IS THAT ALL?

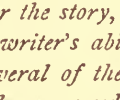
NO NAME SERIES

PUBLISHERS' ADVERTISEMENT.

From the Boston Daily Advertiser.

THE "NO NAME SERIES."

"LEIGH HUNT, *in his 'Indicator,' has a pleasant chapter on the difficulty he encountered in seeking a suitable and fresh title for a collection of his miscellaneous writings. Messrs. Roberts Brothers have just overcome a similar difficulty in the simplest manner. In selecting* "NO NAME," *they have selected the very best title possible for a series of Original American Novels and Tales, to be published Anonymously. These novels are to be written by eminent authors, and in each case the authorship of the work is to remain an inviolable secret. "No Name" describes the Series perfectly. No name will help the novel, or the story, to success. Its success will depend solely on the writer's ability to catch and retain the reader's interest. Several of the most distinguished writers of American fiction have agreed to contribute to the Series, the initial volume of which is now in press. Its appearance will certainly be awaited with curiosity.*"



The plan thus happily foreshadowed will be immediately inaugurated by the publication of "MERCY PHILBRICK'S CHOICE," from the pen of a well-known and successful writer of fiction.

It is intended to include in the Series a volume of anonymous poems from famous hands, to be written especially for it.

The "No Name Series" will be issued at convenient intervals, in handsome library form, 16mo, cloth, price $1.00 each.

ROBERTS BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS.

BOSTON, Midsummer, 1876.

(Wright III, 437

THE "NO NAME SERIES."

(1st ed.)

What is thought of the Initial Volume of the Series,

"MERCY PHILBRICK'S CHOICE."

"'Mercy Philbrick's Choice' reads rather like a record than a story. Its personages are few in number; there is no 'sensation,' almost no plot, yet it is highly interesting. In saying this, we indicate a remarkable story. The stage properties of a novel — events, situations, surprises — are cheap, and easy to come by. It is the higher art which discards these, and trusts for effect to truth and subtlety of character drawing." — *Boston Transcript.*

"A novel wholly out of the common course, both in plot and style. . . . The moral of the book is wholesome, — that no good can come from deceit, and that the relations of life and innocent love should be frank and without concealment. Morbidness works only for misery, and it is the sane and sunny and sound people who get the best out of this life." — *Boston Daily Advertiser.*

"'Mercy Philbrick's Choice' is a story of great power, great depth of thought and feeling, great tenderness and reverence for the truthfulness of truth, and great insight into life. . . . We dare place it alongside George Eliot's latest in point of poetic insight, vigor, and knowledge of life, and to say that it is superior to 'Daniel Deronda' in style, and informed by a purer and deeper philosophy." — *Charles D. Warner, in the Hartford Courant.*

"It is a pleasure, in these days, to get hold of a new American novel which manifests both culture and literary skill. The author of 'Mercy Philbrick's Choice' is evidently a woman who looks upon authorship as something more than a pastime, — a woman of clear intelligent tastes and distinct aspirations. The refined quality of her intellect impresses itself upon the story from first to last." — *New York Tribune.*

"There are many things to be admired in this novel. The artistic delineation of character and the subtle rendering of the human atmosphere show a keen appreciation of the delicate shades which make personality and influence the life of ourselves and others." — *The Liberal Christian.*

"It is a striking and touching story, — this new one, — and will be greatly read and admired, as it deserves to be. There is even genius in some of its touches, which remind one of a feminine counterpart to Hawthorne." — *Springfield Republican.*

"The volume is interspersed with some of the sweetest poems to which these latter days have given birth, showing that the author is a master of poesy as well as of fascinating fiction." — *Hartford Post.*

"It is a story of the simplest motives, but as lovely and heart-holding as a sweet folk-song. Every page is endearingly true to the innermost part of humanity, and the author transcribes the workings of hearts and minds with no less faithfulness than she (we insist that it is a 'she') gives exquisite pictures of nature and the handiwork which 'fashions in silence.' The story is from the pen of a poet, and the inter-current verses are each and all gems of 'ray serene,' not too flashing, but very, very appreciable to eyes which have learned how to weep." — *Boston Traveller.*

"Read the book, which is fascinating. The author is certainly a woman. And she is a poet, too, of no mean powers, as is proved by the half dozen short poems in the book. The sonnet engraved on Mercy's tombstone is not surpassed by any of Wordsworth." — *Troy Whig.*

"This book is a novel only in the sense that George Eliot's books are novels. The story is subordinated to showing the inevitable working out of opposing moral forces. The characters, well drawn as some of them are, are hardly more than dial-pointers on the clock of fate. Of dramatic motive there is more than enough." — *The Unitarian Review.*

In one volume, 16mo. Cloth. Gilt and red-lettered. $1.00.

Our publications are to be had of Booksellers. When not to be found, send directly to

ROBERTS BROTHERS, Publishers, Boston.

NO NAME SERIES.

IS THAT ALL?

NO NAME SERIES.

"Is the Gentleman anonymous? Is he a Great Unknown?"
Daniel Deronda.

Harriet Waters Preston

Is That All?

BOSTON:
ROBERTS BROTHERS.
1876.

CONTENTS.

IS THAT ALL?

CHAPTER I.

CALL IT NOT PROVINCIAL!

ON the first of November, just ten years ago, the great world of Guildford had all come back to town. Veritable metropolitans, of recent wealth and eminence, may smile at the notion that so unimportant a place can have a great world at all; but all who are well versed in the social traditions of this country understand perfectly the import of the phrase "one of the best families of Guildford." I am in a position to introduce my reader to the best families, but it must of course depend somewhat upon himself whether he makes his way among them.

A fine, mature old inland city is Guildford, as the summer tourists who sometimes rest there for a night, on their swift transit along the great railway-routes that graze it, only begin to know. If haply these, after partaking of a multifarious late dinner at the biggest and costliest of Guildford's hotels, wander upward and westward in the late sunset, they find broad, quiet streets, elm-shaded, and relieved by tidy, bowery little parks, with handsome houses, and elderly churches, not too many or too fine. Highest of all — for the cross-streets are very tolerably steep — they come upon a truly noble avenue. Here the houses are set far apart, and separated by old-fashioned lawns and gardens. Hardly one of these mansions will own to less than sixty or seventy years — which is almost as good for practical purposes as battlements and a moat — and their deep-seated rear windows look down upon an undefiled stretch of the

river, which almost enfolds Guildford in its sharp curve, and, beyond this, over a peculiarly sweet expanse of farming, fruit-growing country.

The inquisitive tourist, whom for a moment we follow, breathed a little by the steep ascent, is wont to rest awhile against the foliage-crowned, strict garden-walls that intervene between the houses on River Avenue, and, blinking in the last rays of the vanishing sun, to wonder why the houses are all closed, and the gardens into which he peeps a trifle neglected and overgrown, and why in the world people who own such places need abandon them in the summer. Like many other needless things, it is a fashion. The people who originally built the River Avenue houses happened, almost all of them, to possess farms and orchards somewhere in that stretch of green country to the west, and to care enough for these, and for a genuine old-fashioned coun-

try life, to retain them and return thither for some part, at least, of every summer; and the taste has been cherished.

Of course, then, the custom would be imitated as closely as possible by the people who came to live in those other pleasant streets which were created a little lower than River Avenue, and I have occasionally heard the denizens of these last allege in explanation of their perfunctory exile, that they like to avoid the espionage of our poor, harmless, idle summer tourists.

There is a little affectation in this. I cannot but think that the people of Second and Third Streets often find the custom irksome which obliges them to forsake their spacious and comfortable domiciles for hot cars and stifling attics during a part of July and August.

But for their noble exemplars one row above them, who have both the polish of the city and the dignified free-handedness of the coun-

try, who give you cream and fruit from "the farm" — delightful boast — all the year round, whose well-mannered sons love field sports, and the beauty of whose tall daughters is of a round and rosy order, — for them I have a kind of religious admiration and a very honest envy. I think them the most fortunate people in the world in their external circumstances, except the English gentry.

The temptation is great to go on moralizing about Guildford, which I know so well and always find an interesting subject for theory and reflection; but I must restrain myself, and make my preliminaries as few and brief as possible.

In fine, therefore, the society of Guildford is rather largely professional, owing to the fact that the courts are held there, and also because there is a richly-endowed Episcopal College in the pleasantest suburb, and it is just sufficiently literary. You meet with, perhaps, an

unusual number of people who have written a book, and some of them (the books, I mean,) are not so bad.

Nevertheless, the amusements of the place are by no means as exclusively serious, æsthetic, and instructive as they are in ———, for instance. The art actually survives in Guildford of giving a party where the guests include both old and young, where no "paper" is read, and where there is a supper both moderate in quantity and original in *menu*. The result is that, although confessed conversation is almost unknown, in Guildford everybody talks freely, briefly, and, for the most part, brightly. It is, perhaps, not so civilized as for the many to listen while the few harangue, but it is less monotonous.

There is a charming little theatre where every great artist who visits this country is usually heard at least once; and joyous are the nights when everybody goes, — joyous and

agreeable to behold; for the ladies of Guildford cling obstinately to the tradition of bare heads and opera-cloaks.

In the intervals of these great occasions, or what may be called the interstellar spaces, I must confess that the pretty stage and convenient ante-rooms of the tasteful little playhouse are apt to be given over to amateur performances, in which the children of the stockholders prink and pose, and ingeniously avoid embracing in the interest of this or that charity, and there is as much native dramatic ability in Guildford as elsewhere, and more intelligence and practice.

During the four years of the civil war indeed — hardly eighteen months ended when my story begins — there had been a long suspense of innocent fun. Great would have been the scorn of Guildford and her daughters if her favorite sons could have trodden any mimic stage during that solemn time. The building

had been often used, but strangely. Real, faltering prayers had been breathed behind the dim footlights, and the delicately-colored and gilded auditorium had resounded to sobs as often as to applause. But the long agony was over now. Some of the young heroes had come back braced and bronzed into a new semblance, and others were growing up to fill the places of those who would never come, and the tide of life began once more to run and ripple brightly.

The war had made other changes and broken down some ancient barriers. Six years before, to some one expatiating on the charms of society in Guildford, a knowing stranger had observed, "But you have not yet named the first requisite of a splendid and successful society. Have you a queen?"

"Oh, better than that!" was the prompt reply. "We have rival queens!"

I think, however, that in the old times the

rivalry had been too distant for the best general effect, and the lines of division too deeply drawn. Mrs. Pryor honestly despised Mrs. Anderson, and Mrs. Anderson had a genuine horror of Mrs. Pryor. Mrs. Pryor went seldom to a Unitarian chapel of the extreme left. Mrs. Anderson was a devout Churchwoman. Mrs. Pryor was just as advanced and adventurous in all her views as the ever-graceful traditions of my favorite town would allow. Mrs. Anderson was obstinately and sweetly conservative.

In reality the professed unbeliever was subject to frequent and serious convictions of many kinds, and the professed believer was troubled by very few which were independent. Both had a good deal of the pride of life about them; but the one strove with it — theoretically — on democratic principles; the other — quite as theoretically — on religious. Both were actively benevolent; but the time had

been when either would sooner have seen a pet eleemosynary suffer just a little than be relieved by the other. Then came the swift overflow of a universal cause, sweeping them into one mind and one work; and, for a while, they almost thought they loved, and could never again wholly misunderstand one another. Further particulars about the joint sovereigns you will discover for yourselves; but I pray you mind them well, for I foresee that one of them, at least, may prove a principal heroine of my story.

And so it was the first of November, 1866, and half-a-dozen of the young men and maidens of Guildford had met among the superb and silent casts in the entrance hall of the new Art Museum. The Museum was the bequest of Benjamin Burrage, who, in dying, sacrificed to the graces, which he had ever defied in life. The sum devised had been allowed to accumulate from 1835 to 1860. Then a building had

been modestly founded, fitly left unfinished for four years, but now modestly completed and inaugurated, and naturally, in its freshness, it was a favorite place of resort.

To-day, there slowly trod its tasteful tiles Isabel Rae, who had been three years abroad, and spoke concerning the objects about her as one having authority; fair Annie Faxon and her school-girl sister, still in mourning; Emily Richards; Capt. Henry McArthur, who had left his dalliance after Isabel to join the volunteers, and who had now a stiff elbow-joint and a white seam, half-hidden by the curls above his left temple; and George Aspinwall, a clever lawyer of twenty-nine, who had never abandoned his position on the home-guard, and had been half prized and half despised by the girls of '62 and 63 as a myopic exempt.

Miss Rae was remarking that the Pryors were come, and — "Oh, have you seen them? How is the Colonel?" cried a trio of youthful

voices in varying tones of sweet, high-pitched solicitude.

"I saw Mrs. Pryor just one moment. Her husband is very little better, and still suffers fearfully from nervous restlessness. The doctors say he won't leave his room this winter."

"It is horrible!" sighed Annie Faxon.

"Perfectly beastly!" cried her sister Grace.

"It destroys exactly two-thirds of the pleasure of life," pronounced the lively Miss Richards. "I shall take to daily service and ecclesiastical embroidery."

But Capt. McArthur shrugged his broad shoulders, and Mr. Aspinwall remarked, with the touch of sarcasm which he affected, that he was resigned, and thought it uncommonly kind of Heaven to afford "us young fellows" one more chance.

"You will do your best, I am sure," said Miss Richards, with gracious impertinence; "but what will that be without the great, crea-

tive organizing mind? You know yourself, Mr. Aspinwall, how we languished in its absence.

"Oh, come," said McArthur, "the Colonel is a brave soldier as well as a great swell. It is quite possible to be both, you know. A great many fellows are; and I am proud to have obeyed him. But when it comes to original genius in entertainment, and that sort of thing, their house was, of course, the pleasantest in Guildford, but I think it was always Mrs. Pryor who did it. The Colonel's function in the old days used to strike me as chiefly ornamental. We can spare him much the better of the two, I should say, and if Madam will only— "

"But of course," interrupted Miss Faxon, with the ready indignation of a *rousse*, "she will not leave him! I know I would never! And she has been perfectly devoted!"

"Yes, indeed," added George Aspinwall, with hardly perceptible mockery, "but, do you

know, I don't think Mrs. Pryor can be a fanatical wife. She's a lady of the very broadest views, and if once convinced that the general interests of society require her to forsake the luxurious retirement of her lord's sick-room, we shall have her at the helm again, take my word for it! No such good news for Mrs. Anderson as her retirement! I shouldn't wonder if even the Sunday receptions were revived in a modified form. How would that agree with daily service, Miss Richards?"

"Not at all, of course! I mentioned daily service as an alternative."

But stately Miss Rae, never a devoted listener, observed dreamily:

"The worst of it all to me is, that such a man must continue to suffer. His sensibilities are so exquisite! He so religiously adores personal beauty, and health, and perfection." Then she paused and colored slightly, feeling herself in the focus of Aspinwall's eye-glasses,

and presently added, with a wave of her lace parasol, "I think that Silenus, with the infant Bacchus, the finest thing in the whole collection. It is a glorious cast!"

Before any one was sufficiently collected to respond appropriately to this æsthetic outburst, an interruption occurred.

"Excuse me, Miss Rae, but" — to the group in general — "were you not speaking of Col. Pryor? How is he?"

The lady who had swept in among them, with her long silk train and close-fitting jacket of black velvet, had a voice of honey and a smile like September sunshine. The rest deferred to Isabel, who repeated her unfavorable report coldly.

"Oh, I am *so* grieved!" mourned the mellifluous tones. "And is Mrs. Pryor extremely worn?"

"I scarcely saw her. She looked much as usual."

"She has *such* endurance! Pray tell me, has the Colonel an appetite? Does he like little delicacies and remembrances? Flowers? fruit? Of course they have everything; but one likes to be attentive if one knows the right way. I always thought the Colonel such a fastidious creature, and now he is a hero besides! Good-morning!" and with a graceful, general inclination, she turned away.

Miss Richards could have smitten herself for glancing at Mr. Aspinwall, but the temptation was too swift and slight.

"There goes a sincere mourner," said that gentleman, softly.

"There goes a beautiful woman," said Capt. McArthur, playfully saluting the departing figure.

The lady was Mrs. Anderson.

CHAP. II.

CAMARILLA.

ON a bright but chilly afternoon, a few days later, in a long western chamber of the best house on River Avenue, a handsome man of forty-five lay flat upon a low, luxurious couch, with the dawn of a whimsical smile upon his delicate features; and a handsome woman of about the same age sat in an arm-chair, facing him, the image, for the time, of perplexity and disheartenment.

The room was pleasant. A lacquered screen — a marvel of Japanese art — shut off the flicker of the open fire-light from the eyes of the invalid, and the blue shades were drawn, and the fine lace curtains lowered at the two nearest windows. But in at the third, behind

his head, the afternoon sun streamed brightly, the half-opened door of a spacious dressing-room gave a yet longer vista, the bed was curtained away in an alcove, the pictures were appropriate, though few, easy-chairs abounded, and the low tables were heaped with books and gay with flowers.

I fancy that, ever since you listened to the talk of those idle young people in the Art Museum, you have half despised Alfred Pryor in your heart as a ladies' pet, but, sure as fate, your prejudice will falter in his presence. You see now, that his features, for all their extreme fineness, escape effeminacy; and though long confinement has haplessly removed the bronze color that, for a time, adorned that face so well, a new dignity is coming with the fast whitening hair, and, in the quick hazel eye, and set of the expressive lips, you may see lurking the spirit which made their previously *dilettante* possessor,

when the hour came, reckless of danger, and regnant over men.

The comeliness of Augusta Pryor, on the other hand, was of anything but a disarming order. Her steady, purple-blue eyes appeared to issue a careless command for admiration, which you might obey or disregard. She was, in fact, far too stout to be appealing, although I feel almost a traitor when I say so; for Heaven only knows how bitter the fact was to her. Once she had been tall and lithe, now she was tall, and, as it is tenderly termed, magnificent; but, although at war with her own proportions, she scorned the worse than useless expedients of small gloves and tight dressing, piled her gray hair high above her unwrinkled brow, and lifted ever so little the undeniably duplicate chin, which once had been only bewitchingly round. In her rare moments of entire repose, this towering creature had often an absurd consciousness of what she conceived to

be the deterioration of her appearance; but the moment she began to speak, she forgot her looks, while those who heard, seldom forgot her. Hers was, in fact, a somewhat distinguished gift of speech,—deep-voiced, earnest, eloquent; always animated, and, at long intervals, impassioned. Now she sat silent and was not thinking of herself, but her depression of spirits would hardly have been recognized as such by an ordinary observer, for it was chiefly betrayed by an anxious frown and a sort of pout, sterner than it had been twenty-five years agone, and not so engaging on the lips which did not close quite easily over Augusta's regular and beautifully preserved teeth.

When the husband and wife had regarded one another almost as long as silence once prevailed in heaven, the former spoke lightly, —"Well, my love, here we are, and you appear not to like the prospect!"

"Don't jest, Alfred! Of course it is you I

am thinking of. I am so bitterly disappointed in the result of the summer. I cannot see that you have made the faintest gain, after all we have been through."

"Nor I either, Gus, dear, and it's insupportable of me! And I can't even go on my knees to show my self-contempt!"

"Oh, do not mock me! Poor dear! But one would fancy you thought me sorry for myself. And so I am, in part, I dare say, for I am an extremely selfish woman, Alfred. But the question is, How can we face another wearing winter like the last? How can you bear it, and how can I bear seeing you bear it?"

"That's the very point," said Alfred, with sudden seriousness, "of which I have been thinking, whenever I could think for a week, and I have made up what was formerly my mind. Augusta, you shall not see it! It would be sheer nonsense for you to watch me as you did last year. Your wisest course and

truest kindness will be to leave me alone, — that is to say, with some stolid attendant whom I can abuse when I like. No " — with a languid wave of the hand — " don't take fire, please. I can endure after a fashion, in silence, just as your own sex do whom you occasionally taunt me with resembling. But I can't have a spectacle made of my endurance. You know the sort of Pagan I am — "

" You are more a saint than any Christian — "

" Thanks, but you know what I have worshipped, — symmetry, perfection of aspect, and function; in a word, beauty! Your beauty, my dear, — all beauty, even what they foolishly told me was my own. When I went to the war, the thing I dreaded was by no means death, but mutilation, disfigurement. It was morbid, of course, but whatever personal virtue I had in going into action, consisted in defying that keenly-realized dread. When I lay in

that nauseous hospital in the Wilderness, shot through the thighs, and heard the doctor say my legs were safe, I could only exult in my escape. And then, a year later, when we thought it all right, and the hideous war-dream over, comes Nemesis, or Providence, or whatever you choose to call it —"

"Say Nemesis!" interrupted the lady quickly. "If you should drop into cant in your weakness, Alfred, it would be, I think, the last drop that would make my cup run over. When these pious people talk about Providence, they appear to mean simply the power that lets them have their own way. 'So *providential!*' Rose Anderson says, when things go to suit her. Whereas, if there's any Providence about it, the things that afflict and annoy us must be equally providential."

"You are perfectly right, *mon amie*," interrupted the sick man, clinching the fist concealed by the India shawl spread over him,

"but somehow abstract questions fatigue me most of all."

"Pardon me, dear!"

"No, pardon me. Here I am, at all events, laid flat by something mighty; half of me lifeless, and the other half, upon my honor, Augusta, so horribly racked and tormented at times —"

"Don't I know it, my love?" cried Mrs. Augusta, with a hearty sob, pressing her white handkerchief violently to her eyes for one instant, then springing up and falling upon him with a score of earnest kisses, "and your patience is wonderful!"

"My patience is not to be mentioned," replied the victim, almost sternly. "I suppose good manners help, and you know what place they occupy in my thirty-nine articles; but I am so profoundly convinced that I have just what I deserve, only not enough, that even the fact that the original hurt was got in the ser-

vice of my country seems of small significance. I can and will bear whatever is coming, but not with even your eyes always upon me."

"Better mine than any stranger's, Alf."

"No, no," — wearily.

"You do not think me a good nurse."

"I think, my admirable darling, that there are 'diversities of gifts,' as Shakespeare says."

