. "But I am pleased with your designs; they are very original as well as beautiful. Here is a book which you may illustrate. I intended it for our best artist. If you do it satisfactorily, and I think that you will," he added, encouragingly, "you shall be paid all that we would have given him a handsome remuneration."

The revulsion of feeling after my agony of fear and suspense seemed greater than I could bear, without an outward demonstration. I could have kissed that man, who was neither young nor handsome, and it would have been the holy kiss of gratitude. I could have blessed him on my bended knees, yet did nothing so remarkable. I thanked him quietly, with tears in my eyes, and went away.

I went back not with the faltering step of my coming. I felt as if wings had burst forth from my feet. I did not walk

—I scarcely touched the ground—I felt a sense of flying. I opened the book in the street, and in an instant hundreds of pictures seemed to flash upon me, with which I would illustrate its thought. So I returned to the "comfortable home," and took my place amid its workers.

Poor Morna Avondale! I soon learned why she was persecuted. Her tormentors could not forgive her superiority. Abuse is an involuntary tribute which base souls pay to great natures. If she had only felt insulted, if she had only retaliated, they would have enjoyed at least the variety of a quarrel. But this calmness, this loftiness of soul, this unuttered pity, seemed to them unpardonable. They hated a greatness which they could not equal, and affected to despise a nature, whose depth they could not fathom. Had she only answered proudly and disdainfully, she would have seemed more like one of their own kind. But while that classic head was embossed upon the air before them, while they beheld that calm, broad brow, and met the silent gaze of those spirit-searching eyes, they must feel that she was the native of a loftier sphere than the one in which they were born, and that she sat an alien in the midst of their low tribe. Because they knew this, they hated her. True, Morna answered not, complained not; yet it was this daily, petty persecution, this perpetual dropping, which made the ceaseless friction, the changeless agony, which wore youth, and elasticity, and life away. To have each day the dreary counterpart of its predecessor, to sit through the long hours cramped in one position, breathing a fetid atmosphere, shut away from God's sunshine and joy-inspiring air, was bad enough; but when to these miseries was added a stream of vulgar talk, low jests, horse laughs, and grating voices at times uttering words of imprecation, and even of abuse, was to endure a life which, at times at least, must have seemed intolerable.

With only a few exceptions, these poor girls seemed not to have a hope or an aspiration above the life which they lived. They had always drudged, and their mothers had drudged before them. They had never known any life but that of poverty in its most grinding forms. It is not the sad thing about such a life that it makes the hands hard and the body weary; the sadness is, that it steals from our being its tender, beautiful bloom; that it leaves no space or time for the spirit to grow; that it grinds existence down to one sordid material want, and encrusts the soul with selfishness. To work, to eat, to dress in some cheap finery, if possible to find a husband who would

deliver them from their present bondage of body and soul into another as abject—this to these poor girls was life. Heaven, to those who thought of it, was a great undefinable space which held no "slop shops" nor slop work, filled with people who sang perpetually and enjoyed a good time generally. Selfish, ignorant, debased in intellect, in the darkened temple of flesh the light of the immortal burned dimly; yet they were hardly to blame. Bread they must have; for bread they lived; and to win simply what their body needed they had to sacrifice physical, mental, and spiritual health.

The age holds out lofty opportunities for women to win culture and triumph in the sciences and arts; and yet to the great mass of the daughters of the poor, the drudgery of the kitchen, the wasting slavery of the "slop shop," is all that saves them from starvation or shame.

The summer wore on and the atmosphere of the sitting-room grew intolerable. Morna, Hope, and I took refuge in our little less intolerable closets up stairs. By looking out into the alley-way we could catch a glimpse of blue ether. Besides I had bought a white monthly rose and had set it in the open window. Once in a while a fragrant zephyr would float over its odorous buds and lose itself unawares in the stifling closeness of the little chamber. It was full of vestal blossoms now, and although it stood in the window of a reeking alley, we would bury our faces in its fragrant bloom, and think of sunny gardens and wildernesses of flowers. Sometimes a sunbeam lost its way down in the prisoning alley and would wander lovingly over Morna's white brow, and hide itself in the depths of Hope's lustrous hair.

As yet I knew nothing of these girls' history. I determined to know their story, and thought that the best way to find it out would be first to tell my own. I told them of Les Delices; pictured the mountains, the valleys, the Rhone; told of Paris. Never was story-teller blessed with more appreciative listeners. Hope's eyes grew radiant, and Morna's great orbs became luminous with unspoken interest.

"I have told you my story; now tell me yours," I said, one purple summer twilight, just as Morna folded up the second satin vest which her delicate hands had fashioned that day. How weary she looked; how pale; yet I thought not half as forlorn as when I first saw her two months before. I took her hand in mine. I lifted up the hot masses of hair from her tired brow. I soothed it and kissed it. "Come, Morna, tell me your story."

"My story?" she said, sadly. "There is no poetry, nor beauty, nor any story in *my* story. It is only one of life's every-day tragedies, Victoire. That is all; a common-place tragedy, and nothing more."

"Well, tell it; do. I can't tell how much I want to know how two such flowers as you are ever sprung up in such a doleful spot as this is. How you ever found such a 'comfortable home.'"

"I am willing to tell you," she said; "but it can't interest you."

Then Hope came and took my other hand, and laid her beautiful head on my lap, as we sat before the window, Morna and I, the white rose breathing between us.

MORNA'S STORY.

"I can't begin by telling of better days," she said, "for my father and mother were always poor. I can remember a time when we were comfortable, only comfortable, and those were our best days. Then we lived on the second floor of a great house which had once been grand, but now was let in tenements because its locality had ceased to be fashionable. My pleasantest recollections linger about this home in which my happiest hours were spent. There was one room hung with velvet paper of a rich, dark green, mottled all over with clusters of purple grapes. This was our 'best room.' Here the table was always set for tea; here at evening we awaited our father's return. My mother knew how to make everything look pretty; every article in the room was plain, but she had touched all with a poetic grace. I remember that there was a small book-case filled with books, and that over it hung a picture of Raphael. A stand always stood by the window filled with geraniums and monthly roses. Then there was a table covered with pretty books and trinkets; my mother's workstand and little cushioned rocking-chair and the cradle—for we always had a baby in the house—and that is why it was never lonely. White curtains hung upon the windows; a bright carpet covered the floor; and when the lamp was lit at night and the table set for tea; when the tea-kettle, which my mother kept as bright as gold, sang over the glowing coals and the tea urn filled the room with fragrance; when kitty purred on the rug, and baby crowed in the cradle; when

father came, the event to which every other event in the day pointed; *then* it was a pleasant spot, the pleasantest that I was ever in; and I don't believe that I shall ever see another which will seem so bright to me.

"But you see, Victoire, this home of ours was not much like Les Delices?"

"Never mind, dear; go on."

"At tea father and mother had so many pleasant things to tell each other. After prayers and the evening hymn, mother sat by the cradle and sewed; father read aloud, and I sat on a low stool at their feet and listened.

"My father was a book-keeper, and had only a limited salary to support a large family. While health remained he did this in comfort, and, besides, saved a little. He hoped to have enough at last to buy a cottage and garden in the suburbs of the city. This was his darling dream; a home, a sunny home all his own, radiant with wife and children, made the only picture of human joy on which he cared to dwell. His natural capacity fitted him to fill a much larger sphere than he ever occupied. But from early boyhood he had elbowed his way through the world's crowd alone. There was no tender voice to tell the orphan boy what he might be, or what good and great things he might do. And at last the sweet voices of desire within him grew silent, because there was no one to listen or to answer. The flower of genius unfolded in his soul, filling all the air around him with beauty; but it never basked in the sunshine of ease or leisure; even culture was denied it. So its blossoms were scattered around; they never ripened into fruit which the world could see. The world never knew that this flower filled all his being with fragrance, and to its undiscerning eye he lived and died 'only a common man.' He had a passion for music which he had little time to cultivate, but he played the flute very sweetly, and I can feel now how all his soul used to flow through its melody. Like most men, he fell in love too early, married, and found himself bearing the burden of poverty and of a family before he had sounded the depths or measured the breadth of his own nature, or its needs. Still I think that he was a happier and a better man than he would have been had he lived alone, a selfish, solitary life, filled only with the dreams of ambition.

"When I was a little more than six years old my father was taken ill. You know how ghastly it makes a home to have a father or mother sick. When my father was ill, all the light in the world seemed to go out. The green sitting room was

darkened, for he lay in the room adjoining. The children crept in and out to look at him without a sound. I sat on my little stool, always in sight of his bed, while my mother, pale, yet saintly in her paleness, sat by his side through the hours of the night and day. Weeks rolled away, and he did not grow better. What the doctor called at first a slow fever, at last he called consumption. The little hoard of savings was fast being spent. My mother had a triple burden laid upon her. She nursed my father, took care of her children, and besides sewed for their support. No suffering called a murmur to her lips, no sorrow could make her forget that whom 'He loveth the Lord chasteneth.' Her patience, her serenity, her hope, even then dawned upon me as a mystery. I knew that many times a day she went into a little room to pray, but did not know that here she found the secret talisman of power. On this little shekinah the glory of God rested; here angels fed her with the bread which cometh down from heaven, which sustained her in the extremity of sorrow and peril. She took me with her into this little room, and here I learned how to pray. The first impromptu prayer my childish lips ever uttered was for my father's life.. I thought it so terrible to die. I loved my father so; how I prayed that he might live; how I watched him and hung over him, listening for his breath! I could scarcely have a more vivid conception now of sickness and death than I had then. When I saw my father suffer, when I heard him cough, I would weep convulsively.

"In such an hour of sorrow, Hope was born. She was serene and beautiful from her birth, a Christ-child. The day on which she was born our father died. She was taken to his bedside, and I remember, as he touched the baby brow with his wasted fingers, kissed it with his icy lips, he turned away and groaned. Alas! he knew that he was dying; with the prescience of a spirit, he saw the future. I saw him lay down his head, and—die. My mother laid her face on the baby's silken hair and wept low; but as if her heart was broken. Four little children, I the eldest, went as mourners to our father's grave. We came back, and I can feel now the chill which struck me as I entered the deserted room and thought: 'No father! no father.'

"The ladies of the church to which my mother belonged came to see her. One, celebrated for her profession of piety, offered to take me as assistant nurse to her own infant. She told my mother that she would take good care of me. There

seemed to be no alternative; and my mother, thinking that I should have a better home than she could give me, with reluctance and tears, gave her consent to let me go. I was delicate and knew nothing of hardships, yet I was immediately made a little drudge. I rocked the cradle, scoured knives, waited on the other servants, and found myself a little football whom nobody thought too mean to kick. Yet I would not complain, because I thought of my mother. Although not rich, my associations had always been the most refined. My mother had guarded me assiduously from the coarse contact of rude children. She and my father had made me a companion. I knew of the books which they had read together. Already the words of Milton, of Shakspeare, of Shelley, lingered in my childish brain. Now my society was confined to the kitchen. I heard only the tattle and slang which usually make up kitchen talk, when the mistress is far enough away. Yet doubtless Mrs. Dolittle thought that she did her whole duty to me. For on the Sabbath she dressed me in a suit of cast off garments, and sent me to Sabbath-school. Punctually, every Sunday morning, she said: "Morna, have you learned your Sabbath-school lesson?" And with this question her religious instructions began and ended.

"I was never made for a servant; yet here, for my mother's sake, I submitted to the most pitiless tyranny. It was a hard lesson for a young child. It was hard to lug about, up and down stairs, a great lubber of a baby, till every joint in my poor little spine ached with excruciating pain. It was hard to be ordered about like a little slave by the children of Mrs. Dolittle. I could not understand why the little Dolittle girls should have flowers, and music, and books, which they cared nothing about, while I, who loved them so very much, had none. I could not understand why it was my lot to wait upon them; why I had to be treated by them as an inferior, while all the time they were coarse and rude to a degree which shocked me in every nerve.

"Once my feeling got the better of my patience, and I said to Master Puffer Dolittle, who threw his ball purposely from the third-story window, and then ordered me to carry the baby and go after it, 'I will not do it;' and to Miss Cillie Dolittle, who exclaimed: 'You must; you're our servant.' I said: 'I am as good as you, Miss Cillie Dolittle.' My insolence was immediately reported, and without delay I was ordered into the presence of Mrs. Dolittle, who said: 'Morna, you are a saucy little thing; a little impertinent, wicked huzzy.

I would send you straight out of the house, if it were not for your poor mother, who has had so much trouble. (She forgot that she was getting out of me the work of a large servant without the trouble of paying wages for it.) Yes, you are a wicked little huzzy. How dare you say that you are as good as my daughter, Miss Dolittle?'

"'Because, ma'am, I think that I am.'

"'You do, d-o you! I'll teach you w-h-a-t you are!' she said, fiercely shaking me and slapping me without mercy. 'I will teach you better. You belong to a different class of beings. Your father lived and died a poor man. Mr. Dolittle is worth half a million. Never, never let me hear such words come from your mouth. How dare you compare yourself with my daughters, the Misses Dolittle?'

"In all that great house, there was no one to speak tenderly to the fatherless child, or to give her young, yearning heart one drop of the sweet affection which it so hopelessly craved. The hardest thing to bear was a basket filled with refuse food, which I was ordered to carry to my mother. Then I was filled with humiliation, shame, and rage. I remember when fairly outside of the gate, I set down the basket, or rather it fell from my trembling hand. Then I shook my little fist at the iron railing, and cried:

"'I hate you, Mrs. Dolittle; I hate you. You are not half as good as my mother; you are not half as beautiful; yet you send victuals to her that you would not eat. When you die, I hope that the old devil will get you, Mrs. Dolittle.'

"Of course this rage was very impotent and slightly wicked, not at all in accordance with the Sabbath-school lesson which I learned every Sunday. It was also very natural and very genuine.

"I endured martyrdom with Mrs. Dolittle until I was twelve years old. Then I implored my mother to take me home and allow me to help her. By sewing all day and most of the night, she managed to support herself and her four children. I cannot tell you how she loved everything beautiful; to be surrounded by beauty had once been a necessity of her being; but now she only looked at narrow, naked walls, on bare floors, and wretched furniture; the green room, all flushed with purple grapes, fragrant with roses and geraniums, and bright with home's happy, loving faces, had gone. So had gone the old bloom from my mother's cheeks. Her eyes were too bright, and every vein showed in her white forehead and hands. But she never complained; and when I, in my rebel-

lion, would say: 'Mother, *why* is it? God does not seem kind,' she would always answer, 'What we cannot know now we shall know hereafter. My child, I am willing to wait.'

"The cholera broke out in the city. It raged fearfully in our locality. I could not look out without seeing the hearse or the dead cart piled with ghastly, purple bodies. Men fell dead on the pavements. The streets grew silent, almost deserted. The gloom was awful. Close confinement, bad air, poor food made us early victims. Grace, Neddie, and Bel sickened first; then our mother, then Hope, then I. We could do nothing for each other, only when our agony would let us, we looked into each other's eyes. They—yes, *I can* say it—they died. Hope and I still lived. Men came to carry them away, to throw them all together into the dead cart, into one grave. I wept, I implored. I clung to the men's feet, I covered them with my tears, beseeching with gasping breath that they would leave me my mother. Useless was my woe. They tore her body away from me; they took them all, took them to the dead cart, threw them with a thousand others into one vast hole in Potter's Field. *My mother* buried like that. I never could find my mother's grave. That hers was such an end, that she, who had the nature of a seraph, should be buried like a beast, is the one thing in life to which I know not how to be reconciled. She should have been dressed in spotless robes. Soft hands should have folded those tresses, laid those lily hands on that lovely bosom. Flowers should have been laid in her coffin, a hymn should have been sung at her grave, and a voice should have cried, as they laid her softly down upon my father's breast: 'I am the resurrection and the Life.' But no; they buried her as they bury brutes—my mother.

"Victoire, you see my life began to wither early; it grew bitter; it grew hateful. I wished only to die. I prayed for annihilation. I wanted to forget, and yet I lived and remembered. God's angels were abroad as well as His pestilence. Tender-eyed women walked unharmed amid the plague. They came to the wretched chamber where I lay almost lifeless. They warmed and nourished and nursed me. Hope nestled in my bosom, and for her sake I became willing to live.

"The great wave of death rolled by. Health and activity came back to the city. I had something to do. Hope was to be educated at all hazards; I, if possible. My father had de-

signed to have given me a finished education had he lived. Now what I obtained must be earned by my needle. I excelled in my trade, and obtained the best work which the shops afforded. Still the wages were so small, it seemed almost hopeless to lay by enough to pay for a teacher. You know nothing about such a struggle, Victoire. Men who grind a woman's wages down to the most miserable pittance know nothing about it. We hear a great deal about self-made, self-educated men. Self-educated women, I suppose, are rarer. I only wonder that there are any; that all who try, unaided, alone, to earn a thorough education, are not dead before their object is gained. Only they who try know how wasting, how killing it is, with the point of a needle, to purchase food, clothing, and education. It is stitch, stitch, stitch, till the last drop of vitality is stitched away for a most meagre pittance. Then where is the time, the strength, the power, the freshness of mental vigor needed for study? Nature will be avenged; the body must rest or die. As women are paid, it is all a woman ought to try to do to earn her food and clothing with a needle. But thousands are trying to earn the means to buy culture, and to fit themselves for nobler spheres of action. The women of this country are pervaded with the intense, intellectual life of their age and race; they pant to know, to do, to be, yet loving women still, with all their mental and moral hunger. To thousands Fate holds out a needle, saying: 'Know, do, be, if you can.' How they strive, how they live, how they die! their wants unuttered and unsatisfied, I know and feel. How the young heart faints, how the young hands grow weary, how the sweet eyes close in sleep and long-forgetting ere the dreary task is half accomplished, alas, I know!

"Well, we denied ourselves of all save the barest necessaries of life in order to save a little money."

"You mean that you did, dear Morna; you never denied me anything," interrupted Hope.

"After my daily task was done, by taking a few hours from sleep I managed to study arithmetic, algebra, and at last geometry. I began the Latin grammar besides. I drew books from the city library, which I read on Sunday. Hope went to the public school, and, besides, took music lessons. The desire to take lessons on the piano myself became almost a fever. My whole nature wept for expression. My bound soul moaned to assert itself to give some utterance to its own life of thought, of emotion, of suffering. I thought that in

music I could embody all that I ever dreamed, or felt, or conceived. At last, at last, by pinching still closer my scanty wardrobe, I had money enough saved to pay for a course of lessons. I went to a noted teacher; I was determined not to be taught by a second-rate artist. Of course his terms were high, yet with a feeling of satisfaction which only those who have had a like experience could ever imagine, I laid my dear won earnings in his hand, a full equivalent for all I asked in return; then sat down and received my first lessons in the art which has since become the passion of my life.

"My teacher was a German gentleman, well trained in German University lore, who, as many Germans do, had given up his life to the science of music. He was a large, handsome man, in the depth of whose dark eyes seemed always to burn a low, lurid fire; yet how kindly they looked on me. He was thirty, perhaps; I was seventeen, as life is measured. I knew nothing of men. The only ones whom I knew well enough to speak to were my employers, who gave me work and paid me for it as I went and came. My teacher's voice was low and seductively sweet when he spoke to me; very unlike the sharp, metallic tones of my employer. It was only natural that I should prefer the former. It was only natural that its music fell pleasantly upon my cold, void ear, and soothingly on my aching heart, which from my mother's death seemed to have lain in my breast in a half dead slumber, conscious only of a nameless, never ceasing ache. Well, it was only natural that this new voice, so full of music, should stir my sleeping heart, and, in an indefinable way, awaken its long-hushed instincts. I knew nothing of analysing emotions then. I only felt, without the consciousness of knowledge, that mine were pleasant when I listened to that voice. He was very kind to me, this teacher of mine, and to some natures there is nothing so dangerous as a subtle, delicate kindness; they have thirsted for it so long and so hopelessly, that, when they taste the first draught, they are intoxicated with its sweetness.

"Nothing could have been more grateful to me than his manner, never oppressive, never intrusive, full of that gentle, chivalric deference, expressed in looks, tones, and actions, rather than words, which belongs only to men of the finest intuitions, who have sounded the depths of the womanly nature. Though I could only come for my lesson when my day's task was completed, in the twilight before I began my evening work; though I always came unattended; though he must have known by my dress that I was very poor; he never

took the slightest advantage of this knowledge. He asked no questions, not even the common ones, which most men who claim to be gentlemen would have asked; no, he annoyed me in no way. Had I been the fairest and most favored lady in the land, he could not have treated me with more respectful consideration.

"But I was shy and silent. Nowhere else did I feel quite so awkward, or quite so shabby, or quite so insignificant, as in his presence. He seemed so grand, so far removed from me, both by his acquirements, his genius, and his position. When I looked at him, all that was common, and miserable, and painful in my own lot crowded into my mind, and I grew oppressed, and wretched, and miserably embarrassed, until his gentle *riant* grace put me unconsciously at my ease. I saw my folly in bringing myself in personal contact with one between whose lot and my own existed so great a disparity. Then I consoled myself by saying: 'He will soon give me all the lessons that I can pay for; then I shall go my miserable way, and he will trouble me no more.' He lived in a handsome house, full of rich furniture, pictures, books, and music; sometimes I found in the room two beautiful children, which the nurse would carry away when I came; sometimes a fair-haired lady passed me in the hall; his wife, I thought.

"He was not long in discovering my passion for music. I learned rapidly. When my fingers touched the keys I felt inspired. After much urging, at last I ventured to let him hear my voice. 'You will make a great singer,' he exclaimed. 'Thousands will melt into tears at the sound of your voice. Why have you not let me hear it before?' My whole soul rose in tumult at his words. After that I sang every day. After the lesson he would play and sing some favorite air of mine, unasked. Sometimes the dusk stole down, unnoticed, and found me still listening, entranced, lost. Then he would kindly offer to accompany me to my home. But I always refused. I vowed that he should never see my home.

"He lent me books. He offered to teach me German, that I might read Goethe, and Schiller, and Klopstock in their originals. This was impossible. To study German I must relinquish music. Yet I read the books which he lent me—the philosophers of Germany; at last, the philosophers of France. My whole nature protested against much of their philosophy. I told my teacher this. He smiled. 'I wanted your opinion,' he said. 'I would not ask you to believe them.' He must

have seen that my susceptibility to music amounted to weakness. With all my love I was afraid of it; it moved me so much. He played for me the music which melted me—the music which filled my soul with dew. At last I could not think of him in distinction from his music. The airs which he played and sang floated through my being during all the nights and days. His music magnetized me, and in this way he won a power over me.

"One afternoon I came, weary and dispirited. Nearly all the previous night I had sat up and sewed in order to win the hours for my lesson. My overtasked nerves were in the relaxed condition which made me most susceptible to every external influence. Besides, I was sad and sick at heart. My course of lessons was almost completed. I had not half enough to pay for another. How could I live without music now?

"I went through with my usual lesson. Then he played for me one of Beethoven's most melting symphonies. Physically too weak to restrain my emotion, I buried my face in my hands and wept, wept silently, yet it was the weeping of despair. He ceased. He rose from the piano and came to me. He laid his hand soothingly on my forehead, laid back the heavy hair, and said that nothing could grieve him more than to see grief in me. No sorrow could come to me that would not be his. He only asked the privilege of soothing it away. He sat down and took my hand. From the beginning he had grown gentler and gentler in his manner towards me, but never had he spoken in the tones of seductive tenderness which he uttered now.

"'There were souls made for each other,' he said, 'destined from the hour of their mortal birth to be the consolation and joy of each other. There was no human law which could separate such souls. The law of nature was the law of God, and that law demanded that they should live for each other. He was willing, yea, he could not help, but live for me. Was he wrong in believing that I would live for him? From the first moment that he looked into my eyes he saw that my soul answered to his. Besides, I came to him in dreams. I was inwoven with all his music. I filled all his thought; I was enshrined in his heart. Had he not a place in mine? My beautiful soul was an alien in the cruel world; it needed a sweet spot to rest in; my nature was too fine to be jostled by the rude crowd; it would wound me in a thousand ways at every turn. A cruel fate had defrauded me of all that my nature most craved. My life should be filled with beauty. If

my soul could only grow in the divine atmosphere of love, I would learn to sing sweeter than ever the angels sang. More than everything else, I needed love, and cherishing, and household joy. Would I not let him give them to me? He would give me a home filled with all beauty, and he desired no return but my love and my presence.'

"My face lay hidden on my arm, which was flung over the back of my chair, when he came and sat down by my side and took so gently my other hand. At first I was only conscious of the sound of his voice penetrating me with its music. Then I became conscious that he was offering me sympathy; then I grew confused.. What did he mean? Then like lightning his meaning flashed upon me.

"I lifted my face. I said: 'I wept at your music, for I was weary and sick, and it answered the moan of my heart. But because I weep, why should you come and offer me love, and cherishing, and household joy—you who have no right to bestow them? Do I understand you? Are you not married?'

"'Married! yes, I am married, as the world goes,' he said; 'but that is no reason why I may not love and protect you, whom I love more than any other woman upon earth. Morna, *I love you.*'

"He had never spoken my name before. Now he uttered it, and the words which came after in a low, slow, distinct tone, whose music, rippling over every syllable, thrilled through my heart.

"To a nature all hungry for affection, there is no sound in all the universe so seductive in its sweetness as the words, 'I love you.' Independent of the soul which breathes them, there is an abstract deliciousness in the simple thought. No lips had ever uttered these words to me since my mother died; there were none in all the world to love me now but little Hope. As this utterance sank into my soul, for an instant the thought came to me that, if I were his wife, hallowed and cherished, standing by his side in this my home—so beautiful, so full of melody—what a different place the world would seem; *then* how happy it would make me to hear the words, 'I love you.' But quick after this thought came the damning one that now uttered to me; this declaration was an insult to all that was holy in my womanhood. And the consciousness of a great wrong done to me sank like a stone through its ocean of tears, down, down, till it pressed hard and cold the bottom of my bruised heart.

"I was too weak and worn to turn in proud indignation; my exhausted veins did not overflow with the proud vitality which scintillates flashing and defying rage. If we are pricked and hurt, we can turn with a splendid ire upon our tormentor; but if paralysed by a mortal wound, we can writhe and die in silence under the hand which smites us. I felt wounded through all my soul. 'You have done me a great wrong,' was all that I said, and I rose to depart. 'Do you refuse my love?' he asked, and now his accent was as eager as before it had been slow.

"'You have no right to love me, or to ask for my love,' I said.

"This man had charmed me with the wondrous melody of his voice; there was a magnetism in his presence, a fascination in his surroundings, to me, so alone and so far below him. But I did not need affection so much, that I could even imagine the possibility of joy ever flowing from an unhallowed and unlawful passion.

"'I have a right to love all that is lovely,' he said; 'for this reason I love you. I acknowledge no God but Reason. This God assures me that it will be a greater act of mercy to give to a heart fainting for air, and sunshine, and song, the life which it needs, than to leave it to stifle and perish alone. Why not submit with a flood of sunny tears, like a dear child, saying to me the truth—"I will let you love me, because I am very much in need of being loved."'

"Still I was passing quietly towards the door, my heart all the while filled with a nameless terror.

"'Do you think to escape me, you slender thing?' he said, confronting me. The music in his voice was dead. It trembled with rage as well as passion.

"I lifted my eyes to his; the low smouldering fire had burst into a flame. I saw it and loathed him, and forgot that to me he had ever been gentle, or tender, or winning.

"'Stay!' he exclaimed, and his hand seized my shoulder like a vice. I uttered a faint cry, half from terror, half from pain.

"'Hush!' he said, with an alarmed look at the closed folding door. 'Be quiet! you should not have enraged me. Have I not ever been gentle and kind to you?' he murmured, in the old tone.

"It was too late. He had over-estimated his power. It was his music that I loved after all; its charm broken, he had no spell wherewith to allure me. I had reached the door, I tried to open it; to my dismay I found it locked. I hurried

to the window—I would have leaped from it, but he stood before it. Before I knew it, a piercing cry, born of terror, burst from my lips, which to me seemed to penetrate heaven. I don't believe that he thought me capable of uttering such a sound; he thought that I would not dare to make a noise. He rushed towards me in guilty fear, at the sound of approaching feet. My cry had been heard. He opened the door, he thrust me forth, and with no gentle hand.

"I had nearly reached the hall door, when I heard a voice on the stairs exclaim—'For heaven's sake, Carl, what is the matter?' 'Nothing dear, except that an insane girl screamed. One of my scholars has gone music-mad, that is all.' 'Well, I hope you'll prevent her coming here again, if she is going to scream like that. I thought some one was being murdered.'

"This conversation I heard as I rushed towards the door. I fled from the house as for my life. I turned neither to right nor left. I relaxed not my steps till I knelt by the little bed where Hope lay smiling in her sleep.

"I crept back to myself; my heart coiled up within itself, wounded, ready to die. I had been stabbed through my one joy. Music to me was holy. Yet the one who was blended with music in all my thought, was the only being who had ever attempted my ruin. I doubted all men. I feared them. I fled from their presence. I even doubted God. I called upon Him only for my mother's sake. I wept, I tried to believe. But all my nature seemed so cold and dead. Still that heavy sense of wrong seemed to press like a stone against the bruised fibres of my heart.

"The infidel books which he had given me to read had left in my soul a few drops of their subtle poison. Mystic philosophies and ideal theories of matter and mind, of God and His universe, would at times usurp the place of Christ and the Bible. Yet not always; there were hours when I clung to both as my dearest hope. One blessed lesson my last sorrow had taught me. I had learned how full of peril was the life of a young girl cast alone and friendless into a great city. I saw how, through their human need of sympathy and a little love, they are sometimes led on to fall. With infinite love and infinite trust, at last they yield to one who makes them the idol of an idle hour, only to weary of them, and cast them off at last, discrowned of youth and honor, to live a life of shame or to die 'one more unfortunate.' Had my woman's heart been a little more importunate for love, my moral sense a little less fearful of sin, might not I have been cast out like

them, when my hour of charming had gone by? What but the tender care of the merciful God had kept me from being one of them?

"I no longer sought a knowledge of music. I sought nothing for myself—I cared only to educate Hope. It was Hope who kept alive the little light of faith in my heart."

"Oh, no; it was God's spirit, Morna," said Hope.

"Well, it was God's spirit, speaking through you. You helped me to believe. So the years have crawled away, each the dreary counterpart of the other. My heart has remained mute and unstirred ever since. Oh! it is a dreadful thing to feel Faith lying in your breast, dead, dead.

"But a change came with you, Victoire. The first moment I saw you, I felt that God had sent you. My heart is coming to life again. Faith may yet blossom like the rose.

"This is all. Now you will believe me, Victoire, that my story is as commonplace as it is wretched."

And Morna bent her head and touched her lips to the white rose, blooming between us. A just opening rose. I gathered and laid it in her bosom; then I culled another, a folded bud, unsullied as falling snow, and hid it in the meshes of Hope's purpling hair.

MORNA, HOPE, AND VICTOIRE LEAVE THE "COMFORTABLE HOME."

It is the lot of some never to be positively happy; their nearest approach to it is resignation. They are ever resigned, but never glad. These are the beings who think profoundly, feel acutely, whose discerning, spiritual eye penetrates the abyss of the past and of the future. Their mental and moral faculties are broader and farther reaching, their sensibilities more acutely strung, more keenly alive, than those belonging to beings cast in a commoner mould. They seem to hear all things, see all things, feel all things, suffer all things. And this soul, to whom is given such power to see, and feel, and comprehend, dwelling as it does in the bosom of unrevealed mystery, shrinks back sad and baffled, bearing upon its heart too great a burden of profound thought to be ever lightly gay. This soul encircles all things; it turns in sadness from the unsolved problem of the physical universe, to muse and marvel over the phenomena of man; upon the prospects and possi-

bilities, upon the being and destiny of the imprisoned and alien soul, which for a little time sojourns in fleshly tabernacles. Vainly it asks science and philosophy to explain. Height and depth say: "Not in us." "The universe of stars is cold, and dead, and tongueless," and they exclaim, as Pascal exclaimed: "The eternal silence of the infinite spaces affrights me."

To such a soul religion can be the only comforter. Happy is it if it receives this divine consoler. She says: "Now thou art embosomed in mystery, but in the hereafter thou shalt understand." If it can only lean upon the bosom of faith, the great soul is content to wait amid the blended harmony and discord of this transient life, until the glass which reveals darkly shall be removed. Then it knows that it shall "see eye to eye" with the Father of all mystery and of all knowledge. Such a soul had Morna—a soul that needed more than all things else an unwavering trust in the Infinite Power which overrules our destinies. Yet that which she needed most seemed often to elude, to shift far away from her. Her nature seemed to have but one lack, and that was faith; she questioned all things. She wanted to solve the problem of her own existence. Why had her Lord sent her into the world to suffer, and yet to make no sign? Why was her soul surcharged with silent and smothered power, which yet had no adequate expression? Why must her soul devour itself, because it had no outlet? Hungering for wisdom, beauty, love, why must her life be one long, unuttered want? Why must she for ever stifle so much that was loveliest in her? She asked these questions aloud but once, that first night in the little chamber. She never complained, or said: "I wish my lot were different." Yet I had only to know what she was, to know also what she suffered.

But as the long, hot, weary days dragged by, giving no rest from toil, no ease from care, to those delicate hands and tried young hearts, I could not help but ask sometimes—Why is it? As they sat before me, hour after hour, through the long days and longer weeks, those young and gifted creatures, stitching the very bloom and beauty of their being into the uncouth garments, for whose fashioning they received scarcely enough to keep body and soul together, I could not help saying—Why is it? Why so often are the obtuse and vulgar, who know only low material wants, garlanded with the world's rarest beauty, while to such souls as these, fitted by their ethereal organism to enjoy all eclectic blessings, life is measured, or rather stinted, narrow, meagre, and hateful—a taunting and

unsatisfying portion? Why? I asked. And yet while asking the question, looking into the soul-face of Morna, and the serene, sunny eyes of Hope, an assurance always arose beyond it, a faith in their happy destiny. The Power which rules us is just and loving. And though in the infinite cycles of God's thought, our little times and seasons are as naught, and though we may wait until we have counted the last link in that brief piece of eternal duration which we name life, yet every soul at last receives its heritage. And though now Morna and Hope sat in the shadow waiting and longing, I believed that God's sunshine would cover them at last, and that their beautiful souls were the guarantee of their coming beautiful soul-portion.

Who came to see me one day but Kate.

"A purty place this, for the like of ye!" she exclaimed, looking about in great disdain.

"It is good enough, Kate, till I can afford a better."

"It's a burnin' shame for the like of ye to be here. Indade an' it's mesel that would have a gran'er house than this. I'm afther thinkin' it's very shabby."

"Never mind, Kate, when I get a grand house, you shall come and live with me, and do just as you please, and stay as long as you live, if you want to."

"Indade!"

Kate spoke in a very incredulous tone, as if she had very small faith in my ability to obtain a grand house.

"If you don't get married, Kate, I hope that I can take care of you some time, and make your life very easy and pleasant."

"The vargin! what wild talk. As if I couldn't take care of mesel, and ye too, a hape better nor ye can take care of yoursel. I think that I'm afther seein' how ye take care of yoursel." And again she looked around the sitting-room of the "comfortable home" with an air of disgust. "Not even a soffy in the room for ye to rest your poor back on; a purty place for the like of ye."

"It's good enough and to spare! I'd like to know if Miss Victory is made of better stuff than other flesh and blood?" called out Nance Jones, who, as usual, overheard.

"It's good enough for ye, and too good! ye freckle-faced spalpeen, but it haint good enough for *her*, now let me tell ye; and ye know it."

I coaxed Kate to ascend to my little chamber with all expedition. I would as soon have seen two wild cats come to-

gether as to have watched two such belligerent natures as Nance Jones and Kate Murphy enter upon a war of words, which in all likelihood would have ended in a tearing of eyes and pulling of hair.

It was a lovely afternoon, and Kate went with me to show me the spot where my poor Nannette rested in the Catholic cemetery across the river. It was a sheltered and quiet nook. No ruthless feet had profaned the spot, since they had laid her kind old head to sleep on its clay-cold pillow; yes, it was a peaceful and lovely spot. My first spare earnings paid for her grave-stone, and the bland sun of September smiled softly on the simple marble tablet which rose to the memory of Nannette, my dear bonne.

I found my employer all that he appeared at first; a generous and noble man. He criticized kindly, and commended wisely (which is rarely done), and encouraged, always by giving me good work and good wages. Already I was blessed beyond my improvident deservings, and began to taste the sweets of that noble independence which flows from a knowledge of having earned what you enjoy, from the consciousness of labor conscientiously performed and generously requited. Already my enfeebled pulses began to thrill with something akin to their old exultation.

The redemption of my pictures was the first object to be gained, and the early autumn saw one hundred dollars in the bank saved for that purpose. By the coming spring I hoped to pay the last cent due to Mrs. Skinher. To do this I knew that I must deny myself of all superfluities. I felt resigned to any privation, except that of spending the winter at the "comfortable home."

"Girls! I have thought of a new plan," I said one day to Morna and Hope.

Both pairs of eyes were turned upon me with wonder.

"There is no need of our living here. We can hire two rooms, and go and keep house together. We can sleep in our own bed, eat at our own table, and be as independent and happy as we please, and it will cost no more than to stay here."

"Oh! it would seem like a story in a book," said Hope, hanging around my neck.

"It seems too pleasant ever to be true," sighed Morna.

But it did come true. We rented two small rooms on the second floor of a tenement house, in a respectable, but, of course, very unfashionable street. Barren they looked to the

eye, with their naked walls and bare floors; but to us they seemed a very Eden, into which no serpent could ever enter. No, nor a Nancy Jones, to jeer and abuse; no discord, no ungeniality, nobody but three girls, all differing, yet each very much in love with the other.

What a shabby little room it was. I scarcely thought of it then, but am fully aware of the fact now. It was such a relief to get away from the "comfortable home," from its ungenial air, from its coarse surroundings, and to find ourselves in a little nook all our own. Why, as we looked around it, we would as soon have thought of criticizing Paradise if we had suddenly found ourselves transported to its shelter of beauty. I had not forgotten that once I had been surrounded by the appliances of an easeful and elegant home; but that time seemed so far away, I had long ceased to compare it with my present, or to measure the worth of what I had once possessed. I compared the little room with nothing gone before, but loved it as a present home, and with a thankful heart came into it as to a blessed refuge. Its walls were only whitewashed walls; they could not have looked more blank and chilly than they did. Yet we did not see it. A few frameless sketches had taken the place of my old idols, with their softening glass and massive, golden-fretted mouldings. The rigid white curtains on the windows cast no rosy glow, no attempering shadow on the staring faces of my new pictures. There were no voluminous folds of gold and crimson damask, no floating waves of misty lace to be gathered into sculptured holders; but unrelenting in their stiff severity these white curtains fell over the high narrow windows. Artistic eyes saw that they lacked all dreamy grace, yet the satisfied heart suggested no improvement. A cheap yet neat carpet covered the floor; a single table, a few chairs, an easel, a book-case, and a cooking-range hid behind the fire screen, completed the appointments of the new home. I forget—the white rose tree stood in the window.

There was an ask-no-more look in Hope's eyes, and a world of content in Morna's, as we sat down to our first breakfast. A simple breakfast, yet to us how delicious were its warm, delicate rolls, its fresh egg omelet, the fragrant amber-crystal coffee! How refreshing to our eyes was the unsullied tablecloth, the pure white ware, free from a single flaw.

"All our own! Only think of it, girls; all this belongs to Avondale and Company!" And I looked around with probably an absurdly satisfied expression.

A tear glistened on Hope's long eye-lashes; it fell, a star of dew on the rose leaves of her cheeks, with a quick warm shower of dew-stars pattering after.

"I can't help it; I am so happy," she said, dashing them away with her little white hand.

"How beautiful everything is! How good God is! Oh! I am so happy!" And the sunlit shower fell faster. She thought to hide its brightness within the shadow of her exuberant curls, but failed. Then not knowing what else to do, she plunged her beautiful head first in Morna's lap, then in mine. "Would we forgive her for being so foolish? She couldn't help it; indeed she could not."

We were kissing our pet into assurance, telling her that she was the silliest little puss that ever did live, and we loved her the better for it, when we were interrupted by a hard, plump knock on the door.

I arose and opened it, and found standing before me in the narrow hall, an odd-looking boy with a teacup in his hand. He might have been twelve years old, and what was unusual enough for a city boy, was nearly as broad as he was long. His torn pantaloons were held up by one very imperious suspender, leaving his feet far in the rear; and very odd feet they were. One was clothed in a lady's gaiter, so much too long that the toe stood perpendicularly in the air, while the other wore a most stubbed and pugnacious boot. He had on a coat which, in the variety of its many colors, outvied the famous garment of the patriarch Joseph. Its innumerable round holes and zigzag tears were filled with bits of bright red and yellow flannel, and darned down on strips of variegated ribbon, or glaring calico, till it seemed slashed with the hues of the rainbow. In the mending of this coat, a luxuriant imagination had evidently exhausted itself. The same glowing and unchastened fancy, which excites feminine fingers to sew together innumerable bright little rags until they grow into "Rising Suns" and "Star of Bethlehem" patchwork quilts, destined to shed their effulgence over sweltering feather beds and snoring men and women in the pine-box houses of the rural districts.

The head which surmounted this coat was as unique as the garment itself. Rebellious, self-asserting hair stood erect from the low, square forehead in the most impudent and obstinate fashion. The eyes, like two very black and very shiny buttons, twinkled far back in a bed of fat; but the nose was the oddest of all—such a pug! The berry on the end of it red

as a cherry. Huge cheeks and a great, grinning mouth, full of white teeth, completed the boy.

"Please, ma'am," he began.

"Well, little boy, what will you have?"

"Please, ma'am."

"Well; please what?"

"Please, ma'am, will you lend my mamm half a cup o' sugar?"

"Who is mamm?"

"She's my mamm."

"But what is her name?"

"Her name is mamm."

"She must have another name."

"That's all the name I know on. I calls her mamm. Dad calls her mamm. The young 'uns call her mamm, all but Glory Ann—she can't talk straight, and calls her mum."

"What is your name?"

"George Washington Peacock."

"Then, little boy, your mother's name is Mrs. Peacock."

"I don't care a darn if it is. I know that she is my mamm, and that's 'nuff for me, I reckon."

"You shouldn't swear. Don't you know that it is wicked?"

"Mamm sez it's wicked; but I'd jest as soon be wicked as good. What's the difference? Hang it if I see any! Them what I've hearn called good are wus than t'other; meaner enuff sight. There's old Pharisee Pomp—he's prayin' wherever anybody'll listen—he's good, I s'pose; but he'll skin a chap alive and sell his skin for sixpence. There's Lazarus Lorn, is allers doin' a feller a good turn, but he's wicked. He gits drunk. I'd rather be wicked."

"You don't mean you would rather get drunk?"

"I likes to take my tip; of course I does. What's a young man gwine to do when t'other young man sez—'Take a treat?'"

"Say no."

"I sez yes. I'll be hanged if I'm gwine to do without my tip for all the wimens in creation."

"Where do you live?"

"Up stairs. Where do you s'pose I hailed from? Mamm said: 'Give my compliments to the lady, and say please, ma'am, mamm wouldn't begin to neighbor so soon, but she must have some sugar in her tea. I'll send it down when dad brings some hum.' Darn it, I can't think of the rest. Mamm's speeches are so all-fired long."

"You are welcome to the sugar; but please say no more

bad words; we don't like to hear them," I said, taking his empty cup.

By this time Morna stood beside me, her eyes overflowing with smiling wonder, while in the rear Hope was doing her best to suppress her gurgling laughter, not at his vulgar words, but at the unmitigated oddness of his looks. In a moment more we heard the stamp of the masculine boot blending with the flapping of the feminine long-toed gaiter ascending the stairs below the newly-filled cup of sugar.

"Here is missionary work for you, Hope," I said, as we went back to our seat. "You needn't go outside the house to find a heathen."

"I will try to coax him to go to Sabbath-school with me next Sunday," she said.

Ever to be remembered is that first day spent in our little hired home—the first day of our maiden housekeeping. Birds under their leafy domes, in their summer nests, out in the free sunny air, never warbled with more delicious abandon than did Morna and Hope over their work. Hope's voice was just like a bird's, dilating, in its liquid sweetness; quivering with a thousand jubilant trills, it was the spontaneous outgushing of a heart surcharged with melody. Morna's voice—my hand trembles as I write of it, so sensibly does its marvellous refrain surge back upon my soul, till all my being thrills once more as it thrilled to her symphonies in those years long gone. Her voice was a soul, pouring into the ear of the Infinite, in wild and wondrous music, all the impassioned and immortal longing which a soul may feel, yet never tell in spoken or in rhythmed words. Her voice was worship—one of those rare voices which we sometimes hear floating apart from all the others through the reverential atmosphere of a country church, till we forget its prosaic surroundings, its commonplace faces, its tedious prayers and stupid sermons, while we tremble in rapt exaltation to the grand surges of triumphal praise, to the melting cadence of supplication, all vibrant with adoring love. Hers was one of those wondrous voices which flood with their marvellous melody the dusk arches of solemn minsters, which dilate through the forest-like aisles of old cathedrals, till the loftiest embrasure of gorgeous glass, till stony niche and moresque alcove, are permeated with its effluence of symphony; while a thousand reverent hearts, melted by its shivers of sweet sound, weep in silent rapture, or rise upon its impalpable pinions of harmony to the far-off, unimagined audience-cham-

ber of Deity. Hope's voice filled me with gladness, but Morna's with a haunting and vague unrest. The voice of Hope was full of joy, of life's attainable joy, which may be possessed in this world by every healthful nature. Delicious in itself, it suggested nothing sweeter beyond it. I listened, and thought of Hope in her budding bloom as the loveliest of mortal creatures; I loved Morna's voice for what it made me desire, for what it made me forget, and for what it made me remember. But it never made me happy, for it always hinted at the unattainable. It suggested something which in all my human life I had not found, and might never find. Something I knew not what, yet it seemed a possible bliss, of which, in my common moods, floating along the low level of daily life, it entered not into my dead soul to conceive. Morna's voice made it a palpable, throbbing verity. Why might it not be mine? Why need I wait to find it in the far distant ages—this happiness so dim, so shadowy, so far away! Her voice filled me with love, and worship, and longing; it made me feel capable of all suffering and of all joy; but alas, even its beautiful, unattainable bliss seemed embosomed in sorrow; the voice itself seemed dissolving in melodious tears, so that while I listened I often wept, yet knew not wherefore.

Certainly on this day Morna did not think to make me weep, for her mood was a nearer approach to happiness than I had ever seen in her before, and her voice, as it rose and fell, floating far away, was wild and sweet as nature's own; not when it wails on desolate shores, or trails its moaning dirges across forsaken seas, or chants its melancholy anthems through the chill aisles of naked woods, but when it sings itself to rest on the palpitant hearts of deep-bosomed trees, or distils its dreamy music over gardens of imperishable bloom in the trance of summer noons or the golden calm of balmy summer nights. Thus she sang on this day; yet I remember, as I sat apart with my face turned towards the window, that the sunlight might fall upon the task before me as I worked and listened, the tears fell too upon the white card on which I was sketching. I have forgotten whether I chided myself for weakness or not; if I did it would have made no difference. My proud vitality of strength was broken; the strong, calm nerves sickness had weakened. I was much more easily moved by all things than I had once been; had grown more womanly, men would say. Still there was no morbid misery in the few tears which blotted

my white task, and it was a happy, a very happy day this, the first in our new home.

The day-time work was done, the simple tea ended, and we sat in the twilight, the purple gloaming; that mystic hour when day is departing and night has not come; when curtains, furniture, pictures, are revealed to us in violet light or crimson shadow; when the misty room seems peopled with dreamy phantoms; when books are a mockery and work a shame—that hour which should be consecrated to sacred converse or delicious thought. Well, in that hour we sat and talked—talked as girls will, not wisely of course; had we talked wisely we should not have been girls, but time-taught women, which we were not then quite.

Already we had grown self-indulgent. Morna and Hope took an hour from each evening to study French, and I—well, I had begun their portraits, and to this dear task also was given an hour, which shone like a star between the day and night-time tasks. We were talking of them, and of what we were "going to do," or be, some time in the marvellous future, when there came another knock on our door, a softer, a more lingering knock than had startled us in the morning. This time Morna responded to the call, and opening the door ushered in a great woman, who had a pleasant, sailing motion, like a full freighted ship. She carried a teacup in her hand, and announced herself as "Mrs. Peacock, ladies."

OUR NEW NEIGHBOR, MRS. PEACOCK.

We asked Mrs. Peacock to be seated, and looked with a slight feeling of wonder into the face of George Washington's "mamm." She began: "Ladies, I have brought back your cup o' sugar. I hope George Washington asked for it with perliteness. I doz my best to make him perlite, but 'taint of much use. George Washington's different from all the rest of my children. I've a beautiful family of children; you must come up and see 'em; but as I was saying, George Washington aint like none of the rest. I'm sorry to say he's marked. Yet I have all a mother's feelings for George Washington. I've had more trouble with him than with all the other nine together; 'deed they aint no trouble. Oh! you must come up and see little Serepty Louizy. But as I was sayin', George Washington makes me worlds of trouble; me nor Mr. Peacock

can't do nothin' with him. If I could move out of New York I'd have some hopes of his outgrowin' his swearin', but now 'taint no use, for George Washington will run the streets and sell newspapers. He's a good boy in one particler—he does keep his mother in newspapers and new books. I s'pose you wouldn't think it, ladies, that with so many children, I'd have much time to read, but I does—'deed I can say, next to tendin' baby, readin' is my life. I've a great taste for literatur'; but that's not strange, for I belong to the Greens of Greentown; I'm Serepty Ann Green that was. My family's the most haristocratic in the county. I tell you what, there aint none that stand afore the Greens of Greentown. You should see my father's country seat. Oh, it's beautiful! I allus takes my family into the country in the summer (she added with an air of consequence); of course all genteel people go into the country. I have to leave Mr. Peacock—business always detains him in the city, poor dear; but I take the rest of my family all but George Washington, he stays with his father; but all the other nine. I should die if I couldn't go to my father's country seat every summer. You see I pine for my native air. I've hearn that people's early surroundin's makes a difference in their disposition. I expect that's why I'm romantic, because I was brought up in such a romantic place as my father's country seat. And as I was tellin', I'm crazy for literatur'; if I'd only got my hand into it, I could write a novel as well as any on 'em. 'Deed I've serious thoughts of tryin' it, if it wasn't for holdin' Serepty Louizy so much, I would. Of course I could do it. I might as well be makin' money writin' books as other women. I knows my novel would take, 'cause I'd make the weddin's 'ponderate. They must have a dreadful time gittin' each other, but you must marry them at last; that's the way to make a good novel, one that'll sell. Folks don't want to read about funerals. But my heroine should marry for love; of course she should. I married for love myself. I, Serepty Green that was, married a poor man. My father discarded me, and threatened to cut me off without a cent, but I married for love; and if I were to git married a thousand times, I'd always marry for love. There aint nothin' else wuth gittin' married for; mark my words, young ladies, there aint nothin' in the world wuth marryin' for, but love; of course there aint; mark my words."

Here Mrs. Peacock took breath, an act, however, which seemed entirely unnecessary. For she could talk the longest, without stopping, of any woman that I ever saw before or since.

Emerson thinks that *two* are necessary to the carrying on of a perfect conversation. Mrs. Peacock thought *one* all-sufficient. She never demanded a reply—but the more listeners she had, the better.

"Well," she went on, "I've come down to 'gratulate myself and you on havin' good neighbors. You'll find me a good neighbor, an excellent neighbor. I prides myself on bein' a good neighbor. I am allers ready to ask a good turn, and I'm allers ready to do a good turn; that's what I call bein' a good neighbor. Besides, I give nobody a chance to feel neglected. I'm allers glad to make a friendly call; that's what I call bein' a good neighbor. And I 'gratulate myself that at last I've got some ladies to be a good neighbor to. As I married below my station, I've had to neighbor with some very common sort of folks; but I tell you I never for a minute forgot that I was Serepty Ann Green that was, or that Mrs. Serepty Ann Green Peacock I am. I thought I'd bring back the cup o' sugar, and apologize that George Washington wasn't more perlite. I listened at the top of the stairs, and know that he might a done better; he will say bad words—but you see he's marked; that's what's the matter with the poor child. I think he'll outgrow it. Besides, I came down to tell you, ladies, that you'll find in me a most excellent neighbor, and I expect to find the same in you."

The hour for the French lesson, the hour for the portraits went by, and still Mrs. Peacock's tongue moved on. It was not a trip-hammer tongue; oh, no! it rolled slowly, steadily, endlessly, like a well-oiled, well-poised wheel propelled by powerful machinery, which never paused, because it never grew weary. Her talk seemed interminable—an ocean with neither bottom nor shores. The long fringes of Hope's eyelids had begun to droop on the fair cheek. Morna leaned her head upon her hand with a look of pain; I had grown very tired of being a polite listener, when we were relieved from an unexpected quarter. A powerful baby shriek pierced the air, descending from the upper regions. "Oh! that's my baby! that's Serepty Louizy! Glory Ann has let her fall out of the cradle! Oh, that's mother's darling baby!" cried Mrs. Peacock, in a tone as near akin to agony as her comfortable voice could possibly assume. She rushed out of the room, leaving at least this impression behind her, that she was well satisfied with the world in general, and remarkably well satisfied with herself in particular.

Indeed, a most comfortable looking woman was Mrs. Pea-

cock. And in this country, where work and worry make so many lean, sharp-eyed, anxious-looking people, a thoroughly comfortable looking person like Mrs. Peacock is a blessed sight. To see one who has a genius for taking things easy, no matter how life comes, accepting it just as it comes, with unruffled equanimity, is really a delightful sight by way of novelty.

Mrs. Peacock's nerves were too deeply embedded in adipose to be easily reached by the fretting friction of every-day annoyance. What blessed nerves they were! they never ached, and were never sore. The only sensation which they seemed to know was the sensuous life which trickled through the unctuous ducts and creamy sacs of her vast body. There was not a wrinkle in Mrs. Peacock's face, not one. Not a crow-foot had dared to leave a track in the corners of her eyes. Her hair was warmly golden, flushed with red; her face golden, tinged faintly pink, mottled with patches of moth, which spotted its round surface, like the opaque blots which darken the golden face of the full-orbed moon. She had light blue, misty eyes, which swam in a dreamy haze, and one of those sensuous mouths in which the upper lip droops over the lower; mouths which seem made to enjoy good things to eat. Then she had a form swelling everywhere in curves, not an angle to be seen; little fat hands; such women always have fascinating hands.

Mrs. Peacock needed but three things to complete her happiness—a baby, a book, and plenty of food which she liked to eat. The two latter were necessary; the first was indispensable. Mrs. Peacock revelled in babies. She always had a baby, and she always wished to have a baby. She would as willingly have gone without her eyes two months of the year as to have gone for the same length of time without a baby. Not only was the little mewling, crooning, crying thing itself necessary to her happiness, but several of her lesser joys depended upon its existence.

If Mrs. Peacock had had no baby, she could have offered no plausible excuse for sitting from morning till night in a little broken, bumping, thumping rocking-chair, affected with a chronic squeak in one rocker, and a most execrable shriek in the other, quite sufficient to rack anybody less like a cushion than Mrs. Peacock's into a thousand pieces. Of course, if Mrs. Peacock had had no baby, she would have had no proper excuse for leaving her work undone. The only object in the universe for which Mrs. Peacock was capable of feeling

anything like a positive hate, was work. Her temperament and physical constitution made her lazy. She could no more help it than she could that deep, composed respiration of hers. If she had a baby she couldn't work; of course she couldn't. It was her duty to improve her mind and cultivate her talents for "literatur;" what else was her mind and talents given her for? If she had a baby she could sit all day, thump, thump, squeak, squeak, in the little old chair, singing to baby, and swallowing yellow-covered novels. In the mind of Mrs. Peacock the baby was sufficient apology for all delinquencies. If Mr. Peacock found his shirt minus buttons, which, alas! he often did, and then took the liberty to discourse upon the fact, after the manner of men, the only consolation which his spouse could afford, was:

"Well, Mr. Peacock, you should consider the baby! Dear ·itty t'ing she takes all muzer's time, so she does; and so she should, muzer's darlin' baby!" she would exclaim in the mouth of Serepty Louizy, rocking and jumping her in a violent manner, drowning in noise and baby-talk poor Mr. Peacock's faint sermon on shirt buttons and the beauty of finding them on shirts; he, in the meantime, in silent and grim despair, fastening on that garment with crooked and corroded pins.

When Mr. Peacock found his hose without heels, which was also a frequent occurrence, and ventured to suggest to Mrs. Peacock the propriety of encasing them in a network of yarn: "Dear me! Mr. Peacock; do you forget the baby?" that lady would exclaim: "Of course you can't expect me to mend or to do anything but take care of my family, until it has grown out of the way; and I'm sure I don't know when that will be."

Mr. Peacock didn't know either; for to him the time when the family would be grown out of the way, seemed as far off as the millennium. Unconsciously the unfortunate man had learned to regard the little helpless inhabitant of the cradle as a dreaded rival, the foe to his daily and nightly comfort. Mr. Peacock could endure it in the day-time, but he did wish that he could sleep nights. The hourly wakings from pleasant dreams he bore like a hero at first, but twelve years of nightly nudgings had tired him out. He was very weary of being startled from pleasant dreams by the good-natured but peremptory call: "Mr. Peacock! Mr. Peacock! I declare if you ain't asleep! Don't you hear the baby cry? Mr. Peacock, do get up and get a light!" The baby was Mr. Peacock's Nemesis.

Mrs. Peacock belonged to that class of people who lie because they cannot help it. She would not have sat down and told a deliberate, wilful lie any sooner than the mass of catechism-taught women; still she managed to tell a great many lies nevertheless. Her brilliant and exhaustless fancy played around the simple, ungarnished truth, illuminating it with all the gauds of fiction. Thus all her statements outleaped the cramping boundaries of fact. Exaggeration was as natural as her breath, and having always indulged it as a habit, it had become a most imperious one, and she of course did not realize to what a very absurd extent she carried her misstatements. Had her powers received due cultivation, she would have made one of those ladies who write "*stories;*" who, having nothing more important to do, sit in their shady parlors and see how many brilliant and beautiful lies they can dilute upon paper, and in this way give healthy ventilation to their surcharged imagination. Had Mrs. Peacock been one of these, the description of her "father's country seat," without doubt, would have added lustre to the columns of a flash journal, as one of the quieter "picters" of a blood-and-thunder story. But with all her passion for "literatur'," never having got her hand into the way of writing, as she said, her burdened imagination had no outlet save her mouth, so she felt compelled to tell with her tongue a few of the lies which many others write upon paper, and then palm upon the credulous public as the efforts of genius.

Mr. Peacock looked as composed and happy in his mind as a poor man who had had ten little Peacocks presented to him in a dozen years could be expected to look. As far as flesh and blood make a human being, he was a very faint shadow beside Mrs. Peacock; indeed it can't be denied that Mr. Peacock looked thin and nervous, and his black eyes, which were exactly like George Washington's, without George Washington's setting of fat, seemed restless and anxious. It must have been the thought of that everlasting baby which made them so. Mr. Peacock was not miserably poor. He held a subordinate position in a wholesale store, and his income was sufficient to support his family in a common way, with a little to spare, had it been more judiciously managed. George Washington drove a lucrative business in the streets as "newsboy;" and amid the hundreds of his fellows who smoked cigars, chewed vile tobacco, drank, swore, and yelled in the streets, there was not one who could throw his heels higher in the air, run faster in spite of his fat, scream worse English,

or lie louder, or faster, about the "ship" that *hadn't* come, or the news that was *not* in the paper, than George Washington Peacock.

Hope's gentle soul seemed to be burdened with the thought of George Washington from the morning of his first appearing. "Would he go to Sunday-school with her?" she wondered. She was afraid that he was one of the boys whom she had heard screaming outside of the church on the Sabbath: "*Sunday Herald! Times! Mercury!*" "What a dreadful way to spend the Sabbath. She should try to coax him to go to Sabbath-school. Did we think that she would succeed?"

"Yes," we said, of course. And before Saturday came, I yielded to Hope's entreaties to go up with her, just to see if George Washington *ever* had been to Sunday-school, or if he would go.

We found Mrs. Peacock's sitting-room to be just like herself. A gorgeous imagination, as coarse as it was luxuriant, seemed bursting from every nook and crevice. The tawdry white curtains were looped back with brilliant rags of ribbon, revealing paper shades of a very startling pattern, covered with castles and ships, men and wild beasts, in strange proximity and stunning relief. The whitewashed walls were hung with colored prints, patriotic, sanguinary, and sentimental; George Washington, "the Father of his Country," "Benjamin Franklin," and "Andrew Jackson," of couse were there; so also were the "Battles of Bunker Hill" and "Lexington," in which were seen very fierce horses jumping in the air, men writhing on the ends of bayonets with torrents of blood spurting from their noses; and beside these pictured battles hung the "Soldier's Departure" and "Soldier's Return," in both of which was seen a ringleted lady,. holding a very elaborate pocket-handkerchief, clinging to the neck of a tall gentleman in gold epaulettes, a blue coat, and tight white pants. The mantel was crowded with ornaments. In the centre stood the image of a huge old man, with his tongue hanging out as if in great distress, holding a clock face in the centre of his stomach. Besides, there were plaster of Paris vases filled with yellow lemons and red tomatoes; painted owls and animals, and queer old men and women. In one corner stood a table piled with dishes sadly mixed up with the remnants of breakfast; the stove, red with rust, held a standing army of pots and kettles; in a room adjoining, the nursery probably, the whole troop of little Peacocks were screaming, laughing, crying, and fighting, as it suited their mood; the happiest

amusing themselves by dragging about the floor the bed-clothes belonging to a neighboring bed. Before the window, with her back turned towards us, sat Mrs. Peacock, in the old broken rocking-chair, rocking vigorously, thump, thump, squeak, squeak, holding Serepty Louizy and reading aloud. Amid the general uproar we knew that she had not heard our knock, and so ventured to enter unbidden. As she was not aware of our entrance, she continued her reading, and we stood and listened, scarcely knowing what better to do:

"They hurried to Adolphe's chamber; they heard a groan as they opened the door; they found their son stretched on the bed, pale and haggard; on the table was a phial labelled 'poison;' the phial was empty.

