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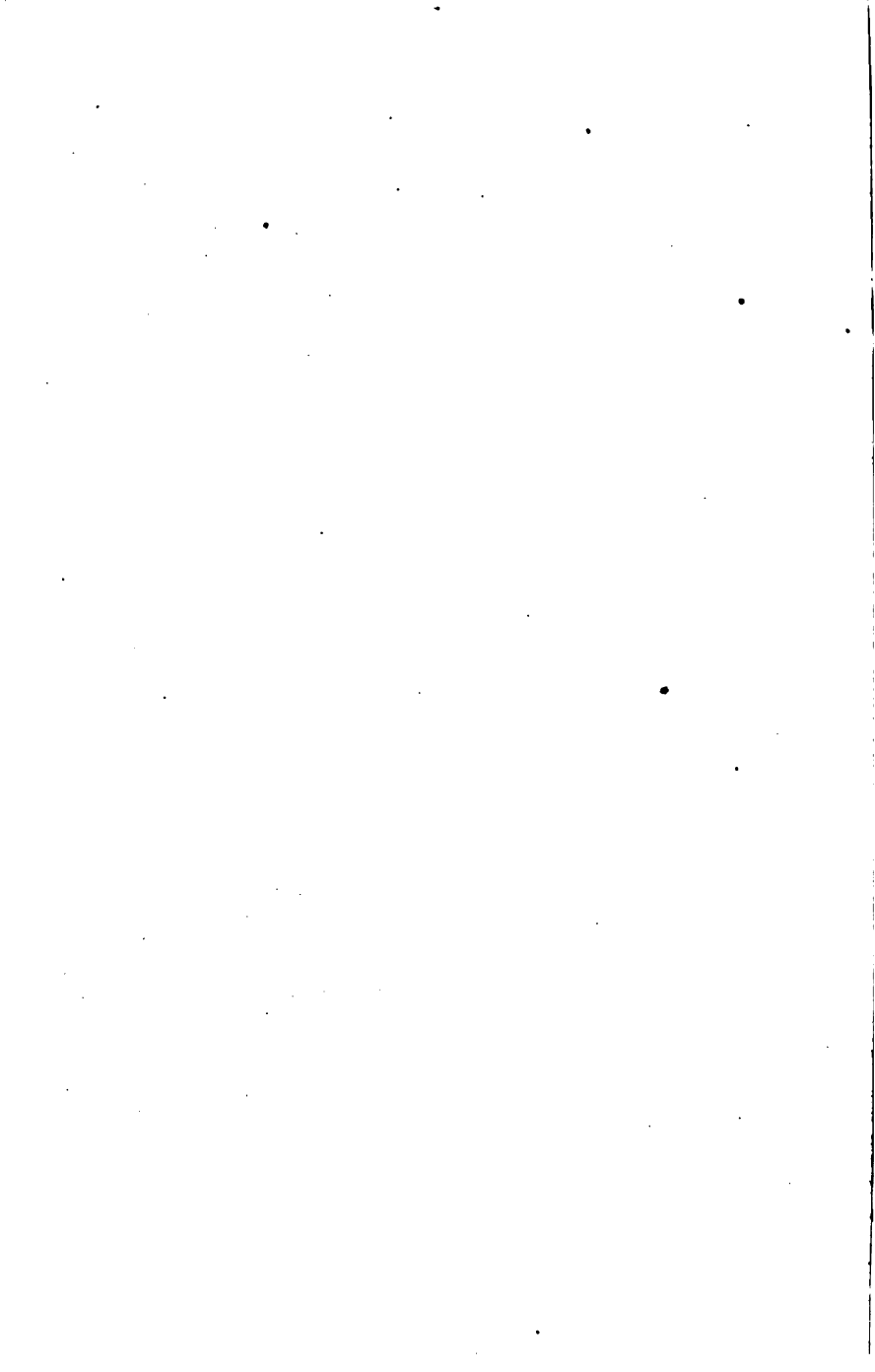


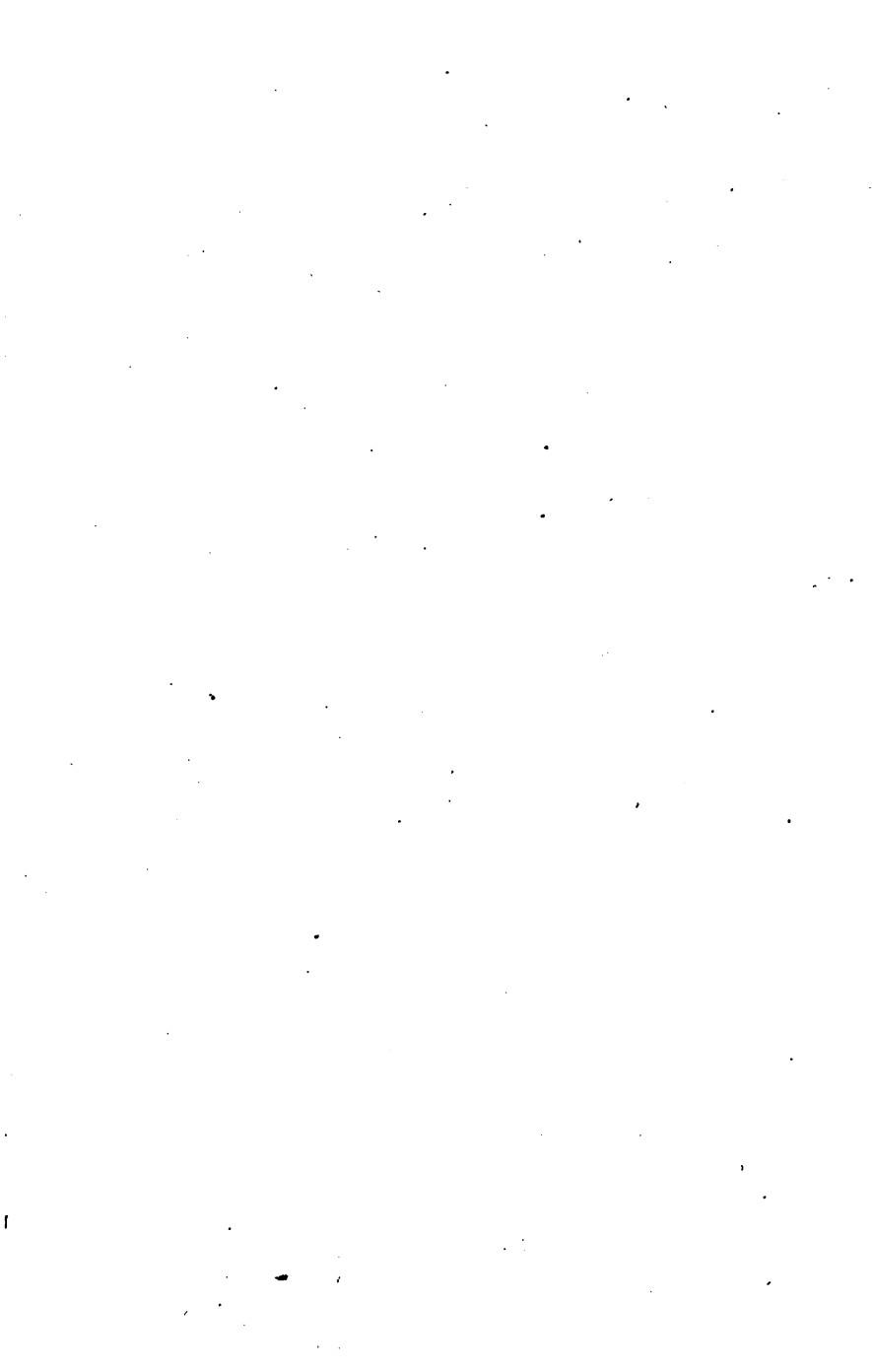
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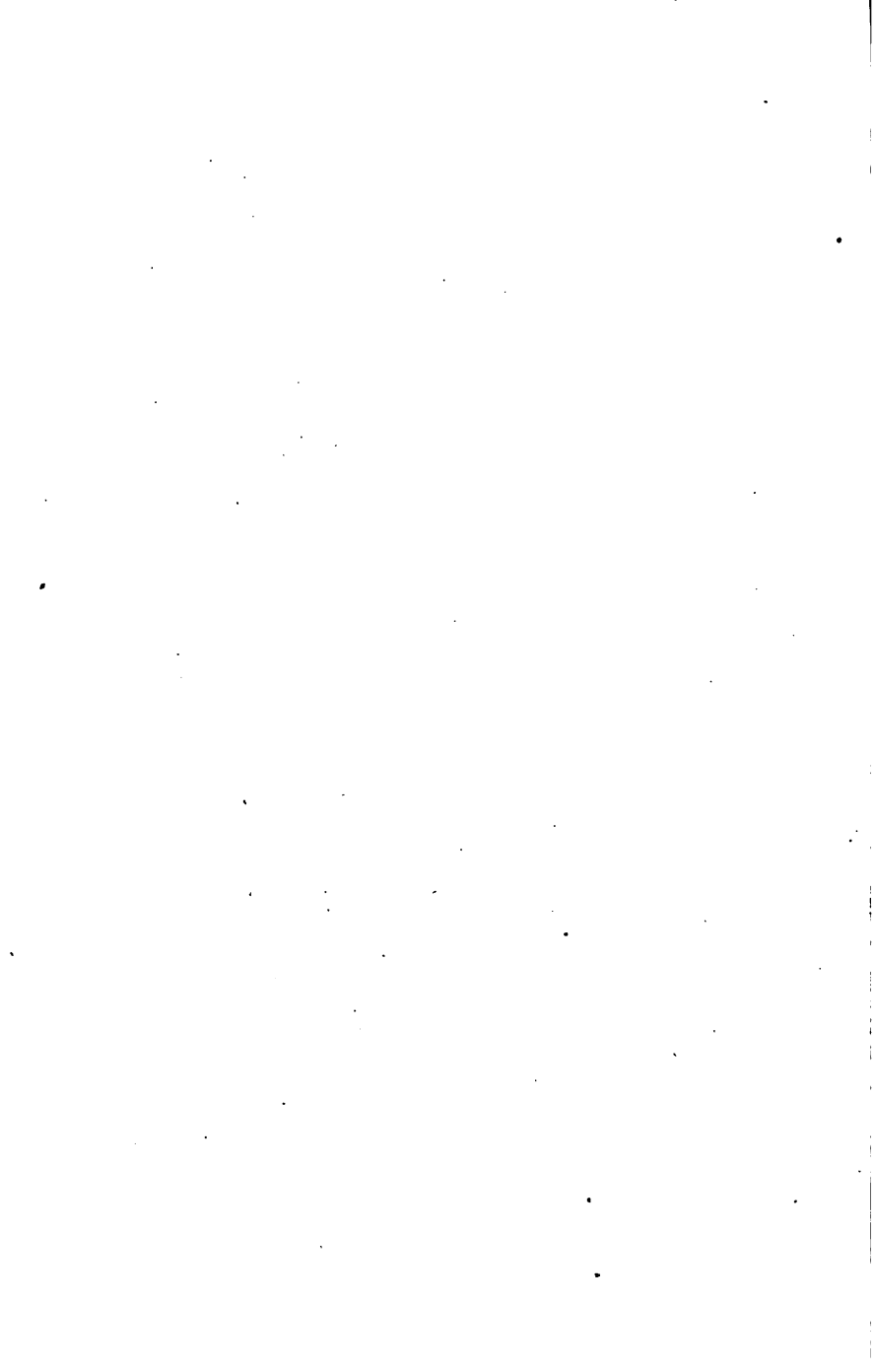


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· E S P E R A N C E .

BY

META LANDER, *author.*

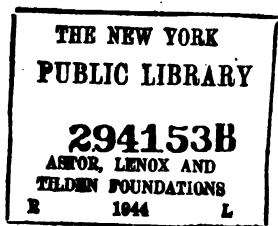
AUTHOR OF "LIGHT ON THE DARK RIVER," "MABION GRAHAM,"
ETC., ETC.

76

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TO YOU,
OUR FIRST-BORN,
MY SWEET "SUMMER-CHILD,"
I DEDICATE THIS UNPRETENDING STORY.
IT WILL SERVE,
IN FUTURE YEARS, TO REMIND YOU OF YOUR SUNNY GIRLHOOD,
WHEN WE TALKED OVER ITS CHARACTERS AND SCENES;
OF THE OLD "INGLE-SIDE," AND THE
LOVE THAT HALLOWED IT.

Merburg - 20 September, 1884

"Passion, rapture, and blindness,
Yearning, aching, and fears,
And Faith and Duty gazing
With steadfast eyes through tears.

I see— or the glory blinds me
Of a soul divinely fair—
Peace after great tribulation,
And Victory hung in the air."

LADY OF LA GARAYE.

ESPERANCE.

CHAPTER I.

How well I remember that scene, child as I was when it was daguerreotyped on my memory! Yellow rays of sunshine stole in through the western windows, and floated up and down the room. Sometimes they lay quivering upon the opposite wall, and again the golden-footed visitors danced awhile on the tall bed-posts. Then they would sink down upon the white counterpane, where the bright, tremulous spots contrasted strangely with that pale, mournful face. My mother breathed quietly now, and her wonted, care-worn expression had given place to one of great peace. The little, nameless new-comer lay close beside her, with its short, quick breathing, as if in a hurry to get through life.

Suddenly my mother opened her eyes, and caught mine as I sat gazing upon her.

"You are still here," she said, in a faint voice.

"Yes, mamma."

Placing her thin, feverish hand upon my head, she continued, —

"Be more patient, dear Hope, and do your best to supply the place of a mother to my poor little ones. And be care-

ful to treat your father with respect, endeavoring to please him in everything. Look to God, and he will help you in all your difficulties."

The words came slowly, and brought a leaden weight, for I knew what they meant. Tenderly stroking my head, she added, —

"Seek to moderate your impulses, and to feel less acutely. And when there comes a strong temptation, think of your mother. I have entire confidence in you, my darling. Now kiss me, and then say to your father that I am anxious to see him a few minutes."

Choking back the sobs that would have convulsed me, I tapped at my father's chamber door, and briefly delivered my message. Then going back, I seated myself in a corner of the room. My mother's eyes were closed, though whether she was asleep, or absorbed in thought, I could not tell. But she was evidently not aware of my presence.

In about five minutes, my father's step was heard, and I could perceive the faintest flush steal over her white cheek, while her eyes at once opened.

"How do you find yourself this evening, Mrs. Frazer?" asked he, in his ordinary cool voice.

"Failing rapidly. But I cannot die in peace without a few words. Will you not sit beside me?"

He complied, though with evident reluctance, and she held out her hand to him.

"I trust you are not intending to get up any scenes," said he, taking no notice of her movement. "You know I detest them, and besides, your physician says excitement is the worst thing for you."

My heart beat fast as I observed my mother's troubled



countenance, for I sat where I could see without being seen. I had not intended to be an intruder, but returned simply because I could not bear to be away from the sick chamber. And now I was afraid to move, for I dreaded my father's severe look.

"I simply wish to ask your forgiveness for any failure in my duties as a wife, and to bespeak your tenderness for the little flock I am leaving."

"Such a failure as yours, Mrs. Frazer, is *always* a failure. You began with deceiving me, and therefore I have never bestowed on you my confidence."

"I implore you to hear my dying words. In all the years of our married life, you have refused to listen to my explanations; but now —"

"No use in explanations. Many would at once have deserted you; but I have not only forborne reproaches, but have treated you with respect as the mother of my children."

"I have but a word to say, and I implore you to hear me. My sin was a weak yielding to another. When you asked my hand, I declined it, as you know. My mother reproached me, saying that nothing else would save us from abject poverty. And for many days I was so harassed with her entreaties, that at length I was overpowered. You remember that when you came the second time, I made no reply, except by tears, and that was taken for consent. I never wished to deceive you, God knows. The rest I need not recall."

"No, Mrs. Frazer. I well remember the delightful conversation I overheard between you and your mother. I had the great satisfaction of hearing you assure her that you had not loved me, and that you never could; — that you loved

another, and that she had ruined your happiness. An agreeable reward truly for my condescension !”

“ My mother had said some things which stung me to the quick, or those rash words would never have been uttered. I earnestly implored your forgiveness, and have ever since tried to be a meek and faithful wife.”

“ But those words were true, and therefore they were never forgiven,” replied my father, in the most frigid manner.

“ Let that go. I will say no more for myself. But hear a mother’s plea. I know Hope is abrupt and headstrong — that she does not please you ; but I entreat your forbearance, your kindness towards her ; for, after all, she is your child.”

To this appeal my father replied in bitterly sarcastic tones. Though I did not comprehend his words, yet I saw, from their effect on my poor mother, that they conveyed some terrible implication. He had hardly commenced when her eyes began to dilate with horror ; and before he had ceased speaking, a piercing shriek escaped her, while the blood gushed from her mouth.

It was more than I could bear. Springing from my corner, in impotent rage I lifted my foolish hand, and struck my father, exclaiming, —

“ You wicked man, you have killed my darling mother.”

The look of hate that stamped his stern face, and that of imploring agony that came over hers, are still engraved on my remembrance. He raised his hand, but suddenly arresting himself, with forced composure said to me, —

“ Take the baby,” — she had waked crying, — “ and send in the nurse. And mark me, if you ever utter one word of this scene to any human being, I will turn you out of doors.”

As I mechanically lifted the little one, my eye fell on my

mother's pallid face. My father was holding a smelling bottle to her nose, while the blood still oozed from between her lips. As I left the room, I met her eyes fixed upon me with the most tender pity and entreaty, and then saw her lift them to heaven. When the baby was disposed of, I softly crept back to the chamber which contained my world. My father did not notice me at first, for he was occupied with the invalid. I thought he looked sorry for his unkindness, and it made me feel less bitterly. But suddenly his eye fell on mine. For her sake that lay there, as I think, he gently told me I had better leave the chamber. But when fairly out of hearing, he sternly forbade my entering the sick room, and then added, in a low but distinct voice, that he had an account with me, which he should not fail to settle some day.

I never again saw my adored mother alive, for she did not survive many hours. I would have braved anything for one more sight of her; but the nurse, too, had her orders, and dared not resist my father's will.

"The baby has gone to her mother, poor thing," said Nancy, when she came to my room the next night.

"I wish I was dead, too," I exclaimed, bursting into tears.

"Poor child, don't talk so. You must live and be a kind sister to the rest of the children."

Telling her I could not go to sleep, I persuaded her to leave me. And there I sat, looking out of the window, till my eyes were heavy with weariness. Then I threw myself upon the bed, and fell into an uneasy slumber, dreaming of ghostly faces, and coffins, and hearses suspended above me. Waking suddenly, I sprang up. The moonbeams fell upon

the wall, giving a weird aspect to a white dress that hung there. I sat shivering with nameless dread, till the sudden desire to see my dead mother seized me. I started instantly, treading softly along the broad hall, and down a flight of stairs, and then turning to the right hand into the familiar room. At first I drew back in terror; but summoning resolution, I ventured in.

On a table, in the centre of the room, lay a coffin. I noticed it, even at that awful moment, as a handsome one, suited to the respectability of the family. I approached it, but the lid was closed. I slowly turned it back. I have always wondered how I dared do it; but my desire to see my mother was so intense, that I should have shrunk from almost nothing to accomplish it. Two tall wax candles made the white face on which I looked down still whiter. That anxious brow was placid as an infant's slumber, and round the mouth lingered that angelic smile which I have since so often seen upon the face of the dead. And there, in her arms, lay the youngest of her flock, safely sheltered from all life's sorrows.

With silent awe I touched that pale cheek to which mine had so often been pressed. It sent an icy shudder through me. The tears began to drop, and one or two fell on that marble face. I took my handkerchief and softly wiped them away. While doing this, I heard a slow step, and in a moment my father and I stood face to face with the dead.

“What are you doing here, Hope?”

The only answer I could give was to lift my streaming eyes and falter forth, “I want mamma.” My sorrow-stricken aspect must have disarmed him, for he said less harshly, —

“You ought not to be up at this hour. Go now.”

I felt so utterly desolate that I longed to throw my arms round his neck, and beg him to love me ; but my voice died away, and I glided from the room. Lingered outside the door, I heard my father groan, and caught the half-uttered words, “Poor Mary ! I have been too severe. I *may* have been unjust.”

I went back slowly to my room, wondering if the dead can hear our cries of penitence and remorse. Oh, my mother, my mother !

CHAPTER II.

THE funeral was over, and things had settled down into their ordinary formal routine. As for myself, I was almost constantly in tears, and I have no doubt my thin, wan face vexed my father. I once overheard our nurse say to him, —

“I don’t know what to do with Miss Hope, for she’s fretting after her mother the whole time as I never saw a child afore. And every day she goes off alone to the grave.”

“Her disposition is an unhappy one,” he replied, “and she always makes the most of her troubles. I shall forbid her going there.”

One day I strolled out, as I often did, into a grove belonging to the premises. It was one of those sad autumnal days, on which even happy people are wont to feel melancholy. The richest colors were blended in the leaves, and the sun, as it struggled through the foliage, kindled them into a brilliancy which seemed to mock my sorrow. The beautiful Catskill Mountains looked almost as distant through the haze that lay around them, as the heavens above my head; and *they* seemed — oh — so far away!