"Shakespeare, you heathen! It was St. Paul!"

"*C'est égal!* You are glorious in a drawing-room! You are a planetary power in charitable societies! And I don't want either the rich or the poor to suffer and go astray because I am tossing, feverish, in the lap of luxury! I don't want the social traditions and the hospitable fame of this house to perish! I don't want our vigilant rival miles ahead of us. And when it comes to ministering angels, Gus, dear, you know yourself that yours are not

exactly the noiseless footfall and soft gray gowns of fiction."

"I can wear winsey, I suppose," answered Augusta, re-seating herself with a sigh, which was not for the rich black silks, which she knew became her best, "but" — with a gleam of drollery in her despair — "no woman ever tried harder to pine away than I have done for a year, and 'tis of no use! Winter and summer accumulate me alike."

"Thank Heaven!" said the Colonel gallantly, "I glory in your splendid vitality all the more, that 'tis all I have left to glory in!"

"Do you mean, Alfred, that you never expect to be well?"

"The Lord only knows what I shall be," came the answer at last, with sharp impatience. "I know, as I say, that I have less than my share, if I never recover. To think of what I have seen happen to men!"

"You are very tired, now."

"I am in an agony, an' it please you! And in Heaven's name, why won't you open that door where somebody has been pounding so long?"

The timid tap had been inaudible to Mrs. Augusta, who rose with a slight flush, and received a half-dozen letters from the hands of a new maid, who as yet stood in great awe both of her master and mistress. But when the lady turned her to the couch again, its occupant said sweetly, —

"I am a brute, Gus, dear, and you must feel the justice of all I have said." And he stretched out his hand to her with a smile, which brought the tears to her eyes again, and made her feel that the wayward love of the wreck of him was the most precious treasure a woman ever owned. "Can you sleep," she said, "while I read my letters?"

"Of course I can, if you bid me;" and Augusta was already too deep in her first

missive to feel all the mild irony of his reply.

Number one proved unimportant. Number two was a summons to the annual meeting of one of the many societies of which Mrs. Pryor was an active member. Number three was an application for admission to the Old Ladies' Home, of which she was president. Number four, an amazing bill for the books which she had from time to time ordered sent to the Mineral Springs, where they had passed their weariful summer. Number five detained, and finally absorbed her. It was from an intimate friend of hers in former days, now an active and distinguished citizeness of a larger city than Guildford, and this was the pregnant passage: —

"And now, my child, I wish to bespeak your attention to my last *protégée*, the most interesting creature under heaven. Don't tell

me that you cannot spare a thought from your husband! If our elegant Colonel is to remain a cripple, — which Heaven forbid! I declare the thought is maddening! — the very worst thing you can do is to sit on the end of his sofa and mope. I don't know which it would harm more, — you or him. Least of all ought you to abstain from deeds of charity; so hear about my little girl, and consider what you can do for her.

"I found her up at Franconia, where we spent July and August. Mrs. Bellamy Griffin had her as a sort of nursery-governess to those scrawny twins of hers. She came in answer to an advertisement, and was too inexperienced to know that she needed recommendations, so Mrs. B. G., with her usual luck, got a treasure very cheap. Her French is delicious, and her music, — but of that by and by. She isn't pretty, but has an unusual sort of face, and her manners are captivating. Mrs. Griffin was

already so jealous, and afraid somebody would steal her prize, that I had the greatest difficulty in approaching her; but I was resolute, and at last got my way, and extracted from the poor little thing a confession of her sufferings.

"Mrs. G. was working her to death, and even those hideous wenches were authorized to snub her. She had taken the place as the first thing that offered, because she was in extremity. She is a widow, though only twenty-three, and her name is Hortense Drown. Her husband left no money, and all her other relatives (if a husband is a relative; I know some are absolute, or assume to be so!) are away in Australia, or somewhere at the world's end.

"What she wants is to support herself by teaching music, or by public readings. Your heart will die within you at that word, thinking of all the torments we have undergone, both in public and in private, from professed

readers, but this, I assure you, is a very different thing. I fairly coerced the Griffin, who was as mad as any mediæval one about it, to let Mrs. Drown read one evening in the parlors of the hotel, and everybody was electrified. No rant; just dramatic enough, exquisite intelligence, intense feeling perfectly commanded, and such a voice! I'm not entirely sure about its being powerful enough for a hall, but for a drawing-room, nothing could be more ravishing.

"She would be priceless at your receptions, if you resume them, which I hope and pray you may have the courage and good sense to do! She herself had conceived the very sensible idea that the best place for her, as a music-teacher, would be some moderate-sized provincial city (excuse me!), where there are wealthy people, but not a great many teachers of accomplishments. I think her piano-playing pretty good, but not first-rate; she might have

young pupils, but her reading is the main point.

"What I want is, that you should ask her to Guildford, and just hear her once, and I feel as if her fortune would be made. The Colonel would not object, I am sure, he is so infinitely kind-hearted. And perhaps she might even afford him some distraction. Pray write me just how he is since your return. I am summoned. Yours in haste,

"Laura Thayer Wyllys.

"P.S. — I ought perhaps to say that Peter, my husband, with his wonted magnanimity, keeps insinuating that I know very little about Mrs. Drown. In reality, she is open as the day, and her face and speech ought to be sufficient passports *anywhere*. Peter has just lost $15,000 in a Western railway — why did he put it there? I always charged him not! — and the consequence is that he apprehends the

almshouse, and hasn't a good word for any creature."

Mrs. Pryor was interested. For two moments, while she read, she forgot even her Alfred, — a thing which she would indignantly have declared impossible an hour before. Mrs. Wyllys had in fact appealed to her two principal foibles, — patronage, and the desire to create a social sensation. She had fancied these and all other vanities dead within her, since the husband, to whose versatile gifts and personal fascination she had always felt her fame so largely due, had been stricken and confined. Perhaps the very purest part of the pride she had taken in her position, had been the feeling that it was the joint conquest and dual realm of Alfred and herself; and much of what is best and worst in conventional womanhood, mingled in her feeling of triumphant advantage over Mrs. Anderson, because

her rival was notoriously unhappy and *incomprise* in her domestic relations.

To be sure, Mrs. Anderson had an exquisitely pretty daughter, the sight of whom did sometimes give Augusta a pang, for she and Alfred were childless; but on the whole Mrs. Pryor felt in her perfect harmony with her husband, and their frank toleration of one another's vagaries, a tower of strength. And now the Greek-godlike physique, in whose aspect she had exulted, seemed threatened with irretrievable ruin, although life might linger in it for many an agonizing year; and never, until this hour, had the wife suffered herself to doubt that the world was over for her, and her true place at the sufferer's side, until it might perhaps please Heaven (for her scepticism was, after all, almost pathetically shallow) to amend his case.

But the world, it seemed, and one's responsibilities in it, were not to be set aside so

easily. Her husband himself was tiring of her too anxious and sympathetic supervision, and, at the same time, the sort of appeal was coming to her from without, to which she had ever in the past been so ready to respond. She looked up, longing to lay the concrete case before her lord, but his eyes were closed, and his pallor smote her. Then she sighed and re-read the letter, and was so fired by a sudden vision she had of a sort of pre-Raphaelite woman in an ivory-white silk, sitting in one of the tall carved chairs below, and reading Rossetti to a discriminating audience, that she spoke before she thought: "Alfred, just hear this!"

He opened his eyes wide, with a very natural gleam of fun in them. "Read on, love," he said, with soft reproach. "Why did you keep it from me so long?" And Mrs. Wyllys' letter followed, postscript and all, with the omission of one passage.

"Now, what," said Mrs. Augusta, "ought I to do?"

"Oh, have her here, by all means!"

"But if I do, I must arrange an evening for her, and I cannot have a party in this house with you here! It would be cruel and scandalous and impossible!"

"Never you mind the scandal, and I won't mind the cruelty. Don't you see, *mon amie*, it is exactly what I have been urging? I call it one of Rose Anderson's own 'providences.'"

"But you observe," said Augusta, with resolute fairness, "that Peter Wyllys appears to distrust her. Not that I think much of that. He is always so cantankerous."

"Exactly! and won't listen to reason about his investments! But it's my belief you had better warm a viper or two than be forever embracing my remains."

"Oh, Alfred! you pretend to be heartless, and I believe you really think me so!"

"Never!" he answered, with the sudden and sincere gravity which was always so impressive in him; "but I think, my darling, that your only fair chance of happiness, this winter, is to fill your great heart, as you have always done hitherto, with a hundred active interests and cares. Yes, and your great house too, if you will! Put this girlish widow, whom I'm rather impatient to see, in the south chamber, and a French marquis or a converted Brahmin in the north wing, and fill in with the superfluous old ladies for whom there is no room at the Home, and come to me now and then, in my lucid intervals, and tell me how they hit it off. But don't make me insist, or I shall turn savage in a minute!"

She rose, half yielding, and wholly in love with her husband, and made as if she would kiss him again. Could it be that he forestalled her?

"Hark!" he said, "is not that Belle Rae's voice in the hall?"

"How strangely acute your hearing is, Alf dear. I will see."

"Let her come up, if you like," he said. "Her *poses* tranquillize me."

"With all my heart! The longer she will *pose* for you the better I shall like it. To tell you the truth, I have thought her rather uninteresting lately."

CHAP. III.

AN ANGEL UNAWARES.

MRS. ANDERSON had been Rose Merrivale, famous as a metropolitan belle a certain number of years before. She never told her age, but concealment did not appear to prey upon her. Her beautiful daughter was, at least, eighteen; but Mrs. Anderson looked so much like her, and so little her senior, that they were really sometimes mistaken for one another, and malicious people said that no one was more prone to the mistake than Mrs. Anderson herself. "And how is your mother, dear?" said an old and stately friend of the family, on whom Mrs. Anderson had called, at a watering-place, the previous summer. "Thanks!" was the reply, "I am

my mother." Mrs. Anderson was rather proud of this *mot*, and liked to have it repeated. She did not know that the old lady had abused her sharply after she left, both for saying "thanks," and for wearing a round hat and a masque-veil. "Vulgar, girlish affectations!" had been her withering sentence. Mrs. Anderson had relatives who felt authorized to use the former and more offensive adjective freely with regard to her arrangements.

She had married a man much older than herself, who had not been able to establish her on River Avenue, but only to build a spacious museum of modern improvements, gorgeous with hard wood and fresco, on a corner lot in Second Street, nor did he ever come quite to understand why she should have accepted that residence with ostentatious resignation.

Certainly Seth Anderson was not a person of delicate perceptions. He was practically

rather indulgent to his pretty wife in matters of expenditure, but he had a habit of perpetually twitching the purse-strings, as bad drivers do their reins, by way of keeping ever in her mind where the authority lay. She had had him made a churchwarden, and, though the mildest honors were dear to him, he grumbled much over the heavy charities which were required to maintain their leading position at St. Saviour's.

The portly rector of that important parish had been with Mrs. Anderson all the morning of the day when Mr. and Mrs. Pryor held converse as you know. Mr. Anderson being absent for two days at the metropolis, Dr. Price had remained to lunch, to which Miss Lilian Anderson had descended late from her lofty little sitting-room, cold, and mute, and lovely, bestowing upon the good Doctor, as she entered, the haughtiest and most artificial of dancing-school bows, and watching her mamma

while she dispensed sandwiches and urged the sherry with starry blue eyes of alert observation. The contrast between her style of manners and her style of beauty, which was precisely that of one of Fra Angelico's angels, moved the really genial soul who faced her to some inward amusement and a touch of compunction; but when he had taken his courtly leave, her mother began to remonstrate.

"My darling, how could you treat the dear Doctor so rudely?"

"Stuff and nonsense, mamma!" replied Miss Lily, in the blunt Saxon which leaped so lightly from her saintly lips. "I want to know what he was here for?"

"My child, a thousand things! We have so much to consider at the beginning of what must be so hard a winter, and you know how the Doctor depends upon my co-operation."

"I know how dearly poor papsy has to pay

for your arrangements; but who is to be Dr. Price's assistant, mamma?"

Mrs. Anderson perceived that an engagement was inevitable, and began rapidly to mass her forces. "I don't know, Lily," she said with some dignity, "that you, as a young lady, have any special interest in that question."

"Oh, but indeed I have! you have always urged me to interest myself in church matters, and now I am beginning to do so. And I know quite well, mamma, who has the best right to the place, and almost the promise of it."

"Nobody has either right or promise, child. The Doctor will of course have the person whom he thinks most likely to promote the welfare of the parish; and if Mr. Warburton is willing, for the sake of the good he may do, to occupy, for a time, a subordinate position —"

"Mr. Warburton, mamma? That brawny

Englishman?" and the young lady raised her violet eyes to the lofty ceiling, and looked like a Madonna in a trance.

"I don't know what you mean by *brawny*, Lily. Mr. Warburton is a young gentleman of the very highest breeding, — a specimen of a class whom we very seldom have domesticated among us. He is an ordained clergyman of the *Church*. His uncle is a bishop. He came here to study the condition of the poor in our great cities —"

"Then why don't he stay in our great cities, and study the poor? He seems to me to prefer living on the rich in our little cities. And so Charley is to be thrown over for him!"

"Lily, you amaze me! How dare you talk of *Charley* and *throwing over?*" How can I ever forgive myself for allowing Charles Mason to come here so familiarly?"

"I think it was by way of doing good you

had him, mamma. You acted for the best, and could not foresee the consequences. Only you need not have deceived him about coming back. Uncle Bishop might easily have provided for Mr. Warburton, but Charley —"

"I forbid you're calling him Charley!"

"Excuse me, mamma, but why? Are we not cousins?"

"Second cousins only. No relationship worth mentioning."

"No, mamma — first cousins, once removed. Mr. Warburton himself told me that they name the relationship so in England. Do you know, mamma, he seems to me an odd sort of missionary?"

"He is a young gentleman —"

"Young! He's thirty, if he's a day!"

"— Whom it is a rare privilege for you to meet."

"I hope it may be a very rare privilege

indeed, this winter. Now I must go to my music-lesson. Good-by, mamma!"

But midway, in the adjustment of her miraculous hat, this pert young person paused, darted to her Davenport, and scrawled the following succinct note, in the large, rapid hand affected by the blonde angel of the period: —

"DEAR C.: — Don't set your heart on the place at St. Saviour's. Mamma is plotting with Dr. Price to have that Englishman, whom you saw at the orchard-party in September. You thought he could not be a clergyman, but he is, very much so indeed; and I'm afraid it's all over. You know I am sorry.

"Yours always, L."

As the young lady poised this missive in her slim, gloved hand, ready for a dexterous shot into the slit of the next public mail-box, she

was aware of swift and mighty footsteps just around the corner, and the shadow of a lifted hat on the pavement at her feet, and looking up she received a bow — which she had the taste to admire, and resolved that Charley should learn — from a fair man of excellent though unusually large proportions, and an air of unqualified distinction. Her acknowledgment of the salute was slight enough, and she receded half a step as if to facilitate his passing, but his own intentions appeared doubtful. He halted, and murmured that the day was fine.

"It is very cold, I think," said Miss Anderson, with an air of politely smothered intentness upon her destination.

"Ah, yes! Of course! Expected in the States at this season. Don't let me detain you. Would you mind telling me if I should find Mrs. Anderson at home just now?"

"Mamma was there when I left," the young lady answered, sweeping onward with an ex-

ceedingly oblique bow. Midway of the next block she met Emily Richards.

"Was not *that*," inquired this observant young woman, "the noble Briton? And they say he is actually to remain here this winter, in benighted Guildford, and hold mission services, and help Dr. Price generally. Why, it will be as good as a curate in a novel! Is it not wonderful, the way our pleasures are provided for? Why, as our rector observes, do we ever despond? A live English gentleman and philanthropist is furnished us, just as we hear that Col. Pryor will not go out this winter! Is it not sad that the dear Colonel is no better? But I forgot, Lily, that you hate him. Tell me, however, is this true about milord? You know, of course!" And Miss Richards took breath.

"Who says it?" demanded Lily.

"Who says everything? The Faxons, naturally, and George Aspinwall. The rest of us

are but base imitators of them. Heavens, Lily! What makes you look so wrathful?"

"Oh!" replied the young lady, resuming her seraphic expression. "I'm cross. Yes"—with a sigh—"I suppose it is true."

Meanwhile the athlete strode onward, and Mrs. Anderson, who had retired in some disturbance of mind to her own little boudoir, saw him coming from its commanding bow-window, and was glad. She took his card with a smile, paused only to throw a fleecy white shawl over her blue-silk-clad shoulders—for the November day had darkened, and was really chill, and fires had not yet all their winter fervor—and was presently bidding him welcome in her drawing-room with all the soft and easy cordiality peculiar to her manner as a hostess. She was even good enough to reproach him with not coming to lunch.

"Many thanks!" replied the young English-

man, dropping his fine eyes for an instant, "but I was engaged elsewhere."

His modesty gave her an undefined notion that he had been "prospecting" in the unsavory districts which were to be the principal scene of his enlightened labors; and "how easily," she reflected, "does philanthropy sit on a man of his traditions!"

"I need not tell you," she said, with her justly celebrated smile, as she dropped into a low arm-chair and admired the careless ease with which her visitor appropriated a small sofa to his long person, and flung his white hand over the satin arm, "I need not tell you how deeply grateful I felt, this morning, when our good rector told me that you had almost consented to remain with us this winter. You will lighten the dear man's labors, and give him the benefit of your practical experience, in this immense and difficult parish of his. It

seems an extraordinary sacrifice for a man in your position."

"Do not mention that," said Mr. Warburton with a faint blush, which became his fair countenance well.

"But since you have given your life to this good work, and are here in America partly for the purpose — "

"Yes," said Mr. Warburton, with becoming gravity, "I have seen something of the English poor."

"You held a London curacy, I think?"

"I worked in a city parish for two years. I have seen sights there such as I shall not see in Guildford, I fancy."

"You really think the condition of our poor less wretched than your own?"

"In a place like Guildford, undoubtedly. Perhaps they are as badly off in your largest cities and great manufacturing towns."

"It is a noble work!" sighed Mrs. Ander-

son, vaguely enthusiastic, and fixing her fine eyes on her guest with a look of complete and rather affecting appreciation, "but we shall try to make your sojourn among us as tolerable as possible, and not to let you feel yourself too much an exile."

"Oh, I like America," said the young man, "and the Americans. They seem uncommonly civil and cordial to strangers."

"Not to all, I fear," replied the lady, with an emphasis which was obviously flattering. "Or rather," she added, "I ought to say, that I hope we are beginning to discriminate a little among those whom we receive into our homes and our hearts. Our reckless hospitality in the past, has been a positive foible. We have welcomed every one, almost, without inquiry; and you would never believe, my dear Mr. Warburton, how fearfully we have been imposed upon!"

"Ah, how so?"

"By foreigners, who have come to us under

false pretences. You must know that everything connected with the Old World has really been so fascinating to us; and especially everything which seemed to savor of that social state and dignity which our forefathers renounced for us" —

Mrs. Anderson became conscious that she was confounding our forefathers with our godfathers, and paused, a little bewildered; but her guest seemed to divine her meaning.

"Ah, I see; noblemen, and that sort of thing. You mean that persons have assumed titles which did not belong them. I should say they would be much more likely to drop those they have; for you know, Mrs. Anderson, more or less of those fellows are really coming here now. They are curious to see the country which did not go to pieces when they expected."

"And desired, — is it not so? Ah, Mr. War-

burton, you were rather cruel to us during the war!"

"I admit that we were unfair to the North. A good deal of twaddle was talked about Southern chivalry, and nobody took the trouble to question it, — I mean among gentlemen. There were plenty of cads who were fierce in your behalf, as I can testify. But we see our blunder now, and are ready to make you our most dogged apology."

"It is quite unnecessary, I assure you," said Mrs. Anderson sweetly. "You and I, at least, my dear Mr. Warburton, have had no quarrel. And I ought perhaps to say," she added, out of the lady-like instinct which was really in her, and only overlaid by her innocent affectations, "that when I spoke of being deceived, I did not mean merely with regard to the rank of the strangers who visit us, but their actual character. It has sometimes seemed as if no foreigner ever came here, who did not ulti-

mately prove to be under some sort of cloud. And this is why," she pursued, with her utmost warmth of accent and radiance of expression, "we are so particularly happy to welcome one whose credentials are unquestionable, and the self-devotion of whose purposes puts us all to shame."

Mr. Warburton bowed. "You are very good," he said, with a glimmer of his white teeth, "and I'm very lucky not to be confounded with the rascals. As to rank," he added, smiling more broadly, "I'm sorry to say that my father is a baronet, and a deucedly poor one, — pardon me! — and I'm only his third son."

"Where is your family seat?" inquired Mrs. Anderson, blandly overlooking the unclerical adverb.

"In Sussex. I have a small picture of the house here. Perhaps you would like to see it." And he produced from a pocket a lacquered case and a six-inch photograph, which, rising,

he submitted to Mrs. Anderson. It represented an ancient stone mansion, with a drive and a grass-plat, and a cedar of Lebanon, and a glimpse of some fine oaks, at a little distance, on the left.

"How very English, and how very charming!" cried the lady. "Ah, did you know that you gave me two cards? But perhaps I ought not to have seen the other, Mr. Warburton," and before she had finished the words Mrs. Anderson had received an impression of an exceedingly picturesque head, with a sort of Spanish veil thrown over it, and had contrived to turn the *carte* enough to see that there was indeed a London name on the reverse.

Mr. Warburton certainly looked embarrassed, and stammered more, even, than is Anglican.

"Oh! — Ah! — I did not know, — I believe

— Allow me, madam. Yes, — 'tis a cousin of mine, but 'tis of no consequence!"

Mrs. Anderson politely forebore to smile at the classic quotation, merely observing, as she gave up the card, "She, at least, does not look English. Spanish rather, or Provençal. Something excessively Latin. How odd and pretty that drapery is!"

"Private theatricals," the young man explained. "It was taken in character;" but the photograph was already restored to its hiding-place.

Mrs. Anderson made a passing resolution not to forget it; but she thought that ingenuous shyness of her guest, combined with so much *savoir faire*, quite captivating, and she gave him the warmest and widest of invitations, when presently he took his leave.