"'My son! my son! you have not been so wicked. Speak! speak!'

"'Oh, I suffer tortures! Oh, I am dying. Leave me! Celeste has also taken poison; we could not live without each other. Cruel parents, we mock you and die!'—

"'Recover, recover, my son, and Celeste shall be yours,' said his mother, falling in hysterics."

Here Serepty Louizy gave evidence of her existence by a loud scream. Mrs. Peacock ceased reading, seized the young lady's toes one by one, singing: "This pig went to market, this pig stayed at home; this pig ate all the white bread, and this pig had none. This pig said, I'll—tell—mamma—when—she—comes—home." Serepty Louizy seemed infinitely amused, and became quiet. Mrs. Peacock resumed her reading:

"'Adolphe, traitor! where hast thou been!'

"'Merely shooting in the woods, my angel.'

"'What! without me? Fie! promise that this shall not happen again.'

"'Oh, dearest! too gladly do I promise. But, Celeste, three hours have I been seeking for you. Where have you hid yourself?'

"'Don't look so angry, my Adolphe. I was only directing the gardener to build a little arbor for you to read in. I meant it as a surprise.'

"'My own Celeste! three hours is an eternity without you. Promise not to leave me again.'

"'My own dearest, dearest Adolphe! how I love you. May my company ever be as dear to you.'"

Here Serepty Louizy thought it time to give another scream by way of interlude, louder and more protracted than before.

"What ails Muzer's ducky diamond? A wicked pin pricks her, so it does."

"Rock-a-by, baby, on the tree top,
When the wind blows the cradle will rock;
When the bough bends the cradle will fall,
Down'll come cradle, baby, and all."

Serepty Louizy became quiet, and again Mrs. Peacock read on:

"'Indeed, Adolphe, if the truth may be said, you have lately contracted a bad habit—you are getting a squint in your eye.'

"'Madame!' said Adolphe, prodigiously offended, hurrying to the glass.

"'Don't be angry, my love; I would not have mentioned it, if it did not get worse every day; it is yet to be cured; just put a wafer on the top of your nose and you will soon see straight.'

"'A wafer on the top of my nose! Much better put one on the tip of your chin, Celeste.'

"'My chin,' said Celeste, running to the glass. 'What do you mean, sir?'

"'Only that you have a very large wart there which it would be more agreeable to conceal.'

"'Sir!'

"'Madam!'

"'A wart on my chin, monster!'

"'A squint in my eye, fool!'

"'Yes; how could I ever love a man who squinted?'

"'Or I a woman with a wart on her chin!'

"'Sir, I shall not condescend to notice your insults.'

"'Madam, I despise your insinuations.'"

Serepty Louizy now thought it high time to enter upon a series of screeches, in comparison with which her former efforts were but feeble echoes. Evidently she had heard enough of that story, and did not mean to listen to any more. Mrs. Peacock began to rock and sing with accelerated violence. Thump, thump, squeak, squeak, was the refrain to her song:

"Hush, my dear! lie still and slumber,
Holy angels guard thy bed,
Heavenly blessings without number
Fall on Serepty Louizy's head."

We thought the moment a good one to present ourselves.

The presence of strangers might change the current of Serepty Louizy's emotions.

"O laws! I'm glad to see you; glad you've begun to neighbor. Serepty Louizy has got a colic this mornin'; but I think she'll be better soon. Sit down," said Mrs. Peacock, as she turned and saw us advancing.

"Does she see the ladies! Muzer's baby dear?" she said, dancing Serepty Louizy in the air, who opened a pair of black eyes very like George Washington's and stared at us in baby wonder, her colic apparently entirely cured; while the flock of little Peacocks came rushing from the nursery to see the strangers.

"There, children, go back! Go back to play, mother's little dears. Don't cry, Glory Ann, and you shall have a sugar doll; George Washington will bring it to you. The children are so happy this mornin' I didn't hear you come in. You see that I has a beautiful family. Children is a great blessing. I pity every one that hasn't got any. Oh, did you hear me readin'? That's one of the most interestin' stories George Washington has brought me for a long time. One of Bulwer's stories for married people. 'True Ordeal of Love' is the name of it. Well, I like Bulwer; he goes to the root of matters. Of course he knows—hasn't he had 'sperience? Of course he knows that, if we've a mind to, we can look at one little fault in a person till we can't see nothin' else, till it covers them all over, and grows as big as Celeste's wart. He knows that folks dead in love can grow dreadfully tired of each other, if they're never apart. Bulwer knows all about it; he knows 'taint no use talkin' over natur's defects. As I sez to Mr. Peacock, Mr. Peacock, sez I, it 'taint no use makin' words over what can't be helped. Married folks don't ought to find fault with each other. It don't do no good. They take each other for better or worse, and if they find it's for worse, it don't make it better to go thro' the world growlin' and grumblin'. For my part, I think it's a great deal better to make the best of folks, instead of the worst on 'em. If they see you remember the good in them, they feel kind o' encouraged and keep growin' better and better; but if you keep talkin' of the bad, why they grow discouraged and think there aint a bit of use in tryin'. As I sez to Mr. Peacock, Mr. Peacock sez I, you needn't 'a married me if you didn't want to; of course you needn't; you might have married Susan Slasher; she wanted you bad enough, mercy knows. I needn't have married you; of course I needn't. Wasn't

young Squire Tim dead in love with me? Didn't he look jest as if he were meltin' whenever I kem round? Didn't I look straight ahead, dre'ful unconscious, just as if nothin' ailed him? and all from principle? I wasn't goin' to encourage him just to dissapint him, and make him take pisen, for wasn't I in love with you, Mr. Peacock? Didn't I have lots of lovers? I, Serepty Ann Green of Greentown, and never looked at any of them, because I loved you, Mr. Peacock? But sez I, suppose I'd married Squire Tim, and you'd married Susan Slasher, Susan wouldn't have had my faults; of course she wouldn't; but she'd a had her own. And sez I, Mr. Peacock, you wouldn't have liked her faults any better than you like mine. I know Susan is a cut-and-dash sort of a woman; she'd a put the work through faster than I do, like enough; but would she have given her life away to your children as I do, Mr. Peacock? No, you know she wouldn't. Has she got my elevated mind? No, you know she hasn't; and my taste for literatur'? No, you know she hasn't. But she's got a higher head; that you know Mr. Peacock. She'd a taken her own way by storm, not quietly as I do; that you know, Mr. Peacock. And there's Squire Tim—I spect he's as many faults as you have, Mr. Peacock, if I only knew 'em; you'se a dre'ful trial to me sometimes, Mr. Peacock, scoldin' around, but I love you better than a thousand Squire Tims. Pity if I don't. And if you squint a little, I aint goin' to look at it till you squint worse, or till I see nothin' but squint; and you musn't stare at the wart on my chin till it covers all my face. That's what I say to Mr. Peacock, young ladies, and it's just as good for you to hear. Only when you get married, be sure you marry for love, and for nothin' else, and everything will come out right. Squints and warts will keep growin' less and less."

We were thankful that the second for breathing had come; and Hope filled it by asking in a slightly tremulous voice, as if she had no right to put the question, if George Washington attended Sunday-school.

"Laws a day! I'm sorry to say it, but George Washington doesn't. As I was tellin' the other night, George Washington aint like none of my other children—George Washington is marked. I never could make him mind. He's got way beyond me or his father, and does jest as he pleases. Still I've all a mother's feelin's for him, poor boy. And I can't complain, he's very good to his mother in his way. See, he brought me all those books"—and she pointed to a bureau piled

high with yellow literature. "I wish he would go to Sunday-school;" and a real sigh came up from her motherly heart.

At that juncture a very decided clatter was heard on the stairs, and in a moment more George Washington presented himself—looking just as odd in the face, but a little more civilized in costume, than when he presented himself at our door for a cup of sugar. The pugnacious boot was now accompanied by its masculine fellow, and the broad back was covered with a "hard times" coat all of one color. I concluded that on the former morning we had seen the young gentleman in his early *dishabille;* that the feminine, slatternly gaiter had been worn for the soothing of a sore foot, while *l'habit de drap et l'habit de soie*, which had astonished us with its brilliancy, was an exclusively home garment, worn, very likely, for the satisfaction of his mother, whose fantastic mending had made it the gorgeous thing it was. George Washington carried under his arm a budget of illustrated papers which he tossed into his mother's lap. In alighting they hit the head of Serepty Louizy, who set up a scream of anger rather than pain, loud enough to put all her colic cries far in the shade, beating the air with her little fists and looking fiercely at George Washington, as if there was nothing which she wanted to do quite so much as to hit the red berry on the end of his nose.

"Stop your yellin', Rep, you little porcupine," said the young gentleman, looking with considerable complacency, however, on this pocket edition of himself.

"Mamm, there's readin' enough to keep you till to-morrow. The Pirate of the Pacific's advertised; I'll git you that in the mornin'."

"George Washington, don't you see the ladies? Can't you be perlite?"

"No! darn it, I never learned."

"George Washington, won't you never stop swearin' and callin' me Mamm?"

"I swears and calls you Mamm behind folks's back, so I'll be hanged if I don't do it before their face. I doesn't want nobody think I'm better than I is."

"I wish you'd dress up nice and go to Sunday-school every Sunday, George Washington?"

"The d——l you do! Well, I shan't do it. I can spend my Sunday in a more satisfyin' manner. Sunday I yells the loudest, I lies the fastest, I makes the most money. Sunday's the day I sell so many *Sunday Heralds* to the fine gentlemen

on their way home from church. 'Tisn't this bird'll leave his best trade and go to Sunday-school. I'm in fur the cash."

"These ladies have come in to ask you to go to Sunday-school, George Washington; I wish you'd be perlite."

George Washington moved uneasily. All the while he had been talking he had never looked at us once, and in spite of his loud, defiant tones, there was an undefined embarrassment in his manner, as if he himself was conscious of breathing very near a new foreign element.

"Wouldn't you like to go to Sunday-school with me?" asked Hope, in a half supplicating tone.

At the sound of that delicious voice, George Washington turned from the little old broken chair of his mother, which he had been jerking and twitching in a most unaccountable manner, and took in Hope from head to feet with his snapping eyes. They dilated with admiration to the utmost limit which the fat would allow.

"I'll be —— if I wouldn't," he said, slowly. "If you'll let me go with *you*, I'll be —— if I don't go every darned Sunday. Cash, *Sunday Herald* fine gentlemen, may all go to the d——l."

"If you won't say bad words I'll be glad to have you go," said Hope.

"Darn it, I wouldn't if I could help it. I'd never say another just because *you* don't want me to. But when a fellow can't help it, what's he going to do, darn it? If any body could make a chap decent, 'twould be some 'un who looks and talks just like you. Mamm allers says I am marked, so what's the use tryin', d——n it?"

"Oh, George Washington; never mind if you are marked; you'll outgrow it. I never meant to discourage you, George Washington; never. It's against my principles, as I said to your father; ses I—"

"There, Mamm, there! don't begin one of your all-fired long speeches or you won't stop till night."

"Well, George Washington, you're a good boy to promise to go to Sunday-school," she said, encouragingly.

"No, I aint, neither. I wouldn't go now to please you. I go to please *her*, though you knows I allers said I'd do as I'd a mind to, spite of all the wimmens in creation."

"Well, you are a good boy to go to please her. It'll do you a great deal of good and larn you not to swear." Mrs. Peacock seemed determined that her son should not falter on the good track for lack of her approval. "You're my own dar-

ling sonny! Come and kiss your mother, George Washington?"

"Don't be silly, Mamm, don't. I won't kiss you, I'll be —— if I will. If I can't kiss who I want to, I won't kiss nobody."

"Stop your noise, you little porcupine," he shouted angrily, shaking his fist, as if it were a relief to his dissatisfaction, at Miss Serepty Louizy, who was jumping and crowing on the pinnacle of baby glee, as if delighted with the fact that George Washington couldn't kiss the one whom he wanted to.

Sabbath came jubilant with its morning bells, the whole world seemed full of their nine o'clock music, when another loud round knock was heard on our door, and we opened it to behold George Washington Peacock, dressed in a new suit from head to toe. A bright red handkerchief tied his fat neck; a galvanized spread eagle blazed on his shirt bosom as a breast-pin; his wilful hair was oiled to softness; his black eyes twinkled with a new happiness. It was the event of his life when he stepped out upon the sidewalk beside Hope to go for the first time to Sabbath-school. We walked to church, rejoicing in our hearts that there was at least *one* voice the less (and a very lusty one too) to desecrate the sacred stillness of that autumnal Sabbath with the eager, mercenary shout of "morning papers," "morning papers!" "*Sunday Herald*, *Mercury*, *Times*."

GEORGE WASHINGTON PEACOCK IN A FIRE.

Mrs. Peacock had never received into her luminous intelligence the full significance of the injunction of Solomon:

"Withdraw thy foot from thy neighbor's house, lest he be weary of thee, and so hate thee."

Mrs. Peacock could visit and tend the baby as well as read and tend the baby; besides, Miss Serepty Louizy had all the strong likes and dislikes which a one year old young lady is entitled to have, and much preferred visiting to the little old excruciating rocking chair with the chronic squeak, or the monotonous sing-song of her mother's voice reading aloud some lachrymose story.

Dodging at the leaves with her baby fists, and bobbing her little black pate against the cover till the book shook so that her mother could not read, ceased to be a satisfactory revenge, after she had learned the sweetness of coming down stairs,

and having her mouth filled with sugar-plums. This act, at first a pleasure, very soon became a necessity. Serepty Louizy having received sugar-plums once, knew of no reason why she might not continue to receive them daily to the end of her mortal life, and acted accordingly. In the first place, she set up a succession of poignant, piercing shrieks each morning, as a signal to her mother to bear her in her arms down stairs.

"Bess her itty heart! she wants to go and see the ladies, so se duz, and so se *sall*, muzer's bessed birdy baby!" Mrs. Peacock would exclaim before the first volley of cries was exhausted. Next to babies, and reading and eating, Mrs. Peacock delighted in visiting, provided she might visit where she could find a patient listener. For this reason, with a sense of satisfaction she heard those daily morning screams, because they gave her a good excuse for making a morning call. The shrieks of Miss Serepty Louizy were distinctly heard in our little apartment, and we deemed ourselves most happy if we could conclude our breakfast before her cries began. Alas, we knew too well the inevitable sequence to this warning sound would be the creaking and groaning of the enfeebled and disjointed stairs, shuddering under the double burden of Miss Serepty Louizy and her ponderous mother. In a moment more would appear the golden face of Mrs. Peacock bland as the full moon. She would begin:

"You see, ladies, I keep my promise not to let you feel neglected. My attention is proof of my 'preciation. Of course you know I didn't neighbor jest the same with nobody else in the house; I know a lady jest the minit I set my eyes on her, and for my part, I'm glad at last I've got some ladies to neighbor with. Next to children, there's no blessin' like good neighbors. As I married below my station, I've had to neighbor with them who wasn't ladies, but as I was tellin' you afore, I never forget that I was Serepty Ann—"

Here Serepty Louizy would think it high time to have her claims recognised, and, seeing no sugar-plums forthcoming, would begin to shriek her disappointment.

"Dear me, Serepty Louizy has got such a colic this morning. I don't see what ails the child, but she has it now every blessed day, 'specially in the early part. I brought her down to see if it wouldn't pacify her. Nothin' duz her so much good as to come down here, poor little thing. The likin' she has taken to you is surprisen."

By this time Serepty Louizy would be sucking her sugar-

plums with all a baby's fierce avidity. The time had come when, in the memoranda of our daily wants, we would as soon have left out bread as sugar-plums; for we could not have dreaded hunger more than we did the voracious screams of the little animal from up stairs.

"Tank de ladies, Serepty Louizy! muzer's darlin' baby must be perlite; tank de ladies for the sugar-plums!" Mrs. Peacock would exclaim, bobbing forward with her hand the little head covered with bristling black hair, as a tacit acknowledgment of favors received. But her effort to make Miss Serepty Louizy return thanks was always abortive, resulting only in a violent shriek and grabbing of the little hands for the retreating sugar-plums, which Serepty Louizy saw disappearing down "muzer's" throat.

"There, there, don't cry! muzer won't eat no more; muzer don't want baby's sugar-plums; no she don't" (a lie, of course).

"Poor little thing, she feels thankful, but she can't show perliteness cause she can't talk. The ladies won't hold nothin' agin her, muzer knows. She's got lots of love in her heart, only she don't know nothin' how to show it. You only ought to hear her cry to come down and see you every mornin'. All my children's is 'fectionate. There's George Washington, lud! how he's taken to Miss Hope. Why I never see nothin' like it. Miss Marna and Miss Victory, he thinks that you are both very fine, but that you can't hold a candle to Miss Hope for looks. Excuse me for being plain—it's my way. That's only what George Washington thinks. 'Taint no ways sartain he knows. Now he says I ain't handsome; p'haps I ain't now, but I *was* I tell you, ladies; Serepty Ann Green was the belle of Greentown. Oh, dear, those days are gone and over! No woman can allers stay a belle. When I get kind o' lonesum', cause there ain't no one now to tell me I'm handsome, I 'sole myself with the 'flection that I'd rather be the happy mother of my beau'ful family, than to be a faded belle, livin' on flattery that don't mean nothin' after all, and in the long run ain't by no means satisfyin'.

"But George Washington, if he *is* my son, and if he does have his little failins, he's honest. He never says one thing, when he means t'other. No, George Washington never does. So when George Washington said: 'Mamm, you ain't handsome and never was,' I knew he meant it. 'Twasn't very pleasant to natur' to be told so, but I 'soled myself with two 'flections: first, that George Washington thought he told the truth; second, that he didn't know. Of course 'twasn't in

the order of natur' that he should know how I looked when I was Serepty Ann Green, the belle of Greentown. Ses I, I'm glad you've taken to Sunday School, I think you'll comfort your mother's heart yet; 'Mamm,' says he, 'I don't go to comfort your heart; I goes jest because *she* wants me to. I'd cut off my nose, I'd saw off my feet, I'd bury myself alive, if she wanted me to. I wouldn't do one on 'em for you; not one on 'em.'

At about this stage in the daily narrative, the sugar-plums having all vanished through the agency of Mrs. Peacock and her infant daughter, the latter would commence a series of screeches for more. All in the house having been devoured, the young lady, Serepty Louizy, seemed to have an intuition that her cries would be unavailing until the next morning, and so consoled herself by shifting her desires to other objects, which she demanded just as vociferously as she had before the sugar-plums. There was not a portable article in the room that she did not want. She screamed for the few trinkets which it contained; she screamed for the white roses in the window; she screamed for my pencils and crayons; she screamed for the pictures on the wall, and for the pictures on the easel. She would jump in her mother's lap, trying to grasp the unattainable treasure, but her little hands with all their grabbing only clutched the air. Then she would stamp her mother's knee in rage, and the black hair would bristle all over her little head, until I, at least, no longer wondered why George Washington called her a porcupine. Her loving mother recognised in her paroxysms of temper only the severest agonies of colic, and when at last even Hope's sweet face looked worn; when Morna's was covered with a deadly pallor and her nerves strained to their utmost tension; when I was ready either to laugh or cry with mirth at Serepty's young face, or vexation at her tiresome noise; when the hubbub grew so dense that it could not be penetrated by Mrs. Peacock's "sez I," then that lady would depart with step as accelerated as her lymphatic temperament would allow, "to go and get some perry goric to ease Serepty Louizy's colic."

She would depart, but not for the day. No; there were a hundred things for which she "must run down just for a minute." She wanted half a cup of sugar. "It was impossible for her to drink her tea without sugar. She forgot to tell Mr. Peacock that she wanted sugar. Would we lend her a drawin' of tea? Mr. Peacock would bring some home at night." "Could we let her have jest a teaspoonful of starch? Mr.

Peacock was so perticler about his shirts; he wouldn't wear a shirt unless it was starched jest so. To night was 'Lodge night,' and Mr. Peacock hadn't a clean shirt to wear, and there he was, Worthy Grand Master of the Lodge. The shirt must be washed, starched, dried by the stove, all in an hour, or what would Mr. Peacock say? Why he'd scold; Mr. Peacock *could* scold, and there wasn't a man in the world but what *would* scold if his shirt wasn't ready. Men couldn't make no allowance for children that had to be taken care of; they must have their shirt, children or no children, or they'd make a fuss. Why even George Washington would rage about his collar, if it wasn't jest so stiff. Would we have mercy on her and lend her a spoonful of starch? Would we let her take a needle and thread? Mr. Peacock's suspender-button was broken off, and he was so nervous and in such a hurry. He didn't see how she lost so many needles; but if he only had the dear children to take care of, he could see. Why, Glory Ann lost a dozen in one morning, jest makin' her doll a hood and a petticoat. Would we let her have the needle and thread? Mr. Peacock was in such a dreadful hurry." Of course the last glimpse which we ever had of the needle and thread was when we placed them within Mrs. Peacock's fat fingers.

Twilight would fold us in her purple pinions; the hour of charmed communion would come—the hour for the French lessons, the hour for the portrait; but instead of the quiet, the calm which had filled these hours with enchantment, the only hours which we could coax from toil to call our own, we would have Mrs. Peacock and her endless "sez I's." Thus was the sacred privacy of our home invaded, almost every hour of the night and day, by an amiable and yet most alien element. Because Mrs. Peacock was just the mooney, amiable woman that she was, was precisely the reason why she robbed us completely of so much precious time, which we owed to useful and ennobling employments. To a surly woman it would have been easy to have said, with a face of steel: "We are busy, and have no time to attend to you now." But to a woman sailing in dozens of times a day, with her face golden and bland as an unbeclouded moon, with only kindness in her eyes and in her heart, although we had not a moment to give her, it seemed impossible to say: "You are not welcome."

It is wonderful of how much of our life work, of how many priceless opportunities, of how many rare successes, are we

defrauded by very amiable persons who, in all their existence, have never found a noble work and purpose of their own. They are the leeches of society, who suck away the life-blood of our usefulness. Unless rudely shaken off, they cling to us for ever, sapping the nerve of daily endeavor, fattening on our very failures. They rob us of our garnered minutes; they take our beautiful brief hours. Night comes and finds us listless, weary, with the day's inexorable task unfinished. The nervous force which would have made us perform it well is all exhausted; we squandered it, listening and talking with ——, who had "a pleasant time; *such* a pleasant time."

The "pleasant time" cost —— nothing. —— has nothing to do but to be amused. It will cost us a sleepless night of toil, a morrow of lassitude, and of over-work. In a whole week we can hardly bring up the arrears of the lost day. In the meantime our delinquency will incommode others, who can see no mortal reason why we are "behind-hand." We knew this when we sat down a martyr to listen to ——. We shall be perfectly aware of it to-morrow, when another —— is ready to monopolize the day; yet because we like both of these ——'s, in neither case will we have the moral courage to say: "I am glad to see you, but must leave you now; my duties are imperative." A great bane to men and women who work, and must work, is that class of persons who are always "dropping in," but rarely dropping out; who are calling to "stay just a minute," but who manage to stay the whole day; inopportune mortals, who never know when to come nor when to go. No wonder that Voltaire said: "The amount of time which people spend in talking is frightful." I thought the same while listening to Mrs. Peacock. From the sound of her voice there seemed to be no reprieve, no relief.

The only thing which she never exaggerated was her account of George Washington's devotion to Hope. When he stood before her, he seemed no longer to possess the characteristics of George Washington Peacock. He was no longer the gruff, swearing, ruffianly newsboy. The very needles of his hair seemed soothed and softened; his whole face grew more human. He was not rough, and loud, and long in speech to her; but answered in awkward, stammering confusion, and stood as one in a daze, as if dazzled and awed in the presence of a new and beautiful mystery.

We heard a loud clattering on the street-stairs one morning,

then a fiercer clattering in the hall, as if the house was being invaded by a small army, followed by a moment's calm; then a rap on the door. It was opened and there stood George Washington, in the midst of a troop of newsboys, dirty, ragged, their rolls of papers stowed under their arms, yet all looking as eager as if they were just entering a menagerie, or any six cent wild beast show.

"Here she is; there she is! look at her, b'hoys; say agin, if you dares, that she ain't no handsomer than the wax figgers in the shop-windows what they put the shawls on and the gran' frocks on; say agin if you dare that she ain't no handsomer, you don't believe, than them dull wax things. Say it agin if you dare, and I'll take you into the street and give you a lickin', every one on ye; I'll be hanged if I don't. Now say it agin, if you dare."

George Washington made this proclamation standing in the door, pointing with his finger at Hope, who sat sewing, her long curls falling over her work. He was greatly excited; the end of his nose was redder than ever before, as if ready to burst with indignation. The remainder of the boys seemed to have no inclination to "say it agin;" perhaps they did not dare, for evidently George Washington was a champion-king among them, and they hardly cared to have a taste of his pugilistic quality. After gazing for a moment, one shouted, followed by all the rest in concert: "Yes, she's handsumer! Jack Peacock, you're right; she's handsumer than the wax figger. She's handsumer than any leddy we ever see in Broadway. Does that suit you, Jack?"

At this juncture Mrs. Peacock's door was opened, and she came down the stairs, followed by eight minor Peacocks, Serepty Louizy in her arms, screaming at the utmost limit of her voice, louder and yet louder as she drew nearer the realm of sugar-plums.

"Mercy on us! George Washington, what is the hallooin'?"

"Mamm,' taint none of your business. I wish you wouldn't allers be a 'pearin' round when you ain't wanted. Rep, you little owl, stop your screechin', or I'll help you stop," said George Washington, evidently nettled by the sudden inundating efflux of all his family constituents.

There was a just perceptible quivering in Mrs. Peacock's motherly voice, as if her motherly heart had been reached and slightly jarred, by George Washington's rude, unfilial reprimand, as she said: "I'll tell you one thing, George Washington, Miss Hope won't never take any notion to you at all, if you

ain't a more perlite man to your own mother. Miss Hope is a lady, every inch of her."

For the first time in her life Mrs. Peacock had found the spring which, if only touched, reached George Washington's heart. He looked through the open door at Hope. He hung his head in silent shame. His companions had never seen their king, Jack, cowed before. They looked exultant, as if they would like to laugh, but did not dare, lest they should receive a thrashing for the same in less than five minutes. "Come, boys," said George Washington; and they went away much quieter than they came.

Hope was the daily recipient of George Washington's bounties. He never presented them to her face to face, yet never left room to doubt for whom they were intended. Mysterious newspapers, illustrated with all the wonders of the day, found their way under the door-sill during the hours of darkness. We would find them in the morning with "Miss Hope" scrawled on their white margin. In the same auspicious hour, we often found a portly bag hanging on the outside door-knob, labelled in glaring capitals: "Miss Hope." Upon exploring its depths, we usually found delights for the stomach, in the form of peanut candy, lozenges, peppermint drops, cracked nuts, and mottoes; or we found something pretty to wear; a comb, a cornelian cross, a little bottle of *eau de cologne*, and once it contained a pair of gilt washed ear rings, garnished with green glass, which must have cost the stupendous sum of twenty-five cents.

* * * * * * * *

It was mid-winter. For many days it had been fearfully cold. One night, after many hours of restless sleep, I woke with a choking sensation as if breath was departing, while Morna and Hope seemed to respire as if suffocating. It was a moonless night, very dark; I could not see, yet felt that the room was swimming in smoke. I started, as I saw a tongue of fire, a narrow, creeping tongue, curl along the crevice of the door.

"Girls! girls! I believe that the house is on fire," I said, quickly. They had wandered too far away on the other side of the gate of visions to be easily recalled.

"Girls! Morna, Hope, come! Do come! The house is on fire. Be quick, quick!"

They were awake now. Not a word was spoken; the certainty of an awful truth was upon us. It seemed not a second before we passed to the door, gasping for breath. It

was through the door which led into our sitting-room that the smoke crowded, and the tongues of flame crept. Would it be possible to save anything? I opened the door to see. A dense ocean of smoke, hot, stifling, rushed through the dead silence of the room into my face. The wood-work crackled; the blackness was seamed with fire. Tortuous serpents of lurid flame writhed on the walls. Fitful, fiery glimmers darted athwart the purple gloom, the shadows of the ascending demon, who had not yet burst into the room in all his resplendent blazing fury. It was too late to save a thing; I fell back suffocated before the advancing, thickening smoke.

"Quick, or those children will be burned in their beds," said Hope, as we three reached the stair leading to the next story together. In an instant more we were knocking at the door of the Peacocks.

"Mr. Peacock! Mr. Peacock!" we heard the lady call; "Mr. Peacock, I say."

"Well! well!"

"Don't you hear that dre'ful knockin'?"

"Do let me alone! You're allers hearin' knockins."

"The house is on fire! If you want to save yourselves, come quick."

Alas! Mr. and Mrs. Peacock were too busy talking about the probability and improbability of this "knockin'" to hear the agonized call. There was not a second to lose. I threw myself, with more force than I dreamed of possessing, against the door.

"There; I guess you'll believe *that's* a knockin'," I heard Mrs. Peacock say to her doubting husband, as I fell upon the floor of her outer room.

"Well, I'd like to know what *is* to pay!" groaned Mr. Peacock, as if there was no such thing on earth as a quiet sleep for him.

We were all in the room by this time. "The house is on fire! Unless you make haste the stairs will be in flames. Then there will be no way of escape, not even by the roof; for you know this building is higher than those around it. Can't we get these children out safe?"

"The house on fire!" murmured Mrs. Peacock, dreamily, as if the thought was swimming pleasantly over her oblivious senses. "The house on fire? Then our names will be in all the papers in the mornin'."

"The house is on fire! The Lord have mercy on us, for we

can't all get out, that's sure," moaned Mr. Peacock; and we heard him feeling for his clothes in the dark.

"The house on fire!" screamed George Washington, as he came rushing from another room. "Then it's time to go to yellin'."

"It is time to get a light. Will you find one, George Washington?" I asked. We had not been standing still all these seconds. We were taking the poor little Peacocks from their warm nests, as fast as six hands could in the dark. Mrs. Peacock had arrived at something like a state of consciousness, and was moving as fast as her capabilities would allow.

"Oh, George Washington, can't you save two of your little brothers and sisters? We will take the rest," implored Hope, as he produced a light.

"If I don't save nothin' else, I'll save *you*. I'll die in the fire if I don't," said the boy, his great face looking ghastly white in the light. He opened the window. He thrust out his head and shouted, "Fire! fire! fire!" in a clarion voice. He suddenly stopped; we looked, saw the empty, open casement, but no George Washington. George Washington had vanished through the third story window.

"George Washington! George Washington, my son! Oh, my boy!" cried Mrs. Peacock out of the window, forgetting the rapidly approaching flames, heedless for once of the screams of Serepty Louizy, thinking only of her first born. We were trying, with Mr. Peacock's aid, who was carrying Serepty Louizy, to marshal the crying, terrified children out of the room.

"George Washington! George Washington!" again cried Mrs. Peacock, leaning far out of the window. A voice came up through the darkness—his voice from the street far below:

"Mamm, stop your yellin'; take them young un's up onto the ruf as quick as blazes, or you're all goners. Oh, mamm, take care of *her*. I'm comin'."

We all rushed to the hall. It was too late; we could not descend; the stairs were all ablaze. It had taken too long to get the family of twelve Peacocks fairly out of their nest. It was well that Mr. Peacock had not followed George Washington's example. Had he done so, he would have been shivered into a hundred pieces, for he had not George Washington's deep, easy cushions of flesh to fall upon; and if he had seen fit to have killed himself, what would

we have done with Glory Ann, whom he carried, or with Moses whom he led? Mrs. Peacock had seized Serepty Louizy, while Morna, Hope, and I led the other six by the hands. Every little Peacock screaming, on we fled, the great masses of smoke and flame rioting fast in our wake. We passed the fourth story, we reached the garret; we gained, but with no small difficulty, the roof. It was no poetical task, in the darkness, in the bitter cold, to lift nine helpless, weeping children out upon a frozen housetop. Now the street was rampant with half-frantic people, every one of whom knew that there was a family inside at the mercy of the flames. The night was filled with the clangor of the bells, the wild alarm-bells; fiercely they rang, till the frigid air seemed to throb and pant with their eager desire, their impetuous pain. The fire-engines rattled along the street; firemen shouted hoarsely, and called and answered each other through their keen, shrill trumpets. Boys screamed fire, until their voices broke like the tense snow creaking under their rebounding feet. The multitude groaned and shouted. The engines sent up their jets of gushing water—still the fire raged on; still we stood among the screaming children, on the high housetop, while our foe drew nearer, nearer. We heard the crackling of burning wood; the crash of glass as it shivered and fell; heard the low, throbbing motion of pent and pressing flame, panting to burst unrestrained into one all-enveloping terror. Clouds and columns of purple smoke arose, enwrapped us, and rolled away in fiery mist, in glimmering banners of ensanguined vapor. Over us the heaven hung molten red; the black air was sown thick with fire-sparks, uneasy stars, stirring in the gloom of Erebus. The fire broke in lurid splendor through the melting casements; it threw knots of sulphurous flame to the very housetop. Blazing scarlet, tipped with keen blue tongues, vivid, eager, it lapped the cornices at our feet. In flaming pennants it streamed against the sky, magnificent in fury; then falling apart in disjointed, glittering chains, dropped back into the night. I felt as if in the presence of an omnipotent yet pitiless foe. I was awed by the might of a terrific power. I shuddered as I looked on those around me, as the crying of the children pierced the surrounding terror. I had ever expected to die quietly in my bed, and not to pass away in any heroic or romantic manner whatever, and although probabilities were slightly against it this expectation did not forsake me now. No! Deliverance would come; yet I am not sure that

the deliverer assumed before my vision the form of George Washington Peacock.

"Save them! Save them! Save them!" were the shouts which came up from below, as a ladder laid its blessed head against the smoking cornice. In another instant George Washington's head, half-buried in a fireman's hat, appeared. "I said I was comin'. Come, Miss Hope, come, Miss Hope, come! The fire is almost to the roof; no tellin' how soon the walls 'll fall. Come, Miss Hope!"

"Oh, George Washington! Don't you care nothin' about your mother, nor Serepty Louizy, nor——" cried his mother.

Hope took Mrs. Peacock's hand and walked with her carefully to the edge of the roof. "Save your mother, your father, all, before you ask me. I cannot, will not come, until the last," she whispered.

"I'm goin' to save them. I'm goin' to save them all! I only wants to save you fust. I wants to save *you*."

Mrs. Peacock had no intention of being saved last. Already with great apparent coolness she was stepping down upon the ladder with Serepty Louizy in her arms, calling: "Come, Mr. Peacock, bring along the children. Come, young ladies, there's time enough if you'll only hurry."

The ladder was fastened to the roof of an outbuilding in the rear. A man stood here, and another midway on the ladder, as George Washington brought them down; while an excited crowd of men, women, and children groaned, cried, and shouted upon the ground. The fire raged most furiously in the front of the building, where it originated, but pressed fast and hot upon the rear; piercing with a thousand glittering poniards the purple blackness of bursting smoke. Up and down, up and down, through the dense stifling air, passed George Washington in rapid succession, at each return shouting more wildly and despairingly for "Miss Hope," yet each time rushing away with the child which was proffered him, as if he felt that it was the only way by which he might at last save her. Eight children had passed down; the only one left was Glory Ann in her father's arms. There was not a moment to be lost.

"George Washington, here's Glory Ann; take her. Go, go, young ladies. I ain't the man to leave three ladies to burn alive on the top of a house, or to be smashed in the ruins," said Mr. Peacock.

"Think of your children. What could they do without

you? There is no one to need us, and if we die, may it be together!" said Morna Avondale.

"We are not going to die here. The roof will neither burn nor fall while Hope stands on it. Go, Mr. Peacock!" I said. Mr. Peacock went, carrying Glory Ann down the tottering ladder. He left George Washington on its topmost round screaming, as if in his last agony: "Miss Hope, Miss Hope, Miss Hope! I won't live if you don't; I'll be d——d if I will."

Morna came; Hope came; we stood upon the ladder together. We had scarcely gained it when the fire, thick, gorgeous, grand in its fury, swept over the entire roof, and sent a thousand spears of forked flame up into the bloody air.

We felt the scorching heat in our faces. The ladder tottered under our feet; bright threads of fire curled around its bars; yet we passed down unharmed, and as we touched the ground, a great shout went up to heaven from the vast crowd which had seemed breathless in its silence a moment before.

George Washington rolled on the ground in a paroxysm of joy, laughing, crying, shouting in the same breath; Mrs. Peacock stood amid her group of little Peacocks as if utterly satisfied; but Mr. Peacock, poor man, might have looked happier. Shelter and food were proffered by a hundred voices, and only when I heard them did I begin to realize how great had been our exposure on that fiercely cold night. Mr. Peacock accepted the offer of a friend who lived near, and there was nothing better that we could do than to go with them and wait for the dawn.

It was deep morning when George Washington entered, looking much the paler for the exertions of the night before.

"Mamm, I hope you'll be suited now; you've got your name in the paper," he said, throwing her a morning journal. She was half asleep when he came in, but quickly emerged from her trance, and read aloud:

"A TENEMENT HOUSE in —— street was last night destroyed by fire. How the fire originated is not known. The second floor was occupied by three young ladies, designers by profession, whose names we have not learned. They lost everything but the garments which they wore. The apartments on the third floor were occupied by Mr. Peacock, his wife, and ten children. The entire family, as well as the lives of the young ladies, were saved through the heroism of a lad of twelve, the son of Mr. Peacock. The brave boy descended

from the third story by means of the eaves conductor, which fortunately passed very near the window. He procured a ladder which was secured in the rear of the burning building, and, ascending to the roof, assisted in conveying his nine brothers and sisters to the ground in safety. Mr. Peacock, who is a worthy man, has lost everything but his family. We trust that the Christian public will administer to their necessities."

"Well, it's worth a fire any day to have such a notice of you in the paper, and to have people what are somethin', speak of you with such great esteem. I haint a doubt but I'll have nicer things offered me now, than I had afore. That aint sayin' as I shall take 'em, though. Serepty Ann Green that was oughtn't to be takin' other folks' cast-offs. I allers knew my name would get into print. George Washington, come here and kiss your mother, you blessed boy."

"Mamm, I don't feel like kissin'," said George Washington, in a much softer tone than usual, looking around with an anxious, questioning look.

"Oh, yes; I knows who you're lookin' for. Allers thinkin' of Miss Hope, as if there wasn't nobody else in the world. Well, Miss Hope is sleepin' safe and sound; and I should think that you'd be glad to let her rest, George Washington."

In the meantime I had taken up the newspaper, as Mrs. Peacock had read the only article which contained any interest for her. I was looking over its columns in that listless, weary way which people have when they are preoccupied or troubled, and so glance at the daily news to dissipate their irksome thought, knowing of course that it can contain nothing of personal moment to them, and yet feeling a vague, undefined hope that it *may*. I said to myself: "Well, we must find other rooms, or else go back to the comfortable home," shuddering at the simple thought. I turned to the advertisements for "board" and "rooms to let." Ran through the whole column, finding nothing satisfactory; and at last came to the advertisements, "personal." I liked to read them sometimes, they contained such odd messages; and so my eyes ran on carelessly, wearily. Suddenly I started; I shook in every nerve as if I had received a galvanic shock.

"Mercy on us! What's the matter? You look as though you were dead, only your eyes. I couldn't look so scared, if the world fell to pieces," exclaimed Mrs. Peacock.

Did I really see it? Did I read aright? Yes, there it was, in clear print before my eyes:

"VICTOIRE V ——: If you are in trouble or sorrow, remember that you have one friend, who must remain your friend while he lives. I know not your address, yet hope that this will meet your eyes.

"HENRI R ——."

HENRI ROCHELLE.

If I was in "trouble or sorrow," Henri Rochelle was the very last person whom I wished to know it. Was I never to escape him? Was it impossible to elude his keen scent? Would he overtake me, confront me, hold me fast at last? These questions I asked as the newspaper hung in my nerveless hand, while I marvelled over the message which it contained for me. Why had he waited until he thought that the probabilities were all in favor of my being in trouble or sorrow, before he had announced his continued interest in my welfare? Why was this man, of all others, the one to remind me of my dependent and needy condition? Why was he, from whom I wished least to receive it, the first and only one to offer me succor and consolation? Was he to be cognizant of all my misfortunes? Was he in my destiny? After all, was his the soul towards which mine was tending—the elected haven into which the great tide of my being would inevitably flow? My fervid self, must it surge and surge against this rock-bound man only to settle at last becalmed and cold into the chill, deep reservoir of his unfathomed soul? A man of marked intellect, of rare culture, of family and of fortune, why was I not in haste to leave my life of poverty and obscurity, to become his dowered companion, his chosen and cherished wife? I was well aware I might look far and wait long to find another man in all respects his peer. The golden door of his mental palace seldom stood ajar, never swung wide open to pilgrims and wayfarers. Only the invited dared to intrude, and only a few of the elected ones who entered felt through every fibre of their being thoroughly warmed and welcomed.

Noble and good, why did this man repel? Not because I

doubted his nobleness; my faith in him had never wavered for an instant. His seeming coldness I knew arose from no real coldness of heart. Rich in his own self-sustaining power, he had never realized the heart-poverty and want of weaker, less self-reliant natures. Henri Rochelle was eclectic by nature. Filled with a calm benevolence towards all humanity, his personal affection was won by few, and these most sacredly chosen. He could not lavish upon the many the love which all his life he had garnered inviolate for one. What a privilege to be that one! Then why did I feel like flying to the end of the earth to avoid him? "Do you dislike him? Do you really dislike him?" I asked suddenly of my palpitating heart.

It started at the imperious, uncompromising question, but answered quietly enough, No! I do not dislike him; perhaps I even like him a little. I cannot quite forget how noble he is, how kind, how true. His face with its clear cut, manly features, with its strong, calm meaning, often fills my thought, if it does not warm my love. I esteem him, I admire him. I —— yes, I think that I like him, but I do not love him. His nature is positive to mine. I feel it as a strong force, but it does not touch me soothingly. It does not subdue me, melt me, win me, like *that* voice. Oh, why did you leave me, lost voice? Oh, why did you forsake me, celestial eyes, in whose splendor the soul sat enshrined! The voice of Henri Rochelle does not penetrate to the soft spring-realm of my being, whose pulses tingle with the delicious stir of youth's enkindling ecstasy—a realm dewy with sympathy, fragrant with the bursting bloom of love; but in the dry desert of the brain he fans the flames of pride till they wax angry and hot, calling all my nature to revolt. I can but turn in haughty coldness from a proffered favor, when I read in the donor's asserting eyes the satisfying thought: "I give more than you can return." I will not accept a gift unless in my own way I can return an equivalent. Ah, that is why I recoil from Henri Rochelle. He ever seems to say: "I love you best of all mortal creatures, yet I do not need you so much as you need me. I possess all the qualities which you lack, the ones which you most essentially need. I love you, I want you, but I can live without you. You neither love me, nor want me, yet you cannot live very easily without me. Disappointment does not dilute one drop of my manhood. I am no less the strong man, performing no less the strong man's work, because Victoire chooses to say 'I do not love you.' All my wounded

affection oozes away through the rock-cut channel of reason, leaving my heart healed and whole. All my superfluous emotion flows out and is lost in the manifold avenues of manly activity. When I rest from labor, in my moments of musing, the thought will press in upon my heart: How much I love her!—but it is ever coupled with another—I can live without her, a not unhappy or inharmonious life. But she is in need of me; of my care, of my protection; and she needs my guardianship not the less because she protests that she needs it not at all. She is a woman; I cannot forget the story of dependence which this fact tells; the unrest, the suppressed power, the love, the yearning for sympathy, infinite, unrealized—guerdons of the power and weakness of her sex. Rebel she may, but her positive soul must live a negative life. She can paint her life into a picture; she can sew, with a burning thought inwrought in every stitch; yet she will come back to herself at last, and look aghast down into the great void of her own being. She thinks that she is wedded to art, poor child, as if a woman could live upon any abstraction. Her nature is not half awake; when it is thoroughly aroused, when she feels within her the yearning heart of womanhood; when her time comes to love, when she longs for human companionship, for human sympathy as a woman can, we shall hear no more about art being her husband. She dreams of fame; but to one of her nature fame can never be anything but a larger love; and at last, if the world comes to praise what her hands have wrought, she will turn away unsatisfied, feeling that the praise of many is naught to the love of one. The cumulated tide of affection, pent so long, will overflow at last and drown her woman's heart; mine must be the soul into which the sweet flood shall pour itself. Yes, it is time to find Victoire Vernoid; may be she is humbled a little now; not too proud to confess herself a very woman, needing both a husband and a home."

Then my heart answered very slowly: "She does not need so much a shelter for her body as for her soul; it is her poor young heart that wants a home." You cannot give me that home. Henri Rochelle, *you shall not find me*, I said, starting in defiance, as if he stood before me. My voice rang cold, as when in days gone I looked into his penetrative eye, and said: "Monsieur Rochelle, I will not marry you;" yet it quivered, died with its own impotence, for it heard an answering whisper, silver-clear: "He is in your destiny. Of what avail is it to fight against your fate?"

My voice aroused Mrs. Peacock, who had rocked herself and Serepty Louizy to sleep in a little chair, whose placid swaying movement made heavenly melody compared with her own lost one of diabolical memory. I was obliged to the recent fire for burning up that chair. I had never listened to it without a conviction that a little squeaking devil was imprisoned in each rocker.

"Lor'," said Mrs. Peacock in her most drowsy tone, "was you readin' or was you talkin' to yourself, Miss Victory?"

"I was talking to myself."

"You warn't!" she said, her eyes of skim-milk blue swimming in misty wonder. "Don't tell me such unlikely stuff. Why when I was Serepty Ann Green of Greentown, my aunt Jemimy Jane use't allers to say that if folks talked to theirselves, jest as sure as they were talkin' they were crazy, or goin' to be, which is jest the same."

"There are few people that have not a thread of insanity running through some portion of their nature; even you are slightly crazy, Mrs. Peacock."

"Me! me! Mercy on us, when I was Serepty ——"

Here she was prevented from repeating the information which I had ample reason to remember by this time (viz. that she belonged to the Greens of Greentown) by the entrance of Mr. Peacock, accompanied by a handsomely dressed, sweet-faced, middle-aged lady.

Mr. Peacock had been seeking another tenement. "He had succeeded in finding one which he hoped might do," he said. He thought that "the sooner they got into it the better, all round." The last remark was addressed especially and emphatically to Mrs. Peacock, who looked as if it was all the same to her easy soul if they *never* got into it. Indeed she would have preferred visiting on to the end of her mortal days. But Mr. Peacock, who had a "realizing sense" of things, was eager to depart. Poor man, he was unwilling to wear out his welcome. Although they had come into the home of one of his own relatives, he was well aware that an influx of eleven cousins at once was more than even a reasonable person could be cheerfully burdened with for any great length of time.

Here the stranger lady remarked that "she was glad to meet Mr. and Mrs. Peacock. She had read of their misfortune in the morning paper, and started immediately to find them. She was aware that the people who inhabited tenement-houses were the innocent victims of a mercenary system; that their

lives were recklessly risked by avaricious men, who knew when they built their wretched houses that if they ever caught fire it would be impossible for the persons who lived in them to escape. She had been in deep distress on account of the great amount of suffering and death occasioned by fires during the winter. She had done all in her power for the afflicted ones. She should be happy, indeed she should be very happy, if she could in any way relieve the necessities of Mr. and Mrs. Peacock. And it would afford her especial pleasure to make a present to the noble boy who had saved the lives of the entire family."

George Washington was lying upon the lounge, his face prone upon the cushion, where he had buried it in his disappointment at not finding Hope in the room, some hours before. Whether asleep or awake was not known to the company. Certainly he gave no visible token that the lady's kind compliment had penetrated into either ear's tympanum.

"Oh, yes, mother's darlin' son! My George Washington, you mean; that's him on the lounge. True enough he did save all his family an' three young ladies besides; that's one of 'em, Miss Victory. But he showed who was nearest an' dearest by savin' his mother an' this blessed derlin' baby fust," said Mrs. Peacock, treating Serepty Louizy to an unpleasant and unexpected leap in the air, in order to bring her into nearer proximity to the stranger; while the one-year-old young lady, after her usual mode of asserting her identity, began to scream in the lady's face.

"There! there! muzer's honey bee mustn't frighten the lady with her music; no she mustn't! there, there!" and Mrs. Peacock fell back to a violent but quiet rocking, still musical compared to her own lost household bump and thump.

"Yes, he saved his mother and this darlin' baby fust. At sech times natur' will have her way, an' show who's nearest an' dearest." (At these words a spasmodic twitching of the lounge-cushion proved conclusively to me that George Washington was not as sound asleep as he might have been.) "I'm sure you're a lady to remember my George Washington—yet 'taint no more than he deserves. You're a lady to remember us in our misfortin'; and though I ses it myself, I must say it, it ain't no more than we deserve. Folks allers should be thought of in misfortin'. Not that we've a favor to ask; no, not a favor; though I dusn't say we wouldn't accept one. People that have done the world as many favors as the Greens don't ought to be afraid to take a favor in misfortin'.

I knows I've everything to be thankful for, that all my fine family is saved. If they had a burned I should have clean died. All my nine children is asleep, muzer's dear lambs. I must show them to the lady afore she goes. They is all asleep but Screpty Louizy, muzer's honey bee, with her little music box."

The lady's face now wore a surprised look, but she said: "I shall consider it a privilege to restore to yourself and children a few of the comforts which you have lost."

"Oh, yes, we've lost so many comforts, 'taint much use tryin' to 'place 'em again. We don't ask it of nobody. I'm sure I don't ask nobody to 'place my nice furnitur' that's burnt. I'm sure I don't ask, yet it does seem as if I couldn't get on with any that wasn't jest as nice. There's my beau'ful sofy burned to a crisp, the beau'ful sofy I brought from my father's coun——. Oh, you don't know that I belong to the Greens of ——."

"D—n it! (There, I didn't mean to say it. I told her I wouldn't.) Confound those Greens! Mamm, I wish you'd forget the name, so you couldn't never speak it again. The Greens ain't no better than the Peacocks, not a hair. I wouldn't give a cuss for the whole kit."

"George Washington, don't you see the lady?" said Mrs. Peacock, in a tone nearer consternation than I had ever heard her speak in before. She had thought George Washington asleep or she would not have dared to have referred to the Greens, or her father's country-seat, and was utterly unprepared for such an unexpected torpedo explosion. There upon the lounge sat George Washington, his black eyes looking as if they would explode with rage; every pugilistic hair on his head standing erect, the berry on the tip of his nose so red it seemed ready to fly in any direction.

"George Washington's just waked up. The fire has put him out of his mind a little;" his mother said apologetically to the stranger.

"I'm right in my mind, or I wouldn't know that you is lyin'. Mamm, what's the use of tellin' lies folks can look straight through? Anybody with two eyes in their head can see that you never had a gran' sofy. What's the use o'tryin' to make things out gran'er than they is? Don't you think other folks has eyes? What's the use o' lyin'? You know you never had a sofy worth sittin' on. You know the old shack you had never saw your father's. Didn't I buy it at a Chatham Square auction? Didn't I give just fifty cents for the old skeleton

what wasn't worth a picayune? Didn't I earn the money screechin' on Sunday? I aint goin' to screech no more on Sunday. Miss Hope says it's wicked, and if she says it is, it is. And if it's wicked to screech, and if it's wicked to swear, it's wicked to lie. It's wicked to call an old frame that hadn't a spear of haircloth on it, nor a sign of a cushion but rags, a beau'ful sofy; 'sinuatin' you'd like the present of another jest as beau'ful; jest as if folks hadn't eyes!"

Having concluded his speech, George Washington again buried his face in the lounge-cushion. Mr. Peacock, unfortunate man, looked as if his trials were greater than he could bear. Mrs. Peacock had relapsed into her usual stare of serenity.

"Mother's darlin' son is out of his mind; no wonder, after that dreadful jump. The lady will excuse him, mother knows."

"Umph!" groaned George Washington from the depth of the lounge-cushion.

The look of surprise on the lady's face by this time had deepened into amazement. Evidently the Peacocks differed slightly from any people whom she had ever met before.

"I hope that in time you will be able to procure another sofa as good as the one which you have lost," she said, quietly; "but there are many things which at present you need much more. I will send to your new address some bedding and comfortable clothing for your children, and if you will give me his measure, I will have a good new suit ordered for your son. And will you take this little gift from me, my boy, for being brave and noble? I hope that you will read it, remember it, and obey its precepts. Begin now to honor your father and mother, that your days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee," said the lady, going to George Washington, and taking from her muff a Bible bound richly in embossed velvet.

There was a sensitive cord somewhere in George Washington's soul which vibrated exquisitely to the sound of a sweet voice, to the rhythmic flow of melodious syllables. He was fascinated, subdued by the nameless charm outflowing from an harmonious presence, and from gentle, high-bred manners; yet in the midst of his very fascination the poor boy felt wofully ashamed because conscious of an utter want of these gracious gifts in himself.

He arose to his feet when the lady began to address him, but when he saw the Bible, he hung his head in great confusion.

"I don't deserve it; I knows I doesn't!" he exclaimed. "I doesn't deserve any such handsum talk, nor no sich handsum book. I'm a misrable chap, so I am. And I can't help it, cause Mamm ses I'm marked, and I believes I is. O dear, I'm such a mis-rab-ble chap!" Here the words began to blubber from his mouth, and the tears to bubble from his eyes, and again he plunged his face into the lounge-cushion.

"If you are as good as you can be, praying and trying all the time to be better, that is all that is required of you, my child," said the sweet lady soothingly, as she laid the Bible down by his side. Then remarking to Mrs. Peacock that the bedding should be sent to their new abode before night, with a gracious bow and winning smile, she gathered up her graceful robes and departed—one of God's human angels, whose lives of heavenly love save this city from the doom of Sodom.

She left a dreary blank in the room. Alas, when some people go, what a great want they leave behind them! A dead silence followed her departure. Mrs. Peacock, holding Serepty Louizy, swayed slowly back and forth, with her eyes shut, while Mr. Peacock looked as afflicted as usual.

"George Washington, I wish you didn't sass your mother afore folks," he said at last.

"I wish I didn't," sobbed George Washington from the lounge-cushion. "And I wish that Mamm didn't make me so blazin' mad, tellin' yarns that folks can see clean through that they ain't true. 'Tain't no use."

"No, I wish you wouldn't make us all silly and ridiculous afore folks, Miss Peacock," said her husband, deprecatingly. Whatever the internal weaknesses of his family might be, Mr. Peacock was too true a man to wish them to be made public.

"Lud!" said his wife, opening her eyes with perfect composure; "if you don't talk as if you thought you was somebody, nobody will treat you as if you was somebody."

Before night we separated from the Peacocks. In parting, Mrs. Peacock observed that she should still continue to neighbor; indeed she should. "A few blocks of houses wasn't agoin' to keep her from neighborin' with ladies. There was George Washington, we should probably see him every day; she didn't believe that he could live through a day without seein' Miss Hope;" adding, as her special private conviction, which we "mustn't mention for the world, that the Sunday-school was takin' effect, that George Washington was under a mighty powerful conviction for his sins; and, for her part, she should pray hard that the burden might be removed."

We went into a single room to which we had been directed by Mr. Peacock. "It wasn't good enough for us," he said, "but perhaps we could make it do until we could find a better." Alas! we could no longer afford a better one. We carried nothing into this little room but ourselves. If the other apartment had been plain, this was naked. The few articles of home comfort which we had gathered about us, our entire wardrobe, the new pictures, the white rose—all had been destroyed; and yet the fierce winter was upon us. We shrank from the thought of going into any new dreary boarding-house in our bereft condition. Besides, "board" had reached an almost fabulous price; and the cheapest would be a dearer mode of living than getting along in a single room alone by ourselves.

My heart sank within me as I thought of my lost pictures—the portrait of my mother, the death scene at Les Delices, the others almost as dear, still hanging unclaimed under the arabesque arches of Mrs. Skinher's luxurious parlors. "Oh, shall I ever get them back; will they ever be mine again?" I moaned, almost in despair. The hundred dollars which had been deposited in the bank in the autumn, as so much towards their redemption, had received no addition thus far during the winter, although it might very soon, if this calamitous fire had not occurred. Our housekeeping outfit had cost something; and then, just as we were fairly settled, the employers of Morna and Hope had said: "No more work until spring." The city swarmed with hungry seamstresses. Hundreds were working for a pittance which would not save them from death; hundreds more were besieging offices of law, their eyes wild with watching, their voices dissolved in tears, imploring men in power to secure to them the meagre wages for toil, of which they had been defrauded; hundreds more were workless, homeless, ready to die. The whole system of women-employment was false, cruel, iniquitous. God never intended that the needle should be an instrument of torture to woman. Sewing is one of her most natural, genial, poetic employments. Her most delicate fancies, her most gorgeous dreams, her purest aspirations, her very might to do and suffer, she has wrought into the garments which her hands have fashioned. Ever since Eve stitched together the pretty fig-leaf apron, women have taken to sewing as naturally as birds to singing. Sewing is one of the sweetest symbols of her femininity. It is the synonym of peace, of fireside chatter, of evening quiet, of heart communion, and of household joy.

The selfishness, the wickedness of her employers have made sewing the dreadful thing it is; changed it into a sorrow, a curse, a shame.

I could not be blind to all this truth, simply because my personal experience had been a happy exception. When I saw how women worked, and how they were paid, I was amazed at my good fortune. I was paid according to the value of my work—paid as an artist. But alas! Morna and Hope were ground down to the lowest starvation prices. Could I forget or grow indifferent to that fact? Their work growing less and less remunerative, at last had failed entirely. Had they died in the effort they could not have supported themselves with their needle.

May this faint reflex of the life of three, bring you *en rapport* with the thousands of orphaned and homeless girls, who in every city and town in the land are striving to live by the toil of their hands. If you could only probe down to the buried heart-life of that thin, wan-faced young girl who every day passes your door, you would find a story before whose crimson coloring Victoire's words would show cold and grey. "She is neatly dressed; I think that she is well off," you say: "She has all which in her condition of life she can need or expect." She has all that she expects, but not all that she needs. Because in barter for her bloom, for the very aroma of her youth, she managed to buy for herself through the dull, dragging year, food and shelter, don't say that she has all that she needs. She needs love and beauty; she needs sunlight and joy. Perhaps she is cursed with a hunger for the beautiful, and there is no sadder curse than to be born with the finest susceptibility to its subtlest shades, the most exquisite appreciation of its infinite delights, while it lies for ever beyond your mortal reach. To have all your nature in conflict with your fate, that is hard. Those frail and fettered fingers can hardly wrest from the clenched fist of fate the bread which perishes. Blessed is the man who with words of manly kindness fills this fainting heart with cheer, till summer rain, the songs of summer birds, the sereneness of summer sunlight fills its thirsting void with blessedness; the man who, according to his ability, gives honorable employment to the toiling women whom he knows; saying not, when the work is done: "There are your wages, just half what I pay my men; you are a woman, you know."

Blessed is the woman who stretches her fair jewelled hand out into the cold air of the world, gently drawing into her

sumptuous home a sad, solitary sister, whose only claim to love is her humanity, the seal of her womanhood stamped on her white brow and in her beseeching eyes—

> "For a woman, poor or rich,
> Despised or honored, is a human soul,
> And what her soul is, that she is herself."

Life, the present, the future, now thrust into my face every incentive for effort, for unceasing toil. Now, if ever, must gold be wrung from the sterile veins of the passing days. Once before I had scarcely rested or slept, as I painted away my soul in a dream of beauty. But now, for something far better than simply satisfying my selfish, beauty-loving heart, I toiled, yet alas! not long. My enfeebled constitution had never regained its lost elasticity. The buoyancy of untouched health, the exuberant vitality of an overflowing life, were no longer mine. Exposure, anxiety, privation, found it not hard to conquer. Bravely, hopefully, I battled with my foes, working and saying: "To-morrow I shall feel better," until the anniversary of my first sickness came; then, in obedience to some mysterious law, nature sank in prostration, and disease again struck to the roots of life. One year before, the full flood of being, suddenly rebuffed, rolled in upon my brain in torturing madness; but now, already so far spent, it only seemed to sink quietly away. The deadly typhus flowed in my veins; surely I yielded to its power, sinking down, down, down. It fills my memory, the shadow of a horrible dream. Oh, those awful days! famine as well as fever came into that little chamber. Sickness brought to me its alleviation; it benumbed my senses to the woes around me. In my state of semi-consciousness even the room itself seemed far away, and yet I had a dim perception of all occurring. I could see Morna place her finger on her lip, and with one look of her great, sad eyes silence the voluble tongue of Mrs. Peacock, who still persisted in "neighboring," and in coming to inquire after "poor Miss Victory." I could see George Washington, with shaking hand, lay down on the stand beside my bed some little delicacy which I could not touch; see him look at Hope, then depart in tiptoe silence, only to burst into a paroxysm of boisterous weeping the moment he reached the outside of the door. Morna and Hope! One of their beloved faces always hovered above me. Wrapped in shawls to keep themselves from perishing, I saw them chafe and breathe upon each other's hands, striving to warm the blue, frozen

fingers before coming to perform some tender office of love for me. In the hush of the night, when she fancied me asleep, I could hear Morna moan low and long, as if the stifled agony of her heart must have vent; hear the drear silence broken by Hope's whispered prayers: "Dear Saviour, spare our sister! Let the night pass. Give us the morning. We believe in Thee, with all our heart." Even then I knew that I should live.