With childish longings for my mother, with whom this was a favorite spot, I threw myself on the grass and wept aloud. Suddenly my father stood before me.

“Get up, Hope, and stop your whining. And mind that you do not come into this grove again.”

"You forbid my going wherever I like to be," I hastily replied.

"To be sure I do, and purposely. You will get no weak indulgence from me. I am sick of your foolish ado about your mother, and mean to put an end to it."

I exclaimed, indignantly, —

"You never loved mamma, and you don't care anything about her death."

I had no sooner uttered the words than I seemed to hear that gentle charge, "Be careful to treat your father with respect." But it was too late. I have no doubt he had been wishing an opportunity to find fault with me; for it was not in his nature to forget how I had lifted my puny hand against him, or to rest till he had wiped out such an insult to his dignity. I had given him what he wanted. White with anger, he said, —

"I told you I should settle that account with you, and I always keep my word. But you have precipitated your punishment by your shameless impudence. Follow me."

I knew there was no use in resistance, and, with the blood congealed in my veins, I slowly obeyed. He paused in his rapid strides to cut from a birch tree a supple branch, whose destined use I too well divined. Passing into the old-fashioned barn, and going up stairs into a room used as a granary, he locked the door, and bade me prepare for a flogging. My soul rose against him as I angrily replied, —

"It is not for my good that you punish me. You have no right to disgrace me so, and if mamma were alive, you never would."

This I well knew; for timid as she was, she was brave to defend her children from wrong. But I was infatuated to

utter such words. He did not trust himself to speak, but laid hands on me. I resisted with all my strength, for it seemed to me that if I were thus degraded, I could never again hold up my head. Taking out his handkerchief, he said, with forced calmness,—

“You forgot there was such a thing as binding a refractory child.”

Terrified by his intimation, I entreated him to leave me free, promising that I would be perfectly quiet. But he was not the man to relent. Putting it out of my power to make the smallest resistance, he whipped me till my brain reeled, and his anger was exhausted.

My fiery spirit was effectually humbled. I crept into the house, and sought my pillow, not for rest, but to hide myself, in my prostration and disgrace. There I lay, with an aching head and a bruised and bleeding heart, feeling as if I had lived a hundred years. It was not necessary to say that I was sick. That was self-evident; and our nurse, Nancy Beman, took the liberty she always had, and sent for our family physician. My father happened to meet him in the hall, and, I presume, judged it wise to be present at his examination.

Dr. Jacob Belden wore one of those broad, good-humored faces that instantly win confidence. His presence in a sick room was like a sunbeam. Not in mine, however. The darkness that lay around me was too dense for even him to dissipate. I fancy he had long divined something of our family history: he may have caught a glimpse of the hidden skeleton; but, like a wise doctor, he knew how to keep his own counsel. Rubbing his hands in his peculiar fashion, he sidled up to me as I lay with my face to the wall, and in a cheery voice called out,—

“ Well, Miss Hope, young girls like you ought to be alive and stirring. There must be some extra attraction about your bed, that makes you cling to it, as Nancy tells me you do. Come child, turn round and let a body have a look at you.”

Drearily I obeyed. His face immediately assumed an anxious expression.

“ Why, how is this?” he said, turning to my father. “ She looks all of ten years older than when I last saw her.” And he put his fingers on my pulse.

“ She is always fretting after her mother,” replied he, frowning.

“ Strange, strange!” continued the doctor, as he looked at my tongue, and then gave me a general survey.

“ Why, it’s not the complaint of a child, but of a grown woman — a real nervous prostration. Unaccountable! — and yet I always knew she was a very sensitive child,” added he in an undertone, as if talking to himself. “ Faith! — but she must be taken good care of — she must indeed.”

And he laid his large hand so tenderly on my forehead, that I could have wept, had there been any tears in the fountain. But no such luxury was granted me. My young heart had been turned into a desert, in which were smouldering the ruins of my childhood.

And there I lay for days and weeks, gazing at one spot upon the walls whenever my eyes were open, and when shut, always seeing that barn-chamber, where the life of my soul had been crushed out. Every beam of the room, every box and barrel as ranged against the wall, was distinctly before me; and I even recalled a broken pane of glass and the cobwebs that hung around it. Perpetually I lived over that

scene, till my spirit seemed literally consumed. Every hope and joy, every desire and emotion, seemed to have died out of me — every thing but — shall I say it? — a feeling of hate to the man who had so trampled down my feminine instincts.

I had always been a mature child. Love for my mother seemed to have quickened all my powers, and I thought and felt as few children do. But, as Dr. Belden said, I had suddenly grown old, as if the cares and sorrows of years had been piled upon me. And alas! — that burning hate in so young a heart! — it was like the hot breath of the simoom.

My mother had early taught me to go to my heavenly Father for pardon and strength. But now all prayer was over. I felt that I could not offer the petition, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those that trespass against us." Indeed, I did not want to pray to One who had ordained for me such suffering. And I strove to banish the image of my mother as something too holy to dwell in my thoughts.

The good doctor called every other day, my father always coming with him; and the same process was regularly gone through. It so happened that on one of the alternate days my father went out of town. Contrary to his custom, Dr. Belden called that day, also. Sitting beside the bed, he took my cold hand in his, and began to chafe it, talking while he did so.

"I have been trying to catch you alone, miss, and to catechise you as I pleased. And since I have done so, I must improve my chance. Now, my little old-faced Hope, — for you look as wise as any woman of them all, — you must open your heart, and tell me exactly what ails you. No use in dodging the question, child, for where there is an effect,

there must always have been a cause. Don't shake your head, and fix your great eyes upon me so despairingly. It is enough to scare a jolly old fellow like me, to see a young girl pining away so under some sorrow which she hugs up into her foolish little heart. I told wife that if I did not succeed, I should send her here to see what a woman can do. Come, child, open your mouth, and make a clean breast of it, or I shall never cure you up."

"I don't want you to," I replied, languidly; "I had rather die than get well."

"Whew! That's altogether too desperate a condition for a mere child. What in the world have they been doing to you, I wonder. To be sure, we will cure you up, and in short metre."

"I have nothing to live for."

"Tut, tut! Why, there's your brother Horatio; and there's Joy and Ada, who have no mother, and need all the love you can give them."

A pang shot through me, for I recalled those dying words, "Try to supply the place of a mother to my poor little ones." But she did not know how soon my heart would be congealed.

At that moment a carriage drove up the avenue.

"Whew!" exclaimed the doctor; "your father has come, and might be up to suspicions, should he find me here. So, while he is entering at the front door, I will whip out at the side door, as I whipped in."

And giving me a hasty kiss, he was away.

The next day he made his usual call, accompanied by my father.

"We must contrive some change for her," said he, after

feeling my pulse. "She is making no progress at all. I'll tell you what it is: you know I have a farm out at Pinckney, and wife and daughter are going out there for a few weeks. Our little girl here must go too."

I shook my head, shrinking from the very thought of leaving my chamber.

"But, as your physician, I prescribe it, Miss Hope; and if your father enforces my orders, as of course he will, I shall call Friday and take you out."

CHAPTER III.

FROM the time of my mother's death, I had not sought the company of my brother and sisters, preferring to be alone. And from that dreadful moment, which had transformed my whole nature, I had so manifestly shrunk from their innocent mirth, that the nurse kept them out of my room.

On the day in which I was to go with Dr. Belden, I rose at early dawn. A momentary emotion stole over me as I put on the black dress, which brought my departed mother so distinctly to mind. But — one single recollection — and I was the same impassive, hopeless being. I sat down at the front window, and gazed listlessly at the long avenue, through the old linden trees. The clouds in the east were tinged with regal colors, but the glory of nature only sickened my heart.

I went to the western window, and looked upon the beautiful Catskills, which I had loved from my earliest remembrance. Alas! they were only a mockery of my desolation. Save for that withering bitterness in my heart, I might have fancied myself actually dead. But I was not without sensation. A glimpse of a familiar object, which I caught through the trees, sent the blood surging through me. It was the place of my torture, and henceforth to me like an inquisitorial dungeon.

“What, up and dressed so early, Miss Hope?” said Nancy, softly opening the door, as if she feared to awake me.

She looked pleased on first seeing me, but her countenance soon fell.

"O dear!" she continued, as if to herself, "she's got the same dismal face. Dear Miss Hope, don't be fretting any more after your poor mamma. She won't rest quiet in her grave, if you do. Come now, cheer up. The children have had the promise of making you a visit; and for their sakes you'll try to look bright; that's a good child."

She might as well have talked to a clod. The children came, each presenting me a bunch of flowers, which I received with entire apathy.

"Say, nurse," asked Horatio, a blustering boy, "what makes sissy look so queer?"

"She's been sick, you know," said Joy, in a low voice, gazing on my old face with something of the curious awe with which children look upon the dead. "But she'll be Hope, again, when she comes back; won't she, nursy?"

"To be sure she will. But you must say good by, now, or you'll tire her out."

Horatio and Joy came slowly towards me, and timidly gave me a parting kiss, looking back with wonder as they left. Their blooming faces spoke of childish happiness, and yet they were not so very much younger than myself.

During all this time little Ada had stood, with her eyes, blue as the fairest gentian, fixed upon me, but without uttering a word. She drew closer, and throwing her arms round my neck, exclaimed, "I lud du, titter."

"You must come now, Ada," called Nancy.

She looked wistfully in my face, stroked my cheek with her soft hand, and sorrowfully saying, "Dood by, my titter," she slowly left me, pausing at the door for a last look.

My father was absent when the doctor took me away. How could *he* have given me a parting kiss?

My companion seemed in high glee at his proposed recreation. And when we were over the boundary line of Clydeville, he exclaimed, "A free man! I've willed my patients to young Curtis, and I hope it'll give him a lift. And as for us, when we get to Pinckney, we'll have a regular spree. Wife and Rose are as happy there as queens; and so shall you be;" and he put his strong arm round me as we sat in the open wagon. "Lean on me, child, for you are not strong. I have taken your blessed mother to ride before now."

"Don't speak of her," said I quickly.

"Well, I won't, dear; but you're a strange chick, and I reckon I'm too rough to deal with you. My Rose is the one. She's as tender-hearted as need be."

So he chatted on, leaving me to my own silence.

"This is Pinckney, and here we are; and there's my lassie for you."

Rose Belden had one of those sunny faces which indicate an open, joyous nature. I was received by her and her excellent mother with genuine kindness. They must have thought me an ungracious child; but I felt their goodness, though it had not power to melt me.

During the doctor's stay he abandoned himself to uproarious merriment, taking me everywhere with him, in spite of my continual protests, to see the cows and calves, to count the hens' eggs, to pick berries, and to chase butterflies. How I should once have enjoyed these scenes!

"What in the world is there we can do for you, grave face?" asked he, one evening, as, after an early tea, we all sat on the veranda.

"Let me alone!" I answered shortly.

I was so humbled in my own eyes, and had, besides, such a painful sense of my want of personal attractions, that I could not conceive of any one's having any interest in me, except of pity; and that, I was too proud to value. So I encased myself in outward indifference, doing the greatest injustice to my yearning nature, which coveted affection as the parched flower covets the healing dew.

The good doctor made no reply to my ungracious speech, but sat, with a long stick in his hand, thrashing the clover-heads that grew thick around us. I soon withdrew into the large sitting-room, and throwing myself upon the couch, closed my weary eyes. When they came in, they spoke in a low voice, evidently supposing me asleep.

"I must walk by her carefully," said Dr. Belden, in a smothered tone, "for she's a real churchyard, and there's no knowing what might happen if I should rouse her suddenly. Poor thing! It's my opinion that she's suffered what she won't tell; for it's contrary to nature for a child to be as she is."

"Poor thing!" echoed Mrs. Belden; "if we could only comfort her!"

"Dear child," said Rose, in the gentlest tones, "I only wish she would let me win her confidence. Somehow, I don't quite understand her; but yet I can't help loving her dearly."

Ah, Rose! you little knew how those words melted my hard nature. It was your hand that smote the flinty rock. A tear sprang to my eye, and only by a strong effort was I able to prevent it from rolling down my cheek. Nothing further passed at that time, but I think they all noticed a slight change in me the next day.

“Well, Hope, this looks like it. You really *are* better. Don't shake your head, or I'll have it fastened with screws. Say, now, we are not *quite* savages out here, are we? That's a good girl. It was a real smile. Now, mother, since I have succeeded in catching one bright ray from Hope, I must be off, or who knows but that young sprig of a Curtis may have doctored half my patients into a galloping consumption?”

When he came to bid me good by, I ventured to say, “I do thank you, Dr. Belden, for all your kindness.”

“So, so; that's something like. You thank me now, do you, for letting you live?”

“No, not for that; but I thank you, *notwithstanding*.”

“Well, I must make the most of it, I suppose, and feel myself honored by the few gracious words that have fallen from your lips. Now, be a good girl, and get off that cemetery face of yours as soon as possible.”

There was a sensible void when the kind, merry doctor had left us. But Mrs. Belden and Rose exerted themselves for my amusement. And since those words of balm had fallen from her lips, I had felt drawn towards the latter. As we returned from a quiet stroll, we sat down under a large maple, shading a clean spot of grass in the pleasant front yard. She put her arm round me, and I was won to lay my head on her shoulder. From that time there was a tacit understanding between us. I did not talk much, for I was naturally reserved, and circumstances had strengthened this disposition. Besides, although I felt the influence of her joyous nature, she was not one to whom I could open my heart. I was even indisposed to talk of my mother. But I liked to be near her, to gaze into her blooming face, to have

her hold my hand, and to listen to her pleasant voice. She had a pure, healthy nature, though not one of great depth. And I came to cherish a real affection for her.

The weeks fled by, and I returned with Dr. Belden's family to Clydeville. As the doctor drove through my father's gate, I was carried back to the days of my childhood, when my mother used to lead me in those pleasant walks.

My ancestral home was indeed a beautiful place. A long, winding avenue of linden trees, bordered with soft, green turf, swept up to the house, and thence round to the stables. The mansion was an old-fashioned building, of brown stone, square, massive, well-proportioned, and surrounded by a broad piazza. It stood on a slight eminence, sloping down on one side to a smooth, open lawn, beyond which rolled the blue Hudson, while in the distance appeared the purple outlines of the mountains. In front, it was shaded by lofty forest trees, which still remained as tokens of primeval days. Scattered here and there between them, like jewels in the grass, catching the lingering gleams of sunshine, were little circles planted with brilliant flowers, which enlivened the velvet turf.

As I gazed on the fine old place, a deep gloom—the gloom of my later life—seemed gradually to overshadow it. One by one, my miserable thoughts and feelings returned; and by the time I stood in the broad hall, I was the same demure, inaccessible little body as when I left. Nancy greeted me with cordiality, and the children bounded in to look at their sister. They kissed me, but with an air of disappointment; and I could hear Raty whisper to Joy,—

“Sissy looks as cross as ever, and I don't believe she'll play with us.”

The gall my father had infused into my being continued to embitter the springs of life, and I retired more and more within myself. What I needed, was employment strengthening for mind and body, with genial, soothing influences. What I *had*, was my own morbid fancies, and novels and poetry of an unwholesome character. This was the very bewilderment of intoxication to a temperament like mine; and with nothing but my own wretchedness to fill up the intervals, I readily surrendered to the fatal enchantment. Bulwer, Byron, Shelley, and other kindred writers, were my constant companions.

Oh, how would my gentle mother have sorrowed to see me yielding thus selfishly to temptation, and becoming more and more soured in my disposition! It may seem strange that there was no one to interfere with these ruinous habits; but so it was. My brother and sisters, finding me uncompanionable, naturally withdrew themselves. And Nancy, the only one of the servants who concerned herself on my account, knowing me to be an unhappy child, was glad to see me engaged in so useful an occupation as she considered reading. The seeds of rank poison thus dropped in my ardent nature, quickly germinated. Were they destined to a growth which would finally destroy every better principle? I was sowing to the wind; was I fated to reap the whirlwind?

CHAPTER IV.

ANOTHER spring had come and gone. In the bright summer that followed, an unusual bustle prevailed. Carpenters and painters were on the premises; new and rich furniture was landed at our door; and my father's chamber, — one of the largest and most pleasant rooms in the house, — after being newly painted and papered, was re-furnished as a private parlor. I had my own thoughts on the subject, but said nothing. My father's frequent absences confirmed my suspicions. But I was indifferent to the event I foresaw.

The anniversary of mamma's death passed by without any change, for my father had too much regard for his own respectability to think of marrying before a year's widowhood had expired. But soon after that time, so full to me of bitter memories, he left home for a month's absence.

"Miss Hope," said Nancy one day, as if she wished tenderly to break some unpleasant tidings, "I have something to tell you, and I beg you to bear it bravely."

"I know what it is, and I care nothing about it."

"What is it, and who told you?"

"My father is to be married. Nobody told me; I found it out myself a long time ago."

"Well, you are the strangest girl I ever saw. But any way, I'm glad you are not a-going to fret about it. There's never any calculating how you will take a thing, I must say."

With all my indifference, however, as the day drew nigh when the bridal pair were expected, I began to feel some anxiety, as well as curiosity. I tried to set myself about reading; but my ears involuntarily listened to every passing sound, while my eyes were constantly turned down the avenue. At length I heard the carriage, which had been sent to the landing, rolling rapidly along, till it stopped at our front door. Then I watched my father as with much assiduity he assisted a lady to descend. I could hear a great bustle and ordering of servants in the hall; and stepping softly to the head of the stairs, I saw a maid showing the new Mrs. Frazer to her chamber — my mother's chamber! Then my heart rebelled, and I stole back to my solitude with a decided prejudice against the new comer.

A little before tea, Nancy appeared, informing me that I must dress myself very carefully, as the children were to be presented to their new mother.

“She isn't my mother, and I shan't dress up for her.”

“But your father has directed it.”

“I don't care if he has. I shall not go down to supper.”

“But she is a beautiful woman, and you had better make friends with her.”

It was not without the utmost urgency that I was induced to give heed to Nancy. And with a cloud on my face, I went down into the parlor. Mrs. Frazer had Ada in her arms, while Raty's and Joy's hands were full of toys and confectionery. My father bowed distantly, saying to the gayly-dressed woman, —

“My love, this is the odd one of whom I have told you.”

Indignant at such an introduction, I lifted my head, and defiantly met her gaze. In that first moment, I felt the

power of her wonderful beauty. Although she carelessly replied, "Ah, this is Hope, then," and took no further notice, yet her tones were such as instantly to mollify my anger.

After tea, my father persuaded her to go to the piano, and, in evident admiration, stood beside her, turning over the leaves of her music. The other children said good night, and I retreated into a corner, where I could have a full view of her without being observed. Even at this distance of time, I can vividly recall her appearance. She could not have been over twenty-three, while my father must have been between forty and fifty.

Of medium height, her form was slightly *embonpoint*, but not so as in the least to diminish her grace. Heavy braids of rich chestnut hair were looped round her head, falling low on her fair neck, and slightly shading her transparent temples. But her eyes! At one moment a strange, restless light flashed out from them, and the next they wore a bewitching softness. Her mouth was beautifully sculptured, but there was a look about it which gave me an instinctive feeling of distrust. I could not then define it. I should now say it was a blending of the wilful with consummate art and recklessness. My father was evidently her ardent adorer, and unconsciously manifested his triumph at having secured such a prize.

I was passionately fond of music; and as she glanced towards me now and then, she must have observed how rapt I was. Although I could not help noting with bitterness the contrast between my father's treatment of her and of my own dear mother, yet I scarcely wondered at a fascination which I too began to feel.

"My liege lord must be tired," said she at last, turning round on the piano stool.

“I can never be tired while with you, Ednah. You are equally charming whatever you do;” and he attempted to take her hand.

“*Ma foi!* Remember you are married, and must not be caught making love to your wife.”

“But when will my time come, dearest? for you completely distanced me during our courtship.”

“If you had only been wise enough, my dear sir, to select a lady of respectable age, you might have yielded to such whims,—she not objecting. But of all things, it is absurd for an old widower to be silly with a young bride.”

I fancied she said this with a slight look of malice. My father frowned slightly as he replied,—

“Mrs. Frazer, I am not accustomed to be trifled with.”

She rose, and making a mock courtesy, was about to withdraw.

“Dear Ednah, do not leave me in displeasure. I only ask you to be reasonable.”

She looked at him with a half-offended air as she replied,—

“I can never endure a tyrant.”

“I am no tyrant. And I am ready to promise anything, if you will only grant me one favor.”

“What is it?”

“It is what you have always invented some excuse for refusing — that I may kiss you;—which indeed I might claim as a right.”

“I have no conscience about such rights. But if I yield it, shall I have my own way in everything?”

“In everything, siren. So now redeem your pledge;” and he approached her.

"I did not make any, sir," and stepping back, she looked at him with strange wilfulness. Seeing his frown returning, she exclaimed, "What an exacting man!"

"Dear Ednah, do not mock me any longer."

"Nay, my lord, I shall not be kissed on compulsion. Here you are, holding the rod over me. If you expect any favors, you must leave me absolutely free."