CHAP. IV.

ANOTHER.

A MONTH later, on the second week in December, Augusta Pryor found herself pledged to the introduction of Mrs. Drown. The interesting stranger was, in fact, expected that very evening, and Mrs. Pryor had just been superintending, in person, the last touches of preparation in the cheery bed-room where the wanderer was to abide. Now it had occurred to her that it was high time to be writing the invitations for Mrs. Drown's reading; for though Guildford was not strenuous about a whole week's notice, it always liked some days to obviate other engagements, when an evening at the Pryors' was in question.

So the lady of the house was now sitting in

a deep alcove of the library with a quire of cream-laid paper untouched before her, and a somewhat heavy heart. Always in past years, except when he was absent in the army — and then she had received little formal company — her leisurely lord had done this service for her. Everything about her spoke of him; for the room was his favorite. The curiously-convenient writing-table, at which she sat, he himself had designed. Those groups of little water-color sketches were his own reminiscences of journeys and campaigns, for he was clever with his pencil. The binding of the books, the priceless bric-a-brac, the rich, deep shades of green and blue that were blended in the walls and draperies, were all the expression of his fancy. Above the generous and rather grandly-appointed fireplace hung that ironically handsome portrait of herself (so Mrs. Augusta thought), every stroke of which he had most anxiously superintended.

And here she was, among the mementos of his taste, beginning to live the old life without him. The old life? Oh, no! How altered must all things be in the absence of that bright and versatile spirit which, to the wife's mind, had animated all. For a moment, her sense of loss and separation had the bitterness of death itself. "I am acting as if he were dead, and had long been dead;" she said to herself, and the poignant sadness of the thought paralyzed even her energies. When presently Annette, the little maid, beginning now to know that her mistress was not always as awful as she appeared, announced Miss Rae and Miss Faxon, Mrs. Pryor, although she frowned a little at the latter name, arose, and met them almost eagerly.

"You are come just in time to help me, girls," she said, in her sovereign way. "Belle, my dear, you know I am unused to this sort of thing, and you are both of you such idle crea-

tures. Come here, and write my invitations for Mrs. Drown's reading!"

"Oh, not I, Mrs. Pryor!" objected Annie Faxon, in her falsetto tones — foolish, but ever voluble — "I write the most shocking hand!"

"It will answer, I dare say," said Mrs. Augusta carelessly, proceeding to make another place at the writing-table, and provide a second pen. "Here is the list. The simplest formula possible, Belle."

"Oh, really!" pursued the fatuous Faxon, "you must excuse me; I should so like to be of use, but I have an engagement."

"Certainly, Miss Faxon. And you, Isabel?"

"No," replied dignified Belle, in her deliberate manner, "I have none. I can write."

Then she drew off her gloves, and laid her fur aside, and lifted and fingered, with some hesitation, a loosely-twisted paper which she had laid upon the table. "Here are some rather choice rosebuds."

"For the Colonel?" inquired Mrs. Pryor, absently. "Yes, I will take them. I hear his bell now. But he positively complains, sometimes, that he is half suffocated with flower-scent."

Miss Faxon laughed, when the door had closed behind the departing lady. "Is that what you call gracious and tender?" she asked. "Overbearing thing! What a goose you are, Belle, to slave for her!"

"I don't see any slavery in writing a few notes for one to whom we are all so much indebted. And if you fancy her unfeeling, it's because you don't know her. She was ready to cry when she asked us to write, at the thought that the Colonel used to do all this. That was why she was so abrupt."

"Nonsense! Some one told George Aspinwall that Dr. Witherspoon said that Col. Pryor's affection was almost purely nervous, and immensely aggravated by that overpower-

ing wife of his. If she could be taken away from him, they said, his chance would be much better."

"I would not tell that in this house, if I were you," said Miss Rae, with rising color. "It was George Aspinwall who used to insist that the Colonel was a coward."

Then Miss Faxon took her leave; and Isabel wrote for an hour, carefully, patiently, elegantly. At the end of that time Mrs. Pryor reappeared, her face changed and bright, and her manner at its warmest.

"You dear girl!" she said; "what a deal you have done! How can I thank you? And now I am so happy and encouraged! When Alfred learned that you were here, he said he would like you to come and read to him. It is weeks since he has been able to hear reading. If he can listen to you, it will be a positive gain. And then you will stay and

dine with me, Isabel, and be the first to see the prodigy."

So Miss Rae had her reward.

Night had fallen, and snow was beginning to fall, stealthily, but thick and fast; so that when Mrs. Augusta, startled out of a five minutes' revery at the library fireside, by what seemed the sound of an arrival in the hall, arose, and herself opened the door of the room, she was met by the impulsive rush of a tiny figure, with a fleecy powder all over its black garments, and large eyes of so singular a lustre that it looked, even to the unromantic mind, like some captured spirit of the winter night. Augusta opened her lips for her well-prepared greeting, but was forestalled.

"Ah, it is Mrs. Pryor!" exclaimed the sprite. "I know it! Dear madam, will you not speak to the hack man?" (She made two words of it.) "I cannot tell what he means, and he is very angry!"

"Where is Grant?" Mrs. Pryor asked of Annette, whom the inside man had left in temporary charge of the hall-door; and that functionary reappearing on the moment, she bade him appease the indignant orator in the vestibule, whatever his grievance, and turning again to her guest, said, — "And this is Mrs. Drown?"

"Yes, it is I, and so cold! May I not go to the fire?" She was full of gesture, and stretched out her morsels of hands towards the great blaze on the library hearth, as she spoke. "Ah, this is good! What a beautiful room! It is not like an American room, madam. I think I am far away!"

Mrs. Pryor began to be fascinated. "Will you not rest here before Annette shows your room?" she said, in her friendlier tones of welcome, beginning to unfasten, with her own hands, the damp wrappings of the stranger, and feeling herself more colossal than ever, as

the shape of a veritable fairy was revealed in a mourning-gown of heavy stuff, severely plain in fashion, but fitting marvellously.

"No, I will go," answered little Mrs. Drown, putting up her hand to her soft, rippling black hair. "You are kind. Thank you!" she added, like a child who remembers its manners, "but I am never tired. When shall I come down again?"

"We dine in half an hour," Mrs. Pryor explained.

"And that is good!" said the new-comer with a confiding smile, and dropping her rather astonished patroness a slight courtesy as she turned away, "for I am also very hungry."

One of the most imperious of Mr. Pryor's invalid fancies required that Augusta, at her solitary meals, should suspend nothing of their accustomed table ceremony. When, therefore, the two ladies met again, and were joined by Miss Rae, it was under the impartial blaze of

the big dining-room chandelier. Mrs. Drown had altered the arrangement of her curling hair, drawing it quaintly to the very top of her graceful head with an unusually tall comb, as if resolute to increase her height. The stiff, mannish lines of linen at her throat and wrists were also immaculate, and by contrast with these, one saw that her skin was very brown. Her nose was flat, and a trifle "tip-tilted." Her lips thin, but scarlet, and they parted over perfect teeth; and her remarkable eyes — though set at an Oriental angle, and of a peculiar light, almost yellowish hue — sparkled with vivid intelligence.

As soon as they were seated, and the soup passed, the hostess turned to Miss Rae. "And the reading, Belle," she said, a little anxiously, "how did it prosper?"

Isabel shook her head slightly, with the deepening color which constantly annoyed her-

self, and was indeed a little incongruous with her proud and finished manners.

"The Colonel is very polite, Mrs. Pryor, and I am very stupid," she said ingenuously, "but I did discover at last how much I tired him."

"And then" (affectionately) "I suppose he asked you to sit still and let him look at you?"

"It is very absurd," said Miss Rae, who was not in the least vain, yet could never turn a compliment lightly, "that he is always fancying me like some picture or statue."

"Have you been abroad?" Mrs. Pryor turned to say to the stranger, but was met by so very inquisitive a look of the lucid eyes, that she began, instead, to explain her husband's helpless and suffering condition.

Her *protegeé*, however, interrupted her.

"I know, I know," she said, "Mrs. Wyllys told me."

The rapid nodding of her small head seemed natural and graceful as that of a flower upon

the stalk; yet it did occur to Mrs. Pryor that, but for a certain oddity and exquisiteness in the creature, she would have thought her a little rude. And the impression was deepened when Mrs. Drown turned to Isabel, and said abruptly, —

"You do not modulate your tones. I mean," she added with a candid air, when the young lady bent on her a look of some amazement, but did not answer, "you have not notes enough. See how many I have in my common talk!" (This was true, although neither of her auditors was sufficiently musical to have noticed it before.) "But you have one or two only, and the pitch is too high. That is why you weary the sick gentleman."

She paused with a benignant expression, and then added, as on a second courteous afterthought, "Pardon me, miss!"

"Miss Rae," said the hostess, thinking that she hesitated for the name. And then her

interrupted question recurred to her, but she put it in an altered form.

"You must have lived a good deal abroad?"

"Always."

"Were you born there? Mrs. Wyllys said, or I fancied she said, that you were a countrywoman."

"Mrs. Wyllys did not ask," was the cheerful and complete reply, on which there ensued a slightly awkward pause.

It was the new-comer who seemed to feel that a certain stiffness about the other two made it incumbent upon her to reopen conversation, which she did in this wise:

"I have always thought that the American ladies pitch the voice too high. It is a great pity, for it makes unquiet those who hear, and it injures the organ. It is not so with all. You, madam," — to Mrs. Pryor — "have a noble contralto, large and rich, but still too monotonous. Why not more variety? A low pitch,

and yet variety. That is what makes the voice in speech agreeable. If I would read to your suffering husband, madam, you should see that he will not be weary." And she glanced swiftly from one rather irresponsive lady to the other, and nodded with the glimmer of a smile. "Variety of tone"—she repeated—"if I have anything good in my reading, it is variety of tone."

"After all," thought Mrs. Augusta, "it is rather graceful in her to introduce her business in this way." And, lapsing into the manner of sympathetic and therefore not offensive patronage which had become a second nature to her, she told Mrs. Drown of the arrangements which had been made for a reading in her own house, before the *élite* of Guildford.

Mrs. Drown was thoroughly simple and frank in her expressions of gratitude. "You are kind, madam," she said, "and I shall read as well as possible. And then, if the company

is pleased, they will perhaps hear me again in some theatre or hall. You think I cannot fill a great space, because I am so *petite*, but you will see. I have power. And do you know," she continued, engagingly, "what I desire most of all, is to have classes — of ladies, it is understood — and to teach them — I think it is not called reading, but — elocution."

Mrs. Pryor warmly approved this plan, and felt her faith in the new-comer reviving. "It would not be surprising," she said, "if you found a number of pupils. A good many of us, I fancy," she added, turning to Isabel, "would like to be made less monotonous." And she was almost vexed at the profoundly indifferent manner of that young lady's response.

Dinner being over, Miss Rae took an early leave; and Augusta lingered with her for a moment in the little reception-room, where she donned her wraps, while Grant waited in the

hall to attend her to her home, three doors lower down on the Avenue. "What an odd creature it is," she said, "but with a sort of fascination!"

"She is very strange indeed. She is French, don't you think?"

"A foreigner, evidently; at least by birth and habitual speech. Her idioms are un-English, and particularly un-Yankee. But she is extremely piquante, and appears to have ideas. I anticipate something from her reading. I must make Alfred see her. I should so like to know how she would strike him. Good-night, my dear!"

And Mrs. Augusta returned to the library, where she found her other guest nearly buried in the depths of the Colonel's favorite lounging-chair. Whereupon, issuing a kind but apparently superfluous command that the small stranger should be entirely at home, she apolo-

gized, briefly, for herself hastening to her husband.

But Mrs. Drown, when she was left alone, slid out from among the ibis-hued velvet cushions, patting them approvingly, as she did so, and stepped lightly about the room, examining and often touching the curiosities, and pausing, from time to time, to regard, with much content, the general effect. She made a similar tour of her bed-room, when left alone in that for the night, and the result of her reflections was this:

"It is a fine house, and a good, soft-hearted lady, though so proud. I shall stay here a long time; and, by and by, I will see the master."

CHAP. V.

CHIEFLY CHORAL.

THE reading, at Mrs. Pryor's, was to be on Sunday night. Augusta had long ago appropriated that evening for a variety of reasons. She was less likely then, than on secular nights, to be interfered with by the plans of others. She had, I must confess, a rather childish pleasure in proclaiming her own and Alfred's independence of Sabbatarian prejudices; and she did not regret as much as she ought to have done the extreme embarrassment which her whim sometimes occasioned to Mrs. Anderson — now that there were diplomatic relations between them — or the real trouble of conscience entailed upon some of the more serious-minded of that lady's immediate following.

On the present occasion, Mrs. Rose experienced unusual perplexity. "It is a charitable occasion in a way," she said to her daughter, "and therefore I think I ought to accept. Your papa, of course, will do as he likes, but he probably will not go, — nor will you care for it, Lily. And Mr. Warburton certainly must not."

"Does Mr. Warburton wish it?" inquired Lily, with the utmost width of her violet eyes.

Now Mr. Warburton, who was already established with Dr. Price at St. Saviour's, had rooms, of course, in a grim boarding-house upon the hill. But he passed his days, that is to say, his leisure hours, at the Rectory, and at Mrs. Anderson's; and chiefly, it must be confessed, with the latter. The Doctor, who was much absorbed that winter in exegetical studies, bearing upon his famous "Refutation of Colenso," thought Mr. Warburton a very good worker, and Mrs. Anderson frequently found him a

most appropriate and acceptable escort for Lilian and herself; and "liked," as she said, "to show him what was best" in "our crude American society." He had shown himself tolerant of crudity, and quite willing, on the reopening of the Pryor mansion, gracefully to conform to the customs of a heathen land. But Mrs. Rose knew, that though all things may be lawful for a high-bred, but rather low-church young divine, all things are not expedient; and, in her softest and most circuitous fashion, she had told him so, and he had been advised.

But Lily was less docile. She was totally indifferent to the reading, having a wholesome preference for dancing-parties; and, oddly coexistent with that frivolous taste, certain extremely private leanings toward preternatural strictness. She had once heard Mr. Charles Mason, then a student at the suburban college, say that the Pryors did not show their usual good taste in that "aggressive latitudinarian-

ism" of theirs; and this she had understood to mean the Sunday parties, and had thought it sounded very well. Moreover, one of her own most cherished whims had long been — as Miss Richards had once hinted — a dislike of the idolized Colonel. But the Colonel would certainly not be visible on the evening in question, and Mr. Warburton as certainly would be visible in their own drawing-room, ten minutes after the close of evening service. And therefore —

"I mean to go myself, mamma," said the young lady with a look of heavenly peace.

"I would rather you did not. Of course I shall not forbid it."

"Why no, mamma, since you are going."

"But I fancied you would not desire it. I have always been pleased that you seemed not to be infected by the craze of the other young people about the Pryors."

"I don't know that I am infected by any

craze; but this time I want to go. So please accept for us both, mamma."

"You will wear your darkest silk, then, Lily. Full dress on these occasions I *cannot* countenance."

"Yes, indeed! My claret with the velvet vest is the most becoming gown I have."

The pretty mother regarded her prettier daughter curiously for a moment, and then sighed; wondering why she, of all blameless women, should have had a child whom she vaguely felt to be incorrigible. But of course Lily went to Mrs. Pryor's.

Meanwhile, that energetic lady had had her own trials. It had been one to sit down alone, on the morning after Mrs. Drown's arrival, and listen to a specimen of her performance, unguided by that fastidious criticism which, hitherto, had been always at hand, to regulate her own decisions.

She had cherished, up to the last moment, a

faint hope that the trial reading might take place in her husband's room; but when the time came the experiment seemed out of the question, and she was fain to depend upon her own judgment.

And, sooth to say, that bristling faculty was disarmed and taken captive by the very first strophe which Mrs. Drown uttered. There entered into her ever varying intonations a pathos, deepening occasionally into passion, which was wholly at variance with aught suggested by her ordinary manner; yet the reader never obtruded herself. Her lovely vocalization was like a transparent garment which emphasized rather than veiled the beauties of the author's meaning, and lent it grace and unity.

Mrs. Pryor listened, first with relief, then with positive exultation, forecasting the enthusiasm of the really discriminating circle whom she loved to please, and assured future for the

fragile and solitary young woman, and most of all — true heart that she was — the possible effect, some time, of those witching tones upon the shattered nerves whose pain seemed constantly to accuse her own vigor. But then, after Augusta had expressed her approbation with an emphasis which did not appear to impress Mrs. Drown very deeply, came the question of arranging a programme for the first reading.

"You say I must read something grave and quiet, madam, because it is the Sunday."

"It will be better. I have asked every one, and I do not want people offended when they are actually in my house."

"I comprehend. I must not read out of a play."

"I think not. Yet you read Shakespeare gloriously. We might possibly select something from Shakespeare."

"I can read *Juliet* best," said Mrs. Drown, with simplicity."

"Perhaps we had better confine ourselves to the moderns, whom all the young people know by heart."

"Ah, I love the moderns! Mr. Morris and Mr. Rossetti, and that wonderful Mr. Swinburne! Pray, madam, let me read you the *Defence of Guinevere*, — I shall make you weep."

"I did not mean that newest school, precisely, but Tennyson and the Brownings, and some of our own poets. You would read *Evangeline* charmingly."

Mrs. Drown explained that she had never studied Mr. Robert Browning. "It is too horribly unmusical! I cannot utter it!" — with a shrug of dismissal — "and your own poets are so tame! I have read the sonnets from the Portuguese, and *Vivien*, and *Œnone*, with much praise. Will you hear *Œnone?*"

Mrs. Pryor was perhaps a little deficient in humor, yet a fleeting suspicion did visit her that she was being quizzed. But the sable garments and meekness of the drooping head, to which she lifted her haughty eyes, seemed to make the thought unpardonable, and a list of "numbers," was at last arranged, which was, at all events, to include Wordsworth's *Ode to Immortality*, *The Cry of the Children*, *The Psalm of Life*, and copious extracts from *Elaine*.

Little by little these arrangements were communicated to the patient in his prison, but this was one of his most miserable weeks, and he was, for a time, obstinately languid and indifferent. At last, however, some of the quaintness of manner and speech which Augusta described seemed to catch his fancy, and when she remarked, with a countenance of grave anxiety, that the little *artiste* would have liked

to read the *Defence of Guinevere*, he fairly laughed.

"I don't know the poem," he said, "but the title is picturesque. I think you have caught a curiosity this time, *mon amie*. Are you quite sure her reading is unusual?"

"I am sure it is unparalleled. Oh, Alfred, if you would only hear her read three stanzas! You would find it so different from my middle-aged croak, or Isabel Rae's boarding-school mouthing!"

"Belle is a beautiful girl, and I won't have her abused. No, no! I can't see a stranger, and I won't have a stranger see me. But tell me all about her, and never mind my occasional brutality!" Then he kissed the tips of his fingers to her, and Augusta went her busy way.

The momentous evening came, and some of my young chorus may tell you how it passed off.

"Didn't I say so, Harry?"—inquired George Aspinwall, as McArthur, who was, as yet, a little restless under peace and civic conditions, wandered into the lawyer's office on Monday morning—"didn't I tell you that Madam would arise like a phœnix, and not be withheld from promoting the general good by petty private considerations? Success attend her! I never passed a pleasanter evening at the Pryors' than last night. Wasn't that rather a first-class performance?"

"It was good reading, certainly. I wonder who the reader is, and where she came from?"

"She's been on the stage, I fancy," said Aspinwall.

"I don't believe it. If she had ever been on, she would not now be off. She has just the sort of original fire, and superiority to rant, which ought to be priceless upon the stage."

"Ought to be, but are not. People don't know the difference And when they don't,

you'll observe, they always like the sham thing best. This Mrs. What's-her-name may have had a theatrical training. But she's a lady."

"Is she? I wasn't sure. There's a mighty difference between men and women about that thing; and there's a very finical sort of woman who isn't a lady at all. Do ladies have so many sideways looks?"

"Mona Lisa did; and Mona Lisa was what some folks call 'very much of a lady.' I suppose where their eyes are not set level, they can't help it. But I've a notion that this one would be a match for any lady-killer. *Par exemple!* We got on very well, last night, without His Grace."

"The world gets on very well without anybody. 'Close ranks!' is the order. Your greatest folly is to imagine that you would be missed."

"I know who does miss the Colonel in society, though, and has barely self-command

enough not to mope for him. It's not Mrs. P."

"Who then?"

"Oh, come! You know she was deucedly distant and *distraite* last evening!"

"I know I hate that sort of jest. There isn't a girl of my acquaintance who deserves the imputation of moping for any married man."

"Heavens! What a Paladin we are! But I meant nothing tragic. I'll tell you what I did mean. How shall I put it? If I say that the Colonel has, in some sort, demoralized all the girls in our set, I suppose you'll call me out."

"Calling out is not the *mode* nowadays. By Jove, I often wish it were! But I should advise you to explain yourself."

"Well, then. He has used them, one and all, and your particular goddess, I opine, most of all—"

"If you mean Miss Rae, say so! I'm not

ashamed to be known as her worshipper. In that case, there's an old and close intimacy between the families. She's at the Pryors' every day of her life."

"Exactly! But there's no need to particularize. He has made use of them all, more or less, to practise his double distilled-gallantries upon. He has accustomed them to a subtle and studied sort of flattery, which makes ordinary admiration flat and distasteful to them. He has made them acutely, and in some cases overweeningly, conscious of all their personal attractions, and he has set up such a preposterously high standard of chivalry — and all that blarney — "

"You're jealous, George, as I'm alive! Can a man help it, that he has a handsomer face than you or I, and manners so fine that ours are awkward beside them?"

"'Tis not alone the standard of manners he has established, but the code of sentimentality.

He has created an artificial taste for an expensive stimulant. He has invested himself with such a delicious atmosphere of refinement and romance, that light-pated young girls are made fools who breathe it, and they shiver ever after in all common air. Why they trot, in squads, to Pym's greenhouse now, and spend all their pin-money buying him flowers!"