Still I seemed to sink further and further away from life; seemed already enfolded in the apathy of death; I moved not, spoke not, yet knew all. Thus I opened my torpid eyes one bitter morning. The frost-rime in pearly crystallizations lay in thick embossage upon the little windows. There was no warmth of fire, no token of breakfast; the table with snowy cloth, the aromatic coffee, the creamy rolls, sweet as ambrosia in the mornings gone, were all wanting. Morna and Hope, close together, crouched where there should have been a fire.

"Oh, Morna, that moan goes through my heart!" whispered Hope.

"I can't help it; it *will* come."

"Try to believe, Morna. God will take care of us to-day."

"I know that I am wicked. I am almost tired of hearing you say that. If He is going to take care of us, I wish that He would. The rent is due to-day, and faith won't keep that dreadful agent from the door. He would not seem quite so frightful if it were not for *her*. Oh, if she should die! If he should thrust us in the street."

"God won't let him do so, Morna."

"He has done so to others, he is so fierce."

At this moment there was a sound of heavy feet upon the stairs, mingled with the thump of a ponderous cane, and in an instant after, three peremptory raps, which seemed to come from the hard head of that instrument, resounded on the rattling pannels of the door. Morna opened it, and there stood an elderly man with bristling hair and a blazing face. He was half-intoxicated, and one of those whom liquor makes a demon.

"Young woman, your rent is due, and I have come after it."

"I am very sorry, for we have not got it. I would have brought it to you if we had it."

"If you had it! That is a pretty story. If you can't pay your rent, what business have you to hire a room?"

"You know we have been able to pay it until now. On account of our sister's illness we have exhausted all that she had saved, and we cannot get any work."

"Can't get any work! that's a likely story. Go out to service or to the poor-house, where you belong. But your room or your rent I will have. Pretty set of tenants I have to deal with; no wonder times are hard." And he brought down his cane upon the floor as if he wished to shiver the whole house.

"No work and no money! That's not to the point! I want your rent! A shiftless set I have to deal with. I'll see the poor commissioner. I'll have you taken to Blackwell's Island, sick gal and all!"

"Please don't, don't speak so loud; she is very, very ill," implored Morna.

"Not so loud? Speak like that to me, huzzy?" he shouted, lifting his gold-headed cane as if to strike her. Morna quailed before him. But before he could utter more, another step, a distinct, manly step, light, rebounding, as if eager with expectation, was heard rapidly approaching; and in the rear another step, which I knew was George Washington's. At these sounds the wolf at our door moved away, growling loudly about the "county commissioner," "the poor-house," and "to-morrow."

"Can I find Mademoiselle Vernoid here?" asked a clear, sonorous voice, which swept with an electric thrill through all my wasted life, filling my veins with new vitality, kindling within me at once terror, and shame, and joy—bringing me back to a keen realization of the past, the present, the future. It was the voice of Henri Rochelle.

"Didn't I tell you you could find Miss Victory here? Isn't that her lyin' there, what looks as though she were dead?" said George Washington, respectfully, who by this time had thrust himself in at the door.

Not a word was spoken as he came to my side, and took my wasted, lifeless hand in his. I felt a live, warm tear drop on my cold forehead. Pride seemed dead. My lips were unsealed.

"*Mon ami, mon ami, êtes-vous venu?*" I whispered.

HENRI ROCHELLE'S IDEAL WOMAN.

Henri Rochelle parted from me when not a tint had faded, nor a petal fallen, nor a breath of perfume been drained away from the unfolding blossom of my early youth. I left him filled with presumptuous hope, believing without doubt that fate would give me all that I asked; that life would promptly gratify my most exacting and imperious demands. I left him, deriding with quiet arrogance his manly proffer of a household woman's quiet lot. Zenobia would do something great. She would create her own kingdom, an oasis amid the desert of the world, fairer than Palmyra of old. And if ever one reigned with her in this empire she declared it should be the soul of her most sacred choice, of her maidenhood's first consecrated love; else would she live on, regnant, solitary, to the end of her days.

Two years had scarcely passed, and Henri Rochelle crossed the ocean to find Zenobia abject in chains; not in the golden fetters of a clement Aurelian, but in the death-linked chains of two pitiless and ignoble conquerors—Disease and Poverty. All Zenobias wear chains at last. They bow their discrowned heads above their fallen sceptres, and beweep the splendor of their lost dominions; or they hold out their slender wrists for the gilded manacles of love, merging into subdued and wifely women, seeking no more a worldly kingdom or a crown. But few lie so utterly crushed under the heel of base-born despots as did this young throneless Zenobia on whom Henri Rochelle now looked. She had been too much of a woman after all, unaided, to wrest sceptre or empire from the grasp of Destiny.

The untaught child of two years ago, where was she with her wilful ways? Where the glory of her sheeny hair? The scintillations of her prodigally proud eyes? The haughty curl of the vermillion lips, which would curl in scorn lest they should melt into tenderness—the full veins flowing with joyous life, the delicious curves, the budding bloom of dawning youth—where were they now? The short, clammy curls clung close to the cold brow; the eyes were dim with suffering; the white rigid lips seemed already humbled, stiffened in death, even while they brokenly murmured: *Mon ami, mon ami, êtes-vous venu?*

When I whispered these words Lucifer was as dead to me as if he had never been born in the universe. All my girlish

defiance, all my garnered pride, were as if they had never existed.

"*Oui! Victoire, ma chère, je viens d'avoir soin de vous.*"

I heard these words of protective tenderness fall from the lips of Henri Rochelle. Once they would have filled me with resentment; now they only brought back to my memory suddenly, sweetly, an existence which seemed long departed. Once more stood before me the brother of Beatrice, Frederick's friend, my friend, whom neither coldness nor time had changed. The narrow, frozen chamber stretched away into the wide frescoed parlor of Les Delices; the icy winter air melted to the softness of a fragrant August afternoon—that afternoon when I sat by the open window, looking out upon the guardian mountains, upon the cone-crested pines, upon Frederick's grave, quiet under their tremulous shadow; when I sent back to the manly voice, as calmly kind to me then as now, my girlish words of lofty scorning. I forgot the two long years of life among strangers, in which I had learned, for the first time, the dreariness and weariness of poverty and pain; forgot that Henri Rochelle had prophesied both my failure and my fate; forgot how I had shunned him, how I had tried to hide myself away from his kindness; forgot all, save that this hour of extremity had restored to me a trusted friend.

Would time bring no revulsion? A revulsion had always followed my kindest thoughts for him. His manly care I had met with rebellion; his manly affection with cold rejection. Whether I would do the same again, in that hour I neither knew nor thought. If the old look of assurance still radiated from his fine features, my dim eyes could not see it. If the calm face still said: "You are mine," pride no longer stood mailed, armed, declaring: "I am not." I was weak and weary, nigh unto death; the voice of old-time kindness was passing sweet; that was all I knew.

He sat down by my bedside and counted my faltering pulse with the calmness of the practised physician. He lifted the sickly curls from my cold forehead with his moist, warm, health-giving hand, and said: "My child, you are going to get well."

At these words a placid gratitude diffused itself through my dumb heart. I nestled my forehead closer to the electric fingers, so soothing, so medicinal, so life-quickening seemed their touch.

"Yes! my little Victoire is going to get well and be herself again. Let me see; she is scarcely twenty," he said, as if to

himself. "The precociously blossoming brain has drained the juices of the slender spring-time stem. She needs dew, and sunshine, and wooing air, to win her back to bloom. Only twenty! a mere child in years. No; I shall not let the bud wither away like a wasted flower."

He followed my asking eyes, which had wandered beseechingly to the remotest corner of the room, into which Morna and Hope had shrunk away as if they deemed themselves sad intruders. Henri Rochelle arose and went to them. He took the hand of each, and said: "I am glad that Victoire has found such sisters. You have shared your hard fate together, poor children; but there is a better fortune in store for all of you; you shall not be separated." (Already he had commenced to plan for our future.) "My name is Rochelle. I have been Victoire's friend for years. Her only brother while he lived was my dearest companion."

"We thought that Mr. Rochelle had come," said Morna, in a low tone, "because you look just as Victoire described Mr. Rochelle."

"Indeed! then she *did* talk of me," he said, with a smile.

"You must change physicians. I shall make you a doctor's call to-morrow," he said, as he came back to my side, and took my hand as if parting.

"Don't go! don't go!" were the words which surged up from my deepest heart; but they did not reach the surface, or dissolve themselves in sound. I knew that the sunny world of France, which his coming had brought back to me, would vanish with him through the door; that all he would leave behind him would be the little frozen room, the sick, sad faces, and sadder hearts; yet the quick thought, "You have no claim," would not let me say: "Don't go!"

He prepared medicine and told Morna when and how it should be given. "It will stir her sluggish vitality," he said. "It will give her new strength with which to seize life. Life has well-nigh slipped away from her, but she will regain it in all its beauty. Watch her well till to-morrow." With a kind smile for Morna and Hope, with the healing hand again laid lightly on my brow, as if in silent blessing, he departed.

Not by word, or look, or manner, had he given the slightest token that he knew the room was without fire on that winter day, almost without furniture. He did not wound one of the sensitive hearts which throbbed within those dreary walls by brusquely inquiring: "Do you need anything?"

Henri Rochelle, with his fine perception of refinement and

sensibility in others, his innate, intuitive kindness, was never in the minutest particular less than the gentleman. Had he found us inside of palace walls, he might have greeted us with the same sympathetic gentleness, but could not have covered us with more thoughtful, delicate consideration.

He had gone but a little while when George Washington Peacock stole quietly in (he had learned to walk without making a noise), laden with good things, yet evidently only oppressed by the burden of a profound secret. He was also the herald of a ponderous load of coal, a portion of which soon cast a ruddy glow upon the frosty walls. "That old wolf ain't a comin' no more to knock his old stick at this door as if he wanted to kill Miss Victory stun' dead. He ain't a comin' no more to scare you and Miss Hope. I'm knowin' to the fact," said George Washington. Yet no one asked him how or why he knew the fact.

The morning brought my new physician, the after mornings brought him, and day by day, slowly yet surely, I drew nearer to health. Save in these daily brief professional calls we saw nothing of Henry Rochelle. Promptly to the moment he came, and as promptly went away. Without a breath of vulgar hurry or bustle, he still appeared like one full of occupation, who had few minutes to give to pleasure, however harmless. He often entered the room with a pre-occupied air, as if his thought was full; then he stood before me the very Henri Rochelle of lang syne—cold, statuesque. I suspected that he had other patients, and therefore was not at all surprised when he said one morning: "I have a very dangerous case upon my hands, which for the present claims my undivided attention. I mention it because it is possible, barely possible, that I may not be able to call on you to-morrow. If not, you will remember the reason, Victoire. I like to watch your daily progress, but my absence will not retard it, as you are beyond danger of relapse."

The universe held no object which could make him forget his duty. The tenderest instinct of his heart could not interfere with the business of his brain.

In the meantime, comfort after comfort stole almost unawares into our little chamber. No one seemed cognizant of our wants; yet they were all anticipated, supplied almost before we were conscious that they existed. George Washington Peacock still continued the silent bearer of dispatches, and each time he appeared, seemed more burdened with the weight of his secret. His oppressively conscious look said: "Do ask

me who sent the gift?" But no one asked. A painful, embarrassing spell rested upon all.

But after weeks of silence, one morning I called George Washington to my side and inquired: "Where did Mr. Rochelle find you, George?"

"He found me in the street; there warn't nowhere else he could find me."

"Tell me all about it, George; will you?"

"I ain't to tell some things. I ain't to say nothin' about nothin'. I'll be ——, there! I didn't say it; did I, Miss Victory? Miss Hope, I didn't say it! and I'll ——, there! I didn't say *that*, nuther, and I ain't never goin' to, that's what I wanted to say."

"Tell me in few words as you can where Mr. Rochelle first found you, that will be a good boy, George Washington."

"I don't know nothin' about usin' few words. I use what words come. I can't use no other. Don't no handsum' words come to me, not a ——, there! I didn't say *that*—and I won't say that; I'll be ——. Oh, dear! 'tain't much use tryin'. I don't know why I was made such an ugly chap, when no one else ain't. I never could make it clear why I had to be marked wicked, anyhow. I'd like to know, I'll be ——. Oh, there! I didn't say it."

"Miss Victoire is very weak and can't listen long; tell her as soon as you can, George," said Morna kindly.

"Mr. Rochel' seed me in the street; there warn't nowhere else to see me. Wasn't I standin' in the city park afore the City-Hall? Wasn't I yellin' an' restin' from yellin'? Didn't I have a mighty batch of *Times* to sell? Didn't I want to sell 'em orful? Didn't I want to buy some oranges for Miss Victory, and give all the rest of the money to Miss Hope, 'cause I knowed she needed it? Didn't I holler louder nor ever I hollered afore: *Mornin' Times!* 'rival of the Hung'ry! I know'd it wasn't a lie, but the truth. The Hung'ry had come to port, and the truth helped me to holler louder. I know'd Miss Victory needed the oranges, that all of yer needed the money; that helped me to holler louder. 'Course I had to rest, but when a lot of fine gentlemen kem along from the post-office, didn't I put in like thunder? Oh, how I hollered! an' when the gran'est gentleman of all kem along, didn't I almost split my throat yellin' '*Morning Times*, 'rival of the Hung'ry!'

"I know'd he'd stop, 'fore he got up, and didn't he? And

wasn't he Mr. Rochel, the finest gentleman in town? An' when I han'ed him the paper didn't he look straight at my little finger, an' not at the paper at all? And didn't the finger have the ring on that Miss Victory gev' me for learnin' a hundred verses in St. John?

"'Where did you get that ring?' sez he.

"'It was guv to me,' sez I.

"'Who guv it to you?' he said, quick as lightning.

"'Miss Victory Verner,' sez I, 'the lovliest lady in the land, but one; 'cause I 'membered how many times you said: 'George Washington, you're a good boy,' jest the same as if you didn't know I'm marked, for mamm sez I'm marked, and I believes I is. It's so all-fired hard to be good, I'll be —— there! I didn't say it! but I did say Miss Victory is the lovliest lady in the land but one, and bust out a bellerin'. I thought how sick you were, Miss Victory; how like enough you'd die; so I bellered and bellered. And when he said, 'Will you show me where she is?' didn't I start as swift as ever I could, a bellerin' an' bellerin', an' couldn't stop, an' didn't stop? Didn't a whole crowd come rushin' after, to see what in hell was the matter? Oh, dear! I didn't mean to say it; oh, dear! 'taint no use tryin' to leave the swearin' out, when the devil's in you. But oh, Mr. Rochel haint got no devil in him. He's the finest gentleman what draws the breath of life. Don't he pay me for every step I take, when I don't want nothing, jist cause it's him? Ain't he gran'? Ain't he splendid? Haint I ben to his rooms? Ain't they all crammed with books, and stuffed with picturs; an' all hung with velvet curtains the color of gold? Oh, if I could be just who I want to be, wouldn't I be Mr. Rochel, an' wouldn't I—(here he looked at Hope) 'Taint no use sayin' nothin' about nothin'."

"You have said enough, George, and said it as well as you could; that is being a good boy. Don't be discouraged, we all like you," said Morna.

"Miss Hope don't care nothin' about me; an' I wouldn't if I was her, 'cause I ain't no such sort a chap she ought to like," replied the boy mournfully.

The revulsion came—came with the full consciousness, the clear realization of my situation. Chagrin, shame, humiliation, agony, smote my soul low at once. My calmness, resignation, quiescence, had all been made of the torpor of disease. A captive, helpless, almost senseless, was it strange that I had been the passive recipient of his bounty? Now the great

flood of calm was surging with returning life. A second time had life come back after having been swept almost hopelessly away, but, in its return, where was the joyous rush, the elastic rebound of its morning? Where was the glorious health, the unquestioning faith in my own future, which made me so gaily audacious when I first proclaimed: " Monsieur Rochelle, I will not marry you ?" I knew nothing of life then—of the life of toil, and want, and weary waiting. Alas! I knew something of such a life now. Then all success had seemed possible to my proud, unwounded nerves, to my believing brain, to my hilarious heart.

Now I had learned that mine was not the strong, supple muscle which sways and bends to the rough breath of life, but the finer fibre which is bruised by its friction and broken by its pressure. Yes, I knew now what I did not then, that a brave will cannot always sustain a fainting body; that it is much easier to dream of working out a splendid destiny than it is to do it, at least for a woman. Then, when I returned the kindness of Henri Rochelle with haughty scorn, I had at least this palliation, that personally I owed him nothing. But now what did I not owe him? Shelter, care, life, he had given me; more numberless, nameless kindnesses he daily poured into my life. How could I be unkind or ungrateful now? How could I ever repay him? Ah, that was the humiliating question! In vain I consoled myself with the thought that soon I should be able to go to work again. If I did, years would pass before I could pay my heavily accumulated debts; and then how frail had become the tenure of my health; it had failed me utterly twice in the time of sorest need; how could I depend on it now for vigor to battle and to conquer necessity! Vainly pride writhed with the new pain of its daily inflicted wounds; vainly, as all my early vaunting pressed back upon my memory. Oh, if it only had been some one else, any one else, upon whom I had become dependent! Why had not destiny spared me this humiliation? His was a man's triumph, a man's every-day triumph.

How many, who watch a young girl to go forth alone to meet the advancing host of life, to struggle, to conquer, to bear off the palm of victory unaided, see her flag and faint before the contest is half won! She has a brave heart, a soaring soul; but she has also the frail feminine fibre that was made for peace, not for strife. The manly muscle must be wedded to those quivering nerves, the manly blood must

strike its vigor through those fainting pulses; the manly arm must lay the foundations of her earthly home, that she may afterwards garland it with all the graces of her melodious nature.

More than Henri Rochelle had ever prophesied of defeat had come to me. On the borders of death I became conscious of this fact, and, as I came slowly back to life, with what an eager, jealous eye I watched his face, to see if it gave token of his triumph. But no; I never saw but one look in his eyes as he turned them upon me—a look of thoughtful, almost anxious tenderness. Now I was apprised of all the royal magnanimity of his manhood. In reply to my scornful vaunting, he once uttered calm words of unvarnished truth; but he was incapable of exulting over the fact that time had proved him right and me wrong. He could never have uttered the womanish words: "There, I told you so! It's just as I prophesied!"

Instead, he had never alluded to our past life. If the punctilious politeness of the stranger no longer characterized his manner, neither did the familiarity of the intimate friend. By no look, nor word, nor action did he claim any added deference in return for the daily blessings with which he covered us. He seemed to attach no importance whatever to what he did, but to do it as a simple matter of course. If I failed to find in his expressive eyes the old assertion: "You are mine," it was because it was now fused into all his actions. I was too weak to be an antagonist; I was unequal to positive rebellion; there I lay, subjugated, helpless. There was nothing in the wasted features, in the tremulous voice, to call back to that good man's face the past look of certain possession. Yet I felt its existence none the less because it was now invisible. It surrounded him like an atmosphere; it pervaded all he did; yet in that intangible way which gave me no right to seize it or resist it, although it sank into my nature with the unerring force of conviction.

More, when I looked on him in a dim, mysterious sense, I felt that I belonged to him. I sickened with the thought; I tried to banish it, stifle it, deaden it; in silent anguish I prayed to be delivered from it, yet in vain. I only looked into the face of that calm, strong man, to feel that, at some time in the history of our souls, my very being had been given to him as his inalienable portion. Indistinct as a vaguely remembered dream, it seemed to lie far back in my consciousness—that time in the past eternity when my soul was committed to his keep-

ing. I belonged to him! Against this truth, dimly revealed to me as it had ever been, I had so persistently rebelled. I wished the privilege of seeking my own destiny.. I resisted that which came to me unsought and undesired.

Still how immeasurable seemed the distance between us. Could he ever draw me until I should stand by his side, on that high isolated plane? Could I pass into his sphere of thought aud feeling, and live contented, happy? My constant benefactor, my tried and tender friend, my soul melted in gratitude while I thought of him; but it was only gratitude; for when I remembered that already he had almost won the right to triumph and take me, I grew rigid, stony. I knew that the moment was near at hand when once more he would talk to me calmly, kindly, of my future; that he patiently waited the hour when I should have gained sufficient strength to endure such a conversation without undue excitement. There was no danger of his being in haste. Henri Rochelle never hurried. He was made in the image of God in this respect as well as others.

My convalescence brought another cause of anxiety. During my extreme illness, Morna had lost every personal consideration in her solicitude for me; but with my dawning health came her reaction also. Sadder, more despairing than ever grew the glorious eyes.

"This life of dependence must cease; it is too dreadful," at last she said. "It is not so distressing for you, Victoire; you are receiving kindness from a tried and honored friend—one whom you trust without fear, one who loves you. Your gratitude will be to him a recompense; and if it were not, when you regain your health, you can repay him in hard gold. It is very different with us. We have no prospect of ever being able to repay him. We have no claim upon him; none. We are only here by sufferance. Mr. Rochelle is kind, very kind; it is not in his nature to be otherwise; besides, he never forgets that we are dear to you. But I cannot accept, much less take advantage, of his generous kindness. You no longer need constant nursing; thus you won't think me neglectful if I go and see if it is possible to find employment; will you, dear? There must be a change!"

"Yes, there must be a change!" I said, after her. My feelings were so near akin to hers, I could not utter a word of remonstrance.

She wheeled my couch to the window, a soft, soothing couch, which entered the room unannounced and took up its abode

with us without explanation. She hovered about me, caressing my head, adjusting my pillows, performing numberless little unnecessary attentions which only the most delicate thought, the tenderest heart could devise, and all in the quiet, undemonstrative manner so like her, lingering as if she longed to coin an excuse to stay; lingering as if she dreaded nothing so much as to depart, and yet suddenly wrenching herself away at last.

"You know that I will come back as soon as I can," she said, reopening the door after she had passed out, as if she half reproached herself for going, yet knew not how to remain. For an instant her eyes pervaded me with their dewy, radiant mournfulness; then the door closed softly (Morna never slammed doors), and I listened sadly to the low retreating fall of her little feet.

Hope had yielded to Morna's entreaties not to forget all that she knew, and, until employment could be found, went daily to glean what crums of knowledge she could find at No. —— public school. I was left alone. There was a pleasant stir of life in my veins—new, low, and quiet. To be sure I had nothing particular to live for; the world did not need me, I knew; yet I liked to live, I was glad that I was getting well. There is a delight in simple sensuous existence, and we are never so conscious of it as when our senses are just loosed from the festering chains of disease. The light of day, the breath of nature, how deliciously they thrill along our pain-quickened nerves; how healingly, how lovingly they kiss our wasted faces! A resplendent March sun looked full upon mine with the first touch of spring warmth in its glory. I nestled in its radiance. I drank, and drank, yet felt that I could not drink enough of its life-inspiring splendor. Quiescently, dreamily, as invalids will, I watched the golden motes dance in a shimmering shaft of light which smote my couch through the broad interstice of a half-open shutter.

I was employed in this wise when Henri Rochelle came to make his morning call. Evidently at this time he was troubled by no very dangerous case. His mind, so often abstracted and absorbed, seemed not at all pre-occupied. Instead of departing according to his custom as soon as his professional questions were asked and answered, he sat down with an air of ease and leisure which indicated that he did not intend to trouble his watch-pocket for some time to come. Since the morning in which he first beheld me, after our years of separation, he had never shown any warmer interest in me than a

brother might have manifested; he never had, by his manner, made me feel that he was making me the special object of his observation or thought. But now I was conscious that his mind was concentrated upon me; that he was thinking of me alone, not of his patient, but of Victoire. I grew wretchedly self-conscious and embarrassed. Although I had seen him every day for weeks, for the first time I sat face to face, thought to thought, with the Henri Rochelle of the past. How I longed to bring back the half-slumbrous minute just departed, in which I forgot that there was a Henri Rochelle, or that aught existed in the universe save golden motes dancing in a sunbeam.

"You realize my hopes this morning, Victoire. For the first time I see the decided improvement which I have so much desired. You are almost well, child; do you know it? Disease has left you. You only want revivifying. The soft curves, the delicate bloom, will soon come back; you are too young to lose them. Let me see, it is March; April, May, June—in June you will look like the little girl whom I knew in France; the very same. I have not quite known the American Victoire," he said, in his calm, kind voice.

"I shall owe the change to you. You have saved my life, Monsieur Rochelle. I am sure I am grateful. I hope that I shall live to pay you, in part at least, the great debt I owe you."

"I expect that you will live to pay me all that you owe me and much more. Your gratitude is entirely too active. You dwell upon it, and upon the great debt which you half fear you may not be able to pay, till you manage to make a little fever every day out of sheer anxiety. Your cheeks are flushing now at the very thought. Don't disturb yourself. You shall have all of your life to pay it in, and I shall ask no interest."

"I don't like to think that I must be burdened with the knowledge of a debt all my life. I want to be free to pour out spontaneous gifts. It is unpleasant to feel that we *owe* all that we can bestow, and more."

"You owe me nothing, Victoire; nothing."

"Monsieur Rochelle, I owe more than I can ever repay; and the thought vexes me. I would rather owe any one than you."

"I know that you would. But if you are to owe at all, you had far better owe me than any one else."

"Why?"

"Because I am your only earthly protector. I only reproach myself that I have not taken better care of you."

"I cannot imagine by what authority you reproach yourself. More than two years ago did I not tell you that God was my protector, and that I did not want you to take care of me; that I could take care of myself, Monsieur Rochelle?"

"Yes, I remember all that you said to me, which by no means lessened my responsibility. I could not endure the thought of annoying you, or of being intrusive; yet I have never seen a moment, since Frederick died, when I have not felt that your interest and happiness were, in a measure, committed to my care, and must ever remain so, unless you chose for yourself a nearer protector."

"Monsieur Rochelle, many women live and die who never have any protector but God. If He designed that they should have another, He would probably have given them one. You speak as if a woman could not live unless there lived a man to take care of her. Don't you think there are women who can take care of themselves as well as if they were men?"

"A few, a very few, Victoire. The world imperatively demands that all men should be masculine, and all women feminine; but nature, wilful and fitful, often sees fit to make masculine women and feminine men. There are apparent women who are intellectually men; there are nominal men who are inwardly women. For this reason, all along the path of life, in the market, in the street, in the shop, the school, the house, there are women who equal men in trade, in knowledge, in capacity, and in the iron will which penetrates through the world, crushing and driving down before it every object which lies in its way. Such women stand on the same plateau with men, grapple life and conquer it with a man's force and a man's weapons. They are women, but not the normal woman; not the mother, sister, wife, whom man loves, serves, protects; not the serene neighbor by his side; the benign, beautiful spirit whom man worships as the visible incarnation of his own highest spiritual self-hood; the embodied symbol of the holier life which will at last redeem him from depravity, and ally him to God."

"Will you go on, Monsieur Rochelle? I like to hear you. This lovely ideal woman of yours, is she incapable of taking care of herself? What if there is no manly arm upon which she has a right to lean?"

"No, she is not incapable of taking care of herself; she will do so in a gentle, womanly way. But all my nature is moved with pity when I see such a woman standing in the world alone. If she is not less an intellectual, she is a more affectional and spiritual being than man, and knows by inspiration what he is taught by reason. Because the texture of her brain is finer, her nerves more delicately strung, her muscle more supple and yielding, her heart more sensitive and tenderly emotional, is the reason why she is jarred and rudely bruised by shocks which scarcely touch him; why she falls wounded in the brunt of the battle, while he fights on, unwearied and unharmed. This is no ideal woman, Victoire; she is the God-made woman, the woman of the household and of the heart. She is not depressed in the scale of being, because man stands as her defender in the great angry world. She knows that she has not his physical power, his passion, his courage, his manhood. She is content that he, the slave of necessity and duty, finds in her his perpetual inspiration. She is to him God's loveliest revelation. In her soul he finds transfigured his purest desires, his most ineffable dreams. It is her life to love and to bless; in this life lies the charm which wins his deathless worship. He has passion and intellect, yet he knows that he lacks the pure spontaneous affection, the serene spiritual force of the fair woman by his side. For him the whole world is gladder for the music of her voice. 'The common air grows tonic with her presence.' He smoothes the rugged life-path for her frailer feet. She brightens life for him by making a joyous home, peopling it with childish creatures; garlanding it with beauty, till every object blossoms in unimagined grace. I know that this woman often walks alone through the world, with no one to stand between her and the hardest necessity. For this reason I long to see her avenues of employment widened, her sphere of mental and physical activity enlarged, new employments and professions brought within her reach, that, if her heart cannot have all the love which it needs, at least life may be a little more to her than one long want, one unending, inexorable, degrading task; that, if fate defrauds her of household joy and manly cherishing, still her existence may be filled with lofty endeavor and noble success. It is the highest honor conferred upon man that he may be the protector of such a woman. It is the purest triumph of her being that she, of all created creatures, is the object of his deathless love. Will you be this woman, Victoire?"

"That is impossible, because nature has not given me her delectable graces."

"With all your proud rebellion, Victoire, you are a very woman through and through. With all your high aspiring, you would never burst a single barrier which nature or custom has imposed upon your sex, in order to do something great. There are women who will do so, but not you. You are a luxuriant but delicate plant that can only strike root in a genial soil. The quickening sun, the healing dew, the summer rain must feed and nourish you, or your soul will never emit its richest fragrance, or bear its most delicious fruit. The hurricane would rend you. Life's wind and rain would scathe, and dwarf, and deform you. You have genius, Victoire. You have its acute, subtle, susceptible organism; and just so far as your nature is finer and more sensitive than the world's driving crowd, are you unfitted for positive contact with it. You could exist, but scarcely live in the great world of greed and gain. Harder natures would run against you, chafe you, hurt you, sharpen you, till existence would grow to be a torment. Talent, sturdy, material, practical talent, daring and doing all things, delights to push its way hard-fisted, barefaced through the blistering highway of the world; but genius effloresces in perfect flower only amid gracious circumstances; for its full development it needs sheltered ways and gentle, tender influences. You need all this; you need a home and a protector, Victoire."

"You told me that long ago. I wish you would tell me something new. I like your abstract discourse better than your personal application, Mr. Rochelle."

"There, I like that touch of your old spirit; now I know that you are almost well. If I only tell you a few more times that you need a protector, you will be perfectly restored. I like a wilful woman, provided she is not stubborn. If she is only wilful, she will contend a little while for her own way, and then joy in following you out of pure contrition for her waywardness. I have felt a tender solicitude for the pale, quiet American Victoire, but I cannot say that she charms me more than the Victoire whom I knew in France, with her lustrous eyes and Empress ways."

"When her Empress ways came in collision with your strong will, you were not very much charmed with her; were you, Mr. Rochelle?"

"Yes, she charmed me then; but not so much as she grieved me. I was not angry; I did not blame her. I was

sad when I thought of the long, hard lesson of life which she had to learn. I was disappointed that I could not save her from learning that lesson alone among strangers; for myself, I felt that I could afford to wait. I knew that her high, delicately-strung soul needed only a little toning down to emit a soft, steady flame of affection. I only feared that in the fierce crucible of the world its fine temper would be destroyed; that it would be crushed and broken. When I first beheld you in this room, I feared that the work was accomplished; but with returning health I see that your soul scintillates as finely as ever. As finely, yet a little more softly; the two years of actual life have tempered you quite enough, my poor child."

"I don't like to have you call me 'poor child' in that pitying way. I don't want you to pity me in that sublime sort of a tone, as if you were Jove sitting on Olympus, and I a wounded worm at your feet that you are sorry for because it is hurt. I wish that you would stop pitying me, Monsieur Rochelle."

"I am half sorry that I have vexed you, and only half sorry. Anything to banish the sick, half dead American Victoire, and bring back the radiant maiden whom I remember, and can scarcely wait to see. There! You are almost the same. There is a pink tint on your cheek, like the blush on an ocean shell. But those short, clustering curls make your head look like a little boy's. I miss the long, flossy, flowing ones. Those clinging, tendril-like curls were always to me the soft insignia of your womanhood, which had a silent way of mocking your proud Athena words. When they come back, you will be the very little girl who used to sit in a distant corner of a Parisian *salon*, sewing, sketching, and listening, while Frederick and his friend talked."

"Listening! I never listened. I could not have listened to such tedious talk. I liked my own thoughts wonderfully better. I thought you very tiresome, Monsieur Rochelle."

"Probably you thought right. It was a great slip of memory for me to say that you listened. I know that you never did. I recollect, too, that it was your perfect indifference which first interested and then charmed me. You seemed joyously isolated and unconscious; rare states for a young girl. Had you been obtrusive and eager for discussion, the charm would have been broken. I met ladies in fashionable *salons* who could discuss the component parts of the blood and bones like scientific savans; feminine metaphysicians, who

could pick human nature to pieces, thread by thread; but there was no attractive electricity in their cold receptive minds; there was no warmth in their brilliancy. No man ever loved a woman simply for her intellect, however rare. Intellect, keen, cold, aggressive, antagonistic, is in itself repellant; it never kindles a warmer feeling than admiration. But intellect, suffused with the warm life of the heart, carries with it an irresistible fascination. An intellectual woman, whose affections are as efflorescent as her brain, whose love is as living and glowing as her thought, is the one of all others who can fill the nature of a large-souled man. A monotonous spaniel-like creature, all affection and no brain, in time would fill him with sickening satiety; but this enkindling creature brings into his life endless variety and infinite love."

"Then, you think a woman's charm is personal?" I asked.

"A woman's charm is always personal, never abstract or intellectual. Not what she thinks, but what she is, makes her lovely or unlovely, attractive or repelling. Man seeks in her the highest object of personal love. It is her individuality, the magnetism of her being, filling all the atmosphere which she breathes with its subtle radiations, her own sacred self, which wins. Thus in your silence you won me, Victoire. I beheld in you my feminine counterpart; in you found all that my soul needed, yet had not.

"I have never told you why I was so long in seeking you," he continued, as I slipped no words into the silence. "I knew that time only could bring a change to your determinations. I knew also that I could not anticipate or hasten that change. While you had means of support I resolved not to intrude upon you; but before you would have spent your last remittance, I determined to sail for New York. The sickness of my father, his subsequent death, delayed my coming; thus it was autumn before I reached America. I went immediately to your address, ——— place. 'Miss Vernoid had gone; went in May; didn't know where she went to,' the lady of the house said. 'Miss Vernoid had been unfortunate; had had a long fit of sickness, which involved her in debt. Miss Vernoid was proud, and probably did not wish her friends to find her; but it was the lady's opinion that she needed to be taken care of by somebody.' I was leaving in utter disappointment, when an Irish servant, who overheard your name in the hall, cried out: 'Deed an' I am knowin' if it's Miss Ver——, I can't say it, ye're wanting. 'Deed I knows where she is, the darlin' young leddy I nursit with me own

hands.' 'Kate, be silent,' said the lady. But Kate did not choose to be silent. She went on with a long story, and a horrible one, too, I thought. I listened only till I could hear the number of your new place of abode: 'A mighty shabby place for the like of her, ye'll find it,' said Kate, as I departed. I found it gloomy and shabby enough, but you were not there. 'She and two other girls had gone to keepin' house, nobody knew where,' was all that I could learn. I left the dark abode wretched, full of apprehension. For the first time, it occurred to me to advertise. I did so, and without avail. For months, day and night, I sought you fruitlessly; till Providence led me across the path of the redoubtable George Washington Peacock, when I found you—found you, and not too late to save your life."

The manly voice was tremulous with suppressed emotion. Its vibrations touched my heart; the great tears dropped upon my wasted fingers. "Your husband and home wait for you, Victoire. Think of what I have said."

As he uttered these words Morna entered, looking pale and weary. He arose and greeted her. He offered her his hand, saying gently: "You have walked too far. I must begin to take care of you. I can't have you exchange places with Victoire. Don't take life too hard, my child. Life has a richer portion in store for you."

The warm blood struck through the pallid cheek, as she lifted her soul-eyes to his.

BEL EDEN.

"Henri Rochelle, if you still insist upon making me your wedded wife, remember upon you must rest the responsibility of the act and its consequences."

"I am only too ready to accept the responsibility and consequences of making you my wife, Victoire."

"You know that never, by desire or deed, have I sought or coveted that place?"

"Yes, proud child, I know all that. If I had taken only a superficial view of your character, or of your girlish refusal, I should have felt that I compromised my manhood by my continued importuning. But I looked below the surface of both. In the likeness and unlikeness of our natures, in our opposite temperaments, in the kinship of our tastes and aspirations, I

see the elements which will be wrought by time into an indissoluble bond, making us in soul eternally one."

"I feel at present that we are decidedly two. How long a space will time occupy in perfecting our spirit union, Monsieur—a lifetime?"

"No. Already I cleave to you as I never did to father or mother. Even now you cannot well spare me out of your life. You do not dislike me, Victoire; no, you like me. If you did not, I would not wish you to marry me until you did. But as I told you long ago, for the passion-bloom of love I can afford to wait."

It was the very same quietly assured tone which said years before: "I can wait." Yet now it did not rasp or fret me, for I had grown to a subtler appreciation of his nature, and knew that his words were not the offering of presumption, but of a deep insight into the soul.

Thus I believed as I said to him: "You are the most calmly self-possessed person I ever knew. You measure time as God measures it. One has only to take in the circle of your plans and to listen to the tone in which you say: 'I can wait,' to believe that your mortal life cannot be bounded by the little arc of three-score years and ten. How long can you afford to wait for love to flower in my heart for you?"

"A lifetime, if it were necessary. Love is of everlasting growth; it never comes to full flower here; in the coming life it will develop glory which it can never do in this."

"Those sound like Frederick's words," I said. "He was always talking in that far-off, heavenly way, which used to thrill me with its sweetness while it filled me with torment, because with all my trying I could not sympathize with its abstract beauty. You, as well as he, are abstract, with this difference, that he was spirituelle, while you are purely and often repellingly intellectual. How did you ever come to love such a little earthworm as me?"

"Because you are so earthly, or, in other words, so human, is the very reason why I love you. In your profound capacity for affection, in your eager hunger for beauty and happiness, lie half your charms," he answered.

"I am hungry for beauty and happiness. But if I could win for my portion the beauty and happiness which I know are possible on earth, I fear that I should never sigh for the beauty or happiness of heaven, or pause to analyse what love is like in the celestial kingdom. Do you know, after my long banishment, as I again catch a glimpse of the green earth, I

feel through all my being that I am as much in love with her as ever. There is nothing I want so much this moment as to go and touch my lips to those violets in the grass; to lay my heart close to the heart of the budding earth, and feel once more its deep, delicious throbs. I would like to thrust my hand under the fragrant turf, into the moist soil, just to feel the quickening life start through its teeming pores. I have been so long imprisoned within dusty streets and mouldy walls, I had ceased to realize, although I had not forgotten, all that nature had been to me. Oh, how I want those flowers, those anemones, mottling the grass with their white and rosy bloom. They have stayed behind after all their mates have gone, just to see how May looks. I want to go and get them; I want to feel the healthful earth under my feet once more; it will give me back an old sensation—so old that it will be delightful as new."

"The horses can be stopped and you may go after them. But I seriously object to your 'laying your heart on the heart of the budding earth;' it is altogether too damp. A poetic idea, but, if made an act, it will give you a cold. You can't afford to take a cold now, Victoire," said Henri Rochelle, the literal philosopher.

"Do you think that I ever get up scenes to order, Monsieur?" I asked. "A third person, a mere gazer-on, is as much in the way when we talk with nature as when we converse with human beings. The unwelcomed third person is the resisting medium which always disturbs the equilibrium of the electrical currents flowing from soul to soul. Had I thus suddenly opened my eyes upon nature alone, after my long exile from her, I know not what crazy things I might have done; but in the presence of another I shall not make myself absurd."

"You take everything too terribly in earnest. You have made life so earnest, that it has become a pain, Victoire. But you may have your anemones and violets. I am going after those dandelions, spangling with gold the skirt of the hedge yonder. I like dandelions," said Henri Rochelle, springing from the carriage in which we were seated, and holding out his hand for me.

"Take in long breaths of this May wind," he added; "it will exhilarate you more than the purest juice of the most delicious grape."

So I stood on the fragrant sod, and drank until intoxicated, the perfume, the dew, the sunshine. How long we had been

strangers, the blossoming earth and I! The greeting kiss of the beloved one after a wintry absence could not have filled me with a more delicious joy, than did the toying breath of the southern wind. It was a morning in May, and there was more of summer warmth in her smile than she often bestows on the western world. The air distilled its vivific wine from the earth's overflowing veins; from quickened roots, and swelling bulbs, and incense-dripping leaves; from myriads of pink and milky blossoms, rippling through the open spaces of the hills, flowing over the illimitable plains in undulating oceans of new-born bloom.

We were on one of the loveliest of the many lovely roads which lead to the garden-like country which environs New York. We stood many feet above the ocean, and, as my eye looked across the vast prospect, I saw for the first time the imperial plan on which nature laid out the site and surroundings of the metropolis of the West. There stretched the city along the distant shore, all its incongruities, its commercial ugliness, its old-time shabbiness, its stark new splendor, merged into one grand ærial outline, showing mellow through the morning mist. I saw the dun steeple of St. Paul peer through its umbrageous setting; the aspiring spire of Trinity glittering against the blue heaven; the green reach of the Battery stealing down to nestle against the cheek of the alluring sea. A buoyant sheet of flame, the broad bay flickered in the dazzling light and rosy shadow of the morning. Long Island lifted up its palace-crowned terraces. Bedloe's Island gleamed like an emerald set in a still more gleaming auriole. On the thither side of the open door of the sea, Staten Island soared towards the sky like a shrine, inviting the world's wanderers here to rest to return thanks for their prosperous voyages.

Far and near the wide waters were palpitant with human life; cities of ships crowded against the sheltering shore. Pennants rippled in the crystalline ether. Sails throbbed against the near and farther heaven, white as the billowy clouds which came down to greet them. Regnant steamers sped through the gateway of the hemisphere, to and fro from immemorial climes. I forgot the flowers in my hand which I had just stolen from their grassy homes, while I looked away upon one of the grandest sights which the earth can show—the bay of New York.

"What are you thinking about, Victoire?" asked Henri Rochelle.

"I am thinking that I owe this enchanting sight to you. I never realized before on what a magnificent scale nature displays herself within sight of the brick walls of New York," I said, as we re-entered the carriage.

Far behind were left the wooded shore of Hoboken, the green heights of Weehawken, as we rode slowly along the castellated banks of the Hudson, America's classic river. Her regal river, beside whose delicious waters genius loves to abide and art to rear its palaces. The river of all times, along whose shore will wander the pilgrim of the future to worship beside crumbling shrines for ever, holy as the mortal home of the immortal dead. Through the trees which interlaced the road with their delicate tracery, we caught broad gleams of the river. I saw the waters flash and trail along their battlemented banks, in long reaches of quivering sunshine; saw the violet shadows which fell on their faces from the depth of winged clouds; saw them glide gracefully away under cover of island and hill, close to green shores, out to the beguiling ocean. Steamboats rode on with their convoluted banners of smoke streaming far behind them. Sloops bent and buoyed to the eddying breezes. Yachts with white wings flashed hither and thither, or, lazy things, dozed with the sleepy gales.

The magnificent landscape stretching along its banks displayed the grandeur of nature with the æsthetic culture of art. Everywhere were seen the dawning signs of luxury which mark the growth of a culminating civilization. Costly villas stood in groves and gardens gazing from the spurs of the embowered hills, or peering through the embrasures of the valleys. Afar on stretched sylvan vistas, towns and villages, church-tower and spire glittering against the distant sky in the light of that resplendent morning.

"You accuse me of being abstract, Victoire," said Henri Rochelle; "but if I wander away in my words, you do in your thoughts. You are an illusive creature; you are as subtle as light. When I think that I hold you fairly within the arc of my thoughts, I look at you only to see that you have slipped away out into a visionary realm, where I cannot even pursue you. For the last ten minutes you have been looking into the distance as if you saw into futurity. You have not even taken the trouble to deny my assertion that you like me. Did you hear it, Victoire?"

"Hear it! Indeed I did. Why should I deny the truth? I came to the conclusion some time ago that I like you, Mon-

sieur Rochelle. I liked you long ago as Beatrice's brother, as Frederick's dearest friend. I like you now as my benefactor, and as the noblest man I know."

"I knew that you would own that you liked me at last. Then, Victoire, why your persistent, I may say your almost perverse refusal to marry me?"

"Not because I do not like you at all, but because there is a voice somewhere in my being which tells me that I do not love you as I am capable of loving—as I might love another. I feel that I cannot admire you too much, nor serve you too faithfully. From pure gratitude, I would willingly sacrifice much joy out of my own life if, by so doing, I might make yours more beautiful. But you sit apart in your great wisdom, and goodness, and greatness. I cannot reach you. I feel a great way off from you, even in my admiration and affection. If this chills me in the friend, it would kill me in my husband. A maiden's loveless life at last grows very dreary, but a frozen married one must be a million times more dreary. I can bear the first. I should succumb to the latter. Or if not, should make an exacting and tormenting wife, let me warn you, Monsieur."

"You will make a sensible woman some time, Victoire, though I confess you have never annoyed me except with your incorrigible romance. You fill your talk with poetic exaggerations. You even hint at the possibility of my killing you with coldness. Am I a monster?"

"No, you are a perfect gentleman."

"And you like me?"

"Yes."

"You like no man better?"

"No. But think of my nun-like life. Besides Frederick, you and Signor Orsino are the only men whom I have ever known. Frederick was the object of my deepest, fondest love. I see plainly now that I worshipped him with a passionate and wild idolatry. Orsino won from me a most sympathetic and sisterly interest. You call out my unbounded admiration, my profoundest gratitude, and a shy, fearful affection which neither cheers nor fills me. Is this all that I am capable of giving my husband? How do I know that there is not a being in the world who would fill my nature and absorb my life? It would be dreadful—"

"What would be dreadful, Victoire?"

"It would be dreadful, more dreadful than I dare to think, after we were irrevocably married, to have another soul thrust

itself between us;—to—to wake to the consciousness that another could be more to me than my own husband. God save me from such a fate!"

"Victoire, you astonish me. I am amazed at such wild words uttered with such prophetic unction. Do use your reason, child; then your imagination cannot fly off with you into the region of obscure possibilities. Do you imagine that people can have no control over their affections? That they must go wherever a mad passion leads them? That will and duty become null and void under the power of love, and the promptings of temptation?"

"Oh, no! I only mean thatneither will nor duty can make love or kill it, although they can regulate its action. We cannot decide how much or how little we will love some persons. Our love is spontaneous and independent of our volitions. Our conduct, of course, can be subordinate to will and duty. We cannot love people for what they are to others; but for what they are to us, and for what we may be to them. We only give to each one the exact measure which they are constituted to create in us. We love another in just the proportion in which that soul supplies the wants of our own. The being who kindles and quickens our entire nature, who first makes us conscious of a wealth of soul which we dreamed not of possessing, in whose simple presence we are pervaded with a heavenly satisfaction, a divine fusion of spirit with spirit, that being is the one whom we will love supremely; the one who will absorb our nature, make our life. Henri Rochelle, if I could only believe that you are that one, this moment I would lay my hand in yours in token of our eternal marriage. How can I believe that you are he, when I do not feel it? If, after marriage, I should meet that being, what, what should I do? Tell me, Henri Rochelle?"

"Do?" he said, looking at me with a perfectly quiet smile. "You would do right, would you not, Victoire?"

"I cannot tell what I should do. We can fancy ourselves strong; we cannot be sure until the test is applied. Our nature is never gauged until a great temptation, like a galvanic shock, touches with lightning our diseased spots and quivers around the weak places of our souls. I do not pretend to know myself, Monsieur Rochelle."

"Well, Victoire, I know you well enough to smile very complacently over the future fiery trial your wild brain has conjured up. We can imagine any absurdities if we choose to

let our fancies run riot. I can even imagine myself loving desperately some beautiful, improbable girl, afar down in the future, although I verily believe that I found the only girl whom I shall ever love years ago. You must pardon me for being amused at that being whom you talk of as vehemently as if you saw him before your eyes. I assure you that he does not make me jealous. Why should he? You have never manifested the proclivity common to young girls, of falling in and out of love. I have no reason to apprehend that you will suddenly become addicted to such a habit after marriage. A sensitive conscience is among your prominent attributes. If you had a husband, you would never forget what you owed him."

"Never!"

"If you marry the one whom Heaven designed for you, you will never wake up to find yourself mistaken, but will come to the conclusion at last that in this, as in everything else, your lot was wisely and kindly chosen. Pardon my continued assurance, although I say that I believe myself to be that one, as I believe that you are my Heaven-ordained and consecrated wife. Victoire, with all our will, we cannot resist our destiny; it will triumph in spite of us."

Once these words would have filled me with rebellion, would have made me lift up my eyes to his in haughty defiance. Now they only sank into my soul with the smiting weight of a heavy sadness. It had been easy once to resist the self-appointed, self-asserting guardian; it was impossible to be angry with the munificent, constant, tender friend. Besides, I was too weak and weary to be proud, and too sincere to affect a loftiness which I could not feel.

"I would rather give the garnered love of my life to you than to any one else in the world, if I could," I said.

"Thank you, Victoire, for those womanly words; they are the dawning promise of a blessed future. The tender woman is fast taking the place of the vaunting girl."

"I like the girl best," I said, perversely.

"If you were a man you would love the woman. No magnificence of spirit can atone for a lack of tenderness in a woman.

"You concede much in acknowledging your desire to love me. 'If you could,' you say. You demur on account of my visionary rival, who at present only lives a very beautiful ideal existence in your brain. I have no concern that he will live anywhere else. As you become better acquainted with men, you

will not find the great disparity among them which you imagine. You will only discover in each individual a little more or less of the same material. All, no matter what their temperament, culture, or genius, radiate subtle antagonisms, send out repellant forces, and one has only to come into sufficiently intimate personal contact to feel their friction. Two souls have never met in absolute equipoise since the avenging cherub hung his flaming sword over the shut gate of Eden. The jar of the dissonant world will cause occasional vibrations. There are souls who move on together in beautiful harmony; but their highest union is the gradual result of assimilation and of growth. Its roots are mutual esteem, confidence, sympathy; its flower is affection, its fruit love. We should cherish the pale flower in whose ovule lies the quickening seed of the divine fruit. Already you have given me this Alpine blossom, with the virgin snow of your heart clinging to its delicate roots. With what interest I shall watch the advancing summer; watch the white flower expanding with its matron charm; watch the delicious growing of the fervid fruit ripening at its core. I can well afford to wait, lingering only a tolerated guest in the vestibule of your heart, when I see that the season is not far distant when I may enter in and partake of its most sacred sanctities. I can wait."

"Oh, you tire me out with your shades of analyses. You dissect love, and me, and everything, just as you would a medical subject. Ah, it is this which divides us, Henri Rochelle. You think that all that is necessary to happiness in the beginning of marriage is a cool esteem, a dispassionate affection, while love hovers doubtful, far off in the distance. How can I know that I shall ever love you more than I do now? I can never be more sensible than I am at present that you are noble, and true, and good, and grand. Oh, if I could be sure that I should grow to love you more! My husband must be more to me than my friend."

"In other words, Victoire, you wish to be violently in love with the hero who is to become your husband. You have even more than the usual share of girl-romance. Have you yet to learn that the people who are the most wildly in love, in the common acceptation of that word, are the very ones who first become disgusted and weary of each other; because their love is not founded in reason, nor in reciprocal qualities, but in infatuation, passion?"

"Oh, you misunderstand me. I mean no such love."

"No, I do not misunderstand you. Your ideal is high, but

you ignore the path by which you must reach it. We must wait for everything desirable. It is hard for you to wait for anything, Victoire."

"I know it."

"Your mercurial temperament forces upon you strong extremes of feeling, which at times amount to impetuous exaggerations. Two years ago you ignored your heart, and seemed to think only of your head. Now you seem to have forgotten that you have a head, and are entirely absorbed with your heart."

I laughed at this picture of inconsistency.

"In all this conversation you have not once mentioned your art; two years ago you scarcely spoke of anything else. Then, you worshipped Athena and despised Aphrodite. Now I think you never knew that Athena existed, while you quietly acknowledge your need of love and loving with all an Aphrodite's tenderness."

I did not laugh now. These words struck me with a quick pain, as they recalled *all* that had made art a thought so sacred and yet so sad. It had shrunken far down into the deepest cavern of my soul, nestling there beside its one lonely secret, beside its hidden, holy face. How could I, with sacrilegious hand, drag it forth into the common daylight of common words.

Henri Rochelle noticed the sudden shadow. He said:

"I have not been speaking derisively. I have not even in my thought accused you of fickleness. Don't put on that sad face over my words, child. You are to me this moment precisely what you were two years ago. You were true to yourself then, and you are true now. I see the identical soul in two different periods of its development. I knew then that no Grecian goddess had ever loved so tenderly, so holily, so entirely as would the Christian maiden when she waked to her nature and its needs. But, because your heart is waking, you must not imagine that your brain is dead. Some day you will be suddenly astonished to find the Athena-head as dominant as ever. Then the heart will have established its empire, and when intellect and heart reign in concert, then I shall see the harmonious and perfectly developed woman. Nothing could be more irksome, more narrow, selfish, and exacting, than a woman whose love is combined with mental or moral weakness. I should make a very unsatisfactory husband to such a woman, or to any woman whose intellect had not an object as well as her heart. No, I could

never satisfy one who had nothing more substantial to live upon than childish attentions and endless fondling, foolish caresses. I should give my wife substantial proof that my highest love for woman I gave to her. Having established that fact, I should not expect that she would demand a corroboration of it every hour in the day in the form of vapid love-words or sentimental affectations of any sort. I should not have time to bestow them, even if I had the disposition. Before I was aware of it, I found myself involved in a large medical practice. I brought with me letters of introduction from the most distinguished medical men of Paris; that fact, with the more important one that in New York there is a great demand for all Parisian articles, established me before I had ever thought of displaying my ponderous college diplomas, or before I had concluded to remain in this country after finding you. This large practice, which has so early forced itself upon me, must of course absorb much of my time and thought. I should not feel justified in taking to my home a wife who had no mortal dependence but my society. You, Victoire, have art. You said once that a portion of your best years you wished to devote to art. I have ever wished to increase your opportunities for culture. I wish to perpetuate to you the ease and leisure which are indispensable to the highest attainments, in either art or science. Will you accept this ease and leisure, Victoire? Will you embody once more in divine forms the beautiful creations of your soul and brain?"

"Ah, I hope that I may some day," I said, my heart suddenly leaping at the thought, though my voice was choked with gathering tears.

"I knew by your kindling eyes that all the old enthusiasm still lives. It has been chilled and saddened, and no wonder. It is a sorrowful sight to see necessity drag genius down from her high vocation to do a menial's work for the sake of daily bread. You will do yourself a great wrong if you continue this when it is no longer necessary. You need not be less a tender woman because you are an artist. Unless your intellect develops with your heart, your nature will be warped or stunted. You, who will have the world of art and of letters in addition to your husband, will be too completely absorbed to be weakly, childish, as those women are who have nothing to think of and nothing to do, and so diffuse their feeble faculties between insipid loving, flirting, and fashion."

"You speak as if I had already uttered the irrevocable

'Yes,'" I said, taking in a long breath to free my voice of its quivering vibrations, that it might sound tense and firm like his. "From the beginning you have always talked as if I belonged to you, till at last, in spite of myself, I half feel that I do. If fortune had not made me so greatly your debtor, I should think that I had the right at least to feel more independent. I cannot forget my deep obligation to you. I am melted at the thought of your lông unchanging kindness. I would gladly devote my life to you from pure gratitude if I dared, if I only knew that till the end of life I could love you above every human being. But I am afraid to marry simply because I am grateful, or simply because I honor you, or feel for you a very quiet affection. Perhaps it is all some natures can give; but if I love at all, I want to love a great deal more."

"Marry me, Victoire, because you honor me and feel for me a quiet affection, but not because you are grateful. I have done nothing but my duty; nothing but what I would do for any man or woman whom I had found in like affliction. I have never sought to place you under personal obligations to me, and I am unwilling that you should feel any. If you insist upon pursuing your lonely life of toil, the indebtedness which you involuntarily feel can be cancelled as a mere business matter. You can earn more than a woman's average wages if you choose to bring your art down to a material level and have health to pursue it. I shall never take advantage of you and burden you with a load of hateful obligation. For your own sake I shall allow you to pay me what you fancy you owe me. I reverence the self-respect of a true woman, which will never allow her to become the voluntary recipient of favors from a man upon whom she feels that she has no claim. I want no gratitude, Victoire. I am not willing even to be thanked for doing my duty. Honor and affection from you are all that I ask at present. You will live to learn, my child, that they make the very warp and woof of the marriage bond.

"It is not possible that you know any one to whom you give more," he asked, abruptly, as if struck by a sudden thought, turning his keen eye upon me in one scrutinizing gaze.

"No," I answered, with a faltering voice. As I spake, that one holy face rose from the deeps of my soul, and I shivered while I saw it. If I should speak of *him*, Henri Rochelle would think it one of my wildest hallucinations—he would

smile at me with that quiet derisive smile. I could not tell him; no, I could not!

"No, I do not know any one to love better; I have only feared that some time I might," I said aloud.

"Victoire, you have not a morbid, ill-regulated nature; if you had, I would attach some importance to your fears. Honor and affection are strong enough to save you as long as you live."

"Henri Rochelle, you have dropped a plummet far down into my soul, but how do you know that there are not depths below which you have not sounded? Can a woman know herself at twenty?"

"No, not if she is as unique as you are. You are an odd creature," he answered, smiling a most undisturbed smile.

We were riding over one of the smoothest of roads at the slowest of paces. Elms reared on either side of us their grand corrugated pillars, their branches meeting high above our heads, like the glorious light, inwoven dome of a gorgeous minster. Birds singing amid the leafy, wavy glory; winds, rippling along the tasselled boughs, sent down flutterings of delicious sound—low, flute-like, as would an organ if touched by the fingers of a little child. Cottage, villa, and mansion had been unheeded while we talked; and we had passed far into this matchless cathedral aisle before I became conscious of its long reach of glimmering sun and shadow, of its waving incense, of its murmurous majesty.

"Do you admire this home, Victoire?" asked Henri Rochelle, as we paused before a delicately fretted iron gate, set like an open screen of richly-meshed lace in a deep hedge of arbor-vitæ; and he pointed past it to a villa which stood high on a sunny slope beyond the trees.

"I have not seen anything so beautiful for a long, long time;" and with these words my heart wandered far away to Les Delices.

"Nor I; not in this country—scarcely in any other. It is so wondrously lovely, that without any authority beyond my own I have named it Bel Eden. Truly it is Beautiful Eden. The trail of the serpent can never darken its brightness."

"Who lives here?"

"No one. It is an uninhabited Paradise. The old man who takes care of the grounds lives in that cottage below the hill. I learned from him that it is owned by a Southern gentleman who built the house as the summer home of a delicate young wife. I believe that she died before it was com-

pleted; at any rate it has never been occupied. Still its owner sees that everything about is kept in the most exquisite order, and the grounds are open to the visits of strangers. I often drive out here. It does me good to be reminded that, sin-cursed as it is, the earth still holds such a spot as this. Shall we go in? There comes the gardener to unlock the gate."

The old man advanced with a pleasant look of recognition on his face, and at his touch the screen of massive lace parted, and the broad serpentine avenue, with its flowery borders, lay open to our horses' feet. It wandered in and out among the trees, which threw over it the deep shadow of their immemorial growth; now running through rifts of glimmering shadow, now resting in broad spots of flickering sunshine, till alternating dusk, and dawn, and dazzling day chased each other along this winding, loitering path. Low seats braided of unctuous roots, of quaint gnarled boughs, stood in green niches between the trees. Statues, softly revealed against the dark foliage, peered from dim, unexpected vistas; nymphs and fawns, who stood transfixed in dumb delight to find in this utilitarian land in this late day a haunt as sylvan beautiful as their own lost Arcadia. The air distilled all subtle, all undefinable aromas. Birds warbled their gala operas in the sheltering depth of patriarchal boughs. The plash of near fountains, the low gurgle of distant trickling waters, the surge of the resonant river we heard as we emerged into the broad sunshine and lifted our eyes to the home of Bel Eden.

Unlike most American abodes, it did not offend with its stark smartness, its vulgar newness, its flaring colors. It was not an ugly excrescence, a deformity blotting the beauty of that matchless landscape. It seemed a portion of its harmonious growth emerging from its deep bosom like its own melodious trees; a flower of indestructible beauty blossoming in stone. It suggested the airy elegance of an Italian villa, with the warm comfort of an English home. Its low, oriel windows stole out into the flower-enamelled turf, hinting of broad sunny apartments and home-born joy within. It had wide piazzas with sculptured pillars; it had drooping balconies, and fringe-like balustrades hung with net-work, ethereal as the crystallizations of crusted frost. At one extremity a tower, a massive pilaster, seemed to grow from the grass up into the soft light, its pale stone merging almost imperceptibly at last into the pale ether. Bas-reliefs encrusted its aerial capi-

tals, statues stood in its deep embrasures. Its mullioned windows of many-colored glass gleamed all aflame. Sapphire, emerald, topaz burned in those diamond panes; ruby dripped through their brightness like wine-drops from overbrimmed goblets.

No redundant vines eclipsed this profuse flowering of art, yet ivies hung their green embroidery of leaves over every angle; myrtles strewed purple stars along the pale stone walls. No substantial element was wanting in this structure, yet it seemed to pervade the mind with the indescribable charm of the visionary palaces which rise by magic in our dreams. The lawn, sloping away from its threshold, was wide and sunny. In its midst a massive fountain tossed into the air its innumerable crystal jets. Their infinitesimal bells stirred all the air with chimes, as they fell back in merry, murmurous rings, or soft resounding plashes, upon the tessellated floor of their marble basin. This was girdled with flowers gleaming in the turf—pansies, hyacinths, daisies, verbenas, heliotropes which spring's warm-lipped angels had kissed into conscious life. Antique vases, filled with trailing plants, sent by their drifts of fragance, while all the air was purpled with lilacs and perfumed with magnolias. Outside of this riant beauty spread away the majestic background, the gorgeous shadow of the scene. We looked away to the shadowy arcades and leafy cloisters of venerable cathedral trees. The dark dome of the larch, the majesty of the silex, the breezy joy of the maple, the spirituel grace of the willow, the shivering sighs of the electric pines, all gladdened or saddened the grounds of Bel Eden. A mad brook, dashing through a deep yet sunny gorge on one side of the overhanging lawn, rushed away to the river. Through the trees we caught flashes of the Hudson, saw the rim of its dark-blue highlands touch the sky, and saw in the distance in dim perspective the great metropolis.