"Only love me, Ednah, and I will be your devoted slave."

"Well, then, to-morrow we shall see."

I hardly need say that I was thoroughly roused by this scene. It was a perfect amazement to see my father so completely bewitched. No young admirer ever sued more humbly for some favor of his lady-love, than did this proud man of his youthful bride. It was to me a new phase of life — an unexpected development of character — that threw me into strange perplexity. "How vexed," I thought, "would my father have been had he known I was a witness of his meek suing!" I could not understand Mrs. Frazer. I was not sure I should like her, but she would be an interesting study. I should witness the acting out of a real romance.

Days passed, and the drama continued to unfold. Mrs. Frazer held my father to his promise. I never saw one so completely managed. Our mansion was still further rejuvenated and refurnished, and then filled with gay company. Parties, rides and soirées were all the rage, and Mrs. Frazer was queen in the *beau monde*. By a skilful mingling of refractoriness, coquetry, and an occasional graceful submission, she kept my father at her feet. I give these impressions as the conclusions of later years, for at that time I could not understand a great deal that I saw, nor explain much that I felt.

As for myself, notwithstanding a certain latent distrust which I could never wholly shake off, I was coming more and more to yield to her fascinations. I had always had that peculiar admiration of beauty which is often felt by those who are conscious of being plain themselves. Besides, she had early contrived, in various ways, to manifest an interest in me, which, of course, was not without its influence. One day I overheard her saying to my father, —

“Hope is a little savage, and needs looking after, to make her a fit appendage of your family. I think I must take her in hand.”

“As you please, dear Ednah; only don't allow yourself to become interested in the ungrateful child.”

Not long after this conversation, while my father was out of town, Mrs. Frazer sent for me to her chamber. She soon noticed that I could not be in that room without emotion, and proposed that we should adjourn to her private parlor. This was the apartment which my father had given up for her particular accommodation; and which she had refitted according to her own fancy.

Throwing herself on a couch, she motioned me to a seat by her side.

“Look round, Hope, and tell me how far your taste agrees with mine.”

I complied, glad of her permission. It was a large room, a little longer than broad, with the front windows reaching to the floor, and opening on the wide upper veranda. The Wilton carpet was thick enough to deaden the heaviest foot-fall, and of an intricate pattern of gorgeous colors inwrought upon a ground of white. Crimson damask curtains draped the windows, clouds of lace drooping airily beneath them.

The mantel-piece was of elegantly carved Italian marble, and opposite was a magnificent pier glass, with a marble slab below, on which stood Parian statuettes, and various charming knick-knacks. In other parts of the room were gracefully disposed a costly bookcase filled with elegant volumes, a rosewood piano, a *tête-à-tête fauteuil*, and lounges inviting to comfort and repose. On the centre-table were vases of fragrant flowers, while here and there were tastefully arranged superb paintings and rare statuary. After a pleased survey, my eyes returned to her who was a fit gem for this gorgeous setting.

“ Well ! ”

“ It is beautiful.”

And then I turned my head away and sighed.

She took my hand, and looking into my eyes, said, —

“ I see shadows there. Do you distrust me, Hope ? ”

I hung my head in confusion.

“ Don't be afraid to speak.”

“ I heard you tell my father I was a little savage, and I thought you did not care for me.”

“ Bravely spoken, child,” replied she, fixing her brilliant eyes upon me. “ It was the only way in which I could get permission to do anything for you. You think it was wrong to cheat him ? We have to do the best we can, dear. But I will not deceive *you*. It is fated that we are to be friends. I have read you from that first evening, and I will stand between you and your father, though of course he must not know it. But I can easily manage him,” she continued, while her eye suddenly flashed.

I cannot say that I enjoyed her manner of talking, though her gay, reckless air had a certain charm, and her evident interest in me was a pleasure as peculiar as it was rare.

“I have taken a special fancy to you; did you know it, Hope?”

“But I am so plain and disagreeable.”

“Not so *very* plain, after all,” said she, in her most insinuating manner. “Look straight at me, child! Did no one ever tell you what eyes you have? Speak truly.”

“Nobody but Dr. Belden, who calls them great, melancholy eyes.”

“You are a little simpleton. Nothing better could be asked for in that line. Nor is your mouth so bad,” continued she, closely scanning me. “A little too firm set, that is all. And as for *le tout ensemble*, though at the first glance it might not attract, yet, believe me, yours is a face to which the eye involuntarily returns. And when you come under my sway, there will be a wonderful improvement. You shall have a gay life yet, and after a time shall break hearts as fast as any of them. I will speedily have you put into more becoming apparel, and my own maid shall arrange those heavy raven tresses. And then, father or no father — *nous verrons.*”

And putting her hand under my chin, she raised my head, and gave me a scrutinizing glance.

“There,” proceeded she, smiling triumphantly, “let me alone for getting at the female heart, as well as at the tougher male one. There is already an encouraging change. Such cordials are novel to you, and you relish them right well. The soft flush on your cheek has deepened to a rich glow, and your eye sparkles with a new light.”

Then, putting her arm round me, she drew me to her side.

“Ah, my little maiden, it is better even than I expected. My red wine has warmed you all over.”

It was truly a moment of sweet excitement, and I eagerly drank in her flattering words.

“*M’aimez-vous, ma petite Esperance ?*”

I don’t understand you.”

“It is a shame in your father, but you shall have a French master. Translated, my words were, *Do you love me, my little Hope ?*” and she once more fixed her magnetic eyes on mine.

I replied by throwing my arms round her neck, while I timidly asked,—

“May I kiss you, dear lady?”—I could not say mother.

“Call me Ednah, child; I shall always be Ednah to you. But why did you not kiss me without leave?”

I answered with some hesitation,—

“Because you would not let my father kiss you the evening of your arrival.”

“Ah, I remember. I had the best of reasons for my refusal, which I may possibly confide to you some day. In the mean time, *you* shall kiss me whenever you are disposed.”

Such a demonstration was new to me, and I felt my face burn as I bashfully pressed a kiss on her fair cheek.

“Mr. Frazer would envy you, were he aware of your privileges. So don’t forget how highly favored you are.”

She spoke playfully, but it excited some anxiety, and I ventured,—

“I am afraid he will be angry with me for daring to love you.”

“Your father shall never come between us,” she replied, with a frown. “But we will be careful in his presence. This covenant shall be our first secret. After a time, if you are faithful, I shall trust you further.”

Hearing the sound of carriage wheels, I started in alarm.

“What is the matter, *ma petite*?”

“I was thinking what father would say if he should find me here.”

She curled her lip, exclaiming, “And do you think I admit *him* into this sanctum? *Ma foi!* No such privilege is vouchsafed to his lordship. But I will give *you* free *entrée*. Come down the back stairs, step lightly through the ante-room, and tap at this little door. And if there is no answer, walk right in. Come whenever you like, but be *sure* to come when you are in trouble.”

“How good you are!” I responded with warmth.

“You little innocent!” said she, patting my cheek, while a slight blush flitted over her face.

When I laid my head on my pillow that night, I was in the flush of a first intoxication. The Circean cup had been held to my lips, and wanting the moral strength to decline it, I had eagerly swallowed the tempting draught. It had warmed me, as Ednah said. My whole being was even now aglow with electrical excitement. Byron and Ednah were blended in my thoughts, and the future began to loom up brightly before me. I would fearlessly take all life had to offer, and settle the question whether I was formed to gain triumphs or not.

Suddenly my mother's pallid face rose up before me. I pressed my own close into the pillows to shut out the now unwelcome image. In vain!

CHAPTER V.

“WILL you teach me to play the piano, dear Ednah?”

“*Ma foi!* no, child. I am too indolent for such dreadful labor. But I will provide you with teachers, and you shall speedily be initiated into the elegances.”

Her plans were carried out, and under the care of accomplished masters, I made rapid progress in the modern languages and in music.

My brother and sisters were placed in charge of a governess, and kept in a different part of the house. I had thus very little intercourse with them. And though they were fond of Ednah, she seldom took the trouble to see them. She gave me to understand that I was her favorite, and I came more and more to believe it. Whether my father was at all suspicious of this friendship I knew not, but his treatment was not calculated to allay my old irritation. Perhaps Ednah's partiality made me somewhat pert. And besides, I had another of her secrets in my keeping. I shall never forget my surprise on learning it.

It was some weeks after my first visit to her private parlor. I was in the same room, sitting on an ottoman beside her, when a thought, which I had often had before, flashed suddenly upon me, suggesting the inquiry, —

“Why would you not let father kiss you on that first evening?”

A deep crimson dyed her face, as she whispered in my ear, — “Because I *hate* him.”

I looked up in astonishment, entirely unable to speak.

“Poor Esperance! I have shocked you, and you want to ask me why I married him then. I will conceal nothing, child. It was for his money. I am dreadfully extravagant; I must have luxuries without stint; I was hard pressed; it was the most eligible match that offered at that time. Besides, though full of silly conceits as to his own dignity, he was dead in love, and I could make my own terms. It was a stroke of worldly wisdom, and so I brought my unwilling mind to it. You see how sovereign is my rule. And so long as it is for my interest to keep him spell-bound, I shall continue alternately to tantalize and fascinate him. He gains nothing in the end, however, by my concessions. So, little one, you see you have a formidable ally.” And with one of her keen glances, she continued, in a low but distinct voice, “I know how your father hates you. But his hate, I see, is fully reciprocated, and you may one day be revenged.”

My eye fell beneath hers, for though but too familiar with my own evil thoughts, yet when dragged into the daylight, and put face to face before me, I could not help being shocked. She saw this, and by her skilful pleading, quieted my protesting conscience; so that I began to justify to myself what I had, till now, admitted to be wrong.

I am unable adequately to measure the extent of Ednah's influence upon my character. She had completely intralled me; and though I could not blind myself to her defects, I loved her with all the warmth of my intense nature, and felt that there was almost no sacrifice I would not make to give

her pleasure. My excessive reading of fictitious literature, and indulgence in day-dreaming, had prepared me for her insidious influence. The delicate flatteries she was continually administering were a subtle poison to my moral sense. Reason revolted from her teachings, and there were times when conscience was alarmed; but an hour in her charming presence silenced them both, and riveted the chain she had thrown around me.

I pursued my education with eagerness, because I coveted intellectual power, as well as that of personal accomplishments. But in the intervals of study, I lived a life of strange excitement. Although I knew that Ednah's course, with regard to my father, was wrong, yet I found a certain pleasure in seeing how dexterously she would balk him. He was necessarily often absent from home, and never was she more gay than on such occasions. Whether any of the servants distrusted her or not, I could not tell; but she was a favorite with them all, as my father had never been. I recollect overhearing one of them talking about her throwing dust in Mr. Frazer's eyes. The reply was, —

“And that, you may say, she does in all our eyes. But we like her for all that.”

Although Ednah sometimes laughed at the ardor of my attachment, yet she took care that it should not be weakened. She allowed me to vent all the affection she had kindled, in honest but extravagant expressions, and to lavish my caresses upon her without stint.

“You can do as you please with *me*,” said she, one day, when I had come up softly behind her and thrown my arms round her neck. “But when you have lovers, you must manage differently.”

“If I have *one* lover, I shall be satisfied.”

“You belie yourself, for it is pleasant to see a crowd of suitors at one’s feet. You are no coquette by nature, but you have spirit enough, and are acquiring tact. Ah, Esperance, you will never need to marry an old fool, as I did. Little dreams the world of the heartache beneath all this glitter.” And she pressed my hand on her bosom.

“Darling Ednah!” I exclaimed, with a burst of sympathy. “I wish I could have saved you from this.”

And clasping her hand in both mine, I looked up lovingly into her face, presently adding, “But in spite of all you say, I am a homely girl, and can’t believe I shall ever be sought, as you predict.”

“Nonsense, child. You know better. Your ‘great melancholy eyes’ alone, can play the mischief with anybody. You are a little girl yet, in the process of training. Are you in such a hurry to begin your conquests?”

I only replied by laying my burning face in her lap, and bursting into tears. She soothed me with tenderest words, but in the very act of soothing, she contrived to feed those fires which should never, *never* have been kindled.

Could no memory of my gentle mother shield me from those seductive influences which were gradually destroying the purity of my mind? Alas! the cruelty of my father, and the captivations of my step-mother, were combining to choke the good seed *she* had so carefully sown. Her pious teachings and her earnest prayers were fast fading from my remembrance; and yet there were seasons when they returned with painful vividness. It is not without struggles, God be thanked, that we break through the thorny hedges which memory and conscience have raised about us, and take our

path across those fair Pontine Marshes whose breath is a deadly miasma. I had many a season of unhappiness, many an hour when I wished I had died with my mother.

But I resisted these repenting moods, and sought to banish them by resorting to Ednah's lively presence. Had I only fled to my mother's grave ——! But as the consciousness of a cherished hate had formerly kept me from that sacred spot, so that of my increasing unworthiness made me continue to shun it, even though often importuned by my little sister Ada to take her there.

Sweet child! what a world of sacred memories cluster around her name! Still her fairy form is before me; still her saintly child-face steals across my tearful vision. A lily-like complexion, occasionally tinged with the faintest color, a sweet and serious little mouth, and soft eyes, blue as the summer heavens, before whose pure glance guilt might well shrink abashed. Round her pale, thoughtful brow clustered drooping, golden curls, according well with her angelic beauty.

Wonderfully like my mother, she never seemed a child of earth, but like a snow-flake lingering in the ether, as if loath to touch the ground. So lingered our snow-flower, opening, day by day, into as sweet a blossom as ever graced a mortal garden. She was like a charmed presence, gliding in and out among us. Even of my harsh father she was not afraid, and his face assumed a softer expression, and his voice a milder tone, when he spoke to her. Surely "of such is the kingdom of heaven."

It was a touching contrast to see the spiritual child beside the worldly Ednah. The fashionable, frivolous woman seemed to feel rebuked by her presence.

"She is altogether too holy to keep company with us ordinary mortals," said she, one day, when Ada had been asking her questions. "Sweet cherub as she is, one can't have her about all the time, or one would become absolutely afraid of doing anything naughty. Take her under your wing, Espy, and try to make some little impression upon her as to the actualities of this world, for she thinks a great deal too much of the other, granting there *is* another."

So I took her to walk with me, and listened to her childish prattle. But I could not find it in my heart to say one word which would tend to undermine her faith, or grieve her trusting spirit. Bad as I was, I restrained my hands, lest, by a careless touch, they might sully that pure, God-given flower. But my goodness was simply that of omission. Many a pang have I suffered that I did no more for the loving child.

"Mayn't I sleep with you, Espy?" asked she, one day, using the pet name she had caught from Ednah.

"Why, Ada?"

"Oh, because I love you so."

"You need care, which I have no time to give. When you are eight years old, we will see."

"But I can dress myself, and I won't trouble you at all."

"Good girls don't tease."

"Ada won't tease any more;" and while a tear was in her eye, she tried to bear her disappointment bravely.

And this was the youngest left to us of my angel mother's flock! Why was I so unfaithful to her dying charge? And why did I refuse the innocent request of the child I so dearly loved? Must I confess that it was in part because the sight of her childish piety smote me to the heart? To see her small hands clasped in prayer; as mine used to be

when I daily knelt beside my mother, — to hear her lisping entreaties for herself and for us all, that we might be “*vely good*, and go some day to live in heaven,” — and to listen to her artless talk about God and the angels, — this was what I could not bear.

And here I ought to record what had been more disastrous in its effect on me than all other influences. It was Ednah’s frivolous and sometimes mocking treatment of sacred subjects. *How*, I can hardly tell, but by words dropped now and then, she had insinuated into my mind doubts of a most ruinous character. A retributive hereafter! — that was only a bugbear to frighten naughty children. So we might as well get out of life all we could. And there was no need to be overstrained in our notions of morality. All that was necessary was an external decency. Virtue, in her view, was an uncertain quantity, varying according to every man’s notion. She entered into no argument, and she adduced no proof. But she took just the course calculated to throw me into a state of doubt respecting all spiritual truth.

CHAPTER VI.

It was now midsummer. Our house, as usual, had been filled with company, Ednah being the gayest of them all. At a pleasant driving distance from the town, my father owned a charming place, called Pine Grove. A large farmhouse belonging to it stood on the banks of a creek, which wound along underneath shady trees, forming here and there little pleasant coves. On this stream was a small sail-boat, one of Ednah's special appointments for the entertainment of her numerous guests. A party would go over from our house for the day, taking an ample supply of provisions and books, with other resources, for the pleasant killing of time.

What nice baskets of sandwiches were put up, with bottles of beer and wine, and delicate cakes and tarts of every variety! An abundance of fruit of the best quality was always furnished from the farm. And sometimes Ednah would order coffee, when there was sure to be no lack of genuine cream.

Occasionally she would invite her acquaintances from the town to join the picnic; and then there was always a season of rare merriment. Some would row down the stream, chatting gayly as they went, or with their fingers dreamily rippling the smooth waters. Others would stroll off into the groves which bordered the creek, while here and there were little groups lounging under the trees, engrossed in some

witching tale, or lazily gazing up into the summer sky, as it came to them in bright checkers through the waving foliage.

Of all these festive occasions Ednah was the life, charming every one by her brilliant spirits, as well as by her graceful hospitality. It was a study to me to watch my father whenever he happened to join these parties. At any attention from Ednah, his countenance would brighten with a proud fondness, which it was pitiful for me to behold. She must have possessed unusual power, as well as *finesse*, thus completely to intrall a man of his character, and that while he was actually so abhorrent to her.

On one of these occasions, Ednah introduced me to Miss Adelaide Campbell, a young lady three or four years my senior. She was a native of Clydeville, but had spent several years out of town, having returned only within a few months. I had heard her spoken of as a girl of high culture, and as quite a connoisseur in art. She was above the ordinary height, of a noble countenance and a commanding presence. We strolled together through a winding path to a point whence we could have a fine view of the North River. We gazed long in silence, and then, turning suddenly towards the mountains standing in sweet serenity, Miss Campbell exclaimed, —

“What a perpetual joy to have such a river and such mountains to look upon!”

I responded with enthusiasm, and we soon fell into an animated conversation. From natural scenery we proceeded to art, and she told me several anecdotes of Thomas Cole, with whom she was intimately acquainted. I ventured to express my desire to see her own paintings, of which I had heard.

"You shall see them, if you will come and pass a day with me."

"I will do so with pleasure when Ednah has no other plan for me."

"Ednah you call her, then."

"Yes, she wished me to, and she is more my companion than my mother."

At this moment we heard light footsteps, and presently Ada, flushed and out of breath, stood before us.

"I asked papa to take me to Pine Grove with him, and then mamma told me where to find you."

"Will you sit by me?" said Miss Campbell, holding out her hand.

Ada went to her directly.

"What is your name?" she asked, putting back the sunny curls from her forehead.

"Ada Frazer."

"They sometimes call *me* Ada."

"What is your true name?" asked my little sister, gravely.

"Adelaide Campbell, at your service."

Ada looked steadily into those clear eyes, and then said, "Will it trouble you to talk to me?"

"Certainly not, darling. But what shall I talk about?"

"About heaven, if you are willing."

So they had a long talk together, in which Miss Campbell kindly answered all her questions, while I listened with inward compunctions.

"What did you talk with Miss Campbell about?" asked Ednah the next day.

"About scenery and art, and she invited me to pass a day

with her, when she has promised to show me her paintings. And then Ada came, and they had a long chat."

"About holy matters, of course. Then she did not honor my queenship with a word."

"O yes! She did full justice to your charms."

"And she did not say, 'Handsome is, that handsome does'?"

"Nothing of the sort, however appropriate it might have been," replied I, laughing.

"Impertinence!" and she shook her finger at me.

Our guests had all departed, and Ednah and I had one day been out for a quiet drive. On our return, a card was placed in her hand. Glancing at it, she changed color, exclaiming, "How vexatious!" but turning it over, added, "It is just as well, perhaps, that I was away."

She then handed me the card, on which was written, with a bold hand, PHILIP LEVERE, U. S. A. On the other side was added with a pencil, "Will call again to-morrow."

"He is an old acquaintance, I suppose."

"Yes," she answered in an absent tone, but presently resumed, "I met him in Paris, and — well — great changes have taken place since then." And she fell into a reverie.

During the next morning, the door bell rang, and Ednah was summoned below. After about an hour she came back into her private room, where she had left me, and with a flushed face threw herself upon the couch.

"Fan me, Espy. The proud lieutenant has taxed all my energies for his entertainment; and that is of late so novel, that I am quite exhausted."

"Please tell me about him," said I, complying with her request.

“He is a hard case, for he knows too much. But I will outwit him if he will only give me time.”

“But this is not describing him.”

“Well, let me see if I can make out the inventory of his attractions. In the first place, he is tall and of decidedly military carriage. Intellectually, his head is well developed, but in the conscientious department, he may possibly be wanting. His complexion is dark, and his hair black and curly. Now let us come to the eyes, though with him they are the most difficult feature to describe. They are dark and brilliant, but their light has no warmth. It is a cold sparkling, like that of the diamond. I have seen them burn, however, and I may have that satisfaction again. His mouth, — but let that go. It is one thing this minute, and another the next. He is a complete man of the world, polished as steel, and equally cold. In manner always assured, he is skilled in fathoming the character of all he meets, and adapting himself thereto, *s’il se plait*. As to his history, he was educated at West Point, has resided a great deal in Paris, and travelled everywhere. But enough of him for to-day. To-morrow you shall behold him for yourself. I am in a stormy mood; play me something of Beethoven’s.”