"What 'becomes of the pins?' I wonder; so long as they go in squads, there's no great harm done."

"But it has all been a piece of iniquitous self-indulgence on the man's part. He revels in the first freshness and sweetness of his young lady friends,—I hate the term between man and woman! The Troubadour, I believe, always called his lady-love *amie!*—and never cares that the early bloom is forever brushed off their affections."

"Whew! Who's romantic now, I wonder! Honestly, George, that cynical spirit of yours

misleads you, as I have known it to do in other cases. Col. Pryor is the most amiable man alive. In fact, there's the only danger."

"So you own there is danger!"

"There may have been once; of the sentimental sort and to the feeble-minded. But the hero is down, now, and I can't feel it manly to kick him."

"So I said last year, but 'being dead he yet squeaketh,' as they put it on somebody's tombstone. Hang it! if I don't think him more pernicious now, as an interesting invalid, than he used to be upon his legs. Girls are such geese!"

"Let's pity and forgive them! All the girls I know are good and bright girls; and my old commander — whom I salute for his bravery — is a man of honor and of common sense."

"He's egregiously weak in spots."

"So am I! Not many fellows are armed at all points as you are, George."

"Fire away! But you know I've told the truth."

"You have distorted it. And now let us quit the subject of the girls and their hero."

"Their carpet-knight, you mean."

"Well, quit him! and tell me what I am to set about doing. Shall I read law, or open a singing-school, or go on a Choctaw mission? 'My country 'tis of thee' that I can't settle to any rational employment, and seem to have lost the knack of making a living."

CHAP. VI.

AT THE PRYORS'.

MRS. ANDERSON and Mrs. Pryor met in the street one day, in the week following Mrs. Drown's *début*. They had volumes to say to one another, or rather Mrs. Anderson had volumes to say. First of all, of course, there were minute inquiries to be made about the Colonel.

"Situation quite unchanged? How very, *very* trying! But you have no fears about the result?"

"The doctors have always encouraged us; but all agree that it must be a work of time."

"Ah, yes! And of course you have had the best advice. And so he sees absolutely no one, —he to whom society has been, as one may say,

the breath of life! But tell me, is this wonderful little Mrs. Drown still staying with you? What a miraculous voice, and what a perfect style! Where *did* you find her? Allow me to thank you for one of the greatest pleasures, etc., etc. Do you really think she will be able to fill the Union?" (This was the Guildford theatre mentioned before.) "Such a slight little thing! But there seems no limit to her capacity, and of course we shall all go! And, dear Mrs. Pryor, I have a *protégé* of my own, although of a very different sort — at least he laughingly calls himself mine — whom I would like *so* much for you to see! The most charming young English clergyman! — accomplished — thorough-bred — a nephew of the Bishop of ——, a great acquisition to Guildford! He came to this country to study the condition of the poor in our cities — the wretchedly poor, you know — and the forms of organized charity among us, but he has consented to assist

Dr. Price in the parish this winter. Ah, yes! — you have heard about him. I found that I knew some of his people — an aunt, the Hon. Mrs. Bingham, whom I met in the East — so I undertook to *chaperon* him. I should have taken him to the reading unhesitatingly, dear Mrs. Pryor, but on Sunday, you know, it would not quite have done. Next Saturday afternoon he is to talk to a few friends in my parlors, about public and private charity in England. I shall depend on your coming, because you are always interested in every good work, and then I want you to know Mr. Warburton. It is not a lecture, you understand, but just a familiar talk. Pray come, and bring that fascinating little thing with you. She has a mysteriously familiar look to me, but of course I never saw her. How she did read the *Cry of the Children!* I shiver at the remembrance. And so Col. Pryor has not been able to hear

her at all, and she under your very roof! What a loss for him!"

"Yes, last evening I did persuade him to listen to one of the shortest and simplest of Longfellow's Lyrics. I dared not attempt anything more intense."

"Is he so weak? But he approved? You know the Colonel was always our arbiter of taste."

"He encouraged me very much by saying he would like to hear her again. 'Tis the first entertainment I have devised for him which he has ever asked to have repeated."

"Ah, well! My kindest regards to him! Be sure you come on Saturday!"

"What do I care for her young divine?" observed Augusta, when she mentioned the interview to her husband; "and why is the nephew of a bishop dawdling about here?"

"But she came to your show, my lady, and I think you are bound to go to hers."

"Well, perhaps Mrs. Drown will like it. It will give her a sort of introduction into the most gorgeous house in Guildford, and it was rather good-natured of Rose Anderson to ask her."

But when the proposal was made to the stranger she became very shy, and pleaded to be allowed to decline. Wherefore Mrs. Pryor went alone to hear the Rev. Mr. Warburton discourse on public and private charity in the Established Church of England.

Half an hour after her departure, the attendant, who usually sat sewing in Col. Pryor's dressing-room when Augusta was away, being also accidentally absent, there came the tiniest of taps at the door of the long chamber, to which the invalid could only respond by an invitation to enter. Then the door unclosed and closed again, without the faintest noise, and a slim, black-robed figure slipped timidly in, and stood speechless, as though in a royal audi-

ence chamber, slightly lifting up, as if in deprecation, two volumes in her fairy hand.

Alfred, who had seen the intruder but once, and for a few moments, was undoubtedly amazed. He started, and flushed uncomfortably, but gave her, of course, his elaborately polite welcome.

"I am come to try reading to you, again," said Mrs. Drown, in a voice that just escaped being tremulous, "because you said that you would hear me, and you are quite alone."

"A thousand thanks, madam! you are only too kind. Pray forgive my not rising, and sit down!" And he reflected that this was probably a *ruse* of Mrs. Augusta's to forestall his denial of her favorite.

There was a low steamer-chair near the couch. Mrs. Drown crept around to that, and, carefully and silently removing it some yards farther off, to the very edge of the lacquered

screen, she sank into it, still holding up her books as a kind of buckler.

"Shall I read prose or poetry?" she inquired, a little hurriedly, as though fearful that her call would assume another than a strictly business aspect. "I read always poetry to the ladies, but I can also read prose well."

"Pray don't read either just yet," he said with a smile. "Unfortunately I cannot listen long. Have you something new there?"

"I have this new long poem by Mr. William Morris, whom I love,—*The Earthly Paradise*. It is not like his other poems, but all very plain and sad and soothing. It seems to me it would either weary one very much indeed, or never at all. Perhaps, never. You could tell me."

"I should be sorry to do that, you know. What else have you?"

"Ah, such a light and charming little French book! If I might only read you this! I like

French prose best of all that is written, and sometimes I think I read it best. This is M. Alphonse Karr's quaint story of his garden. You have not met it? No, but you would understand the French without doubt."

"It used to be familiar enough, but I have neither spoken nor heard it much for some years. Read a bit, please, Mrs. Drown. — Yes, that is the true French grace of narration," he said, when she paused; "and what an exquisite accent you have! Pardon me, but aren't you French yourself, Mrs. Drown?"

"I spoke the language always, when a child," she said, "but it was in England."

"Then you are a cosmopolite."

"Alas, yes! And that is good for a man, but not for such as I."

He wished she were sitting a little nearer. Alfred was a trifle short-sighted, and his visitor had provokingly withdrawn herself just beyond the focus of his circumscribed vision.

"What did you tell me was the name of your other volume, Mrs. Drown?" he asked presently.

"*The Earthly Paradise.*"

"Ah, me! I have little faith in an Earthly Paradise."

"You mean that there is none. Oh, no! Those who sought it in this book did not find it, as you will see. Listen!—" and she read the argument and paused.

"Go on, if you will be so kind."

Then she read the sweet prelude, and paused again, but his eyes gave her undoubted encouragement, and she proceeded simply to the narrative. The light and perfectly just pathos of her full tones, and her crystalline pronunciation, began to work upon her listener like a charm. At the end of a half-dozen pages he waved his hand a little, unwilling to interrupt her by his own voice, but she understood instantly, and stopped.

"Ten thousand pardons!" he cried, with almost his natural liveliness. "This is the very loveliest exercise I ever heard in my life, and you are giving me such a pleasure as I have not had in a doleful while; but I ought to tell you, it is so very soothing that, if you don't pause now and then, I may pay you a very doubtful compliment."

"You mean," she cried, with shining eyes and a frank little laugh, starting up, to his great satisfaction, and moving her chair five paces nearer, "you mean you would go to sleep! Why, that ought to flatter me most of all, and indeed so it would, for Mrs. Pryor has told me —" with her extraordinarily musical fall of the voice — "how sorely you need repose. I am to go on?"

The next time he interrupted her, he apologized for the seeming imperiousness of his lifted finger. "They have been so afraid I should feel my dependence," he said, "that they have

spoiled me ridiculously, by obeying my very gestures. But I want to know, Mrs. Drown, what else your author has written. I don't know his works, but I have not lived much in the world of letters for a good while."

"There is one other small volume," said the lady, hesitatingly — then, with a sudden illumination of countenance — "Ah, then you don't know that weird little thing about the 'banner-poles!' Let me recite it."

And so, with one of her swift but never sharp changes of key, and letting her book fall in her lap, with her finger between the leaves, she began —

"Wearily, drearily
Half the day long
Flap the great banners
High over the stone;
Wearily, eerily,
Sounds the wind's song,

Bending the banner-poles. While all alone
Watching the loop-hole's spark,
Lie I, with life all dark,
Hands tethered, feet fettered
Close to the stone.
The square walls, grim-lettered
With prisoned men's groans.
Still strain the banner-poles,
Through the wind's song,
Westward the banner rolls
Over my wrong."

That surely is a distinct and very wonderful gift, whereby he who utters certain sounds can evoke as clear a vision in the brain of the listener, as may ever be reflected from any visible picture. To the sensitive imagination of the listener, in this case, the whole middle-age returned in the soft, feminine tones that caressed his ear, — its fervor, its blindness, its wild contrasts of splendor and squalor, its incessant tragedy. The dank stone walls rose high around him. The taunting colors of a

triumphant foe stained, with their cruel brilliance, his one pale, strip of sky. And that which made the vision overpowering was an intense although only half-acknowledged personal reaction in the sentiment of the verse, — defeat, imprisonment, hopeless rebellion. He scorned himself for the weakness which made it necessary for him to shade his eyes, but, for a moment, he could not speak.

Mrs. Drown watched him intently, until she herself broke the silence in childlike tones of bitter compunction — "Oh, I have been wrong! I have pained you! It was not delicate to repeat that. What shall I do?" and she started up, dropping her books and clasping her hands.

He was collecting himself to reassure her, when the door opened and, stately in velvet and sable, Mrs. Pryor walked in. It was the first time, for more than a year, that Alfred had failed to take note of her step upon the staircase.

Augusta's was a face unused to disguise, and, save in the supreme moments when any woman can and should deceive, hardly capable of it. Alfred saw in an instant that his wife had not planned the invasion of his privacy, but all the more, if there were any possible censure for their singular guest, he was ready to be the shield and defence of the latter.

"Ah, is this you, my lady?" he said lightly. "You see a conquered and converted man! You never would imagine, Mrs. Drown, how obstinately I have resisted a blessing in your person. I would not believe a tithe of what they told me about your witchery with words. But now, as usually in the end, I bow to the superior judgment of my wife. Do, Augusta, help me to thank Mrs. Drown for a perfectly fresh and rare pleasure."

"Mrs. Drown knows," said Augusta, with a gentler dignity than usual, "how much I am obliged to her, if she has given you ease and

entertainment." But she remained standing while she spoke, and the acute young person whom she addressed, knew that she was dismissed.

"I will go then," said Mrs. Drown demurely, with a glance up at her patroness of timid obliquity. "I knew you wanted me to try again, madam, and so I came. I am glad to have done no harm."

"But you will come again, Mrs. Drown, and often! I am to hear every word of that long story-book, remember!"

"Yes, indeed, if I may."

"If she *may!*" echoed Mrs. Augusta, casting aside her cloak after the door had closed. "What does the creature mean? I can't quite make her out. Of course she may, if it suits you. But what in the world made her think of coming here to-day, I wonder? Did you send for her?"

"Not I! I supposed it was by your orders,

but it seems to have been all a benevolent impulse of her own. She's not very conventional, apparently, but she has genius."

"And she has really amused you."

"Much more! She has really made one afternoon seem short to me."

"Well, I am rejoiced, of course. But"—touching his forehead with her large cool, white hand—"aren't you a little feverish?"

"I'm not conscious of it. How was the apostle to the Andersons?"

Mrs. Pryor declared "that he was evidently just what he claimed to be, an English gentleman. He is fair and muscular and white-handed, and very becoming to his clothes. And he drawls and blushes and stammers, and speaks of America with unconscious insolence. What could the heir of an earldom do more? All that he told us we knew before, but I think we were all impressed by the privilege it was to hear him tell it. And he seems to be fall-

ing in love with Lily Anderson in the most orthodox fashion."

"Do you remember how savage the fair Lily used to be to me? But any young man with a well-regulated mind would, of course, fall in love with her."

CHAP. VII.

AT THE ANDERSON'S.

THERE were certainly some indications that the Rev. Mr. Warburton meant to prove himself a young man with a well-regulated mind, according to Col. Pryor's definition. Miss Anderson was not yet twenty, but she had had experience in lovers, and she was obstinately in love herself, and she knew very well that a good many of the young Briton's inarticulate murmurs meant personal admiration. And still she did not quite understand him. "Sometimes," she said pensively to her only confidante, Emily Richards, "I think it is mamma he hankers after." Miss Lily had certainly the sort of unholy yearning which her word implied, for effective and inelegant forms of speech.

"Nonsense! He all but makes eyes at you from the reading-desk."

"That's only at the pew, and in a general way. And sometimes, also," pursued Miss Anderson, with her contemplative look, "I have a feeling that he has made a great many eyes in his day, and only does it from force of habit. One does not think so at first, because of that plain, boyish way of his which mamma will have it is the *true simplicity of the high-bred Englishman.*" (Lily was a good mimic.) "She always speaks as if she had known them by hundreds, but I remember very well that they would hardly deign to look at us when we were abroad, — and great louts they were too, some of the most stupendous of them. But the longer I know Mr. Warburton, the less stock I take — I must remember to say that before mamma and him — in his simplicity."

"You don't think he's another impostor, do you?"

"Not exactly, and yet I don't quite believe in him."

"How you analyze everybody, Lily."

"So Cousin Charley used to say; but I always told him that I only do it — if that's the proper word for it — in order to find out in whom I may believe. Oh, what I want most of all," and a look of real and almost hapless fervor came into the violet eyes, "is to *believe* in persons. I never could quite believe in my mother. In my father I do after a fashion, unpleasant as he can make himself; and I do believe in Charles Mason. That's why I shall marry him and nobody else. We're not engaged, you know, — that is not formally. It would never be allowed. And I'm not much in love with him in the ordinary sense of the term —"

"Goodness! How do you know?"

"Oh, I haven't any raptures or any thrills or any illusions. I haven't the sort of *tendresse*

which mamma always has for some man or other besides father, — just now for Mr. Warburton. In short, I'm not in the least sweet on him. Nor do I fancy that sort of thing. That was what I always disliked about Col. Pryor. He could be sweet, yes, *veritably sweet*, on a dozen girls in succession."

"He was very, very chivalrous," observed Miss Richards, paying the retired officer his perpetual tribute of a light feminine sigh.

"Of course his manners were courtly. But I prefer a little honest rudeness myself. Charles is often very rude. And he is always very homely — or *ugly*, as Mr. Warburton insists that one should say. And sometimes he strikes me as pedantic; though I'd soon cure him of that! And I have seen creases in his linen, not to say smudges — but that's only because, poor fellow, he can't quite afford all the washing that is desirable. I think he is clean —"

"Oh, Lily!"

"And I know," added the young lady with deep solemnity, and looking like the very angel of the church triumphant, "that he is *true*. He never did anything to be ashamed of, and he never will."

"No more, I suppose, has Mr. Warburton."

"I'm afraid not. But do you know it has occurred to me more than once, when I have seen him standing up in his white gown, so handsome and sanctimonious, and mamma so devout, and Dr. Price so entirely satisfied, because now he can let his old wits go woolgathering about his old book, how delightful it would be to see their consternation, if even the Bishop's nephew should turn out by and by to have done something truly horrid."

"I don't see why you should want to shock the good old Doctor."

"Because he was not honorable to Charles Mason, and allows himself to be led by mamma. You are going to the Union, of course, to

hear Mrs. Pryor's Mrs. Drown read this evening. Oh, why won't you stay to dinner and go with us? The Bishop's nephew is to attend us."

"Thanks! but I'm not dressed, of course, and besides, I'm going with George Aspinwall. He is very nearly as cynical about Mrs. Drown as you seem to be about his Reverence. He inclines to think that she has been on the stage of some provincial theatre abroad. But, like every one else, he considers her voice a wonder, and her style much better than we are accustomed to. In fact, that's the thing to say about her. And he wants me to take lessons of her, and thinks of doing so himself."

"And is it so," said Miss Anderson, bending on her elder friend a grave and searching look, "that you will take these or any lessons because George Aspinwall wishes it? Emily" — reproachfully — "I always tell you *everything*."

"There is nothing in life to tell," replied

Miss Richards, without change of color, but impatiently. "Just now Mr. Counsellor and I are rather intimate friends. In Lent he will be all devotion to the Faxons. Heigho! Lily. I wish I had a rich aunt to take me to Egypt, or an uncle in the army to invite me to spend a winter on the frontier, or a chance to join an Arctic Expedition or ship for a voyage round the Horn! I don't suppose there is on this planet another so stale and flat a town as Guildford!"

After which transport of *ennui* Miss Richards took her leave, and was observed to be keeping up a brisker fire of jest even than usual with her companion at the theatre that night.

They both turned round, as everybody always did — and pardonably — to see Mrs. Anderson and her daughter come in, wrapped in their fleecy white cloaks, and Miss Richards observed

with surprise that they were attended by an usher only.

Mr. Warburton had, in fact, received letters from home that afternoon of so pressing a nature that he had no choice but to devote the evening, and indeed half the night, to the consideration and arrangement of his replies; and he had been fain to send round to the Andersons a rather constrained note of apology, which Lilian had criticised without mercy.

The next day arrived the first great snowstorm of the season with a howling gale, and so rapid and blinding a fall, that travel and traffic were well-nigh banished from the streets of Guildford before the preternaturally early twilight. But Mr. Warburton's fine limbs, albeit unused to just that form of exercise, bore him safely through the mounting drifts, and landed him, rosy and splendid, in the Anderson's parlor just as the after-dinner tea equipage had been deposited on its usual table. Both ladies

were present, as well as the master of the house for once in a way, and Mrs. Rose glided swiftly forward to meet her guest, with soft palms outstretched and more than her wonted *empressement*.

"Dear Mr. Warburton, how gallant of you to come in this tempest! I trust I may now dismiss the anxiety which has been haunting me all day. There was no bad news in your letters of yesterday?"

"Oh, no, nothing of that sort. Family affairs, you know. You're very good, Mrs. Anderson, I am sure."—Then his eyes wandered to Lily at the tea-table.

That damsel was wearing a certain wide-spread and much-voluted black silk gown, in which she always looked particularly imposing, and she now offered him tea with so distant a dignity that he was quite abashed, and retreated with his cup in the direction of Mr.

Anderson. "Is this what you call a great snow-storm in the States?" he inquired.

"Stiffish!" replied the master of the mansion, succinctly. "Trains blocked and wires down. No city papers to-night.—Have the *Evening Circus?*" he asked, with what was for him a spasm of self-conquest, extending a few inches while yet he greedily clutched the one daily paper of Guildford.

But Mr. Warburton did not accept the sacrifice, and again fell back a few paces, after which Mrs. Anderson waved him to follow her to a certain *tête-a-tête* chair, and ostensibly claimed him for her own, kindly allowing him, however, the seat that faced her daughter.

The performance of the previous evening first came up for discussion.

"Augusta Pryor," said Mrs. Anderson, judicially, "has an insatiate passion for *protégés*, so that one always has to be a little on one's guard lest they prove mere adventurers. But

this one truly is wonderful. Is it not odd, Mr. Warburton, that you should have missed hearing her again?"

"There seems a sort of fatality about it, you know," said the Englishman, lightly wiping his blonde moustache.

"And now she is forming a class of young ladies. Shall I let Lily go and have her voice developed?"

"'Pon me soul, I don't think Miss Anderson's voice could be improved."

"Oh, you are very good," said Lily, with a hardly perceptible toss of her fair head; "but you see I have determined that it shall be. I never in my life heard anything so impressive as the way those quiet tones filled all that high space."

"But you don't want to fill a high space, you know."

"Indeed, I wish to be capable of it. I

think every young woman nowadays ought to be trained for public speaking."

"Lily!" cried her mother, feeling herself vicariously shocked, through all Mr. Warburton's British prejudices, by this ultra declaration.

"Certainly I do! Who knows what may happen? Think how many times during the war, mamma, Mrs. Pryor had to speak in public, or what was the same thing, and very noble she was. You know, mamma, you wished a hundred times that you could do it yourself."

"My love, I was more than willing that that part of our joint labor should devolve upon her. Mrs. Pryor (to Mr. Warburton) was President of our Soldier's Aid Society.

"Ah, yes, of course! But I protest," added that gentleman, with unwonted energy, "that I never in my life knew but one woman who did not seem to me naturally disqualified by the

character of her voice for anything of the kind."

"You don't include actresses," observed Lily.

"Actresses?" repeated the young man, a little blankly. "Oh, yes, I'll include them so far as I know about them. The professional training is worth something, of course; but one doesn't hear many women, even upon the stage, whose tones are penetrating without being shrill."

"How perfectly he describes Mrs. Drown's, does he not, Lily? And what I think heightens the effect in her case is that she is so small and slight, and has an almost childish air."

"Oddly enough," said the Englishman, "the woman of whom I speak was tiny too. Is that to be the physique of the female orator, I wonder? All the eloquent men I ever knew were big and broad. Miss Anderson, I rejoice to think that your ambition is vain. You are at least six inches too tall." Then he stopped

abruptly, and mused for the space of three seconds, after which he added, in a slightly altered tone, a question which had been asked before, "Where does this wonder come from?"