"I would like a studio in the highest chamber of that tower," I said, as we sat down in a sylvan seat beside a magnolia tree white with blossoms. "The turret-chamber at Les Delices was mine from childhood; I think that fact must have given me such a proclivity for high nooks. I always feel as if I were choking in a low room, and anywhere in the neighborhood of the ground."

"I have not told you, Victoire, that one charm Bel Eden had for me, aside from its own marvellous beauty, is that, in a remote way, it reminds me of Les Delices. Yet I cannot

define the resemblance. Do you perceive it? What is it?" asked my friend.

"Yes, I perceive it, but did not speak of it, lest you should call my imagination to an account. See! That sculptured fountain, with water gushing from its hundred marble lilies, is modelled precisely like the one which frolics before the veranda at Les Delices. That brook, too, breaking through the seam of yonder hill, cooling the heart of that deep gorge, is certainly a distant cousin of the one which runs away from the cascade and goes out to cheer the vineyard. But this house, this marble dream, poor old Les Delices, with its scarlet turrets, never thought of being so inspiredly beautiful. Bel Eden is a poem; it could only dawn upon the conception of a many-sided poet-soul; it suggests all lovely, untenable things—hints at all that we dream of, yet never see."

We relapsed into a long silence, mesmerized by the subtle magnetism of an all-diffusing beauty.

"Victoire, Frederick desired it; he desired nothing more for you, for me."

I started suddenly, recalled from the far-off countries of thought. It was his own manly tone, deep, intense, *almost* sad. As *he* spoke, two years dropped into chaos, and left me standing by Frederick's side. It was not the memory, the dead name of every day, that I had with me, but my living brother. Yes, Frederick desired it! He loved this man, he loved me; and although he had not influenced my choice, yet he desired it! My father, my mother, would have chosen for me this sheltered lot. After all, why should I persist in struggling with the world? Its prizes were not worth the winning. Why should I reject this noble man, whom I revered and trusted, for the sake of an impossible dream? There was nothing in the world which I needed so much as rest. Besides, he had said that I could make him happy; now I made no one happy."

"Why this impotent delaying of what *must* be?" He spoke these words with deep vibration in his voice, as if he felt the shock of a smothered flood of emotion. He snatched my hand. I had never seen in him anything so near like impulse.

"Victoire, let us join hands *now*, and walk the rest of our life-way together. I love you." Never had such a thrill of tenderness quivered through his voice to my heart before.

"Henri Rochelle, you are dear to me. I will marry you. God pity and forgive me if I sin in saying so."

I spoke quickly, lest a great power within should snatch back my words ere I should have power to utter them.

One seemed to stand before me whose deep eyes touched my soul—filled it! The air seemed instinct with his being; not Henry Rochelle, not Frederick—it was the stranger of Les Delices.

A MARRIAGE BEFORE THE LAST CHAPTER.

> "Whom first we love, you know we seldom wed;
> Time rules us all; and life indeed is not
> The thing we planned it out, ere hope was dead;
> And then, we women cannot choose our lot."

"I don't like Victoire."

Of course you don't. Who ever anticipated so pleasant a catastrophe! If she were not independent of your 'like,' she would never have had the courage to tell a story which proves her to be anything but an angel.

"I am ashamed of her," says a strong-minded woman of the nineteenth century, who has devoted twenty of the best years of her life to wrangling about the "woman question." "I am disgusted with her weakness. She began life well. She might have wrought out for herself a splendid career. She might have proved to the arrogant bipeds of the masculine gender that, though they will not confess it, women can perform wonders. But to succumb so early, to marry so soon, to make herself a mere appendage, a perfect cipher to man, and *such* a man—one feeling so grand that he can scarcely live. Now she is a hindrance to her sex. Just such women forge our chains on tighter, and do their best to make us just the slaves which we are. And she might have done such a work! Oh, I am disgusted with her, so I am."

My dear lady, I suppose I could not possibly make you believe that there is not on earth a more miserable object than a rebelliously ambitious woman. Not one more in need of pity; for, with all her devouring ambition, her towering pride, with all her rebellious efforts to break the bands which bind her, she can never escape the penalties of her human condition. She has given herself up to a life of fever and disappointment, whose inordinate hunger for applause, for notoriety in the world of Art, Letters, Politics, or Fashion, has crushed out the holier aspirations of the natural woman.

Is it not an ignoble pursuit to seek in the benison of culture, of genius, of beauty, not their own sacred uses or beautiful ends, but the empty fame with which they may cover one poor little name? Fame is a goading word, hard, hollow. Is it worth so much, the telling over of one's name from generation to generation, if that be all? The atoms of matter which make our material body, ever changing, ever renewed, will be transfigured eternally. Spirit will quicken spirit for evermore. Thought, transfusing itself into thought, will live long after each brain through which it passed is forgotten. Is it not enough that we shall live thus through the infinite ages; that the circuit of the universe will be ours? They who have won the noblest immortality of earth, never sought it in life. They consecrated their noblest faculties to the noblest ends without a thought of reward. Fame was granted them, not because they sought after it, but because it was deserved.

I had this satisfaction (so great a one to either woman or man), he had chosen me for myself. I had nothing else to give him. There were people who thought me very disagreeable, and they thought right. Mrs. Wiggins was one. She hated me for my reticent *hauteur*, my dumb contempt of her vicious hypocrisy. M. Petiman was one, my whilom transient acquaintance, whom I had impressed as a most arrogant and self-assuming young person, who dared to cherish a most unwarrantably high opinion both of her position and powers, and to award to his insinuating, sycophantic suppleness all the disdain which it merited. Rev. Jonathan Bunkum would have been one, if it had been possible for that gentleman for the space of two consecutive minutes, to have thought of any one but himself. Yet Henri Rochelle had chosen me for what he believed that I might be to him. Nothing does a woman's heart so importunately crave as the knowledge that she is lovely at least to one.

The world is full of women who would gladly give all their rich possessions in exchange for this one sweet assurance. "Oh! if I could only know that he loves *me*, only me," they say; "that I could be certain that the gilded accidents of my lot have not ensnared him; that he has not been dazzled by the perishable baubles which make my surroundings, but which can never add a single charm to the beauty of my soul!" Alas! many a girl blindly fancies that she has won a loyal, manly heart, when in reality she receives only a body and a name in barter for her money. You may thank your golden setting, the gorgeous background on which your tame colors

are embroidered, for your graceful husband and genial home. You think all this was naught; that it was only yourself who won him? Poor simpleton; there is something pitiable in your delusion!

He tries to persuade himself of the same fact, that it is the maiden, the maiden only, whom he seeks. He says: "To be sure, her family influence would be of immense advantage to me; and her money—yes, I need it in my business. Position! Well, a young man just beginning life always needs to be strengthened in his position. To be able to refer (carelessly, of course,) to Hon. Land Shark, M.C., Rt. Rev. Dr. Skin Flint, D. D., LL.D., the poet Skim Milk, the universal traveller and prospective millionaire, as my near relatives, would be no drawback as the world goes. "I care nothing about them; of course not; I care only for Gilda. Gilda is a good girl. Gilda is a stylish girl; she will set off an establishment well. Not very handsome, to be sure; not clever, people say; but what do people know about it? Besides, what is more tiresome than a woman who knows too much? I'm afraid of clever women. Gilda is the one of all others whom I prefer for my wife."

He utters the last words with a most impetuous emphasis, as if to banish the young face already shaping itself in his thought; the very one which steals unbidden into his nightly dreams. Pearla, the snow-drop, the pure pale blossom, blooming in the snow of poverty, he sees her face, and his heart suddenly leaps in a strange, sweet tumult. "Pearla! Well —yes—I could have loved *her*—but it is out of the question. She is poor; so am I. Romance, sentiment, love, don't pay as society stands. No; they are all below par. Pearla, my darling, I am not rich enough to marry you. I must forsake and shun you from this very hour. I must be practical and sensible. Gilda will do. On the whole, Gilda I prefer (for a wife). Gilda is a good girl. She loves me desperately."

Is this life's greatest misery, its chillest, dreariest despair, which falls on us some day with the consciousness that if fortune had been kinder, if greater wealth had lent its glitter to our surroundings, if more generous circumstances had enveloped us with a beautifying halo, an artificial yet alluring atmosphere, which mellows and goldens every object which it enfolds, we should have been more earnestly sought, more fairly judged, more tenderly dealt with by one from whom nature gave us the right to demand the rarest gifts of friendship? Then dawns life's first great consciousness of loss.

Oh, awful, isolated sorrow! Oh, endless, enveloping pain, which can never be averted and never shared!

Because no glamor hovered over us, because we sat in the cold, alone with only our own spirit to make light and warmth around us, we were left alone. The tender warmth of our single heart could not reach this soul wrapped in so dense a cloud of worldliness. We were mistaken. Brave heart, receive this taunting truth with proud yet saddest seeming. Open the door with regnant hand, with calmest unction bid it enter. Bid it enter; though you know that its steel will cut through your tenderest fibre, though you know that it will stab and rend you, still bid it enter; it is the truth. Believe not the clinging falsehoods which hang their pretty parasites about it; they are as false as they are beautiful. They whisper of an unfilled world lying far below the metallic mail which material interest has forged about your friend. With honeyed words they tell you that you, in your great need of love and blessing, could fill this world with the morning bloom of most delicious affection. Believe them not; the brazen shield will never be lifted that you may enter in. Of what account is all your pent yet prodigal sweetness, all your seductive magnetism, all your proud and pure aspiring, all your need of love and loving, weighed in the balance with worldly interest, with the fawning flattery of the oily tongue, to this idol of yours eager for place, emulous for power? With this truth rending your soul, you can live on. You can live on, though disappointment deluge your summer world till not an olive leaf is found in all the dreary waste for you. You can live on patiently, calmly, till the tender hand of the pitying God stretches down from the window of Heaven and draws you up to rest in the great ark of His love.

Bury the beautiful friendship of yesterday, and go away and leave it in its grave alone. Bury it; leave it; you can live on. Its imploring eyes will look mournfully at you through the door of the past; its retributive face will haunt your present and throw its baleful shadow between you and every dawning joy; yet remember it is only its ghost, not the warm, living human thing, which you loved and cherished. Brave heart, you can live on!

I was independent at least in this—Henri Rochelle should not continue to cover me with presents; I would accept from him no bridal *trousseau*. I would earn my own wedding-dress. I was almost well now, and felt quite able to return to my accustomed tasks.

"Let me sketch designs for the most beautiful book you have. I cannot tell how beautiful I shall try to make them, for it is the last work I shall do for you," I said to my dear, honored employer, as I appeared before him after my long absence.

"The last work! Why, we have been waiting for you to get well to do the prettiest job that we have had ordered for a long time—descriptive illustrations for a volume of choice poems. I have more work saved for you, besides. What is the matter? Are you going to leave New York?"

"No; I am going to be married."

"Married! Well, you take it very quietly. You tell it in the same tone in which you might say—'I am going to be buried.' I wish you a life of happiness," he said, extending his hand. "Can't you sketch a little after you are married?"

"Yes, I can, to prove my gratitude to you; but what time I have for art I shall usually devote to painting. I painted always until you gave me employment. Oh, how kind you were! You were a friend to me when I needed one the most—when I was sick and weary, homeless and almost hopeless. You gave me work, and more, you gave me kindness. I shall never forget you, never; and I will sketch for you, sometimes, if it will please you."

There was a tender light in the eyes which looked down upon me; very commonplace eyes most people would have called them, but they were more than beautiful to me.

"God bless you, now and for evermore," he said.

He gave me the poems, which were to be embalmed in rich-tinted paper, in rare setting of gold and velvet; and the very first one which I glanced at was Coleridge's "Genevieve:"

> "I played a soft and doleful air,
>   I sang an old and moving story;
> An old, rude song, that suited well
>   That ruin, wild and hoary.
> She listened with a flitting blush,
>   With downcast eyes and modest grace;
> For well she knew I could not choose
>   But gaze upon her face."

Here was a perfect picture in melodious words. Could I embody it as perfectly in melodious lines—the "ruin, old and hoary"—the loving troubadour playing his "soft and doleful air"—the maiden "with downcast eyes and modest

grace?" Well, I tried; and, at least, thus I earned my bridal *trousseau*, my wedding dress.

My kind employer could not have expressed my mental state more completely than in the words, "you take it quietly." Quiet must follow a storm. I had resisted my destiny so long, that, from the moment of accepting it, I sank down in peace. Weary of the long struggle, I was glad passively to rest. Yes, I was very quiet. I had accepted my lot, and now seemed to expect nothing, to fear nothing.

"Sing it again, Morna; do."

"Do you love it so much?"

"Yes, yes! Then it is the last evening that we shall ever sit together like this. Fill it full of song. I want the melody of your voice woven with the last hours of my maiden life—a memory to carry with me to my grave."

She sang it again, that wonderfully sad sweet song of George P. Morris:

"How we met and loved and parted,
None but God can ever know;
How the pure and gentle-hearted,
Loved and perished years ago.
Hearts that truly love forget not—
They're the same through weal or woe;
And the sun of memory sets not,
In that grave of years ago."

It was a June twilight; the breath of the month of roses stole in through the open casement, kissing our foreheads, toying with our hair. The entrancing days, the alluring nights, so steeped in perfume, so redolent of bloom and beauty, seemed made only for the richest sensuous life. Sentient existence grew more misty and dreamlike with the culminating, adolescent hours; yet it seemed as if we could not live enough in the delicious air of these young, perfect days. We sat close together. Hope, on a low stool at my feet, nestled her curls in my lap, folding one hand in her little palm, while Morna held the other, as she sat by my side. The next day I was to be married. Three snowy dresses lying side by side, revealed themselves through the purpling light and golden shadow of the hour. They were of pure, sheer muslin, as softly meshed as the most fibrous threaded lace. They were utterly unadorned, save with their own aerial ampleness, their misty, far-floating folds. They were precisely alike, but one was enveloped in a cloud of tulle. This was my bridal-robe and veil. (I tell this in parenthesis

to my lady friends.) (I must make another parenthesis to tell my lady friends that I was perfectly satisfied with my wedding-dress.) It falls far below the standard of your aristocratic taste, no doubt, but I would not have exchanged it for regal satin or crinkling brocade, in all their stately stiffness. Such are harmonious with grand parlors and state occasions. But pure muslin, in its virgin transparency, is a meet robe for the unsullied maiden when she yields up her being to the love and keeping of another. Yes, I would have chosen my marriage-robe amid a thousand rarer fabrics. It needed nothing, I thought, but wreaths of living orange-blossoms to make it perfect. Thus I saw it before my eyes, a drift of snowy cloud, lying against the dimness—my bridal dress!

I had been gay all day—rather, I had tried to be. A fitful, wild sort of gaiety it was, I fancy. I talked all manner of extravagant talk, which made Hope laugh her bird-laugh, and Morna gaze at me in the tenderest wonder. In short I made most spasmodic efforts to keep from weeping, and succeeded by rising to the opposite extreme. But now the day was done. The pulses of the twilight throbbed against my own; I sat within the sphere of her magnetism; what could I do but yield myself to her soft, sad mood. Then this tender memorial song of Morris made me sadder—or was it the music, so tremulously sweet? or was it Morna's voice, in its wondrous cadence of soul-melting melody? You know that I told you before that Morna's voice ever filled me with a bliss that was half a pain; that I loved it for all that it made me forget, for all that it made me remember. She passed from the simple song, to warble snatches from operas which her teacher taught her long before. She had never sung them to me, probably on account of the painful memories which were linked with them. But now her soul seemed to break away from the chain which bound and hurt it, and, like a bird let loose from wiry prison out into the infinite liberty of space, she seemed to dissolve herself in song. The little room swam in a dilating sea of rapturous sound; the warm air shivered with the rapt vibrations, the mellifluous falls of most imploring, most delicious melody. I listened entranced; every nerve drank—all my soul drank, yet seemed not to overflow. This was for me Morna's last, her richest gift, ere I passed from her into a new life. She sang sweet airs from *Norma*, from *Lucrezia Borgia*, from *Lucia di Lammermoor*, and at last broke forth in the pathetic music of *I Vespri Siciliani* of Verdi. It was the mournful strain of Arrigo, which he sang

after he had lost the love of the Duchess Elena, because he had saved the life of Guido, the murderer of her brother, who, alas! was also the father of Arrigo. He had not been able to destroy his father, even to fulfil the vow of Elena; yet he could not renounce her love. His imploring words to her, Morna sang:

"Giorno di pianto, di fier dolore!
Mentre l'amore sorrise a me.
Il ciel dirado quel sogno aurato,
Il cor piagato tutto perdè!
Sovra il mio capo;
Il folgor scoppia
E in me raddoppia
L'atro dolor!
Nel tuo disprezzo:
Vivere, o cara,
'E pena amara
È morte al cor!"

She sang the reply of Elena, and, as she hovered before the last four lines, she clasped my hand closer, and turned her deep eyes full upon mine. All that I had ever imagined of tenderness, all that I had ever dreamed of love, all that I had ever conceived of a high immortal sadness—I saw in those fathomless eyes, while her far voice hung pendulous above these words:

"S fido le folgori
Del rio destino,
Se ate vicino
Potrò morir!"

Again she sang it, her hand still clasping mine, her deep eyes melting into my soul:

"I defy the lightnings
Of my evil destiny,
If near to thee
I may die."

"If near to thee I may die!" The wondrous voice lingered suspended over this line, yet melting it at last in melody, which quivered through all my being, than which there will be no sweeter note in all the symphonies of its future eternity.

The air was still tremulous with its music, when we heard the well known step, not rapid, not slow—easy, equable, with that clear, decided rebound which indicated power, character, will; the well known knock, not abrupt nor harsh; not eager

nor presuming; but deep, quiet, certain; and in a moment more Henri Rochelle sat by the open window before us.

"Is it possible! Was that *you* who were singing just now, Miss Avondale?" he inquired of Morna. She seemed embarrassed.

"Yes, it was Morna," I answered. "Did you never hear her sing before?"

"I was singing for Victoire; it is our last evening together, you know," she said, in a faltering voice.

"Yes, I know that it is your last evening together in this little stifling chamber. But, Miss Avondale, you can become a great *prima donna*, if you will. I have been patiently waiting for you to develop some great gift. I did not know what it might be; yet I have been expecting it every day. I was sure of the great soul, but I knew nothing of the wonderful voice. It shall receive all the benefit of the highest culture; then it will be to you not only a fortune but a perpetual joy."

At these words Morna's fingers tightened about my hand till it ached in their convulsed grasp. She breathed deep and quick, yet said nothing.

"You speak of this being your last evening with Victoire; it need not be unless you choose to be separated from her. You remember that the first morning in which I saw you I assured you that you should not be separated. Victoire's home is yours as long as it will add to your happiness to share it; and this child, I am sure we all need *her*," he said, reaching down his hand to Hope, who now sat very erect on her little stool, having been drawn up to that rather unnatural position by her very active veneration for Mr. Rochelle. She always sat before him as if he was a god.

"In the meantime you must have the best music masters which the city will afford," he added, looking from Hope to Morna.

She seemed to rally all her inward forces in one long breath.

"Mr. Rochelle, how kind, how very kind you are; I thank you from my heart, but———"

"You are such a kind young lady, I know that you will excuse me from listening to a formidable array of objections, when I can assure you that I can anticipate them all. I have become somewhat acquainted with young ladies' objections," he said, in a slightly ironical tone. "There is a world of prudence and girlish foresight in that solemn 'but.' I honor

you for it, but do not accept it, Miss Avondale. It means simply this: You feel that you cannot accept favors from one who is under no obligation to confer them; favors which you fear that you can never reciprocate. Now I offer you no favors, but will make a business arrangment. You need accept nothing which you cannot pay back with interest. You surely will not refuse to fit yourself for a large and beautiful sphere? You will not perish over your needle while you carry a whole bank in your throat from which you have never drawn a single cent? You will not choose a dwarfed and smothered life, when a glorious yet womanly career is open to you; will you, Miss Avondale?"

Morna could not speak. The fulfilment of her dearest wishes, the fruition of her long-cherished yet most hopeless desires, seemed to have come to her so suddenly from such an unexpected source that she was stunned with the great joy.

"I have wished, prayed for it so much, it seems as if it could not, could not be," at last she murmured.

"I think that it can be, and very easily indeed, without the slightest inconvenience to any one," he answered quietly.

Hope was lifted above her veneration by her admiration and joy. She seemed to have arisen unconsciously, and, standing before him, she exclaimed: "I knew that something beautiful would come to Morna; but I did not know that God would send it by you. Oh, how good you are, Mr. Rochelle!"

"Victoire says that I am tiresomely good. That is an adjective which is appropriated exclusively by stupid people; did you know it, Mademoiselle?" he answered, smiling on her kindly.

Henri Rochelle attached no merit whatever to the fact of his doing his duty. The noblest acts of his noble life to him were only duty. He performed them cheerfully, gladly; but sought not, did not even wish praise. "Why should a man be praised for doing his duty?"

The lamps in the streets were lighted now. One before the house filled the room with flickering golden light.

"June! My prophecy is fulfilled. Victoire, you are the very little girl whom I knew in France. I should not think that you had ever thought of being sick; nothing ever made you sick but unrest," said Henri Rochelle, looking at me now through the soft radiance. "No sooner did you acquiesce with your fate and enter into an atmosphere of quiet, than all your lost bloom stole back unawares. I gave these to Beatrice once; she often wore them for my sake. Now they are yours.

Will you wear them to-morrow?" he asked, in a gentle voice, as he rose and placed in my hand a small, gold-fretted ivory casket. Already it seemed natural to say "Yes," when he wished it. "To-morrow!" he said, emphatically, as he stood in the open door, after having uttered his adieu. "To-morrow!"

"To-morrow!" Yes, it came, as all to-morrows come, the most dreaded, the most longed-for, if we only wait long enough. Living orange blossoms came, too, another gift from him. Morna twined them around my head, festooned them around the flowing folds of my misty robe. I wore the casket's treasures—a necklace and bracelets of pearls—and stood within the veil which fell around me, an enveloping filmy cloud. (This is all in parenthesis for my lady friends.)

In one of the tree-shaded streets of the metropolis there stands a chapel which shall here be nameless. It is filled with a reverential grace, sacred, solemn as the grand *Te Deum;* sweetly worshipful as its own Sicilian vesper hymn, which through its vibrating arches quivers up to the heart of the all-loving Father.

The afternoon of that "to-morrow" was touched with the almost imperceptible shadow of the advancing evening; its golden glow was just beginning to fuse itself into the blue ether, when a single carriage paused here, and a very small bridal party passed into this chapel. Before its altar I took the vow to love, honor, and obey the man who stood by my side. This had seemed impossible once. It seemed not at all impossible now. Because I felt that the vow was as solemn as death, I as sincerely and solemnly vowed to keep it. It would not be hard to do so; I thought now all my will had submitted to its master. Thus in the usual commonplace way, did Victoire Vernoid merge into Madame Rochelle.

Of the latter person you will care to hear no more, if you are one of that large number of persons who think that all the charm of a woman's individual life is lost the moment she is married. Then of course this story is not for you, else the wedding would have been deferred to the last chapter.

. . . .

A NEW LIFE JUST BEGUN.

"Mrs. Rochelle, Mrs. Skinher."

"I am glad to see you looking so well, Mrs. Ro—*chelle*," said my former hostess, with a lingering, questioning emphasis on my new name, which had just fallen from the lips of Henri.

To some ears there is a potent dignity in the word "Mrs." which the unprotected "Miss" never embodies. To the worldly mind "Mrs." conveys the idea of an establishment, of a defined position, of possession and power; while "Miss" is only a pretty appendage to papa, a waif or a cipher in society. Judging by her tone and manner of address, Mrs. Skinher considered Mrs. Rochelle a much more important personage than Miss Vernoid had ever been. "But she would have thought that Miss Vernoid would have stayed Miss Vernoid to the end of her days for all of ever finding such a husband. He was vastly too clever for such a ne'er-do-well Miss, who, without doubt, would bring him to poverty unless he kept a sharp look-out, which she guessed he would do, for Mr. Rochelle was decidedly to her taste. Such a towering, commanding featured man, how *did* she ever get him?"

All these conclusions and questions seemed to look from Mrs. Skinher's keen, business-eyes, as she turned them with an admiring gaze upon Henri. She had a sympathetic appreciation for very masculine men. Nature had perpetrated a blunder in not allowing her to be such a man herself, she thought. She had never been quite resigned to the mistake. She was sure that if she had not been trammelled by the restrictions of her miserable sex, she would have been worth millions instead of thousands. She did not over-rate herself when she said: "I have as clear a judgment, I can see as far into business, I can make as good a bargain as any man!"

Mrs. Skinher had reached that age when a year, or two, or three, make no difference in looks. She did not seem one minute older than when I parted with her one year before. Her gorgeous *robe de matin* was just as stylish; the roses in her morning coiffure just as conscious; her autumn cheek just as robust and ruddy; the curls which fell around it more glossy and abundant. I knew those curls; they were mine; and I felt very much like twitching them out of the blonde lace which rested above them.

The desire sharpened my voice a little, perhaps, when I

disturbed the admiring gaze which she was bestowing upon Mr. Rochelle, by saying: "Mrs. Skinher, we have come after my pictures." My pictures! Yes, mine. I had never for a moment thought of them as the property of another, although more than a year had gone by since I looked at them last. I was so eager for them, I wanted to see them so much, now that they were so near my sight, there must have been a quick vibration of impatience in my voice as I spoke, but there was no triumph. There had been an anticipation of triumph, almost as sweet as the triumph itself, which filled my heart when I gazed at them in parting. Then the thought that I should go forth and earn money to redeem them quickened my enfeebled pulses and gave new vigor to my wasted limbs. I had even been foolish enough to imagine the exquisite delight of the real triumph, when I should place within Mrs. Skinher's rotund palm the money my own hands had earned, saying: "Mrs. Skinher, I want my pictures." A delight which would be enhanced by that lady's well-remembered assurance: "*You* will never earn money to redeem them."

I had *not* earned the money to redeem them. Therefore I felt no triumph; I was only filled with a great impatience, an impetuous yearning for my treasures. Yet I felt no humiliation, no shame. How could I? The money in my hand had not been doled out to me with niggardly reluctance; it had not been offered me with the condescending munificence which would have made me spurn it. It had stolen into my purse unawares, as other gifts had stolen around me, as if they belonged to me and had never belonged to another. But when Henri said: "Victoire, you *must* go for your pictures; it is a shame that that woman has had them so long," my heart was touched with this new proof of his delicate, ever-thoughtful kindness.

Mrs. Skinher started at my abrupt assertion: "Mrs. Skinher, I must have my pictures, *every one*. Here is all that I owe you."

She grew very red; that is, the claret in her cheeks saw fit to rush out to the tip of her nose and up to the roots of her hair.

"The pictures are all in the back-parlor—all but *one* that I sold. You see that this parlor has been newly frescoed, and the design of the mouldings altered. Your large painting did not harmonize at all with the room after the change; the walls were too gay for such a richly-colored picture; so I sold it. Of course I knew that the picture would never be redeemed; that is, if its redemption depended upon you earn-

ing the money. Besides, how did I know but that you were dead?"

"I think that the picture would have been redeemed, even if its redemption had depended upon Mrs. Rochelle," said Henri, in his coolest, calmest tone. "Mrs. Rochelle is capable of earning money if necessary. Mrs. Rochelle had money enough saved from her earnings to redeem this picture at one time, and it was swept away by sickness. All are liable to misfortune, you should remember, Madame."

What a new thing it was to have some one sitting by, defending me in my weakest points in that quiet, assured tone which would admit of no gainsaying! I had never dreamed how delightful it would be to be thus defended, how very soothing to one's jarred self-love.

"I do not pretend to say what Mrs. Rochelle is 'capable' of doing," said Mrs. Skinher, in her keenest metallic tone; "I only know what she *did;* that she did absolutely nothing while she resided here, although time proved that there was need enough of her doing, for she left, over three hundred and fifty dollars in my debt."

"Not if she left all her pictures with you. I know something of the value of paintings, Madame. The pictures which Mrs. Rochelle brought to America, at the lowest estimate, were worth two thousand dollars; and they did not include the one which you have sold."

The claret which had receded from the end of Mrs. Skinher's nose now rushed back with accelerated violence. She evidently did not relish the idea of Mr. Rochelle's knowledge of the value of paintings, and was slightly confused in spite of herself.

"It is immaterial how valuable they were to you; they were not worth two hundred dollars to me. Give me the money due to me and you are welcome to them," she said.

"You had no right to sell my picture, Mrs. Skinher," I said in a voice choking with tears. I was absorbed with my loss. After such waiting and longing; after all, I had lost it, my idol picture.

"Right?" said this estimable lady of the genteel boarding-house. "Right! Why hadn't I a right? You prove your ignorance of business and of law to make such an assertion, Miss —— Mrs. Rochelle. I entered into no written contract; I did not even bind myself by a verbal promise to keep the pictures for any given time. Yet here I have had my house cumbered with them for over a year, and have sold but one,

and that a great big thing which I could not possibly have in the way any longer. You can bring no prosecution against me for that act, I am certain. Of course I will allow for it."

"No allowance can atone for its loss to me, Mrs. Skinher," I replied, utterly unconsoled.

"I would rather have a hundred dollars in my hand than a picture in my way any time. I suppose that you will have nothing to do now but to paint such pictures all the time. If you please you can paint it over again."

"I can never paint it again," I said, sadder still.

"That is no concern of mine. I should not have made a contract to have kept it as security beyond a year. But you proved your incapacity by not even asking me to keep the picture a certain time. In poetry, I believe (though I never read it), people leave things to be taken for granted; in business, never. Everything there must be in black and white. You may be thankful that I have not sold all your pictures, Miss—Mrs. Rochelle."

"The least reparation which one lady can make to another for an injury which cannot be repaired, is to manifest regret, however slight. I do not wish to hear such harsh tones or language addressed to my wife," said Henri, with all the sensitive dignity of the newly-made husband.

I turned my face towards him in spontaneous gratitude. Mrs. Skinher had made me feel as she had done many times before, that I was absolutely inefficient and good for nothing. Oh, how pleasant to have some one to take one's part, I thought.

Mrs. Skinher looked up angrily, yet said nothing. She saw that Mr. Rochelle was a gentleman not to be trifled with. Besides, she had another reason for keeping quiet.

"I received one hundred dollars for the painting; you are welcome to it, and to the remaining pictures as soon as you choose to call for them," she said with marked dignity, counting the above-named sum from the gold which I had laid on the marble table beside her.

"Did you receive only one hundred dollars for it, Madame?" asked Henri.

"I received one hundred dollars for it, sir," she said, looking into the distance.

"I think that you received more for it, Mrs. Skinher."

"Do you consider it gentlemanly to call a lady's word in question? You have no right to accuse me of receiving more. I shall not condescend to deny it, as you doubted me in the

beginning," she said, haughtily, looking towards him now. His arched eyebrow was drawn down, and from under its shadow the penetrative eye of the man well acquainted with the world looked into the eye of the woman who knew it equally well.

"If you wish more money for it, fifty dollars is no object with *me*, though it may be with *you*," she said, endeavoring to hide her annoyance with a sneer, and hastily thrusting another little pile of gold towards him with her hand. "I can afford to give much more than I received for it," she added, with great emphasis on the word "afford."

"I shall not accept the fifty dollars, and I wish no further conversation. I only wish you to know that I believe, from the very look on your face, that you received more than one hundred and fifty dollars for that painting."

"I am not going to be insulted in my own house," said Mrs. Skinher, rising with an air of state, waving her hand regally towards the door. But the gentleman before her was not one to be at all perturbed by a few lofty lady airs, even though they proceeded from so august a personage as the very genteel mistress of a very genteel boarding-house. He took no notice of her manner whatever, but coolly asked:

"Do you object to giving the name of the person who bought it? If possible, I wish to purchase the picture."

"The name I have forgotten; the gentleman was proprietor of a gallery of paintings. I doubt if he would sell it; he wished it to give variety to his collection, he said."

"Is it an art-gallery in the city?"

"It may be. I—believe that it is."

"Very well, I can find it, then."

She looked more thoroughly annoyed than she had done at all. "You must excuse me; I have an engagement," she said, looking at her gold watch. "Be so kind as to have your pictures removed as soon as possible."

But we were not quite ready to go.

"Does Kate live with you still?" I inquired.

"She does."

"Can I see her, Mrs. Skinher?"

"She is busy; the house is full."

"I told Kate once that if ever I had a home I should be glad to have her share it. Now I have come to ask her to go to it. You know that Kate was very kind to me once?"

"Kate kind to you! A pretty story. She only obeyed my orders, yet I never received as much as a thank you. I don't

know but that you think it good manners to come and tell a lady to her face that you intend to persuade her servant to leave her, but I consider it very ill-bred—the height of ill-breeding."

"I certainly should not do so under ordinary circumstances, Mrs. Skinher. I am sorry to do so now, if you are so much attached to Kate; yet I, too, am attached to her, and feel that I must give her an opportunity to make a choice," I said.

"Attached to her!" said Mrs. Skinher, in great disgust. "As if it were possible for a lady to have any personal attachment to an Irish servant. No; Kate is lazy, saucy, and troublesome. Yet she is just as good as any of her class, and I don't wish the bother of making a change; though I dare say if I had time I should find some one who would do more work and give me less impudence."

"I will engage to find you a good servant to take her place if she leaves you; but I feel that I must see her."

"*You* find *me* a servant! I assure you that I am quite equal to attending to my own affairs. I would trust no one to select a servant for *me*. I know the very minute I look into a girl's face if she is a thief, and just what she is. A dreamy, sentimental person like you would never know. It requires common sense to select a servant. If you wish to see Kate, you can go through the rooms until you find her. But I doubt if the ladies will think it agreeable to have a stranger intruding into their apartments."

Of course to see Kate under such circumstances was out of the question. We must devise some other way to reach her. With a good morning, and with an assurance from Henri that the pictures should be sent for before evening, we arose to depart.

Kate was one of those acute-eared chamber-maids who seldom fail to hear the ringing of the door bell, neither was she without a proper degree of feminine curiosity concerning the human beings whom black-faced, white-vested Nick ushered in and out. For example, if she happened to be at the head of the staircase at the right moment, she would poise herself against her broom-handle, and look down, "jist to see if the lady's driss was ilegant, or the gintleman's moosetush was fit to be sane." Kate was also one of those opportune chamber-maids who knew how to happen on the stairs at the exact minute when some one was issuing from the parlor, provided in their *entrée* they had aroused sufficient interest to induce her to take cognizance of their departure. On this morning she

had just caught a glimpse of Henri as we disappeared into the parlor; and as she was "sure that she had seen this gintleman before," she waited his second appearance, that she might compose her mind by assuring it "when and where."

Slowly descending the broad stairs, bearing in conscious state the badges of her office—broom, duster, and dust-pan—came Kate, just as we passed into the hall. Suddenly broom, duster, and dust-pan fell with a great clatter, hitting the enamelled balusters, and dropping with a sharp reverberation upon the floor of the basement far below.

"Kate, you are the torment of my life. You shall pay for breaking that new enamel," exclaimed Mrs. Skinher, rushing away to ascertain the precise amount of damages done. But Kate did not hear her in her rapid descent and eager call.

"Oh, me darlint young leddy, is it ye! The very young leddy who I nursit wid me own hands, lookin' like a princess. Sure, an' I al'us said ye was born to good fortin', though ye'r own nus said ye was borned crazy."

By this time Kate had reached us; and although she looked slightly abashed at my companion, her embarrassment was not sufficient to arrest the motion of her tongue for a longer space than to take a single breath; then she went on, looking straight at me with the most devouring delight:

"Sure, an' the gran' gintleman's foun' ye. I know'd he wud, though 'twas more nor I cud do. Faith, upon me wurd, it *is* the truth. I've bin huntin' an' huntin', and 'twas all no use. Didn't I go mesel' to the graveyard across the river, fearin' they had burried ye beside o' y'er owld nus. Pace to her sowl. But no; it wasn't ther' that ye wus. Thin I was in thruble, not knowin' what hard fortin' had befallen ye. Long enuf afore I wint to the hathenish place wher' ye got board, an' they sed ye'd gone, they know'd nothin' wher'. Thin I spake me mind, I did. I tould thim to thar' face, 'twas a burnin' shame that my young missus, the lady what I nursit wid me own hands, had iver lived in such a din of Satan. Thin, that big, big red-headed thing said it was good enuf, an' too good, an' I felt like pullin' all the blazin' hairs out by the ruts, bad luck to the like of her! Faith, I am afeared me bad temper wud make me struck her, if I hadn't thought of ye. Dade, it's a great shame that the like of ye iver had to sit afore the face of that freckled-faced spalpeen. That gloomy hole of a house was enuf to make your heart as black as a pot!"

"Well, Kate, I am going to have a pleasant home now.

And you know that I promised you once that if I ever had one, I should ask you to come and live with me. Do you want to go?"

"Why wudn't I? It's afthur bein' time that ye had a dacent ruf to kiver ye'r young head. An' if you've got a gran' house at last, I'm the gel that wud like to see it. I know'd good enuf ye wus borned to good fortin', but it was the feelin' I had that some other sowl wud bring ye the luck. Well enuf I know'd that no sich hands as yourn could iver dig money enuf to buy a big house, if they *do* say that it sprouts in the streets of Amereky thick as the potaties blossom in the fields at home. Wan't me own faythur a well-to-do?"

"Yes, your father must have been a good man; but I haven't told you yet that this gentleman is my husband. He will be very good to you, Kate."

"Yer honor!" said Kate, dropping a low courtesy, "an' will ye be good enuff to pardon me gibgabblin'. Joy at seein' the young missus hus set me tongue a-runin', and there be'n't no stoppin' it. Upon me wurred, sir, it is the truth; I am very, very fond of the young leddy."

"I see that you are," said Henri, smiling.

"An' if yer honor will let the like of me say it, I must say to ye'r honor, I know'd the minut' I set my eyes on ye'r honor, when ye kem afore, askin' so throbbled-like for the young leddy what I nursit wid my own hands, that ye it wud be what wud bring luck to Miss ——, faith; an' I can't say yit yer outlandish name. I hope now, Miss, ye's got a name that mesel' can spake?"

"My name is Rochelle."

"Ro-Ro-Ro-shall. Faith, it's no better nor tother! A great misfortin' is it, Miss, ye's got sich outlandish names; no common folks can spake 'em. How is ye'r servants to trate ye wid respect when they can't say ye'r name, to save their sowls. ? I'm glad me name is Murphy; that's a name what folks can spake."

"Kate, you've lost just two weeks' wages. Go and look at that broken cornice. Another time, perhaps you'll hold your dust-pan in your hand, where it belongs, and not send it flying down two flights of stairs," said Mrs. Skinher, as she returned from her explorations.

"As ef I cared if 'twus two months' wages. I'd drop the dust-pan out of me hand the very nixt minnit, if I seed me young missus a-comin', what I thought was dead an' burrid,

an' gone to heaven. Here she is alive an' well, an' lookin' like a princiss, thanks be to God! An' aint mesel' agoin' to live with thim what I likes, an' thim what likes me? As if I cared for your two weeks' wages!"

"Give me no impudence, Kate. If you are going to live with this woman, go out of my house this moment. But remember you have lost two weeks' wages."

Kate took no notice of this command to leave, for she was only waiting to exclaim: "Indade, upon me word, Miss, it is the truth, an' the whole truth, joy at seein' ye, made me forget to tell it afore, but I'se got a packet for ye; I has, with a furrin mark on it. I tuk it to that gloomy hole of a house that was niver fit for the like of ye, an' as it wasn't there that ye was, what in the world was I to do wid it, but to keep it till I know'd for shure if ye was alive or dead, or gone to heaven?"

"It must be from Orsini," I said. "Bring it to me, Kate, as quick as you can."

Kate went immediately after it, and Mrs. Skinher embraced the brief moments of her absence to express her final opinion of my character.

"I feel it to be my duty," she began, "to tell you just what I think of you. You are a person who would never know your faults if you were not told of them. Never! It is my duty to tell you, and I *will* do my duty." (Oh! how some people love to do their duty in certain states of temper.) "Miss—Madame Rochelle, you are a very troublesome person. Five hundred dollars would not pay for the trouble which you have made me. I always had my suspicions that you were the cause of Signor Orsino going off as he did. Yes; I had my suspicions, and I expressed them at the table, that Signor Orsino would never have gone to Italy if it had not been for you. A better boarder I never had. He was good pay, excellent pay; he always paid his bills the first day they were due. And you was the cause of my losing him—as good a boarder as I ever had. You caused the death of my cook—the best cook I ever had. She would not have died if you had not taken it into your head to have gone crazy. And now, as if you had not done mischief enough, you have come to coax away my chamber-maid—the best chamber-girl I ever had. She has got a saucy tongue, but she wouldn't have so much time to use it if she was not so spry when she does work; though she is a lazy thing. Now you have come after her. You are a very selfish person. It is my duty to tell

you so. Five hundred dollars wouldn't pay for the trouble which you have made."

"I allus said ye know'd that I did the work of two common gels," said Kate, triumphantly. She had heard Mrs. Skinher's estimate of her spryness while descending the stairs —bonnet, shawl, and package in hand.

I had no fault to find with Mrs. Skinher's picture, being too much engaged in the thought of the advancing package. Henri evidently deemed the tirade beneath his notice; therefore the charming woman who delivered it, having "done her duty," walked away with becoming dignity.

I have not spoken to you of Orsino this long time, but I had not forgotten him. His amulet had hung upon my neck and fluttered on my heart through all my changing fortunes. There was an hour, when want and death drew near, in which I feared that I must part with it. Then I watched for an opportunity to slip it into George Peacock's hand and to whisper: "Go buy fire and bread, lest my darlings perish." I had been spared the sacrifice. Often I had looked at the little cross with its crown of pearls, and yearned for tidings of my friend. Had his prayer been granted, had he died for Italy, and thus been spared the woe of living to see her still in chains?

I knew not, for although I had sent him my address at the "comfortable home," I had received no tidings since his first letter. I was never one of those sublimely indifferent persons who can carry an unopened letter in their pocket for any number of hours, or let it lie before their eyes with the seal untouched, as if it was all the same whether they read it to-day or next week. If a letter is disagreeable, I wish the felicity of seeing it burn to dust in less than five minutes; if it is one of those which few can write, but which many love to receive, I cannot too quickly fold it with my heart's treasures. I did not wait to pass out from the slightly ungenial atmosphere of Mrs. Skinher's hall to open the package which Kate placed in my hands. I saw at a glance that it was not Orsino's handwriting which traced the cover. I opened it, and, ere I was aware, from its folds of silken paper a tress of hair floated noiselessly to my feet, and with it a chain of gold fell with a quick vibration outside the velvet carpet on the hard enamel of the stairs. It was Orsino's amulet. I stooped and picked it up; its sword, its laurel-wreath were broken. I found in the package the leaves of Orsino's journal closed by a strange hand, which recorded that Angelo

Orsino, his beloved friend, died pouring out his blood for the liberty of Rome; that he obeyed his dying wish in sending this memorial to the Signora in a distant land! Here, at the foot of the staircase on which we had exchanged our first glances of pleasant recognition, where his beautiful smile had first hung its light in my lonely life, I read the record of his death.

I read no more. These last leaves of his life must be perused in more sacred hours, I said, as I laid in their folds again the broken amulet and tress of faded hair. Henri, in a quiet tone, was giving directions to Kate about a certain train of cars—about the station where a carriage would wait her arrival. I did not know what he meant, and did not ask. I only knew that Kate was to come to us that morning, and with this satisfactory knowledge we departed—the loss of my picture forgotten in the loss of my friend.

The three weeks which had passed since our marriage we had spent in a Southern city. Morna and Hope had accompanied us, for the first time in their lives catching a glimpse of the grand country lying outside of their native metropolis. We had returned to New York the evening before, when Henri said: "To-morrow we will go to our home." In what portion of the city that home was to be I had not even inquired. I did not seem to care much, now that Morna had certainly assured me that she could not share it with me.

"Victoire, it is not *best*," she said, with deep emphasis; and when Morna said anything was not best, I always believed that it was not.

"You must remember," she said, "that ease and luxury are not portions of my natural heritage. I do not want them, at least until I have earned the right to enjoy them. Long privation has created in me so keen a taste for forbidden joy that I fear, if I should come into sudden possession of it, I should become intoxicated. Leisure, beauty, music, would enervate me. I should yield to them unconsciously until lost in a delicious delirium. Yet I should some day wake to the consciousness that I had no right to this gorgeous life, no right to this unchecked leisure, to this yielding up of the soul to all that it thirsts for most, because it would not be mine but the property of another. Yet that knowledge would not bring back the patience and power to perform my old hated tasks. No, Victoire, I must content myself with what I can earn. What I toil for is mine, but nothing more. Besides, it is not *best*."

She spoke as if her mind was conscious of a distinct reason why it was not best.

"I know," she went on to say, "that I should not be justified in utterly refusing Mr. Rochelle's kindness, much as it pains me to accept it. He says that if I will devote myself to music this summer, by autumn I can secure a situation in a church or cathedral choir. Besides, perhaps, I might then obtain a music class; and by another spring I should be able to pay all that he will loan me in order to secure my teacher. In the meantime I can sew enough to pay for my board during the summer. I am so anxious for Hope's future, for her sake I waive all feelings of pride. It seems as if I had never wanted anything in the world so much as to have that child educated. If culture can be added to her natural graces I feel assured that her lot in life will be a beautiful one. For this reason, Mr. Rochelle's offer to adopt and educate her seems like a proposition from Heaven. I dare not utterly refuse it. At least we will share her together, Victoire. And my joy, my holiday delight, will be to come and see you sometimes in your home. What a bliss it will be! Victoire, you ought to be happy, very happy; saved and sheltered as you are in the love of such a man—so noble, so manly, so strong. These are the qualities in man which arouse the highest worship of a woman."

I had heard my friend praised many times; never before, my husband. I recognised a difference. With a real thrill of womanly feeling I said: "Morna, he *is* splendid."

Thus it was concluded, and after her certain assurance, I knew that a whole torrent of feminine entreaties of: "Oh, do, Morna;" and "I should think you might, Morna;" and "How cruel you are, Morna," could not wash away that little sentence: "Victoire, it is not best."

Nick had opened the door for us, and I had passed down the marble steps of Mrs. Skinher's mansion for the last time, not much as I tottered down them one year before, carrying nothing with me out into the world but my sick body, my sad heart, and my "dead Christ." As we entered the carriage Henri said:

"We will devote to-morrow to a search for that lost painting. The art-galleries of New York are not so numerous nor so extensive but that it can be found, if in any of them; but now we will go home."

I expected that the carriage would stop before one of the innumerable houses "all alike in a row." But no, it

rolled by all, till at last the city itself was passed. Then I said:

"Why, we are on the road which we took when we went to Bel Eden."

"We are going to Bel Eden, now," said Henri.

"What, for a drive?"

"Yes, and for a rest at the end of it. Bel Eden is our home, Victoire."

"Our home! I thought that you said it was the property of a Southern gentleman."

"So it was at that time. But I said nothing of what was equally true, that it was then in the hands of his agent for sale. I wanted to be sure that you would like it for a home before I purchased it."

I was quite unprepared for this last gift of fortune.

"Why are you so quiet?" asked Henri.

"Everything seems so strange. I can't make it seem that we are going to live at Bel Eden. I don't like to have my life seem so like a story. I am afraid that it will slip away from me before I know it."

"I should think that you had had reality enough to make the story-part pleasant by way of variety. But will this make it seem any more like a fact? Here is a deed of Bel Eden made out in your name—my bridal gift to my wife."

"Why did you choose one so magnificent? You know that it is not at all in keeping with me. I never dreamed that you were such a Midas."

"I am no Midas. I have no ambition to change your life into gold. But perhaps you remember that I told you on this very road that I should give my wife substantial proof that I loved her above all women. This is my first proof to you, Victoire. Besides, Bel Eden is a capital investment. It is excellent property."

"Is it?"

"Yes; I made up my mind from the first moment I saw it to buy it if possible. How full of wonder you look, child. I know you have thought that my profession was my only dependence. This has made you magnify the generosity of my deeds a hundredfold. The truth is, I am rich. I inherited all of my mother's fortune, which has been accumulating since my infancy, when she died. Beatrice's portion came to me. Last autumn my father died and left me the money which he had hoarded through a long life, my step-mother having enough of her own. Now if I have tried to diffuse a little of

the treasure which I had no use for into three other lives which needed light and warmth very much, it is no proof at all that I am a very munificent fellow. If I could have done a great deal more, it would have been only my duty. You must wait until people deny themselves to do a kind deed, before you talk of generosity, Victoire. You have an example in Morna. She is as unselfish as she is gifted."

"Oh, how glad I am that you like Morna," I said, my heart yearning towards my friend with that great love which she had created in me.

The road to Bel Eden did not seem nearly as long as when we rode over it before. With eager eyes I watched for the first glimpse of my home, wondering if it could seem as beautiful as when I looked at it with the eyes of a stranger. Before we entered the arcade of roadside elms I caught a gleam of the glowing windows of its tower, overlooking the high sunny slope on which it stood, and, as we drew nearer, saw its pale walls showing softly through the openings of the trees.

The gate was opened by the same old man who admitted us before, and there was a world of welcome in his pleasant face. The trees now wore the wondrous garniture of June. Dense, gorgeous, richly veined, filled with the fulness of life, they waved over us their pendulous panoplies. Bel Eden had put on a warmer bloom, a deeper, riper loveliness since we saw it last. As we emerged into its free space, all the air was flushed with roses, distilling attar from their white and crimson hearts, till the world seemed rife with their wandering odors. There, leaning against the vine-hung arches of the portico beneath the tower in their white flowing robes, stood Morna and Hope—Hope, the promise of her budding beauty enfolding her like a mystic glory; Morna, with all the tense lines of pain fading away from her gentle mouth, the dark braids of her hair shining against the ivy leaves on which they rested, her large, lustrous eyes sending out the radiance of a larger love, dewy, tender as the beautiful orbs in which it shone. They were there to welcome me to my new home.

Amid this unexpected yet joyful greeting, I was made aware of still another presence by a very queer sound bearing some resemblance both to a chuckle and a grunt. Looking, I saw a ponderous object dressed in white jacket and trowsers, rolling over, and over, and over in the sunny grass, and I had only to look to discover that it was George Washington Pea-

cock. At the question, "How are you, George?" he turned a somerset which brought him blank before me.

"Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear! Miss Victory, I can't say nothin' about nothin'," and with these words again he plunged into the grass with as much vehemence as I had once seen him plunge into a lounge-cushion, beginning to roll with great violence, as if it was the only possible way by which he could give adequate expression to his superfluous emotion.

"I am very glad to see you, George Washington. What do you want to say?" I asked, laughing, as I saw the white mass rolling down the slope of bright turf. In a moment more he brought himself up again before me.

"Oh, dear, Miss Victory, I'll be——I aint never goin' to swear no more. But I feel as if I was a bustin', an' I must shout glory or I *shall* swear when I don't want to, for I must say somethin'. What is a feller gwine to do when he feels hisself a bustin'?"

"Sing, George Washington."

"I can't sing; 'taint no use tryin'. But I can yell an' I can tumble. An' I never had no such place as this to tumble in afore," he said, plunging again into the turf, and rolling down the sunny slope, bringing himself up the third time to exclaim: "Well, I never read nothin' like it in no story-book. I didn't 'spose there ever was nothin' like it, as you should come an' live with Mr. Rochel' in a handsum meetin' house, with the steeple a shinin' at the top like blazes. I didn't spose as I should ever see Miss Hope a standin' in the door, lookin' like an angel in a white frock. There never was nothin' like it in all the story-books as I ever read, in the Pirate of the Pacific nor nothin'; as I should come an' live with you an' Mr. Rochel' an' be made a decent chap of. Oh, I never thought nothin' so good could come to me, I'll be —— Oh, I didn't say it. I can't say nothin' about nothin'. I am a bustin'!" And again the half-frantic boy rolled off in the grass, Henri calling out:

"Roll away, my boy, until you feel easier."

The next morning the search for the lost painting commenced. The art-gallery in which it had been placed was easily found; but, alas! it was not there. The director, the gentleman who purchased it of Mrs. Skinher, informed us that he had sold it more than a month before for a thousand dollars; also that he bought it of Mrs. Skinher for five hundred. He said that the picture had attracted much attention on account of its marked individuality; that it had been sharply

criticised and enthusiastically praised; that only one verdict had been pronounced upon the living inspiration of the faces in the group, which all critics acknowledged remarkable for power and beauty. Its present proprietor purchased it for his own house; whether he intended to reside in this city or not the director did not know. The painting was sent to the Hotel St. ———. The gentleman's name was Moncrieffe.

Amid the many unsatisfactory items which we gathered we found the very satisfactory one, that, in the amount paid Mrs. Skinher for this picture, she had received an equivalent for the five hundred dollars' worth of trouble which I had unfortunately made her in causing the death of her cook and the loss of her chamber-maid.

LIFE.

Life had come to me. I had accepted it not as the realization of the ideal life which I had dreamed of, but still as a life rich beyond my deserving. Whose actual life is ever just the thing which once they imagined that it might be? Even if its colors are gorgeous as those which fancy painted, still they are different. The life of fact is never the fulfilment of the life of dreams. Life had come and lavished upon me treasures which I had never sought; should I murmur because it retained a single gift, even though that was the one which I most fervently desired? Life could not be all love nor all happiness. Labor, and discipline, and growth were a part of life. There were victories to be won over ourselves; there was good to be done and to be attained. There was a life which transcended all personal desire; which included an abnegation of self and devotion to the happiness of others. I would live this life. It was very selfish to be so eager for happiness, to spend one's days longing for that grand ideal of personal satisfaction which we may find in heaven but never on earth. God had given me much to live for now; every day, from a full heart, I thanked Him for it. I honored and revered my husband. I regarded him with a yearning, wistful affection. The sweetest pleasure I had was in consulting his tastes and anticipating his wishes. How I wished that he needed me a little more. I was glad that he was so self-poised and strong; that his life was so complete; and yet if he had only needed me a little more! Surely the wells of

love in my being had never been sounded; my power of devotion longed for an object to call it out to the utmost. Yet those were pleasant times, when I drove down through the aisle of cathedral elms to meet him each evening as he came from the city. Sometimes Morna was there, and Hope came from school, and we had laughter and songs, and walks and stories. Yes, those were happy times. There was good to be done, and enough of it. My life need not grow morbid from inaction. There was Morna and Hope to live for; their future to wait for. There was Kate Murphy to be civilized. There was George Washington Peacock. To be sure I could not change the end of his nose. I could not chisel it till it assumed a more classic outline. But I could teach him English grammar, that the poor boy's bound soul might utter his native tongue with less physical wear and tear to himself. Yes, there was good enough to be done. Did not a great Babylon of sin and sorrow lie just beyond the precincts of Bel Eden? While there was so much misery to be healed, should a woman complain that her life could find no great object? Could she be justified in making her own selfish heart-wants the centre of her universe?

I commenced Morna's portrait. Twice a week she came and sat before me. In trying to embody that tragic yet magnificent face, I found food for my enthusiasm and full employment for my faculties. Art was again an inspiration as vivid and pervading as when I painted out my first dream in Mrs. Skinner's attic chamber. Thus life had come; had given me so much; how could I ever be dissatisfied or selfishly crave another joy to be added to my portion?

It was June. I had been married two years. I was sitting in the room which once I had playfully wished for my studio—the highest chamber in the tower overlooking the grounds of Bel Eden, the Hudson, the blue precipitous palisades, the distant city. It was my studio, in its appointments looking like hundreds of other studios which may be seen in the world. There, beneath the skylight, stood the easel with its unfinished picture. This, most people would have thought, a study, an ideal face. They could scarcely imagine a human one so surpassingly lovely that it could claim to be its original. This picture was to go forth to the world bearing the name of Hebe, yet it was scarcely an idealized portrait of Hope. Then, besides, here were the busts and pictures which find their way into almost every studio, besides some which never

found their way into any but this one. Opposite each other hung the portraits of my father and mother; while near, gazing into each other's eyes, were the faces of Frederick and Beatrice. Sacred faces, sacredly cherished, lavishly loved, I wanted them where I could look up to them always for benediction, for inspiration. These were the woman's idols, reigning supreme amid all the artist's treasures. Yet the latter were scattered around with almost prodigal profusion. Here was Aphrodite's little foot, which might just as well have been called Morna's, modelled in marble. Here was the august bust of Athena, on whose royal face I looked with ever-kindling admiration, and sometimes with a sigh. I could never be Athena now.

A part, on their sculptured brackets, gazing upon each other in conscious emulation, stood the Apollo Belvidere in the glory of his manful beauty, and the Venus of Milo in the pomp of her sumptuous womanhood. Here, as a matter of course, was Raphael's Madonna beside Raphael's own still diviner face. Here, too, Correggio's Christ, which you know had followed me through many sunless spots, ere it reached a resting-place as harmonious and hallowed as this. Pictures in every stage of development, from the aerial outline to the full, warm-tinted form, the softly shaded landscapes were carelessly grouped about the room. Embedded in the mossy carpet, they leaned against the walls, some half-revealing themselves as they peered out from behind others; and some, hiding their faces entirely, showing instead blanks of grey canvas. The braided beryline and ruby light streaming from the gorgeous window, was attempered by deep folds of drapery. But one stood wide open now, in which I sat in a low seat, my feet resting on the lace-like balcony into which all the windows opened. I often sat here at this hour, just as the day was going to look out on one of the grandest amphitheatres of beauty which ever stretched away before human sight. But now I did not see the sunset crimsoning the white clouds or the emerald hills; I did not see the glimmering city or the gleaming river. I did not watch the golden and purple shadows flit through the shimmering trees, nor the fountain scattering about its lavish diamonds; nor think of the gay congregations of flowers sending up to me their evening oblation of perfume. I neither saw nor thought of the objects which had grown to be a part of my daily life, for I was absorbed in a letter which I was reading, and these are a portion of the words which it contained :—

"I am not able to banish your Niobe, although I have endeavored to do so. Niobe is more the embodiment of a spirit than of a mere face. The features are noble, the eyes glorious; so are the eyes and features of other pictures, which possess for me no such charm. It is the spirit radiating from every line, which arrests and fascinates so many beholders.

"You have caught the essence of a beautiful soul and rendered it palpable in an immortal form. Yet Niobe embodies a divine beauty which can never be resolved into mere color or lines. It emanates from her, it hovers over her, a glory which can be felt yet never described; if it were possible to portray it by any material symbol, it could not be the purely spiritual effluence which it is. To suggest the perfect, evermore hovering beyond, is the highest revelation of the highest art. Your critics say that Niobe lacks the grandest lineaments of a tragic face, and that her form is wanting in majesty. This is true, perhaps, if she is judged solely as the representative of the ancient idea. To me she is not so much the embodied type of a mythic goddess, as she is the Niobe of your own conception, the mortal woman of to-day, whom sorrow has transfigured into something divine without robbing her of one of her sweet, womanly attributes. I judge that you are still young from the sympathetic, lingering touch you have given to the lines of youth which woe has not swept from your Niobe's face. Yes, I think that you are young as years are told, yet how much you must have lived in your earthly sojourn; how wide a scope you must have encompassed in your range of thought, of aspiration, of sympathy, before you could embody such a soul as this! Through your Niobe you draw near to me, breathing of a royal yet saddened womanhood, with distant, mystic suggestions of that magnetic sympathy through which these thoughts will from me to you vibrate without a thrill of dissonance.

"As deep calleth unto deep, so does soul answer unto soul. The great flood of ocean, as it rolls under the influence of countless stars in their far blue homes, together with all the moving and blending forces of universal creation, proclaim a correspondent chain of cognate elements in the spiritual world. Sympathy is produced through the medium of organic impressions, but absolute friendship may grow out of the veriest abstractions. Do you not believe that the contemplation of the good, the beautiful, in every form, seems doubly beautiful when shared even in thought by another who can sympathize to the utmost in our exquisite enjoyment of them? I

believe also that when another has appealed to that which is highest in our nature, it is a joy to answer that appeal. That when another has embodied our own highest spiritual conceptions, whether in form, in color, or in words—embodied that which we have always felt, yet never had the power to express—the least return that we can make is to tell that soul what it has done for us.

"As I reverently fear God, in whom all my hopes are centered, I do solemnly declare that these are my motives for addressing you. Here I trace an ineffaceable record of my gratitude for the lovely vision you have given me of a rare, human, glorified womanhood. I confess that if Niobe was not more to me than a picture, she would not have called forth all that I have said. She brings back to me more palpably than I dare think one who has made the sweetness and the sadness of my mortal life. I do not deny that I deeply desire an interchange of sentiment with the soul which gave her birth. There is nothing on earth so calculated to refine and elevate the mind of man as a frank, open, sincere interchange of thought, with a pure, gifted, Christian woman. It is the alembic through which the holiest friendship distils its sweets.

"Thus, while I beg your pardon for introducing myself to you unannounced, I shall never cease to cherish a grateful recollection of your goodness, should I be so fortunate as to win a reply.

"Respectfully yours,

"PAUL AMBROSE MONCRIEFFE.

"*No* — —— *Place*, *New York*, *June* —, 18 —."