The next afternoon I was summoned down stairs to see Lieutenant Levere. As I reached the door, I heard Ednah say in a low voice, —

“She is of tropical temperament, and only needs hot-house culture to make her a rare flower. Try what you can do for her.”

Knowing of whom Ednah must be speaking, I felt some embarrassment at her introduction. After exchanging a few words with me, Mr. Levere resumed his conversation with

Ednah, which gave me an opportunity of comparing her *sketch* with the original. I found her portraiture correct, though she had omitted his epaulets, which, with young girls, have their share of influence. A pause occurring, he turned, and fixing his eyes on mine, inquired, —

“What will be the weather to-morrow?”

“I am no prophet, sir,” I answered with surprise.

“Excuse me. I fancied those eyes could look a great way into the future.”

He said this in a significant manner, which made me blush in spite of myself. I was too confused to reply, which increased my vexation, for I was sure he noted the effect of his remark. He had gallantry enough, however, to appear unconscious of it.

As he was leaving, *Ednah* invited him to dine the next day with us, adding quietly, “Mr. Frazer will be at home.”

Giving her a glance so piercing that she changed color, he politely accepted the invitation. The moment he had withdrawn, she began to walk up and down, muttering to herself. Then turning to me, —

“Ah, *Espy*, I have a hard game to play with that man. But I will prevail against all his arts.”

I did not fully comprehend her meaning, but ventured to say, “If he displeases you, why do you permit his calls?”

“Displeases me?” she replied, with a scornful laugh.

The next day a number of guests were assembled, when Lieutenant *Levere* was announced. *Ednah* introduced him to her husband, who received him quite ceremoniously. But the young officer thought it worth while to make an effort, and it was not long before my father was listening to him with unwonted interest. *Ednah* devoted herself to her other

guests, apparently satisfied with the course of things. When, at length, Mr. Levere pleaded an engagement as compelling him to an early withdrawal, my father cordially invited him to call as often as he had leisure. All this time, Ednah stood near with apparent indifference, though I fancied that I caught a gleam of triumph in her eye.

“Mrs. Frazer,” said my father, turning towards her, “cannot you plan an excursion to Pine Grove this week, which our friend can be induced to join?”

“It is doubtful,” replied she, coldly; “still, if you desire it, I will try to find a day.”

“It will give me pleasure to enter into any arrangement Mr. Frazer may propose,” said the officer, bowing to my father, without a glance at Ednah.

After some discussion it was settled that the present company should make the excursion on the morrow. It proved oppressive weather, but with the aid of watermelons and iced lemonade, the party managed to keep comfortable. Ednah surpassed herself in brilliancy, but notwithstanding my father’s frequent appeals to her to show the officer this and tell him that, she treated him with a marked distance, which was returned in even measure. As we were about leaving, Ednah, happening to be near the stranger, expressed her hope that he had passed a pleasant day.

“I have enjoyed myself extremely,” said he in a nonchalant tone, giving her at the same time a quick glance of intelligence, of which I could make nothing.

This formal intercourse continued several days, till my father was obliged to leave town for a fortnight. The day after his departure, as I came up the front walk, Mr. Levere was standing at the door with Ednah. He had laid aside his

ordinary coolness, and seemed to be earnestly arguing some point. After a little hesitation, she replied, —

“I consent then, but only with that understanding,” when he touched his hat and walked away.

As I came in, Ednah drew my arm within hers, saying, “Esperance, that wilful man has drawn from me a promise to go to Pine Grove to-morrow. But I consented only on condition that you would accompany us.”

“You must excuse me,” replied I, “for a trio in such a case is any thing but agreeable.”

“Don’t vex me, Epsy. You will not be *de trop*, and you *must* go.”

“Of course, I will yield then.”

In spite of a certain nameless distrust of our gallant officer, which I had felt from the beginning, he contrived to make the day unusually agreeable. While we sat on rustic seats in the cool shade, he reclined on the grass, and read aloud passages from “Lalla Rookh.” There was an occasional *empressement* in his manner to Ednah which I had not before noticed. He tried more than once to persuade her to stroll with him among the winding paths, but she professed herself too indolent to move.

In the afternoon, when the shadows were beginning to lengthen, we sailed down the creek, Ednah insisting on helping row the boat, while at Levere’s entreaty she sang a wild air he named.

“Do you remember the days we spent on the Rhine, Mrs. Frazer?”

“*Oui, monsieur.*”

“And that prediction of the saucy fortune-teller?”

“Pray don’t recall that nonsense,” answered she, with a quick change of color.

“And are you, then, so entirely satisfied with the present as never to breathe a sigh for the past?”

She started at his bold question; but, controlling herself, replied carelessly, —

“I am sorry you have not forgotten those hours of folly.”

“Are you?” he slowly asked, probing her with his glittering eyes. “Well, I can exorcise the ghosts of memory. Shall I do so, Mrs. Frazer?”

“I recommend it by all means,” — with bitter sarcasm in her tone.

“There is one thing, at least, that I shall never forget nor forgive; that is, till it is atoned for.”

He uttered these words in an undertone, again looking fixedly into Ednah’s face, till her eyes unwillingly fell. In a moment, however, she regained her composure, and saying hastily, “I defy alike your memory and your anger,” began to hum a gay tune. Levere entered into her mood; and till our return there was nothing between them but sparkling sallies of humor, and playful attacks and retorts.

“Shall we take another drive to-morrow?” asked the lieutenant as we were approaching our house.

“Not unless you will promise to cease annoying me with such extremely disagreeable reminiscences.”

“Very well,” replied he, coolly. “I have not the smallest objection to make the desired vow. But when it has once passed my lips, not even you shall tempt me to break it. With this understanding, capricious lady, I await your commands.”

Bitterly Ednah responded, “I did not ask you to take an oath, but simply to refrain from teasing me with painful

memories. It is neither kind nor manly to torture a defenceless woman."

"*Je le comprends,*" rejoined he, in a softened tone. "How could I imagine that, with so brilliant a present, the past could cost you any pangs? But since it is so, it shall be my part to soothe if not to banish them. I will call for you to-morrow at eleven."

Ednah drew a deep sigh after he had gone, but soon aroused herself, saying, —

"Remember, Espy, that you are to go with us everywhere."

"I had rather not, Ednah; nor do I see how you can want to go with that bold man."

"Take care that you don't thwart me." Then, with her caressing manner, she continued, "When I have fairly humbled the audacious fellow, I shall take my adieu of him. And you will not vex me, child."

I yielded, as usual. And so the days glided by. I saw no signs of growing humility on the officer's part; on the contrary, I fancied his manner became increasingly assured. I had my own thoughts about this intimacy, yet was constrained to acknowledge that Ednah was extremely guarded in their intercourse.

CHAPTER VII.

SEPTEMBER! My father had just departed on his expected journey. I was reclining on a couch in a deep recess of Ednah's parlor, reading "Sorrows of Werther," one of the books she had put into my hands. Partially concealed by the heavy curtains, she did not observe me when she entered. Sitting down by an open front window, and leaning her head upon her hand, she gazed dreamily out. Suddenly a bright flush passed over her face, and she turned as if expecting a summons. A few moments passed, and then came a gentle tap.

"*Entrez.*"

The door opened.

"Ednah!"

"Mr. Levere!" said she, retreating, "I am accustomed to be addressed as Mrs. Frazer. And, sir—"

"Why, Ednah,—I beg pardon,—Mrs. Frazer,—what occasions this prudery? Seeing you at your window, and recalling what you said the other day, I supposed I was only taking a justifiable liberty. But if you order it, I am gone."

"You can first make known your business. But your presence in this room was unexpected."

"Not unwelcome, though, I have the vanity to believe." And he approached to sit beside her.

Divining his intention, she rose, saying, —

“ You grow assuming.”

“ And have you given me no reason?”

“ Reason? No!” she angrily replied.

“ A spice of your old coquetry;” and he again approached her.

“ Talk not to me of coquetry.”

“ But what then do you mean?”

“ Mean? *vous savez très bien. Vous êtes un mauvais homme — une bête feroce.*”

He smiled a cold, cruel smile, but did not once remove his searching eyes. At length, in the distinctest tone, he asked, —

“ Do you love Mr. Frazer?”

“ Love him! *Mon Dieu!*” And she shivered, while a look of mingled hate and contempt crossed her face. Then, clasping her hands, she whispered, —

“ Oh, pity me, pity me, Philip!”

“ *Bien!*” he muttered. Then slowly, “ You hate this man. You loved me when you married him. And, Ednah, *carissima*, — I speak with assurance, for I have read your heart through all the folds by which you seek to disguise it, — you have not yet lost all tenderness for me.”

“ Wretch, begone! You have no right to say that.” But her face paled in spite of her imperious tone.

“ I have a right. Have you forgotten, Ednah?” And his voice lowered. “ You are not happy. Yes, I do pity you. And yet I cannot help approving your selection of a home, though I could wish you had another lord and master. But then I was a poor devil, and you women would marry Mephistopheles himself, if he could minister to you all de-

sired luxuries. Besides, I don't think even your delightful company could reconcile me to poverty."

"You well know, Levere, that it was not your poverty which separated us, but —"

"But what?"

"Your cold-blooded flirtations. You drove me desperate, and I — but your heart was not worth breaking."

"Is it worth *healing*?"

He asked this question in his most insinuating tone, and then continued, —

"You can never forget the wrong you did me. But on certain conditions, I shall generously pardon you."

"You are modest! What claims do you presume to make?"

"Only an occasional *entrée* to this paradise, whence your legal master is excluded."

"Never, while you demand it."

"As a favor, then, I beg it. You well know, Ednah, that at heart I am your slave."

"I have already one slave, and that is all I care to manage."

"Capricious woman! You will neither let me command nor obey. What position, pray, would you have me assume?"

"If you behave yourself as a true and gallant officer should, you shall be *mio amico*."

"Rather a distant assignment for an old lover; but if you are suited, I shall not complain. And now, *amica mia*, I must tear myself from your presence."

As she accompanied him down stairs, I made good my retreat, confounded by the strange scene I had witnessed. I could not deny that this unscrupulous man was gaining influence with Ednah. Both of them governed by impulse and reckless of consequences, what would the end be?

Hardened and worldly as I had become, as I pondered this question I was filled with solicitude and distress.

I did not think it best to acknowledge to Ednah that I had been a witness of the interview between her and Levere. But I resolved, henceforth, to give her as much of my company as she desired. And I think she felt my presence a relief whenever he was with her, whether at home, or in their walks and rides. Her manner now more decidedly discouraged all familiarity, and I began to hope that, after all, his boldness was receiving a wholesome check.

"Ah, Espy," said Ednah one day, "you know nothing of these dreadful conflicts." And with touching sadness she laid her cheek to mine.

I threw my arms round her neck, and told her I wished she could be happy, and then went on to say that I thought her old friend was making her more and more miserable. Before she could reply, a carriage rolled up the avenue. I lifted the curtains, and, looking out, exclaimed, —

"My father has returned."

Ednah gave a shriek of surprise, exclaiming, —

"The wretch, to disappoint me thus! And now I must turn hypocrite again, when he is a hundred times more detestable than ever." Then, controlling herself, she added ironically, "He will be all impatience to see me. Go down, Espy, for I will not meet him alone. He will delay announcing himself till he has made his toilet, and so I shall gain time to school my face."

She soon followed me, and in the course of half an hour I heard my father's step in the hall. Encountering a servant, he said, —

"Ask Mrs. Frazer where she will see me."

"She is waiting for you, sir, in the parlor."

He opened the door, and Ednah went towards him, suffering him to embrace her. I looked up, and we exchanged bows. And then I heard him say, —

"Will you not send Hope out of the room?"

"She is only practising."

He led her to the sofa, while she inquired, —

"Have you ordered dinner?"

"I dined on the boat."

"You have returned sooner than you expected."

"Love gave me wings."

"So you are not tired of that *rôle*."

"Such a time can never come. But I must try absence again, for you are more complying than usual."

Her head drooped still lower; then, with a gay laugh, she sprang up.

"Will you hear one of my new songs?"

"You may leave, Hope," said my father.

And the happy pair were alone together.

"*Ma belle Esperance*," — Ednah called me so in her wooing moods, — "I had engaged to ride with our hero to-morrow, but must devote myself to your father till Friday, when he will leave for New York. Just step round to his boarding-house, and give him this explanation."

I could not quite make up my mind to refuse her request; so I reluctantly delivered the note.

It so happened that on Friday I was engaged to spend the day with Adelaide Campbell. In the afternoon, when we had been talking over various matters, she asked if she might speak with me frankly on a certain subject; and of course I gave my assent.

"Think of me as a sister, and whatever I may say, I beg you not to consider me obtrusive."

Then she told me of the impression Ednah had made upon the community, and of the unpleasant rumors afloat in consequence of her intimacy with Levere, who was known to be a profligate.

"Is not your father disturbed by her course?"

"He has been absent a great deal; and besides, he sees nothing out of the way in her."

"Then so much the more important for you to act."

"There is nothing I can do."

She then spoke of Ednah's affection for me, imploring me to talk with her freely.

"I have alluded to the subject more than once, but it was not pleasant to Ednah, and I am too young to reprove her."

"It is not necessary to do it in the way of rebuke; besides, she considers you a companion, rather than a daughter."

I felt the force of her words, but shrank painfully from so disagreeable a step.

"Think of what is due to the memory of your mother, dear Hope, and check this scandal at once."

"But it is only indiscretion. And after all, for one of her temperament, Ednah is very guarded."

"That may be now, but she is travelling on a dangerous road."

"Suppose I have a talk with her, and it is of no avail."

"Then you must go to your father."

I shuddered, replying, "He must take care of his own dignity. I cannot enlighten him."

"I hope it would not come to that; but if it should, you cannot escape the responsibility."

“And if he should not believe it?”

“Then you could do nothing more but pray for her.”

Could I confess that I never prayed?

“Is your father at home now?”

“He went to New York this morning.”

“Then, excuse me, dear, but I cannot help the feeling that you ought not to be away from the house. And, if opportunity occurs, I entreat you not to delay opening the subject.”

With a very unwilling mind I put on my bonnet and shawl.

“God bless your efforts, dear Hope. You may not now realize the importance of your action, but you will some time. Good by, dear!”

CHAPTER VIII.

SLOWLY I trod the way back ; and finding Ednah out, I went into her parlor, resolving to attempt a conversation as soon as she returned. The curtains were down, as usual ; for she never admitted the garish light to her precincts.

Seating myself on an ottoman in one of the large embrasures, I began to consider what I should say. After a time, I heard steps along the hall, and presently the door opened, admitting Ednah, followed by Levere.

I felt myself in an awkward position, for I saw that, absorbed as they were, I might remain unnoticed in the dimness of the apartment. But not having risen at once, I hesitated to do so afterwards. Besides, as Ednah had particularly desired my company at their interviews, I could hardly regard myself an intruder.

Ednah threw off her hat and shawl, and sat down upon a couch.

“So I am in paradise once more, *ma belle*, and this time by your permission. But you owe me some indemnities for having so long excluded me, contrary to your express promise.”

“Ladies are privileged to break their promises.”

“*Très bien!* Then it clearly becomes us gentlemen to make the most of our opportunities.”

This he said while standing opposite her with folded arms, and then continued, —

"Now, will you assume a vindictive air, if I venture to take a seat beside you?"

"You dare not," replied Ednah, laughing, as she drew herself up.

"However that may be, I might as well venture first as last, for I should be sorry to disappoint you."

"You are impertinent," retorted she, with flashing eyes.

"It is one of my ways of winning, fair lady. And I little care what epithets you use, since they will only entitle me to fuller amends. But allow me."

And lifting a curtain behind her, a softened rose-light fell on her glowing features. There he stood, gazing down upon her with his basilisk eyes, while the rich color came and went in her face.

"Do you know, *ma chère amie*, what a feast it is to watch your varying countenance? This is one of the ways by which I have divined that interest in me—to give it no more specific name—which you have striven so hard to conceal."

"Mr. Levere," replied she, erecting herself, "your vanity and audacity are intolerable."

"And yet, with all your hauteur, you find it quite possible to tolerate them. Nay, more; in spite of your studied reserve,—by all those infinitesimal signs which I am well skilled in interpreting, I now affirm what I intimated when last here." And fixing his eyes on hers, he added, in a low but distinct voice, "You are at this moment as much in love with me, as in those old passionate days on the Rhine."

Springing from her seat, and imperiously stamping her foot, Ednah confronted him,—

"Insolent wretch! thus to insult a woman, especially one whom you once professed to adore. Weak as you deem me,

I am not so weak as to give you the smallest right to triumph over me. And whatever power you may have had, is gone forever. From this moment I scorn and defy you. Leave me, base man, and never cross this threshold again."

Base man, indeed! He well knew his game. During her vehement tirade, he stood smiling coolly, with his magnetic eyes fastened upon hers, which were literally blazing with wrath. That penetrating, assured gaze was continued till she trembled from head to foot.

Throwing herself upon the couch, she began to weep convulsively. Then he knelt beside her, and clasping her hand, said, in honeyed tones, —

"Pardon, sweet Ednah! I have wounded; now let me cure. You denounce my vanity. But it is enough to turn the head of a poor sinner like me, to know that he owns the heart of the fairest and proudest lady in the land, and that against the combined claims of heaven and earth. Can you not find in this some excuse for my temerity, and so grant absolution?"

"I will forgive you, Philip, if —"

"No *ifs*, pray, or we shall quarrel again. You must pardon me out and out."

"On condition of better conduct in future."

"I assent, for deeds are always better than words. And that love which you cannot deny, entitles me to some privileges."

Every moment the temptation had been growing stronger to leave my recess, and thus put an end to this unfitting scene. But I saw that Ednah was struggling hard against the sorcerer, and I could not but hope she would yet prevail. Striving to preserve her composure, she replied, in a low voice, —

"Whether it be true or not that I retain any interest in you, you certainly have no claim to the smallest expression of any such interest."

"And why not?"

"Because," said she, with indescribable bitterness, "I am a married woman."

"And therefore, in your wretchedness, entitled to some consolations. But I do not forget that you are Mrs. Frazer. It is only some little favors that I seek."

And the wretch dared to press a kiss on those wedded lips.

Watching the unfolding of this drama with terrible interest, I had sat almost like one paralyzed. But I could no longer be restrained. Springing from my seat, I impetuously exclaimed, —

"Lieutenant Levere, is this shameless conduct befitting a gentleman and a soldier?"

His face was instantly distorted by a scowl, while the blood mounted in torrents to Ednah's cheeks. But regaining her self-control in a moment, —

"You quite startled me at first, Esperance; but you know we have no concealments from you."

Then whispering a few words to her companion, of which I only caught enough to know that they were in French, he rose and walked away.

"Now, sit down, child, and say all you wish. I admit he is a naughty man; these officers always are, and they like to make us women naughty too. And the trouble is, there is no helping ourselves, as you will find out before long."

I had noticed that Levere stepped behind us. As Ednah finished speaking, my face was seized and held firmly by

both his hands, while the audacious villain stooped to kiss my unwilling mouth, saying coolly, —

“This, my little lady, is conduct exactly befitting a —”

Before he had completed his sentence, his movement was arrested by a heavy blow upon his cheek, inflicted by my wrathful hand. My temper was thoroughly roused. And as there was no magnetism for me in his glittering eyes, I was able to look him steadily in the face. So I relieved myself by pouring upon him such a torrent of indignant words, that he actually quailed, and with a whisper to Ednah, abruptly withdrew. The next minute I was in my room, pacing rapidly up and down, and venting in incoherent language my outraged feelings.

CHAPTER IX.

WHEN the angry storm had somewhat abated, I sat down, and leaning my head upon the table, began to ponder what I should do next. Suddenly the door opened, and Ednah's arms were round me.

"I could not rest while you were angry, dear Espy. But don't fret about the savage. These officers are regular wild beasts. They don't mean anything, however, and we have to tolerate them. Confess, now, it is not so very disagreeable, after all, to receive attentions from a handsome officer. That is my opinion, certes, and though he often vexes me, I always contrive some excuse for him."

"If you have no regard for me, Ednah," I said, when able to control myself sufficiently to speak, "I think a wife is bound to consider her own honor, and to resent such insults as they deserve."

"*Et tu, Brute?*" and she looked reproachfully. "But, no, child; it is girlish excitement that makes you rave."

"If you choose to frame excuses for *him*, at least you will not attempt to justify yourself as a married woman."

"I know I am dreadfully naughty. But be cool, and let me talk to you." And stroking my hair, and kissing my cheek, she continued, "My birdie's feathers are frightfully ruffled, but we will smooth them down. *Ma foi!* but one of these days you will be a real Juno. Now listen to me.

I was never made for an heroic character like you. Nor have I anything of the prude about me. And you must remember that I have lived in Paris, where such flirtations are necessary to respectability. To the pure, you know, all things are pure."