"Where was her home, Lily? Augusta Pryor told me, surely, but I have forgotten. She is a widow, poor thing! — and obliged to use her remarkable gift for self-support."

"Ah, yes! extremely sad! I shall make a point of hearing her. — By Jove, this is terriffic!" for at that instant a blast, fiercer than any which had preceded it, caused the plate-glass to rattle and the gas to waver.

"Devilish cold, too!" emitted the lord of the house, rubbing his large hands over the glowing coals. He had just returned from a visit of inspection to his exposed thermometer, — next to the Stock Exchange and the *Evening Circus*, the keenest interest of his life. "Nineteen and a half *pre*cisely! We don't often get it with the mercury down there. This will give you a

stroke of work in the alleys, — you philanthropist."

"Ah, yes, ah, yes!" sighed Mrs. Rose, closing her eyes — a gesture which always made Lily pat the carpet with her boot — "how the poor will suffer! In this respect, at least, dear Mr. Warburton, our poor are worse off than yours. Our climate is so cruel."

"There's not much to choose, I fancy," the young man answered a little absently. "What, when all is done and said, do we know about their discomforts and temptations? I often think of it, when I am advising them to resist the devil. It is undeniably hard that a man may not steal coals, if he can, to keep himself from freezing on a night like this."

"I think he not only may, but ought," said Lily, "especially if he has a family."

"My love, the Commandment!"

"But I'm sure, mamma, the Ten Commandments are a very imperfect code." (This was

a quotation.) "The meanest of all sins — lying — they hardly mention at all. Now that is a something the temptation to which is perfectly inconceivable."

"Lying is ugly, certainly," said the young divine, lifting his eyes to the fair censor's face, and letting them fall again, "but I think I can imagine a temptation to it."

"I cannot, then; in old or young, rich or poor, — nor a pardon for it either."

"She would make a pitiless judge," Mr. Warburton said to his hostess, rising at the same time to take leave, and rather contemptuously repudiating the suggestion that he had better remain over-night, on account of the inclemency of the weather.

"Why will you always drive him from us, Lily?" inquired Mrs. Anderson rather plaintively, when he was gone.

"I, mamma?" — and Innocence rose to her full height — "what do you mean? You can't

suppose I was alluding to him when I spoke of lying!"

"Really I am ashamed of you."

"Snub the parson, did she?" said the churchwarden with some glee. "So she should if she wanted to! Come and kiss me, my duck, and then I'll go to bed."

The embrace was bestowed with some effusion, but when Lily made as though she also would retire, her mother detained her. "Remain for a few moments, my child, I wish to speak to you very seriously."

Then Lily sat down.

"Have you never reflected," inquired Mrs. Rose, with some pomp and some pathos, "what it would be to you to secure, at your early age, the affection of a man like Mr. Warburton? A man of the greatest personal attractions — the most sacred profession — the highest family connections — the noblest type of character —"

"No, mamma," answered the young lady

sweetly, "I can't say that I have. I don't reflect in that way about gentlemen, unless they particularly request it. Did you, mamma?"

"Lily," said her mother, unmoved to smile, "you are unkind! My own fate is fixed, — fixed! I endeavor to accept it." She pressed her lace handkerchief for a moment to her face, and so did not see the half-indignant flash of the saucy blue eyes returning from a swift tour of the splendid room with a look that said plainly, — "You might have done worse." "But I would fain," Mrs. Anderson continued, "see you, my darling, in a wholly congenial sphere. You may never have another opportunity like the present. Think twice before you reject it."

"Certainly, mamma; but I cannot reject before I have it, you know. Now may I go?"

"Without bidding your mother good-night?"

Then Lily kissed her other parent quietly, and departed. She kissed something else, also,

in the dainty privacy of her rose-colored chamber, and a very hideous photograph it was, exaggerating the uncomeliness of its original with the brutal frankness peculiar to that kind of portrait. The ceremony performed, she returned the *carte* to its place in her illuminated *Imitation*, and then proceeded slowly, and with much serious bewilderment, to read a chapter in that saintly book.

The contrast between the choicest and purest of all cloistered spirits, and the wayward, worldly, irreverent girl under her pink draperies, may seem too ironical; but after all, the belle of Guildford had certain honest sympathies and vague stirrings in the direction of a higher life, which appear to her biographer more affecting than absurd.

He on whom she had been counselled to fix her perverse fancy was sitting rather gloomily by his boarding-house grate, making anything but Christian reflections on our climate, and

re-reading, without increased satisfaction, the foreign letters which had detained him the evening before. He owed it to the storm, however, that the perturbation of his spirit was not yet farther increased by a cable despatch which he received as soon as the wires were repaired, and which was thriftily comprised in these four words, —

"She is in America!"

CHAP. VIII.

THE EARTHLY PARADISE.

UP in that fair mansion on the tip-top of River Avenue, the dim winter weeks went smoothly, noiselessly on. How precisely did it come about that Mrs. Drown, to whom the shelter of a big house had been graciously offered for the first days of her utter strangeness in Guildford, was now established as a permanent inmate of that house,—nay, even so thoroughly intrenched there that she had had a verbal disagreement with the mighty Grant, and had come off with flying colors? Mrs. Pryor could hardly have told you, nor, in her single-minded devotion to the business of the hour, did she pause to consider curiously the conditions of her own unforeseen and abundant leisure. If her spirits were at a lower level than

usual, and she felt poignantly at times that she was indeed and irretrievably growing old, there was plenty of reason for that; and the many to whom she ministered out of her ample wealth and freedom, had never liked the giver of the gift so well in her old imperious days as they did with this new touch almost of humility upon her.

The *Earthly Paradise* lasted longer than might have been expected from the proverbially fleeting nature of such a state of things. Augusta had essayed to be present at the second reading, with a knitted wool petticoat which she was briskly evolving for one of the old ladies at the Home, and a long pair of clattering needles, each more substantial than a dandy's cane. She thought the narrative extraordinarily dull, but was bravely determined not to say so, and nothing was further from her serene imagination than that Alfred was

clenching his fists unseen at the sound of her industry.

But the reader, who had a clever way of possessing herself of her matter four lines in advance, and then lifting her luminous eyes to her audience and delivering her stanza as though it were an improvisation, discovered the contracted brow in the midst of this little performance, and instantaneously utilized it. She paused, and slowly turned on Mrs. Pryor her most deprecating and fawn-like gaze.

"Dear madam," she said, "pray, pray forgive me!"

"With all my heart!" said the lady, with brusque and slightly contemptuous good-nature. "What for?"

"Oh, I am very bold; but, if you did not care to knit, — or if — if you did not care to hear at all. — I know you do not like it, Mrs. Pryor," she cried, with one of her pretty little

bursts of sincerity, "and I can never read with all my soul when any one does not like it."

"I can't say that I have discovered the charm as yet," replied Augusta, nonchalantly, "but I have been willing to be educated. Did the needles really disturb you, dear?" turning to her husband. "Why did you not say so?"

"The least in life, *mon amie*," he replied, penitently; "but don't go!" as Augusta rose and swept up her knitting. "We'll have no more reading to-night."

"Indeed you will! It would be monstrous in me to grudge you such pleasure as you may derive from so very mild an exercise! I can't consider it a feast of reason, but, at least, I need not interrupt Mrs. Drown's flow of soul." And having vented her momentary anger at what she merely felt as a bit of impertinence, she smiled frankly on them both, and turned away.

But the big needles became weary to wield

even by her firm muscles in the solitude of the artistic library; and by and by it occurred to Augusta that she had too long neglected to inform her friend Laura Wyllys of the easy and remarkable success achieved in Guildford by the gifted young person in whom Mrs. Wyllys had interested herself the summer before.

So she retired to the writing-table and scrawled, in her careless fashion, a laconic account of it. "She has twenty-five pupils in elocution, at a perfectly romantic price, twice a week, in our billiard-room; has given one reading at the Union; and is to give a series of four in March, after the Astronomy Course and the Grand Army Tableaux are over; and my hypercritical husband enjoys her reading so much that I have invited her to remain with us during the winter months. He can't hear her elsewhere, and her board would be something to her, you know. At present they are mean-

dering through William Morris's *Earthly Paradise*."

To this report Mrs. Pryor received, in three days, the following equally characteristic reply: —

"I never in my life knew any one respond to an appeal as magnificently as you do. I declare I had nearly forgotten that taking little creature with her yellow eyes. You must know Prof. Gryps declares that γλαυκῶπις means having eyes like an owl, yellow, and extremely brilliant, and that Pallas Athena's were of that kind, — not stupid blue at all. Well, where was I? — Oh, Mrs. Drown! I'm delighted that she has found such friends, but, as I say, I had almost forgotten her. There seems to be more going on than ever this winter. In the first place, we are all studying Sanscrit. There's the most charming East Indian prince here, who learned English somehow, and read Chan-

ning and Emerson, and voluntarily expatriated himself that he might study the civilization which produced those cosmic thinkers. We take lessons of him, and he is asked everywhere. A class in Gaelic is forming, — to be taught by a genuine Highland chieftain, the last of the MacIvors, who goes to parties with his pibroch, and sings their native songs in the national costume. It was a little odd at first — in a drawing-room you know, — but one becomes used to it, and the plaid is pretty. Then we have among us a most interesting Frenchman, the favorite disciple of Auguste Comte, — the only person in whom he really confided in his latest days. On his death-bed, the philosopher imparted to this man several important secrets which throw great light on the practical application of the Positive Philosophy, but he forbade their being divulged for a certain number of years. The time has now expired; and M. Renard says he could think

of no city but our own, where ideas are sufficiently advanced and the general level of intelligence high enough to hear their promulgation. So he is delivering a course of lectures — three a week, and every one attends — which he calls *New Illustrations of the Positive Philosophy;* and they are to be published by subscription, in a book entitled *The Master's Bequest*, or *New Illustrations, etc.*

"Besides all this, and the usual concerts and fairs, a number of us ladies have organized a *Bushelwomen's Friend Society*, and we take turns every week in inviting the bushelwomen *to our own dining-rooms*, and giving them sponge-cake and breakfast-tea, and some sort of intellectual entertainment, — a magic-lantern, for instance. . . . So you see I am even more than usually occupied, and the children have had scarlatina beside, and Peter, my husband, narrowly escaped pneumonia. All his own fault! Why will he go in street-cars

without an overcoat? But you will not wonder that Mrs. Drown almost escaped me. You are an angel to keep her in your house for the sake of saving her board; but if I were you I would look after her and Col. Alfred a little, and their poetical readings. You have as good as owned to me that he is over-susceptible, — fascinating creature that he used to be himself! Poor dear! Is he always just the same? I wish you would write oftener.

"Ever yours,

"L. T. W.

"P. S. — I have just received my summons to the Woman's Suffrage Convention in your State. It is to be holden at L——, so I shall have to pass through Guildford. I need not tell you how gratifying it would be to me if you could feel like joining me and attending the meetings; but, at all events, I will stop over with you a few days on my return. What

with home cares, and more weighty responsibilities, I am growing haggard as a death's head, and do really need a little rest."

Mrs. Pryor had winced at the expression "used to be." — "I am not sure," she reflected, while she re-folded the letter, "that I want to see her. There always was a vein of coarseness in Laura, which her career seems rather to develop." But naturally she wrote next day, begging her friend to come; and, having Mrs. Wyllys's letter before her when she did so, she smiled as she reviewed the last of that lady's avocations, and gave the benefit of that part to Isabel Rae.

Belle had come in from the lesson in the billiard-room, as she was rather apt to do lately. The elder and younger woman were becoming fond of one another. Neither was very demonstrative, or apt at sudden enthusiasms for female friends, but their mutual under-

standing and confidence grew silently every day. Mrs. Drown had also looked in with Isabel, but refused to sit.

"No, no," she said, with her prettiest air of occupation. "It is time now for me to go and finish the *Love of Alcestis*. You have been so very good to me, madam, that I am busy every single moment; and doubtless I cannot afford to be idle." So the sprite had vanished.

"It was Mrs. Wyllys, was it not," said Isabel, after laughing a little over the letter, "who first introduced Mrs. Drown to you?"

"Yes."

"And of course she told you all about her. But is she not odd? Does she talk much about her past life?"

"Never. I fancy that it has been, in some ways, very painful, and so, of course, I have not pressed the subject."

"Yet she does not appear in the least like a stricken woman."

"I think, Belle, that any widow must be stricken, whatever bearing she may assume, or however try to repair her lot."

Something in the grave simplicity of this remark touched Isabel strangely. Cold people — as they are called — like her, never know when their feelings are going to overpower them. A sudden mist rushed over her clear gray eyes. She rose, with her stately step, and, coming round to where Mrs. Pryor sat, she kissed her lightly on the forehead. Augusta looked up a little surprised, but patted the white hand that rested on the writing-table, and then proceeded to direct her letter.

At the same time, by an odd coincidence, this was what was passing in the room above:

"'The gods at least remember what is done,'" repeated Alfred, musingly, as the echo of Mrs. Drown's exquisite cadence died away on the warm, exotic-scented air of the chamber. "Is

it true, I wonder? Sometimes the gods appear to me of all beings the most forgetful."

"Who are the gods?"

"What a startling inquiry! They are those, according to Mr. Morris, who never forget."

"Then I do not love them, and I wish there were none."

"Oh, my dear lady," said the invalid, with his charming, melancholy smile, "you are a great deal too young and too highly gifted to be in love with oblivion. For me, indeed—"

But she interrupted him almost vehemently.

"No, no!" she cried, and the suspicion visited him with a certain shock that now, for the first time, he heard the real woman speak. "Do not make a comparison between you and me! There is no such thing! Your past is all ease, and wealth, and splendor and honor. You are ill now, indeed, but with all the world to wait on you; and by and by you will be well again and the world still at your feet. But I—I am

a nothing — a mockery! friendless, — homeless. I hate the past, and I fear the future."

Alfred started; and the painful flush which a fresh realization of his helplessness always occasioned, mounted to his forehead. "Surely," he began hurriedly, "you have found friends here, and you have no new trouble. No thoughtless disregard — "

"No, no," she repeated forlornly, yet with something like scorn. "Madame Pryor is very kind, and every one, but they do not know. No one knows. I am alone, afraid. When I cannot stay here any longer, where can I go?"

"At least," said the Colonel in a low voice, commanding, by a strong effort, the agitation of which he was ashamed, "you need not fear the loss of a shelter. I have often suspected that, besides your recent bereavement, and though you are so brave and cheerful, you have some sorrowful secret."

"Oh!" she cried, "I have nothing else ex-

cept sorrowful secrets, — or secrets, however you would call them; " and she began to wring her slim brown hands.

He stretched out his own with authority. "Come nearer to me," he said.

Then she crept forward, as though unwillingly obedient, to where he could grasp both her hands and hold them. "You must confide in me."

"Oh, ought I?" and she lifted her strange eyes, and fixed them on space, with a look of distressful inquiry.

"Most assuredly you ought! I am a miserable wreck myself, but I am rich, as you say, and we have influence, — my wife and I."

Then she made as if she would draw her hands away; but he took no notice of the gesture. "You can hardly have a trouble which we could not, at least, contrive to mitigate. Poor child! how you tremble. Sit down."

He kept hold of one of her hands, but she stretched out the other, and, as though moved by an irresistible magnetism, drew the low chair to the side of the couch, and dropped into it.

"I believe," he went on gently, "that it would be better if you would tell me your whole story."

"Perhaps it might! Perhaps it might!"

"Well, then" — as quietly and reassuringly as he could speak.

"Ah, I don't know how to begin. — Hark!" she cried abruptly, breaking from him like a bird, and darting to the opposite side of the nearest table, where she seized a little silver vase, as though she would smell its flower. "Some one is coming! Yes, yes!" — nodding her head, for even the sensitive ear of her companion had not caught the sound. "It cannot be to-night, you see. Another time, perhaps." And she glided away.

CHAP. IX.

ON THE ICE.

SNOW-STORMS, brief thaws, north winds, and deadly cold rain, fog and sudden cold again, — such was January in Guildford, and a direful time it was among the elements. But after the mystical crisis of Candlemas Day was passed, came a season of truly superb winter weather. The sleighing was fine, the cold moderate, the sun came out of his moods, casting all sulky vapors aside, as if forever, and lingered every day a little longer in the rare blue sky. The ruddy sunsets faded unwillingly just south of west, only to be succeeded by starlight, and presently moonlight, of almost incredible clearness and brilliancy.

And now, with the firm closure of the ice upon the river, began the reign of one of the

most distinctive and delightful amusements of Guildford, — skating-parties up the stream, often with a cortege of sleighs, for the less adventurous, along the elm-shaded river road, and a hot supper and dancing at one or another of the ample old country-houses mentioned in our first chapter, where usually an ancient retainer or two, or at least a poor relation, kept the tradition of life alive, during the winter months.

Already the widowed mother of Capt. McArthur had received Harry's friends in her simple, dignified fashion (they were far from rich), at the red-roofed cottage, whose modest lawn was thought, by some, the greenest that sloped to the river in summer-time. Then George Aspinwall, and a number of coadjutors, had hired the dancing-hall of a certain rambling old inn — one of the curiosities of the region — and given a rather memorable German there. With his wonted impartiality, the

philosophic attorney had applied both to Miss Richards and the Faxons to assist him in decorating the bare and somewhat ghostly hall; and the result had been glorious and fluent disagreement over every feature of the adorning, which, nevertheless, when complete, was pronounced picturesque, if a little bizarre.

The Andersons had no summer place upon the river, but it was not Mrs. Rose's fault. With her own missionary spirit, that faithful wife had been instant, in and out of season, in urging upon her inconsiderate lord his duty to society of buying the first estate which came into the market in the charmed region, and erecting an overshadowing villa there. "Sha'n't do it, my lady!" had been his obstinate response. "Not while they hold their land at such a d—d impudent price as now!" Then Mrs. Anderson had looked like the angel who "blushed when he gave it in," and had dropped the subject until another time.

Lilian cared very little who gave the parties at this, which was always to her the gayest and most triumphal, season of the year. She looked to her own birthday ball, which came late in March, and was apt to be the costliest entertainment of the year, for the discharge of her social debts; and meanwhile, she was a consummate skater, fleet and perfectly fearless, her tall, slim figure affording at every turn a new revelation in grace. Some, indeed, of those who liked to call themselves the "society men" of Guildford, professed to prefer the "action" upon the ice of Miss Rae.

"Slower, you know! She's two stone heavier, I suppose, but more stately! Less of the fairy and more of the goddess!" Thus the partisans of Isabel.

In like manner, the girls took sides about the skating costumes of the rival belles. Isabel's was of clear peacock green, bordered with ermine, and well did that most difficult

of colors vindicate the splendor of her pure, healthful complexion, and nut-brown hair, besides having, in itself, a peculiar harmony with the ice-bound river and the dazzling landscape. When the rumor of this witching dress reached Lily's ears, she perceived the emergency, and acted with her usual promptitude in at once proclaiming her intent to appear upon the river in light scarlet, with black feather trimming.

"You mean creature, with your golden curls!" cried Emily Richards, the ever present, "to go and choose the only colors which we black-eyed girls can wear."

"Nonsense!" replied the young strategist, "one color is as good as another, but I hate always having the same slice of the rainbow, and I'm sick to death of Nile green and azure blue."

"It's very well for you to talk, to whom one

color is as good as another, but I suppose you will do as you like."

"Certainly," replied Miss Anderson with her seraphic smile. "Don't I always? And in this case, you know, I *must* extinguish the Venus of Milo, as Mr. Warburton calls her. I had been thinking of very dark green, with a long white feather, but *that's* all over."

Isabel, on the other hand, would never admit that there was any rivalry between herself and the beautiful blonde, being a great deal too proud to confess a competition where her own victory was in the least doubtful. She was likewise intolerant of social obligations, almost to a foible, and began to feel it high time that she herself were playing hostess to the river "crowd." But now two difficulties arose: her mother was in Washington for a month, and Miss Rae, for all her apparent *aplomb*, had a certain shyness about entertaining in her absence. And Mrs. Merril, who occupied a

part of the Rae farmhouse during the winter, had lost a child but lately, and was herself ill with rheumatism, so that the preparation of a feast there seemed out of the question. When, however, wondering a little whither had fled her old especial reserve in that lady's presence, Isabel confided her dilemma to Mrs. Pryor, Augusta was ready with a remedy.

"You must have them at Orchard Lawn, Belle," she said cordially. (Orchard Lawn was the Pryor country-seat.) "Jameson and his wife are there, you know, and if Alfred is as usual, I will go up and receive with you. He always took such an interest in your parties, Isabel, that I am sure he will like the notion."

And Miss Rae was presently persuaded to accept the favor.

The Colonel approved, certainly, and even made some rather lavish proposals to his wife about the accessories of the entertainment,

but his chief concern seemed to be that Mrs. Drown should go.

"She needs it. She is overworking. You, Augusta, who are so strong, don't realize her fragility, but she grows paler and more troubled looking every day."

"I had not observed any change, though, to be sure, that sort of complexion don't show paleness. Well, I will certainly take her if she will consent to go. So far she has refused all the invitations that have been given her, and I must say I think very properly. And this will be a genuine young folks' frolic — dancing and all! However, if you have detected that she is pining — "

"I have; and I think she will go if I request it."

"I dare say," said the wife with a quizzical, yet loving look.

And so it was that, when Isabel's evening came, with a glory of full moonlight in the

purple air, that was like a new and more delicate day, Mrs. Drown spent the unexampled space of two hours in the retirement of her own chamber, and emerged thence with only a *fichu* of cunningly plaited white *tulle* bound over her black gown, soft ruffles of the same at her throat and wrists, and one star-like white flower in her crown of raven hair. Yet the result was so transforming, that even her self-poised patroness, meeting her in the gallery, started with astonishment.