I read this letter through once, twice, thrice; then I held it before me to see how far I might judge of the writer's individuality by this embodied expression of his mind. It was written on full-sized letter-paper, unmarred by "rules," pure, fine, glossy as satin. The chirography, devoid of all pretension, was remarkable for elegance. It displayed no vulgar flourishes, no writing-master precision, no nervous quirks, no ambitious ascension, no sharp plunges of lines in a downward direction. Every letter stood bold in the masculine vigor of its form; yet delicate, almost feminine in its shading, as if traced by a light, fastidious hand. There were no words erased, no words left out to be hoisted in untimely haste upon the shoulders of their fellows over the pinnacle of a tottering caret. There was nothing cramped, contracted, hurried. The full, clear lines, encircled by their broad, snowy margin, sug-

gested only strength and harmony, beautiful freedom, infinite grace.

Letters written amid the hurry of business, beneath a pressure of care, in moments of exhaustion or pain, cannot be regarded as fair representatives of their writers. But when an individual in an hour of leisure, with perfect deliberation, sits down to record for you a pure expression of thought or feeling, you may accept that letter as the synonym of its author. As you open it, you will inhale the very atmosphere of attraction or repulsion which you are conscious of in the living presence. It is instinct with a single personality. As in action, here character publishes itself unawares; you can detect it in the texture of the paper, in the hue of the ink, in the distorted angles, or melodious curves of the letters. The idiosyncrasies of character will stamp the visible lines no less than the invisible thought which they breathe to you. The seal of the soul from which it emanated was on the letter which I held in my hand, and I felt drawn within the sphere of its alluring attraction. Its simple mechanical beauty satisfied my æsthetic sense. Its delicate words of prodigal praise satisfied my love of approbation. Its spiritual conception of Niobe satisfied a love higher than my self-love could be, my love for Morna—for Niobe was only a slightly idealized portrait of Morna. I had not created the soul of my Niobe, but only embodied it as I recognised it in my living friend.

It had become no unusual occurrence to receive letters from persons whom I had never met. Since the advent of Niobe into the world of art, notes of compliment, notes of inquiry, every day found their way to Bel Eden. Henri brought my letters from the city every evening, and had handed me this about an hour before, with the remark :—

"This must be another letter from one of your Niobe worshippers."

I paused beside him for a moment, and we looked together at the seal upon the envelope (the only ostentatious mark about it) which displayed in clear outline a crest and coat of arms.

"Well, little girl, run and read it. Doubtless it is full of pleasant things. You may tell me all about them some time, but I am very busy now," said Henri, kindly, but with his most preoccupied air. He passed into his study, and I, left alone, went to read my letter in the silence of my sanctuary.

I did not expect to be especially interested, but was thank-

ful for a little variety to occupy my thought, and to keep me from feeling lonely. But from the moment my eye rested on that beautiful page, my heart absorbed its words with a new, strange interest.

At last with the thought, "Perhaps Henri is not busy now," I arose with my open letter and went to read it with him. His study was the room beneath mine. Pause a moment on the threshold with me, and say if you think that there could be a lovelier bijou of a study in all the land. Every side was lined with alcoves filled with books, whose harmonious binding and classic arrangement could not fail to satisfy the most artistic eye. The gothic cornices of carved rosewood were surmounted with busts suggestive of the character of the books below. Homer and Dante, Shakespeare and Corneille, looked down upon the poets' alcove. Herodotus and Xenophon, with Gibbon and Macaulay, reigned in silent state above the arch of history. Thus above their own peculiar realm, many kings of ancient and modern science sat enthroned in white and silent majesty. In the embrasures between the alcoves were set the stained windows, filling the room with floating lights, crossing each other with violet and golden hues. There were only two pictures in the room, one a full length portrait of Victoire, with free hair and student's dress, painted by her beloved master, M. Savonne, purchased of him by Henri Rochelle after her departure from Paris. The other was a magnificent portrait of Henri Rochelle himself, in all the high, cold beauty of his statuesque manhood. The velvet carpet was sown with moss roses, the ebony table in the centre of the room was crowded with books and folios, presenting that disarranged appearance which is the perfection of arrangement to the student's eye. Beside its gold-mounted escritoire stood an alabaster vase filled with white and crimson flowers, which I had gathered that evening in anticipation of their master. And now beside them, in easy undress, in a deep library chair, sat that master, absorbed in a ponderous folio. He was so much absorbed that he did not hear me as I paused on the threshold, did not notice me as I passed softly by him and went and stood in an open window directly beneath the one in which I had sat above, and, like that, opening into a hanging balcony. He was reading, and I listened:

"They differ from the optic ganglia of birds and the lower vertebrata, being divided by a transverse furrow into anterior

and posterior eminences, whence they are known as the *corpora quadragemina.* The auditory ganglia are lodged in the substance of the medulla oblongata, forming the gray nuclei of the strands termed the posterior pyramids; and similar nuclei in the restiform bodies, are the ganglionic centres of the glosso-pharyngeal nerves, and perhaps minister to the sense of taste."

Here the fluttering of the open letter in my hand, stirred by a passing breeze, arrested his attention. Turning and seeing me, he said:

"Ah, Victoire, is that you! Some other time, child, I shall be very glad to see you. You know that I told you I was busy. I am very busy still. To-morrow I lecture before the Medical College."

"I only came down to read this letter with you. It is different from the other letters which I have received; I would like your opinion of it," I said.

"What letter? Oh, the one I brought. Well, it praises Niobe, does it not? I am sure that it ought to praise. When I have an hour of leisure I will attend to it; but I cannot be interrupted now."

"I am sorry that I have disturbed you; I did not mean to, Henri," I said, softly retracing my steps towards the door.

"I know that you did not mean to; you are too good a little girl for that. Yet I must tell you, Victoire, that you do disturb me often by coming into the study when I am so completely occupied. It is becoming a habit, or I should not speak of it. I know that you do not wish to confirm a habit which would render you annoying to me. I enjoy your society more than anything else in the world; but I must not allow my fondness for it to interfere with my duty; if I did I should be unfitted for my work in the world. Hereafter when I shut myself in here you must fancy that 'no admittance' is written on the door, even for you. When I have leisure to chat with you I shall always climb to your eyrie, or make my appearance in the parlor below."

"Forgive me, Henri," were the words which rose to my lips; but as I looked towards him I saw that he was already engrossed in the scroll before him.

I stole quietly down the stairs, out into the open vestibule of the tower. It looked very pleasant, with its floor of tesselated marble, with the rich ivies clustering around its massive

arches. I sat down on the threshold. Serene was the evening, lovely the scene before me; yet I buried my face in my hands. My heart swelled as if it must burst into an agony of weeping. Yet I did not. Was he not in the room just above me? He should not be disturbed again by me sitting down there crying like a homeless child.

I had disturbed him with my presence. I had disturbed him many times—so many times that at last he had been obliged to tell me of it. I could fill the day with employment; but in the evening I wanted some one to talk with, some one to talk with me. I had sought my husband, and had made myself troublesome. Was he cruel? No, he was not even unkind. The words sounded harsh, yet the tone was pleasant. He was thinking only of his obligations, not of wounding me. He would be astonished if he knew that he had hurt me, and would see no reason whatever for my feeling hurt. If his duty as a man in the world was not fulfilled, the world would not excuse him. He knew that, and acted accordingly. I honored him the more for it. Could I respect a man who was careless of his obligations? How many he had! How much he was sought, how much honored, how much good he did! I ought to have been more careful and never have interrupted him, and yet I had; I had obliged him to speak to me. I was banished from his study. He would not think of it when next he saw me, but I should think of nothing else. He was as kind to me as on the first day of our marriage, yet how little I saw of him now. He probably was scarcely aware how completely he was absorbed with public duties, how rare were his moments of leisure. This accumulation of responsibility had been so gradual in its growth that it fairly devolved upon him before he knew it. He had never sought it, yet if he had chosen, perhaps he would not have avoided it. His executive genius craved full occupation. He was one to whom great responsibilities came, he had so much capacity to bear them with honor to himself and benefit to others.

Still he must have thought of these things, for once he said: "Victoire, it is very fortunate that you are interested in art, or you would be singing the song of the neglected wife. I never intended that medical practice should absorb quite so much of my life. But I must do a man's work while I am in my prime." In these words he had only said what thousands of men say. No man who loves his wife intends to neglect her; he would shrink from the thought. He only intends to

do his man's work well, to sustain and strengthen the respectability of his family, to contend for life's prizes proudly among his peers. High, manly impulses are these, and he does not forget that all the glory which he can win will reflect its lustre upon *her*. But neglect is of slow, insidious growth. Care, business, the world, are very aggressive. They choke the springs of affection till the heart grows as dry as dust. Ere he is aware, the sweetnesses of life are gone. Loving words and smiles, those tender charities of home, whose fragrance used to go with him out into the world, perfuming all his toil, are dead; they died he does not know when; he does not even know when life became the metallic, grinding thing that it is. He only knows that now he has no time for anything but work. Is he not spending his life for his wife and children? Would he not die for them? Who is better supported or more handsomely dressed? What more can a woman ask?

Henri Rochelle had fulfilled his word. Every day he gave substantial proof that he loved his wife above all women. He had established that fact by actions; therefore words were unnecessary. In the first letter which he wrote me, did he not inform me that he could *live* his love, but could not tell it? A life was a nobler expression of a great sentiment than language. Each soul, restricted by its own nature, can only express itself as that nature allows; therefore every soul's expression is partial. Henri Rochelle attested his devotion by magnanimity and munificent deeds. Why did I not accept the beautiful fact of his love, proven in his own way, without pining for the demonstrations of weaker souls, the hourly tenderness of life? Had he not given me Bel Eden—Bel Eden with its lavish wealth, its luxurious beauty? Had he not given me Zenaide, my gentle spirited beautiful horse; my dear dumb friend, my daily companion? The little pinnace, with flashing oars and fluttering sails throbbing now on the blue waters just below the grounds of Bel Eden, he had built for me, and would call it nothing but "Victoire," though I wanted to name it "Hope." Did he not give me culture, ease, luxury, beauty, everything but his daily self? Everything but the divine communion which I dreamed of, the oneship of spirit which I sighed for most. I spurned his love once. I proudly told him that I desired only art for my husband. He was avenged now, yet did not know it. Should I apprise him of his triumph? Should I tell him that I wanted nothing so much now as that he should let me love him, and lavish upon him all the rising tenderness of my soul.

Yes, I was willing to accord him the triumph. I knew that he would not spurn me; he would accept it rather, and say that such tenderness was beautiful in me, a woman; and yet I could not tell him, I could not offer it, because he did not need it. Calmly writing the medical thesis above me, how little that strong man knew of the poor child who sat below in her great loneliness and want.

I lifted my face from my hands and looked around. Never had Bel Eden seemed to me so lovely, so soft, so silent. The evening was steeped in calm. The trees stood motionless. Even the quivering needles of the pines were at rest. The bare hearts of the roses were stirless, waiting for the dew. The only sound which stirred the silence was the dreamy lapse of the fountain murmuring amid the flowers. I looked away to a marble cross which shone white beneath the shadow of a cluster of pines. It was my fancy to place it there, bearing the names of Frederick and Beatrice; and now I, who had always loved the world so well, looked at it, and wondered if it would not be sweeter, after all, like them to be quiet and at rest. Once I had been mad with my love of beauty. Perfection in form and color satisfied my unawakened nature. Now the eye, satisfied with beauty, mocked the craving, hungry heart. Once I had dreamed of fame; had dreamed that there was something grand in doing wondrous deeds, and then listening to "the nations praise them afar off." What did I care for fame now! Nothing. What to me the acclaim of the distant multitudes, even if I could win it? What if people would visit my grave, or the house that I had lived in, or cover my memory with praises after I was dead? Was such mocking oblation worth the gnawing pain of a starved, human existence? Could it atone for a mortal life barren, solitary, sorrowful? No; what I craved was fulness of being, a personal life, melodious, complete. After all, mine was not a self-abnegating nature. I loved to see others happy; I loved to make them so; but I loved also to be happy myself. My soul's hunger was not easily appeased, and was only quelled for a season, the more imperiously to assert itself. No wild, worshipping passion my nature craved. It only asked for one to fill its great world of affection; for a single being and that being mine by every holy tie, on whom I might pour the flood of tenderness, pent and moaning in my heart. It is a false idea that a woman's great want in life is only to win, selfishly to absorb love. She does not ask to be the object of an overmastering passion so much

as she craves an object which she herself may worship. Her sublimest conceptions of an infinite God, her tenderest love for a God made manifest in the flesh, cannot absorb her utterly. Her human affections must have human objects, and if every tendril of love clings to its legitimate support, her whole being expands in symmetrical grace. But if life defrauds her affections of their natural aliment, the womanly nature becomes distorted. One faculty is sure to grow out of all harmonious proportion, and live by devouring the rest; or all dwindle and die together. A woman's soul is burdened with love and reverence; it is her nature to lay these costly offerings at the feet of man. The grandest work of God, he ever wins her worship; she only asks him to be worthy of it.

"This isolation, this solitude of soul, is it ever to be my portion?" I said, looking still towards the white cross under the pines. I felt alone. I was alone. Hope was in Paris. The schools in New York were doubtless just as good, but Henri wished her to have advantages of the institution and instructor under whose shadow Beatrice was educated. Six months had passed since she went away, and now all that I had of her was in her tender letters. Morna, Morna Avondale, the gifted cantatrice, the great soul-singer, my best loved friend, whose praises were now on many tongues, was in the city. She did not neglect me, but she was not here now. I must do something to forget myself. Should George Peacock saddle Zenaide? No, I did not want to go and ride alone. Should he go to the boat with me? I could help to row it myself. No, it would be no pleasure to sail alone. I thought of Hebe on the easel. It was too dark to paint. Art was a beautiful phase in my life, but I could not live on art. Once I thought that I could; but I was mistaken. There were two things which I could do immediately. I could take a book or I could go to bed. I chose to do the former. I read the letter in my hand again, and resolved to answer it. Then I went into the parlor, and sat down by a soft light, and took up a new number of the best magazine of the day. I opened upon a story of Italian life, and was very soon impressed by the rich versatility of its style. It was terse and masculine; it was humorous and witty; it was tender and poetic.

The story is nothing to you; but these words which I found in it were much to me:

"All meet some time in their life a being who above all others has the power to quicken their nature, to absorb their

soul. No eyes can ever burn so deep into the heart as did those eyes, those deep, lambent, electric eyes. No voice can ever move us as did that voice, whose modulated melody caused the pulses of joy to tremble till they overflowed. No words can ever move us as did those words, which gave to the care-covered present the purple glory of the future—a future more gorgeous to our love-awakened eyes than the fabled splendor of the Pagan's Elysium, or the golden brilliance of the Christian's Paradise.

"The hours are lightning-winged which give us such communion. Fate tears the idol from our arms. Our paths diverge, seldom if ever to cross again in the labyrinths of life.

"With weary feet, with wearier hearts sometimes, we thread our way through the mazes of the world. Gentle hands are pressed within our own. Tender eyes meet ours in love. We cherish a soothing, a beautiful affection for the beings who walk by our side; an affection which elevates our nature if it does not satisfy our heart. Yet there are moments when we know that we are alone. With the ones who love us best we are alone, sighing for the unattainable, the lost.

* * * * * * * *

"Only a face! Why had it the power to move me so? Those eyes met mine in a single gaze, yet in that the sweetest mystery of life was told. No one told your story, yet in your eyes' ineffable softness I foreread a history and a prophecy. Faces more beautiful I had seen before; fairer faces I have gazed upon since. Seductive eyes have cast upon me their spell; eyes luminous with thought, eyes scintillant with genius, eyes melting in love, have awakened for me their varied enchantment. I acknowledged their witchery, yet sighed for the eyes which quickened first the pulses of my heart. Where are you, tender eyes? Where are you, lost face? I have sought you long, wearily, fruitlessly! In your own bright land where beauty abides, where sublimity has made for itself a perpetual home; in the strife of cities, amid the surging sea of passing faces, I have searched for you, yet found not my lost vision.

"In solitary gardens, where the wind sweeps through the pines like the thrilling garments of ghosts; on silent seas and forsaken shores; on awful mountain tops where the sun smites the face of the falling avalanche; amid burning, homeless deserts; in the trance of calm nights, when I have looked into the faces of the isolated stars, and felt all the solitude of soul which can appal a man; amid the splendor of festivals,

when mirth and music taunted me with the joy I had not found; I have thought of you. An abiding, an absorbing thought, a perpetual inspiration, a haunting memory, sorrowful yet tenderly sweet, art thou to me, lost face!"

Who uttered those words? I would know.

Life had come to Henri Rochelle, had given him all that he asked, and he was satisfied. All of this world's prizes which he ever had sought were his. He was admired for his talents, distinguished for his high scientific attainments, sought and honored for his wealth and position, married to the only woman whom he had ever taken the trouble to seek. Beneath that full, active, outward life the current of his inner being moved deep and strong, freighted so heavily with content that it stood almost still. He stood in the midsummer of his years, and the future held no richer, riper joy than that which he tasted now. It was not a foaming, flashing, intoxicating beaker; it was a calm, overflowing, sating draught of which he drank. I drank from the same cup and was *not* satisfied.

We cannot anticipate the stages of our being. We cannot anticipate the seasons of our development. In the exuberant life of spring we look in vain for the calm fulness of summer. In the ripe glory of summer we seek, yet find not, the soft serenity of autumn. Henri Rochelle had passed the fierce fever of the earlier noon of being; the unshadowed yet slightly attempered glory which belongs to the later hour of life's meridian was his. The exultant pulses of the morning were mine. Life overflowed within me. With culminating force it surged through my soul, till it was surcharged with a power which had no outlet and no object. The heavy pressure of the outward calm which surrounded me repressed, yet could not stifle, the importunate life within. One looking at the surface (and how few look below) would have exclaimed: "How fortunate! The young aspirant of Mrs. Skinher's attic, the sick orphan of the 'comfortable home,' the poor, toiling designer of —— street, now the loved and honored wife of a rich and noble man; how fortunate!" Remember, good fortune does not consist in the multitude of our possessions, but in the possession of the thing which our heart needs the most. And now with all my strivings after an impersonal life, a life which was to find its fruition outside of its own needs, there were moments when I was only conscious what a weary thing it was, this constant effort to drag the tenacious heart up to a level of passivity where it could

never be importuned by its own inherent wants. I had read of consecrated, holy souls, whose whole life had been a struggle to annihilate will and desire; who believed that existence, to be perfect, must be an utter negation! What a grand idea was that of utter self-renunciation! Where the soul sought nothing, asked nothing, but the presence of God; where, amid all the temptations of the world, it sat in perfect quietude, waiting for the illumination of the Divine glory. I had read of many, but had never known but one soul who reached this state of unearthly resignation, this face-to-face communion with Deity; and that was my pure and Christian mother. I took from their resting-places the books which she used to read, traced on every page by her delicate hand. What consolation, what help it would be, to pause at these landmarks of the soul, where the being who gave me birth had rested before me for strength and comfort. I carried them to my room, and after that found my daily companions among the old quietists. The inspired utterances of Francis De Sales and Thomas à Kempis, of Madame Guyon and Catherine Adorna; the holy words of the holy Fenelon; the aspirations of the sublime but dreary Pascal; all wooed me towards a higher life, which until now I had never wished to enter. They had loved the world, yet in its fulness they relinquished it. They had been crucified to the pomp and glory of life, that they might only live in Christ. Could I ever reach that altitude of negation where I should desire nothing save only that the will of God should be done in me and by me?

There are two eras in a woman's life when she turns to Thomas à Kempis as she turns to her Bible. The first is at the dawn of her religious life, which usually is also the dawn of her womanhood; when she loves the beautiful world in which she finds herself; yet in a dim, confused way feels that it is her duty to renounce it. She is eager to taste life's ungathered joys, yet in her very eagerness is born the fear that they will mock her taste and fail to satisfy her hunger. Thus she turns to the great teachers of renunciation that she may begin early to cultivate a desire for immortal food. When she has drained her life-cup to the lees; when she knows all its sweetness and its bitterness; when she has gauged the world and found it wanting; when above the grey waste of experience rises the serene sun of the spiritual life which will never know a setting, then she comes once more to her holy teachers, never more to forsake them;

for the world is no longer before her but behind her, and henceforth her guides will go with her, hand in hand, to the very gate of the celestial city. Life had just come; I had scarcely tasted it, yet I knew it was going to mock me. I should be compelled to learn it at last. I would begin now to teach my self-asserting soul the sublime lesson of abnegation. Thomas à Kempis touched me more nearly than all the rest of my teachers. His were the utterances of a soul purified in the world's fierce crucible, not the enthusiastic rhapsodies of a religious dreamer giving rules for overcoming temptations which he had never felt. He sounded the depth of human experience before he uttered the oracles which appeal to the universal soul. I pored over the words; I came to them for wisdom and guidance. I felt that it was the truth when he said :—

"Know that the love of thyself doth hurt thee more than anything in the world. If thou seekest this or that, would'st be here or there to enjoy thine own pleasure, thou shalt never be quiet or free from care; for in everything somewhat will be wanting, and in every place there will be some that will cross thee."

Yet there were hours when I was filled with doubts regarding this life of the mystics. Was it the holiest life, after all? Was it quite noble to ignore the world in which God had placed us, to shut ourselves away from the temptations by which He had surrounded us, to forsake the untaught and sorrowing masses of humanity, simply that we might live an ascetic life of rapt contemplation and holy joy? Had we any right to abuse the very natures which He had given us? to allow the noblest faculties with which He had endowed us to fall into disuse? Would not our nature approximate nearer to its pristine glory, by allowing it to grow to symmetrical expansion, rather than by a lifelong effort to crush and kill it? Did not every soul have need of its fellows? Was it not the highest use of our gifts to use them for the benefit of others? Could we not glorify God more by living a simple, sincere, consecrated life *in* the world, amid its pomp, and glory, and beauty, rather than by fleeing from it to spend our days in pious meditations where we could never be touched by temptation nor delivered from evil?

Alas, for the earth-child! there were moments when the sublime philosophy of religion went down before the personal want of one young, eager heart. Moments when her grand

ideal of a grander life shifted far out of sight. She only knew that she was very tired trying to be wise and good. She only felt that her youth was swiftly passing without paying to her its full value. She was conscious of something which she had missed; of something hoped for which she had not found. She could not define it, yet she was very sure that life held in reserve from her a depth of life which she had never attained. Why, after receiving the letter regarding Niobe which she has recorded for you, did she pore over the words of Thomas à Kempis and Madame Guyon with renewed assiduity? Was it not because she detected her heart recurring to that letter with a thrill of pleasure? Was it not because its subtle suggestion of a distant yet delicious sympathy was answered by a tone in her own soul which she thought it wise to silence before it grew more distinct? Not that she was conscious of anything sinful in that tone. Oh, no; but had she not vowed before God to ask for nothing but what He had given her, to desire nothing beyond the rich gifts which He had bestowed? She was grateful that He had allowed this distant soul to send her these kind and beautiful words, but it was enough to be grateful without thinking of them so often with an ever-recurring, lingering delight. Certainly it had not been her weakness to place an undue estimate upon the mere words of compliment. She was well aware of their cheap average value. She had not forgotten that when she needed fame and friends to help her earn her daily bread they were far away. Both had come now, for she no longer needed them. She was not wholly indifferent to praise—no one is. But the admiration of strangers had ever been to her what music is in a foreign tongue—pleasant to the ear, but cold to the heart. Of the many letters which she received this one alone reached her soul; from her soul she answered it thus:

"Your words have reached me, and I write to tell you that I am grateful for them. You place undue estimate upon my powers, yet do not overrate Niobe, which is the portrait of the most glorious woman I ever knew. I cannot answer all your letter. It is not my mission to write to embody life in words, but to live what others interpret. In sensuous images, in harmonious colors, I strive vainly to portray the revelations of beauty which have been made known to me since my earliest consciousness. Like all souls, mine lives but partially revealed. It can lay hold of no visible symbol by

which to express its own awful significance. Your words utter what I have many times thought and felt; for this I thank you."

I asked for no further communication, yet I discovered myself wishing for one. For this inordinate desire I devoted an extra hour to Thomas à Kempis. I could not divest myself of the impression, although I could give no reason for it, that the author of the Niobe letter and the Italian story were one. One individuality appealed to me through both. I suddenly recollected one day, although in the two years' interval it had passed from my memory, that "Moncrieffe" was the name which the director of the art gallery gave as belonging to the purchaser of my lost painting. Could it be the same one? What chain of coincidents, what life-links were here? When I told Henri that it must be the same person who bought my picture, he smiled and said: "Very unlikely. There are a thousand Moncrieffes. You would die, Victoire, if you could not conjure up a little romance."

In the meantime Niobe continued to attract still greater attention. In its creation fame had not been an end, yet it brought me fame and an acknowledged position in the world of art. It was made the subject of elaborate critiques; it was warmly praised and sharply blamed. It was engraved and found its way into the windows of picture-stores, and into the pages of art-journals. The public was not slow to recognise its marked and mysterious resemblance to Miss Avondale, yet very few imagined that it was an actual portrait. To me all the praise awarded it seemed only so much homage to Morna. It was Morna that people saw, recognised, and worshipped. In this fact my fondest wishes were realized. Niobe was a work of love, and she brought me love's reward. No one could look into Morna's living face without feeling its power. And here from the canvas looked Morna; here was the rapt brow, the electric eyes, radiating all the magnetism of a living soul. It was not a dead picture but a breathing woman; a magnificent, a royal woman. Henri was proud of Niobe. He was not one of those little-souled men who considered all praise awarded to the wife as so much stolen from themselves. He felt fully equal to sustaining the dignity of his manhood, even if his wife did paint pictures while he did not. To him she was his "own Victoire," his "good little girl;" if the public chose to praise Madame Rochelle, he had no objections.

"THINGS WHAT HAPPENS ARE STRANGER NOR ALL THE NOVELS."—*Mrs. Peacock.*

We talk of the solitude of nature. Is it ever solitary? Never are we less alone than when we enter her domain. Never is life so busy within us as when we commune with her in silence. Nature has passions, moods, tears, and smiles. She appeals to us like a human soul. Not only the cultivated and gifted, but the rude and untaught find solace in her presence. Few but at some moment in their life have found consolation in a flower, companionship in the stars, and a refrain of melody in wind and waves. Yet it is our humanity, the bond of human sympathy, which allies us most closely to her heart. We stand beside the sonorous sea, and every wave that comes up and kisses our feet calls for one who stood beside us when once we stood there. We look into the significant eyes of the stars, feeling that if one other pair of eyes could gaze up with us they would give even to them a deeper glory. Why does the world hold some spots so inconceivably dear? Not because their sunlight is rarer, their flowers sweeter, their air more enticing, but because every object which they unfold is linked with the memory of one human presence, for whose loss no charm of nature can atone.

But what was the thrall which bound my heart so closely to Bel Eden? No vanished face haunted me at every turn. No tender memory of the long-buried past was linked with this spot. Life had never given me here more joy than she gave me now. Yet never had I seemed so near to those whom I had loved and lost as when I gave up my being to the rapture of solitude in the hush of this Edenized retreat. Never before had nature wooed me with so irresistible a voice; never before had I felt my love for her so divine a passion in my heart. Bel Eden had never been an alien spot to me. From the first moment in which I had gazed on its beauty I felt as if I had known and loved it always. I accounted for this sense of kinship in the fact that in many ways it reminded me of Les Delices, or rather in a dim, unaccountable way seemed connected with it. I had no power to analyse this association, and so resolved it back to my imagination. Reason compelled me to do this, for my intuition of a relationship between them far transcended the points of resemblance which actually existed between these beautiful homes separated by so many miles of land and ocean.

Day after day I wandered through the haunts of Bel Eden, through its flowery paths, its deep glens, its broad tree-domed vistas; rested beside the mimic lakes asleep amid its hills; followed the windings of the mountain brook, ever losing, ever finding its garrulous way through the ravine to the river. I leaned upon the bough-woven bridges which spanned it beneath the dense trees, and listened to its waters trickling through the intricate vines and close-meshed leaves which laced it; listened while they gurgled through their pebbly passes and poured their quivering crystal over the grass-rimmed rocky ledges. I listened to the melody thrilling the green interwoven arches, the rifted sun-flecked domes of garniture above me; and all that I saw and heard filled me with a love profound as my being. Yet below it, more pervading, thrilled the memory of the human voices of those cherished ones who even now made all the light, and beauty, and music of the world doubly dear to me. My father and mother, Frederick and Beatrice, seemed to walk unseen by my side, living, loving, and at home. If my father and mother could have lived, how large a space they would have filled in the now unfilled world of my human love. If my brother and sister could have existed on, in mortal form, what would they not have been to me now, in the beautiful expansion of their divinely-wedded manhood and womanhood! Without father, mother, brother, sister, or child, held to the earth by a single link in the great chain of affection which so early began to draw me heavenward, it was not unnatural that in that single tie my bereft heart should seek satisfaction for all that it had lost. But one presence haunted me at Bel Eden which I wished to banish, which I did banish, only to behold it again at the least anticipated moment. There were spots in this ground which seemed pervaded with the personality of that one who once made so deep an impression on my life. Could I have believed it possible that he had ever been here, then this consciousness would have been no mystery. I knew that in every spot where a soul has lived its effluence lingers long after it has passed away. We enter a chamber in which a dear one left us for the spirit life; years after, and every lost sensation, the very breath of the dying one, again pervades us. From the mouldy ruins of exhumed cities the seemingly extinct life of lost epochs and buried races thrills the sensitive sense of the denizen of to-day. Who dares to measure the space which may be impregnated by a single spirit? I was half startled at the subtle

acuteness of my own psychometric sense. I had never sought nor cultivated the soul-measuring, soul-discerning faculty—the lightning perception, the piercing intuition, penetrating to the finest fibres of hearts which I did not care to know or to analyse. I knew not whence it came, this mysterious inner vision, which at times made me so vividly cognizant of lives far separated from mine, which seemed to bring so near to me the inmost experience of souls far distant with whom, unconsciously, I had entered into some dim, impalpable relationship. The exquisite sensibility of organism which made me conscious of the most secret emanation from the souls whose atmosphere I breathed, was in itself a pain.

For the involuntary radiations which proceed from every soul establish its essential nature beyond all cavil. Vainly it attempts to hide itself in borrowed garb of words or actions; the silence underlying all is more significant than any guise or utterance can be. It is the very breath of the soul; it sheathes it like an atmosphere; and you breathe it to feel what the very essence of that soul is. Your unspoken thought, your suppressed emotion, your secret antagonisms, not only change the hue of your cheek and vary the expression of your eye—they glance from you an invisible emanation, filling all the air around you with electric revelations. If I could have believed that the stranger of Les Delices had ever inhabited Bel Eden, I should have been at no loss to have understood the irrepressible psychometrical impression which I felt at times of the lingering effluence of his vanished presence. But I had every reason to believe that he had never entered this retreat. Thus my ever-recurring intuitions were resolved back to an over-active imagination as their source; as we are ever ready to say of our highest conviction: "It is all imagination." I avoided entering the retreats where I felt this consciousness most vividly. I banished as far as possible this lost being from my heart. His memory might rise unbidden, but it was never welcomed, never cherished. Once he had been to me a vague and beautiful dream; but I was well aware that I had no right to think of him now. I was sure that it would be for my happiness to banish him utterly from my thought.

Strange to say, in proportion as the world praised Niobe, my heart longed for the lost painting of Les Delices. Years had passed since last I saw it; how I yearned to behold it now! The first-born of my soul, the child of purest love, was not its being bought at the great price of human joy and suffering?

Where now was its resting-place in the wide world! It was the work of a dreamer, and all the faults of youth were in it. Perhaps the strong outline, the touch of conscious, assured power were wanting. I did not know; I only knew that it held the faces of the beings who filled my dreams, the beings who loved me before the fingers of life had touched me—cold with care, and want, and sorrow. I knew that the opaline glory which hovers in the eyes of youth, transfiguring all things in its evanescent lustre, imparted to it a celestial radiance. It did not belong to my present life; it was the revelation of a past existence; it held the eyes which once made all the glory of my world. Why had it been snatched from me so utterly, so irrevocably? At an early day Henri made every effort to find its purchaser, but with no success. He went to the Hôtel St. ——, only to learn that Mr. Moncrieffe was not a resident of the city; that he had sailed for Europe weeks before; and in the two years which had intervened we had heard nothing of the gentleman. When I recollected the name as identical with that of the person who had addressed me respecting Niobe, my first impulse was to write and ask if he knew aught of my lost picture. But the very decided doubt which Henri cast upon my surmise deterred me from doing so. Probably I was very romantic and foolish in my fancies. It was always best to be guided by a man's judgment rather than by intuitions for which you could give no reason at all. If Ambrose Moncrieffe had ever seen my first picture he would have detected a relationship between it and Niobe. Even if he had not known the name of the artist would he not have discovered that one individuality asserted itself in the lines and colors of each? Would he not have mentioned this picture if he had it in his possession. It seemed to me that he would. So, with my oft-recurring impulse to speak of it to him, I said nothing at all. My forbidden desire was most unexpectedly gratified one day by the appearance of another white envelope bearing a crested seal, sent in reply to my brief note.

There was a tremor in my hand, a tumult, then a stifling sensation at my heart as I opened this letter—proof that the soul who sent it moved me as powerfully as could any thought which it contained. It was much shorter than the former letter traced by the same hand. It contained a few gracefully expressed thanks for my gracious reply. It stated that the writer was not conscious of possessing any literary ambition or any desire to become a critic of high art or distressing ambition of any sort. He feared that he was a selfish fellow, and liked

nothing so much as to be pleased. At least he knew that he was pleased with all the great thoughts of the day, whether embodied in form, in words, or deeds. And that he should be still more pleased if he could enjoy a sincere, spontaneous interchange of opinion and criticism with one equally interested in them—one who, in addition to culture, possessed a more divining insight, a more spiritual intuition of truth and beauty than could possibly belong to himself. Would Madame Rochelle deem it an unpardonable intrusion if he should occasionally address to her a letter concerning some subject of interest in the world of art or letters? Would it be too great a tax upon her generosity or time to ask for an occasional reply, when for so doing he could offer her no equivalent of pleasure? Again he asked pardon for his *outré* mode of introducing himself, and referred to Mr. Van Ostrand, a well-known gentleman of high position, an intimate acquaintance of Henri's, for any information which Madame Rochelle or her friends might desire concerning his social standing and personal character.

Henri read this letter through deliberately, and touching the end of my chin with it, said:

"How will you like æsthetic letter-writing, Victoire?"

"I could not write æsthetic letters if I tried," I answered. "But what do you think of the writer of this?"

"Think? Why I think he is a gentleman of elegant leisure, who feels entirely uplifted above all vulgar ambitions; who, nevertheless, is burdened with many positive thoughts and opinions of his own for which he desires an exclusive yet graceful avenue of expression. Doubtless he intends you a great honor when he elects you as the chosen recipient of his pet ideas. To judge by his hand-writing, I should say that he was a person of the finest cultivation;" and Henri again opened the elegant letter and glanced over the masculine yet femininely graceful chirography.

"Moncrieffe? Well, now, I recollect that Van Ostrand *did* speak of a Mr. Moncrieffe, a friend of his, who was going to spend the summer in town," he added.

"What else did he say about him?"

"Nothing that I remember. He spoke of him casually in connexion with something else."

"Shall I answer this letter, Henri?" I asked.

"Certainly; it is entitled to a reply of some sort. Inform him that if he chooses to propound subjects of general importance and interest for your observation, you will reply

to the best of your ability. It would really be of advantage to you, Victoire, in assisting you to think clearly and to express your thoughts with perspicuity. Still, you must be careful and not allow it to take too much time from your painting; you know not writing, but painting, is your forte. And I am sure a man should have business more important to attend to than the writing of elaborate private critiques to a lady whom he has never seen. On the whole, I think that you had better wait until I ask Van Ostrand something more about this Mr. Moncrieffe."

And with these words Mr. Moncrieffe passed entirely out of his mind, not to enter it again for at least the space of a week. At that distance from the time when he last spoke of him, as we sat one evening at our little tea-table which stood on the turf outside of the oriel windows of the dining-room, Henri said: "Van Ostrand was in the office to-day, and I made some inquiries respecting that Mr. Moncrieffe. He informed me that when he first knew Moncrieffe he was the most gifted and brilliant man of his acquaintance; that he has ever been a man of the strictest honor; that he possesses all sorts of accomplishments and graces, and has such a generous and genial nature that it is impossible to know him and not like him. He says he has but one fault, and that is, that though there never was a man of his years who had more promising political prospects, since the death of his wife he seems to have lost all personal ambition, and is too indolent or too indifferent to use his splendid talents for any definite end."

"I am sure it is not a fault to be affected by the death of his wife. I couldn't respect a man who was not," I replied.

"That is a woman's view. A man can mourn his wife sincerely, and yet not give himself up to inanity. If he is in sorrow, that is in itself a sufficient reason why he should give full employment to his faculties to keep his nature from growing unhealthy."

"Well, it seems to me that most men are too busy and in too great a hurry to give much time to either love or grief. I am sure it is beautiful to find an exception."

"More romance," said Henri, looking amused. "How the hard kernel of truth does hurt your tender soul, Victoire. What do you say to the fact that there are men in the world who do not love their wives very much while they live, nor mourn them very deeply when they die? To be sure, they

do not really want them to die. But when the transient emotion incident to the funeral is over, and they are all ready to begin a new life and marry a new wife, to say the least they are not very miserable."

"Well, I think such men are monsters."

"Oh, no; they are not. They are only human. Don't you know that if a woman chooses, she can make herself not only very tedious, but very odious? After the course of discipline some poor fellows go through, I don't blame them for feeling relieved when it is ended. Yet I can understand how a wife may die, and the husband feel as if the light of the world had gone with her. Here is a very clever fellow who, it seems, has found nothing to live for since he buried his love; which, after all, is very foolish. His trouble does not relieve him of a man's duty or responsibility. Answer his letters by all means, Victoire; and in an impersonal, womanly way, kindle his ambition and rouse him to be a man again in the world. It may be graceful for ladies, but I have no patience with men who have nothing to do."

"Then you really wish me to answer his letters, Henri?"

"Yes, provided it does not take too much time. Be sure and write simply and naturally, just as if you were talking. Don't indulge in one of those pretty affectations which are always tempting women to be a little less or more, or a little different from their real selves. Eschew all mere fine writing. Ornate composition in a letter is absurd. Though you are writing to a polished scholar, be content to be your sincere, ungarnished self; if you attempt to be more, you will do yourself injustice. As far as you can, embody your soul in words; be yourself, and only yourself. Van Ostrand has really interested me in this Mr. Moncrieffe. I mean to call on him when I find time."

Thus this new, unsought correspondence became a fact. Letters, snowy-vested messengers of sweet tidings, their white palms filled with purest benedictions, stole to me noiselessly across the miles. They were æsthetic, philosophical, poetical, religious, with unexpected rays of humor glancing here and there with a playful, lambent light. They were rich in thought and expression; full of the experiences of the visible and of the invisible life. Lymphatic people would have called them extraordinary; prosaic people would have called them transcendental; people of cultivated and gifted intellect would have called them beautiful. Had they been printed just as they were written, they would have attracted attention as

critiques and essays remarkable for subtleness, vividness, terseness, and power, which was increased by the fact that they were written to a single person instead of a vague general public. These papers (for they could scarcely be called letters), with their replies, passing between two persons personally unacquainted, encroached upon the individual life of neither. From their advent to their close they remained pure utterances of impersonal thought. They neither invited nor offered private confidences. It seemed sufficient to Mr. Moncrieffe that there was a soul to whom he could speak of topics which interested him without intruding upon that soul's personality. He verified his former assertion that "absolute friendship may grow out of the veriest abstractions." He took no cognizance of me as a person. He never intimated a desire to meet me, nor hinted that such an event was possible in the future.

And yet it was the personality emanating from these letters which charmed me. Something profounder than all their words—the soul below them—moved me with a mysterious power. In the purity and grace of the language lay its fascination. If it had been less elevated, to me it would have been less dangerous. And yet it was not the words—which might have been written to a hundred as well as to me, it was the impalpable effluence which no words could explain, pervading, flowing from every letter, which quickened so my heart. I knew the day of their coming by the restlessness, sweet to pain, the eager, irrepressible, expectant longing and looking which were their sure precursors. Then I knew the white dove was drawing near my ark, bearing both the olive and the myrtle. One day I awoke as from a dream. I suddenly awoke to the utter consciousness of all that these letters were to me. They were companionship, they were inspiration for my thought, aliment for my soul, a cherished, a beloved presence. I knew that they were all this, and the knowledge frightened me. I took them all from their sacred drawer; I placed them in an envelope with a few lines addressed to their author, thanking him for the pleasure which they afforded me, yet informing him that I could no longer continue the correspondence. He might burn or preserve my few poor epistles as he chose. His deserved a better fate; they should enrich many hearts instead of one. I had not intended to bring the correspondence to so abrupt a close, but other duties rendered it impossible that it should be continued. Having indited and directed this hurried communi-

cation, I dispatched George Washington Peacock to the city with it immediately; I would not allow it to remain until the next morning, lest I should persuade myself to change my mind, which I was certain was not best. This solemn duty performed, I surrendered myself up to Thomas à Kempis and the Sermon on the Mount. I knew that all of resignation was in the first, all of religion in the latter. But the holiest instruction of man, the sublimest utterance of a God, failed to banish utterly from my heart a sense of loss. I had simply done right, and was ashamed that this thought did not make me happier. I was thankful that the letters were gone. I was unwilling to receive any more—and yet, and yet—there was no denying it, I was almost miserable over the fact. What an exaggerated nature was mine, which for such an immaterial loss made me feel that the light which marked the path of my spirit was suddenly withdrawn and my nature left in darkness. The task, yesterday so grand in promise of fulfilment, to-day seemed promiseless. The new glory which had baptized my being was suddenly quenched; but weariness, satiety, loneliness were old acquaintances; I must accept their daily company and be resigned, if not happy. Yes, one thing in the universe I must do—I must do right.

The day was far spent when I left my teachers and went and mounted Zenaide to go to the depot to meet Henri. Every afternoon George Peacock rode Pontiff to await his master. I usually accompanied him, telling him many things which he liked to know, as we sauntered leisurely down the shady road. But I was in no mood to impart wisdom this afternoon; thus upon his return from the city I had sent him off alone, to follow at my leisure. I made a necklace for Zenaide of crimson, golden, and opal dahlias. I hung it around her proudly arching, glossy neck. I rubbed my cheek against hers, and told her she was the best and most beautiful horse in all the world; that I should die without her. For all this extravagant nonsense she rewarded me with the loving light of her great, gentle, gazelle eyes; and thus with the most perfect sympathy established between us, we went together down the shadowy avenue. It was an August afternoon; ineffable was its beauty, medicinal its enchantment. I had scarcely realized that summer had come, and here it was August. I love all the months as I love my friends; each for its own personality, its distinct individual charm; and for me the month of August has a peculiar fascination. It seems as if

in this matchless month nature, having brought the year to its prime, pauses entranced above her own work, saying: "It is perfect." August is to the year what the first hour past meridian is to the day; the noon's fulness of splendor is scarce one shade abated, yet the moment breathes forth a softness which the noon had not. We rest in the first glory of the afternoon, ripe, tender, delicious, ere the chill of twilight has made us shiver, or a deepening shadow on the golden horizon warns us of the advancing night. September, the Ceres of the year, fills our hands with luscious treasures, but her cheek is beautiful with hectics; the scarlet ring upon her brow is the coronal of death; I cherish for her the sad, regretful affection which I feel for a friend who is about to die. I love August as I love a perfected soul, who will stay with me for a little while, pouring out its opulent life to fill up the scanty measure of my own. I know this rich soul must soon pass beyond my sight; but it will pass in the full flush of its prime; there will be no token of decay, no struggle of dissolving nature to make me sorrowful. In the joyance of the moment I say: "Pour out, pour out, still more of your wine, ripe heart!"

> "'Tis life whereof my nerves are scant;
> 'Tis life, not death, for which I pant."

I shall be for ever richer for having partaken of your fulness. Thus I yielded to the sway of this imperial month as I passed out into her presence. No longer the virgin blossoms of the spring looked up from the turf with their half-veiled eyes. Even the amorous tulip and ardent rose had departed, and instead the matron flowers of the later summer stood around me, stately, sturdy, self-conscious in their pride. The leaves on the great boughs above me no longer pattered their tiny palms in the ecstasy of newly quickened life; heavy, glossy, darkly veined, they drooped in equipoise, or, slowly swaying to and fro, their dreamy murmur made a part of the calm content of the hour. Beneath this rare sky, in this divine air, it seemed easy to forget life's trivialities—all the littleness of human care, all the wearing selfishness of self, all the assertion of personal need, which impels every poor heart to make itself the centre of a world. But it is ordained that we shall never catch more than a glimpse of heaven on this side of the grave. And as I passed out from the blessing of the patriarchal trees into the common air, and saw just before me the stark

roof of an unpoetical railroad depôt, I fell from my lofty impersonal contemplation of the universal, to the low level, the narrow life of one little human creature.

Why should the sight of that grizzly station perturb me now, when I beheld the same material object every day? Why should I feel that anxious fluttering about my heart at the thought of meeting my husband, when I came here to meet him every evening? I was not afraid that he would meet me with a frown. Henri Rochelle never frowned, at least on me. I did not anticipate a lecture; for although he delivered many scientific lectures, he did not lecture his wife. Sometimes I wished that he would. I fancied that a sound orthodox, conjugal scolding for one or more of my numerous faults would be preferable to an obliviousness of my existence. For the last few weeks I had heard of nothing but "medical councils" and consultations; of "dangerous cases" and "surgical operations." Precious human lives, the happiness of human homes and hearts, hung suspended on his skill. He was equal to the trust; he was worthy of it, for he thought of nothing else. He was busy in the city, or he was shut in his study, or he rode by my side, or sat at the table, perfectly pre-occupied with the momentous issues which absorbed his mind. I thought of their importance, and uttered no complaint. What if I had to cut off people's limbs, and prescribe for their miserable stomachs, and keep them from dying in spite of all their persistent abuse of their functions? I probably should not be wise and silent, but cross and utterly overwhelmed with my tremendous task. Henri Rochelle was perfectly excusable for forgetting for the present that he had a wife, when he had so much of greater importance to think of. She was sure that as soon as he had leisure he would be as kind and thoughtful of her as ever. She only felt that she was very selfish not to be absorbed as he was in doing good. He had manifested a cognizance of my being the day before, by asking me to visit some poor patients of his in town, and carry to them articles necessary to their comfort, for which privilege I was exceedingly grateful, it was such an exquisite pleasure to feel that I was of any service to him or to the needy. If he thought of me at all during those days of excessive care, it was only to conclude that I was absorbed in art and my beautiful home; that my little world was complete in its fulness of blessing. He did not give me the credit of being half as foolish as I was. "Why is laid upon me the burden of so many wants? Why must I suffer the penalties

of an unsatisfied nature, while he is so calmly poised, so wise, so satisfied, so symmetrically developed, so happy in being and doing good?" I said half bitterly as I drew near the railroad station, with the sickening anxiety still creeping through my heart. It was only the womanish anxiety lest Henri should be as silent and absorbed as usual. I wanted company this evening. I wanted to forget those letters.

Presently the cars came shrieking up; the great engine, with its burning, cyclopean eye, reminding me as forcibly as ever of the dear old devil.

In a moment more proud Pontiff was prancing, wheeling, arching his lustrous coal-black neck as demonstrations of delight at the presence of his master. Henri sprang into the saddle, and we cantered away to the elm road. We came into its shadow at a quiet pace, and had scarcely entered it when Pontiff with a graceful curve wheeled close to the side of my gentle Zenaide; his tall rider, like a gallant knight, bent down and kissed the forehead of Victoire.

"*Ma bonne, ma belle*," he said, smiling, his clear eyes overflowing with a lambent light. "Six patients, serious cases, fairly off my hands to-day. I feel as if I had a right to a little leisure. Let me see; it is a week, is it not, since I talked much?"

"A week! Why, Henri, it is certainly three since you have uttered a word more than necessity compelled you to speak."

"Indeed! But you have been enjoying yourself during all that time; haven't you? How does the new picture progress?"

"Oh, how can I tell, when there is no one to look at it and tell me how I am getting along!"

"You should have an opinion of your works, independent of other people's judgment. But I'll go up to your bird's nest after tea and tell you what I think of it. It really seems very pleasant to feel that I have a right to give a whole evening to you without neglecting any obligation or making any one else suffer by so doing. We will have a pleasant time. Would you like to drive to the city, or take a sail, or what?"

"A sail," I answered, delighted at the thought.

"When I have time to think about it, I find that I am as much in love with you as ever," he said, slowly, looking down into my face with a long, lingering smile, beautiful as rare.

Beneath the Alps there are sheltered valleys, and there are

no lovelier in all the world. There is no music sweeter than the tinkling of the tiny bells on the neck of their kine; nothing softer than their verdure; nothing more fragrant than their thyme; nothing more spontaneous than their flowers, springing under the everlasting snow. Thus, through knowing him, I found that there was a sunny summer valley far below the heights of Henri Rochelle's nature. All the more enticing it was from the contrast with the glaciers which made winter above it. It was full of dew, and sunshine, and quiet blooms; full of all pleasant summer sounds. Whenever I looked down into this valley a whole heaven of possible happiness opened before me. But just as I fancied myself entering it to go out no more for ever, the Alpine brain would drop its avalanche of business, and bury all this fair valley from my sight. Wearier were the dull, grey days which came after, for the brief gleam which I caught of the buried valley. It did not take so much after all to make me happy. I had forgotten the letters. I did not want more joy than this moment by his side gave me.

"Who do you think called on me this afternoon?" asked Henri, in an arch tone.

"Some one whom I know?"

"Yes."

"Morna?"

"No. Who but your friend Mr. Moncrieffe. You know him pretty well, do you not, although you have not seen him?"

How I started at that name.

"Why in the world did you send back his letters this morning, telling him that your duties interfered with the continuance of the correspondence? I laughed at that freak. I was not aware before that my wife was so heavily oppressed with duties that she could not attend to a much smaller number of correspondents than women usually have. What put that notion into your head, Victoire?"

"Why, did you not tell me not to allow it to take too much of my time? I found that it did take too much time, and too much thought, also. It seemed to me best to discontinue it immediately."

"Rather more prompt than graceful, Victoire. You are not usually so brusque. However, Mr. Moncrieffe has made me the bearer of his thanks and regrets; his thanks for the honor which you have done him, his regrets that your kindness in his behalf has incommoded yourself. He is an enthusiast over your Niobe—would like to purchase it?"

"How did he happen to call on you, Henri?"

"He called with Mr. Van Ostrand, who promised to introduce him some time ago."

"Did you like him?"

"Very much. Better than I usually like persons at first sight. He is all, and more, than Van Ostrand represented him to be. I am sorry that he is going away; I invited him to visit us when he returns from the South. But I have something very odd to tell you. Odd enough, I think, to satisfy your romance-loving ears. It was Mr. Moncrieffe who built Bel Eden!"

"Built Bel Eden!" I said, slowly after him.

"Yes, he it was who built Bel Eden, before the death of his young wife."

"Did he know that his letters to me came to Bel Eden?"

"No, because they were sent to our New York address."

"Didn't he remember that you had bought Bel Eden?"

"He knew nothing about it until Mr. Van Ostrand told him a few days since."

"Why, how could that happen?"

"Just as other things happen. I purchased Bel Eden of Mr. Moncrieffe's agent, not of himself. As long as he received the money he did not trouble himself about the name or the person."

"I agree with Mrs Peacock," I said, "that things what happens are queerer nor all the novels."

By this time we had reached Bel Eden gate.

AMBROSE MONCRIEFFE.

It was October now. It dawned a golden and azure day—as lustrous a day as ever dropped through the fingers of Time to enrich the life of mortals. It was one of those celestial days when the year's summer steals back from its thither march to smile once more on the world ere she leaves it for ever. The trees stood bare, save here and there a solitary leaf quivered on some tremulous spray. In and out through the naked branches stole the odorous south wind, with a pleasant sound like the rustle of silken garments. It stirred the drifts of crimson and yellow leaves which nestled together in the broad walks, in the hollows of the trees, and the dimples of the hills. A few untimely flowers, which the loving sun

had wooed into tardy life, stood like lonely watchers amid the frost-scathed parterres, sole relics of their vanished splendor. A few scarlet asters, with here and there a mournful dahlia, looked down from their blackened stalks upon the dead forms of their beautiful race, the sisterhood of summer flowers who died with the summer weather. The squirrels leaping from bough to bough with quick vibration, rustling the fallen leaves as they ran over them and peered through them; the patter of falling nuts, the plaining of doves in their lofty cotes, the trill of the cricket, the fall and flow of waters, made the symphony of the hour. Faint odors stole out from the sun-warmed grass, from beds of russet clover, till the atmosphere was full of perfume sweet enough to have fallen from the censers of the angels. A veil of amber haze hung over the face of the sun. The world stood transfigured in golden light, and the serenity of the hour seemed to foreshadow the serenity of Paradise.

Strange it is that such halcyon days should bring us the least of rest. There is a soul in the day which touches the soul within us, saying: "Thou art a prisoner." Then more than ever we feel the chafing of our chains, and beat our wings against our prison bars in wild unrest. Vain and vague are the longings which possess us for knowledge, joy, love—deeper, higher, purer than we have ever found. In all that we see we feel that there is a deeper significance than we can understand. We are baffled. We long to find the life within life. It is the Immortal restless within us—the soul yearning towards the infinite soul from whence it came.

I gathered the last flowers to save them from the frost which I knew would fall that night from the "clear, cold heaven." Mingling them with fragrant geraniums from the conservatory, I filled the alabaster vases in the parlors. I rearranged the folds of every curtain; I placed and replaced vases, statuettes, and pictures; I could not have given to the rooms a more harmonious arrangement, and at last stood to behold the effect. The massive curtains of crimson velvet looped from drapery of gorgeous lace, the paintings, the blossom-tinted walls, the calm-faced statues, the sculptured vases with their living flowers, the carpet with its deep-glowing hues, the rare couches breathing luxury and repose, the soft tender light pervading every object—all were parts of a beautiful picture.

In honor of that untimely summer day I had arrayed myself in white; the only remainder of the season was the

crimson scarf which I wore about my snoulders. Having completed my tasks, I went out into the garden, directing my steps towards the park; it was sacrilege to spend such a day in the house; besides, its rapt air had pervaded me with a strange restlessness which made quiet impossible. I walked through the fallen leaves till I came to a flight of steps leading down the ravine. I descended until I reached the bridge which spanned the brook, a favorite haunt, yet I rarely visited it. I leaned over the rude balustrade and looked down into the sunken stream, now nearly choked with leaves fallen from the overhanging trees. What ailed me? There had been preparation in my movements. There was a tremor in my frame, half pleasure, half pain, half expectation, half dread, such as fills us on the eve of the approach of an illustrious stranger. Some one was coming, yet no one had been announced. Some one was coming! yet, what of that? many strangers visited Bel Eden. Some one is coming! yet who can it be to give me this throbbing heart? I asked, laughing, yet ashamed of my own folly. The water singing through the leaves mesmerized me into quiet, from which I was aroused by Kate's heavy tread and asthmatic breath:

"'Dade, here's a card for ye, an' as fine a lookin' gintleman behind it as iver ye see," she exclaimed, as she came panting down the steps.

I took the card from her hand and read: "Ambrose Moncrieffe."

I pressed my hand upon my heart, in whose one convulsive leap there was more terror than pleasure. Yet what was there to be so moved about? Only a gentleman in the parlor. Many gentlemen had sat in the parlor before, and stupid enough had I found them—about as interesting as so many stones. Mr. Moncrieffe might be equally entertaining.

Thus hushing my heart, I ascended the stairs from the ravine to the hill top. Under the trees, through the leaves, again to the garden, to the house. I ascended the steps of the piazza and stood within the drapery of the open window. A man with folded arms stood looking at a copy of Niobe. He turned, and I stood eye to eye with Ambrose Moncrieffe, the stranger of Les Delices.

"Stranger" I called him; there could be no greater misnomer. That moment I felt as if I had known him all my life, and from the deep eyes which were fixed upon me I felt that few of the secrets of my heart could be hid. We stood

for a moment and looked at each other, and in that look the dreams of two lives were fused into one.

"I have been searching for you a long time," he said, quietly, extending his hand and leading me to a seat. "I have not been so much of a dreamer as I feared," he added. "Now I know to be true what I have long believed, that soul may recognise soul even before they meet in bodily form; that souls separated by a thousand barriers yet act and react upon each other; that beings who seem far distant from us sometimes exert a deeper influence over our lives than the companions who walked by our side. You remember me!"

Remember him? As he asked the question I felt that we had never been divided; it was the very face, the very voice which through all those years I had scarcely ceased for a moment to see and hear. Having pervaded my being once, they had never left it. When I feared that it was a dream, it was the pulsations of a warm, living, human heart which I had felt and responded to. And he had remembered me. I had never dreamed, never hoped for such a remembrance. Yet how natural it all seemed, as if it never could have been any different; as if we had always sustained the same relationship to each other which we held now; as if there was no dream about it save the long separation. Again I looked into the face which looked down into mine. That face was very quiet, yet a deep pallor swept from the dark hair to the darker beard. This face had the ever-varying eyes which I love—eyes which can scintillate the keenest lightnings, or grow tender and dewy as a little child's.

"Your eyes are full of inquiry," he said, smiling.

"Yes, I would like to know everything about you; you have been a vision long enough."

"Everything, I fear, will be very tiresome; yet I can tell you."

As he uttered these words I drew back into the cushions of my chair to listen and to look. To look! Could I look enough at this face? The very face, the planetary eyes which through so many years had haunted me unbidden. This face which I had seen but once before, yet which had remained with me always.

I felt my eye-lids droop beneath the deep half-mournful gaze which was bent upon me. I felt my heart still tremble to the music of that voice. Yet while I looked and listened, I seemed to be in a vision no less now than then.

Thus we sat for a moment in silence, when I asked again:

"Will you tell me all?"

"To tell you all," he answered, "I should have to tell you my life, and you know when one tells their own story they are always tedious."

"You will not be tedious to me if you tell me the whole story of your life. I shall hardly be satisfied with less," I answered, retreating still further into the cushions and half closing my eyes while he began:

"You know," he said, "that I am of Southern birth. I was born in Virginia. My mother died when I was a little boy, and I was hardly twenty-one when I was called to the death-bed of my father. This was a terrible stroke to me, for, as I was an only child and he a man in the prime of life, he had been to me both brother and father. I had just completed my studies at the University of Virginia, was full of hopes and projects, every one of which he was to share, when every brilliant prospect seemed cut off by his death. I had a cousin six years younger than myself, the only remaining child of my father's only sister, and she, with me, was the heir to my paternal grandfather's estate. She was an orphan, and shared with me my father's affections. We had grown up from childhood together, and I loved her as a sister. In my father's last conversation he revealed a plan concerning my cousin Lila and myself which he said he had cherished for years. Had he lived, he should have trusted to time to have wrought its fulfilment; now he trusted it to my filial love and obedience. He wished me to marry my cousin Lila. She was dear to him as a daughter; he wished to feel that her future was provided for and the estate preserved in the family. It had belonged to the Moncrieffes for more than a hundred years, and he could not bear to have it divided with a stranger. He did not wish the marriage to take place immediately. Lila was too young, and I had not seen enough of the world. He wished me to spend the two next years at the University of Heidelberg, two more in foreign travel, and then return for my bride. In the meantime Lila was to remain closely immured in a girls' boarding-school. In all my life I had never disobeyed my father. I could not do it now. It was no time to express individual wishes, if I had any, which I did not. I only knew that I was listening to my father's dying request, and that I wished to fulfil it, and that I liked Lila better than any other little girl that I

knew. Placing my hand within his, already stiffening in death, I solemnly promised to obey his dying wishes in every respect. After his obsequies, after I had seen my father laid upon a stone shelf in the great cold vault of the Moncrieffes I took my little cousin—my incipient wife—to the fashionable school designated by my father in which she was to be manufactured into the accomplished young lady. Very soon after I sailed for Europe, and the next two years were spent at Heidelberg. I believe that the roistering German students called me 'a good fellow,' although I never succeeded in turning myself into a beer-barrel, and never fought a duel with small swords.

"All men have their poetic age; some when they are boys, and some later, much later in life; men who never dreamed for a moment that existence could write itself in anything for them but tame prose to the end, suddenly find it breaking into melodious rhythm. Life merges into a poem unawares, one no less sweet because measured by heart-throbs instead of rhyme. My poetic life began at Heidelberg. You remember how Bulwer introduces this loveliest of German towns in his Pilgrims of the Rhine. 'In the haunted valley of the Neckar, the most crystal of rivers, stands the town of Heidelberg?' Well, it was a 'haunted' valley to me; here I first became pervaded with the love and sense of beauty. I was steeped in that divine indolence which asks for no other heaven than to be left alone to drink the wine of its own thought. Hour after hour used to pass and leave me stretched in the afternoon summer sun under the lightning-smitten arches of the castle of Charlemagne. Yes, I wasted hours, as all sensible people will say, doing nothing in the world but gazing down into the antique streets of the town upon the spacious plain, following the white sails upon the Neckar until they reached the farther sky. And I devoted more time still to lying beneath the mouldering walls; pacing the feudal ramparts, gazing at the architecture of many ages blended into one stupendous ruin. For the first time in my life I had the opportunity to meditate over the relics of discrowned empire and buried epochs. The grandeur of their past compared with the melancholy majesty of their present both oppressed and appalled me, when I allowed myself to meditate upon their history as the symbol of all human power and magnificence—which was not very often. I was too young to be melancholy, too lazy to be profound.