"That is a clear perversion, Ednah. We are not in Paris; and you have no right, by your indiscretions, to bring dishonor on our house."

Her eye flashed, but the next moment she was all tenderness.

"I will make you my *confidante*, Esperance."

"I have gathered sufficient knowledge of your acquaintance with Mr. Levere, from the two interviews in your parlor. For I was an unwilling witness of the one directly after my father's departure for the west."

"Then you know enough to understand our unhappy position," said she, winding her arms round me, and laying her head on my shoulder. "But, on my honor, with all his entreaties, I have not allowed him such a liberty before. And he only won it now by a manœuvre. I promise you he shall never do so again. But it is so hard to resist him. Dear Espy, I am sometimes so wretched, I am tempted to destroy myself. But you *will* be a good friend to me."

"I have always been your devoted friend; but I cannot blind myself to the wrong of your having any intercourse with such a man."

"It is only for a short time, and it would be too cruel entirely to separate us; for, Espy, we cannot help loving."

"But you can help *sinning*." I spoke plainly, for on all these points my instincts were yet true and strong.

"Do not be so harsh, dear. Love me and pity me;

but—there is the hall door. It is your father. O Espy, I wish I were dead.”

And kissing me, the misguided woman left the room. I was greatly distressed, being full of sympathy, as well as anxiety, for Ednah, and not knowing what I ought to do—what I *could* do. At the tea-table she was unusually gay, and exceedingly complaisant to my father. This appearance she kept up for a day or two. She treated me, also, with flattering kindness, though she carefully avoided the subject on which we differed.

One morning, as I was returning from a solitary stroll, Levere overtook me, and in his most courtly manner bade me good morning.

I replied by a formal bow.

“You are charitable enough, I am confident, Miss Frazer, to forgive my past offences, and generous enough to do me a favor. Will you hand this note to Mrs. Frazer?”

“Excuse me, sir.”

“But surely you will not refuse—”

I answered by walking rapidly away.

The next day, as I was taking my accustomed stroll on the river banks, I heard footsteps behind me. Pursuing my course among the thick shrubbery, the steps were in a moment at my side; and, looking up, I was annoyed to see the lieutenant, who had a flushed air, as though he had been drinking freely.

“*Bon jour, ma belle Esperance.*”

I made no reply, but quickened my movements.

“You are a wonderfully spirited lass,” said he, hastening after me; “but you only excite me to overcome that spirit.” And he suddenly threw his arms round me.

Almost beside myself with resentment,—for none feel such insults more keenly than a young girl,—I quickly broke from him.

“You are prudish, Miss Hope.”

“Prudish or not, you are a villain, as I shall not scruple to tell any one.”

“Miss Frazer—”

His keen eye flashed as he spoke, but before he could proceed farther, I caught the sound of wheels. Stepping quickly to a bend in the road, I saw good Dr. Belden's buggy approaching. As his eye fell on me, he stopped, saying,—

“Well, Hope, are you ready for a ride?”

“Quite, sir.”

“Then give me your hand, and jump in.”

Turning round, with a long gaze at my face,—

“You look a great deal better than you used to. And yet,—there's something to pay. Why, your eyes shine like fire-flies, and your cheeks are a *leetle* too much flushed for such a pale body. Have you been up to a race in the woods?”

“Perhaps I have. You used to recommend such things.”

“Well, well, it's all right, if you don't get too much out of breath. But you will never be an Anakim, dear. How long since you stopped letting down tucks?”

“I did not get into your buggy to be catechised. But if you are determined to measure me, I will save you the trouble by announcing myself just four feet ten and a quarter inches.”

“Ha, ha! I like your spunk. Well, ‘*multum in parvo*,’ you know. Besides, you are not the very smallest woman that ever was.”

Bent on concealing my vexation, I joined him in his playfulness. At length he made a pause; and when he spoke again, it was in a more serious tone.

“I may say it to you, Miss Hope, for you were always a wise little body. I would give all my old shoes,—and they are not a few,—if that jackanapes of an officer were only safe in Botany Bay.”

It was on my tongue's end to say *amen*, but I chopped off the word. Not for my right hand would I have had him know what I had borne from Levere. So I sat very silent and demure, while he continued, in an apologetic tone,—

“You see, dear, your father was too old and grave to venture on the hazardous experiment of appropriating a gay and beautiful young woman. These women, you know, are untamable things.”

“And what about these men?”

“Oh, they are full bad enough, I admit; and I advise you, as a friend,” said he, with a twinkle of his eye, “never to undertake the management of any of them.”

“No danger of that.”

“So the girls all say. Well, we shall see. But here we are, at your father's gates. Do you expect me to take you through that long avenue?”

“Not at all, sir.”

“That is lucky, because it will save you a disappointment. Whoa, Jerry. Do you presume on my dismounting to assist you?”

“You shall see.” And with a bound I stood on the pavement.

CHAPTER X.

WHEN I met Ednah at the tea-table, I saw in a moment that she was displeased. I went from the dining-room into the garden, where I sought to quiet my perturbed spirit. Ednah soon joined me, and, in a freezing tone, observed, —

“So you refused to deliver me a note.”

“I could not do otherwise.”

“You are a — .” With great effort mastering her excitement, she continued, “Something has come over you, for you are very unlike yourself. Your refusal cost me some miserable hours, for I had a special appointment with Levere. And as he failed to keep it, I supposed some accident must have befallen him.”

“I am sorry to disappoint you, but I think such appointments very wrong.”

“I did not ask your opinion,” answered she, sharply; “nor shall I change my course at your suggestion. If you choose to be unkind, we can do without you.”

“Levere is a scoundrel.”

“Take care how you speak!”

“And he is well known to be a profligate,” proceeded I, without heeding her words.

“That may be, so far as the past is concerned. Of course I am not fool enough to presume that one of his rare fascinations is of orthodoxly immaculate virtue, or that he has

escaped without some triumphs over our sex. But from this time I will answer for his truth and fidelity."

"I have only to add that his treatment of me is outrageous. To-day he has dared to repeat his insult, and in a grosser form."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that he overtook me on the hill, and repeated his insolence."

"But he could not have been in earnest!"

"Then it was most dastardly sport."

"The deceiver!" muttered she, while an angry flush dyed her cheeks. "If he does not explain this satisfactorily, dear Hope, and make an ample apology to us both, I have done with him."

"You had better break with him without conditions, Ednah, for there *can be* no explanation."

"That would be unjust. No, I must first see him. *Ma foi!* — that is his knock. Will you come to the parlor, if I send for you?"

"No, Ednah."

I retired early, but could not rest. Everything seemed to go wrong with me. And I rose the next morning with one of my dismal headaches.

"All is handsomely explained, child," said Ednah, as she came to my room after breakfast. "He says your prudery vexed him, and he wished to give you a lesson you would remember. Then he was displeased at your ill-natured refusal to do him a favor, and desired a little harmless revenge. But the moment he discovered that you were flattered by his demonstrations, he desisted. As for myself, I can forgive you for feeling the force of his attractions."

Whether her last remark was made in mockery or earnest, I could not tell; but my indignation rose beyond all bounds, and I exclaimed, —

“He is a base *liar*. And if you choose to continue your intimacy with such a wretch, I warn you that I will report you to my father.”

“Do it at your peril,” said she, lifting a menacing finger, as she left the room.

Overpowered by painful excitement, I threw myself on the bed, where I lay all day with a distressing headache, and a worse heartache. I had loved Ednah with a girl’s passionate affection, and now the chain that bound me to her was rudely sundered. I felt, too, that in my hot haste I had destroyed any influence I might have had with her. At length I sunk into an uneasy slumber. A gentle hand, placed on my head, awoke me.

“Nancy said I might come and nurse you,” said little Ada. “So I climbed up softly, and have been holding your headache.”

“You are a good child, but you will get tired.”

“No, I will never be tired of taking care of you. Shall I wet a cloth, and put it on your head?”

“If you can.”

“May I look in your drawer?”

“Certainly.”

And the little fairy found a handkerchief, and standing on tiptoe before my washstand, she carefully lifted the pitcher, and poured out some water into the bowl. Then wringing out the handkerchief, she tenderly laid it on my head.

“That is done nicely, Ada.”

“Does it make your *headic-ache* better?”

“Yes, dear.”

"Does it make you well enough for me to tell you just one question?"

"You can try."

"When I die, how will God get the things on to my shoulders?"

"What things?"

"The shining things they fly with."

"The wings?"

"Yes, the wings. How will he fasten them on?"

"I don't know, Ada."

"Do you think he will pin them on, or sew them, or tie them? I think it would be best to *sew* them."

"I don't think he will fasten them on at all."

"Then I should be afraid they would come off while they are flying."

"What put such a question into your head, child?"

"Why, I was thinking how God would get the wings on me when I die, so that I could fly to heaven without falling. Mamma will come down and get me, won't she?"

"Perhaps so," I replied. "But what makes you think so much about dying?"

"Because I can't help it. And when I'm asleep, I often see mamma coming for me. But I can't see her wings. Perhaps they are behind her back."

"You will drive me into the blues, if you keep on."

She opened wide her clear eyes, not understanding me, but presently went on, —

"When I die, I will fly round you like a bird, and take care of you all the time. Should you like me to?"

"I dare say I should; but I want to be quiet, so you had better go now."

"I will be so still."

"No, dear! I had rather be alone."

She looked very sorrowful; but stooping to kiss me, she slid from the bed; then walking slowly to the door, she opened it carefully, and, turning back, said, —

"Good by, my Espy."

"Good by, Ada."

And the sunshine vanished from my room.

As I recall those days, I remember that Ada's step seemed to grow lighter, week by week. And she begged more frequently to be read to from that holy book left her by our sainted mother, while her eyes sought mine with a tender, wistful expression. But little was the sympathy I gave her.

After she had gone, I tried to quiet my self-reproach for dismissing her, by reverting to the question which for a few days had pressed so heavily upon me. *What could I do?* There was no use in going to Miss Campbell, for she could not give me adequate counsel without knowing all the circumstances which hedged me in so closely. And these, every feeling forbade me to reveal. The longer I pondered, the darker seemed my way. And when, at length, I fell asleep, it was only to be pursued by the same pressing doubt.

The next morning, when I went down stairs, I found that my father had gone out of town. Listlessly I wandered about, not knowing what to do. At length, taking "Childe Harold," I threw myself under a linden in the front yard. At about eleven, I heard a carriage rolling up the avenue, and as it stopped, saw Mr. Levere descend. In a moment Ednah appeared, arrayed for a drive. As they passed me, her quick eye caught mine, and motioning to her companion to stop, she called out, —

"If Mr. Frazer should return before us, please say to him that we are passing the day at Pine Grove."

With a mocking smile they both bowed, and the carriage rolled away.

It seemed an interminable day, for I was oppressed beyond measure. I resolved that I would speak to my father of Ednah's conduct without further delay. My sense of duty was strengthened, I fear, by resentment.

I sat by a window where I could command the avenue. The gay young couple returned first, as I was sure they meant to do. As the lieutenant left, he gallantly kissed his hand to Ednah, calling out, —

"Au revoir."

Feeling unequal to the effort of going down to supper, I rang my bell, and ordered a cup of strong tea. I also desired to be informed when my father retired to the library, for I knew Ednah never devoted a whole evening to him. At about eight the summons came. With a palpitating heart I went down stairs, and passing through the long hall, knocked timidly at the library door. When I found myself alone in that forbidding presence, the dreadful scene of long ago flashed upon me; and I stood there like a culprit, my tongue cleaving to the roof of my mouth.

"What have you to say?" asked that stern voice.

"I thought I ought to tell — you ought to know — that there are unpleasant rumors concerning the intimacy of Lieutenant Levere with Mrs. Frazer."

A long silence. Then I continued, —

"This morning they went out alone in a carriage, to pass the day at Pine Grove."

Another pause.

“Have you anything more to report?”

“No, sir,” I replied, feeling at liberty to confine myself to generals.

“Then let me tell you that you are a shameless girl, as you always were. But your arts will avail you nothing. Last night Mrs. Frazer came to me in tears. She came to her husband for protection, and she shall have it. She told me how you had beguiled that gentleman into certain freedoms. In short, I understand you. They went to Pine Grove with my consent. Indeed, I urged it upon her when I found she thought of refusing on account of your reproaches. I told her, moreover, that she should no longer be compelled to endure your presence. So I have applied for your admission to Crawford Female Seminary. You deserve to be an outcast, but I will put you where you will be disciplined for your falsity and baseness. If they receive you at Crawford, you will remain there till you have completed the course, coming home, perhaps, once a year, in order that your disgrace may not be made public. One thing more ; you will keep your own room till you leave town. You may go now.”

Lingering one moment, I ventured to say, —

“Time will prove who has spoken the truth, and who disgraces your name. I am glad to go to school, and qualify myself for teaching, so that I shall not be obliged to tax for my support one who has always hated me.”

Smiling in mockery, he bowed and waved his hand. With a hot face and a fast-beating heart, I crossed the threshold, and reëntered my solitary room.

CHAPTER XI.

It was on a rainy afternoon that I arrived at Crawford. With a sense of utter forlornness, I took a coach from the Landing, and was carried to the Seminary. It was a four-storied brick building, with a gloomy, prison-like aspect, having no trees, or other signs of taste on the premises. The principal, Miss Carey, who soon made her appearance, was a woman of formal manners, but with a good countenance. She asked me a few questions, and then sent for Miss Belinda Lawson, my destined room-mate, to show me to my quarters. If anything could deepen my depression, it was the idea of no longer enjoying the luxury of solitude. In my distress, I ventured to ask Miss Carey if it were not possible for me to room alone.

“Certainly not,” she replied, looking surprised at my question.

So I mechanically followed Miss Lawson up one flight of stairs, and another, and another, into the fourth story, the servants coming after with my trunks. Our room was of moderate size, and had but one small closet, which contained a few shelves. Miss Lawson, who proved to be one of the excessively neat bodies, had invented a sort of clothes-press, by driving nails for our dresses into the wall of the chamber, and hanging a sheet over them as a curtain.

The first thing I did was to walk straight to the window,

where, with something like satisfaction, I caught the outline of my beloved Catskill Mountains, and also a distant gleam of the North River, in its silvery flow. These familiar objects would ordinarily have occasioned a homesick feeling, but I had no home. As I stood gazing, Miss Lawson inquired if she should show me where to put my things, having no opinion of such a useless expenditure of time. I turned drearily, and unlocking my trunk, took out my dresses, and hung them on the portion of nails assigned me. Then I laid my books on the closet shelves Miss Lawson pointed out for my use. I had brought no school books, but only some of my favorite authors. Miss Lawson picked up a volume to put in its place, and looking at the title, gravely remarked, —

“Miss Carey will not allow you to retain this.” Then glancing over several other books, she added, “We are not permitted such reading, Miss Frazer.”

I made no reply, for I could say nothing but to express my indignation, and that would do no good.

A gong was now sounded in the hall.

“That is to prepare for tea.”

“I do not wish any.”

“Miss Carey excuses no one except for sickness.”

In about five minutes the discordant call was again heard, and Miss Lawson went promptly down. Presently she returned.

“Miss Carey desires you to come down.”

I rose, and reluctantly followed my room-mate down one flight of stairs after another into the dining-hall, where I met a sufficient penalty for my slight offence. That large, waiting assembly had been kept standing on my account,

and now every eye was fixed on me. I was naturally timid, and as I made my way to my appointed place, my cheeks burned uncomfortably. After all were seated, Miss Carey said grace in a distinct voice, and then the clatter of dishes commenced. I declined to take anything, for I was too unhappy to eat. But I presume my refusal seemed like obstinacy. And I had good reason to know afterwards, that the prejudice I inconsiderately excited that first evening, lasted for months.

According to Ednah's suggestion, I had been well drilled in the accomplishments; but, as I was greatly behindhand in the fundamental branches, I was put into the lower classes. The whole routine of the school was exceedingly distasteful to me, although it was just the discipline I needed. My hours were strictly apportioned out, and I was scarcely ever alone. A few of the students were allowed to study in their own rooms; but most of us learned our lessons in the large hall, the care of the several tables being assigned to different monitors. No day-dreaming was possible here. If any one ventured to indulge in a wandering thought, it was known in a moment, and with an unpleasant jolt, the car was again swung upon the track. We were drilled like soldiers, and no foot could be off the line without disturbing the whole order.

I did not intend to break the rules, particularly as there was no use in resistance; but it took me a long time to attain the strict discipline of the school. Thus I received not a few private and public admonitions. My chum, on the other hand, was exceedingly scrupulous in her observance of every prescribed duty. There was a novelty in the manner in which she put herself through her daily routine, which

afforded me considerable amusement, though I do not think she had any idea I was watching her.

Belinda Lawson was kind, but with not the least tenderness about her. We had very little to say to each other, for she was always busy, and I had no inclination to talk. What she did say, however, was in the line of reproof or advice, which she inflicted upon me whenever she thought I needed it, but which, I fear, was mostly thrown away.

So time dragged on, till the vacation came, which, by a special arrangement of my father's, I was to spend at the same tiresome boarding-house. And now let me peep into my old journal, and steal some extracts from my crude records in those foolish young days.

November 6. I have just been out to the bookseller's, making an important purchase, namely, this same blank book, which I intend to fill with myself.

The girls went away this morning in fine spirits, having dear ones at home, who will meet them with open arms. Ministers are always saying that the ways of God are equal, but, in my opinion, they are very unequal. Indeed, everything seems to happen more by chance than design. And here comes up one of the old questions which I have pondered so often. Is there any other God than *chance*? On *any* supposition, I am almost equally oppressed. It is a dreary thing to have no God, — and yet this is as well for our necessities, as to have an unsympathizing and arbitrary one.

I see there are about half a dozen girls left besides myself, — truly a forlorn set of us in this great brick jail.

Well, Esperance, you are clearly a miserable young lady, without expectations of any kind whatsoever. An exile from

home, — your father and she who, by her relation, ought to have been your mother, — positively hostile; and having no one to whom you dare, or wish to unbosom yourself. Can you contradict this?

So far from it, I admit the whole. Before I had reached my teens, I was weary of life. Then came Ednah, with her voluptuous beauty and rare fascinations, and cast a bright halo over my gloomy path. She was my first friendship, — and oh, what a passionate one it was!

But that chapter is closed. A cold tombstone is erected over the grave of that dead and buried first friendship. Why may I not as well write the epitaph? Let me consider. Yes, I have an appropriate one.

“Alas! our young affections run to waste,
Or water but the desert; whence arise
But weeds of dark luxuriance, tares of haste,
Rank at the core, though tempting to the eyes;
Flowers whose wild odors breathe but agonies,
And trees whose gums are poison.”

Now let me wall up the grave, and wander there no more. For, try to be indifferent and satirical as I may, such memories eat into my heart.

November 7. How foolish it is to allow these insidious dreams to steal over me! Nay, Hope Frazer, the bitter-sweet of love is not for thee. In spite of Ednah's flatteries, I am too plain to win such a man as my fancy depicts. Besides, I am reserved and repellent. So, farewell to all such reveries.

After Tea. Those blue mountains mock me with their serenity. There, I have turned my back upon them, and

now I will jot down some lines which have been running in my head this dismal afternoon.

November 9. Morning. I had finished my verses last evening, and was deep in thought, when I heard a tap at my door. I opened it, and Miss Eleanor Cottrell, one of the young ladies who have remained, entered the room.

“Well, Miss Frazer, if you will not make any advances, I will. What’s the use of moping all the time? We may as well get up some excitement.”

“What will you do?”

“Anything that offers — make your acquaintance, to begin with. Any way, I am determined to analyze you.”

This was said with a mixture of bravado and condescension which I did not fancy, but I simply replied, —

“You are welcome to do so, if you can.”

“Very gracious, but I like your coolness under the circumstances.”

I was amused by her call, and sat pondering upon it, till suddenly I missed my verses. I was thoroughly vexed, but had no means of redress. After breakfast to-day, I found a letter on the table, containing my foolish rhymes, with the accompanying note: —

“Enclosed is my returned theft. Thanks to it, I know you now, and acknowledge a kindred spirit, but want to see you more positive. The poetry is tolerable for a mere school-girl, but you will do better. I believe we shall suit each other. I owe the world nothing but a grudge, yet I am determined to get something out of it. But no more now. Come to my room, No. 35, this evening.

ELEANOR.”

CHAPTER XII.

CONTINUATION OF MY JOURNAL.

I HAVE been reading my piece with some care, for I am not without pride. I think I will copy it; but I must have a title. Let me consider. I will call it what it actually is.

THE CRY OF MY HEART.

Sailing down the rapid stream of life,
Whose tidal currents, with deep perils rife,
Rush on and on, without one sheltering lee,
Bearing me deathward to eternity!

Dreary the night! deep thunders sullen roll
O'er frowning heaven from pole to angry pole;—
While through the gloom, fierce lightnings glaring dart,
Striking wild terror to my sinking heart.

Around me flaming billows roar and dash,
And my frail bark with ceaseless fury lash;
Thus riding on the waves and tempest-tost,
My doom is written — to be wrecked and lost!