"Good heavens! who would have thought so trivial an alteration in your dress would change you so? Upon my word, it is like magic, and vastly becoming! But what can you wear in the sleigh that will not crush those fluffy ruffles? Ah! take this"—and she pulled a great white fur cloak off her own ample shoulders—"I will wear another. Now throw it around you—so!—and go show yourself to Col. Pryor. He does so enjoy

an effect! I will go with you. What is it, Annette?"—looking over the balustrade. "Some one for me? Go alone then, Mrs. Drown, and join me in the hall! The horses are ready."

So the white apparition dawned noiselessly upon Alfred also.

"What a vision!" he cried. "It is the very spirit of the snow! I always thought I was a disinterested fellow, and now I know it. To give up my one pleasure and let you go off in that guise for other"—he was going to say men, but substituted—"people to see!"

Her cheeks, that so rarely betrayed any movement of the blood, grew suddenly red in his pause, enhancing infinitely her singular charm. "I would a great deal rather stay here," she said in her most dulcet whisper, "and read as usual."

"Don't humiliate me by mentioning it! but

let me kiss your hand, and wish you one evening free from all sadness and care."

The young people whom we know best, and many more, were to meet at the Rae house upon the Avenue, take the river from thence and skate up to the Farms — as they were collectively called — in company. Miss Anderson came attended by the Englishman, and the fact excited not a little comment among her young compeers.

"I have written to Charley Mason how things are going," murmured Capt. McArthur to Isabel, who had gladdened the young warrior's honest heart, unspeakably, by seeming rather to rely on him in her preparations for the present affair. "I thought it no more than right. Charley is such a thoroughly good fellow."

"Indeed he is. Harry — "

"Yes — " and the Captain looked so eager that Miss Rae's provoking blush arose, as she

remembered that she had hardly called him by his Christian name since they rambled the Louvre together, five years before.

"Would you mind going up to the house with me when we first arrive at the Farms, to make sure that the fires and everything are all right? Mrs. Pryor cannot be there quite so early. The others will go on, very likely, or, at any rate, rove about for a while. The two miles up there is nothing!"

"Would I *mind!* Well, I should rather think you might know by this time that all my humble ambition is to be of use!"

Lily Anderson looked so odd that night in her unusual colors, and with the beauteous hair, with whose coils the daring maiden loved ordinarily to enhance the effect of her height, braided loosely in her neck three times, tied with a broad black ribbon, and falling in a cataract of golden rings the whole length of her slender waist, that one and another pro-

fessed not to have known her at the first glimpse, although all agreed that she was never handsomer. When the skating-season opened Mr. Warburton had been quite chagrined to find himself eclipsed in one athletic exercise by all the Yankee youth around; but he had practised vigorously what time he could spare from his benevolent labors, and was now quite proficient. He was even complimented on his performance, among others by Miss Richards, on whom he bestowed an absent stare, perfectly unmistakable even in the moonlight, which seemed to say that he had never observed her before,—an affront which that young woman registered as calling for early vengeance.

"I think the Briton's elder brother must be in failing health," she observed to George Aspinwall. "Nothing else could have increased the stiffness of his island spine."

"How he does hover over Lily! She's a damsel of spirit, and I have thought her deci-

dedly coy; but, by Jove! I think he'll have her yet, by the help of Heaven and her fair mamma."

Orchard Lawn was an old mansion of a grander type than most of those at the Farms, and occupying a commanding position on a bend of the river which became extremely sinuous beyond this point, and offered no long vistas for many miles. All the lower part of the house was lighted when it came in view, especially the semicircular southern wing, where was situated a fine oval dining-room, — Col. Pryor's particular pride. Snow-paths traversed the lawn which descended to the river, among the scattered fruit-trees, affectionately preserved in their hardy old age as picturesque in themselves, and having given the place its name. On the hither, or city side of the estate, there were also a boat-house and landing, and, from these to the dining-room verandah, led a straight path bordered by tall spruces

closely planted, that they might afford, in summer, an unbroken shade. This path had been hung, as for a midsummer *fête*, with Chinese lanterns, which cast a strange, rose-colored light upon the icy footway whereby, having excused themselves at the landing, Isabel and her cavalier went up to the house, all the rest having derided the notion of seeking shelter so soon.

The two were received by Mrs. Jameson, the housekeeper, clad in her best black silk. That excellent woman had known them both from babyhood, and welcomed them unceremoniously, but with an air of high satisfaction. "There! Warm yourselves a grain fust — Mis. Pryor, she won't be here for half an hour — and then come and take a look at the dining-room."

"Oh, we're not cold. Show us at once."

The folding-doors, which communicated with the hall, were thrown triumphantly open, and

certainly the scene was charming. The noble room was all draped with red, white, and blue, and these were days when those colors yet hallowed every feast upon which they shone. A fine trophy gleamed above the tall, quaintly-carved wooden mantle; a great fire blazed upon the hearth; and then the flowers, — the flowers upon the table!

Isabel, whose raptures did not rise readily to her lips, could little more, in the first moment, than sigh her admiration. But McArthur, who was in wonderful spirits that night, tossed his cap, and gave a long whoop of boyish ecstasy.

"Who's the artist?" he cried. "Mrs. Jimmyson," turning upon her with the old nickname which he had adopted when, as a flaxen-haired urchin, he used to tease her for apples, "do you pretend to say that this is your work?"

"I did just what I was told," replied the

housekeeper, bridling, "and there was others to help; and I think it looks *well*."

"*Well?* That's what I call restraint in style. *Well?* Why, it's Orientally magnificent and unspeakably splendiferous! Hallo, mademoiselle!" (Just then Mrs. Jameson was called off by her husband.) "What's the matter with you?"

For Isabel had taken a delicate little note from the tip-top of the highest flower-pyramid, and was reading it with a high color and a face that betrayed emotion.

"It is all the Colonel's doing," she said, softly, holding out the note to her companion. "He has lain in his sick-room and contrived all the loveliness. Whose else could the taste have been? Oh, how sweet, how generous he is! How few people understand or appreciate him!"

Capt. McArthur twirled his moustache dryly, but did not take the note. "The decorations

are handsome," he said, in a tone which was no longer boyish, — intensely mannish, rather; "but — "

"But what, pray?"

He strode to the doors, which Mrs. Jameson had left open, and shut them with something approaching a bang. "But the fact is, Isabel," he said, returning and looking at her steadily, "I don't like them the better for knowing that they are a special attention from Col. Pryor to you."

Belle drew herself up and returned him her own haughtiest gaze. "I do not understand you," she said.

"Didn't I speak plainly? I intended it. I have always admired the Colonel, in some ways, and have defended him from some aspersions in my time; but, by Heaven! I am out of patience with that inveterate and universal love-making, which it seems he can't suspend even now! No, thank you!" as the note was

disdainfully pushed a little nearer him. "I'm quite familiar with his complimentary style. Who isn't? I have no doubt that such notes are pleasant for a lady to receive —"

Isabel's eyes began to flash. "You are forgetting yourself strangely!" she said. "Even if there were any excuse for these unworthy insinuations, what possible right have you to make them?"

"Well," answered McArthur, in a low tone, "since you ask me, I'll tell you what I think gives me the right. I've known you all my life, and loved you ever since I can remember. You know yourself that, so long ago as when we used to play in these orchards together, we felt that we belonged to one another. Then we grew up, and I never thought twice about any other girl. Then you went abroad, and I went after you. I didn't think there was the power on earth or heaven to call me off and keep me away from you for years, but of

course there was! I said to myself that you would never have a half-hearted or dishonorable fellow; and that such an one would not be worthy of you."

Isabel's anger was fading fast. She had a hard struggle, if he had but known it, to keep back the tears. The simple soldier, with his young life full of action, had never so much as read, —

> "I could not love thee, dear, so much,
> Loved I not honor more."

"In all the hardest times I thought most of you. Twice I supposed I should never see you again. Then I came home, and here you were, more beautiful than ever, but somehow you were changed. You were distant and preoccupied, and I could not come at you. Then I began to hear it whispered that my old Colonel, whom I loved too, admired you extremely. I knew he admired everything hand-

some, and thought very little of that, but when they began to say that you were infatuated about him — "

Isabel's lip curled again.

"I beg your pardon. Good girls like you don't know how men talk. I stamped upon them as they deserved, and swore you were the favorite of the house, and all that; but all the same I could not help seeing that you were in a sort of dream, and I said to myself that if your thoughts were running on such a grand cavalier as that, there could be no chance whatever for a fellow like me. So I began to hate him, and was mean enough to be a little glad when this long illness took him, as I hoped, out of the way. You must forgive me if I have said anything I ought not."

There was a silence of three seconds, and then Isabel sighed, —

"Oh, Harry!"

He had the fine instinct which does not need

to reflect before seizing an advantage. "Do you mean," he cried impetuously, "that you might possibly do more? Speak quick!"

"I suppose I do. I mean that I like you just as well as I ever did."

"By Heaven! I want something more than that. Do you love me as I love you? Will you marry me, if ever I can make a suitable home for you? I've idled about shamefully since the war, but it's been because of my doubt and disappointment about you. Will you, Belle?"

"Yes, Harry."

"O God! can it be true? Give me one kiss, my blessed girl!"

"Another!"

"No, no!"

"Hurrah for the Colonel now!" cried the person thus repulsed, as his eye fell once more upon the splendid flowers. "Heaven bless him, and all his dainty devices! What a deal of

money he must have spent! After all, you who never served under him don't half know what a hero he is!"

"Stop a minute, Harry," said Isabel with lofty gravity, "I want to be perfectly honest with you, also."

"Oh, never mind about that!"

"But I choose. I did once worship Col. Pryor in a way, when he first came home. I saw him constantly, and I could not help thinking about him a great deal. I thought him a perfect model of manners."

"Well, and so he is! I'll fight it out on that line with anybody."

"But I liked his manners to me! I liked his flattery, — oh, so much! I liked my privilege of going there at any time. I wasn't in love with him —"

"My darling, you can't suppose I meant to imply it!"

"But I did think that whoever loved me

must be a good deal like him, and love me in just that way."

"I'll try to do it in any way you prefer."

"Nonsense! What I want you to understand is, that he was my beau-ideal."

"And quite naturally! I should n't much wonder at a woman's breaking her heart for him."

"I never was anywhere near that! My heart is not of a fragile kind, I fancy! But I thought no other outsider knew the real beauty of his character as I did, and I was very much distressed when he became so ill."

"So was every lady in Guildford, I verily believe!"

"But this winter," continued Miss Rae explicitly, "although so kind, as you see, he has quite left off petting me. He could not endure hearing me read, and then came Mrs. Drown, whose voice was perfectly soothing and charming to him."

"That little actress! By Jove!"

"And so, although I have been there almost every day, it has been more than formerly to see Mrs. Pryor, who I do think, Harry, is about the grandest woman alive. It has not been quite as fascinating as it used to be, but I think somehow it has been more healthful. Hark! There are their bells now."

"Then give me one more kiss!"

Capt. Harry was not a curious analyst of character, but he knew too much to expect Isabel's first embraces to be very ardent.

It was ordained that there should be more than one order of love-making at that winter festival.

CHAP. X.

BREAKING THE ICE.

IF Miss Anderson looked unlike herself in the weird brightness of that memorable evening, an undeniable change had also passed over the manners of Mr. Warburton. It did not appear at first, but was gradually borne in upon the consciousness of the scarlet-clad maiden as she felt his blue eyes continually fastened upon her, amid all her wonderful dartings and skimmings and spirals, and had some ado to avoid, at every turn, the perfectly superfluous assistance of his well-developed arm. There had always been something, in his muttered and stammering style of compliment, which had tickled the girl's reckless humor; but all the amusement which he had hitherto furnished her in this way, was as nothing to

the entertainment provided for her this evening. She was convinced, however, as she had often fancied before, that he made fitful and ineffectual, but wholly serious, attempts to restrain even these halting gallantries, and, piqued by this notion, and by the excitement, and a certain license of the occasion, she lured him on for the mere pleasure of detecting his periodic dismay lest he should indeed have committed himself. Her superior skill upon the ice gave her a constant advantage in her tactics of advance and retreat, and the dance which she led him, about island and cove, was one calculated to bewilder any but an extremely active and versatile brain.

Gradually they withdrew a little from the rest, and this, also, was partly by design on Lily's part, for the Englishman's bearing toward the other members of the party was unusually distant, and almost supercilious, and she was unwilling to have her friends exposed

to more of what they called his rudeness than was needful. Once, when she paused for a moment facing him, and resting her delicate cheek against the little black muff which she carried, he exclaimed, with an impetuosity which rendered his utterance positively distinct,—

"'Pon me soul, Miss Anderson, I wish you would not look at me like that."

"I beg your pardon," said Lily, beginning to *chassez*. "What is wrong with my looks?"

"But you can't think how supernaturally lovely you are, you know."

She moved off a little at this, but the thought darted into her naughty head that it would be agreeable, for many reasons, actually to refuse him. So she flashed her starry eyes upon him, and he followed hard after her until she chose to rest again.

"I think," she said, with an air of impartial criticism, "that you improve steadily."

"I think you grow more distracting steadily."

"Of course that cannot be meant for a compliment."

"It means, Miss Anderson, that if it were not for the barriers between us —"

("Oh, ho!" thought Lily, pursing her lips with the utmost Republican rancor, "he's alluding to his distinguished relations.")

"Barriers of which you have no conception."

("Indeed, he considers their grandeur beyond my imagination, even!")

"I'd throw myself at your feet, this moment!"

"Pray don't," interrupted the young lady, earnestly, "the ice is very treacherous in some places on this river. I'd advise you by all means to keep your footing, Mr. Warburton, if you can."

She turned, suddenly, as she spoke, and skimmed away up the stream. Like some wonderful bird, he thought, with her yellow hair

floating behind her in the place of plumage, — and of course he followed. The sound of his coming spurred her on, and such a power of fleet motion seemed to enter into her as she had never experienced before, save once or twice, perhaps, on daring horseback rides or in dreams of flying. Faster and faster yet, — the keen air, the dazzling moonlight, the sense of unimagined victory over time and space, the triumph over her halting lover, — all helped to intoxicate. She turned her graceful head from time to time, and exulted to see her pursuer falling behind. An ideal of unfettered movement had haunted her insubordinate spirit in its waking as well as its midnight dreams, and all at once her conception seemed on the point of being realized.

Presently the exhilaration of her flight overpowered every other emotion, and she forgot even that she was followed. The image of the man whom she had just saucily defied gave

place, by a natural law, under the excitement of this weird voyage, to that of the perpetual hero of her girlish dreams. He rose before her, idealized of course, but homely, manly, and dear, and she did him fresh homage in heart. She saw what life might be with him — a whole, long, vividly-realized future — simple and serious and beneficent, with a vague suggestion of blooming roses and country ways about it; arduous and yet sweet; free from the showy unreality and petty exasperations of her home; sublimely innocent of the pomps and vanities whereon she doated so much less than the world supposed. One person could make her gladly independent of these. She called to him in her heart, to come and take her away into that simpler, safer life. She was no longer conscious even of smoothly speeding on.

But not being, in fact, disembodied, our heroine was presently visited by a sense of

something like exhaustion. She had small idea how far she had come; but feeling suddenly compelled to rest and gather breath, she neared a little wooded island which here divided the stream, seized a bare, depending branch, and swung herself upon a prominent rock, blown bare by the winds, to recover her forces and await the coming of her follower.

He was nowhere in sight; but he could not, in the nature of things, have been visible at any considerable distance. Wherefore, in the interval before he should appear, Miss Anderson began to observe the section of river landscape immediately about her, and was a little startled to perceive that it was unfamiliar.

On one side of her the shore of the stream was closely wooded. On the other, there were open glades; and beyond, what might be cultivated fields snow-clad. But there was no human habitation in sight, nor a single sound to break the crisp stillness, except the strange

whisper of the lightly-blowing wind among the leafless twigs.

Fear was a sensation which Lily hardly knew; but it did occur to her, while she began to strain her eyes and ears for some token of her gallant's approach, that her predicament might possibly prove an awkward one.

What if he had come to grief among the windings of that, to him, unknown river when equally distant from herself, and from the party which they had left so unceremoniously? It was perfectly evident that her own madcap flight had been much fleeter than she herself supposed, and she hardly liked to guess how far she might now be from Orchard Lawn. She must go back at once.

But though fully to be acquitted of any cowardly care for conventions, Miss Lily was acutely conscious of her solitude, besides being fairly spent with the reckless rapidity of her

flight to this lone spot, and she felt an almost unconquerable reluctance to move.

While rallying her energies, however, she detected a sound, — a soft gliding, a slight crunching. Somebody was coming at last. But hark! Was it not from the wrong direction? Yes, indeed! It was a solitary skater, — a man, of course, coming rapidly *down* the stream. Lily could not see him, for he was behind the wooded islet, and she devoutly hoped that he might pass without observing her in her extraordinary costume and equally extraordinary position.

There was a moment of suspense, during which the scarlet nymph held her breath and drew back as far as possible under the shade of the winter boughs. Then she heard the swift sweep of the voyager around the little point at her left. A strong figure stopped short, and then sprang forward, and a well-known voice

cried out in accents of rather stern amazement, —

"Lilian Anderson! How came you here? Who is with you?"

"Good gracious, Cousin Charley! I never was so glad to see any one in my life! Where am I, pray?"

"Don't you know where you are? Are you alone? What sort of a crazy escapade is this? Are you *alone*, I say?"

"Y — yes. N — no, not exactly. I expect that Englishman every moment."

"Oh, you do! It's an eligible place for an appointment, at nine o'clock at night, six miles from home!"

"Heavens! Is it really so far? I began to think I had come an immense distance, and it all looked so strange."

Her *degagé* air softened his wrath a little, in spite of himself. "You know the place well enough," he said. "We've often boated up

here. It is where those farm buildings were burned in the autumn. It was their absence which made it look unfamiliar."

"Ah, I see! but—four miles! We came from Orchard Lawn, you know."

"I know nothing about it. Perhaps, now, you will be good enough to explain."

"Hoity-toity! How did you come here yourself?"

"I left the Guildford train three miles north, at the Junction, for the express purpose of skating down the river."

"That's very satisfactory, at all events."

"Can you be equally explicit?"

"I suppose I can, if I choose. But where do you think that man can be, Charles?"

"I neither know nor care. I know that you will not be abandoned to his protection again to-night, however you escaped it."

"Escaped? How clever you are! If you must know, that's exactly what I did. I ran

away from him. Belle Rae has a party at Orchard Lawn to-night, and we were all out on the ice. He was uncommonly disagreeable —"

"Then, at least, you do not care for him, Lily —"

"Don't interupt! You can judge for yourself. I tell you he was hateful, both in the airs he put on to the rest, and in his flatteries to me. So I drew him off from the others first, and then started away merely to tease him. I don't quite know whether I meant him to follow me, but he did for awhile. Then he fell behind, and, finally, was out of sight; but something wild was in me, I think, for I kept on until I dropped upon this rock to rest."

"Where you must not sit still another moment! I fear you have taken cold already."

"Oh, no! I'm still aglow; but I begin to think that something has happened to Mr. Warburton."

"I'm not alarmed. He is a good skater, isn't he?"

"He is learning fast; but he don't know the river, of course, and I suppose there are dangerous places in it, as usual."

"Plenty of them! What a reckless girl you are! Yes, we had better go back at once." And he took the little fur-clad paw which Lily extended meekly as any kitten, and assisted her to descend from her perch and regain her balance on the ice. Then, to her surprise, he hesitated before starting.

"You have relieved my mind so far," he said, "that I believe I shall tell you something which may help to explain my abruptness —"

"Oh, that requires no explanation, I'm sure," she interrupted, saucily.

His next step, however, was to take off his overcoat.

"What are you doing that for? Ridiculous nonsense! Do you suppose I'll put on that

thing? I tell you I'm perfectly glowing. Take it away!"

But the masterful individual so vivaciously adjured only imprisoned her two resisting hands, muff and all, in one of his, and, with the other, threw the rough garment around her shoulders and held the breasts of it together.

"I'm not sure I ought to speak before I have proof," said he, "but I have some reason to believe that the man with whom you have just run your insane race, has been deceiving you all."

"No, Charles! It would be too much happiness! This is the very thing I have desired, but dared not hope. What, not a Bishop's nephew, after all? Oh, say a lackey! Say a navvy!"

"No," replied Mason, gravely. "If he's the man I suppose, his social position is exactly what he claims. Nor do I see any proper ground for exultation in the misdemeanors of a

clergyman. But there is, at least, an unworthy mystery about him."

"What sort of misdemeanors?"

"I cannot explain."

Then he released her from his overcoat and resumed it himself, and the two set forth. Presently, Lily, —

"How did you learn this?"

"Casually, through a letter from a friend abroad. Mind, I don't know it. I only believe."

"All the better! I think I have heard you say that faith is higher than knowledge."

"I wouldn't jest about it, if I were you," said her companion, rather grimly. "Your levity had like to have led you a deal too far."

"My levity, is it? I think what you so handsomely term my levity has been the only saving clause in the whole affair. What do you say to mamma's credulity, and Dr. Price's?"

"I think they will be more scrupulous another time."

They had now rounded the first point on their return voyage, and no one was in sight. What if he had drowned himself of his own accord, the lively young lady suggested, or taken this opportunity to escape altogether?

"I don't credit him with so much forethought," was the answer. "I only dread an accident."

But, at the second turning, a figure loomed up at a considerable distance, in which the keen eyes of Miss Anderson at once recognized her whilom cavalier, and she nodded the fact to her present rather sombre protector. The explanation of Mr. Warburton's delay was really simple enough. He had been far outstripped, but was pressing on, as in duty bound, when the fastenings of one of his skates gave way, and he had sought the shore to repair it. The process to his unskilled fingers was a long and

imperfect one; and he found himself compelled, when he took the ice again, to proceed more slowly and cautiously than hitherto, in his pursuit of the strange little refugee. He appeared to descry the two coming figures almost immediately after they discovered him, and, when he had done so, he hesitated, stopped, and finally turned, and retreated slowly before them.

"What do you suppose he thinks of me?" asked Lily, näively, after some moments of reflection.

"I cannot say. Perhaps it would be worth while, in future, to consider beforehand what people are likely to think and say."

"Very well! But I wouldn't be a Polar Bear."