"Well, when I left Heidelberg I followed in the track of com-

mon tourists. I sauntered about Rome, stood in the palace of the Cæsars, tired myself to the verge of death roaming amid the dreary splendors of the Vatican; caught a shocking cold in the Catacombs, and drank in enough malaria on the Campagna to keep me well saturated with poison for two months, during which time I enjoyed the variety of lying in an old Roman palace prostrate with fever. My first exploit on recovering was to scale Mount Vesuvius, lose one of my boots in the crater, and melt the sole of the other in the burning core of this eruptive mount. After I recovered from the effect of this scorching I sailed for Greece, and of course was disgusted because I found 'living Greece no more.' Then I floated down the Nile. Wondrous was that Nile-life with its monotonous days and constellated nights, when the planets hung low in the silence above me, great scintillant globes of flame; when the days and nights blended in an endless dream, and the vast world with its toiling generations seemed a far-off, dimly remembered phantom; and yet I was fleeced so ferociously by the rascally Arabs, that at last I was thankful to get back to noise and civilization.

"Then I resolved to leave the highways of travel and to wander about in the world's demesne wherever circumstances or fancy led me. Thus I made my way through the most inaccessible portions of Switzerland; travelled through the most glorious portions of Spain on a mule's back, aad at last found myself in the valley of the Rhone, in a round-about way drawing near to the Atlantic coast.

"I was charmed with the valley of the Rhone, and wandered down it leisurely enough. You never can forget the magnificence of that evening when I first caught sight of your home. I had seen many ivy-grown castles, many princely palaces on my way thither, but had seen nothing which had so impressed me with picturesque home beauty. The mountains, the Rhone, the firs, formed such a contrast to the bright little chateau with its red turret—with the warm repose of the grounds, the fountains, the statues with their white faces, and the wild cascade leaping down the jagged rocks. The crystal jets of water dancing in the sun were tempting, almost mocking, to a tired traveller, and I resolved to have a drink of the nectar. I left my horse in charge of the servant who accompanied me, and entered the narrow footpath running along the brook-side to the cascade at the foot of the mountain. As I drew nearer I caught the murmur of a voice, and in a moment more my heart thrilled strangely as the words of

my own language reached my ear. I had not heard it for months; and now to hear it so unexpectedly, so strangely, in this remote spot, affected me like a sudden spell, which drew me on whether I would or not. The heavy vines hid the speaker from sight until I came to the end of the veranda, when I saw what was to me at that moment a wonderful scene. Upon a couch reclined a young and apparently dying man, whose countenance seemed to wear already the light of a beatified spirit; by his side sat a young girl reading the Holy Scripture, and these were the first words which I heard with sufficient distinctness to understand:—

"'I know that my Redeemer liveth and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God. Mine eyes shall behold Him, and not another.'

"The sound of my own language in a strange land was inexpressibly sweet. I leaned against a pillar in the shadow of the vines and listened. My whole being thrilled while I hearkened to those words. But if the language moved me, there was a tone in the girlish voice, in its tremulous pathos, in its suppressed yet outgushing sorrow, which moved me more. You remember that wonderful sunset; the glory around God's throne seemed falling to earth. You saw how it shone around your brother's brow; you can never know how it hovered about your own. I saw his uplifted eyes, his uplifted hands; heard his last words; saw you drop your book, saw you clasp him in your arms, and cry wildly for water. Then I started for the first time; before I would have deemed an intrusion sacrilegious. You remember that I gave you water; you bathed his brow; in the most imploring tones you besought him to live, to live a little longer for your sake. You still wildly clung to him, when I came to the aid of the terrified servant, and tried to take your dead idol from your arms. As you lifted to mine your imploring eyes, pleading so piteously that I should not take away your brother, I felt all my soul pervaded with a new emotion, the first great love of man for woman, of which all after loves are only counterfeits.

"You seemed dearer to me that moment than any object upon earth. I felt like folding you to my heart and holding you there for ever. But you yielded, even while you subdued me. I never shall forget how like a lamb I led you away from your brother, and delivered you into the keeping of your nurse. I composed your brother's limbs; I closed his eyes; I dropped

a tear on his brow, not for him but for you. I took in your face in one long, lingering look as you lay almost lifeless in the arms of your nurse, and then retraced my steps down the narrow path. I mounted my horse and went on my journey. I have cursed myself more for that act than for any other of my life. It was the one which decided my fate; it was fate. I had an appointment to meet the next day at Nismes, a Heidelberg friend, who was to accompany me to Paris, and from thence go with me to America. At Nismes I expected to find letters awaiting me from Lila. It was Lila, the thought of the solemn vow made to my dying father, which impelled me to go on. The moon rose full above the mountains, and scattered over river, road, and forest, thousands of golden auroras. She made another day softer, lovelier, than the one which had departed. I thought only of you, saw only you. I heard no voice, but felt a hand upon my heart which drew me back; and yet I went on. More than once I came to a dead pause; I drew the bridle and turned my horse's head, and *yet I went on.* 'It would be harder for me to go to-morrow; besides, what madness!' I said. I saw the little face of Lila; I remembered my vow, and still went on. At midnight I halted at a little inn, and in the afternoon of the next day reached Nismes in a more miserable state of mind than I had ever found myself before. I brought with me a new memory, a new joy, a new pain. That which seemed more to me than all the world, I had left behind. I was determined to fulfil my vow, thus to maintain my power over myself; yet was disgusted with myself that, to sustain it, I had taken refuge in flight. Why had I not stayed like a man to render assistance in the hour of affliction? Why, like a man, had I not proved that I could conquer my heart by meeting and resisting its first great passion, not by fleeing from it?

"At Nismes I found my friend; also letters from Lila pleading my return. Poor child! she was tired of her imprisonment, and was sighing for an establishment. Notwithstanding my unhappiness, as I read her letter I felt sure that I had done right. In another month I was in America. I went immediately to the young ladies' manufactory where I left Lila. I found not the free young cousin, my pretty playmate, in simple robe and Tuscan bonnet; but, instead, a fashionable young lady imprisoned in whalebones and hoops, lost in laces and flounces. She was neither prettier nor plainer than a thousand other school-girls with French braids, insipid eyes,

and aristocratic noses. Like paper dolls, they are all pretty, and all intolerably flat. Label each one precisely alike 'elegant and accomplished,' sell them as dainty bits of mechanism, and with your eyes shut you could safely buy any one of the thousand, and be sure that she would be just as frail a toy, just as useless a little plaything, as her nine hundred and ninety-nine counterparts which had been purchased by other gentlemen who wished to be amused. I was now twenty-five, and the last four years had been long enough to develop an ideal woman in my brain. I believed that I had seen the woman who could create in me the absorbing love which man gives to woman but once in his life.

"I was sure that Lila had not sufficient character to make me either very happy or miserable. I cherished a very tender affection for her as my old playmate, the pet of my father; but to the stylish school-girl I was supremely indifferent. We were married, and became one of the world's model pairs. We never quarrelled; we felt too high-bred for that, had there been a cause, and happily there was no cause. We felt none of the chafing of life's hard necessities; there was money enough for both of us; so we each took to enjoying ourselves in our own way. I hate a pedant, but love an intellectual woman provided she has a heart. I wanted in my wife a companion in the highest significance of that term; if Lila was not, I resolved that it should not be my fault. I tried to interest her in my loved German authors; tried to induce her to take a few hours from society and devote them to pleasant study, reading, painting, and music. But, alas! in boarding-school her intellect rose to its highest level. The shallow little reservoir was then filled to its utmost capacity; every added drop from the ocean of wisdom only ran over and was lost. She said that she did not like people who thought. She believed that the most uninteresting women in the world were those who knew a great deal. There was her old teacher, Madame La Pop, who knew everything; but, oh dear, she was so tiresome; besides, her dresses were always short-waisted and the skirt always skimped; for her part, she would rather have her dress fit in Paris style than to know all about the stars or those dreadful old Germans. And all the gentlemen of her acquaintance, except her odd old Ambrose, cared a great deal more about having their wives graceful than wise. She would do anything else to please him, but she never could remember those horrid old Dutch letters. Lila meditated on the subject for perhaps ten

minutes, to come to a most satisfactory conclusion regarding her own erudition. Why should she know any more? Was she not all that an elegant lady need be? She could play upon the piano, and shriek a dozen operas. She could converse in execrable French, and make diabolical little dogs and cats out of Berlin wool. She had parsed through the whole of Milton's "Paradise Lost," and that was poetry enough to last for a lifetime. She dressed like a princess; she had a costly equipage, a grand establishment; she had a husband and a poodle; what more could she have if she were as wise as Hypatia? She doated on her poodle, and never seemed vexed at me except when I accidentally trod on its toes; then the bow-wows of the dog and the tears of Lila so disturbed my equanimity that I invariably seized my hat and rushed from the house. At last I left Mrs. Moncrieffe to be happy in her own way; in her poodle, her establishment, her fashionable charities, and fashionable parties; she accepting her husband as a most necessary article at all public displays and occasions.

"Mr. Moncrieffe took to public life. He was young, but wealth and family had their usual influence, and he held offices of honor and trust. Man's nature is too comprehensive, his powers too varied, to allow him often to become the sacrifice to a single passion. In public action he expends his superfluous energies, dissipates his secret sorrows, and satisfies as far as possible the demands of his soul. I followed the example of other men; I could not throw life away because I had an unsatisfactory home. In such cases the difference in the actual capacity for suffering in man and woman is not so great as is generally supposed. A human heart is a human heart, whether dropped in a man's or woman's breast. But women have so rarely any great object of personal interest, so little to live for outside of their hearts; if these are not happy, they shrink back into their own natures to brood over themselves. Men go out into the world to forget themselves —at least the better part, their hearts. Yet there are hours, and they come oftener than many people dream, when the busiest man comes back to himself; when the great man-heart within him is just as lonely, just as loving, just as importuning as the heart of any woman. There are moments when a sweet, womanly face rises silently from the sea of the past, into whose eyes he gazes with the same love which transfigured his youth, and he would that moment give much of the wealth and honor which fortune has given him, could he only bring that lost face, that lost love back into his

life. But presently he becomes conscious of his folly, ashamed of his weakness, and rushes back to the world and to business with renewed vehemence. The woman, if she has no business particularly interesting or remunerative, which I am sorry she cannot always have, has both opportunity and temptation to brood on endlessly; that is why the world is full of morbid, miserable women. Men's natures would grow just as sickly in the same atmosphere. Outwardly, I lived a very gay and brilliant life, and was too entirely occupied to find much time to be miserable. Yet I often turned away from a face which no eyes saw but mine; from a pair of beseeching eyes, the only eyes which had ever melted my heart. I tried to be manly enough to despise myself for my folly, but did not succeed. Poor Lila! she was not evil-hearted. A weak nature, a false education had made her what she was. She was not heartless. Her affections, if feeble, were true. She inherited consumption from her father, and after one year of the wear of fashionable life her health began to fail. We spent our summers in New York. During the first I commenced this house, designating it as our summer home. Lila seemed enchanted with it, and made herself happy anticipating the brilliant summer fêtes and festivals which she would give her metropolitan friends when it was completed. She used to drive out here every day to watch the workmen and to go about with me superintending the laying out of the grounds. It seems like a dream now," said Moncrieffe, gazing out. "Has anything about the place reminded you of your early home?" he asked.

"Yes, the fountain, the gorge, the brook."

"I told Lila that the fountain, with its score of marble lilies, was modelled from one which I saw in France, and she was delighted with it. But she thought that the ravine ought to be filled up and sodded over. She said that when she had her fêtes the guests would be in danger of falling into it, unless the overhanging trees were hung very thick with lamps. But this ravine, with its trickling waters and deep shadow of foliage, was my favorite retreat.

"Another season and the house was completed, but poor Lila had ceased to care about it then. She had gone into another 'mansion,' which we are bound to believe will never perish. From the hour in which ill-health compelled her to forsake the world, she sought refuge in religion and her husband. It did me good to have her need my care. I forgot the fashionable woman in the little Lila of my childhood. I relinquished all public affairs, and watched and nursed her as

a mother might a child. This tender, solicitous affection softened my nature and made me a better man. After a wasting illness she slept; it could hardly be called dying; she closed her eyes and passed away so quietly. Her last words were full of affection for me, her dear, dear husband, whom she expected without a doubt 'to meet in heaven.' Yet it was scarcely as a husband that I mourned her. I shed tears of sincere sorrow for my only cousin, the sister of my boyhood, my cherished household pet, for the young girl whom, despite my tenderest solicitude, I had watched fade and perish like a blossom. My mansion had lost its mistress, my heart the object of its care, yet my soul had not lost a portion of itself. What I knew a wife could be to me, the very life of my life, Lila was not, and never could be. Two months after her death, one of the public journals announced that: 'Hon. Ambrose Moncrieffe had sailed for Europe to dissipate, amid new scenes, the deep melancholy occasioned by the death of his young and beautiful wife.' 'This is all the world knows of its votaries,' I thought, as I read this paragraph. I had no reason to wish to dissipate the beautiful memory of Lila's last hours, the loveliest of all her life. I had no reason to mourn that I was free, although I never wished Lila to die. I was sailing towards Europe to find you. Don't start; I was in search of nothing else. From the moment of my release, you became to me a living presence, and all the days of my married life a dream. I determined with the eyes of manhood to look on the face which in a single glance fascinated my earlier youth. If it was an illusion, I wished it dispelled; if not, my soul yearned for the reality. I reached France, and as fast as steam would carry me made my way to Languedoc. Again I traced the road from Nismes and reached your home in the golden noon of a summer day. My infatuation had suggested no thought of change; it seemed as if I should meet you in the veranda, that you would greet me in the spot where I left you. I was appalled at what I saw—at the silence, the desolation. I passed the gate; high, rank weeds filled the broad path. I drew near the house; ivy enveloped it like a tomb. Fierce greens had thrust their spears through the crevices of the veranda; not a face was seen, not a sound heard. Even the fountains were dumb; nothing looked as I remembered but the statues and the cascade; I saw a grave and a white cross beneath the firs. 'They are all buried,' was my thought, as I approached it. I began to read the inscription: 'Frederick Vernoid,'—my impatient eye glanced

below to see if it bore another. No, only one slept here, and that thought brought a quick sense of relief to my fearful anxiety. I read the remainder of the beautiful Christian words which a sister's love had recorded on that marble monument. I gathered a flower from amid the long grass which waved above his grave, and returned in silence as I went. I lingered a moment on the spot where I had once separated you from the dead body of your brother. I drank from the moss-rimmed urn which I had once filled with water for you, and then departed.

"For days I sought tidings of you amid the scattered inhabitants of the valley. All said that the young lady had gone to America, but no one knew anything certainly of her fate. Some had heard a vague rumor of her marriage to a rich gentleman; but the majority thought her dead, and that the house was haunted. If the young lady was gone, the Vernoids were all dead. They were a brave, proud race; the valley was full of the record of their past exploits; the peasants were sure that nightly they visited their earthly home, the young lady and all. At last they almost tempted me to believe that I was a madman chasing a phantom. And yet, when I turned away from that valley, a living face seemed to look into mine, a living form to walk by my side; I could not banish you. I returned to America, and attempted to take up my old duties where I laid them down. I did not realize until then how utter was my disappointment. I took no real interest in anything. I was disgusted with politics, with chicanery, falsehood, party strife. None of the world's prizes seemed worth striving after; that prize which I had most eagerly sought had eluded me. I cared for no other. People who had once called me a 'smart fellow' and prophesied wonderful success for me, now began to suspect that I was a lazy noodle.

"My friends thought it was the death of my wife which had so changed me, and advised me to marry; quite a number of mammas very disinterestedly began to project matches for me. I had one answer for all, that I probably should never marry again. Nearly a year after my return from America, I came to New York, my brain full of wise resolutions regarding my life. I had resolved to break the shackles of that dream, and be my old self again. I even thought of opening a law office in the city, and of seriously going to work. In the midst of such sensible cogitations I strolled into a picture-gallery mechanically one day. I did not expect to be interested, and therefore began to gaze about as carelessly as I

had entered. I saw, at one end of the gallery, a large painting, relieved by dark green drapery. I walked towards it, and, as I looked, for the first time in my life doubted the evidence of my senses. For a moment I felt that I must be the victim of hallucination. But no, my eyes could not tell so many lies; it was as substantial a picture of canvas, oil, and colors, as any in the room. There was no mistaking your face, nor Frederick's, nor my own; no mistaking that unique home, that magnificent scenery. No one could have painted that picture but you; you could not have conveyed the idea to any one who could have embodied it so perfectly, who could have infused so much reality, so much soul into its expression. All that was in that picture had been felt before it was portrayed. I went immediately to the director of the gallery, who told me all that he knew about it. He purchased it, he said, of a very ordinary appearing woman, who seemed to have no very high appreciation of art. She informed him that the picture was the work of a young French girl who had left it with her in payment for debt. She had lost track of the young lady, but she was very sure that she was dead, or had returned to France. The director knew nothing of the young artist's name; the woman did not mention it; he gave her five hundred dollars for the painting; she asked six, saying that would not cover the amount of the young girl's indebtedness, who had had a long illness in her house. The gentleman asked a thousand dollars for it; I would have given him three—yes, half of my fortune, rather than not have possessed it.

"While the picture was being taken down, the director noticed for the first time the resemblance between my face and the one on the canvas.

"'Why, sir,' he said, 'one of these faces looks enough like you to be your portrait.'

"When I again entered Broadway I had forgotten that there was a law office in Christendom. I did not believe that you were dead. No, I felt sure that you lived. Relying on the woman's statement, instead of any conviction of my own, I was inclined to think that you had returned to France, as you were an artist; probably to Paris. In another week, the painting, sacredly cased, with its new owner, had taken passage for Europe; and, in a few weeks more, both were fairly domesticated in Paris. By Mr. Van Ostrand's account, I learned that I sailed the very week that you were married."

"You did?"

"Yes."

"I searched for you in Paris. I went again to Languedoc and found it silent as before. The people around said that they heard a gentleman in Paris had bought Les Delices; but he had never lived in it, had never even visited it. They were quite sure that he was afraid of the ghosts of the Vernoids. And they evidently regarded me as an astonishing and slightly suspicious individual, to be coming again in search of dead people. I made Paris my home for nearly two years, though, in the meantime, I went to Florence and Rome, vainly hoping to find a young artist sitting amid the wondrous pictures of the Doria palaces or the Vatican. I would return from my fruitless searches to Paris, and, for a time, give myself up to study; doing my best to perfect myself in arts and sciences which I cared nothing about. I was positive that you were not in Paris, almost positive that you were not in Europe, when, for the third time, I turned my face towards America.

"One of the first objects which attracted my attention after my arrival was 'Niobe,' which was then on public exhibition. In the hundreds of paintings which I had seen, this was the first which reminded me of you. Not that it looked like you in any definable way; yet there was something in the expression of the eyes which recalled yours forcibly; but more, there was something in the outline, the touch, the coloring, which suggested my own painting the work of your hand. I thought that I detected in both one individuality, yet feared much that it was fancy.

"I found no mystery hanging over Niobe. The proprietor of the gallery informed me that it was the production of a lady, the wife of a distinguished physician, Dr. Rochelle, who was proud of his wife, and afforded her every opportunity to perfect herself in her art. I went away, intending to forget this Niobe, but did not succeed; had I done so I should have banished you. In writing to you, I did what I had never done before in my life, yet felt irresistibly impelled to do at this time. I felt a vague hope that if you were the maiden of Languedoc, you would in some way refer to your lost picture. You did not; yet, in the reticence of your reply, I found more than in many pages. If you were she, I did not want the faint illusion dissipated, neither did I wish to draw nearer to you; if you were indeed she, it was too late to intrude upon your individual life, hence my impersonal letters. I met you nowhere in the society where I dragged myself. And my friend, Mr. Van Ostrand, informed me that although so young, and having all the appearance of one created for

society rather than solitude, you seemed to be perfectly absorbed in art; shutting yourself up in your Eden as if you and your Adam were still earth's only inhabitants. It was at this time I learned the astounding fact that your 'Bel Eden' was no other than the home which I had built for my little Lila. I had not visited it since my first return from Languedoc. Shall I confess my madness? I had a hope that I should return with you my wife, and offer you Bel Eden as your home. Such was my disappointment I did not visit it; and it was after I had relinquished all hope of ever seeing you, that I allowed my agent to sell it shortly before I came to New York and found your wonderful painting. I wanted a law office, but I thought that I should never want a home. One day my conviction of your identity became a certainty. I was sitting in Mr. Van Ostrand's office, when he exclaimed—

"'There, there goes Madame Rochelle in that carriage!'

"I followed the direction of his pointing finger, caught a glimpse of your face, and knew that it was you. Why had I not caught that glimpse years before? Perhaps I turned pale, for Mr. Van Ostrand exclaimed—'Good heavens! Moncrieffe, what is the matter?' To which inquiry I could only reply, 'Mrs. Rochelle reminds me forcibly of a lady whom I met years ago.'

"A mysterious interfusion of circumstances has seemed to render it necessary that I should say all that I have said to you. If you had not recognised me I should have remained silent; but, knowing me as I you, an explanation was inevitable. I have told the simple truth. Yet do not fear that I shall disturb you, or in any way invade your peace. I am not a weak boy now to be running away from myself. I know well what honor and right demand; I shall obey."

I made no reply to his words. Like all that seizes my deeper nature, they seemed to paralyse me. I was dumb. At last my eye fell upon the magazine which contained the Italian story. I opened to it and asked, "Did you not write this?"

"Yes," he answered; "I am not a story writer, yet I wrote that before I knew that you were Madame Rochelle."

"It came in the very mail with your first letter. I read it immediately after reading that. Does it not seem strange?" I asked.

"No stranger than all the rest," he said, rising and going silently to inspect the paintings upon the walls.

"Good-bye," he added, in a few moments, as he offered his hand. "I saw Dr. Rochelle before coming, and he urged me

to await his return to tea. Will you be so kind as to give him my regrets, and tell him I could not stay to-day? Ask him to call on me. Good-bye," he said again, folding my hand in a frank, friendly grasp, and no more. I arose to see him depart. I saw him enter his carriage, received his kind parting glance, watched the wheels flash through the trees along the road. I walked back into the parlor as if in a dream, yet by the pain lying sore against my heart, I knew that it was a reality. Yes, it was a reality; there lay the card traced by the well-known hand; a great light seemed to have gone out of the room; that, too, was reality. Once more I looked out upon God's world. Softly the tender light of the celestial day stole through the open windows. How bland, how benign, how beneficent it was, baptizing me with its warm effulgence! Perfume, melody, and sunshine were around me; so were scathed flowers, dead leaves, and desolation.

Once more I mounted Zenaide, and went quietly down the road to meet Henri.

SOCIETY.

Winter came, and to me seclusion, solitude, had lost their charms. Mine was no longer a self-supported life. Existence was touched with delirium. In the feverish atmosphere of society I breathed more freely than in the stiflingly calm air of my home. Bel Eden was deserted for the season. Now that no summer beauty nor autumn glory rendered the country inviting, Henri wished to be nearer to business, nearer to all metropolitan opportunities and entertainments. I said "yes," as usual, to this proposition, which had become an annual one; yet breathed a quick sigh after, not because I had answered reluctantly, but so eagerly. One year before, I had said "yes" without feeling one pulsation of that eagerness. Then the gay world of society was not half so alluring to me as my own home. Then winter, folding its ermine around the fauns and naiads of the park; spreading its white mantle over hill and dingle, along avenue and vista; fringing the green arbor-vitæ with convoluted pearl, sheathing the great pillars of the trees in glittering ice; hanging from a million sprays millions of gleaming icicles, till I seemed imprisoned in a vast emblazoned palace sculptured in crystal—was far dearer to me than winter scattering his liquescent pearls on

ugly griffins and grim stone lions guarding the portals of stately mansions; or than winter with his white robes sullied and torn by the grime and tramping feet of the city. Then, far more satisfactory to me was daily quiet, my self-imposed tasks, my books, my children of the Mission-school, my dear visits with Morna, than all the gay éclat of dressing, going, seeing, and being seen, which forms the programme of a fashionable winter season.

It was different now. I had sought in religion the complete satisfaction which leaves no room for another. Now I went into the gay absorbing world in search of an impersonal life; let the conflict cost what it might, I was determined to live without, not within myself. Dust had once more gathered on the face of poor Thomas à Kempis in the undisturbed closet into which I had thrust him. Holy old monk! I rarely talked with him now. All his words of consolation I carried in my memory. I did not wish to remember more, for was he not constantly calling upon me for renouncement and self-examination? Again I had come to the sad conclusion that I had no genius for abnegation. I was tired of examining my heart; I wished only to forget it.

I heard no name spoken so often as that of Ambrose Moncrieffe. A love as strong and deep as he once gave to my brother Frederick, Henri Rochelle gave to this new friend. His personal attachments were rare, but, as you well know, tenacious as death. This genial, richly-dowered soul, this graceful, winning cosmopolite, opened a fountain of infinite refreshment to the fastidious yet practical man of science, crowded with the business of the every-day world. His most intimate companions were not elected from among those who followed the same pursuits; he sought those rather, who could add to his life the charm of variety.

Ambrose Moncrieffe won love from persons of all classes and conditions. He had a man's athletic brain, with all a woman's tenderness. The manly iron was not stinted in his making, but through it ran a vein of feminine gold. You were impressed with his refinement, his delicacy, his gentleness; but were equally conscious of his intellectual power, his capacity for strong passion. High mentality made love in him an exalted sentiment; a passion of the soul rather than a fever of the senses. He was a man who could feel temptation through every fibre, because it appealed through a vivid imagination directly to his heart. He might stray where Henri would not even be enticed; he might fall, through the very

excess of that in his nature which in itself was beautiful and holy; yet so tender was his conscience, so high his standard of honor, though the world and God might forgive, he would never quite forgive himself for the slightest act unworthy of his manhood.

He was as versatile as he was opulent in mental resources; he impressed you as one of those fortunate mortals who succeed in whatever they attempt; yet it required the strongest pressure of circumstances to force all his power into action. Had he been born poor he would have distanced every difficulty and achieved a splendid career. He was equal to grand occasions; he would have added to the glory of a great epoch; he suggested all that was noble and exalted in a man's destiny, yet it was very probable that his whole life would prove only a suggestion and not the reality. Unless moved by some extraordinary incentive, he was just the man to slip through the world, attempting little and accomplishing less. So hopelessly high was his standard of achievement, he found it very easy to be nothing but what he could not help being, a gentleman of generous fortune, scattering lavish blessings about him, just as it happened; followed by troops of friends whom he did not particularly need; carrying with him a splendor of culture and a wealth of gifts for which he had no particular use. In making him, God did not drop the seed of a great ambition into his soul. He seemed utterly devoid of the greed for personal fame and power which is the almost unfailing accompaniment of secondary endowments. His comprehensive soul had measured all the world of human action; he had weighed all its prizes in a most exquisite balance, and on the whole did not think them worth struggling after. It required a motive higher, stronger than the desire for personal aggrandizement, to arouse Ambrose Moncrieffe to be all that he could be. He had faults, as all truly lovable people are sure to have. His were those imperial faults which dazzle, allure, and fascinate, as the stark virtues of the sterile-minded never can. If he seemed to win more love than his share, it was not because he deserved it more, or sought it half so eagerly as many who seemed famishing for the lack of it, but simply because he was endowed by nature with those graces of mind and person, those qualities of heart, which, when found in man or woman, win love as inevitably as the sun draws towards its bosom the floods of ocean.

When Ambrose Moncrieffe said "Good-bye" on the October afternoon when he first visited me, he spoke as if that

"good-bye" were final. But Henri was not charmed so often that he could allow a man who pleased him thoroughly to pass away from his sight without an effort to retain him.

"Moncrieffe seems to have a world of engagements. I have invited him here to dine every day for a week," he said, not many days after that first meeting. A few more passed away, and Moncrieffe came.

Men have a very short and sensible way of becoming acquainted with each other. They are not half as foolish in this matter as women. They have not the thousand and one preliminaries to pass over, nor one-tenth of the silly punctilios of etiquette which are for ever thrusting to an immeasurable distance from each other women who ought to be friends. Men take each other's hands, look into each other's faces (not at each other's clothes), measuring each other in the look; they smoke cigars together, or drink a glass of wine, or invite each other home to dinner; discuss the state of the nation, the condition of the town, their favorite politician, minister, and doctor; and, provided no unusual resisting medium obtrudes itself, these two men rise farther advanced in their social relations than would two fashionable women after a two years' series of "friendly calls." Thus, in what seemed to me an inconceivably brief period, to my amazement I found that Henri Rochelle and Ambrose Moncrieffe seemed to be as intimately acquainted as if they had known each other from their birth.

"A man who had reared such an enchanting home for other people to enjoy was entitled to their hospitalities as long as he would accept them," Henri said. So through all that heavenly October and the first sere days of the sad November, when I rode Zenaïde through the elm-road to the railway station, I often met two mounted knights instead of one. A pair of eyes which for years had shed a mournful splendor upon all my dreams became luminous verities beside my table. One evening Morna sat opposite them, and that evening I learned for the first time that Moncrieffe was an amateur in music. She played, they sang together—his clear, mellow tenor blending with her rich contralto. I sat apart, I listened—or did I only feel? That was the voice to which all my nature responded the first time that I ever heard it. Was it less seductive now? I would fain have lain prone upon my face and wept my soul away—yet I did not weep at all. I said and did nothing. Yet I remember that Morna stole softly to my side afterwards and whispered:

"Dear Victoire, what ails you? You are as white as if you were dead."

But Moncrieffe's brief visits were usually filled with conversation. Henri and he had travelled through the same lands; there were endless reminiscences to recall; there was Paris life, an almost inexhaustible theme; there were the affairs of the world to be discussed, after the fashion of men; there was the condition of the country to be deplored; there were parties to be denounced; individuals were saved in the heaven of Moncrieffe's vast charity. When other topics grew stale, by way of variety Henri would fall to lecturing Moncrieffe in a frank, pleasant way; said lectures always being received with the most unperturbed serenity. One unusually mild afternoon, after dinner, they sauntered out into the piazza to smoke their Havanahs. They seated themselves in the don't-care posture which is the pet felicity of men who have seized an hour to "take it easy"—their chairs poised on two legs, their feet several degrees nearer their head than usual, resting most comfortably on the marble balustrade. I, within, was meditating upon the sublime composure with which men accept life, when, after a series of long whiffs, I heard Henri say:

"Moncrieffe, you are a lazy fellow."

"I know it," said his companion, with utter nonchalance, watching the blue smoke of his cigar curl up through the golden air.

"You waste your time shamefully."

"I know it."

"Then why don't you make a better use of it? You are full of aspirations after a grand, ideal life. With your infinite resources, why don't you make such a life possible by embodying it before our eyes?"

"Don't make any demands upon me, Rochelle; it is too late to comply with them."

"Too late! Here you are, hardly thirty; and, with a whole world of splendid acquisitions in your head, you are doing absolutely nothing."

"I have nothing particular to do. The world would be a terribly tedious place if everybody in it worked as hard to benefit it as you do. It is the law of a Frenchman's being to keep flying about. It is the law of a Southerner's to make himself as comfortable as possible."

"You can't accuse me of flying. I only keep doing," said Henri. "Besides I am not a pure Frenchman; my mother was an Englishwoman."

"Well, you always impressed me as a very queer Frenchman. Your mother made you English, every inch of you; that's English, to keep for ever doing."

"But what is English or French is not to the point. You must excuse me, Moncrieffe, for my meddlesome pertinacity. If I did not like you I should not mention it; but now I am really afflicted to see you doing yourself such great injustice. Leaving all culture out of the question, nature made you an orator. You would make a special pleader, a great advocate. It will be your own fault if, in ten years, you are not one of the distinguished members of the New York bar. I believe that it is your moral duty to open a law office in New York."

"I am not sure but that it is my moral duty to quit New York as soon as possible."

"What! and bury yourself in that little provincial city. If you are going to live on this continent at all, New York is the only place where a cosmopolitan can live. Here he has room to breathe and do. Here he is quickened by the electricity of human masses; here the energy, the life of the nation culminates. The wealth, the misery, the wants of humanity———."

"Don't bore me with 'the wants of humanity,' I beg of you, Rochelle. It is a hopeless task for you to attempt to strain me up to a high point of philanthropy. I'll do everything that I know how for everybody that needs me. Perhaps you can live on the luxury of doing good, and be satisfied; I can't. Individuals so absorb me that I can't swallow the whole human race at once. If I should seriously set myself to work to relieve 'the wants of humanity,' I should be so overpowered with their number and my inability to supply them, that I should give you the opportunity of shutting me in a lunatic asylum within the space of a year or two. It is best for some people to live as much of an oyster-life as possible; they will feel enough then."

"And do nothing? You are wrong, depend upon it; and you have seen the day when you did not discover so much merit in doing nothing."

"Oh, yes; I have seen the day when I was as busy as a Yankee. I am not aware that I am any better or happier, or the world either, for my having been so."

"The thwarting of your life-plan has made you morbid in one particular, but no more. I am sure I don't blame you," said Henri, very kindly. "Perhaps I cannot sympathize with you, for I have obtained every object in this life that I ever

sought. Nothing would so near unman me as to bury my wife, yet with me it would be a point of conscience to go on with every duty, as if nothing had happened. The putting out of one hope should not make you blind to all the rest, my dear fellow."

"Of course it is ungrateful; but some people, if they are denied the only treasure they ever asked for, disdain all other gifts. Who is it says that everybody can be a philosopher over other people's troubles? Perhaps I shall be aroused to the importance of accomplishing a career some time. But there is no forcing experiences, you know, Rochelle. I am sure that it is kind in you to be so interested in my destiny. I hope that I shall never prove ungrateful."

"I wish that you would show your gratitude by using one or more of your thousand accomplishments to some purpose. What do all your Greek, and Latin, and Italian classics amount to, if you never use them?"

"They amount to this, that they afford me a vast amount of entertainment. And if a man is too indolent to make an effort to benefit his race, he ought at least to be able to amuse himself."

"It is a mystery to me," said Henri, "how you ever contrived to ransack the ages, and search all climes for the lore of heaven and earth. You have neither the looks nor the habits of a student. Where did you find all that you know, Moncrieffe? You never exerted yourself terribly, I am certain."

"Well," said Moncrieffe, "some people are like moles, you know; they dig and dig, till they ferret out a vast pile of knowledge; and some are like sponges; they suck it in from every vein in nature, without exerting themselves particularly. They are constantly absorbing; yet this drop, or that, they cannot tell when or how they drank it in. If they are full, praise not them, but the rich world around them. Perhaps I am a sponge."

"That you are; you manage to sponge out of me more time than any other mortal living, except my Victoire; and, by the way, in many respects you are marvellously like her. Here she is, ready for a walk as usual," said Henri, looking around and seeing me by his side, hat in hand. The feet came down from the balustrade, and the two diminished cigars, with ashen crests and burning eyes, flew simultaneously into a bed of withered leaves.

We went out together under the wind-swept branches of

the great trees, under the solemn pines waving above us their odor-tipped lances, dipping them now far out in the sunset's gold. On we went through the dank yellow grass, through the dismantled flowers, through the rain-torn autumnal leaves which covered the ground with a red-brown carpet, till we reached the bridge down in the ravine. Here we stood a moment in silence, when Henri said, taking out his watch:

"I must be in town in an hour. I have four patients whom I must call upon this evening."

So we wandered back where the carriage stood waiting, and I, standing on the piazza, saw them depart together. Moncrieffe did not visit Bel Eden again that year. A few days after, all our household, including Kate Murphy, George Peacock, no small number of dogs, cats, and birds, besides Pontiff and Zenaide, were transferred to our city home.

One of the most unalloyed pleasures of my daily life consisted in watching the gradual transformation of George Washington Peacock. Unawares, a beautiful soul was growing in the boy. To be sure he retained his idiosyncrasies; he was George Washington Peacock still, and no one wished him to be any one else. He was not yet remarkable for fluency of speech, although now he could speak upon the subjects most exciting to him without stumbling over an oath. His love of truth was no longer displayed at the expense of his good temper. His love of beauty had grown harmoniously amid the refinement of his later life; and his strong desire for goodness, struggling into existence amid moral darkness and deformity, had grown into a sturdy, healthy principle, tempering all his actions. It was not half so apparent in the fact that he asked for the privilege of teaching a class of little ragged boys in the Mission-school, as it was in his private intercourse with his family; in the Christian dispositions which he manifested to his brothers and sisters; in his obedience to his mother; in his tender forbearance when she tried him most—an instrument more potent in the reformation of friends than any number of long sermons, or any amount of righteous indignation. His love for light reading had grown into a desire for useful knowledge. Every spare cent of wages was expended on books to study. And his delight knew no bounds when, on our arrival in town, Henri offered him the privilege of attending a boys' academy.

Since the day when she asked him to go to Sabbath-school, Hope's interest in his welfare had in nowise diminished.

Every month brought him letters traced by her beautiful hand, full of sweet, unconscious pictures of Parisian life such as her limited school-girl experience enabled her to see. The boy made these letters into a book, placing them inside of a handsome cover, each letter forming an additional leaf, making at last a large volume. This he allowed to come in contact with no other book but his Bible, on which he laid it, studying it as scarcely less a divine oracle. He lived in the ever-yearning desire to make himself an object worthy of her approbation.

Hope's home letters were an unmingled delight; they were diaries into which every phase of her guileless young life was written. It was very evident that the great world was not spoiling her. She was one from whom every contamination would drop off, so wonderful was the spell of innocence and purity which she carried in herself. Her letters, written in French, Italian, and Spanish, were graceful proofs of her advancing scholarship, while every word which they breathed was touched with unconscious humility, which was as natural to her as her beauty and grace.

"How I long for you, my beloved ones," she would write; "yet I gladly submit to any exile which at last will make me more worthy of you."

In one of his letters, written before we met, Moncrieffe spoke thus of the face of Hebe which was exhibited beside Niobe. He supposed it an ideal face, and said:

"It is wondrously beautiful, and lacks nothing but intensity—that intensity which always accompanies an impassioned nature and deep capacity for suffering. Such a look could never deepen the dream-like beauty of this face, or the nature which it represents. Hebe could gently grieve or be sweetly sorrowful; she could not be rent with anguish. There is no selfishness in this face. She could relinquish everything, life itself, for another; yet she would not suffer in renouncing as Niobe would. Niobe would make a larger sacrifice in offering the same object, for in putting it away from her she would tear her heart with it. Hebe has not this tenacity of soul-grasp. She is all love, but loves as the angels love. She would look through her tears into the face of life's greatest sorrow with a smile of seraphic resignation. She is all gentleness, love, and beauty. No renunciation, no process of suffering or growth has made her what she is. Thus she was born. Such a being would not satisfy me now; yet after a great storm of soul I can imagine how I might find heavenly rest and peace gazing on such a face; imagine with what warmth of

healing the celestial sunlight of such a spirit would fall on the ruins of my own, filling me with tenderest affection, yet kindling not a grand inspiration."

Henri was filled with surprise and satisfaction when he learned that my long-lost picture was in the possession of Moncrieffe. He accompanied me to the sumptuous private parlor in the Hotel St. —— where it hung. When it was first revealed, amid its softening drapery, he manifested a degree of emotion rarely visible in him. The face of Beatrice, of Frederick, the memories so suddenly evoked by the presence of those long-lost faces, so strangely grouped in a strange land; Frederick's death, my departure, all came back to him so vividly, so unexpectedly, that for a moment he seemed lost. Then he took my hand almost impulsively as he said:

"My poor child, then this is that long year's work, just completed when disease and madness overtook you. It is noble. It is worthy of a great genius, of a great soul. I look at it, and live over again my lost youth. No picture ever moved me like this. Frederick, my brother; Beatrice, my sister; Victoire, my wife—all here! Frederick dying! It seems as if I was parting with him over again." He looked down into my face. Again I caught a glimpse of the deep valley of tender love far down into his nature. My heart yearned towards him. Oh, why did he not draw my soul thus near to him always!

I looked up—Moncrieffe was gazing at us.

He said: "Rochelle, if you think so much of this picture, take it. However much I desire or need it, I am unwilling to monopolize anything that does not belong to me. Take the picture, and hang it up at Bel Eden."

"I am sure that the picture belongs to you," said Henri. "As it is not mine, Moncrieffe, I would rather that you should own it than any one else in the world. No, I have more than a picture; I am not going to rob you of that. Besides, there is your own face in it. It is not strange that every person and shade of that scene was so indelibly impressed on her mind. It is the most natural thing in the world that she should have remembered and painted you, appearing at that moment as you did. It is strange that you of all the inhabitants of the earth should have come into possession of the picture. Life is full of remarkable coincidences."

If Moncrieffe felt any dissatisfaction at the very practical way in which Henri disposed of the fact of his face being in

the picture, he did not express any. He treated me now as he did upon all occasions, simply as the wife of his friend. While he maintained these distant relations, he evidently felt under no obligation to reveal a past experience. I was conscious of carrying nothing in my heart which I was either ashamed or afraid to confess, but I had a great dread of making myself absurd in the eyes of Henri. It always piqued me a little when he laughed and called me romantic. I was constantly endeavoring to make myself practical in his sight. It would have been a great relief could I have told him how Moncrieffe had once grown into my life. But I had not the moral courage to be willing to make myself appear ridiculous to him, as I knew that I should, tell that story as best I might. I could not tell him, but I would put it far away from me. I would fill my life so full that I should have neither time nor room for that memory. I would—yes, I would do right. Thus I reasoned. Moncrieffe never sought me. Politeness obliged him to accept a portion of the many invitations lavished upon him by Henri, but he by no means availed himself of the privilege offered by his host, "to consider our house his home." He yielded to the entreaties of his many friends, opened a law office, and distinguished himself for ability in the fulfilment of public duties with an ease which astonished many in that brilliant circle, who had known him only as a gentleman of graceful leisure, a master of the accomplishments of life. This was the state of affairs in our little world when the gay winter season of the metropolis began.

After all, it was a natural metamorphosis which changed the nun-artist of Mrs. Skinher's attic, the young toiling designer of the "comfortable home," into the woman of society, wearing her crown of success as regally as if she had placed it on her head with her own hands. Yet, what was the volatile mass, the glittering crowd to me? They were fellow-creatures, nothing more. For their burden of foibles, folly, and sorrow, which we shared together, I had abundant pity; for everything else I despised them. I was well aware that it was not me but the golden accidents of my life which made them flatter and follow me. Victoire, the unknown artist, might have painted on to her dying day unbefriended; Victoire, the designer, might have died of poverty and starvation for all of this fickle crowd. A few might have pitied as a beggar one whom they now sought as a peer; but they would not have treated her with the consideration of an

equal. Oh, no; she had no position then. I knew that Madame Rochelle was not better, not more a lady than that young Victoire. The attentions which would not have been given to her, were yet lavished upon Madame Rochelle, I could fairly estimate now. I knew precisely how much they were worth. I had never been dependent upon promiscuous society for happiness, and could well afford to be good-natured while I measured its favors. I had no fault to find with it; it gave me all that I asked—entertainment and an interesting source of study. Besides, it is vulgar and ill-natured to be always grumbling at the world. Society is only accumulated humanity; we must accept it as we ought each individual human creature, loving its virtues, forgiving its sins, taking care to divest ourselves of the very faults which we are so willing liberally to condemn. Society, in its broad significance, is a word of vague import, but its root lies near the surface of life, and means only companion. So the struggles of the race in this age and all others to establish a standard of the best society, have been only human hearts seeking the best companionship, its type varying with races, climes, and customs.

Louis Fourteenth thought that he had found it when the genius of Boileau, Racine, Sévigné—the eloquence of Bossuet, the saintliness of Fenelon, the beauty and wit of Pompadour and de Maintenon, reflected splendor upon the court of Versailles. The high-born coterie of the famous Hôtel de Rambouillet, with its immaculate purity and inexpressible nonsense, thought that the best society of the world was shut within its walls. So thought Charles the Second amid his court of lewd beauties; so thinks Victoria to-day in the virtuous palace of Windsor; and of the same mind is Mrs. Potiphar in the Avenue, and Mrs. Codfish, whose wardrobe has not yet lost the odor of beer contracted by a long residence in the Bowery. In a commercial metropolis, vulgarity tries hard to bear the palm of the best society. Mr. and Mrs. Wholesale never invite to their soirées Mr. and Mrs. Retail. No; they snub them upon all conspicuous occasions, and invite only to their mansion the relations of Mrs. Extensive Jobber, and gentlemen distinguished in the professions. Mrs. Wholesale is sure that she has all the "best society." Mrs. Pedant allows no one to darken her threshold, save the lions of the literati; she of course has only the "best society." Mrs. Ton admits only the rich, no matter how ignorant, boorish, vulgar; if they are only rich, rich enough to sport

coach and livery, they are the very "best society." When these distinguished representatives of the "best society" cross by accident each other's orbits, it is amusing to a spectator to see them stare at each other with eyes askance; to hear Mrs. Wholesale whisper to her bosom friend Mrs. Extensive Jobber: "See Mrs. Retail, that dowdy woman! She does not belong to *our* set."

Thank God, amid a vast deal of shallowness and falseness, there are homes in New York—beautiful, holy homes. In them are luminous brains, lovely faces, loving hearts, dispensing all catholic hospitalities, all gracious, tender charities. They are the rare magnets who draw about them the "best society," and a gifted, noble American—the only man in the land who has depicted its society with both infinite truth and infinite grace—has told us what that "best society" is—"the men who mould the time, who refresh our faith in heroism and virtue, who make Plato, and Zeno, and Shakspeare, and all Shakspeare's gentlemen possible again. The women whose beauty, and sweetness, and dignity, and high accomplishments and grace, make us understand Greek mythology, and weaken our desire to have some glimpses of the most famous women of history. The 'best society' is that in which the virtues are most shining, which is the most charitable, forgiving, long-suffering, modest and innocent." An easy fortune, poetic surroundings, opportunities for wide culture which wealth can give, are certainly more favorable to a rich, harmonious development of mind and person than the blighting air of poverty. But if poverty tends to distort and depress the souls of its finer victims, great affluence tempts its recipients with enervation, artificiality, a false, hollow existence. Only a noble soul will live a simple, sincere, contrite life, amid the frivolity, the shams, the hypocrisy, of purely fashionable society. Such souls are sometimes forced by circumstances into these circles. All who compose the world's gay multitudes are neither heartless nor false. Here I found divinely-inspired souls, whose feet touched the flower-bedizened path of fashion, but whose eyes were kindled with the light of the empyrean; men who did not disgrace the likeness of God; women whose souls were unsullied white, whose eyes were like the evening star, whose vestal beauty and supernal grace saved Sodom, and atoned for half the folly of the denizens of Vanity Fair. I found the "best society" when I found the highest companionship, amid the few who met in sincerity, simplicity,

sympathy, and charity, whether they met in lowly homes or gorgeous palaces.

The Van Ostrands were true metropolitans, holding allegiance to no particular clique or "set." One was sure to see at their receptions and soirées representatives from the world of religion, art, literature, science, philanthropy, fashion; and at their house one night I met an old acquaintance. We went early—I am not afraid to go early to a fashionable party. You who have such a reputation for fashion to sustain that you never dare show your face before ten o'clock, cannot know how much you lose. Go early to a party, if you want to sip its dew and bloom. Go early, and you will breathe the air before it becomes fever; you can use your eyes in the gas-light before it burns them like fire; you can gaze at pictures and marvels of art before they are lost in crinoline; you can inhale the breath of flowers before they wither; you can receive the smiles of your hostess before she has grown weary or nervous about her spoons and carpets; if there are any children in the house, you can have a chance to kiss them before they are thrust out of sight. If you are so fashionable that you must lose all this, I am sorry for you. We went early; the dancers had not come, but through the great, illuminated halls floated the heavenly music of Dodworth's band, playing "When the Swallows Homeward Fly." The lofty drawing-rooms were as enticing as wealth, taste, splendor, light, warmth, and genial hearts could make them. Through their ample length floated a thousand rich odors from the open conservatory, whose air was sown thick with lemons flushed with the tawny gold of clustering orange trees. Gorgeous exotics, sweet home flowers, plashing waters, golden fish, singing birds, made the charmed life of this tropical bower hid in the heart of a palace of stone.

A rare poetic hour in this mimic paradise, and the guests began to flow in. Fair young sylphs in snowy "clouds" and misty mantles, in robes of lustrous silk and ethereal tulle, floated away to the dressing-room, and from thence to the dancing hall; slender gentlemen in flashing pumps and virgin kids, flew after them. Into the drawing-rooms began to flow all the component parts of a brilliant metropolitan assembly. There were people distinguished for their brains, and people equally distinguished for their want of them. There were orators, philosophers, scholars, painters, poets, and singers; blooming matrons, *passé* belles, and pretty maidens whose mammas would not let them dance. There were gentlemen who wrote

reviews, gentlemen who edited newspapers; antiquated ladies who wrote novels, and school-girls who wrote essays from the models of Addison. There were authors who touched the tips of each other's fingers, stared into each other's faces, praised each other's last new book—afterwards going away and slandering the same. There were seers and sybils, inspired men and women, beautiful and loyal, whose souls drew near together on one plane, loving each other then, and loving each other afterwards. Miss Poddil Puff herself was there, a young lady who contributed to the magazines, and had written a book; whose ejaculations, "O moon!" and "O music!" were decidedly Ossianic; whose desire for notoriety was so rampant, that she wrote elaborate notices of her own effusions, and particularly flattering descriptions of herself, and paid the daily journals for printing them. Mr. Dante Blonde was there; a girlish youth, who had been told that he bore a striking resemblance to his illustrious Italian namesake, and therefore quoted his poetry at great length, rolling up his eyes after the most accepted model of high poetic art. Morna was there, wearing a dress of opal velvet with a scarlet flower in her lustrous hair. Moncrieffe was there.

In the course of the evening I found myself pressed into close proximity with Mrs. Automaton and Mrs. Flirtfan, two ladies of the highest ton in the world of insipid nonsense. Mrs. Flirtfan was one of those flimsy bits of femininity who make sensible women ashamed that they are women. One of those little, fluttering, feathery women, all covered with flying ends of ribbon; head, tongue, and fan always going. Mrs. Flirtfan affected naïveté. She thought that nothing made a lady so irresistible to gentlemen as to prove by her conversation that she knew nothing. "Gentlemen so admired sweet, dependent women." "I am a mere child, you know" (she was over forty), she would lisp to some lord of creation, archly peering up through the feathers of her fan, perfectly sure that she had made herself transcendently fascinating, which was her highest ambition. Mrs. Automaton was not without her great object in life; it was to make herself as unnatural as possible; and, more fortunate than most people, she attained her object. To be possessor of an "air," was not that enough to live for? You might have injured Mrs. Automaton in many ways, and she would have forgiven you, remembering you especially on the next Sabbath, when, kneeling in church, she murmured over her gold-clasped prayer-book, "Good Lord, deliver us." But she would have been too much

disgusted to have ever forgiven, had you in her presence descended sufficiently from your high-bred grace to have manifested natural emotion. Mrs. Automaton had charity for all people but "gushing" ones; persons who had the inelegant, rustic habit of appearing affectionate. It was the Christian duty of every man and woman so fortunate as to have been born to the best society, to cultivate a "manner."

"Do not stir, dear," she said, magnificently, to Mrs. Flirtfan; "*our* friends will come to us."

"Stir! Dear me, no; I shan't stir till we pass to the supper rooms. I am always afraid that I shall be introduced to somebody who isn't in our set; and it is so dreadful, you know; because then I have to snub them when I meet them somewhere else. One never knows whom they will meet at the Van Ostrands'. They will do as they please, and yet you know, Mrs. Automaton, we have to come, because they are the Van Ostrands;" and the little fan began to flutter spitefully.

"Mrs. Flirtfan, that young lady in the opal velvet dress is very distingué," observed Mrs. Automaton, with an air of profound erudition.

"Why, Mrs. Automaton, do you know what you are saying? Why, that is Miss Avondale. She is only a great singer. It's splendid to go to the Academy and hear her, where we pay her for amusing us; but oh dear, think of it, of meeting our artists at our reception on the Avenue just as if they were on our level! Why, Mrs. Automaton, I have heard it from the most undeniable authority that this Miss Avondale came up from the depths of poverty. I have heard"—and here the little fan flew close to the little mouth, which whispered ominously—"I have heard that once she even sewed for her living! Oh dear, Mrs. Automaton, isn't it almost insulting, to oblige us to breathe in the same room with such a person, just as if she was our equal? The Van Ostrands are so queer—and yet you know that they are the Van Ostrands."

"Let us forgive them, dear," said Mrs. Automaton, with the august tone of an injured queen. "Our friend M. Petiman is approaching."

"There, if he isn't speaking to that Miss Avondale," interrupted Mrs. Flirtfan, her fan twitching most nervously. "Of course he doesn't know. It's our duty to inform him, Mrs. Automaton. Dear M. Petiman, he has such a sweet, heavenly, condescending smile. Oh dear, I wish I could smile

so divinely. Oh, did you ever see such an ineffable 'air' and such a lovely bow?—and all wasted on a sewing girl. Oh dear, Mrs. Automaton, it is dreadful!"

"Yes, love, it is dreadful," solemnly echoed Mrs. Automaton, with the look of a sphinx. Overcome by their reflections, the ladies spoke not again till their friend M. Petiman had wormed his way to their side, making his lowest obeisance.

"Ah, I am delighted to see you," said that gentleman to his doting friends. "I have been a long time reaching you. One finds so many people at Mr. Van Ostrand's whom they *must* speak to—ah—you understand. You observed me speaking to Miss Avondale, our gifted American cantatrice. She is a truly magnificent singer, she is a great genius—but ——"

"But" —— reiterated Mrs. Automaton, drawing up in owlish state.

"But"—simpered Mrs. Flirtfan, "Oh dear, M. Petiman, I am so glad you know" (and the fan began to coquet). "It really made me quite sick, thinking that I must as a duty inform you of her history."

"Ah, thoughtful as ever; yes, very kind of you, Mrs. Flirtfan. But you know I make it a point to ascertain the history of all whom I meet in society. It is very easy, very easy. A few incisive questions are all-sufficient. These are due to society and due to ourselves. Ah, Mrs. Flirtfan? But as I was observing, this Miss Avondale is truly an estimable young lady; she has great genius, but like all persons who have struggled through disadvantageous circumstances to success, she places a somewhat undue estimate upon herself, and is inclined to think that her powers are not fully appreciated by the public. I never heard her say so, but that is my suspicion. For this reason, I take great pains to smile upon her whenever I meet her in the 'best society.' It is better to humor, even to flatter such people, you know, when you see that the great public awards them a high position for genius, ah, Mrs. Flirtfan?"

He told the truth when he called it a "suspicion." It was a suspicion, too, which had foundation only in his own craven mind. He could have said nothing more false. Morna was too proud to seek approbation, and too humble to feel that she deserved it. She was astonished and gratified as a child for the praise awarded her. She associated no sense of personal merit with the great gifts lent her, which she never felt were *hers;* and I who knew her best, knew well the crushing

weight of self-distrust which she carried in her heart. She needed encouragement as the flowers need dew, but she never courted flattery nor demanded praise.

This speech was like what I first knew of M. Petiman. He was a little too amiable, a vast deal too polite to be openly slanderous. It was so much more graceful to be slyly invidious; so much more high-bred to drop a covert innuendo, to breathe a gentle insinuation; so much more magnanimous to baptize a name with praises—at the last pouring a drop, only a drop, of poison into the honeyed flood; that one drop deadly enough to murder all the sweet faith which you were willing to cherish in the nobility of the man.

M. Petiman could have said nothing which would have moved me more. In indignation I turned towards Morna. Ire died before that pure brow, those holy eyes. She walked far apart from those drivelling souls; their miserable misapprehension, their petty thrusts, could never reach her.

"Oh, M. Petiman, so many engagements, so many engagements—engagements to parties a week deep; but I was so sorry, so sorry not to have been at Mrs. Petiman's soirée last evening," said Mrs. Flirtfan.

"Ah, we had such a charming time," said the amiable gentleman; "such a charming time. My friend Lady Magnificent says that she has seen nothing so brilliant this side of the water. There were my distinguished friends Lord and Lady Poodle, the great philosopher Noodle, the sweet poet Simple, the philanthropist Wimple, and so many rising stars. Ah, you should have been there, Mrs. Flirtfan."

"These little people, they do not interest me; they cannot even amuse me," said Moncrieffe, approaching my side. His fastidious ear had caught M. Petiman's last mellifluous sentences. The sight of Mrs. Automaton and Mrs. Flirtfan was sufficient. "By the way, I heard M. Petiman ask Dr. Rochelle for the honor of an introduction to his wife," Moncrieffe continued. "I only marvel how you have escaped so long. I should not know New York society if I did not see M. Petiman's face wherever I go."

He was not mistaken; in a few moments Henri, who had been busy with a group of savants, drew near, accompanied with the gentleman of many smiles. He did not dream that I had spoken to M. Petiman before, although he knew that I had seen him many times, and it was very apparent that gentleman recognised no former acquaintance in Madame Rochelle. After the introduction, I informed M. Petiman that I

had had the pleasure of an introduction before. His surprised look seemed to say, "Is it possible that I ever forget one in any way distinguished?" I informed him that M. Petiman was the only gentleman to whom I brought letters of introduction from France. He probably did not recognise the young artist girl, Victoire Vernoid. He remembered her now, as his face plainly indicated.

"Ah, he recollected that years ago he had had the distinguished honor. He remembered with sorrow that the multiplicity of his engagements had prevented him from visiting Miss Vernoid's studio with Mrs. Petiman, a lady devoted to art, as he most fervently desired. Would Madame Rochelle pardon?"

Madame Rochelle informed him that she had nothing to pardon. She was well aware that M. Petiman regarded Victoire Vernoid as a romantic adventurer, and treated her accordingly. Had he considered that she was a young girl, poor, alone, exposed to temptation and danger in a strange land, needing encouragement and counsel, she was willing to believe that he would have given it, and, by a few kind words, helped her to have helped herself. I did not dip my arrow in venom; I sent it with a smile. M. Petiman needed it. It reached its mark, and I meant that it should. M. Petiman continued to smile, yet his manner had lost somewhat of its Parisian ease. Evidently he did not feel entirely comfortable in the presence of Madame Rochelle. As soon as practicable, he bowed himself out of her sight. There are many M. Petimans in the world.

TEMPTATION.

Did you ever dare to look into the face of a great temptation, declaring: "I will look, yet not be tempted?" Did you ever persist in gazing into the eyes of the fascinator, saying: "I will gaze, yet not be fascinated?" Many have said it; many have fallen because they said it. Often we are taught by the saddest experience, that we can never have the power to do absolutely right while we make the slightest compromise with wrong. The flowers which ravish us with their perfume, distil the deadly gas which destroys life; so there are souls which, unawares, poison us with their very sweetness.

In the silence of my soul, before God, I had prayed for power to make not only the acts of my life, but the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart, acceptable in His sight. I had vowed to do right, and only right, so far as knowledge was given me. Complete occupation, the absorbing world, would leave no space for him, I reasoned.

He possessed the rare grace of perfect manners, which in him was less the consummation of art than the harmonious expression of a rich, many-sided nature; the result of affluent culture, of æsthetic taste, of the finest perception, and a gentle heart. So clear were his intuitions, so quick his sympathy, that he adapted himself almost involuntarily to the moods and emotions of his companions, and thus unconsciously took possession of their hearts.

As I stood apart, I saw fair cheeks flush, lovely eyes soften, and kindle, and deepen under the deeper eyes reading their sweetest secrets. I heard common tongues grow eloquent in replying to one who could create and quicken inspiration. I saw him filling the rôle of a man of the world; yet, however surrounded, felt not a pang of jealousy. The story which his lips had uttered once, had never been repeated—that was not necessary. I did not know how deep was its impression. I was not aware that I was living in the silent consciousness of my rich possession. To those who love each other, the universe is articulate, and breathes a language for them alone. Language in its subtlest phrases sheathes a meaning within a meaning, never misunderstood by the quickened heart, which is its unerring interpreter. It was enough for me that occasionally I could stand apart and listen to the tones of that alluring voice, although it fell upon other ears; that the eloquent eyes, the books which he read, the music which he selected, the flowers which he placed in my hand, all conveyed a meaning understood by my heart alone. If it was love, it was love unuttered. It was love, without one of love's privileges; no meetings, no caresses, no tokens. I was fortified against visible dangers, careful that no flaw should be made in the wall of propriety. I had yet to learn that the most insidious and dangerous of all love is that which steals to the heart through the enchanted avenue of the imagination, kindling in its passage with all ideal beauty, that love which never offends by license, never repels by grossness; which does not express itself in words, but in things lying deeper than all words—the involuntary language of the heart, breathing itself into a thousand acts, speaking through every glance

of the silent eyes. A sensitive, susceptible heart can live on this delicious, yet often deadly aliment, asking nothing more. This is the love of woman; how different from the love of man, which, in proportion as it deepens and absorbs, maddens for complete possession of its object.

To me no one said, beware. Not even the world, with its suspicious eyes and hellish tongues. Mr. Moncrieffe was the intimate friend of Dr. Rochelle. Mr. Moncrieffe awarded to Mrs. Rochelle the courtesy due to the wife of his friend. That was all that the world saw; that was all that there was for any mortal to see. Pray do not fancy it an uncommon case. Looking at the unruffled surface of society, what do you know of the life below, of the wrecked hearts, of the dead hopes buried in its great deep? Could the electrical cord lying in the depth of the main become impregnated with the messages of men and nations, it would transmit them without a sound; it would not disturb the sunken galleons, nor the moss-green bones lying on the ocean's oozy floor. The gay inhabitants of the coral palaces, the great tidal waves above, would play and flow as if no messages of life and death thrilled through the abyss below. Thus from being to being flow the electrical currents, bearing the subtle messages of hearts in silence. Soul speaks to soul in burning syllables which make no sound. Love and tragedy meet in the eyes of men and women, while the ever swelling ocean of outer existence rolls on unconscious of the fiery chord of life spanning the profounds of being below. I knew nothing of this then. I scarcely knew that my nature was filled with a new inspiration, that the old ecstasy in life, the joy in simple breath, had come back. Rare forms and faces grew beneath my hand almost unconsciously. My work, when completed, astonished myself; I could not realize that these creations of beauty were born in my own soul. The divine passion within made every form in nature more beautiful; it filled my heart with a tenderness for all living creatures. Like a satisfied child, I rested in the soothing arms of the present. All sunshine seemed around me and in me. I did not see the little cloud growing and deepening, which soon might fall upon me and cover me. I was satisfied in the beautiful now, and all the coming to-morrows seemed only countless links in the golden chain lengthening down to the doors of the still more beautiful to-be.