But should this be, — would not the ocean bed
Give sweet repose unto my aching head?
Would not the melancholy, moaning surge,
Above my pillow, be most fitting dirge?

Oh, could I hope for *any* place of rest
 Where stilled would be the anguish of this breast,
 Glad would I welcome all the frowns of Fate,
 And calmly drink her cup of deadliest hate !

Yet not this hope can cheat me of the pain
 Which madness drives into my burning brain,
 When I look forward to that shoreless sea,
 On which a drifted soul-wreck I may be.

Oh, for a friendly hand my bark to guide
 O'er the dark billows of Time's rushing tide, —
 To land my spirit on some kinder shore,
 Where waves of sorrow will disturb no more !

I have read better poetry, that is certain. But considering this was spun out of the very fibres of my heart, it seems cruel to criticise it. I must, however, keep the veil drawn close about my private griefs.

November 10. "I am going to be frank, Hope Frazer," said Eleanor to-day. "I am an orphan, under the care of a detestable, straight-laced guardian. Not but that he is good enough in his way, but I abhor sanctimoniousness. His only son and I took it into our heads to fall in love with each other. Mr. Granger, for some reason, was dead set against this, and sent me here to be out of the way. But he can't help himself, for Orlando and I have our own way of correspondence. And after a time — that is, when my ladyship sees fit to be sufficiently persuaded — he will find himself completely outwitted. Don't look shocked. I believe in the supremacy of love over all other claims. So much for sentiment. And now I am bound to reveal my principles. I see that you are a natural doubter, but you cannot yet swing yourself clear of old notions. You have read

poetry and romance of the right sort, but you need argument also. I have some books safely concealed from all prying eyes, and you shall read them. They will take you up into a freer air."

This was the substance of her talk. But enough for to-night.

November 11. I have been reading Paine's "Age of Reason," one of Miss Cottrell's books, which now lies locked up in the bottom of my trunk. It is attractive in style, and specious in argument. I have not read it without many qualms of conscience, yet, in spite of them, I am now in the last chapter. My doubts before were occasional and floating. Shall I become a settled unbeliever? Oh, my mother!

* * * *

November 12. A singular love-letter! Eleanor came rushing to my room, with her cheeks in a burning glow, and putting it in my hands, said, triumphantly, "See how we cheat the old man! I can trust you so far as to say—"

"I beg you not to give me any troublesome confidences," said I, holding my hand before her mouth. "I think you are on a perilous road, and if I know too much, I may be tempted to warn your teachers."

"If you do, I will curse you; but I fear nothing. However, it may be wisest to keep my own counsel. But read that, and I will show you my answer."

And she vanished, leaving a part of Orlando's letter in my hands. It is a passionate epistle, yet not such a one as would suit me. It is not intellectual or high-toned enough.

November 13. Eleanor has just left her reply with me. Neither do I like *that*. It is not what a true woman's love-letters ought to be. How can she enjoy tantalizing him so?

And yet I feel as if I had it in me to be sufficiently tantalizing on occasion.

As to this intimacy with Eleanor, it is an awkward affair, and not exactly to my mind. I am not satisfied, either, with my underhanded manner of reading her books, but they interest me, and so I foolishly yield to her persuasions.

Evening. I have been taking a long, solitary walk, having declined Eleanor's company. I was too gloomy to bear anybody's presence. The mysteries of life press upon me painfully. Whence am I, and whither am I bound? I look up to the far-off sky, but no answer. I stretch my yearning glance over the misty river; I call to the shadowy forms on those distant shores; but not even an echo is returned. A thick, visible, tangible darkness shuts down close around me.

November 17. I wish I could feel the smallest interest in Mr. Gilbert's sermons. But he is dreadfully prosy. He might just as well string passages together from the "Common-School Reader." Strange that one believing as he does, cannot find more to say! But I doubt whether any Christian really believes all he professes. There must be a latent infidelity in the heart, or the life would be more fully moulded by the faith.

This is a dreary November's day. How the wind sweeps round these bleak prison walls! It makes me shiver, and yet I am in strange sympathy with it. Now it comes shrieking down the chimney as though it were an evil spirit in torment. And who knows but it is? There is occasionally a fierce spite in its voice, as if the imp were bent on mischief. Suppose it should tear down this great building with one mighty blast, and bury us all beneath its walls! *There*, would be an end of all my weariness and sorrow.

Yet would it? Would not these waves of troubled life wake up again on the eternal shores? Who can tell me that knows any better than I? The Bible? Ah, yes! But if the infidel be right, what is this Bible? The oracle in our own hearts may be as safely trusted. And that differs in every man; so I am again afloat. But do I really doubt the Bible, on which my mother rested all her hopes? I can hardly tell. In some moods, it seems to me like the everlasting rock; but in others, all is drear uncertainty.

November 18. After Dinner. I have just got possession of Dana's "Poems and Prose Writings;"—a precious waif to be cast on this desert shore. It is a shame I could not have had it all these holidays. Only to-day and to-morrow! Well, I must swallow it *whole*.

Evening. I have devoured the poetry, and am entranced, though most of it is in a strain that makes me dreadfully blue.

I am just going to begin with the prose. Trust my lamp is freshly filled, for I am determined not to close my eyes till I have seen the last page.

Two o'clock, Tuesday Morning. I must have been sitting here all of an hour, too much oppressed to move, or scarcely breathe. When I had finished "Paul Felton," horror congealed me. The next minute, I wanted to scream loud enough to waken every sleeper in Crawford. When this impulse was over, I burst into tears, and cried like a baby, as I am. I felt as if I couldn't, and *wouldn't* have it end so. But at last I fell into an ominous silence, during which the room seemed full of evil spirits, ready to strangle me if I made the smallest movement. Finally, with a desperate effort, I seized my pen, and the spell is broken. And now I must lay my aching head on the pillow.

Eleven o'clock, A. M. But I could not sleep. My light waned away and died. And then "Abel," with sunburnt hair, leprous skin, glaring eyes, and long yellow teeth, began to dance madly round me, brandishing aloft a rusty knife. It was so vivid, so frightful an image, that I was glad to cover up my head in the bed-clothes. And there I lay, shuddering, till the flush of morning dispelled the hideous phantom.

But I can't get that harrowing story out of my head. It would be a sort of grim relief if I could avenge myself in some way on the narrator. But, with all that is horrible in the tale, — and in that element Mr. Dana perfectly riots, — there is yet something marvellously fascinating about Paul. What touches of exquisite beauty and delicacy soften the harsh outlines of his portrait! What strength and stern truthfulness give it character! And what tender, protecting, and reverent affection weaves a bright halo around it!

Ah! there is something potent beyond all other charms in this capacity for intense and concentrated affection! But I am not fit to discuss such a subject, certainly not now, with my nerves all on fire.

Afternoon. The Philistines be upon me. And the Actual is again seizing me with its iron grasp.

Belinda Lawson has returned, and is at this moment systematically emptying her trunk. I feel a strong temptation to scatter her neatly-folded clothes all over the room! What dire astonishment would take hold upon her! I wonder if she would be very much vexed. I have a good mind to make the experiment. She is leaving the room, and now is my chance. * * * *

Poor Belinda has no sooner closed the door, than, with irresistibly itching fingers, I fly about, and, dispersing her

things pell-mell, open the window. As I sit writing gravely as before, she returns. I bend my head low, but can catch her look of amazement. A strong current of wind is setting in at the open window, giving her scattered garments a fluttering motion. She evidently suspects it has been tricky in her absence. She gazes about in a bewildered fashion, occasionally eying me askance, but my undisturbed gravity nips her suspicion in the bud.

“Miss Frazer, do you wish to have that window open?”

“Oh, no, Miss Lawson, not in the least, if it incommodes you.” All these words, uttered most blandly, and with a good-natured closing of the window.

Then, looking about, I jump from my chair and assist her to pick up, refold, and lay on the bed her dishevelled wardrobe.

“Thank you, Miss Frazer.”

This was said so cordially, that I was instantly visited with compunction, and should have confessed my sin, had I not opportunely recollected that she knows nothing about me, and would conclude that I am a much more vicious character than I admit myself to be. And the idea of explaining my sudden freak to her satisfaction, or comprehension, even, seemed preposterous. Wherefore I forbore, and have the gratification of standing as high in her esteem as ever, though with some little drawback in the consciousness of having practised an imposition on the honest soul.

CHAPTER XIII.

TRAVELLING in a treadmill! How tiresome it was, I never conjectured until I had the experience. Now, I should not be surprised to see any beast, thus toiling on without a goal in view, stop short out of sheer desperation, and absolutely refuse to take another step. But *I* did no such thing; for I knew that after my appointed number of rounds, I should be set upon another road—the mistress of my own destiny. So I toiled on, learning, reciting, reviewing, day after day, week after week, month after month.

As to my intimate friend, Eleanor Cottrell, who told me all her secrets, but to whom I told none, she was not without talent. But she had no fondness for study, and would have been a hinderance, had I not plainly told her to let me alone in term time. In our occasional crossings during the business-hours of school, she gave me to understand by her significant winkings and other freemasonries, that her love matters were going on prosperously.

One memorable day, while I was reciting a lesson in algebra, I was summoned to Miss Carey. Her serious, tender look smote upon my heart, but I could ask no question.

“I have sad news for you, my dear. Your little sister —”

“Not dead?” I almost shrieked.

“No, my dear, but she is very sick, and your father has sent for you.”

As I made no reply, she put her hand softly on my head ; —
“ Lift up your heart to God, and he will help you.”

Alas ! I was, perhaps, about to lose my sweet Ada, and I had no God to comfort me. I felt stunned, and stood without asking a question.

“ Your father’s man, John Riley, as he calls himself, has come for you, and will be here again with the stage in half an hour. You will put up what is necessary as soon as possible, and be ready to go with him.”

I had thought myself indifferent to everybody, but the pangs I endured on my way to my room proved how fondly I loved my sister.

Ill tidings travel on wings. Miss Lawson had evidently heard mine, for, as I entered the room, she came towards me, saying, —

“ I will put up your things, dear Hope. Just sit down and rest yourself.”

I obeyed, and mechanically watched her. She seemed to know exactly what I might want, and scarcely asking a question, she had everything in readiness by the time I was summoned.

“ Tell me all, John,” said I, when we were on our way.

“ Well, Miss Hope, there ain’t much to tell. Little Miss Ada has seemed all along growing more and more of an angel. She took your absence hard, and it’s my private opinion that she’s been kind o’ pining ever since. When I’ve been to work, she’d come and talk with me, and such wise things as she’d say, was enough to make me scared. I telled Nancy we should sartin be hearing the death-tick.

“ Well, nobody knows what ails her. She’s jest growed whiter and thimer. And lately she’s talked about you all

the time, and begged to have you come home. Your pa didn't seem to favor it, but Dr. Belden, he set in, and got his consent."

We were up to this time alone, but as we now began to take in passengers, our talk ended. I had no want of bitter food for thought during that long, painful journey. At length we reached Fairmount, the town opposite Clydeville, where John took my father's horse and sleigh, which he had left at the hotel, and drove me across the frozen river. He called for Dr. Belden, who got into the sleigh directly, and we soon entered our avenue. The naked arms of the trees were hung with glittering pendants, making a gorgeous pathway.

"What mockery!" was on my lips, but I did not say it. The doctor must have surmised that I felt like a stranger, for when we stopped before the door, he led me into a little ante-room, saying, "Take off your things, and wait here till I return." He soon came back, trying to look cheerful, but with telltale tears in his eyes. I softly followed him up stairs into Ada's room.

How her wan face brightened! I knelt down by the bed, and laying my face to hers, my pent-up sorrow broke forth in a torrent.

"Don't cry, darling Espy — I'm going to mamma."

"Control yourself for her sake," whispered the doctor. So I put an iron curb upon my sorrow, and wiping away my tears, told the dear child I had come to take care of her. And as I said this, the memory of *her* tender nursing, and of my selfishly sending her from my room, smote me to the heart. But I choked down all these recollections, and determined that she should never have another moment's pain on my account.

The sick room was of course no place for my father, except for an occasional call; and Ednah, being out of health, left her own room but little. Raty and Joy were kept by their governess in a distant part of the house, so that, under Nancy's superintending care, it was my privilege alone to be with the gentle sufferer by day and night. The record of that sacred, tender season is written on my heart. I sang her favorite hymns, and read to her from her own Bible. And when she begged me to pray with her, — telling her I could do it better out of the Prayer Book, — I would kneel down, and holding her little hand in mine, would repeat fervently those immortal prayers of the church, which for centuries have comforted and strengthened so many hearts. We often talked together of God and heaven, or, rather, she talked with me, and I made answers as I best could.

One day she asked me to read something about heaven. Turning to the seventh chapter of Revelation, I complied. As I finished, she repeated after me, "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes," and then lay a long time silent. At last she turned towards me with an expression I shall never forget; —

"I was thinking of you, darling Espy, and how glad you will be to get to heaven. The dear Lord won't ever let you cry any more."

How I was able to restrain my feelings I know not, but I did, quietly asking her if she would not pray that I might go there. So she folded her waxen hands, and prayed for her poor, unworthy sister, whose heart fervently joined in those childish petitions. But what had become of my doubts? I know not. In that hallowed sphere they could not stay. The presence of the saintly child was like that of an angel.

After this scene, she failed rapidly. During the evening of that same day, she said to me earnestly, "I want to see them all." The family was summoned, and one by one Ada bade them good by. From this time she took no notice of anything about her. Her large blue eyes were fixed upon the ceiling with an earnest gaze, as if she saw something hidden from our view.

Suddenly an expression of angelic rapture irradiated her pale face, while her lips parted; —

"I see her, I see mamma. She stretches out her arms to me. And beautiful children are all around her."

The child lifted up her hands as if to embrace that mother. The next moment, and without a shudder, her little feet entered the cold river.

Oh, who can tell

What words of love were whispered to her heart,
 Or what pure rays, from out the rainbow throne,
 Streamed through the wide-flung crystal gates of heaven,
 Illumining the depths of that dark stream?
 Bright shone her "silver thread," as on she moved,
 E'en to our tear-dimmed eyes. But soon, alas!
 The blazing radiance, blinding mortal sense,
 Like a bright veil, enwrapped her from our sight.

From the conservatory I gathered white and fragrant flowers, and strewed them around her, as she lay in her little rose-wood coffin. The sweet hands, that had so short a time before been clasped in prayer for me, I reverently kissed, and then folded them across her silent bosom. I wonder my heart did not break as I did all this, but I went about like one in a dream. Over the whole household brooded the hush of Death, and all were humbled, as well as

mute in his presence. It was no mock solemnity that sat on my father's face, and the tears which stood unshed in Ednah's eyes, as well as those which rolled down the poor children's cheeks, were genuine tears. And no wonder. The sweet bird, that had enchanted every one by its beauty and its song, had broken from its cage, and soared forever out of our sight.

The day after the funeral saw me on my melancholy return to Crawford. The parting from my father and Ednah was, perhaps, somewhat less formal than our meeting had been; for it is impossible, even for the most obdurate, to resist the subduing influence of affliction. Yet I left with an added weight of sorrow on my heart. In losing Ada, I had lost the only one who loved me. She had drifted out into the darkness, and I should never see her more. But was there no unseen land where are gathered the loved and lost? What, then, was it she beheld in those last solemn moments? This question pressed upon me continually. There could be no superstition about such a child. Was heaven actually opened to her vision? But if there was a reality in all this, what would become of me?

CHAPTER XIV.

WHEN we were about half way between Clydeville and Crawford, we took in a gentleman who at once attracted my attention. He was apparently about fifty, of medium height, stout-built, and with a profusion of short brown hair. His large, honest mouth was compressed, denoting the energetic working of his mind, while his gray eyes told of fire as well as kindness. His abrupt movements bespoke decision, and his quick glances round upon his fellow-travellers were indicative of a benevolent interest. He immediately commenced a conversation on religious subjects with one of the passengers, with whom he seemed acquainted. But while talking with him, his eye frequently rested on me, as if noting my mourning attire. At length he requested some one to change seats with him — a movement which brought him to my side. Bending towards me, he said in a low voice, —

“So the Lord has been laying his hand upon you, my young friend.”

No reply.

“Do not be offended at my frankness, Miss. We are all brothers and sisters, and I speak only from my interest. God, it seems, has removed some beloved one from you. Are you submissive?”

“No, sir,” I answered, shortly.

“Ah! I am truly sorry;” and I saw that he *was* so. “Your peace then is not made with God.”

"No, sir."

"But have you no penitence for your obduracy?"

"No, sir."

"God have mercy upon you!" he exclaimed with fervor.

Then after a pause, "Where are you going?"

"To Crawford."

"To the Female Seminary?"

"Yes, sir."

"Have you heard what a glorious work is going on in that town?"

"No, sir."

"The Spirit of the Lord is there, and may your proud will be subdued! It is a fearful contest in which you are engaged."

He talked with me very earnestly, setting clearly before me my great wickedness, the righteous claims of a holy God, and the dreadful consequences of my persistency. I was much agitated, but my heart rose in opposition to the infinite Being whose cause he advocated. When about leaving the coach after our arrival in Crawford, he warmly grasped my hand.

"I shall see you again, and in the mean time you will have my prayers."

We left him and hastened on. Grimly rose the walls of the old building before my eyes. A flood of thoughts rushed over me. Alas! what should I do with those tender memories of my departed darling, which gushed warm into my heart? I could not have them subjected to the cold scrutiny of my companions; I would not have them even guessed at from my quivering lip, or my heavy, swollen eyelids. So, with a stern hand, I crowded them down into

the burying places of memory, drawing the grave curtains close about them. Then I put on that immobile face to which I was accustomed, and without even dropping my veil, I walked firmly up the broad steps, prepared to encounter scores of curious eyes.

I was mistaken. A great change had passed over the school. A strange hush had fallen upon the stirring, busy air. On every face sat an unwonted solemnity, while many a hand, formerly indifferent, was extended in tender sympathy and welcome. And my room-mate, the self-possessed Belinda Lawson, was greatly moved in meeting me.

“I am so glad, dear Hope, that you have come back at this time!”

I made no reply to this, or any similar remark, but not a token of the wonderful change escaped me. I could hardly believe that I was really in Crawford Seminary. The ordinary stringent business pressure which so distinguished it, was relaxed, and the whole school was broken up into little groups, engaged in earnest talk.

Meeting Eleanor Cottrell the next day, I inquired what all these changes meant.

“They mean that we are cast among a set of fools. Such a ridiculous fuss! It is nothing but *meeting, meeting*, all the time. Mr. Gilbert has had a wonderful hurricane in his soul, and there is a corresponding increase of violence in his manner. Then a famous gun, Dr. Kendrick, has been here, helping him to get up a gale, and is to return again, when they are to have protracted meetings for the preaching of protracted nonsense, which we shall all be expected, alias, required, to take in large doses. It is *bosh*, and of the worst sort. Take care that you escape the contagion.”

I was silent, for while conscious of inward opposition, I had no heart, certainly while the loss of Ada was fresh in memory, to make light of sacred things. The next day the meetings commenced. Partly out of curiosity, and partly from some indefinable impulse, I attended the first service. What was my surprise to discover in the pulpit my faithful fellow-passenger! Turning to Belinda, I whispered, —

“Who is he?”

“Dr. Kendrick. Hush! he is speaking.”

A breathless silence reigned over the assembly as he announced his text, “The carnal mind is enmity against God.” Whoever might have been an indifferent hearer during that powerful discourse, *I* certainly was not. Indeed, I felt almost assured that the preacher had singled me out, that he might concentrate the whole weight of his terrible charges on my devoted head. Tearing asunder the flimsy veil I had flung over my heart, he pierced the subtlest disguise, ruthlessly scrutinizing every thought and feeling, and analyzing and condemning every motive, till, by a strain of resistless logic, he had proved me the very vilest of God’s creatures. As I sat there, trembling under the consciousness of God’s wrath, he held me over the pit till the flames of hell seemed devouring me. I wonder that I was able to keep from shrieking aloud in my agony.

In that hour began a terrible conflict between me, a miserable worm of the dust, and my offended Maker and Judge. Day after day found me in my seat at church, and I was even persuaded to attend the inquiry meeting; — and still the conflict went on. It was at a time when the churches had but little experience as to the final results of what were called *new measures*, and extreme devices were resorted to, for

the purpose of arresting the attention and impressing the heart.

So intent were my companions on my conversion, that on one occasion I was literally dragged to the anxious seat, where I was publicly prayed for, almost by name.

My mind was in a state of unnatural excitement, and seemed doomed to grapple with every form of difficulty. Many an hour did the zealous Dr. Kendrick spend in laboring with me. At one time, after a long struggle with the doctrine of election, when he told me that my heart was full of rank rebellion, and that I was drawing down on myself the severest judgments of heaven, I exclaimed in anguish,—

“What *shall* I do?”

“Submit yourself wholly to God. Be entirely willing that he should do with you exactly what will most promote his own glory, even if that should be your destruction.”

“I cannot, I *never* can.”

“But God, in his sovereign power, can make you willing.”

“Not without crushing my mind and heart, and making me a mere machine.”