Then stern Justice relaxed a little about the corners of the eyes, and there was the faintest possible squeeze of the elbow which Mr. Mason was supporting.

They went on in this way, — the distance between them and the advancing figure inevitably lessening a little, until Orchard Lawn was once more in view, and the question of how they should bear and how explain themselves, began to harass not a little the souls of the truants. The ice appeared deserted. The revellers had seemingly all sought the house. All at once Miss Anderson, who had been moving on a little languidly, and with eyes cast down, felt her companion start and withdraw his supporting arm, with a smothered exclamation. She looked up and saw it all. The figure in advance of them had stopped again, struggled frantically for an instant, then its foothold crashed beneath it, and it was gone!

Mason swept onward and flung himself prone upon the ice at the edge of the terrible chasm. Lily darted to his side.

"Go on!" he said. "Tell the others!"

"I won't leave you!"

"Go *on*, I say! Call! Fly! I shall need help."

Just how she obeyed this order, Miss Anderson never knew. She only knew that she met some one on the ice, and gasped out her tale before she gained her goal. But she turned very dizzy as her feet touched the bank, and had but a confused recollection of being helped up across the lawn, while a score of men were running wildly down it to the shore. When she came fully to herself, she was sitting on the lower step of the great hall-staircase, at the Lawn, and Belle Rae had her arm about her and was trying to make her swallow some wine out of a spoon, held in a rather tremulous hand. The wide front door was open. The cold night air blew in and flared the lamps. A few of the girls were running about nervously, and wringing their hands. Others huddled together pale and speechless. Mrs. Pryor

was issuing steady orders to have restoratives in readiness in the housekeeper's room, which opened off the hall, and had been prepared as a coffee-room. Mrs. Jameson and Mrs. Drown appeared to be quietly obeying her.

"What is it?" said Lily in her bewilderment. "Are they safe?"

"Oh, we don't know yet. Hark!"

There was a faint sound, like a cheer, from the direction of the river.

Mrs. Pryor stepped out upon the verandah, and most of the terror-stricken trooped after her. George Aspinwall was running up the lawn, and when he saw them he waved his hat.

"It's all right!" he shouted. "The man's alive, and coming to himself. Charles Mason appears to have dropped from heaven and pulled him out of the water somehow, but it was a hard tussle. They are bringing him up

here, Mrs. Pryor. Have you blankets, and brandy and things?"

"Everything is ready."

"And I should say, if possible, some dry clothes for Mr. Mason."

"Certainly. There are plenty of Mr. Pryor's here. Girls," said Mrs. Augusta, facing round upon her fluttering followers, "you had better all go back, and keep out of the way. Had they not, Mr. Aspinwall? Go into the parlor, or dining-room, or anywhere, but don't obstruct the passage!" And she returned, driving her flock before her, but overlooked the group upon the stairs, where Lily had started up and clasped her hands at the sound of Mr. Aspinwall's voice, and was now sobbing in a smothered fashion, with her head on Isabel's knee. Mrs. Drown, also, whose unexpected efficiency Augusta had found time to note and silently commend, remained, as a matter of course, by the side of her patroness, when the

young men slowly brought in, and deposited upon an improvised couch in the coffee-room, their half-conscious burden.

It was a solemn procession, although so much less awful than it might have been; and it would not have been very surprising if, at the exciting moment of its arrival, no one had been observing little Mrs. Drown. But it so happened that Mr. Aspinwall did glance her way, and he saw what spurred his curiosity to professional alertness. He saw her eyes dilate, when they fell on the prostrate figure, and a sudden whiteness come around her lips. He saw her start forward, with an action that seemed to him like the spring of some lithe animal, then check herself, and stand stock still, with her hands a little clenched, as he fancied, and her face fixed in a concentrated expression, whose exact meaning he found it impossible to decipher. She retained her trance-like posture until partially aroused by

some one brushing past her, then retreated, still as in a kind of dream, and sank down upon the seat of one of the broad windows which flanked the hall-door, where she absently pulled the red woollen curtain about her, as if unconsciously trying to shield herself from observation.

This was interesting. The lawyer roamed vigilantly about; exchanged commonplace remarks with one and another; learned at the door of the coffee-room that the rescued man was rapidly reviving; saw Mrs. Jameson commune a moment with Capt. McArthur; and the latter, who knew the house well, summon Mr. Mason, and bid that unbidden guest follow him up-stairs; saw — and drew his collateral conclusions from this also — the unbidden guest clasp, with a sort of sacred fervor, the slim hand which Miss Anderson impulsively extended to him as he passed her; and finally

sauntered away in the direction of the window-seat.

"This is a rather tragic ending to a gay evening, Mrs. Drown," he said.

She looked up, a little startled by his voice, but with eyes that defended themselves by two-fold watchfulness from the scrutiny of his own.

"How tragic?" she said. "It might have been much worse. The gentleman is recovering, they say."

"Oh, yes. He is nearly right. A night's rest will restore him perfectly. But it was an extremely narrow escape. A stranger, you know, and not as well acquainted with the river as the rest of us; but very athletic for a clergyman."

"Are not clergymen athletic?" she inquired, still looking fixedly at him, in a way that made him feel a little as if he had exchanged with her the inquisitive place he had meant to take,

and he answered, with a slightly awkward laugh, —

"Why they are supposed — aren't they? — to be more devoted to spiritual than physical culture. Haven't you a rather cold seat there, Mrs. Drown? May I not take you to the supper-room for some refreshment?"

For Mrs. Pryor had bethought herself of this refuge for her agitated guests, and, two by two, they were beginning to stray in thither, and regale themselves, as appetite returned, after the sudden shock and check to their gayety.

"No, I thank you," replied the little lady in her distinct speech, after a moment of what seemed meditation, "I wish to see Madam Pryor."

So Aspinwall offered her his arm again, and she rose and took it, unwillingly, he perceived, and with a little touch of dislike.

But Augusta was not immediately to be

found; and, since the house was not all open for this unseasonable *fête*, their field of research was limited. In truth, the mistress of the mansion was just at that moment consulting with Mrs. Jameson, in the rather remote kitchen, where that busy officer was making arrangements to have dried, around the roasting fire, the dripping garments of Mr. Warburton.

Mrs. Pryor had warned Miss Rae that, if dancing were continued late, she must herself leave before the party broke up; since she must, at all events, be back in the city before midnight. But, in the excitement of the late adventure, time had passed unnoted, and it was already past eleven; and a sudden sharp anxiety, about home and her husband, had seized Augusta's usually reasonable mind, in the reaction from her recent fright.

"I must go," she said to her faithful coadjutor, "but whom shall I leave with you? For, of course, the gentleman must remain over-

night, and you cannot do everything. Dr. Witherspoon says there may be a little danger of fever, although he thinks not. Oh, why can't those thoughtless young people have the wit to go home?"

"'Cause they never think of nothing! If I was you, Mis. Pryor, I'd tell 'em to go."

"Oh, no! They are Miss Rae's guests, even more than mine, and I cannot disperse them."

"*I* could! But I guess Jameson and me can manage for the night. You'd ought to go, any way!" — Here a moist pocket-book fell from the coat which Mrs. Jameson was handling, half the contents of it slipped out, and she stooped her stout person with a little grunt to gather them up. — "Why, good land, Mis. Pryor!" she exclaimed the next instant, "he's got a picter of that woman that's a-staying with you!"

Augusta held out her hand mechanically, and received the *carte* which Mrs. Anderson had

so imperfect an opportunity to examine three months before.

"Impossible! I know they have never met; but what a likeness!" Then she too turned the card over, and saw the London mark. She remembered her profound ignorance of her guest's antecedents, and a swift though vague suspicion of having been shamefully imposed upon sent the angry blood into her face. "It is a remarkable likeness," she repeated, and turned to seek her guests again with her grandest step, and a head held higher than usual, while Mrs. Jameson remained behind, sagaciously shaking her own over Mr. Warburton's wet garments.

Augusta saw at least, when she regained the hall, that she had underrated the breeding and commonsense of the party. All were preparing to go away. Wraps were being assumed, hats adjusted. Some were already waiting to make their adieux. In the very focus of light

and motion, opposite the open doors of the still brilliant dining-room, our lofty lady encountered Mr. Aspinwall and Mrs. Drown, and the latter promptly accosted her.

"I have been seeking you, madam; I know you are now anxious to return to your invalid husband."

"Pray do not make yourself uneasy about that."

"Ah, but I know," she persisted steadily, the artificial timidity of her manner vanishing at once the moment the other's became really formidable. "He has been alone a long while. But you will wish to leave some one here to see that all is done for the gentleman in there, and I will remain."

"I see no propriety in such an arrangement."

"There is the utmost propriety," was the defiant retort, "for the man is my husband!"

Her speech was penetrating, as we know,

and every one heard. Augusta thought she perceived, and it redoubled her anger, that the revelation had been deliberately planned with a view to publicity and dramatic effect. There was now no avoiding a scene.

"How am I to credit you," she said very haughtily, "after all your deception? You are neither of you, it appears, what you pretend to be."

"If you have any doubt," was the firm answer, "come with me into that room where he is. But you had much better leave us alone."

Mrs. Pryor hesitated an instant, then handed her late guest, contemptuously enough, the *carte de visite* which she had retained. "You can restore him that if you like. I suppose it proves that there is some sort of connection between you."

"Did he have that about him?" inquired the

other, with the first shade of softness in her voice.

Then Mr. Mason came near. "Allow me to urge you to leave them, Mrs. Pryor," he said; "I know a little about this strange story, and I have been waiting the opportunity to give you a warning. It is bad enough, perhaps, but it might have been worse."

The doubly astonished guests had still sufficient tact to make their farewells very short.

"We will all go, Isabel," said Mrs. Pryor, too overstrained to be other than stern and towering even to her favorite. "I am far too late already. Come to me in the morning."

Will it be believed, however, that there were four young people present who were egotistical enough to retain a consciousness of their own concerns through all the accumulated excitements of the evening?

"What an evening!" sighed Isabel to Capt. Harry, casting one longing look behind, as

they passed the door of the dining-room. "Those lovely arrangements of Col. Pryor's were almost thrown away!"

"Not at all!" was the emphatic response. "The room was beautified for just us two, and none too fine, either!"

"What an evening!" murmured Charles Mason to his companion, as they paused a moment on the verandah and looked up the river. "Was I very cross to you, up yonder, Cousin Lily?"

"Tolerably, Cousin Charley; but how Col. Pryor's old dress-coat did become you! I never saw you look so well in my life! Oh, mamma, mamma! what will you say now?"

CHAP. XI.

CONFUSION.

THE rapid ride back to town seemed painfully slow to Augusta Pryor, for her thoughts were in a whirl. If they turned back to what she had left, resentment, a mingled scorn and distrust of the late inmate of her house, and the keen sense of an insulting mystery increased every instant. If homeward, the apprehension returned that Alfred had somehow suffered from her protracted absence, mingled with a new alarm at the shock her story would give him, and the slightest possible bitterness when she reflected how completely that artful little —— no suitable substantive occurred — had seemed of late to captivate his difficult fancy. She hardly waited for the horses to be checked at her own

door before she sprang out, unaided, ran up the long steps, and pulled the bell-handle more violently than she knew.

The answer was not immediate, and she sharply pulled again. Then slow steps were audible in the hall, there was fumbling at the lock, that lasted an exasperating while, and just in time, she thought, to save her from distraction, the door was opened, and Augusta beheld a strange figure with disordered hair, blinking eyes that betrayed the recent nap, and the most "hygienic" of winter travelling costumes. In short, it was her friend Mrs. Wyllys.

"Laura!"

"Oh, you have come at last! I certainly thought you never would. Are you often out so late?"

"Often? Never! When did you come? Have you been taken care of? Do you know how Alfred is?"

"I came just when I said I should in the telegram, my dear!"

"There has been no telegram."

"Oh, but indeed I sent one. Or, stay!—There was so much to be done on that last morning!—notes and despatches and reports of proceedings to be sent off!—Such a delightful and successful Convention as we have had, my dear!—but I must tell you of that another time. It is just possible— True enough! Here is the message I wrote in my bag, this moment. It was never sent! Well, at all events I came at half-past nine, and there seemed to be nobody about whatever, but one nice, frightened little maid. I really am afraid there's something wrong among your servants, my love!" (Mrs. Pryor silently decreed the decapitation of Grant.) "I told the girl that I was famished, and she did the best she could for me, I dare say, but of course it was rather cold." (Mental decapitation of the cook.)

"And then I inquired for Col. Pryor, and found that the man who usually comes in from outside to attend him in the evening, had not come at all."

"Good heavens!" cried Augusta, turning pale. "Then he is up yet! Excuse me, Laura, I must go —"

"Don't be in such haste! I don't know what you call *up*, but I assure you he is all right. I said to the girl, 'Col. Pryor and I are very old friends, and I will go right up to his room myself, and sit with him until Mrs. Pryor returns.'"

Augusta's heart died within her.

"So I did; and he was surprised to see me, of course, but I didn't let *him* know how frightfully ill I thought he was looking, and I sat down and told him all about the Convention —"

("Then he is dead already," thought Augusta in her despair.)

"And even read him some of the reports, which I had in my bag. He seemed much interested."

("Polite to his murderess! I can believe it.")

"And I stayed with him, I should think, an hour and a half. And then he thanked me, and told me he saw I was fatigued, and begged me to take a little rest, adding that he would not in the least mind being alone, and that you were sure to come soon. So you see there is no need for you to hasten."

"Indeed I must."

"Stay, my dear, — one or two things I feel I ought to say to you. In the first place — I say it outright, because I know you are not a nervous, weak-minded woman, to be crazed by alarm — I find your husband a great deal worse than I had imagined. I don't refer to the paralysis, or whatever it is, but to his general health. He is thinner, more shattered. And

I want to beseech you, Augusta, to lay aside your prejudices for his sake, and consult a doctor; or, at least, a person who has performed some perfectly startling cures among us lately. It would be peculiarly convenient in the dear Colonel's case, because you only need send a lock of the patient's hair — "

Augusta's much-tried temper gave way. "No earthly consideration, Laura, as you know, would ever induce either Alfred or me to consult a quack. I consider you most unfortunately credulous. We are likely to have trouble enough with that theatrical woman you sent us — "

"Ah, my dear, that is it! That's the other subject, on which you must allow me, as an old and true friend, to say one word. I spoke of Mrs. Drown, of course, to Col. Alfred to-night, and his manner betrayed at once how deeply he has become interested in her. We all know

his little foible of old, — that ready susceptibility —"

"Silence!" interrupted Augusta, with her blue eyes ablaze. "Not another word of that kind, Laura Wyllys! Your room shall be ready as soon as possible. I'm sorry you should have such an inhospitable reception, but I must leave you now. Good-night!"

She went up the great staircase on the wings of her manifold wrath. The fire which should have warmed the hall was evidently very low. The door was ajar from the rear of the upper hall into the long western chamber; the temperature of that room, Augusta noted with fresh alarm, as she went in, was many degrees lower than usual. The invalid lay on his ordinary couch, muffled to the chin with all the wraps within his reach, and he was very pale, but summoned a faint smile with which to greet her.

"Oh, my darling!" she cried, when she saw

him, "still there! What have I done to you? How can I ever forgive myself for my neglect? Are you dreadfully exhausted?"

"I'm cold," he said, feebly, with a little shiver, "and despicably weak." And he shut his eyes, but opened them immediately, and seemed to make a great effort after his wonted liveliness. "I'm tired," he said, "despite the glorious results of the Convention —"

"Oh, I ought not to have left you! I would never have allowed her in —"

"But have you had a pleasant evening, you and — Mrs. Drown?"

"Mrs. Drown," she said, constrainedly, "is not come back."

"You have left her so late? What does it mean?" This in stronger tones, and with a sudden flush.

"Do not speak of her!" she cried, impetuously. "Neither of us knows what she is! I almost hope I may never see her again. What ails

you, Alfred?" as his color changed once more. "Is it that you are suffering so much, or —"

"Don't worry!" he whispered, and fainted away.

. . . . . .

In the dismal winter morning twilight — for the day dawned overcast — Mrs. Wyllys was wakened from a dream of triumphant oratory by sounds that conveyed, even to her preoccupied mind, ideas of trouble and alarm.

There was a hurry of slippered steps along the passages, and there were repeated openings and closings of the hall-door, all the more distinct from their evident endeavor to be cautious.

Mrs. Wyllys was a great deal too humane a woman to cherish resentment for the sharp repulse which she had sustained the evening before, and she lay listening with an indistinct purpose of getting up to ascertain what it all meant, until the sounds died away and were

succeeded by profound stillness. Then her thoughts naturally returned to the composition of her first leader for the reform journal, whose editorship she had undertaken; and in the midst of this exercise drowsiness overcame her, and she did not wake again until the light announced a late morning hour, although the sky was gray.

Something in the atmosphere of the dwelling seemed then to remind her of her passing anxieties; wherefore she rose, assumed her simple costume in some haste, and descended to the library.

Augusta met her there, wearing a plain dark wrapper, and looking, for Augusta, very haggard. She had not lain down for the night, but her face and voice were singularly gentle.

"Alfred is very ill this morning," she said, simply. "He took cold yesterday, and has high fever. The doctors have been here, and I can see that they think him in danger. I shall

not leave him to-day, of course" — here the lip, which was considered so haughty, trembled a little — "but I wanted to come and beg your pardon, Laura, for my rudeness last night."

"Oh, don't mention it! Only tell me —"

"Yes, I will explain all I can, and that is little enough. She, Mrs. Drown, has been in the house all these weeks, but I have always felt her something of a mystery. I believed her first story, the same that she told you, and had always a feeling that it would be indelicate to press her confidence about a painful past. Alfred enjoyed her reading, and he could enjoy very little. Last night we went up to our seat on the river. My young friend Miss Rae had a skating-party, and I helped her receive her guests there. Mrs. Drown went too — the first time that she has gone into any company. There was a young Englishman there — a clergyman, who has been spending the winter in town, and very much admired and sought —

really a well-mannered man. He was out on the ice with the rest, and there was an accident. He just escaped drowning, and was brought into the house half dead. Then Mrs. Drown, as she called herself, stepped forward before the whole company, and claimed him for her husband —"

"Heavens and earth! What did you do? Did you come away and leave her there?"

"What else could I do? I had been absent far too long, as the event has proved. I know no more; but I cannot think of it now. I cannot think of them. I cannot imagine whether she will return here, or when. Some time, I suppose, she must do so, but I feel as if I never wanted to see her again. I am glad you are here, Laura; and if you will only stay in this room and receive whoever calls —"

"Of course I will do that! What, not a widow at all? Pray don't blame me!" added Mrs. Wyllys, rather inconsequently.

But Augusta was too heavy-hearted to perceive the joke. "Certainly not! We were equally deceived."

"Persons in your position and mine, my dear Augusta," said Mrs. Wyllys, with an air of weary responsibility, "have so *many* appeals — such conflicting claims to adjust — we have the reputation of being able and willing to assist. I often think it is like the old Roman patients, — clients, I mean. Of course we make occasional mistakes."

"Yes," said Mrs. Pryor, absently. "And now you will not mind my leaving you. I will have them bring your breakfast here, Laura, and I hope it may be fit to eat."

"Oh, pray don't concern yourself! An egg — a chop — anything! I have important writing which will occupy me nearly all the morning, — that is, if I cannot be of use in the sick-room. After all, you know, you may be unnecessarily alarmed. Peter, my husband,

nearly dies of his own terror every time he has the slightest attack. But oh, my dear, if you only would *not* have the old practice!"

Then Augusta escaped; the quaint notion occurring to her, even in the midst of her deadly anxiety, that it was almost disloyal to Alfred to let a woman receive visits in his library with *such* opinions, big boots, and no train!

So it was Mrs. Wyllys who arose from amid the professional half-sheets by which she was soon irradiated at the writing-table, and told the grave tidings of the morning first to Isabel Rae, and then to a score of other callers who came, impelled by a not unnatural excitement and curiosity about the events of the evening before.

The Pryors had lived exclusively, even among their own kind; and I fear it was only Isabel, and a very few more, who turned away pierced by a sympathy for the inmates of the

mansion, which amounted to positive pain. To the rest, alas! the Colonel's dangerous illness served but to increase the intensity of the situation. *Ennui* was banished from the streets of Guildford that afternoon, and though snow was falling fast before night, feet pattered and tongues flew faster.

Mrs. Anderson was in a state of unfeigned agitation. She had received the rush of Lily to her dressing-room in the early morning after the river *fête*, and the amazing disclosure which that clever maiden tried hard not to make exultant, with an assumption of lofty incredulity.

"I know nothing of the *woman*," she said; "Augusta Pryor has always appeared to me most unfortunately accessible to impostors, but I shall not lightly surrender my confidence in Mr. Warburton."

"But if the woman is the man's wife, mamma, they must know something of one another."

"The story is too preposterous! I wonder that Augusta Pryor should have left them together. I shall send up at once to inquire for Mr. Warburton, and offer to take him home."

"But mamma, Charles Mason —"

"Appears to have intruded into the company very strangely."

"Intruded, mamma? Where would Mr. Warburton have been but for him?"

Later in the morning, Mr. Mason called. He was subjected to a somewhat fitful cross-examination, whereby very few facts were elicited.

"I was merely struck by a rumor, mentioned in a letter from Dr. Chasuble, that a young English clergyman, of the same name, had left his parish rather abruptly, and was thought to be now travelling in the United States."

Mrs. Rose was impressed by the name, as the speaker had intended she should be; but

she made a strong effort still to exercise her judicial functions.

"I fear, I fear," she said rather foolishly, "that you have always been too willing to injure Mr. Warburton."

"I saved the man's life, if you call that an injury. Perhaps it was."

The door opened and Mr. Anderson entered, red-faced, and in a buoyant frame of mind.

"How are you Charley?" he cried, in his boisterous fashion. "I understand that you're a hero. Great excitement in these parts! Mother's pet parson and Mrs. Colonel's *prima donna* turn out to have been in league to befool us all! Pretty good joke, isn't it? Whew! I swear I forgot that you're another. Do you know," he added, making a clutch at a more serious and suitable subject, "they say they've had three doctors to Col. Pryor to-day, and have telegraphed for some more. He ain't expected to live."