Life was all enkindled. I worshipped all that was highest and fairest. Through one glorious human personality, I fancied

that I drew nearer to the one eternal holy soul of love. Why need disenchantment come? Why should life ever be any different? Rather, why should the beings who made my life ever be any different? Change might come to the earth, might touch the soul of nature and the brows of men; it would not reach our hearts. Alas! I had yet to learn that the change which blights nature and withers the human face, is not half so sad as that change which makes the mutations of the human heart. The gay winter went by on wings. With the ripening spring, with the newly quickened life which comes to human beings, with the birth of leaves and the resurrection of the flowers, I marked a change in Moncrieffe. Almost imperceptible at first, it became more and more painfully apparent. The shadow of a deeper sadness brooded in his eyes; he often seemed listless, absent, or else he was feverishly gay, startlingly brilliant. The graceful poise, the healthful repose of his manner, seemed gone, and his fitful actions gave token of deep restlessness, if not unhappiness.

"I wonder what ails Moncrieffe?" said Henri one evening. "I used to think that he had no moods. That was one reason why I liked him. I knew where to find him. He was not agreeable one day, and disagreeable the next. But he seems moody enough now; and once or twice he has been really cuttingly sarcastic, as if he was retaliating upon me for some injury that I had done him. He seemed to regret it immediately, and suddenly became so kind, of course I did not notice it. But I am sure of one thing, he has some trouble that we know nothing about. It is not all sorrow for his wife, I know. Poor fellow! when I have time I must investigate and find out what is the matter."

I needed not to investigate. Henri's words were to me a revelation. From that hour a pain ran through all the pleasure which had once been untouched when I met Moncrieffe. I knew not why, but before I was aware, the innocent ease, the frank intercourse of every-day friendship seemed gone. True, it was assumed, but it was no longer real. I could no longer look into his face unconsciously, and talk innocently and fearlessly of all the pleasant nothings of daily life. Nothing which he said or did, but an undefinable atmosphere around him, seemed to forbid it. I attempted to be unconscious as of old, yet, without the slightest idea why, only succeeded in being embarrassed and constrained in his presence.

He was now to me a conscious and troubled thought, so

conscious that the attempt to put it away seemed useless. I was aware of this; it made me miserable.

Again it was June. The dark shutters and massive doors of the grim mansion in —— place were barred for the summer, and we had come back to Bel Eden and its roses. The third anniversary of our marriage came, and on its morning, after an accumulation of medical lectures and scientific engagements had kept him dumb and absorbed for four weeks, Henri most unexpectedly announced that he should give that entire day to me. The day was as divine as June could make it; we spent it in the park and upon the river, floating away in our little yacht as if sailing was the whole of life, and there was no such thing as a dry world of business on shore. When it was over, we took our tea amid the fountains and flowers.

"Now," said Henri, as we pledged each other in a draught of delicious water, "Morna and Moncrieffe ought to be here to drink our healths in Madeira or old Bordeaux or this cool crystal. By the way, don't you wish that they would love each other, Victoire? They would make a most magnificent couple!"

"Yes," I replied; "I would rather see Morna marry Moncrieffe than any one else in the world." All that day I was happy in a sunny valley, and never once remembered that it lay under the Alps. The next day came, with its stiff, blank, business aspect, and I saw nothing but the Alps, although it was June. The same week was to bring an event towards which I was looking with the most intense interest. At that time Morna was to bid farewell to the American public at the Academy of Music in the opera of Norma. Morna was tempted to appear upon the lyric stage much less frequently than her admirers wished. Her exacting conscience seemed better satisfied when she came, without a single stage accessory, in the simple yet grand character of Morna Avondale. Yet it was only in a lofty impersonation in which she could embody the great emotions, the tragic passions of the human soul, that her genius could find its broadest scope or be truly fathomed or measured. The opera season was past; the gay habitués of the temple of music were beginning to disperse in search of pleasure on the hills and by the sea, when it gave the managers "great pleasure to announce the farewell benefit of Miss Morna Avondale!" Morna was to spend a year in Europe, singing and studying with the great masters, and when she returned, Hope was to come with her. Great was

my desire to accompany her, but I did not express it, for I had listened to the reading of our programme long before. Two years must pass, Henri said, before he should have earned the right to a year of leisure. Then he intended to place his large practice in competent hands, and we would go for a visit to Paris and Languedoc, to Florence and Rome.

On the afternoon preceding the benefit, Henri returned to Bel Eden at an unusually early hour. He was quite unwell, he said; too ill to attend to business, and had come home to rest, and if possible recover sufficiently to accompany me to the Academy in the evening. It was not strange that I was slightly alarmed at this announcement, for, in all the years in which I had known him, I had never heard him complain of the slightest indisposition, and had often thought that the beautiful tenor of his life was as attributable to his unbroken health as to his equable temperament and harmonious intellect.

"It is only a slight cold," he said, as I stood bathing his feverish head and hands. "A very slight affair, yet I thought it best to attend to it. I think that I shall be well enough to go to-night; yet as there is a bare possibility that the fever might increase, I told Moncrieffe to drive over to accompany you, if I should not be able to do so. I am resolved that you shall not be disappointed."

"Why did you?" I asked. "I do not want to go without you."

"How foolish," he said, "for you to deprive yourself of a pleasure which you have set your whole heart upon, because I have a slight cold, and am fearful of contracting more. If I was very ill, it would be a different matter. Or if you had an indifferent escort it would alter the case. But I would trust you to the care of Moncrieffe as soon as to my own. You can afford the world the rare sight of seeing you once without your husband!"

"How disappointed Morna will be, and I cannot half enjoy the music if you are not there."

I uttered the simple truth. A strange apprehension seemed to fill me at the thought of going without him. The very consciousness of the joy which Moncrieffe's society might have given me under other circumstances, made it a pain to think of it in the present.

"Well," he said, "I am disappointed on my own account; don't make me disappointed on yours also. You will not compel Moncrieffe to drive over here for nothing, will you? Go

and dress, and I will try to take a nap; afterwards we will decide the matter."

I went to my dressing-room, and there found Azalie standing, lost in admiration before the costume which she had laid out for me.

Azalie was a little French grisette whom the hard fortunes of orphanhood had stranded on this western shore. Henri found her in a wealthy French family, in which he was medical adviser, where she tried to fill the double office of child's nurse and lady's maid. Azalie was more used to ribbons than to babies. She did not affect the latter, but doted on the former. Azalie was cross to the baby, I fear, and then the gay *Mère Française* was cross to her in return. At any rate, Azalie followed Henri into the hall one morning, weeping bitterly. "Would the gentleman pardon her? she knew no other French gentleman or she would not trouble him. Among all the fine families which he visited, did the gentleman know of one lady who had no babies, and was never cross?"

Henri informed her that he did not know any lady who was *never* cross, but he knew a lady that had no babies, and who, if she indulged in the feminine felicity of being cross occasionally, it took little to make her good-natured.

"Oh, if Azalie could only live with that lady, she would make her dresses, work and darn her laces; Azalie could do everything in the world but tend baby and stay where she was; that she could not do; no, she could not;" and Azalie fell to weeping more bitterly than ever.

Henri again sought the lady of the mansion, and learned from her that Azalie was an accomplished dress-maker, but a diabolical baby-tender; that she persisted in pinching the tender ears of young Monsieur Augustine Paul Du Pont, for which unnatural cruelty the lady wished to get rid of her immediately. The result of the matter was, that before night little Azalie with her many budgets was transferred to ——— Place, where a young woman who was not without employment in attending to her own little tempers, accepted this freaky maiden as another soul to help or hinder, as good angels should prompt or bad ones triumph.

All looked complacently upon Azalie's advent but Kate, who declared that she "cud see no good in her young missus havin' that bit of a Frinch flyin' an' gablin' an' doin' not a hap'orth';" but at last Azalie bought Kate's blessing with *bon-bons*, with taffy candy, glass rosaries, pewter crucifixes, wooden holy

virgins and baby Jesuses; and finding herself in the house without an enemy, without a baby to make havoc with her amiability, little Azalie grew antic and happy as a kitten in the sun, while her life's one superlative joy consisted in the privilege of tricking out her mistress till she looked as near like a bird of paradise as possible.

On this memorable evening she had spread out before my toilet a robe of pale rose color, a snowy opera-cloak, gorgeously embroidered, a trifle of a hat which seemed only a garland of roses smothered in tulle. She had forgotten nothing; the sleeves of fibrous lace, the bracelets of pearls, the cobweb pocket-handkerchief, gloves, fan, lorgnette, all were there; while, as she declared, "Azalie was dying to see Madame in them. Madame had worn that dress but once, and Azalie had never seen her look half so handsome in anything else. And that hat, Madame had never worn anything half so ravishing. All the world would say of Madame, *elle se met avec gout.* Ah, if Azalie could only go to the Academy and sit in the parquette to look at Madame. She cared nothing about the music, nothing at all; she only wished to go to look at Madame."

Under this flattery to Madame, I was well aware was hid an earnest plea for Azalie.

"If you care nothing at all about the music, you can look at Madame here, and save the trouble of going to the Academy for a sight," I said.

"Ah, did Madame think that her eyes looked half as handsome in the day as in the night, or did she think that Madame standing there could be half as *magnifique* as Madame sitting in the opera-box under the curtains of golden satin? Ah, if Azalie could see Madame *there.*"

Thus, amid a thousand ejaculations of admiration and desire, the foolish maid dressed the foolish mistress.

The faintly blushing gossamer fell around me in softest folds; over neck and arms swept the alluring lace. Azalie hid a white half-blown rose in my hair, now redundant as of old; she clasped the pearl necklace about my throat, the pearl bracelets around my wrists; she threw the white mantle carelessly around my shoulders; she thrust into my hand the tulle hat with its wealth of veiled blush roses; and then, pointing to the mirror reaching from floor to ceiling, with a look of triumph, exclaimed:

"*Je suis enchanté! Je vous félicite de tout mon cœur!*"

I looked for an instant; then a crimson blush sprang from

the quick thought in my heart, to my very temples. "*Vanité! Folie!*" I exclaimed, turning quickly away, throwing the frail trifle in my hand upon the sofa from which I had risen.

"Azalie," I said, turning to the astonished girl, "I shall wear none of these things. Some other time, child, I will wear them, but not to-night. Go bring my plain grey silk, black lace mantle, and walking hat."

She evidently had a very faint idea that I meant what I said. She did not believe that Madame would allow Azalie to get up such a toilette for nothing. "Did not Madame know that she looked frightful in grey and all sad colors? Madame needed soft, warm tints. Madame looked like a beautiful young bride now, but she would only be a very plain Madame in grey dress and straw bonnet; and how would a black mantle look under the golden curtains? Madame was in sport, Azalie knew," and she did not move a step, and looked as if she had not the slightest intention of doing so.

A carriage rolled up the avenue. I heard a quick step and ring. I looked in the glass. I took up the bonnet; it was a marvel of taste and beauty, and so becoming. I was looking well. Was there any merit in making myself look indifferently? "This costume will gratify his exquisite taste," said desire. "That is the very reason why you are so loth to part with it; the very reason why I command you to put it off," said conscience, sternly. Azalie, *instead* of obeying me, had been peeping through the blinds to see who had arrived.

"Ah," she exclaimed, "Monsieur Moncrieffe, *un bon beau homme*, had come. *Now*, would Madame take off her beautiful robes? Azalie knew that she would not."

"Azalie," I said, in a tone which I tried to make very decided, "go and do as I bid you."

Evidently I had not quite succeeded in my effort. Azalie had a lingering conviction that I did not mean quite what I said. She took only a step or two in the necessary direction, then paused and shrugged her shoulders, saying:

"*Madame, je suis de mauvaise humeur.*"

"I am sorry," I said. "If you have lost your good-humor you must find it again. But do as I ask you, Azalie."

She was fairly enraged now, feeling that the compliments lost to the toilette were so many lost to herself.

"*Quel dommage! Quelle honte! Cela est epouvantable!*" she exclaimed.

"*Azalie, point d'impertinence. Je le veux absolument.*"

Azalie looked into my eyes. There was no mistaking their

meaning now, nor my last "I insist upon it." Without another word she obeyed my command, and with multiplied sighs and groans, watched me descend in my quiet costume.

Moncrieffe was in the parlor. Henri was lying on the sofa; he was still feverish, and had decided not to go.

"And do you know, Moncrieffe, this child has been half inclined to stay at home, too, which would be absurd, for she has thought of nothing else for a week; besides, it would be a real unkindness to Morna. Why have you donned such a sombre costume? This suit does not look at all like you," he continued, looking at me.

"It seemed more suitable to ride in than full dress," I said, feeling myself blush as I saw Moncrieffe's eyes take me in.

"I hope that you will have a very happy time," said Henri, looking after us as we departed. "I shall lie on the sofa and nap till you return."

I stepped back an instant. "I should have a happier time if you were going," I said softly.

"Nonsense," he replied, yet looked pleased.

It was deep twilight when we started. The carriage rolled through a wilderness of roses. It had been one of those feverish days which come in the young summer in the early ardor of its adolescence. The atmosphere was enervating; the heavy fragrances which oppressed, also stirred the senses. Electric clouds lifted their crimson crests low in the sky; above, the stars stole out faint and sultry. Even our proud horses seemed affected by the smothered passion of the elements; their scornful feet seemed to have lost somewhat of the lightness of their rebound, and their arched necks drooped with a languor not usual.

From the moment when we found ourselves alone together a spell seemed to fall upon each of us. We had not found ourselves solitary companions since our first interview. There had been a mutual and instinctive avoidance of such an occurrence. Neither had ever seemed to have any inclination to recall the past, to discuss the present, or to anticipate the future. There were a thousand things which we could talk of in the presence of others; alone, there was at least danger that we should talk of each other. Now each seemed struck dumb with the other's presence, pervaded with the other's being, conscious only of the other in every nerve. I attempted a light, impersonal conversation; uttered the usual amount of trite nothings, interspersed with a few more elaborate remarks not particularly lucid or brilliant. But my efforts

were fruitless. Silent lapses seemed inevitable. Moncrieffe gave gentle and brief replies, yet seemed to have little more to say than what my words called out. For the first time I saw him preöccupied, brooding over something apart from the occasion. Why I felt that it was something in connexion with myself I could not tell. The grace, the deference of manner was all there, but the careless ease, the polished abandon was utterly wanting. If I was not mistaken, he was terribly oppressed and wretched, and took refuge in silence lest he should betray it.

Thus we rode till we found ourselves under the very shadow of the grand temple of Irving Place. Its lobbies and cloak-room were thronged with gay groups, and bouquet-venders were driving an astonishing trade. Resplendently dressed ladies nodded and smiled in recognition, and looked with as much wonder as their high breeding would allow upon Madame Rochelle's very unoperatic costume. The Academy looked as brilliant as at the acme of its winter season. The same blaze of light flooded its stuccoed arches and dome of arabesque. The white old Titans supporting the successive gallery tiers had rarely held up a heavier burden. The sculptured little boys looking down from the balustrades, the beautiful goddesses in their rosy robes gazing down from the lofty ceiling, had seldom seen below them a more dazzling sight. Parquette and dress circle were rapidly being filled with people more or less splendid. Fashionable gentlemen, leaning against the walls, looked through their lorgnettes at fashionable ladies sitting in their seats. Fans fluttered, ribbons flew, voices hummed and tittered; boys paraded the aisles, calling: "Opera Norma! Twenty-five cents." Fair faces, bare shoulders, burning diamonds, jewelled and tasselled fans, were beginning to appear within the amber satin curtains of the boxes; everything gave token of a most brilliant night when Moncrieffe and I entered ours and took our solitary seats.

I should have turned from all this pomp of wealth and fashion in sorrow that night, if I had not thought of Morna. It was a triumph for her which she had never anticipated. If Henri could have been there to have witnessed it! I knew how keen would be her disappointment that he was not. She venerated him as the one benefactor who had redeemed her from a life of hateful servitude and given her soul opportunity for its grand expression. For every triumph which she achieved she thanked him; and yet he was not here

to-night. Involuntarily I dwelt upon Henri and Morna in connexion, and was filled with the new, painful consciousness that, while I was away "pleasuring," one so near to me—my husband—was at home alone and ill. I was filled with self-crimination, which by no means ceased as I looked into the pale face of Moncrieffe. Guiltily I remembered that the thought had sometimes come to me that, could I only sit by his side, it would be joy enough; here I was, yet was not happy at all. No, I felt strangely troubled.

Upon all this splendor without, this darkness within, the vast curtain rose, and at last I forgot all in Morna—Norma. The soul which embodies life in any of the immortal forms of art must first have lived. By life I mean all that is comprehended in its unfathomed mystery. Morna had suffered, sorrowed; she had loved, lost, struggled, and triumphed. She had lived; and now all of life—its love, its yearning, its woe, its hope, its despair—seemed to flow from her soul in one great refrain of melody, smiting and thrilling the universal heart. There was no stint in the acclaim which filled her ears that night, nor in the gorgeous flowers which fell in votive offerings at her feet. It was at the close of the last scene, amid the enthusiasm of a pealing encore, that Moncrieffe and I threw down to her our fragrant offerings of love, rather than of homage. She knew whence they came; lifting her eyes to the box as she stooped to gather them with a sweet acknowledgment of manner, I thought I detected a shade, just a shade, of disappointment pass over her expressive face. She saw that there were but two in the box, and missed the other one. With tears in my eyes, I looked down upon this sister of my soul, as my heart travelled through all the scenes which had brought us to this spot, and out towards the future which must be revealed ere I should behold her thus again.

The lights, the music, died like a dream; the gay pageant vanished, and once more I sat beside Moncrieffe, with our faces turned towards Bel Eden. Again the painful silence had fallen upon us—so painful now that it seemed an agony. We had entered the Elm road; for more than a mile before us stretched its delicious arcade. High above the sulphurous clouds which formed the smouldering bastions of the sky, the moon had risen. Through the light foliage which made a dome of perforated green over our heads, this gentle Christ of the solar heavens shed upon us a mournful smile. I saw Moncrieffe's hand press tightly upon the reins, and the horses stood

still as if by instinct. He turned suddenly around and confronted me. The glimmering light fell full upon his face; again swept over it the deathly pallor which covered it when we first met. The divining eyes seemed to overflow with an unfathomable sorrow; all the might of passion quivered in the curved lines of the supple mouth, while he said:

"Victoire, I cannot endure this life. A mechanical, misunderstood, miserable life; such I live, and can live no longer. I must go and leave you, Victoire; or you—must go with me."

"What do you mean?" I gasped.

"Mean!" he said, low and slow. "You must know what I mean. You must know, you must feel, that all my life is false. Am I not false to my needs, to my holiest affections, to the most sacred aspirations of my soul? I have been true to nothing but a miserable abstraction, which I have called duty, right. You know that I love you; aye, that word, living as it is, seems dead to express the love which through long years of growth has culminated in my heart for you. You know that I live in you and for you; that it was only to breathe the same air with you that I consented to stay in New York; I said that I would never trouble you, that I would go far from you, if I found that I must be more to you than a friend; I said that I knew what belonged to duty and honor. Forgive me, Victoire; for weeks I have known nothing save that I love you; that I have no existence separate from you; that in you all that is best in my nature finds its inspiration and its crown. Duty, honor, falsely so called, are only empty sounds. Victoire, you must have felt all this, yet you ask me what I mean."

"Moncrieffe," I said, "only a portion of yourself utters these words. There is another portion which some time will contradict much that you say now. Duty and honor are not empty sounds; they comprehend all that is truly grand and loyal in life. No one has believed this more practically than yourself; you will believe it again. Talk not of what must not be. We must be superior to ourselves—to our hearts, I mean." If there was a tremor in my tone, there was anguish in my soul; yet, beside his, my words sounded both weak and grating; they seemed to goad him.

"Superior to ourselves!" he exclaimed. "Is not the heart the holiest portion of ourselves! God made the heart, and we cannot be superior to it. It will assert its prerogatives in spite of us. Victoire, can you, a woman—a woman capable of thrilling with the divinest love which ever transfigured a

woman's soul—can you talk thus? Would you make me believe that you would crush the heart, kill it?"

Truly one part of myself had uttered these words. Conscience had asserted itself, even while the moaning heart far below it wept over the words which it had spoken.

"Victoire," he murmured; it was the same voice, the very tone which once penetrated my soul through all the agony which death then brought me. He took my hand in his—the same hand which led me so unresistingly years before. Then I knew not to whom it belonged; now I knew that it was the hand of one whose soul touched mine more nearly than that of any other being whom I had ever met upon earth. Could I resist him now?

"Victoire," he said, "we belong to each other. By every law of our being we belong to each other. Come with me, Victoire; come! I have no sweet stories to tell you of Italian skies and orange bowers; where we can dream our life away in love and poetry. But the world is wide. It holds some spot where you and I may live in and for each other. To me life without you is not life—it is a living death. In the past eternity God never allied two souls so closely to each other, only to doom them to an eternal separation. You know, Victoire, that I can never leave nor forsake you. Will you come with me?"

"Henri! Do you think that I can leave or forsake him? I owe him too much; he is too dear to me; I have vowed—"

"Yes, you have vowed. Henri Rochelle is your husband in name, but not in soul. I do not doubt your truth, your esteem, your affection for him; if I did I should honor you less. He loves you as much as such a man can love. But he is purely logical. Leave him, and his reason will assure him that you were utterly unworthy. He will waste few regrets on a woman whom he will deem so false. He is a man full of practical ambition. His busy life will soon cure his heart. He will weave comfort out of a stoic's philosophy. God forgive me if I wrong him, but he can never need you as I need you. He has never fathomed the mine of love in your soul as I have fathomed it; he does not feel the exquisite delicacy of your nature as I feel it; he does not appreciate your marvellous grace as I appreciate it; he is not moved as I am moved by every need of your heart. He can draw a fine portrait of an ideal woman, and then destroy her unconsciously by the atmosphere which he makes for her. I will give you what he has never given—companionship, sympathy,

tenderness; for these you are inly dying, Victoire; with all your glorious genius, there is nothing which you long for, nothing which you need half so much, as tenderness. I have nothing else for you. Victoire, come!"

Oh, if he had not said "come" in a tone which dissolved my soul in weakness! I could think of nothing, feel nothing, but that voice. Fever, passion, were naught with me; they would have availed him nothing. Only such tenderness could thrill me thus; for this my woman's heart was so athirst. All that I had ever dreamed of love, divine, complete, looked down upon me from those living eyes. The spell of a powerful nature rested upon me; I seemed a dissevered part of his being, which an irresistible attraction was now drawing back to himself.

"Come."

My face sank into my hands. I felt the tightening of the reins; I heard the carriage grate against its wheels in turning; I heard the first step of the horses beginning that endless journey which would lead me from home and honor for ever.

What was it—what, which amid the hopeless fascination which had fallen upon me, making me more pliant than a child, suddenly quickened in me a new antagonism as those sounds smote my ear? Was it the old will which had made me so stubborn a child, so wilful a maiden? Or was it the ever-promised grace, brought by good angels from the heart of the compassionate God, to succor His falling little one? The glamor had fled; a lightning consciousness struck through my soul. My duty, my husband, my sin! The face of my departed ones hovered close to mine; Frederick's seraphic face, the face of Beatrice, my father, my mother. Had they come to accuse me? No; their eyes were filled with the light of a serene hope—yea, of a radiant certainty. I stretched out the arms of my spirit for help towards them, towards the tenderly pitying Christ, the man of sorrow, once tempted, yet without sin.

"Take me back, back," I said, suddenly lifting my face from my hands.

"Back? I will not—cannot. You are mine, mine for evermore. I cannot take you back to one to whom you do not belong. By all the holy laws of nature you are mine!"

Involuntarily I rose; his strong arm restrained me, but the spell was broken. My soul had risen to a level above his own. There was a cold resoluteness in my manner which I did not

understand; my voice was low, slow, strangely distinct—it did not seem like my voice even to myself.

"Moncrieffe," I said, "I can resist even you. I will not perjure my soul even for you; I will not prove traitor to my most sacred vows even for you. Take me back. If I obey you to-night you will despise me to-morrow. You cannot realize it now, but it is true; you would soon cease to love a woman who had proved false to her integrity, even though she had proved false for your sake. Ambrose Moncrieffe, you are false to yourself to-night; to-morrow you will feel it and deplore it. Take me back!"

Again our eyes had met in one long gaze. He looked on me as only such a man could look upon the object which he loved best. Will, purpose, passion died; sorrow, tenderness, tears, stood instead in the dark irides. I could combat the first with the nerve of an Amazon; before the last, my soul melted. That long, loving, lingering gaze, which evermore makes a farewell look, covered his face; beneath it I felt all my nature growing weak again. I turned away.

"Victoire, if I have sinned, if I have wronged you, it is because there is no object in earth or heaven which I desire beside you! Yet I would rather die than wrong you, save in the sudden madness of a mad moment!"

Again I felt the tightening of the reins; again the carriage grated against its wheels, the proud horses curved their graceful necks, and we were once more fairly turned towards Bel Eden. During the remainder of the drive not a word was spoken; in silence he handed me from the carriage; in silence he extended his hand; then, as the moonlight fell clear on both faces, the words of the Greek Ion burst from his lips:—

> "I have asked that dreadful question of the hills
> That look eternal; of the flowing streams
> That lucid flow for ever; of the stars,
> Amid whose fields of azure my raised spirit
> Hath walked in glory: all were dumb; but now,
> While thus I gaze upon thy living face,
> I feel the love that kindles through its beauty
> Can never wholly perish; we *shall* meet again."

He dropped my nerveless hand; I stood transfixed as I saw him enter the carriage—saw it roll down the avenue. For days, months, I could hear the sound of those wheels. I hear them now!

I leaned my head against one of the pillars of the portico

for a moment before entering the house. The peerless beauty of Bel Eden stretched away, revealed in the white moonlight; the green shadow of the park, the glory of the flowers, the intoxicating roses, the quiet statues, the peace-dropping fountains, all stood before me, baptized in the dewy splendor of a June night. A little way beyond was the low garden seat on which we sat that June morning, three years before, when I said to Henri Rochelle: "I will marry you. God pity and forgive me if I sin in saying so." Again my eye wandered to the memorial cross, again stole up to the dumb heavens, past the voiceless stars, to the listening soul of the Everlasting Father, the yearning prayer, "God pity and forgive."

I stole softly through portico and hall, through dimly-lighted parlors, to the sofa where we left Henri. He was still there, and seemed asleep. I laid my hand lightly on his brow and started, it was so feverishly hot.

"Victoire, is that you?" he asked.

"Yes," I said, giving him my hand. "I have been anxious about you. I have feared that you were growing worse."

"I have been anxious about you also," he replied. "I have not learned how to be sick; a slight cold makes me childish; I was never at home and you gone before; thus for the first time, to-night I have had an opportunity to know that there is no light in the house when you are out of it. I did not dream that it could make such a difference in my happiness to know that you were inside of these walls. I have been strangely nervous to-night—such a new sensation. Every time I fell into a light slumber I was tormented about you. It seemed as if you were in trouble, or danger, and I was trying to save you. My distress would wake me up; and then I would reassure myself with the thought that you were as safe with Moncrieffe as you would be with myself. Then I would fall asleep and dream the same horrors over again. You are a very dear child," he said, kissing the hand which he held. "*Ma chère, chère amie, ma bonne, ma belle épouse, asseyez-vous près de moi.*" And he drew me down to a low seat beside the sofa.

"I have thought only of you when awake as well as asleep," he added; "but then my thoughts were very pleasant. I have been thinking what a good wife you are, Victoire, and have longed for you to come home that I might tell you so. To-night it has dawned upon me like a new revelation, that for months you have been growing more and more beautiful

in face and soul. How you adorn my life, how you soften and gladden it! Here, in silence and alone, I have thanked God for you, my sweet companion, my lovely friend, the only one I think in the wórld who has learned truly to love me. You know that I am one who will never win many to love me. Many will esteem, I suppose, but I think that no one loves me but you. I never realized until to-night how grateful I am for the gift. Indeed I think that it makes me rich enough. You will never take it from me, will you, Victoire?"

"Never," I said, breaking into a flood of tears, while I still held the burning hand. Had he pierced me with a thousand daggers he could not have hurt me worse. I had never felt a more poignant pain than this—to be compelled to hear from the soul which believed in me without a doubt, praise that I did not deserve, faith which I had almost forfeited, love which I had almost forsaken. Yet, as I sat there, could I say that I was indifferent, that I had no affection for him? No, I could not. I longed to throw myself beside him and confess all; my only expiation could be that, after all, I honored and loved my husband too well to betray him or to forsake him.

I thought of Moncrieffe—how in Henri's affections he stood apart from all other men. I could not speak the word which would lower him; in this moment of perfect trust I could not shatter his faith both in wife and friend. All would yet be revealed. I prayed that it might, but the hour had not yet come. I knelt beside that couch, and in silence thanked God that He had delivered me from temptation.

Henri uttered no complaints, yet I saw that he was seriously ill. A heavy cold had settled upon his lungs, and the morning revealed a fearful case of pneumonia. In the many long days and nights of watching which came after, I found abundant time for reflection, for contrition, for prayer.

By this couch of suffering one dreary midnight, while straining my vigil-worn eyes over the day's newspaper to keep them from closing in hopeless sleep, I read the announcement that, that day, "Ambrose Moncrieffe, Esq., sailed for Europe as American consul to ——," the paper adding that "it would be difficult to find a man more eminently qualified to fill the position with distinguished honor than Mr. Moncrieffe."

"FREE LOVE."

"My dear *fils adoptif*, my dear brethren of mankind, endeavor to clear your mind of cant."

Why is this life so full of partial relationships? Why do the barriers of circumstance often separate us for ever from the beings dear to us? Why are the twin in soul so ruthlessly divided by fate? One sent on, longing and faltering down the life-path, for ever looking far back, where the other stands bereft and hopelessly alone. We cannot measure our affections and appropriate them in given quantities according to our will. If so, why am I so cold and indifferent towards you? My intellect acknowledges your superiority. You are wise and worthy. I admire you, I appreciate you, yet my heart does not warm towards you. I expostulate, I reprimand it, because it does not; but in vain. The more I try, the less I like you. The truth is, there is something in your nature which obtrudes and chafes me; it hurts me, and will keep me for ever outside of your heart. Your affinities lie without my sphere. "You are no relation to me." I will esteem you to the end of my days; love you I cannot.

The guileless, unformed girl of seventeen truly believed that she loved the man to whom she plighted her hand; perhaps she did. There are so many gradations of love, it shades itself so naturally to the claim of the soul to whom we give it—to simple tenderness or divine pity, to friendship, phrensy, or passion. She did not dream that she liked him, simply because he loved her, nor because there was anything in him which answered to the yet quiescent needs of her being. But the harmonious, ripely developed woman, with her yearning soul and passionate heart, discovers what the girl of seventeen could not know. She may give to him all the affection which his nature calls forth, all which it demands. But the measurelesss devotion, the absorbing, the ideal love of the woman, finds not in him an object. There are depths in her nature which he cannot fathom; there is a reach to her intellect which he cannot measure, a want of love in her heart which he cannot supply. Her nature is melodious, inspired, spirituel; his is paltry, plodding, prosaic. Is it strange when Apollo crosses her path that he is drawn towards Venus in spite of Vulcan? At their birth the same genii presided; their spirits are attuned to the same harmonies. She makes all beauty possible to him; he all nobility

a reality to her. Children of the sun, born in one celestial latitude, they recognise each other.

The man who married at twenty the beauty who maddened his senses, at thirty, in the peevish, querulous woman whom he calls wife, looks in vain for that early charmer. These souls have changed. He has grown; she has shrivelled. He has arrived at manhood's noon of strength, of knowledge, and of power; she, an evanescent blossom of the morning, fades and shrinks away before his noontide glory. Where is the radiant companion of his dawn? He needs a more effulgent spirit to share the splendor of his meridian. He forgets that, rashly mad, he tore this frail bud from its mother-stem when it was far too early to know what the blossom could be. Has he nourished and fed it as he ought with the dew and sunshine of love? He does not think to inquire; he only feels that now it is a daily piercing thorn, whose sharpness hurts him, whose dwarfed proportions insult his pride; and as he looks, he says silently with all a man's bitter impetuosity: "That such a woman should be my wife!" perchance cursing fate, when only he himself is to blame.

To this man very dangerous is a regal woman who has crossed his path in the world; a serene and musical woman with a man's brain, a woman's graces and gentleness, and a woman's heart of tenderness. Her presence fills him with inspiration. He dreams that all goodness and greatness would be possible with her. For the first time in his life he is filled with a sentiment which he deems worthy of the name of love; that pervading, transfiguring love of the soul, first-born in us in the full ripeness of our years. He sits by his hearth in the twilight shadow, his children climb his knee and cover his face with kisses, but a dissatisfied womanly voice utters its peevish complaints and fretful reproaches. He looks down on his little girl, into her dreamy eyes, and half unconsciously sighs: "Oh, that Ally called Tashline mother!"

Shall Venus seek refuge in the arms of Apollo? Shall this man renounce the woman whom he has left so far behind in the race of progression, and seek as the light of his home the glorious Tashline? Thus did Shelley, one of the most gifted and most misguided of men. Who doubts but that Mary Godwin inspired in him a higher love than that kindled by the pretty child-wife who so early found "the world too many" for her, who sank so soon under a woman's burden of life? Yet, who can say that it was not the great crime of Shelley's life when he forsook this poor child, left her alone

in her weakness and temptation in order that he might walk the paths of high intent with a fitter companion, a beautiful soul-mate, the

> "Friend whose presence on his wintry heart
> Fell like bright spring upon some herbless plain."

Such a being as Shelley could only meet Mary Godwin to love her; had he met her *first*, his would have been a less stormy life, a less mournful fate. But life with her *afterwards* could not obliterate the past. The love of Mary Godwin, dear and satisfying as it was, could not banish the melancholy ghost which haunted his years—could not warm the remorse which froze his soul, as the drowned face of that forsaken one drifted through the cold waves of his dreams.

Ah, if human beings could only feel and act as if they felt that love is born in their souls for a higher end than that of mere personal happiness. The simple renunciation of the beloved but forbidden object, forces upon us new discipline and growth, greater nobility and purity of spirit. Love does not die because you relinquish the creature which awakened its deeper life. You would fain have lavished all your noble soul upon one; God wills that it should sweeten and gladden the lives of many, flowing into the wider spheres of thought and action. Thus the very love which may be made an inspiration and blessing, if sought solely for your own pleasure, seized as your own exclusive personal possession, would prove the very bane and scourge of existence. Perfect fellowship, if it is not born to us legitimately, will not force its way into our lives through dishonored homes, sundered ties, and broken hearts. The maiden may not have married the man whom of all others she would have chosen, nor the youth the girl of his first love. Both have a memory to sigh over, a lost dream to dream over when their hearts are sore or sad, a brief unwritten poem to chant amid the dull prose of life; yet each may be more truly mated than if fate had not torn from them their early idols. In marriage, as in His other gifts, God does not always satisfy every desire, but bestows for a higher end than the personal joy of the present hour. Socrates needed a Xantippe to test the grandeur of his philosophy. No doubt, he drank his last draught of hemlock with deeper serenity, and left for all ages the record of a sublimer death-scene than if he had given up the ghost in the arms of a beloved Hypatia.

Ambrose Moncrieffe came to me under no silken covert;

he had not attempted to decoy me by any arts of temptation. He had simply been himself, a gifted, manly man; yet, because a man, tempted and ready to fall. Talk not of the weakness of woman, O man, born of woman! First look into the eyes of the only woman whom you love with the concentrated passion of your manhood, then gauge your strength. It cost my heart many a pang to leave a letter, which I had received from him a few days after our parting, through Henri's long illness, unopened. As I sat in silence and dimness beside that couch of suffering, my eyelids would close in half wakeful dreams, and through their mist would float that never-to-be-forgotten face; sometimes, as I looked on it last, all blanched with pain and passion, but oftener as it had looked upon me in earlier hours, effulgent with genius, tenderness, all manly beauty; then what light it would make in the darkness, till, unconsciously, I would put out my hands to thrust it away, opening my eyes in sudden terror. Then I would half sleep again, to feel that voice thrill along the chords of my spirit, filling all my hearing with music. Again my ear would catch the echo of his resilient step, and the dark room would kindle with the radiance of his presence. Again I would open my eyes in remorse, lavishing every tender attention which my heart could devise upon the sufferer by my side, attentions born no less of contrition than of the saddest affection.

Henri missed him, and in the intervals when he was free from pain, would ask for him; and I did not dare to say that he had gone away, fearing the effect of such a revelation on one so very ill. He might, had it not been for that spring's sad change, he might have brought consolation to the sufferer in that darkened, sorrowful room.

The long weeks wore away. August came and brought with it the promise of returning health to the invalid. That which I had sighed for so long was granted me; he needed me now. The strength of the strong, proud man sickness had broken. He did not scorn the aid of a woman's arm, and had come to depend upon her hourly care and companionship. The snow melted on the coldest pinnacle of the Alps, watering with tender rain the valley below; in this budding valley I took up my abode. Sheltered and quiet I unawares grew peaceful; if something like a shadow of remorse had not stolen in, I should have been happy. With my letter from Moncrieffe came one also to Henri, which in the early days of his convalescence I placed in his hand to

read. After announcing his sudden departure, it said: "If you knew everything about me, you would want to crush me under your feet. I will tell you some time; then you may do as you please. I feel that I need your friendship, and will yet deserve it."

"Poor Moncrieffe," said Henri, most kindly, "how moody he has grown. I never knew a nobler fellow; I am sure that I shall like him to the end of my days;" and, with a trembling hand, that very hour he wrote and told him so.

Many days after, when every shadow of danger of a relapse had passed away, when Henri had once more gone forth to his daily occupation, when I once more found myself solitary—not till then did I open and read my long waiting letter—the only one which ever waited for my reading.

"Victoire," he wrote, "for the first time in my life I feel that I have degraded my manhood. I was false to myself that night, and to-day feel the fulfilment of your prophecy. I have been false to myself for many weeks past; I have been wicked, and my only consolation is that I know it, and with the knowledge comes the purpose to make atonement. My first leaning towards wrong was in courting temptation, propping myself up with the delusion that I only did it to prove myself strong. It was a temptation which could come to me but once in a lifetime. The one object which my heart had sighed for was before my eyes, the only object which I desired or needed. Yet, I said, I will behold it, yet not desire it; I will come into its presence, yet not seek it. Thus I ran the gauntlet of my strength with that of the great arch foe. It was enough for you, a woman, that you could sometimes hear my voice, that you could share my society with others, and that you could know in silence that I loved you; but it is not in the nature of man to be satisfied with anything less than absolute possession of the woman whom he loves. A man's passionate love is exclusive, restless, and selfish; it will endure no rival, it obeys no law but its own wild will; it is the parent of sin, sorrow, remorse, and death. Affection is holy, and differs from passion as light from fire. It grows in the atmosphere of reason; it reveres the right; it is disinterested, constant, and tender; it gives all, asking no return but the happiness of its object. I said—It is affection which I give to her—holy, true! I would not believe that it was love, blind, mad, until I looked into the face of your husband and felt a sudden feeling of hate, new and frightful to my soul, while it seemed to me that he had defrauded me of my own rightful possession. Then a

demon took up its abode in me, and actually made me believe that you belonged to me, and that I had a right to claim you as my own. I have somewhere read that woman, having first led man astray, must never more presume to be his guide. When woman falls, it is through the depth of her affection; man falls through the might of his passions. Passion is weakness; tenderness may be also, but it is of a diviner sort. I believe that if woman has been the tempter, she must also be the saviour of man. In the clear light which shone in your eyes that night, passion died. Had you yielded then, you would have lived to curse me as I curse myself. Truly you said: 'You could not long love a woman who had been false to her integrity, though she had proved false for your sake.' No, I could not. No man can truly love a woman whom he has ceased to respect. Though once he worshipped her as an angel of light, let her descend from her moral altitude, through her great affection for him, sink to the level of his passion, and all unconsciously to himself his reverence changes to contempt, his love to hate or pity. I am giving you the convictions of my intellect—I have no right to offer you more. I am going forth again into the great world, not to forget you, but to make you a beautiful yet sorrowful memory embalmed in the past. I silence my heart and say—Narrow must be that nature which can be measured by a single sentiment; narrow indeed that soul which through all its mortal life can be absorbed by a single being. Love is eternal, but its objects change. Poetry dreams of one love, but our consciousness assures us that it can find more than one object. If God has manifested Himself in one soul for me, He can do so in another also. Victoire, you will say this is man's love; only a man could thus talk of relinquishing an object which has so long filled his life, and thus coolly calculate upon the certainty of securing another. You, a woman, would find a sad, unacknowledged consolation in the thought that I should remain for ever desolate for your sake. Like a true woman, you rejected the love which you had no right to take; like a true woman, you will weep for want of the very gift which you spurned. There will be moments when you will pine for the tenderness which you so utterly refused. There will be hours when I shall be desolate and wretched enough to satisfy the wildest cravings of your heart. But I will not be the slave of such hours. Already I have given you reason to despise me, even as I despise myself. God save me from again dishonoring my manhood. Long I sought to find a woman with a

large brain, but with a weaker woman's lowly and loving heart; one who finds in the use of her manifold gifts their own exceeding great and rich reward. I came into the sphere of such a woman, and proved myself unworthy. Victoire, forgive me. I go to make myself indifferent. We shall meet again; but never until I first have learned to find lawful happiness in the being of another. Not till then shall I have earned the right to look into your face. I *will* make my heart relinquish you."

HOPE.

"She moved upon this earth a shape of brightness,
A power that from its objects scarcely drew
One impulse of her being—in her lightness
Most like some radiant cloud of morning dew,
Which wanders through the waste air's pathless blue,
To nourish some far desert; she did seem
Beside me, gathering beauty as she grew,
Like the bright shade of some immortal dream
Which walks, when tempest sleeps, the waves of life's dark stream."

As I read the last words of his letter, it dropped from my hands. Weary and weak with long anxiety and watching, I wept as I had wept but once in my life, and then over the new-made grave of Frederick. Alas! too true were his words: "Like a true woman you rejected my love, like a true woman you will weep for want of the very gift which you would not take." At last came sleep.

"Sweet child, sleep; the filmy-eyed
Murmured, Wouldst thou me ?"

Many, many weeks had passed since she had wrapped me last in her "mantle star-inwrought," or in words less Shelleyic, since I had slept soundly. From the depth of a profound slumber I opened my eyes upon a new life—one just emerged from the ruins of the old. With an outwardly serene and smiling face I arose and went back to my duty and to the love that was left. From my nature something had been wrenched away, from my heart something had been torn; the wound might heal, but the scar would remain for ever, and sometimes it would bleed. My visible life seemed precisely what it was at the same time in the summer before.

There were my pleasant household cares, my painting, my home pupils, which now claimed an accession in the shape of the magpie Azalie; my books, my afternoon rides with Zenaide; the same quiet, the same—no, not the same loneliness that was mine one year before. Then, how much was wanting; now, how much had gone! Henri fairly back into the world, found a multiplicity of affairs claiming his undivided attention; therefore I saw less of him now than before his illness. Ever kind, he was now most gentle to me always. There was something very like tenderness in his manner when he lingered sometimes, yet he would go promptly to the moment as of old. Before his sickness this strong and active man found his most positive happiness in the energetic, absorbing occupation of a man's life; but that long convalescence had made him feel, what he believed theoretically before, that there is something richer and sweeter in life than business or the most lofty public affairs. "Well," he called himself, yet I was certain that physically he was not the strong man that he was before. Languor, weakness, to him were new companions; so were the needs which they brought with them—the need of quiet, of rest, the need of womanly soothing and of womanly care. Henri was evidently astonished to discover such unanticipated needs in himself; he thrust them quickly to one side as unmanly weaknesses; he went and came at the call of duty as if he did not feel them; but I could detect a shade of difference in his going and coming. Once all his inclination went with what he called "duty;" now his inclinations often tempted him to remain; yet duty was no less his inexorable master, no less promptly and perfectly obeyed.

It was my own fault that Bel Eden was so quiet now; had I chosen I might have made it gay enough. Moncrieffe's young Lila never planned greater festivities for Bel Eden than I had anticipated for this saddened summer. I had selected in my mind the company of "friends" who should gladden it with their presence. Months before I heard in my brain the merry patter of childish feet, the velvet fall of ladies' slippers tripping through the marbled and carpeted halls; I had heard the refrain of their merry laughter echoing from room to room, and the music of other voices blending with his; the rich tones of the piano floating through the wide apartments. I had travelled through all the splendors of my *fête champêtre;* had seen just the effect of the gorgeous-colored lights streaming through the dense foliage of the park, while

I listened in fancy to the wondrous melody of Dodworth's band swelling through those umbrageous arches on a delicious "stilly night." I had gone on further into the season when there was a great flying about of maids ironing flounces and "doing up" with miraculous skill sheer muslins and costly laces; when there was an endless amount of feminine buzzing, flutter, and chatter; endless consultations on the becomingness of this and the elegance of that; an agony of trunk-packing lest all could not be got in; yet, how could one article of wardrobe be spared from those engulfing trunks; with a gay dispersion at last for Nahant, for Newport, and Saratoga. And I remembered distinctly now how often I had wondered whether he would go with us, or with them. I had not made two months' sickness and watching, nor the other sad changes of this summer, the vestibule of these gay festivities. All was over now; life's daily routine began again.

Why was I so indifferent regarding my "friends?" It was not too late even now to invite them to such a retreat as Bel Eden. A portion at least would be glad to exchange their quarters at an over-crammed watering-place hotel for the inviting coolness, the quiet freedom, the beauty and luxuries of Bel Eden. The truth happened to be that these "friends," like the mass of people to whom we unlawfully give this holy name, were good enough sort of persons in their several ways. I liked them very well; a few I liked very much when circumstances brought me in conjunction with them; but as far as soul-wants were concerned I did not need them, and they did not need me. Very fine friends we were, as society estimates friendship; but it would not have made any great inroads upon the happiness of either party if we had known for a certainty that we should never have set our mortal eyes upon each other again. The world is full of just such exalted friendships. Very selfish it was, no doubt, but you know that I had never succeeded in annihilating my selfishness, and was not now in that self-abnegating mood which inclined me to fill my house with people when I did not want them; when the very sound of their voice would have tortured me; when their affected quips and insipid puns would have jarred sadly against my aching heart. I knew that they would be a great bore to Henri, but if they had not been, perhaps I should have done just the same.

Perhaps it would have been wiser to have done exactly the opposite. Serving them might have helped me to forget what

I ought to have forgotten. But I felt no inclination for gay company, nor for my grand *fête champêtre*, nor for Nahant, nor Newport, nor for any other fashionable resort crowded with all the world, his wife, and marketable daughters. Henri had said: "Where shall we go?" but I knew that he had said it only for my sake, desiring nothing so much for himself as the quiet and rest of his home; therefore I said: "No-where." Then I went back to my Œnone. I began Œnone amid the last winter's trance of happiness, dreaming as all artists dream over their youngest born—this last shall excel all before. It was not Œnone alone, but Œnone in the vale of Ida:

> "There lies a vale in Ida, lovelier
> Than all the valleys of Ionian hills.
> The lawn and meadow ledges midway down
> Hang rich in flowers, and far below them roars
> The long brook, falling through the cloven ravine
> In cataract after cataract to the sea.
> Behind the valley topmost Gargarus
> Stands up and takes the morning; but in front
> The gorges opening wide apart, reveal
> Troas, and Ilion's columned citadel
> The crown of Troas. Hither came at noon
> Mournful Œnone, wandering forlorn
> Of Paris, once her playmate on the hills."

I had infused into the coloring of this classic landscape all the warm richness with which my soul overflowed in those unkindled hours. It was steeped in a soft radiating beauty, unshadowed as Eden ere the curse fell. Now I had come to paint amid this untouched glory "Mournful Œnone," "whose cheek had lost the rose," "whose eyes were full of tears," who could only sing:

> "Oh, mother Ida, many-fountained Ida,
> Dear mother Ida, hearken ere I die."

I could not have painted Œnone when I painted the vale of Ida; I should have made her glad. I could not have painted the vale of Ida now, silent and happy; no, I should have made it sad. After a great change has fallen upon our life it is hard to go back to a task begun when the world seemed so different; to take it up where we laid it down in a summer hour, and go on with it just the same as if that which made its inspiration was still our own. Still to keep doing when that which made doing sweet is gone, ah! that is a weary thing for those whose doing well depends so entirely upon

the sympathy and encouragement of those whom they love. "Everything is going on just as if nothing had happened," people sometimes say after coming from a house in which there has been a funeral. Thus we can bury out of our sight our dearest joy, and go on with our tasks to all outward eyes as if nothing had happened, yet not just the same; that which yesterday was inspiration to-day is only toil.

I had not touched this picture since our return from the city; there, with what interest he had watched its progress. When I feared that I should fail, how often he had reassured me by telling me that I should do well; that as a work of art, Œnone would far transcend Niobe. I might have begun a new picture and perhaps found inspiration in itself; but I could not in this which had grown thus far beneath his eyes. How I missed the eager and approving glance, the gentle criticism, the intuitive recognition of beauty, the consciousness of sympathy such as had never been vouchsafed to me before. What wonder that the "vale of Ida" was transcendent in its portrayed loveliness. The vale of Ida was a portion of a lost existence; Œnone was the fitting companion of to-day. I could embody *her*. Into this daughter of a river-god could I not infuse all my own want, my desolation, my remorse, my sorrow? While from Ilion's cliff she cried:

> "Oh, mother, hear me yet before I die!
> Hear me, O earth; I will not die alone,
> Walking the cold and starless road of death
> Uncomforted."

Morna, too, gone! There were moments when my palette would drop in my listless hand and my head sink against my easel, while, in my great loneliness, I longed for her. Morna! friend of my mind and heart, beloved companion, sister of my deeper soul, nor time nor distance can divide us! No less now than then do I long for you. No change can come to me, nor ever any joy or sorrow, which can make me need you less or love you less entirely. A few, perchance, have truly loved me, but who as thou? Who else so patient of my errors, so forgiving of my frailties? I might grieve and wound you, yet you would not drop me from the tender arms of your enfolding charity. I might fall, and the world spurn and curse me, yet thou wouldst not look coldly nor forsake me; no, all the more sacredly wouldst thou soothe and cherish me because fallen and forsaken. I have known many women gifted, beautiful and good; among them all I have

looked in vain for your comprehensive soul, for your incapacity for all littleness, for your simple greatness, your sweet humility, your unfathomable charity, your sacred sadness—twin-sister of divinest love, born of the Christ-like pity in your soul for the sorrows of all living creatures. Sister, endeared by those long days of privation and toil—by working, waiting, longing, hoping, and believing shared together; by the kindred aspiration, the perfect communion, the hallowed joy which we have known; would that a new name of love would drop from the heart of Infinite Love above us with which I might dower thee! But the summer air, perfumed with the life-wine of the flowers so dear to you, as it shimmers along my paper and ripples through my hair in assonant cadence of liquid Latin, murmurs only *carissima!* Never can I cease to need thee—to need thee or to long for thee, Morna, *carissima!*

Henri wrote fraternal letters to Moncrieffe, and received fraternal letters in reply. Besides the common-place "kind regards to Mrs. Rochelle," they contained no message for me. Where was the friend who so lately had enriched all my life? What a dreary blank divided us; what an impassable chasm which nothing could span! I was flooded with letters—vapid, lifeless, well-meant, good enough letters—which one worries through to forget the moment they come to "Yours, etc." A few were full of life and love; Morna's and Hope's were; but never more drew near my ark that white dove bearing the olive and the mystic myrtle. But the longest year is a little while; this was the longest one which I ever knew, yet it did not take long for it to go. Another came and brought to us again Hope and Morna. Yes, Hope had come. How beautiful she was! What sunshine came into the dwelling with her fresh young life! The long school years were ended, and there was nothing to take our darling from us any more. The rare prophecy of her childhood was more than fulfilled. My eyes never wearied of gazing upon her; she was to me an unceasing marvel, an unfailing delight, so beautiful she was in motion or in rest. Hers was the rarest order of beauty; hovering and undefinable, it ever suggested a beauty beyond itself. Like the beauty of a rainbow, or a perfect flower, or a strain of ravishing music, it thrilled the senses, yet hinted at something beyond all sensuous delight—something that could not be resolved back to any mere fact of organism. It is true Hope was no illusion, but the sweetest of realities. The per-

fect form was tangible; the curved cheek with its peachy bloom, the luxuriant hair, the eye with its depth of glory, were physical facts; yet it was the effulgent soul which made their illumination, which surrounded them with a mystery of beauty and inspiration for ever felt, and for ever mocking all solution. Her body was the perfect temple of a still more beautiful soul; for it is a false idea that in the divinest temples of clay the Creator ever enshrines a trivial and petty spirit. It is true that the Godlike often do penance in hideous houses of flesh, but not always. When God himself came to earth he did not choose a defaced and distorted body. The image of Christ, as he lives in the universal soul, is that of a sorrowful, majestic, and beautiful man.

Hope had not devoted four years to the acquirement of meretricious airs and a head full of smatterings. She had not returned with the idea that she was "finished," and had nothing more to do but to forget as quickly as possible the little which she had learned, fold her hands in idleness, and present her beautiful face as an advertisement for a husband. In a being so perfectly constituted, it was impossible that there should not be a harmonious development of all the faculties. Upon a nature so exquisitely wrought, intellectual discipline could have only its finest effect. She was a fine scholar; in solid attainments far in advance of most educated girls of her age, yet who could connect the idea of learning with Hope? She seemed so like a fresh incarnation of beauty, who could find the meaning of everything worth knowing within herself. She never referred to what she knew; never quoted the last book which she had read; never brought forward abstruse themes, saying to some embarrassed mortal who did not know "Of course you know." "The great ——, of course you have heard of *him*." It was only in the deepened expression of those beautiful eyes, in the subtle flashes of unconscious thought, in her exquisite taste and perfected grace, that we saw the result of those years. In music she found untrammelled expression; she played as if by instinct; and her voice, cultivated as it was, seemed like that of a bird's, filling the air with untaught harmony. I would pause and listen while it floated up to me as I sat at my work, sometimes soft and low as a spirit's, but oftener in glad gushes of spontaneous melody—the music of a heart untouched by sorrow, breathing the prelude of the song it was yet to sing with the angels.

Yet Hope was not a genius. Why should she be? Why

should she sing like Morna, or paint pictures like Victoire, when she herself was a sweeter song than words could measure; when her own transcendent loveliness no pencil could portray? She lived in the sunshine which her own spirit created. She possessed such a susceptibility to happiness, no joy could escape her; and the light which she exhaled from every object around her she radiated back upon each heart which throbbed within the circle of her life. She lived out the beautiful nature which God had given her, without knowing that it was beautiful. She felt herself to be the child of a tender, loving Father, and simply loved and obeyed Him without dreaming of merit in so doing. She lived in a beautiful world, she thought; God's world, overflowing with all lovely and enjoyable things; why should she find fault with it? Yet she was alive to all who sorrowed in it, and in a thousand nameless ways brought joy to aching hearts. With her facile power of adaptation, she glided into a knowledge of everybody's wants, and supplied them from the loving wealth of her own heart, unconsciously to herself and perhaps unconsciously to them. A perpetual blessing, ever doing good, she never dragged about with her the heavy cross of duty to mankind, the name which some of the world's dreary philanthropists give to their own all-devouring egotism. Love was the essence of her being. She loved much, and because she demanded nothing in return, she received much, ever accepting as a gift, never as a reward.

Thus she lived, a pure spiritual force, yet one unconsciously to herself, almost unconsciously to those who knew her best. Most of all, we knew that she was our darling, that there was something of magic in her presence, that Bel Eden was brighter since she came, that the very paintings on the walls, the flowers in the vases and in the garden, everything, our human hearts included, seemed to feel the inspiration of her presence, the quickening joy of her young life. Yet there was so much of the child in her sportive grace—something that looked so like weakness in her guilelessness, something in her unworldliness which sued so meekly for protection, that we loved her still as a child, never dreaming all that she was doing for us, or that we were entertaining an angel unawares. I wonder that I did not fear for her future, yet I did not, although I knew well that she would be followed by flattery and adulation, the temptations of folly, the allurements of pleasure. Who could behold her beauty unmoved? Who could know her and not love her? I knew all this, but

I knew also that the purity of her soul was a God-given amulet; that wearing it, all the vipers of the world might touch her, yet would they drop off and leave no sign.

I had learned to believe my life a happy life; the old existence seemed very far off, yet it lay only one year away. I said to myself, "I no longer regret it." The grave which I made there I have planted thick with flowers; it scarçely seems like a grave. He went forth to make himself indifferent; I, too, am indifferent. The scar in my soul is well healed; it would take much to make it bleed again.

It was one of the first grand soirées of a gay season, which we were to attend that evening. I had dressed Hope myself, to the great indignation of Azalie, who now delighted to regard herself as Mademoiselle Hope's exclusive *fille de chambre.* Greater prizes were at stake in Mademoiselle's toilet. How could Azalie tell what great fortune it might make for Mademoiselle, and perhaps for Azalie? Madame's fortune was made already, besides Mademoiselle was never queer, like Madame—stayed dressed just as Azalie dressed her, never tore off her beautiful robes when there was no occasion. But I had set my heart on dressing Hope myself this evening; having bought Azalie's reluctant good-nature with a present, after a succession of pouts she condescended to proclaim herself "enchanted."

As an artist, beauty was to me a necessity. I worshipped it in every form; but to have a soul whom I loved enshrined in so peerless a casket, was an inexpressible bliss, and if anything could have spoiled Hope, it would have been my foolish idolatry of her loveliness. To-night she wore a dress of white tulle, festooned with rose-buds and lily of the valley. Her graceful head wore no adornment save the glory of its burnished hair. I looked at her in triumph. The effect of her unadorned beauty was wonderful. As we entered the drawing-room, I felt a thrill of delight as I marked the suppressed yet visible admiration which greeted her and followed her, and afterwards in watching the homage which she elicited, the love which she spontaneously won.

As usual in such assemblies, at last the room grew crowded, the heat oppressive. Weary of looking and listening, of bowing, smiling, and talking, I was glad to find the recess of a lace-shaded bay-window, where I could breathe the clear winter air wandering in from under the stars. I sat down a moment apart, gazing at the throbbing tide of human life flowing through the apartments, at the few happy and many

weary faces; at the braided beauty, splendor, grace; the magnificent costumes of velvet, satin, silk and lace, crowned with flowers sown with diamonds and pearls; listening to the flutter of fans, the buzz and hum of congregated voices, blended with the swells and falls of the orchestra; and, having exhausted all of these, fell to studying the devices of the cornices girdling the lofty walls with golden vines and fruitage, and the rare carved devices on the antique rosewood doors—when suddenly a chill swept over me. I was possessed with the sudden consciousness of an intimate human presence. My eye followed its attraction. Opposite me stood Hope, and by her side stood Moncrieffe. Henri was there, too, apparently looking amid the gay crowd for me.

As I looked the shudder passed off, leaving me cold as marble. I saw only him and her. I felt no power to stir. I could not look another way. Was it a vision? No, it was Moncrieffe. Could I mistake that face—that form? No, there he stood; the same, yet not the same. There was a chastened and quiet expression in the countenance, a look almost sad, yet I could hardly call it that; it was the lingering shadow of a sadness passed away. The imperial face, softened, elevated, purified—never had I seen it so sublimely beautiful before. Still I looked. Not two years had passed since we parted at the threshold of Bel Eden; had it been ages he could not have seemed more remote from me than he did with only the width of the drawing-room between us. How did I know, as I gazed at him now, that his work was accomplished? that his heart had relinquished me? Why was Hope by his side? Had they just met? Had they met before? It mattered not. It was enough that I read their destiny, that I saw their future. Yet my heart grew strangely calm; it seemed frozen!

For this had I loved this child? Her sweetness would have been wasted, she might have been blighted, trampled under foot in the horrid dens of poverty if my love had not rescued her. For this had I loved and nourished the bud to a rare and perfect flower, to be gathered by his hands? Was it for this that I had loved and suffered? I thought that I had conquered. Why could not fate spare me such a test?

Still I gazed. I knew those faces. Not a light or shadow, not a thought or feeling had ever kindled or shaded the exquisite features of either which I did not know. The look in his eyes now, I knew. I had seen it, felt it; once it was mine;

never before had I seen him give it to another. It was the look which won my heart away long years before beside the dead body of my brother. I had seen him smile, had seen him converse with women before, even in that very room; but never with that look and manner. And Hope! a new life seemed born in her face—her whole being responded to his soul. She did not know it, but he was winning her heart away from her as he had won mine from me. Fool, sinner, I called myself, as suddenly the consciousness of my thought fell upon me. I had risen, and Henri, discovering my outline through the lace drapery, immediately crossed the room.

"Do you know that Moncrieffe is here?" he asked. "I think that I was never quite so much astonished in my life. He has returned as suddenly as he departed. He is a queer fellow."

I took Henri's proffered arm and crossed the room. We *did* "meet again." As our eyes met, a change so slight that it would have escaped a casual observer passed over his face. I forced mine to smile, whatever he discovered beneath its mask.

"I am happy to meet you again," he said, taking my hand kindly and frankly. "You see that I have already appropriated a portion of your family," he added, looking down upon Hope.

The eloquent blood, for ever coming and going on her transparent cheek, deepened at his words.

"You have a certain right of possession, perhaps you think," I answered.