He pressed the point till I grew excited, and angrily replied,—

“And what would be gained by persuading me to be willing to be lost? Nothing but an indifference to salvation, which would render me insensible to your most powerful pleas.”

“But God—.”

I was in torture, and quickly interrupted him: “There’s no use, Dr. Kendrick, in arguing the matter. I am *not* willing to go to hell; and I should not be, if all the angels in heaven were to get down on their knees, and entreat my

consent. And if God requires such a willingness, as a condition of helping me, he is not a God of love, but of malevolence. You look shocked, but I may as well speak out what I think." And I burst into tears, while, with a deep sigh, he withdrew.

At my request, Miss Lawson left me alone that night. Through its long hours I walked back and forth, hopelessly battling with the mysteries which hemmed me in on every hand. Struggling in the strong coils of the Necessitarian scheme, I reasoned with myself: If God has so made us that we are compelled to choose according to the strongest motive, — since he himself has ordered all the circumstances which precede and induce every action, I could not have chosen otherwise than as I have, and as it was from all eternity ordained that I should choose. And this being so, how can I be chargeable with guilt? In this reasoning I fortified myself by recalling remarks I had read on the same subject in the notes to Shelley's "Queen Mab," — arguing that God is the author of evil as well as of good. But here my awakened conscience protested, sharply accusing me of innumerable and aggravated sins.

At this point I was plunged into the most painful and profound of all mysteries — the origin of evil. In answer to a question on this subject, Dr. Kendrick had told me that God ordained the existence of sin, because he foresaw that it would conduce to the greatest good of the universe. But if sin, I reasoned, is promotive of the highest good, then its commission is not only justifiable, but desirable, and sinners do more to further the interests of God's kingdom, than do the angels in heaven. In this view it is not strange that Dr. Kendrick should urge upon me a willingness to be lost.

If, however, my sins have been more instrumental in manifesting God's glory than my holiness could have been, I surely am undeserving of eternal punishment. I have a right to rebel at God's commands. I cannot love him, and, not loving, I will not submit to him. Let him destroy me, then, if he chooses!

Terrified by my own blasphemy, and almost expecting an immediate answer to my dreadful imprecation, I threw myself on the floor and groaned aloud. As soon as it was day, I went over to Mr. Gilbert's, and asked for Dr. Kendrick. He had not risen, but, being told that I had called, sent word that he would come down directly. When he entered the room, I rose, but was scarcely able to stand.

"Sit down, poor child, sit down," said he, placing me in a chair, and taking a seat beside me. "You look sick. I fear you did not sleep last night."

"I can neither sleep nor eat," I impetuously exclaimed. "And I may as well speak out—I *hate* God."

"Ah, poor child, I know you do. 'The carnal mind is enmity against God.' But sovereign grace can change that heart."

"It will do nothing for *me*. I am given over to a reprobate mind. These dreadful struggles are worse than death, and I gain nothing by them. What is the use of striving longer? My doom is sealed." And overcome by exhaustion, I wept passionate tears.

"I believe God has designs of mercy towards you, Miss Frazer. He has put it into the hearts of many to plead for you. There are two little meetings for prayer every day on your account."

This information greatly affected me; and when the good

Doctor said, "Let us pray," I readily knelt by his side. What earnest petitions were those! Spreading out my rebellion before the Lord, he cried out, "'Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?' But is this maiden, then, as she affirmeth, a vessel of wrath fitted to destruction? Hast thou not purposes of infinite mercy, even towards her, O our Father?"

In the most fervent tones, he pleaded that I might, then and there, cease from the unequal contest, and submit myself, without reserve, to Him who loved me and died to redeem me. As he prayed, my obdurate heart was softened. I began to feel that, in spite of all my reasoning, God was infinitely holy and just in all his requirements, and that I stood before him without a single excuse for my innumerable transgressions. Acknowledging his perfect right to unconditional submission, I resolved that I would no longer resist his will, and that, henceforth, whether happy or miserable, I would live to his glory.

When we rose from our knees, the eyes Dr. Kendrick turned on me were moistened with tears.

"Ah, my dear child," he said, laying his hand upon my head, "I see it in your countenance; you have submitted."

When I replied, "I hope I have, sir," his face beamed with joy. I listened reverently to his words of counsel, and then left the house. As I walked back, it seemed to me that the morning sunlight wore an air of peculiar solemnity. My emotions were profound, though not joyful. Yet I was conscious of great relief, for I had ceased striving with my Maker. Reëntering my room, I wrote down my determina-

tion to lead a new life, and in the strength of this purpose, experienced a satisfaction I had never known before. This must have been expressed in my face, for many were the congratulations I received. Eleanor Cottrell, however, passed me in silence, eying me with a half-curious, half-disdainful glance. But this gave me no disturbance. I had made a resolve, to fulfil which, would tax every energy of my being, and I had no time for sensitiveness to the comments of others. Duty, henceforth, was to be my mainspring—the alpha and omega of my life. And the more disagreeable and the harder I found it, the better, I thought, for self-mortification.

The first thing I undertook was a plain talk with Eleanor. She indignantly refused to hear me, exclaiming,—

“I did hope better things of you, Hope Frazer; but you have proved yourself a *sham*. From this time, I forswear your friendship. If you recant, well and good; but till then, farewell; for come what may, I won't have you whining and crying over me.”

The time had now come for my faithful friend, Dr. Kendrick, to leave town. Previously to this, however, he had a long, parting conversation with me.

“I am sorry, Miss Frazer, that you derive no more satisfaction from your religious duties. But your case is not an uncommon one. We must do right, and leave the rest to God.”

“But I sometimes find my devotions exceedingly burdensome.”

“I know all about it. But never allow yourself, on this account, to relax in them. Ask God's forgiveness for your remissness and indifference; and, at all events, persevere in

every duty, waiting the Lord's time for his promised blessing." Then grasping my hand, he added, "We may never meet again in this life, but I shall expect to find you on Mount Zion. Farewell, my dear young friend, and may God bless you."

As I watched his retreating figure, I fancied that I felt something as Elisha did, when he saw Elijah borne up by a whirlwind into heaven. And I could not restrain the fervent exclamation, "My father, my father!"

The old business aspect of the school had now been resumed, yet a striking change continued to be observable. Nor did the manifest influence of the revival cease, while I continued a member of the Seminary.

As the days and weeks glided away, I met with many discouragements, and found frequent occasion to lash myself for neglected duties, and for wrong feelings and actions. It seemed to me that I wrote out full lists of specific resolutions, only to break them. But, disheartened as I often was, the purpose I had formed, in that solemn interview with Dr. Kendrick, remained good. In looking forward to the long summer vacation which I was to spend under my father's roof, I determined strenuously to discharge all my obligations, and, at whatever cost, to make my temporary residence at home useful to every member of the family. How entirely did I blind myself to the secret self-complacency by which I was unconsciously influenced!

CHAPTER XV.

As I entered the familiar hall door, saddening memories of my lost Ada were mingled with the satisfaction I felt in the course of conduct on which I had determined. To my surprise, — for home tidings had rarely been communicated, I found a new and vastly important addition to our family circle. It was a little pet, by the name of Ednah, an infant of rare beauty, the miniature of her mother. Never had I seen my father display such doting fondness as that which he now exhibited towards both mother and child. His worship of Ednah was marvellously increased by the new link formed between them.

As to Ednah herself, she wielded her despotic sceptre with even more apparent recklessness than formerly, as if conscious that she held it with a firmer grasp. From the little I saw of them, I felt assured that she was as far from reciprocating his affection as ever. But the fair child! — there could be no doubt it was the very apple of her eye. And as she and my father were so fully and consciously in harmony on this point, there was a semblance of greater union than formerly.

Little was the notice that I received from them, or from any member of the household, except Nancy. Yet I firmly adhered to my purpose, and under a sense of my responsibilities, I looked about to see what family reforms I should undertake.

Ednah always had an eye to the *tout ensemble*; but, beyond that, she gave herself little concern about housekeeping. Consequently, there was great waste in the whole domestic department. Here, then, was the Rubicon which I must not hesitate to cross. Vigorously bent upon a revolution, I sallied into the kitchen, and dealt about my rebukes for extravagance and mismanagement. This I continued for a few days, receiving, as the reward of my well doing, impertinence without stint. Finding that I effected nothing by my zealous interference, and knowing that complaint was useless, I felt myself at length compelled to relinquish my efforts in this department.

After much consideration, I concluded that my next invasion must be of the nursery. Raty was a rude, blustering boy, of ordinary appearance, and altogether behindhand in his studies. Neither head nor heart had been properly cultivated, and, greatly to the annoyance of my father, he was addicted to low company. Joy was very pretty, but entirely untrained. Miss Jenkins, their governess, was a well-meaning, but inefficient body, entirely wanting in discrimination and energy, and with but little faculty of interesting children. But she suited Ednah, and so she remained. Perhaps she suited her better for her want of acuteness.

To Miss Jenkins I went, complaining of the children's rudeness and ignorance, and begging she would require more of them in their studies. She took my interference in good part, but said she had tried her best, and wished I would make some effort with them, if I felt so disposed. Encouraged by her reception, I gladly assented, and told her that I would assume her office for one day, as an experiment.

Without having entered into the children's amusements, or

taken any pains to remove their long indifference, if not dislike to me, I went into the school-room. With great plainness of speech, I remonstrated with them on their short-comings, telling them that, as I had determined to take them in hand, I should expect very different conduct. Raty indignantly rebelled, saying he wouldn't recite to me; that I was a great, old, homely girl, and had no right to order him; while Joy opened her eyes in astonishment, but prudently waited to see what was coming next.

Convinced that I was in the path of duty, and, though a New Yorker, having some Yankee grit about me, I looked Raty full in the face, and told him if he did not get his lesson quickly, I should shut him up in the closet. Somewhat abashed, and presuming, doubtless, from my assured manner, that the authority I so valiantly displayed had been properly delegated, he took up his book, and with a cloud on his face, sat down to his task. Joy also obeyed, and I began to congratulate myself on my triumphs.

In a short time, however, symptoms of insurrection appeared. Raty began to hunt flies, and deposit them in a paper fly-box, while Joy laid her face on the seat, and lazily watched him. I admonished, but in vain. So, not daring to annul the threatened penalty, I left my throne, and, taking hold of Raty, attempted to enforce it. But not quite successfully, as it proved. Though my brother's charge of my being "*great*" was entirely unfounded, yet I was not wanting in physical power. But till I coped with it, I had no suspicion of the strength of an untamed boy.

I had by this time disproved another of his charges, for I found I was not so "*old*" as he or I had fancied. Indeed, I might with good reason have sympathized in David Copper-

field's disagreeable sensation of extreme youth, in the presence of the knowing waiter.

In the mean time our contest increased in vigor, until Raty, finding I would not relinquish my hold, doubled his fist, and dealt strokes to the right and left, at the same time setting up the most doleful shrieks, in which Joy accompanied him. The loud noise, bringing not only Miss Jenkins, but some of the servants, to the rescue, I was forced to surrender.

"I dunno what's got into Miss Hope," said the cook, with a very red face. "It's my 'pinion she oughter be put into a strait jacket."

The indignant victor continued to scream at the top of his voice, while Miss Jenkins stood by with a woe-begone countenance, striving to pacify him. Leaving the scene of my inglorious defeat, I retreated to my room, where I gave free vent to my disappointment and vexation. With other zealous reformers, in the heat of failure, I pronounced this a most ungrateful world, on which it was worse than useless to expend one's benevolent efforts.

The days of my self-inflicted martyrdom were now accomplished, for that same evening the following note was put into my hands:—

"For some days I have known of your offensive conduct, and have kept silence. But your unsisterly treatment of Horatio renders it necessary for me to interpose. During the remainder of your stay, I forbid the smallest interference on your part with the children, or the servants. At the first violation, you will leave the house.

"HORATIO FRAZER."

Thus summarily ended my virtuous schemes of reform. Disgusted and indignant, I was almost ready to resolve that I would never make another effort to do good. But, while out of humor with the world at large, and with my father's family in particular, I could not escape some latent consciousness of my own stupidity, and was unable entirely to silence a mocking whisper in my ears, "You have got just what you deserved."

Adelaide Campbell was out of town, and I kept carefully away from Dr. Belden, to avoid his catechising. The only company I sought was that of the quiet dead. It is true that deep shadows still hung about the grave; yet, when lingering near the dust of my mother and sweet Ada, blessed memories fell like balm on my perturbed spirit. It seemed as if it would be very pleasant to lie beside them, and to have the soft sunshine sleep on my resting-place, and the green grass wave above my head.

At the commencement of the next term, I returned to Crawford, carrying with me no small amount of well-merited chagrin, which, though lost upon me for the time, was not, I trust, wholly without benefit in the end. During this—the last year of my school-course—I devoted myself more assiduously than ever to my studies, and earnestly endeavored, though still in a legal way, to perform all my religious duties.

The only event of any importance which occurred was the elopement of Eleanor Cottrell with Orlando Granger. They went to the South, and as man and wife, sought her guardian's forgiveness. It was rumored that they were repulsed, and forbidden his presence, but I heard no further

particulars. Poor misguided Eleanor! She possessed some fine traits; but, destitute of principle, and even of womanly propriety, it could only be expected that she should become a wreck.

The closing day of my academical career arrived, bringing with it, besides my diploma, sufficiently high testimonials to my attainments. But my health had suffered from protracted application and the neglect of exercise, and my spirits were depressed from constant failures in duty. It was therefore in no promising mood that I bade farewell to Crawford, and went forth alone to seek my fortune in a world whose chill had already reached my heart.

CHAPTER XVI.

MISS CAREY had procured me a situation as assistant in an academy at Muscoda, a town in Vermont, lying east of the Green Mountains. Passing Clydeville without even a call, I proceeded on my solitary journey, taking the canal from Albany to Whitehall, and completing the distance by the stage-coach.

In my desolate mood, I hardly troubled myself to look at the beautiful country through which I was passing, but sat absorbed in the past, and wondering whether, with all the knowledge I might have acquired, I was really any better prepared for life, than when I was first sent out from under my father's roof. But the Green Mountains, suddenly rising in their glorious beauty, aroused me from my reverie. They recalled the friends of my childhood — my beloved Catskills — the only friends I could still claim.

As I first caught sight of these mountains, stretching along the horizon in wavy outline, and seeming almost to float in the purple haze that hung over them, they looked fair as the hills of Beulah. It was a toilsome ascent up their steep sides; but I was never weary of gazing at the magnificent trees which crowned their slopes, or of watching the silvery-footed streamlets, as they tripped down the precipitous pathway, singing their own mountain songs.

When we had gained the summit, and were descending

on the other side, a bend in the road suddenly brought us face to face with a splendid panorama. As far as the eye could reach, the fields and meadows were covered with an emerald carpet, over which were scattered lovely villages, while here and there glittering sheets of water lay dimpling in the sunlight.

“Can you tell me in what direction Muscoda lies?” I ventured to ask.

“That is it, Miss, lying right down there,” and he pointed to the fair village which nestled at the mountain’s side.

We had crossed the mountains in a strong, open wagon or cart; and in this, it seems, I was destined to make my *début*. How vividly I recall my emotions as the driver urged his tired beasts towards something akin to a gallop, while we rattled through the main street! And with what eager curiosity did I look for the first glimpse of my sojourning-place! Throwing out his mail-bag at the small store, likewise labelled “POST OFFICE,” while I silently wondered whether any letters directed to Miss Hope Frazer would ever be carried in that same leathern, padlocked bag, our accomplished Jehu called next at the tavern, where all the passengers, except myself, alighted.

“Where do you go, Miss?”

“To the Academy.”

At a renewed flourish of his whip, our steeds once more lifted their weary legs, and speedily brought me in front of a long, three-storied, yellow, wooden tenement. Most uncomfortably contemptible and forlorn did I feel, as he stopped at the broad flight of steps, and assisted me to descend from the wagon. Innumerable eyes were gazing down upon me from multitudinous windows; so I instinctively let fall my

veil, and, climbing the steps, waited for the driver to lift the huge knocker. Its loud echo, which strangely startled me, brought an untidy Irish girl to the door, a tall man appearing behind her.

“Here she is, I suppose,” said the driver, pointing to a card which labelled the trunk. “That’s the same name, I take it, you had in your advertisement.”

And he was away.

I was well aware that the tall, black-eyed man was surveying me from head to foot; and I felt the consciousness, running like cold water all over me, that he considered himself cheated — fairly humbugged in the article he had spoken. With this consoling reflection, I was ushered into the parlor.

“Miss Frazer, Mrs. Jones;” and his wife advanced to shake hands with me.

With a woman’s tact she divined my feelings, and saying she was sure I must be tired, she guided me to my chamber — a pleasant, though not spacious room in the third story.

“If you prefer to have your tea sent you to-night, I will excuse you to Mr. Jones.”

I gladly assented, and in a moment found myself alone, when I sat down on a hard chair, and laying my head on a red pine table, took the liberty to indulge in a good cry. But fearing lest I should become wholly unfitted for the ordeal before me, I at length bathed my face, and took a survey of my quarters. The appointments seemed rather small for the principal female assistant, but I determined to make the best of them, and having learned some useful lessons from Belinda Lawson, I set about unpacking my trunk.

When the large bell rang out loud and shrill, succeeded by the quick tramp of feet, I congratulated myself that, at least for this time, I was relieved. Not long after; a servant appeared with a tea-tray.

"Mrs. Jones says she hopes you'll feel better in the morning;" which kind message was a drop of comfort to my lonely heart.

Night soon wrapped the large household in slumbers, though one pair of eyes was hardly closed through those tedious hours. Morning came. I followed the multitude to the dining-hall. There stood the principal, solemnly awaiting my appearance.

"Miss Frazer, you will take the head of the fourth table;" and he pointed to my place.

Wishing myself out of the room, under the table, anywhere most remote, I dragged my unwilling frame to the designated spot, and stood, while, in a stentorian voice, grace was said. I then slunk into my chair, with the miserable consciousness that I was proving myself an outright coward.

Breakfast over, I heard that same sonorous voice, "Miss Frazer will please walk into my study and receive her instructions."

Where the dreaded study was located, I had no idea; but I inquired, and softly tapped at the door. Immediately Mrs. Jones came from an adjoining room, and taking me by the hand, —

"I hope you find yourself rested this morning," and accompanied me into the study.

The two eyes looked down upon me, and into me, till I felt myself growing still smaller and more insignificant in their piercing light.

"Mrs. Jones, I desire to see Miss Frazer alone;" and the meek spouse retired from the presence of her lord.

"I wish you to make yourself familiar with this programme."

While saying this, he handed me a paper on which my assigned duties were spread out at length in a large hand. As I glanced over them, it seemed to me that almost every hour of the day was occupied; but I made no comment.

"You are requested to be extremely particular with the French and music classes, as thoroughness in those departments is of the utmost importance in sustaining the high reputation of Symmington Academy. You are smaller than I expected," added he, with a reproving glance. Pausing a minute, he added, "And it is rather unfortunate; still, we will hope for the best. In half an hour a bell will ring. Let me find you here, ready to accompany me to the music-room."

At the appointed time I was introduced into the Euterpean department. In front of the piano were ranged twenty-two girls, who were, every week, to receive two lessons of an hour. In addition, two French classes were to have a daily lesson. To these engagements, Mr. Jones graciously super-added the correction of sixty weekly compositions, instruction in calisthenics, and various miscellaneous exercises. Though bewildered by this long array, I screwed up my courage, and entered upon my task.

I might, perhaps, have had tolerable success, had not Mr. Jones considered it one of his prerogatives to appear before me suddenly — I was about to say, *sneakingly* — at any moment. It was hard enough, under ordinary circumstances, for a diffident, inexperienced teacher to establish her author-

ity; but these frequent apparitions well nigh paralyzed me; and it took all the intervals between his exits and entrances to recover myself. Sensible that this first day was nearly a failure, at half past seven, I reluctantly made my appearance in the study, as requested. "Those devouring eyes!" thought I; "they will certainly swallow me, some day."

"You need energy, Miss Frazer, or you will be overrun by your classes. But let to-day pass. You will have an opportunity to retrieve your character. In regard to all our arrangements, I wish to have everything understood in the beginning. How old are you?"

My face indignantly flushed, as I replied, —

"I shall be eighteen next month, sir."

"Worse than I supposed. I was about to say that, although you are small and inexperienced (I must now add, *and young, likewise*), I wish to deal generously by you. I shall therefore allow you your board, and washing, and lights, with the use of the fire in the study-hall. In addition to this, if you prove yourself a faithful and efficient teacher, I shall present you, at the end of the year, with the sum of fifty dollars."

Although this salary, so patronizingly offered, struck me as exceedingly small, yet I was too little acquainted with such matters to realize the amount of overreaching involved in his bargain. But I had perception enough to dislike the man more and more, — so much so, that I shrank even from asking the small favor I had in mind. I mastered this feeling, however, and ventured to request that no one should visit my classes till I became a little familiar with my duties.

"A singular request, Miss Frazer!" and those hawk's eyes were fastened on me with an expression of astonish-

ment. "When I inform you that Symmington Academy is my child, that I devote my whole energies to its welfare, and hourly visit every part of this large establishment, you will see that you have made a great mistake—a *great* mistake, Miss Frazer."