"Is it possible? How Augusta Pryor must reproach herself for having left him last night!"

Just then a note was brought in for Mrs. Anderson. It had the tiny Orchard Lawn stamp on the upper left-hand corner of the sheet, and was written in a curiously cramped little hand, as follows: —

"DEAR MADAM, — We are very much obliged to you for your kindness, but we propose to remain here to-day. My husband has slept well, and will soon recover himself of his accident.

"I am, with the most profound respect,

"HORTENSE WARBURTON."

Two notes were also handed to Mrs. Pryor that day, in one of her brief absences from the sick-room, one of which was the exact counterpart in appearance of that received by Mrs.

Anderson, and characterized by the same admirable *sang froid*. It ran —

"DEAR MADAM, — Such is your kindness, that I know you will wish us to remain in your country-house until my husband is again in his accustomed health. Should you desire to know more about him and about my past life, I will come and tell you all my history when you will. Present my friendship to Col. Pryor. I remain, yours with gratitude and respect,

"HORTENSE WARBURTON."

Of the other missive, a fragment will suffice:

"I just wish to know, ma'am, if it's your orders that I'm to supply these folks with all they want, and wait on them by inches. The young woman, she orders up everything in the house, and wine, and fires, and note-paper besides; I never see folks make themselves

more to home. At least she does. He don't say much, one way nor the other. I think maybe he's a little dizzy yet from his sousing, but otherwise as well as ever. I give them scalloped oysters that was left over, this morning, and she said — "

Here Augusta crushed the notes into the pocket of her gown, and, sitting down, wrote to Mrs. Jameson the briefest possible statement of the Colonel's sudden danger, and her own preoccupation, accompanied by a curt command that the strange guests should be supplied with whatever they required.

Then she went back, high-nerved and outwardly calm, to her breathless watch.

CHAP. XII.

RESOLUTION.

FOUR weeks later those deep-seated western windows were uncurtained for the first time, that a pair of sunken but still brilliant eyes might have a distant visionary glimpse of earth and sky. The landscape thus revealed was bright with a moving promise of early spring. The river was full; the fields beyond it, bare. Sweet sunshine, filtered through a warm, blue haze, suffused the scene.

Augusta Pryor was in her accustomed place, by the alcove, as yet. If the countenance which she adored had long been delicate, she had to own that it looked more shadowy than ever in the fuller daylight, just admitted to the chamber, but she thought — infatuated woman! — that she had never seen its expression more

spirited and charming than now. She held a letter in her hand.

"So that," said Alfred, "is the reward of merit, and the patient absorption of medicine, which has been promised and withheld so long."

"Yes. I really don't see why you should not hear it now. And it is so astoundingly characteristic!"

"It will be worth hearing, then! You know I am her sworn defender."

"Oh, her cleverness needs no defence. And, for the rest, she's a riddle, which you look bright enough this morning to help me to solve. This came, you know, just after you began to mend. While you were at the worst I peremptorily refused to see her."

"I can believe that."

"Yes, my lord, and not on your account alone, though that was enough. Hadn't she lied to me? Well, then —

"'ORCHARD LAWN, Feb. 26.'

("Think of their staying there till then!")

"'MY DEAR MADAM —'"

"Stop a minute! How that prim address recalls her! She was a *piquante* vision, I can tell you, Madam Augusta, to my tired and misty eyes. Go on."

"'It seems that you will not see me, although I have asked to be admitted to you so many times. I am told that Col. Pryor, who always showed me so much goodness, is yet dangerously ill, and I am desolate. But I think this is not all the reason why you refuse me. It is that you are angry with me, and I do not know the cause.' ("Isn't that cool?") 'Is it because I said to you that my husband is dead, when he was living? But when I said that I thought never to see him again, but always to gain my own life by my readings here in America. Now he is come here also, and we

shall go away and live together, at least for a time.' ("Business-like.")

"'Dr. Price, the rector of the parish where my friend has labored among the poor all winter, does not desire his services any longer, and we must remove from Guildford.' ("You see they are a pair of injured innocents!") 'I would have liked to see you again, and the good Colonel, so noble and generous, but I can tell you my story in a letter. Once I almost told it to him, he was so kind. If he is not too ill he will remember the occasion.' ("There it is you see, Alfred! The whole letter is full of little sidelong yearnings over you,—but I'm used to that!")

"'I was born in England, but my mother was French, and my father had played in French theatres, and passed much time in that country. Both my parents were on the stage, and my father desired me to be an actress also, and trained my voice and gestures

when I was very young. He thought I would have a great career, but my mother did not desire it. She was of a good family of *emigrés*, but my father was bourgeois. She would have me educated for a governess, that I might live among ladies and gentlemen. She thought the theatre perilous for a young girl. I had no fear, but I wanted to be a great actress, not a little one, and I wanted to be a lady most of all.

"'I began, therefore, by teaching French in my *pension*, and after that, still because my French was so good, a rich lady engaged me as governess to her small children, and took me to her estates. There, when I took the children out walking in the park, I used to meet Mr. Warburton, who was staying in the neighborhood. He admired me, and I thought him the handsomest man I had ever known. I have met finer types since then, — your unfortunate husband, for example.' ("Did you ever hear anything like it? Audacious little thing!")

"'That summer my mother died, and my father, whose fortunes were bad, determined to go to Australia, to a theatre in Melbourne, and was very angry because I would not go with him. He thought that there I might have a great career, but I thought that Mr. Warburton would marry me, and make me easily a great lady, so I remained. By and by, Mr. Warburton explained to me his circumstances. He was to be a clergyman against his will. But if a certain old lady, very rich, should die, he might do as he liked, and need have no parish. The old lady was then ill, and he asked me to marry him in secret, and when he was free, after her death, you comprehend, he would disclose all. I consented to this, and then the old lady recovered.' ("Unreasonable of her, was it not?")

"'Mr. Warburton received a parish in a large town, and then he would have me remove to a cottage in the vicinity, where he could come

sometimes and see me. But my life was *triste*, and I soon became frightfully weary there. I could see that he very much feared discovery, because it would disgrace him with all pious people; and I did not wish it any more, for what would life have been to me in that dull town, — in a rectory, *par exemple!* I knew then that I was more fit for a career. I am told that in the States of America women are quite free — everything is easy for them — and I say it will be better for us both if I escape.

"'So once when he had brought me money, I purchased a widow's costume, and took passage for New York, but left a note saying that I had gone to my father in Australia. You know all that happened afterward. It was you chiefly, madam, I confess it, who assisted me to achieve success.' ("How magnanimous!") 'I did not regret my husband while I was in your house;' ("does she mean to credit me with that, I wonder, or her adroit

flirtations with you over the *Earthly Paradise?*"); 'but it alarmed me, sometimes, to remember how I was alone. Then came the night when I saw my friend brought in half dead, and laid down before me. I said, for one moment, I will hide myself, and will not tell even now; but his aspect compelled me to reveal the truth. I knew that it was destiny which had brought us together. He told me, when we were alone, that, after I left England, there were whispers about him in his parish. His visits to me had been observed by the curious, and a scandal arose. Then he confessed our marriage, but was not permitted to remain in England. He came here without a thought of finding me, and he also feels that destiny has reunited us.

"'It seems that we cannot well remain here, where my prospects are so good, and we propose to ourselves to go immediately into the West. If, therefore, I may not hope again to

see you, will you have the goodness to send me my small effects and the money which is now due me, and which you have so much assisted me to gain. I shall reward the person who has not served us willingly in this place.' ("She means Mrs. Jameson. I trust she tried it!") Present once more my compliments to the good Colonel, whose complete restoration I desire with ardor; and receive yourself the assurance of my respectful gratitude.

"'HORTENSE WARBURTON.'"

"Well," said Augusta, for Alfred did not offer any immediate comment upon the letter, "is not that extraordinary?"

"Quite so! but frank and high-spirited, and, to my mind, considerably pathetic as well."

"Now that I do not see! What strikes me most of all, is the total absence of real sensibility. The letter is exactly like the woman,—perfectly clear-headed, and almost uncanny in

its nonchalance, with an occasional fitful affectation of sentiment. Her place was on the stage."

"I did not mean that it was subjectively pathetic, but merely that I am moved by the spectacle of a delicate and rarely-gifted woman, in whom a hard and vulgar life seems to have killed the germs of natural tenderness."

"The germs were few and feeble, you may depend."

"Perhaps; but after all, Augusta, there was a singular magnetism about her."

"Not for women! She repelled me from the very first, and I shall always think the better of my blind instincts that she did so."

"So vanishes, at all events, a rather uncommon pair of adventurers. I wonder how Mrs. Wyllys feels about her instincts, and Mrs. Anderson about hers. This makes an additional tie between you and Mrs. Rose, Gus. dear!"

"Laura is so addled by the numerous causes she has adopted, that I don't think individual

fates make much impression upon her. Rose Anderson I do feel for. 'Tis much more embarrasing for her and Dr. Price than for me, because I never advertised my *protégée* as a saint."

"But I don't see that theirs has been very much of a sinner! A little weak, perhaps."

"And not entirely straightforward. No, Alfred, I do not like lies!"

But the more charitable view of Mr. Warburton's character and career was the one eventually adopted by the good rector of St. Saviour's himself, and with this he endeavored to soothe the chagrin of his most important parishioner.

"After mature deliberation, and some serious interviews with himself, I am inclined to regard our late friend merely as the victim of an exceedingly artful and able woman." So said Dr. Price, in his Johnsonian English, and with the slightest possible twinkle in the corner of

his eye. "It is not inconceivable to me," he added, "that the natural patrons and guardians of this young man should have desired for him a new career of usefulness, unhampered by the associations of an unfortunate past, and that they should have endeavored, by the power of their recommendations, to secure him the same; but I am forced to conclude," and here the Doctor indulged in a gesture which he usually reserved for the pulpit, "that the impression prevailed among them that a slightly lower order of morality and decorum might be admissible here than could be tolerated under the immediate effulgence of Christian Civilization!"

It was during the same visit that Dr. Price informed Mrs. Anderson that he had made choice of her admirable young relative, Mr. Mason, as Mr. Warburton's successor.

Frankly, but somewhat feebly, the mother remonstrated.

"Lily is an only child, Dr. Price! You

know her expectations. A great deal too young to understand her own mind; yet so wilful where she has taken a fancy!"

"A great deal too wilful, my dear madam," said the Doctor, shaking his head wisely, "to be influenced in her little determinations by prudential arrangements of yours or mine."

Isabel Rae's engagement was announced at about this time, and Alfred, on the first day of his promotion to the sofa, insisted on her coming up, that he might felicitate her face to face. She entered the room, blushing of course, but now that her blushes were in order, and no longer intensified by her own indignation against them, they were no more than brilliantly becoming.

He held her white hand — inevitably — it was rather more substantial than his own just now — while he praised the man of her choice, just as a girl best likes to have her lover praised; and expressed his joy in her present

happiness, and his faith in her future, with a sympathy so ardent and yet so delicate, that, added to his thrice etherealized appearance, poor Belle found it quite overpowering, and was fain to turn her head away.

"What does that mean?" he cried gayly. "Face the light if you please, miss! I thought so! A tear stands in your bright blue eye, Isabel, and it is for me! Don't shed it, dear girl! I never deserved it less. I'm going to recover in a hurry, if that's what you mean! Did you not know that the gracious Faculty have given me full permission to get wholly well as fast as ever I like? I shall go abroad to select your wedding-present, my dear, and return to dance at the ceremony. Now you may go, and order that lucky dog, McArthur, to report at headquarters for congratulations."

The ensuing winter was, in fact, redeemed from dulness in Guildford, by three memorable weddings. Miss Rae was united to

Capt. McArthur; Miss Anderson triumphantly achieved that which, in American society, corresponds to marrying the curate; and Miss Annie Faxon — Miss Richards being providentially absent with an invalid friend in Cuba — bestowed her hand and a snug fortune, recently inherited from the Aunt Nancy for whom she was named, on Mr. George Aspinwall.

All the weddings were splendid; and although it is not the custom in Guildford to publish the caterer's bills, an inventory of the bride's wardrobe, or a list of her gifts, I may perhaps be allowed to mention, since it is a positive addition to the art-treasures of our country, that exquisite little cabinet of Mrs. McArthur's, filled with rarest china, concerning which every one cried, with gasps of enthusiasm, that of course it could only have been discovered at the ends of the earth; and equally, of course, the contents could only have been selected by Col. Pryor in person.

The Colonel was present at this wedding, although he did not dance — nobody did — and then and there he resumed his position as æsthetic dictator and chief ornament of society in Guildford. His war-record is almost forgotten now; and all except the few who know him intimately are wont to imply, when they speak of him, just as they always used, that he is a flatterer and a trifler, — elegant, self-indulgent, fastidious, and *fainéant*, to a degree that well-nigh passes patience in a native American citizen.

Is that all?

Yes! it is all told — my gossiping little story — a very *meringue* of a story, you may justly complain; unsubstantial and flavorless. Not a great situation or ideal type of character, and but one passably fine action! I confess it. The people of Guildford are little better or worse than those of other places, and

even with them I have not ventured far below the surface.

Yet I am half-inclined to appeal against your sentence on behalf of one person — my own favorite — and to ask whether the strong, generous, loyal wife, with her infinite pride and devotion, and her unassailable faith, — whether Augusta Pryor, in short, be not almost worthy to be called a heroine?

THE "NO NAME SERIES."

WHAT IS THOUGHT OF THE PLAN.

"The first of the 'No Name Series' of novels is 'Mercy Philbrick's Choice;' and, if its successors nearly approach the excellence of this, the series will speedily have a very wide and favorable name." — *Hartford Courant.*

"The 'No Name Series' of novels is rather a happy idea upon the part of the publishers. Curiosity will naturally stand on tiptoe, eager to discover through the author's style his or her identity." — *Chicago Daily Inter-Ocean.*

"The inauguration of the 'No Name Series' was a happy thought. Nothing adds fascination to a really good literary work like the uncertainty or mystery of its authorship, and the public have read and are reading the new novel with avidity, in order that each constituent member of it may pass judgment. . . . 'Mercy Philbrick's Choice' is a novel that will give the 'No Name Series' an acknowledged place in literature, and stimulate curiosity to meet its successors." — *Boston Post.*

"If the succeeding volumes of the series are as good as this, its success will be assured, and curiosity will run high concerning the authorship of the various volumes." — *New York Independent.*

"The conception of the series is entirely unique. . . . 'Mercy Philbrick's Choice' is a felicitous introduction to just such a series of novels as the one projected, and, if merit shall decide its popularity, an enthusiastic reception may be predicted for the book." — *Hartford Post.*

"It is a good idea." — *Troy Whig.*

"If its successors shall prove to be as good as 'Mercy Philbrick's Choice' is, the fortune of the series is well assured." — *New York Evening Post.*

"The 'No Name Series' promises to be an interesting and piquant literary enterprise." — *Portland Press.*

"The name business in our literature is terribly overdone, and, if the remaining stories of this series are as good and clever and well written as this one is, 'Mercy Philbrick's Choice,' readers will learn to trust more to their own taste and judgment, and rely less on reputations." — *New York Graphic.*

"The typographical appearance of the series is quite tasteful, paper, type, and ink are good, and the page shapely. The cover is black, the title showing in black against a broad red bar; while to avert bad luck and persuade success the cover presents, also in black and red, the four-leaved clover and the ancient horseshoe." — *The New York Christian Union.*

"The story is a very pleasant one, and will make a very favorable impression for the whole series." — *Syracuse Standard.*

"The plan is an exceedingly happy one, — will gradually elevate a discriminating taste and establish a higher standard in fiction." — *Washington Capital.*

"The story is an admirable introduction to the new series, which has for its motto, 'Is the gentleman anonymous? Is he a great unknown?' and appears in a novel and pretty binding of black and red, with ornaments of four-leaved clover and horseshoes." — *Boston Daily Advertiser.*

ROBERTS BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS,
Boston.

LOUISA M. ALCOTT'S WRITINGS.

"*Miss Alcott is really a benefactor of households.*" — H. H.

Little Women. Two volumes, $3.00; Hospital Sketches and Camp and Fireside Stories, $1.50; An Old-Fashioned Girl, $1.50; Little Men, $1.50; My Boys, &c., $1.00; Shawl-Straps, $1.00; Cupid and Chow-Chow, &c., $1.00; Work: A Story of Experience. With Character Illustrations by Sol Eytinge. 16mo, $1.75; Eight Cousins, $1.50; Silver Pitchers; and Independence, a Centennial Love Story, $1.25; Rose in Bloom, $1.50.

"H. H.'s" WRITINGS.

"*The poems of a lady who contents herself with the initials H. H. have rare merit of thought and expression.*" — R. W. EMERSON.

Verses, $1.25; Bits of Travel, $1.25; Bits of Talk about Home Matters, $1.00; Bits of Talk in Verse and Prose for Young Folks, $1.00.

SUSAN COOLIDGE'S WRITINGS.

"*Not even Miss Alcott apprehends child nature with finer sympathy, or pictures its nobler traits with more skill.*" — BOSTON DAILY ADVERTISER.

The New-Year's Bargain, $1.50; What Katy Did, $1.50; What Katy Did at School, $1.50; Mischief's Thanksgiving, $1.50; Nine Little Goslings, $1.50; For Summer Afternoons, $1.25.

HARRIET BEECHER STOWE.

"*The pen, which more than any other quickened the public heart till the black slavery of centuries was broken, will render a service not less considerable, if it so wake the conscience of men and women that pink and white tyranny of women over men shall be impossible.*"

Pink and White Tyranny: a Society Novel. $1.50.

☞ *Our publications are to be had of all booksellers. When not to be found, send directly to*

ROBERTS BROTHERS, *Publishers*,
BOSTON.

FICTION.

F. C. Burnand. Happy Thoughts, $1.00; More Happy Thoughts, $1.00; My Health, $1.00; Out of Town, $1.25; Happy Thought Hall, $2.00; The New History of Sanford and Merton. With 75 Illustrations by Linley Sambourne. $1.75; To Buddlecombe and Back. 50 cents.

Sara Coleridge. Phantasmion: A Fairy Romance. $2.00.

Juliana H. Ewing. Six to Sixteen, $1.50; Jan of the Windmill, $1.25.

M. B. Edwards. Dr. Jacob. $1.00.

Mrs. R. S. Greenough. Arabesques, $2.00; In Extremis, $1.50.

E. E. Hale. Ten Times One is Ten, 88 cents; Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, $1.50; Ups and Downs, $1.50; In His Name, $1.25; Our New Crusade, $1.25; If, Yes, and Perhaps, $1.50; The Ingham Papers, $1.50; How To Do It, $1.25; His Level Best, $1.50.

P. G. Hamerton. Harry Blount, $1.50; Wenderholme, $2.00.

Mary Healy. A Summer's Romance. $1.50.

Arthur Helps. Realmah, $2.00; Casimir Maremma, $2.00; Ivan De Biron, $2.25.

Jean Ingelow. Off the Skelligs, $1.75; Fated to be Free, $1.75; Studies for Stories, $1.25; Mopsa the Fairy, $1.25.

Sylvester Judd. Margaret. $1.50.

Robert Lowell. Antony Brade. $1.75.

Louise Chandler Moulton. Some Women's Hearts, $1.50; Bed-Time Stories, $1.50; More Bed-Time Stories, $1.50.

George Sand. Mauprat, $1.50; Antonia, $1.50; Monsieur Sylvestre, $1.50; The Snow Man, $1.50; The Miller of Angibault, $1.50; My Sister Jeannie, $1.50.

Six of One by Half a Dozen of the Other. By Mrs. STOWE, Mrs. WHITNEY, Miss HALE, Mr. HALE, Mr. PERKINS, and Mr. LORING. $1.50.

ROBERTS BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS,
Boston.

ROBERTS BROTHERS, Publishers, Boston.

THE "NO N

—

KISMET. A Nile Novel.

Opinions, generous tributes to genius, by well-known authors whose names are anonymous.

"Well, I have read 'Kismet,' and it is certainly very remarkable. The story is interesting, — any well-told love story is, you know, — but the book itself is a great deal more so. Descriptively and sentimentally, — I use the word with entire respect, — it is, in spots, fairly exquisite. It seems to me all glowing and overflowing with what the French call *beauté du diable*. . . . The conversations are very clever, and the wit is often astonishingly like the wit of an accomplished man of the world. One thing which seems to me to show promise — great promise, if you will — for the future is that the author can not only reproduce the conversation of one brilliant man, but can make two men talk together as if they *were* men, — not women in manly clothes."

"It is a charming book. I have read it twice, and looked it over again, and I wish I had it all new to sit up with to-night. It is so fresh and sweet and innocent and joyous, the dialogue is so natural and bright, the characters so keenly edged, and the descriptions so poetic. I don't know when I have enjoyed any thing more, — never since I went sailing up the Nile with Harriet Martineau. . . . You must give the author love and greeting from one of the fraternity. The hand that gives us *this* pleasure will give us plenty more of an improving quality every year, I think."

"'Kismet' is indeed a delightful story, the best of the series undoubtedly."

"If 'Kismet' is the first work of a young lady, as reported, it shows a great gift of language, and powers of description and of insight into character and life quite uncommon. . . . Of the whole series so far, I think 'Mercy Philbrick's Choice' is the best, because it has, beside literary merit, some moral tone and vigor. Still there are capabilities in the writer of 'Kismet' even higher than in that of the writer of 'Mercy Philbrick's Choice.'"

"I liked it extremely. It is the best in the series so far, except in construction, in which 'Is That All?' slight as it is, seems to me superior. 'Kismet' is winning golden opinions everywhere. I have nothing but praises for it, and have nothing but praise to give it."

"I have read 'Kismet' once, and mean to read it again. It is thoroughly charming, and will be a success."

One volume, bound in cardinal red and black. Price $1.00.

Our publications are to be had of all booksellers. When not to be found, send directly to

ROBERTS BROTHERS, Publishers, Boston.

IS THAT ALL?

NO NAME SERIES