"No; no right, unless you bestow it," he said, with a look of pain.

Henri had many questions to ask. The conversation was free and general. We lingered together as long as politeness would allow, and parted with an engagement to meet upon the morrow. I fancied that I had played my part well, felt a sort of miserable triumph that I had not betrayed my weakness. During our drive home I was strangely gay. When had I found so much at a party to be pleased with, so much to talk and laugh about before? Hope was as strangely silent. To Henri this had been neither more stupid nor interesting than any other party, but it had animated him to meet Moncrieffe. He returned home to sleep the calm sleep of an undisturbed heart and peaceful conscience. I went to my dressing-room, sent away Azalie, who began to ask a thousand questions, telling her that Hope would describe the beautiful

costumes; that I had forgotten them. I was alone at last. I could be honest now.

A sudden thought took possession of me. I arose and went to the mirror. I wore a dress of crimson velvet, the high corsage laced and edged with pearls; my hair was confined with a bandeau of pearls wrought in lilies. I looked only at my face. I scanned it with the eye of keenest criticism. It was no longer a young girl's face. Not old, oh, no; twenty-five is not old, I said; yet before very long it will have ceased to be young. Already the rounded outline of earliest youth has gone. Time has not worn it, but thought and feeling have left their traces. There is glory in the hair, depth of power in the eyes, something in this face which makes people look; but after looking a long time, they are not always certain what it is. All come to different conclusions; what one calls its beauty another calls its genius, and another its haughtiness. But it is not a beautiful face. Oh, no; not beautiful as Hope's is beautiful. I never cared before that she was so much lovelier. Just then I heard a slight stir as of rustling robes, and turning, I saw Hope in her white vestments standing in the open door. I gave her the displeased look of one suddenly detected in an act not altogether creditable. Her step faltered as if she didn't know whether to enter or retire.

"Come," I said, "you are not frightened, are you, to find me looking in the glass? Don't you know that this is the special employment of ladies who begin to suspect that they are not as handsome as formerly?"

She moved slightly forward, but not with the light spring with which she usually approached. There was a sharpness in my tone which she had never felt before; it pierced her loving heart. I saw how she was affected, and the sight only irritated me.

"Why, Hope, what is the matter? You actually appear afraid of me. Have I suddenly grown so terrible to you?"

"No, dear Victoire; only I never saw you look at me so before. Have I done anything to displease you? Do tell me, so that I may never do it any more."

"How foolish! Do you ever displease me? Am I not always delighted with you? Does not everybody say that I shall certainly spoil you with excessive fondness? I was startled, for I thought you in bed long ago."

"Oh, I feel as if I could not sleep. I saw a light in your room, and came in to say good-night."

"Well, come, pet," I said, holding out my arms. "To tell

the truth, I was vexed because you found me doing a foolish thing. But you will forgive me, will you not? You know that I love you."

She came as was her wont, and laid her beautiful head upon my shoulder. There she lay for a longer time than usual, and I looked down into her eyes without a word.

"Why do you look at me so, Victoire?" she asked. "I never saw you have such a sad look in your eyes before; never. Tell me, and let me love it away."

"Yes, you will love it away," I answered. My words had a different meaning from hers, and she did not know it.

"Can I? What is it that makes you so sad?"

"My own wicked heart; that is all, child."

"Victoire, why do you talk so? If you are wicked then I am very wicked."

"That does not follow, Hope. We have opposite natures. You will never have to struggle as I do to conquer yourself. Your walk to heaven will be much easier than mine. You seize nothing with such a death grasp that you can never let it go. Thus I seize everything that I love. It seems as if I never could give up an idol, never; and yet I must and will."

"I don't see what has changed your feelings," she said. "I thought that you were very gay coming home. You looked splendid to-night. I heard more than one say so."

"Who said so?"

"Mr. ——— and Mrs.———, and—"

"Never mind. I dare say that I looked quite as well as I felt. You were happy to-night, Hope."

"Yes, so happy. I am happy now."

"Why more happy to-night than usual?" I asked.

"Am I happier than usual? Life all the time looks beautiful. God has given me so much; you, and Henri, and Morna. Life is so rich."

"Yes, rich for you; may it never be poorer," I said, as I loosened my arms and kissed her good-night.

Never had I seen her more radiantly beautiful than now. Neither of us had mentioned Moncrieffe. I looked after her as she glided out of the room. Sweet child, I thought, you have your heart yet to learn, may you never have it to conquer.

JEALOUSY—CONQUEST.

He came, and I had full opportunity to see and feel all the change which those two years had wrought. The suave manner, the high-born grace, characterized him as of old; while the fitfulness of mood which Henri had marked before his departure had entirely disappeared. His beautiful repose of bearing seemed to flow from the serenity of a soul which had suffered, yet outlived its suffering; which had ceased eagerly to anticipate, yet was ready calmly to enjoy. Yet this very serenity seemed a sleeping strength, which said in every action: "I rule my own spirit." There was no affectation, no constraint, yet there was less spontaneity of utterance, a reticence which left no room for impulse; the growth of chastening, of discipline, of experience. He was more than kind to me, but it was the frank tenderness of a brother for a sister, hiding nothing beneath it deeper or sweeter. The careful reserve which once marked his manner towards me was all gone; it was no longer necessary. He made no outward demonstration of a preference for Hope; he neither sought nor avoided her. Yet I, who knew those eyes as well as the forms of beauty which they loved, saw with what a calm delight they ever turned to that pure young face, and what a look of peace stole into their depths while gazing upon that soft and soothing loveliness. Even then I thought that I read in the deep quiet of those eyes' expression: "This is my recompense. I have wrestled with myself and conquered; this costly gift the kind God bestows as my reward. The night of passion has fled; in this beautiful being I behold the promise of a calm, transcendent day."

How was it with me? Was I indifferent as I had supposed? The love that I had thought dead, was it dead? Or was it only buried—buried alive, and because alive, ready to writhe, and moan, and suffer? Alas! how often that which we call dead is only asleep within us, ready to awake the first instant it is touched by the power which kindled it into being. We think that we gauge our hearts; some unexpected phase in life, some sudden revelation or temptation presently shows us that we are slightly different from what we suspected. With all our soul-probing there were some little unguarded corners which we did not find. I honestly believed that I had renounced Moncrieffe. It was true I had relinquished him for myself; but I had not renounced him for another.

Here was an opportunity to be great and magnanimous. I am sorry that I was neither. I am very sure that I was not at all magnanimous. I had besought Moncrieffe to be true to duty and honor, true to himself; now that he was obeying me, proving that he could be strong, I was wretched that he was not weak. If, when out in the world far from me, he had wooed and wedded a wife, I should have breathed a sigh, and have gone on my way, coldly and quietly, saying: "It is well." "It is better thus." Then I should have known nothing of the torture to which I was subjected now. But no; he had come back to my home; and the one object in the world on which his heart had fastened was the ewe-lamb which I had cherished in my bosom.

If she had sought to win him with beautiful arts and coquetries, I could have hated the very beauty which for so many years had been my delight. But no, there were no arts, no efforts to win; she was only her own self, and because herself, it was impossible not to love her. I knew that he was an idolator of the beautiful. Could I wonder that he was moved by human loveliness which was only the melodious symbol of the perfect and the spiritual? Is not all beauty spiritual? Is not beauty ever a suggestion, never a fulfilment? That which can be perfectly defined is not beauty. When it hovers about human features, glances from a human eye, it ever hints at the incomprehensible, at the unattained. When the spirit within fails to fulfil the promise of the perfect face, even its worshipper is filled with a vague sense of disappointment, and, passing on amid other beautiful forms, still seeks the divine ideal.

Moncrieffe unconsciously was verifying his own words: "Love is eternal, but its objects change." He might have said, they increase. The soul, like a wave, is for ever widening—widening out to absorb and to be absorbed of others. A soul fulfils its mission to us; we enter into closer kinship, or grow apart. The law of growth constantly forces us into new relationships with those nearest to us, or else thrusts us for ever asunder. Thus it happens, that, of those who for a time walk the life-path together, a few go on before, and many are left behind. Thus it happens that we so often say to one standing far apart from us: "We were all the world to each other once; we are nothing now."

It was impossi le that Moncrieffe and I should return to our old relations; they belonged to the past, and henceforth could be only a memory. Had the pent and passionate love of his

heart been offered to me to-day, I would have refused it no less utterly now, than then. Yet strange, sad inconsistency of the human heart, if possible I would have prevented that love from being proffered to another!

We returned to Bel Eden early that season. I shall never forget the first time which Moncrieffe came; the first time that his eye had rested on Bel Eden since that memorial night when he parted with me at its threshold. Henri paused a moment in the portico, where Morna and Hope were sitting, to distribute between them sundry parcels and letters which the mail had brought; while Moncrieffe, after a brief greeting, walked quietly into the drawing-room. Opposite, as he entered, hung the painting of Œnone, which all connoisseurs declared, as a work of art, far excelled all that I had before attempted. He knew the vale in Ida; his living eyes had feasted on its living beauty in his wanderings beyond the Ægean sea; this faint similitude of its classic loveliness had grown beneath his eye; his æsthetic taste had decided many of its lights and shadows. Long before, he had watched "the noonday quiet hold the hill; the grasshopper silent in the grass; the lizard with his shadow on the stone, resting like a shadow; the cicola asleep; the golden bees, lily-cradled."

> "Still at his feet the crocus broke like fire,
> Violet, amaracus, and asphodel,
> Lotus and lilies.
> Overhead the wandering ivy and vine
> This way and that, in many a wild festoon,
> Ran riot, garlanding the gnarled boughs
> With bunch and berry, and flower through and through."

A shadow had stolen across this beauty since he last beheld it. Now sorrowful Œnone stood on "the knolls of Ida." Leaning on a fragment twined with vine, she sang to the stillness. "Beautiful-browed, mournful Œnone, still wandering forlorn, for Paris once her playmate on the hills." All of loneliness and of sorrow, all of remorse and love, looked from her beautiful and burdened eyes. No voice of encouragement, no word of praise had added inspiration to her being. No criticism, however sharp, no blame, however severe, could have hindered her existence; I could have said this of no other work which I had done. But Œnone was the offspring of my highest, most sacred soul; in her I had embodied my own deepest life. She seemed no portion of the gorgeous beauty amid which she stood. A most lovely yet sorrowful mortal

shadow, she would haunt its brightness but a moment with her song and her sorrow, ere she passed on to Troas or laid down to die.

The vale of Ida stretched before him, the reflex of a brief, delirious Elysium of being, in which he and another soul had lived two years ago. Œnone stood before him like a living ghost just arisen from the tomb of the past. As he looked into that face, the deathly pallor which I had seen sweep over his own twice, smote it again. He turned from that pictured face to mine, as I sat in the recess of an open oriel window. All the love, the sorrow, the sacrifice of a life seemed gathered in that gaze, as he turned upon me his silent eyes. A great emotion, long mastered, suddenly surged back with resistless might. Tenderness such as I dreamed not could pour from the eyes of man upon woman, brooded over me. Utter love, utter abnegation, met in that one gaze; it was the final seal of renunciation; it was never repeated. Memory seized it as an immortal dower, the most sacred, the last.

Hope tripped in with a carolling laugh and an open letter; how eagerly he turned towards that young face as if it was a refuge from himself. During the remainder of the evening how often and intently he looked upon it. I understood it now; in this face he found rest. I recalled the words which long before he had written to me concerning it:—

"After a great storm of soul, I can imagine how I might find heavenly peace in gazing on such a face; imagine with what warmth of healing the celestial sunlight of such a spirit would fall on the ruins of my own—filling me with tenderest affection, yet kindling not a grand inspiration."

No, my chamber in his soul was barred and solitary. The bar would never be taken down, the door would never be opened, that another might go in and take possession. He loved Hope; yes, I was sure that he loved her—loved her with just the pure, beautiful affection which her nature inspired. She filled her own niche in his soul, not mine. Had it not been for that revelation beside Œnone, I should never have known but that he himself had thrust me out—not because it was right, but because he was indifferent. Every other painting of mine he had criticised, but he never criticised Œnone. No comment concerning it ever passed his lips; he made one request regarding it, but that was months afterwards.

The glory of the summer deepened, and so the glory deepened in the eyes of Hope. The gay girl-heart was feeling the first low thrills of that mysterious power of love which makes

the greatness, the strength, and the weakness of woman. It was the dawn of the great awakening of her nature, which in her would be pure and holy, never awful in its misdirected or thwarted force.

Yet the word had not been spoken; the tale of love had not been told by him. Well I knew what Hope in her innocence could never dream, that there was a very different story to be told, a very different confession to be made, before Moncrieffe would allow himself to utter to her words of affection. I knew what sin it was which lay heavy on Moncrieffe's conscience; that he both dreaded, and sought eagerly the day when he might confess to his friend the wrong which in a moment of weakness he was ready to have done him. In the delicious stir of her new happiness, she little dreamed that Henri, with his unclouded judgment, his strong, true heart, was to be the arbiter of her fate. Hope was not without the usual train of admirers and lovers which the most beautiful girl of a metropolitan winter season would be likely to inspire. She had met men, who, judged by all the accepted standards of society, were at least in many respects the equals of Moncrieffe. But Hope knew nothing of coquetries, and it was impossible, at least for me, not to see who alone inspired her; who it was whose simple presence made all her face and being radiant; to whom she turned as naturally as a flower turns its face to the sun; whom she instinctively obeyed and studied to please, without being conscious that she was so doing; who had the power to draw her out beyond her usual self, till in all which she did for him, she far transcended her ordinary beauty and grace. Her exquisite tone and touch thrilled with tenfold sweetness when she sang and played for him; yet all was spontaneous and unconscious. Had it been suddenly revealed to her how deeply she was swayed by him, she would have been shocked, and have deplored without stint what she would have called her wickedness. Was he indifferent? Did you ever see a man so near being an archangel that he could receive with perfect indifference the involuntary homage of a beautiful woman?

Outwardly it was a gay summer at Bel Eden. All that troop of "friends" which I had been so selfishly indifferent about two years before, came and went at their pleasure. Parties stopped for a few days' visit on their hither and thither way from mountains and springs. Zenaide and Pontiff had many prancing companions now cantering with them through the shady avenues. There were sensible people who in de-

lighted silence watched the sunsets fuse the world in glory; and there were twittering misses who made many weak exclamations over the same; there were young ladies who doated on flowers and fountains, and evening rambles in moonlit, leafy alleys, especially when they could be enjoyed with fascinating gentlemen companions. Thus it happened that now, when I sat in portico or piazza in these summer twilights, the lovely world around Bel Eden was no longer quiet as of old; white robes gleamed along the embowered walks, and I caught glimpses of fair faces through the vistas of the trees. As the dimness deepened I could discover manly arms drawing in near proximity to delicate waists, while I doubt not sonorous voices murmured into eager ears stories too sweet for the day to hear or for me to repeat on paper.

The weeks were crowded with fêtes and excursions, with regattas on the river, pic-nics in the park. The house was full of gay voices; snatches of laughter and song gushed back and forth from room to room. There was mirth and music, gossiping and novel-reading, to preserve women amiable through the fiery fervor of the solstice. There was the plash of many fountains to steal through their senses with a thrill of coolness in spite of the thermometer; there was the hush of dim shaded rooms; the loosest and coolest of robes; the long siestas of the sweltering afternoons to assist the lovely creatures in enduring the burden of the weather. And for the gentlemen outside of the house there was the cool stillness of mantled arbors; the dense shadow of the park, where they could lounge as they listed; smoke, sleep, discuss the newspaper, augment their caloric over politics, evaporating all their superfluity of naughtiness, leaving them the enchanting beings which they proved themselves to be to the ladies in the evening. This was outward life at Bel Eden; the tragedy was within.

It was in the silence of my own room, in the solitude of my own nature, that I listened to my hurt and desolate heart. Often, when all were asleep, I would take a light, steal to Hope's bed, and gaze upon her in silence. How peacefully, how innocently she slept, like a child, in her low, calm breathing. In silence I stood over her, and read her fate—how different from mine! No striving with want, no struggle with pain, no insatiate yearning, no inward dying. *Her* life would be one calm lyric, without a dissonant note; its rhythm would flow all melody to the end. The one who had won her earliest love, he who could fill the entire mea-

sure of her needs, with gentlest hand would lead her along sheltered paths to her journey's end. The ethereal maiden would ripen into a harmonious household woman, more spiritually beautiful than the maiden had ever been. Young children would cling around the fair neck, "keeping her low and wise." In the joy of her home she would find the sweetest inspiration which can be given a woman's life. There the graces would hover; there Faith and Love be the Lares to guard its altars. And how melodious would be her footfall, how beautiful her ministrations beside the inner shrine of home!

Sorrow and death would come at last, but not fiercely to one who seemed always to be sheltered so near the bosom of God. When the last call would be heard, and the life-song closed, the dear head would only nestle a little closer to the Infinite Heart, and God would take her. Only once, when I thought of him, of what he had been, might have been, to me, I grew suddenly fierce. If I were free, and then she had come between us, then had robbed me, would I have saved her? Could I? I asked. I shuddered, I turned away. I said "yes." Had she robbed me of all that life had bestowed dear to my soul, still I should have said "yes." Had she been less lovely, I could have ceased to love her; I could never have harmed her. Hope smiled in her sleep as if she saw the angels.

Moncrieffe was not an established guest at Bel Eden, yet he often drove over with Henri. I knew that he did not come to taunt me—that he did not come in triumph to prove that, after all, I was weak and that he was strong; yet his coming did prove all this. Still I inwardly exclaimed—Why must it be here? Why in this very room where we first met, must I behold the dearest revelations of life made to another? Hope had never seemed to hold in reserve from me a single thought or feeling; everything had flowed from her heart to mine as to another self. This rendered her reserve in speaking of Moncrieffe more remarkable; his name rarely passed her lips. I did not wonder at this, for I was not at all certain that there was not something in my manner which forbade it. I, too, avoided his name; and I fancied that she had a vague intuition that in some way to me his name was connected with painful associations. I remembered my impression when I first saw them together, that their manner was that of persons who had met before. I resolved to know, and to have the perfect confidence established be-

tween us regarding him, which existed respecting everything else. Thus, at last, when a day of freedom came, when the guests had all departed, and Hope and I sat alone under the trees one afternoon late in the summer, I asked, without preliminaries:

"Hope, did you ever meet Mr. Moncrieffe before Henri introduced him that evening at Madame ——'s party?"

"Yes, once before. I saw him first in Paris."

"How did that happen? I thought it impossible for a young lady to form any gentleman's acquaintance in that *pensionnat*."

"I did not form his acquaintance, Victoire. I only saw him when he delivered an oration at one of the anniversaries."

"And you remembered him?"

"How could I forget him?"

"Why did he make so deep an impression?"

"Would not his face, and bearing, and voice, impress any one? Besides, the moment he rose on the rostrum I thought of you."

"He does not look like me."

"No; but the thought instantly came into my mind that he was one whom you would very much admire."

"Did I ever describe to you one whom I should very much admire?"

"No."

"Then why should you imagine that you knew?"

"I don't know why; perhaps it was because I admired him myself more than any man whom I had ever seen."

"Did he remark you?" I asked.

"He has told me that he recognised me immediately as the original of your Hebe."

"Then he has told you that he knew me before his departure for Europe. Did he tell you where we first met? How we became acquainted?"

"No; he only told me that he sought your acquaintance through your Niobe; that you had exerted a deeper influence upon his life than any other person whom he had ever known; that everything which you had ever loved or cherished was dear to him."

There was a long silence. We both looked afar off into the dreamy depth of the fountain. When I thought that I could command my voice, I asked:

"Hope, when did he tell you all this?"

"The other evening at the sailing party, when you asked

him to row me in my new skiff. Don't you remember, the river was like glass, so quiet? I could scarcely see the boat move, it floated so softly; then he told me."

"Did he tell you that he loved *you?*"

"No; he never told me that he loved me."

"Yet you feel that he does, and I feel it. He will tell you this soon, and when he tells you, the story will be very sweet to hear, will it not, Hope?"

"Yes, Victoire, it would sound sweeter than anything I ever heard; you know it would. I never dreamed that such a man could ever love me; I dare not believe it now. No one else could ever love me who would seem to me to be his equal. I could never forget him; I fear that I should never cease to regret him."

"You will never be called upon to forget him or to regret him. When he offers you his love, accept it, and lavish yours upon him without stint. He will make you very happy, Hope; and you—you will make life dear to him. If company comes, do not call me," I added, rising; "I shall not come down until Henri returns. You will not be lonely, Hope?"

"O no," she said, with her sweetest smile, kissing her hand after me. Why did I ask that question, when I saw that her own thought was richer company than any living presence, save that of one, could possibly be?

In contrast with the hilarity which had so lately filled it, the hush which now pervaded the house seemed almost stifling. Morna was in her room; Azalie was asleep. For the last two months her brain had run wild inspecting and studying costumes, and now the reaction was so great the poor child did nothing but sleep from pure exhaustion, and an unwonted lull in the household atmosphere was the result of these slumbers. Save the trills of the canaries and the subdued murmur of voices in the distant kitchen, no sound greeted my ear as I passed through the hall and stole up to my studio.

I had done nothing in it for many weeks; the blinds were shut; the windows closely draped; it was dim and silent. I went in and knelt down. There are moments when the great God comes down to us; when the Omniscient, All-discerning soul, entering our inmost heart, searches us through and through. The film of self-love falls from our eyes; the armor of selfishness drops from our heart; desire, motive, action, stand bare, utterly revealed. We see ourselves, not

as we love to seem, not as we love to make ourselves and others believe, but as we are, as we shall know ourselves at death and at the judgment. We can reject creeds, the dogmas of men, the pomp and paraphernalia of ghostly forms; but we cannot reject God, we cannot doubt Him, nor deny Him, nor turn from Him, when thus He asserts Himself within our innate secret consciousness. The blindness of self-love again may gather; again we may grow metallic, sordid, selfish, weak, yet we shall ever be better, purer, for having wrestled this hour with God. We may be conscious of sin, with a desire and even a purpose to relinquish it, yet have no adequate realization of its nature or of its consequences upon ourselves and others. When the primal spirit illuminates us so that we both utterly see, and feel, and repent, then we not only desire, we do renounce sin. Great epochs mark the inner as well as the outer life. The epoch in our outward career settles our destiny among men; the epochs of the soul decide its indestructible character, its eternal fate. The moment which saw me reject the love of Moncrieffe decided my human lot; it saved my name from the ranks of the fallen; it perpetuated to me the gifts and amenities of a favored fortune; it did not eradicate any blot which temptation might have made upon my moral nature, it did not absolve my soul before God. But this moment was to decide whether, with spirit stained or washed white, I was to live and die. It would set the final stamp upon my inward character by which I should be recognised and judged by God and angels, if not by men. I had been self-deceived; not wilfully, surely; yet, no less entirely because I did not know it. An eternity of life seemed curdled in these moments in which I scanned my naked soul.

That was not renunciation which I called renunciation two years before; but the hour had come now; and now as I tore the living idol from my living heart, every fibre warm and bleeding with the very life-blood of my humanity, I knew and felt for the first time how entirely it had become interwoven with all the tissues of my being.

Renounced it! My conscience renounced it two years before; my heart never. Had I ever clung to it with such deathless, jealous, despairing tenacity as in the weeks just gone? Why had not the spirit of God searched me thus before? Why had I never felt as I felt now—how very, very weak and sinning I was? Heart and will surrendered; the enshrined idol dropped from my relaxing grasp; dropped so

far away from me that I could never reach it any more. My soul was being winnowed by a mysterious and awful force, which with one resistless sweep carried with it all that I had cherished most.

"This moment cannot change all my nature; it cannot annihilate the associations of years. To-morrow, when I look on the living face, shall I find that it has lost all its power? To-morrow shall I not find myself just as weak as I have been to-day?" faltered doubt. "To-morrow! You have no business with to-morrow. It is not yours. Be the conqueror of *now.* Make the present pure, and all the future will be peaceful," answered the deeper voice, as I arose, wondering at the great calm that had come over me.

The deluge of passion had rolled back. "The earth was green again. I was in a new world, and the new world was the sepulchre of the old."

I went down into Henri's study. I felt a wonderful sense of kinship for this room. I knew that none but wise and pure thoughts had ever entered into it. Next to human faces and hearts, what can so grow into our affections as books? Many of these I could not understand, but many more were my daily intimate companions, while the marble faces looking down from the alcoves now seemed the kindest of silent friends. I was in search of an antique book whose words had often come home to my heart with a strange, sympathetic truthfulness. I found it, and sitting down within the drapery of the open window, read:

"Many, if not most friendships, be like a glove, that, however well fitting at first, doth by constant use wax loose and ungainly, if it doth not quite wear out. There be friendships which a man groweth out of naturally and blamelessly, even as out of his child-clothes; the which, though no longer suitable to his needs, he keepeth religiously, unforgotten and undestroyed, and often visiteth with a kindly tenderness, though he knoweth they can cover and warm him no more.

"But deceive not thyself, saying that because a thing is not, it never was. Respect thyself, thy old self, as well as thy new. Be faithful to thyself and to all that ever was thine. Thy friend is always thy friend. Not to have or to hold to love, or to rejoice in, but to remember.

"And if it befall thee, as it befalleth most, that in course of time nothing will remain to thee except to remember, be not afraid! Hold fast that which was thine; it is thine for

ever. Deny it not, despise it not; respect its secrets; be silent over its wrongs. And so kept, it shall never be like a dead thing in thy heart, corrupting and breathing corruption there as dead things do. Bury it and go thy way. It may chance that some day long hence thou shalt come suddenly upon the grave of it, and behold! it is dewy green."

Why had Moncrieffe crossed my path? Why had each nature responded perfectly to the other? Why had we been friends—more than friends? Not to have or to hold, to love or to rejoice in; but to remember, to be for ever nobler and purer for that memory. Could either well spare this experience out of their existence? Was it not indispensable to our discipline, growth, final development? This larger capacity to love all things, this broader charity, this deeper insight into my own heart and the hearts of others, this profounder yearning for innate purity, this victory over myself, all this love, at last had brought me—did they not make the wealth of my life? Not one could I spare from my nature. When at last we should yield up our souls, redeemed and perfected, to the God and Father of our spirits, we could bless him for this mortal love which He had made a link of light to draw us upwards nearer to Himself; whereas our own hands might have forged it into a chain to drag us down to remorse and death.

Amid these thoughts an infinite tenderness swept over me as I gazed around the room and thought of its owner. I knew that the time had come when there could be no longer any reserve between me and my truest friend, the husband of my heart. "To-night," I murmured, "I will tell him all."

I do not know why I thought of my old haunt, the gnarled bridge crowning the ravine, but I did. It would be a good place to test my new emotions, I thought. Returning my book to its place, I went slowly down to it, beneath the shadow of the foliage which hung dense about it. Here I had leaned and lingered hundreds of times; here I had waited in dim expectation that October day when Moncrieffe came; here, too, he had loitered and dreamed in the leisure of a past existence; it was all past; all came to me now like memories from a distant world, that long life of love for him! It was not a present consciousness, not a living desire; it was a memory. I thought of him already as the husband of Hope. The thought did not make me wretched.

"Oh, dear!"

I started as this exclamation broke in upon my thought. I had heard it too many times, under too many different circumstances, not to know perfectly well from whom it proceeded. I was only surprised that I had not been conscious before of the near proximity of a human presence.

"Oh, dear!"

My eye followed the direction of the voice, and there below me, just above the brook, beneath a clump of alder bushes, his face buried in the ferns and mosses of the bank as I remembered having seen it buried in the bosom of a lounge-cushion, lay George Washington Peacock, no longer an overgrown boy of twelve, but a well-formed youth of eighteen.

"Oh, dear! I thought when I was up there that I'd just as lief drown myself as not. And I *would* if my dead body could in any way be a blessing to *her*. But she'd think it was a pretty end of all her teachings to have them drag me out of the water dead as a stun'. It wouldn't mend matters. She couldn't respect me, and she wouldn't love me any more, because I had made a goose of myself by taking affairs out of the Lord Almighty's hands. But I came down here on purpose to drown myself; and now it makes a fellow feel kind of queer to think he can't. I mean that he don't want to. I believe after all I'm afraid; not of the water, but of what's beyond it. A pretty end 'twould be, after all of her tryings to make me good, for me to go and kill myself. The devil's got me, or I shouldn't have thought of it.

"O Lord!" here he raised himself up upon his elbows and began to pray.

"O Lord! I know that You know best what is best for me. I'm only sorry when I know that I don't know what is best for me; that I ain't any better contented with what's given me. O Lord! I'm sure of one thing—that nothing so homely as I am was ever made to go with anything so beautiful as Miss Hope. It would be like tying a great sprawling mud-turtle to a white flower. Only, Lord, I wish You had made me handsomer. I can't see why you didn't. I should have had a better disposition if I had been made better looking. I should have swore less. I shouldn't have struck the children more than half as many times, for then they couldn't have said: 'George Washington has got a berry on the end of his nose.' I know for certain that it makes a chap feel ugly to know that he looks ugly. But O Lord, I know that You knew best. Of course, it would be easy enough to be good if there wasn't anything to make one ugly. O Lord,

You know I try hard enough, with mighty slim results. Help me to give up wanting to look for ever at Miss Hope. The more I look the more I want to. I know well enough I wasn't made for Miss Hope; only, Lord, I wish You had made me for her. O Lord, why didn't You? But You know best. I know that You have given me a great deal more than I ever deserved. I am thankful, O Lord, that through *her* You have taught me what beauty, and goodness, and everything lovely is. From the first moment I saw her I knew that there was something higher in life than I had ever thought of, and ever since I've been trying to reach it, and mighty hard work it is. O Lord, I am thankful for the kind instructions, the happy home, the blessed friends Thou hast given me. May I never disgrace them nor prove myself unworthy of them, as I should if I had gone and drowned myself just because I can't see Miss Hope as often as I want, and because she can't never think any more of me than she does now. O Lord, help me to feel that You put me in this world to be a good and useful man, not to have everything my own way. Help me to act as if I felt it. Help me to be good, because I ought to be good, because it is lovely to be good, and not just because Miss Hope desires it. Help me to stop living just on the sight of her face; it's mighty poor living when I can't get the sight any oftener. Help me to give up Miss Hope in my heart. I shall be a better man just because she is in the world if I ain't nothing to her but a poor ugly boy that she is sorry for. The dearest idol I have known, help me to tear it from its throne. O dear!"

Perhaps I should have laughed at the sight of George Washington rolling and groaning amid the ferns, if I had not felt more like crying. Just then I heard the sound of carriage-wheels in the avenue, and a moment after, Hope's light laugh and silvery voice blending with more sonorous tones the summer wind brought me through the trees. I knew that Henri had come, and so went back to the house.

A WEDDING IN THE LAST CHAPTER.

As I emerged from the trees Henri saw me, and came down the path to meet me. Hope was gathering flowers to garnish the tea-table, whose snowy damask gleamed above

the green grass of the shaded lawn. Moncrieffe, leaning against the vines of the portico, seemed to be intently watching her. It was a strange tea which came afterwards. The birds sang in the trees, as they did every evening, their low, lullaby music; the flowers and fountains, the river, the blue palisades beyond, had not changed; the world around us was precisely the same, yet it seemed different, simply because I looked on it and on the five human beings who sat around the table with different eyes, with a different heart.

Conversation at this table was usually a most easy and pleasant thing, composed of elements as various as the five widely differing natures which contributed to it. When the ladies gave them opportunity, which was by no means always, the gentlemen grew profound over public measures and affairs of state; or they grew fervid over politics, for they were of opposite parties; yet, strange to say, their differences seemed only to augment their friendship. But the merry chit-chat and the earnest discussions were both wanting to-night. A rare silence seemed to have fallen on all. Each one appeared to be thinking of something which could not be spoken, and yet a perfect sympathy seemed to exist even in this silence.

Morna was a little paler and a little more silent than usual, but there was no unrest in her manner. Moncrieffe's face seemed full of an expression of relief—the light in his dark, radiating eyes seemed gratitude; not joy but thankfulness. Henri's clear gaze sought my face continually; it was filled with a new meaning, made of wonder, love, pain. Hope's sensitive heart seemed to vibrate to all our moods, and she glided into our silence as intuitively as if she, too, had a burden on her heart—which she had, but it was a very pleasant one.

After tea we had music. Hope played and sang till the twilight came. Then we wandered into the beautiful outer world again—all but Morna, who lingered, her fingers rippling over the keys of the piano, her rich voice quivering with the prelude of a strain into which the great, loving soul soared impatient to overflow. Music had become a more soothing companion to her than any living presence could be. We left her with her friend, as in the world the great, the loving, yet unmated in soul, are often left utterly devoid of companionship save that which their own spirit can make.

Henri and I wandered out to one of the garden seats, and

not until after we were seated did I notice that it was the one on which we sat on that June morning when I said: "I will marry you." Moncrieffe and Hope slowly wandered down the wooded path which led to the ravine, the brook, the bridge. I watched the sheen of her white robes floating in and out through the interlacing foliage, till at last they were lost down the descending knoll. They were wandering down to the little bow-braided, leaf-draped bridge, beneath which that very afternoon George Washington had struggled with himself, his love; the bridge whose murmurous leaves and musical waters were instinct with a thousand memories. There, what vagaries had stirred my heart, what visions had been revealed to me, but never this—that here the stranger of Les Delices would win his bride, and that bride would be Hope Avondale.

"There will be a wedding at Bel Eden before many months, if you are willing," said Henri; and as I looked up I saw that he, too, had been gazing after them as intently as I till they disappeared. "I have given my consent. Will you yours?" he added, taking my hand most gently, yet fixing upon me a penetrating gaze which pierced me through. I did not shrink from it. Truth was in my heart, and it must have shone through my eyes.

"Yes, I shall be glad to have a wedding at Bel Eden."

"Victoire, I have heard a strange story this afternoon," he continued, without withdrawing his hand or removing his gaze.

"Yes, Moncrieffe told it to you."

"Yes, he told me. I have heard that all women have a story—some heart-tragedy to reveal if they choose. I begin to think that men have about as many, at least poetic men; a commonplace fellow like me, of course, does not weave much romance out of the raw material of life. Moncrieffe's story was a romantic one, but a very hard one for me to listen to, Victoire. He has done me a wrong which few men can forgive—which I would not forgive any man but him," and as Henri uttered these words I saw that his deep nature was wounded to the very core. "Jonathan never loved David more truly than I loved him. His nature commands the affection of men no less than of women. *You* have loved him, Victoire?"

"Yes, Henri, I have loved him. I loved him first. The great temptation of my life came to me through him. Yet I have never seen the moment in which I could consciously

wrong you for his sake. If I have sinned in loving him, forgive me. It is past."

"Are you sure, Victoire; are you sure that it is past?" he asked, vehemently. "If not, of all men I am the most wretched. With all my wise conclusions have I been blind, self-deceived, for all these years? Victoire; are you sure that it is past?"

"Yes, I am sure. I desire to find rest only in the heart of my husband. You know how tenaciously my heart clings to everything which it seizes. But when at last it lets go an object, it lets it go. It tears it up by the roots—not a fibre remains, and the idol drops so far away, it can never be taken up again. Can you forgive me, Henri, that I ever loved him?"

"Forgive you, child! I do not blame you for the love; if I blame you, it is that you did not confide in me—that you did not tell me, your husband, your best friend."

"I wanted to tell you, Henri; I wanted to tell you all; but I did not dare. I was afraid of that quiet smile, so cold and so lofty; I was afraid of your pity. I knew that you would feel for me a kind of godlike pity, while you gauged a weakness that you never felt," I murmured.

"When I thrust aside my feelings and look at this in the light of reason," he continued, "I find that I cannot exonerate myself from blame. Ever since my illness I have sometimes questioned my own course, which I never did before. Ever since then I have discovered wants in myself, weaknesses I have called them, which previously I had never known. They have made me more appreciative of the needs of others; those which I once noticed from a sense of duty, if I noticed them at all, I have learned to regard with genuine personal sympathy. There is something hard in unbroken physical health. A vigor that has never even been touched by disease has no adequate sympathy to offer for the sufferings or needs of the weaker or more exquisitely organized; it can theorize, speculate, estimate, and be even kind to a degree, but it does not *feel*. Suffering—mental, moral, physical—is the saviour and softener of the human heart. Thus I have learned to think, Victoire, since that long illness has wrought such a change in me—in my feelings more than in my actions, for, with my native love of domination, I have ruled them though I have not killed them. I remember that long convalescence as the very happiest season of my life. It was the first time in my life in which I ever enjoyed ease, rest. To be sure I had taken them occasionally before, because I knew that I must; but it was a great

bore. I was restless to be doing; the great force of activity within me seemed to impel me irresistibly forth to work, to business—duty I liked best to call it."

I made no answer, and he went on.

"The power of action, the capacity for affairs, which are essential requisites of manhood, I drove beyond their healthy energy into an excitement, a dissipation. I never realized this till, with faltering feet, weakened nerves, and a softened heart, I returned from the gates of the grave. That coming back to the bright earth, to the summer flowers, to your dear face, was the epoch of my being. Those long hours of delicious leisure, of gentle rides, and quiet walks; those hours in which you used to read to me, and sing for me till I fell asleep, only to hear your voice distil its music through my dreams, seemed to create a new heart in me, soft and grateful as a little child's—a heart far too weak, I thought, for a strong man's breast, and of course thought it my duty to hide it as far as possible. In those hours I first noticed a change in your face. When your tender heart had exhausted the last possible attention, and you had sunk upon the low stool at my feet, your white hands crossed and your features in repose, I saw what I had never thought of before my illness. A sadness looked out from your eyes which I tried in vain to fathom; a look of weariness lay across the brow, which I did not understand; it was not the result of physical exhaustion, it was a weariness of spirit. Anxiety and watching alone had not made it. What had? Your face should still be radiant as any maiden's—it should still be girlish in its outline and its bloom. What had so soon transformed it into that of a woman, with a look of suffering on the brow and the history of long years gazing from the mournful eyes? Then, for the first time, I began to question myself. What had I to do, directly or indirectly, with this change? Had I not fulfilled all my promises? Had I not covered you with gifts? What other wife did I know so free and independent, so honored, so beloved? I remembered that in the past, after a great press of occupation had kept me constantly absorbed for many weeks, the thought would suggest itself that perhaps I had unwittingly appeared careless or neglectful, that I condemned you too entirely to loneliness or the society of strangers. But I recollected also that you never complained of neglect or loneliness. Did you not have art, letters, friends, home, a rich and varied life? The thought of ennui, loneliness, in you seemed absurd. Had you not told me once that you wished to devote a portion of

your best years to art? Just as if I did not understand your nature too well, even then, before you knew anything about yourself, to take you at your word. 'I am busy. Let her learn something of life, the world; there will be time enough for love afterwards,' was ever my final conclusion.

"But now there was something in the white face, and soft, womanly eyes which looked up to me, which contradicted all my wise theories of duty and happiness, and there was a feeling in my heart as well as a voice in my head which assured me that I had been mistaken. I resolved that as soon as I could arrange business matters I would take more leisure for my home, and we would renew the sweet, uninterrupted communion of the hours of convalescence. But you know how it was—I found a thousand matters to attend to which I never thought of, and the leisure has never come. Yet all the while my heart has kept up a rebellion with my head, which it never thought of doing before.

"God knows that I have ever meant only to bless you, Victoire. Yet I have been selfish. Because I have found in your nature all that mine demanded, because you have given me all the tenderness my soul needed, and I knew that there was a world more in reserve on which I could make draughts at any time, I have been contented, and have not inquired whether I returned to your heart an equivalent. Strange it was that the pale, changed face first prompted the inquiry. But you know that most natures are miserably deficient in something. Rarely we find a perfectly harmonious being. There is always some sharp jutting angle, some hateful excrescence, or some pitiable lack. My intellect has been cultivated at the expense of my heart. My reasoning faculties have absorbed my emotional, leaving them neither room nor warmth to grow. But, Victoire, I have a heart, and it is capable of great expansion, and you have not been filling it with sunshine and dew all these years for nothing. I blame myself that I left you to feel the need of a tenderness which another was ready to bestow. Men place a flower on their heart, and after they have drained it of its first fresh sweetness they forget it. Absorbed with their worldly projects or great ambitions, they forget that without light or dew that flower will die. The flower drops away at last from the dry dust of the heart which has ceased to nourish it. A stranger who has long watched, perhaps coveted that flower, seeing it droop and fade, begins to water it, to give it a little of the light and air which it needs. The flower begins to revive and grow beautiful again under

the hand which nourishes it. The stranger has no right to cherish this flower, for it is not his; but if he loves it he cannot be wholly indifferent to its needs. Of course it is very weak in that flower to need sunshine and dew, but only being a flower it grows beautifully with them, and is dwarfed without them. The man who owns the blossom may some day wake up to find that he has lost it; but it is his own fault, he should have taken better care of it. The man who unlawfully possessed himself of that flower is not a good man of course; neither is the man who professed to love, who was bound to cherish it, yet did not.

"If you had forsaken me, Victoire, I should have condemned you bitterly, but not more bitterly than I should have condemned myself. Your heart turned involuntarily towards Moncrieffe, not only because he was born to inspire love, but there is not a want of your soul which he does not know and feel. Can I forget that my one chosen friend would have robbed me if he could of the treasure of my life? If he saw that I did not cherish it as tenderly as I might, he should have told me frankly and truthfully as he did this afternoon. Yet I know that that was too much disinterestedness to ask for friendship when it stood in the way of love.

"I forgive Moncrieffe because he is Moncrieffe, and because I know his inherent nobleness; and because I know that as far as he has sinned, that sin has brought to his heart its own punishment. Never can I forget his manliness in confessing all. The sun had never risen since that night, he said, when its light had not brought to him a consciousness of remorse for the unforgiven sin which rested on his soul. Hope is very dear to him. He finds rest and peace in her pure young soul; he wishes to devote his life to her—believes that he can make her happy in his love; yet he said if I thought him unworthy of her, if I could not forgive him with all my heart, he would never utter to her a word of affection; he would not again enter her presence; but a solitary man would go forth into the world. Victoire, I told him that I forgave him with all my heart, and I do. But why has your soul been sealed so long? Why have you never revealed any of this to me?"

"I knew that the day would come when Moncrieffe would tell you all. I have waited for this day. Long ago I longed to ask pardon for myself, but I could not betray him," I answered.

"After all, it is as well that you did not," he said. "No words, nothing but experience, could teach me what I now

feel and know. My intellect has always assured me that tenderness in a man was weakness, and yet I have always known that the greatest souls are the most childlike. There was a time when there was no discord between my heart and brain; but ever since my sickness my heart has silently yet surely waged war with my head, and has come off victor. Victoire, can your great, tender heart rest satisfied in the love which I give you? Never was woman loved more entirely or more tenderly than I love you now. Surely I cannot have been all wrong. The kind God must have brought us together for good, for complete love and happiness at last."

"Yes, for complete love and happiness at last," I murmured. "On this spot I promised to marry you: here, five years after, I can say from my heart I am glad that I promised. I love you, my husband. I ask only that you should need that love, and I can live in you, and for you for ever."

The eyes which looked down upon mine were suffused with tenderness which I had never seen in them before. The light in them, always so clear, was wonderfully soft and deep—the outshining of that immortal love which can fill the eyes of a man when he gazes on the woman for whose sake he has forsaken father and mother that he may love and cherish her to life's end. Theories and disquisitions were nothing now. Love had come, full, perfect, filling our hearts; it needed no analysis. Close to his heart he folded me—this husband of five years, this lover whose kingly pride love at last had conquered. The Alps and glaciers of the head vanished; instead, the dews of Hermon distilled through all that summer valley of his soul, and I entered in, to go out no more for ever.

Deeper and longer grew the shadows in the grass; the flowers slept, the birds grew still; the fall and flow of waters trickled through the silence; softly the leaves turned their lips to the evening wind; all the beauty around us, even the celestial blazonry of stars above, breathed but one thought of our wedded hearts—that thought was happiness.

"Let us return to Europe," at last he said. "Let us go to Les Delices, and there begin truly to live; there will be time enough after to come back to this land of endeavor, this country of emulous and endless action."

Les Delices! My heart bounded at that name. All the memories of childhood, all that was best and sweetest in life, came thronging back at its mention.

"Les Delices!" I said. "Oh, if I had not lost it, if it was

still my home, it would be such a joy to behold it; but I fear that it would fill me with sorrow now to see it forsaken and neglected, the property of a stranger."

"You have seen the purchaser of Les Delices many times."

"Where?"

"You see him here now. I bought Les Delices, and for you. I thought, even then, that perhaps the day might come when you would gladly return to it for a season. At any rate, I was not willing that the ancestral home of Frederick should go to strangers. My medical friends imperatively insist upon rest and change of air for me; and, to confess the truth, I do feel worn. The unrelaxing tension of the last six years is broken, and I, too, want rest for my body as much as you want it for your heart. Don't you want to go to Italy, Victoire, and to Languedoc?"

"And never come back?"

"Oh yes, come back, of course; that is, if you prefer America to France."

"You are my good angel. I bless you a thousand times for saving Les Delices. You saved it for a surprise some day?"

"Yes."

"It is my Mecca, to which I shall for ever make pilgrimages. I shall kneel before Frederick's grave as the Kaaba of my heart. Les Delices is the home of the past, the shrine where I shall renew all holy vows and consecrations; but America—Bel Eden—is the chosen home of my life. Is it not of yours, Henri?"

"Yes, you know that I could never live at Les Delices save in the way of visiting; it is a spot in which to rest and to gather strength, not to live a life of action in. Listen!"

As he spoke a tide of melody, sad yet triumphant, flooded forth, filling all the night, till the very airs seemed to stand still to listen, and the boughs above us to quiver with rapture. It was Morna singing.

"Morna," said Henri, tenderly, "what a blessing she is; in her unselfishness, what a silent teacher to us all! How could we spare her from our life, Victoire? I once hoped that Morna and Moncrieffe would love and marry; but I see now that both have suffered too deeply for either to find refreshment in the life of the other. Moncrieffe needs just what he finds in Hope's spontaneous, untouched soul."

I grew sorrowful as I thought of Morna, and yet, as I lis-

tened to that voice, I could not say that she was not as happy in her renunciation as I in my realization.

An hour later, from the balcony of my room I saw Moncrieffe depart. Again I heard his carriage-wheels roll down the avenue, but not as I had listened to them once. I had not thought of rest; I could not for joy—joy that at last I had emerged from the cloud and mystery of my life into an open and benignant day; joy that yearning, strife, torture had ceased to be my portion; that, instead, I held to my lips the overflowing cup of peace. I waited for Hope; I knew that she would not pass my door that night without entering.

"May I come?" at last I heard the sweet voice say, and in a moment more she was in my arms. The soft eyes were luminous with a new lustre, the transcendent face touched with an added loveliness. She was filled with the celestial rapture which is kindled with the first consciousness of loving and of being loved. I knew that Moncrieffe loved her as deeply, but not as she loved. His was a deeper and calmer joy; he had loved before.

"A most noble heart has given you its love. You are worthy of the gift," I said, low in her ear, for she had not spoken. Tears gushed through the long, silken lashes, and the head nestled closer to my heart.

"No, I am not worthy. It is too much; my life is too full of joy. How kind my Heavenly Father is! How much I thank Him and love Him for everything!" Hope's was a deeply religious spirit; to her unquestioning faith every gift which she received came from God, and her first impulse was to thank him for it.

"Yes," I said, "you will always be happy, for you are one of Christ's little ones; your way will always be in green pastures and beside still waters, and a most loving hand will lead you to the end."

I saw them married. With my own hands I dressed my darling in her bridal robes. On a golden morning in golden October, when Bel Eden was resplendent in scarlet and amber, in opal and amethyst, Moncrieffe and Hope were married.

It was a brilliant wedding. Many beautiful faces were grouped around that fairer face; many a manly heart felt a twinge very unlike happiness while it listened to the words which gave that lovely young creature to another; many were the maidens who thought, "What a handsome husband;" many the young men who sighed, "What a beautiful wife;"

many the men and matrons who declared "What a splendid match!" secretly hoping that their pug-nosed "Augusta Jane would do as well."

Never with my mortal eyes shall I behold a rarer couple. He in the fulness of manly prime, lofty, yet humble; calmly happy, yet deeply thoughtful in his happiness; she in the first bloom of her wondrous beauty; in her marvellous and unworldly grace pure as a vestal in the love and worship which she gave him. How could I say that they were not created for each other?

Henri gave the bride away, as long before I had in silence given her—and him! I loved them both—loved them too well to divide them or to mar their happiness even by a thought. I could never be indifferent to Moncrieffe; still he was mine, even as Hope was mine; still he was my friend, "not to have or to hold, to love or to rejoice in," but to remember. I was satisfied. I was a holier and happier woman for that memory, for it was consecrated, sanctified. Already my life was full and rich; I no longer needed Moncrieffe.

We were to sail for Europe in a week after their marriage. Moncrieffe and Hope were to begin their life at Bel Eden. Only once did Moncrieffe remind me of the past.

"Are you willing to remove Œnone?" he asked one day as I entered the drawing-room and found him standing before it. "This belongs to the old life; you know that I have begun a new. For Hope's sake, it must not be darkened by a single shadow of the past. It is better that Œnone should go."

Thus Œnone went, was loaned for our absence to the directors of a gallery of art, and there took its place among those pictures of which some thoughtful gazer says: "It must have a history!" wondering much what the story is.

We spent the winter in Rome. Amid the miracles of old art, I did not learn to despise the inspiration of the new. In paying homage to the old masters, I did not cease to love the masters of to-day. Once I had hoped to meet Orsino in Italy. Alas! I found only his grave: amid the flower of the Roman youth who fell in Mazzini's struggle, Orsino died. Yet he had his wish—he poured out his life-blood for Italy; the sod of Rome made his pillow; her purple heaven pavilioned his rest. Here, above his head, I read the last words which he had recorded for me, the last written before his death. Many times had I read them before; many times had I wet them with my tears:

"To-morrow, signora, to-morrow I shall behold a great conquest or I shall die. If I live, the rubies in my amulet will burn with triumph, and I will write for you the record of our victory. If I die, I shall die for Italy, my mother. If I die, then accept these, my last words: that, next to Italy, art thou dearest to Orsino's heart."

Orsino was only one of thousands of Italians who, on alien shores, deplore, with all an exile's yearning love, the degradation of their country. The Italian loves Italy as he loves his mother. Who that knows their self-denial, the ever-longing love of her exiled sons, will say that the old passion for liberty is dead, that the Italian of to-day is unworthy the name or inheritance of his fathers? With their child-like hearts and the poetic fervor born of their summer clime, their souls thrill with all the old heroism, their arms are nerved with all the tragic valor of the ancient Roman. At the first call of her patriots they leave our shores to lay down their fortunes and their lives for Italy. May all fortune favor the deliverers of Italy! Glorious Garibaldi! God guard his way! Heaven hasten the hour when, beneath the civic heaven, within the seven hills of Rome, a ransomed people shall proclaim, "We are free!"

I sat beside Orsino's grave, beneath the softest of Italian skies, believing then, as now, that the blood of that brave young heart had not been spilled in vain. Dear to him, after the ring of the battle-field, is the everlasting calm. Already to that tenderly-attuned spirit has come the sleep and the forgetting; thrice blessed will be the morn and the awakening. Had he been a painter, he would have been Raphael; had he been a poet, he would have been a Shelley without Shelley's sins; but the gift of inspired utterance—the last gift of genius—was denied him. His soul was a harp, wanting a single string; pining to reveal itself, the melody which might have been, looked sadly through those translucent windows, yet ascended to the Eternal without a sound.

In the spring we went to Les Delices. I had prepared myself to behold desolation, change, decay; thought that the fountains would be choked and the flowers dead; but the love which now watched so tenderly over my life thought of this also. Henri sent a messenger before, and when we reached it not a trace was left of those long years of desertion.

One afternoon in May, when every pulse in nature seemed to throb with ecstasy, my eager eyes caught the first gleam of the scarlet turret beneath the firs. The cascade was voci-

ferous, throwing its creamy skirts far over the rocks; the fountains gurgled happiness; the flowers bloomed, the birds sang; even the face of old Ceres wore a radiant look as she held out the flowers and fruits in her hand to the returning wanderers. The vines which I knew in childhood still mantled the veranda and hung high above my head; but the windows were wide open, and as I entered, there were the fadeless frescoes, the antique furniture of the old beloved room, the very carpet on which I had played when a child.

"Henri," I said, as I threw myself into his arms, "how tender, how thoughtful, how good you are! What heart could withstand such a love as yours?"

And as we stood amid all those hallowed souvenirs of a happy past, in the full joy of a still more happy present, our tears of gratitude mingled together. But there was a still more sacred spot to be visited; through the open windows we saw the white cross shining pure above Frederick's grave. The velvet turf, all starred with white blossoms, seemed a fitting coverlet for that beautiful body with which I never could connect the idea of decay. Already it seemed immortal. Even now, while I knelt beside his tomb, I felt as if I had hardly been separated from him; and as the words which he had uttered to me long before came back, "As a ministering spirit I may do more for you than if I walked by your side fainting beneath the burden of my own humanity;" I felt as if, through all those years, he had never left me. 'Good stars meet in your horoscope,' he had also said. I knew it; I felt it now.

Two years have passed since that night; still we linger at Les Delices. The winters were spent at Florence and Paris, and we are here for the last time now ere we return to America and Bel Eden. The new poetic home of Moncrieffe and Hope I shall see from the window of my studio. She writes: "Already we are settled, and *so* happy! When will you come?" Les Delices—truly named "The Delights"—I am in no haste to leave thee!

I received a letter from Morna the other day.

"You ask me if I am happy," she writes. "When I ceased to seek happiness as a definite object it came to me unawares. At least a calm has fallen on my life, so like that I call it happiness. My soul, I fear, is not as largely developed as yours, for you drink from fountains of life of which I have never tasted. The bliss of the wife and the mother will never be mine. Already people begin to call me

an 'old maid' and to pity me because, with wealth and fame, I am still alone. I am very weary of that old idea that a woman's life can have but one event—that if she does not marry there is nothing worth having left for her. The world of human affection, the world of benevolence, of nature, art, of thought, of religion, open their avenues to her. Herein abide all serene and elect souls, whether men or women—they who are likest the angels, in whose spirits the earthly subserves the divine. And I confess I do not see why a life of individual action, of lonely personal endeavor, need force a woman to lay aside the unsullied garments of her normal womanhood and go forth to add discord to this most discordant world. I can but feel that a woman drops the insignia of her most sacred nature, when, making herself the highest end of all effort, she chases amid the crowd the phantoms of fame and power.

"I am sure that it is very plain to see that in the jostling world men contend for most contemptible prizes. Why should a woman want them, or seek for them, when in a thousand unrecorded ways she may be a teacher and savior of the race; when her nameless deeds are recorded among the stars; when to the utterance of her thought the ages will reverently listen? The life of an unmarried woman need not be miserable or incomplete. This, dear Victoire, I believe. My friends waste all the pity which they lavish upon me. My life is not barren, my affections do not wither. I do not love the less all the beauty around me, the fair children who spring in my path, because they are not mine. Why need my life grow selfish or contracted while I am surrounded by God's poor and all the sorrow that is in the world? Pardon this long lecture, but I think that I am *nearly* happy. Victoire, come home and see!"

I have been the recipient lately of a long favor from Mrs. Peacock. She informed me in a very remarkable handwriting, that, as her youngest, "Victory Hope, has e'en a most grow'd out of sight an' mind," she has commenced her long meditated novel, and she has no doubt that it will "bring her an everlastin' fortin'!" In great detail she has recorded for me all its incidents and characters, by which I learn that Miss Hope is the heroine, and Miss Victory her rival. It bears the not unappropriate title of "Lovely Rose, the Lady of Fortin'," and when it is completed it may be purchased by Mr. Bonner—not as a novel in any way equal to Sylvanus Cobb's, but as a literary curiosity of the nineteenth century.

Through the narrowest streets of New York, through its most filthy alleys and darkest passes, these long summer days, walks a young man carrying always a satchel, and often looking weary and worn. Into garret and cellar, into dens the most wretched, to human beings the most depraved, this young man penetrates; but wherever he goes I think that he carries with him something of light and cheer. In homely language, but with a directness, kindness, and sincerity which command their attention, he talks to them of a better life; tells them how they may become sober, honest, and happy. He does more; he offers to assist them, to show them how they may become industrious and earn a reputable living; he does still more—he takes these neglected little ones of these dark abodes by the hand and leads them forth to the soft-eyed women who will wash their sad little faces, cover them with whole garments, and teach them day after day in the Mission-schools.

From his plain dress and bearing, he is one whom (had she never seen him before) Kate Murphy would declare was "no gran' gintleman," and his face is by no means handsome. Still I like it exceedingly. I like the manly forehead, the clear frank eyes with the shadow of sadness in them, the earnest air and look of sincerity which radiates from every feature. Yes, I like this face, and have a most sincere regard for its owner. This young city missionary is George Washington Peacock. I doubt if he will ever receive a call to a church in Fifth Avenue.

There are other and fitter "calls" for George Washington. In the lonely villages of the frontier; on the endless prairies of the great West, where houses are scattered and churches rare; where the children pine for new books and Sabbath-school libraries of their longingly remembered Eastern homes; where immigrants hunger for the bread of life, and lonely women weep as they recall the lost privileges of their youth—the meeting-house, the minister, the minister's wife (though perchance they found much fault with her once); where a warm and honest heart, a simple and sincere utterance, are prized more than all priestly polish, all oratorical grace—there George Washington Peacock, with his Bible and bag of red-cheeked books, will be received as a messenger direct from God. In some stark pine school-house, blistering unsheltered in a fierce prairie sun, or in some little log meeting-house, from miles away will gather "the neighbors"—men with white hair, grandames leaning on their sticks; bronzed men, bony

matrons, young men, maidens, and little children, to listen with eager tears to the immortal story of a loving and saving Redeemer as it falls from the young missionary's lips. Or in the haunts of great cities where squalor and vice abide; amid "common people" like those from whose veins he sprang; in a thousand ways and in a thousand places, can George Washington Peacock love and labor. He no longer speaks of "Miss Hope;" long ago ago that name died from his lips. Neither has he ever manifested any personal preference or attachment for any other lady. Through all his mortal life, through all changes of time and fortune, will Hope Avondale be enshrined "all lonely in his highest thought," the being who unconsciously to herself has been the angel who has wrought his regeneration.

Victoire fancies that she has found the secret of happiness. She has found it in cherishing the joy which she has, in ceasing to sigh for that which she has not.

She knows of no other way to struggle towards all goodness and purity than to tear away the little secret shoots of evil as fast as they appear before they reach the surface or blossom into acts; tearing them away with unsparing hand, that we may leave space for God's light, room for the good and beautiful to grow within us.

The grandest victories are not those which history records and to which all generations pay homage; nor those the sublimest sacrifices which are emblazoned on the world's escutcheon. A common life is often made not only holy but heroic. The silent triumph of a single obscure soul over its own error or weakness—though never known or praised of men, is reverenced by angels and acknowledged of God.

If growth is the end of existence, how are we to grow into harmonious, perfectly developed beings? Not by being absorbed in a single object, not by cultivating a single faculty will we become mentally and morally distorted; but in allowing this many-sided, myriad-shaded soul which God has given us to develop in complete symmetrical expansion. Then the great life within us will flow to beings without, and we shall never ask—Have we riches to spare?—never dream of merit in its bounteous overflowing. Is it not God's life?

The sun is going away from Les Delices this wondrous summer day—going away in scarlet fire down behind the firs. Gorgeously rifted cloud-piles uplift their pearly peaks above the mountains. The Rhone's arrowy waters — dark, yet tipped with flame—swiftly pierce the rocky passes, while white

sails gleam, and boatmen call upon its breast. Here on the veranda I am writing my last words for you. Are you glad? I get on slowly, for I have to pause so often and look at what I see before me—a picture which fills eye and heart. A little way off, under that spreading larch, sits a gentleman with a book in his hand, but he is not reading it. No, he is looking at just what I am. This gentleman is my lover. "All mankind love a lover!" All women surely do. I should find it very lonesome living without one. My lover is all that I desire—my lover is my husband. Once his face was called cold. But with that soft fire burning in his eyes, with that smile of happiness playing about the mouth, who can call that face cold now? But what are we looking at? Here on the turf, chattering like a magpie, is Azalie; and here is a little cat flying after its tail, and a silken-eared dog bobbing his nose after flies, and a sunny boy whose little life may be measured by twelve happy moons.

A great sight, you say, to absorb a sensible man and woman. Never mind; it suits us. The boy rolls and croons with happiness, feet and hands twinkling in the golden light; he does not pull the cat's tail to the roots till she flies at him with a terrible "yow," nor the dog's ears till he fiercely bites and yelps, but it is only because we will not let him. Azalie declares that she is enchanted with babies now. And certain it is, I never hear a sudden scream indicating that the tender ears and quivering dimples of this one scion of our house has just suffered a malicious pinch. The natural conclusion would be, that in the lapse of time Azalie had grown better tempered. But I prefer to think that the want of pinches is all owing to the fact that Master Henri Frederick Vernoid Rochelle is a vastly more amiable child than Master Augustus Paul Du Pont ever thought of being.

But do I see nothing in the world but this baby? Have I forgotten art? Oh no; I paint pictures still, but no longer childless Niobes and forsaken Œnones. I paint Cupids and Cherubs, and my boy is the model—my boy with his hyacinthine eyes and winged Andalusian feet.

The sun is just going, the earth is all aglow. This is a beautiful world; I love to live in it. Do not you, my friend? If this world, with its clouded loveliness, is still so lovely; if this life, with its sad discipline and brief beginnings, may be made so fair, what must that world be towards which we hasten? What that life upon which we may enter with perfected minds and purified hearts? We may never take each

other's hands, or look into each other's eyes below; yet somewhere along the ages, in the illimitable universe, beyond the stars, I hope we shall meet, and recognise, and love each other.

Good-bye, my friends!

THE END.

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