With elevated head I bowed and withdrew. Fortunately, vexation gave me the courage I needed, and constantly goaded by renewals of this stimulus, I succeeded beyond my expectations—succeeded, I mean, in controlling my pupils. I was too reserved to gain their affections.

Mrs. Jones did all she dared to make my situation tolerable. Her lord and master considered her a part of his grand institution, and did not omit her in his hourly inspection of proceedings. But whenever and wherever she could, she dropped a kind and sympathetic word. Poor soul! she had sold her birthright; for what, I never was able to discover. But like many another, she stilled the cravings of her heart, and meekly endured her destiny.

"Dr. Preston has been in to see you," said she, one day, with a flurried manner. "He is an excellent, fatherly man, and I want you to call there."

As was usually the case, when she undertook to communicate with me, his majesty just then emerged from some recess.

"I was speaking to Miss Frazer of Dr. Preston's call," said she, with a deprecating air.

With a frown directed to her,—

"You have no time to make calls, Miss Frazer, and you had better not think of it."

I was but little inclined to seek new acquaintances, and probably should not have thought of calling, except for a

spice of contrariness in my nature. Mr. Jones's opposition was sufficient to determine me; and after tea, one pleasant evening, I set out for the minister's abode. I had heard much of Dr. Preston, but he had been out of town; and the previous Sabbath — the first after his return — I had not attended church, consequently I had never met him.

An air of repose pervaded the ancient parsonage, and as I lifted the shining knocker, I inwardly said, "Here, at least, is peace." A neatly-dressed, middle-aged woman appeared, and took me into the cosy parlour, where sat Mrs. Preston, busy at her knitting. She had one of those faces that you invariably trust, and it gave me a feeling of satisfaction to receive her greeting.

"Has Mr. Preston returned?" she inquired of the woman.

"He is just coming in."

At that moment the door opened, and the good Doctor made his appearance. At a glance I took in his singular *personnel*; — a large head, short, thick neck, a body of unusual corpulence, and small legs and feet, set off by tightly-fitting small-clothes, which increased the peculiarities of his *physique*.

"Miss Frazer has called, Mr. Preston."

He advanced quickly, with short, mincing steps, stopping suddenly in front of me.

"Ah! Miss Frazer, is it?" And giving me a rapid shake of the hand, he continued, "How d' do, child? Glad to see you. Sit down, sit down."

"You are tired, Mr. Preston," said his wife, drawing out his large arm-chair.

"Rather so. Been taking a long walk."

And he puffed away as if still quite out of breath, frequently wiping the drops from his broad face. Suddenly turning to me, —

“Well, child, do you keep up?”

“Not very well, sir,” I replied, glad of a chance to express my mind.

“Ah! Sorry to hear it. Get along with Mr. Jones tolerably, I hope.”

“Not at all, sir.”

“Sorry. — Must make the best of it. — All come right in, the end. — Meantime, good to bear the yoke.”

“I hope so, sir.” Then, with one of those sudden impulses to frankness which sometimes come over reserved natures, I added, “But I fear I shall prove refractory before the year is out.”

“How is that?” asked he, hitching nearer, and with an expression of increased interest. “Made a hard bargain with you?”

“I don’t know, sir; but there are no possible points of harmony between us; consequently, it is all friction.”

“Very sorry. — Afraid it can’t be mended.”

“He has the reputation of being pretty sharp,” said Mrs. Preston. “If you have no objection to confide in us, we should like to know what contract he has made with you.”

I simply related what had passed between us the evening after my arrival.

“Hard man!” exclaimed the doctor, energetically stamping his foot. “Mrs. Preston, have we a catalogue?”

“I believe there’s one in the cupboard,” said she, getting up to look for it.

She soon brought it to the Doctor, who carefully adjusted his spectacles, and then turned over the leaves till he came to the expenses of the school. Fumbling laboriously in his pocket, he at last brought out a lead pencil and a letter, from which he tore an unwritten corner.

“French, six dollars per term. Pupils?”

“Thirty, sir.”

“Thirty multiplied by six — one hundred and eighty.”

“Shall I help you, Dr. Preston?” I asked, observing that it was as much as he could do to manage the catalogue, paper, and pencil.

“No, no. Can't trust you. Fear you don't know when you're cheated. — Music, twelve dollars per term. Number?”

“Twenty-two, sir.”

“Twenty-two multiplied by twelve — two hundred and sixty-four; added to one hundred and eighty — four hundred and forty-four. Three terms per year. Four hundred forty-four multiplied by three, comes to thirteen hundred thirty-two. Thirteen hundred and thirty-two dollars per year for music and French, understand. Anything more?”

“Teach calisthenics, correct compositions, &c.,” said I, falling into his laconic style.

“Boards you and finds you — one among a multitude — a trifling matter, and — fifty dollars in cash.” A peculiar smile stole over his face, succeeded by a cloud. “A hard case, child! If you need sharp corners, good for you. Danger of souring you, though. Don't let it, I say, *don't let it,*” putting down his foot emphatically, probably observing my eye kindle at the thought of being thus egregiously duped. “We'll make a fuss about it, if you say so.”

“No, sir! I will stay my year out — *if I can.*”

“Come often, child.—Keep up good heart.—All for the best.”

As it was still early, I bent my steps towards Mount Tryon, which I had been longing to do ever since I came. Slowly I climbed its fair slope, till, finding an attractive resting-place, I threw myself on the grass, and leaning against a straight old pine, gazed in admiration at the prospect spread out before me. Above, fairy clouds were chasing each other over the broad blue plains of heaven, reduplicating themselves in their own soft shadows, which played a similar charming game on Mount Tryon's verdant sides. Below, lay silver sheets of water, broad green meadows with grazing cattle studding their smooth surface, dark expanses of forest, gentle slopes, and beautiful valleys with white villages nestling in their hearts. And the floods of rich sunshine glorified the scene to an almost perfect beauty.

“How charming would it be,” were my musings, “to dwell on this mountain height, and never descend to the sordid world below!” And fancy, guided by legends of the old Mystics and Eremites, pictured a still, contemplative life, softened and elevated by the beauties of nature and thoughts of God, and unjarred by the turmoil of this bustling world. “But that would not be my happiness,” was my second thought. “I should die with only my own thoughts to feed upon. I must have action, and the stir of excitement, or lose my reason.”

The fading light woke me from my reveries, and warned me homeward,—no! not homeward, but prisonward. “Always ‘sharp corners’ for me,” I exclaimed with bitterness, as I bent my steps towards the ungainly building. “But there is no use in flinching; so let me learn to ‘brass it out,’ as Dr. Preston says.”

As I entered the hall door, my ubiquitous overseer encountered me.

“This way a moment, Miss Frazer;” and the odious study was entered. “The reputation of Symmington Academy”—were the first words I caught. What he previously said, I had not heeded. I looked up interrogatively.

“You understand me, Miss Frazer. I must absolutely protest against your walking out alone at improper hours. Indeed, it is expected that your whole time will be devoted to your academical duties.”

“I shall take the liberty to walk when and where I please, Mr. Jones; and if my ways displease you, you may seek another teacher. But as to any further imposition on your part, I will not bear it.”

Alas for my tongue! Could it never learn moderation? Must I always vacillate between cowardly shrinking and downright resistance? But this time my temper did me a good turn. Mr. Jones instantly drew in his horns.

“I ought not to doubt, my dear Miss Frazer, that you will be very tender of the reputation of Symmington Academy, and that you will take every precaution that no indiscretion on your part shall occur to reflect upon it. My zeal was well meant, but, I dare say, unnecessary in your case. At any rate, ‘*Sat verbum.*’ I presume you are enough of a classical scholar to recall the proverb.”

With a smile at his own attempt to be funny, and a stiff bow, which he intended for a gracious one, he opened the door for my exit.

CHAPTER XVII.

It was long a problem with me how a man of Mr. Jones's small calibre and peculiar characteristics could be tolerated at the head of so large an establishment. Arriving at no satisfactory solution, I one day ventured to propound the question to my kind friend, the simple-hearted, but shrewd, Dr. Preston.

"Great executive force. — Knows what he's about. — Secured first-rate teachers at the smallest possible prices — for instance, my young friend here. Astounding quantity of brass. — The man to make *anything* go, if he has determined it. — Excellent wife. — Sorry for her. — Worse case than yours, child. — What would you do?"

"Fight till I obtained my rights, or run away in despair."

"Better not. — Unsuitable for a woman. — Neither amiable nor right. — Far better love and obey him, child."

I shook my head.

"The only way. — Hard contest. — He has an iron will."

"So have I. I never could love such a man, and obey him, I never *would*."

"Poor child. — Battles before you. — Cultivate meekness. — Best treasure for a woman. — The only way; but you don't believe it." And the good man looked at me over his glasses with a compassionate gaze.

It was Mr. Jones's policy, so far as possible, to prevent

mutual acquaintance among his teachers. He had his own motives for this, upon which I do not presume to speculate. For myself, shrinking as I did from new faces, I had no objection. Nor did I seek much intercourse with my pupils, many of whom were considerably older than I. With my recluse habits, it was cause for self-gratulation that the people of the village were not in the habit of calling upon the teachers. Doubtless, our dignified preceptor was in some way at the bottom of this non-intercourse regime. But whatever was the occasion, it so turned out that I numbered as friends only Dr. and Mrs. Preston, and my well-loved Mount Tryon, unless, indeed, I include Mrs. Jones, of whom it was taken good care I should see but little.

After the multiplied duties of the day, I often found myself utterly exhausted.

"Your spirit is stronger than your body, dear Miss Frazer," said Mrs. Jones, as she bathed my aching head.

It was on a Saturday evening, when weariness and headache had driven me to my pillow.

"My body is pretty tough," I answered, "but I am not well to-night."

"You will have a day of rest to-morrow."

"Yes, I suppose so," said I, sighing drearily.

"I fear you have undertaken too much."

"I hope to spur myself through the year, especially as we are soon to have a fortnight's vacation. But you look more worn than I."

"I think I am as well as usual."

Tap! tap! tap!

Mrs. Jones opened the door.

"Mr. Jones wants to see you, ma'am."

“Yes, Bridget, I will go down.”

And the dutiful wife hastily kissed my forehead and withdrew. Poor woman! My own lot seemed enviable in comparison with hers.

I had now been in Muscoda eight months, and my nerves were unstrung by constant effort, with little exercise. I had written to Miss Carey, who had treated me with kind consideration, that I should leave at the end of the year. Asking her recommendation to some other place, I told her I should like a situation at the West. The necessity for some change became more, and more manifest; but I made out to drag through the remainder of the term, when the spring vacation occurred. I was then obliged to put myself into a physician's hands, and the result was, confinement to my bed for more than a week.

The last day of the recess had come. Wearied and out of spirits, I resolved to call at my dear Dr. Preston's. Slowly I descended the long flights of stairs, holding on carefully to the balusters. The fresh air revived me, and as I walked, I gained strength. The old Doctor extended both hands to meet me.

“Welcome, child!—Sit down.—Stop and take tea with us.”

I shook my head.

“Do, dear Miss Frazer,” urged Mrs. Preston. “Indeed, we shall insist upon it. Ann shall go home with you in the evening.”

So I untied my bonnet, as a token of surrender. Sitting down, one on each side of me, they began to make inquiries, which I answered as well as I was able. Then I took my turn at catechising, and asked the Doctor if it was true, as I had heard, that he was going to have a colleague.

"Partly true, and partly false," replied he, with a wise look.

"I don't understand you, sir."

"You will, though, before I get through. I will tell you, however, that Mr. Dinsmoor has received a call, and accepted it. In a few weeks, will be ordained."

"Hè is to be your colleague, then," persisted I.

"We shall see, we shall see."

The good Doctor's peculiarities were not confined to his family, or even to private life. In his public ministrations on the Sabbath, his brief, pithy, energetic sentences were jerked out with a nod, and sometimes enforced by rapid and violent gesticulation, and a peremptory stamping of the feet. At his weekly meetings in the vestry, he indulged himself in still greater immunities of speech and action, sometimes bringing down his cane with startling force, by way of pointing a charge, and again, stepping over one bench after another, and freely perambulating hither and thither, as the fancy took him, yet never ceasing to discourse vehemently through the whole. I well remember the unfeigned astonishment and anxiety with which I gazed upon him during the first exhibition of this kind I happened to witness. My final conclusion was that he had suddenly lost his wits, and I looked round, expecting to see the deacons come forth and lay hands upon him.

In prayer, his manner was equally characteristic. Keeping his eyes wide open, he would sometimes pass from petition to exhortation, and then back again, without a moment's interruption. Nor did he hesitate to arrest himself in his supplications, for the purpose of delivering a rebuke to some irreverent lad. On one occasion, as I learned, when ear-

nestly engaged in prayer, happening to notice for the first time a member of the church who had just returned after a long absence, he stepped over a bench, and extended his hand, exclaiming, "How d'do? how d'do?" Nor did he afterwards awake to any consciousness of this singular proceeding.

Upon an unaccustomed audience, a decidedly ludicrous impression would have been made by these peculiarities. But the good Doctor's people thought nothing about them. In spite of them all, and perhaps, with *him*, the more on their very account, he was not only a true shepherd, skilfully guiding his flock, but a man of undoubted power and remarkable influence, both in public and private, with old and young. He had several times requested a dismission, but his people, one and all, were unwilling to have the relation dissolved. He then proposed a colleague, to which they assented, uniting in a call to Mr. Dinsmoor.

The day of the ordination arrived, and as it was a great occasion, and Mr. Jones made a point of patronizing all praiseworthy objects, Symmington Academy was permitted to suspend its functions and be present at the public exercises.

It fell naturally to Dr. Preston to deliver the address to the people. Alluding to his long and happy connection with them, he said, —

"I have one request to make. It is that I may be immediately dismissed from my pastoral charge. Those in favor of granting this request will keep their seats. Contrary-minded will rise. It is a vote. The clerk will record it as unanimous."

I now understood what the good Doctor meant, when, in

answer to my inquiry as to his having a colleague, he said, "Partly true and partly false." It was a complete *ruse de guerre*.

When the people had sufficiently recovered from their bewilderment to realize that they had actually voted for their beloved pastor's dismissal, they were confounded. And throughout the congregation, the universal wiping of eyes and blowing of noses testified to their affectionate regret. But, however informally, the deed was done, and, making a virtue of necessity, they yielded their wishes to his.

It was now May, and only ten weeks would elapse before the completion of my year. Mr. Jones had become more disagreeable than ever, though in a different way. He had been so long accustomed to despotic sway, that I believe he really enjoyed the novelty of some opposition. It served to tax his wits lest he should lose an iota of his established authority; and to a man of energy, this always brings pleasure. At any rate, he seemed to like me all the better for the tart replies which his rudeness often extorted.

"You are a smart little piece," said he one day, patting me on the cheek.

"What do you mean, sir?"

"No offence, dear Miss Frazer," replied he, fawningly. "I only mean that your spirit becomes you, and that—that—in short, you are my favorite of all the teachers I ever had."

"You must know, sir, that both your words and manner are exceedingly offensive. If you presume again to treat me with such disrespect, I shall leave the school at once."

With an incredulous smile, he replied, —

“You must blame yourself if you choose to show such spirit as tempts me to retort by harmless gallantries. I intend conquering you by kindness, you see.”

“I will endeavor to control myself henceforth, and thus escape your insults.” And I walked loftily out of his presence.

Not many days after, he entered the room during one of my French recitations, and placed himself opposite me. His fixed, unpleasant gaze was so annoying, that I made several blunders, which, of course, embarrassed my pupils. He sat through the lesson, and then, tipping back in his chair, coolly remarked, —

“I shall make allowance for you, young ladies, on the ground of your teacher’s youth and inexperience.”

I retained my self-command till the class had left the room, when I angrily exclaimed, —

“Why did you insult me, sir, in the presence of my pupils?”

“Do you intend to dispute my right to rebuke you whenever and however I please?”

“I do, sir. And I will not bear this impertinent interference.”

“You forget your resolution to control your temper, my dear girl. So you see you must take the consequences.”

In oily tones did these words creep forth. And the insolent man actually dared —

CHAPTER XVIII.

NOR half an hour after, I was standing by Dr. Preston, to whom I had fled in most stormy mood.

“Sit down, child, sit down,” said he kindly, taking my hand. “Now tell me all.”

When he arrived at a comprehension of the case, he laid his hand tenderly on my forehead, saying, —

“Be quiet, dear, be quiet! — All in *our* favor. — We are lonely. — Want young company. — Both love you. — Come and stay with us as long as you can be content. — Great kindness to us, child, great kindness.”

His delicate treatment in my utterly forlorn condition completely upset me. In the warmth of my gratitude, I seized his hand, and pressed it to my lips. It was all the reply I could make.

When Mrs. Preston came in, she cordially seconded her husband’s proposal, adding, —

“We shall be rich in having such a daughter.”

And I so unworthy of all this kindness! What could I do but throw my arms round her neck?

So it was settled that I was to be domiciled in the pleasant parsonage. Sending for my trunk, I wrote a line to Mr. Jones, requesting an immediate settlement. He replied that, as I had left before the year was out, I had forfeited my claim to any payment. I showed Dr. Preston his note.

“Going to do, child?”

“Nothing, sir.”

The next day he came puffing in, bearing a remarkably polite document from Mr. Jones, containing the very highest recommendations touching my ability and success as a teacher, and enclosing fifty dollars. As I gazed in astonishment, with a merry twinkle of his eye, the Doctor said, —

“Hard work. — Screwed tight. — Fairly pinched. — Winced and floundered. — Couldn’t help himself. — Do him good. — Got more, but knew you wouldn’t touch it.”

“I thank you,” replied I, tearing the testimonial into fragments, and throwing them behind the fire-board.

The Doctor looked on, evidently quite amused.

“Crazy, child! Crazy! — Help you to another situation when tired of us.”

“I could not possibly lay myself under the smallest obligation to that man,” said I, laughing at his affected dismay.

Then, sitting at his desk, I wrote as follows: —

“To the Principal of Symmington Academy.

“MR. JONES. Sir: Enclosed is my receipt for the sum due. I acknowledge your extraordinary courtesy in furnishing me with so flattering a testimonial. As, however, it is undesired, and would prove wholly useless, I have taken the liberty to destroy it.

HOPE FRAZER.”

Handing this note to the Doctor, I asked, —

“Will that do?”

The dear old man shook his head with emphasis.

“No. — *Never* do. — Touchy. — Sarcastic. — Spiteful too! — And proud of showing spite. — Not dignified. — Not

womanly. — Not Christian. — Ah, child — meekness a sweet grace. — Cultivate it. — Cultivate it, I say.”

Thus ended my first venture; — once more I was out on the wide, wide sea. And yet not so, for had not a kind Providence brought me into a quiet haven? How precious, even at this distance of time, is the memory of those peaceful days spent under that blessed roof!

Not long after my removal to the parsonage, a letter came from Miss Carey, to whom I had again written, saying that she had made an engagement for me as assistant to a Mr. Northrup, principal of a Seminary at Ironton, in Illinois.

Thus relieved of all anxiety for the future, I gave myself up to the enjoyment of the present. Rejoicing in my freedom, I strolled about whenever and wherever I pleased, — sometimes passing hours in wandering over the sunny slopes of Tryon.

With the excellent couple my intercourse was always delightful. I read to them, and talked with them, as if I had known them all my life. On matters, however, pertaining to my past history, and my religious views and feelings, I maintained an unbroken reserve. I hardly know why, but somehow I could not open to the good man my old bitter doubts and questionings, or my present inward discouragement.

I still felt that, while at Crawford, there had been a certain change; yet it was not one that had brought me abiding happiness, or even serenity. My main purpose to live for duty was unaltered; but in my attempts to carry out this resolve, I was under the guidance of principle rather than affection, and therefore took little comfort in my endeavors, however sincere or earnest.

Those genial, refreshing days sped by on rapid feet. The dreaded time of my departure had arrived. I secured a farewell interview with Mrs. Jones, who manifested no little emotion. The next day I must take leave of those cherished friends, who had given me a home and its sympathies in my hour of need. Of my sad parting with them I will not speak. The good Lord will reward them for their generous kindness. I never can.

The morning of my departure, I climbed my favorite mountain. For the last time my eyes were filled with the fair landscape spread out beneath me. The last time! And then, with lingering look and a saddened heart, I left behind me all this beauty, and set my face towards the desert of life, stretching gloomily away before me. Once more, however, when I had reached the foot of Tryon, I turned back, and lifting up misty eyes to its proud summit, I said my last farewell.

“Clouded in morning’s rosy, liquid light,
Thou standest, mountain fair, once more for me;
But ere the pale stars of another night
Encircle thee with rays, — far ahall I be.

“How oft, with loving heart and watchful eye,
I’ve marked the changing beauties o’er thee glide!
Bright autumn’s gorgeous tints, in sadness die
To sombre brown upon thy sloping side.

“And in the calm, voluptuous afternoons
That mind one still of golden summer-days,
When rivulet and bird trill softer tunes, —
I’ve seen thee robed in melting purple haze.

“ Pure Dian’s crescent moon has bathed thy brow
With waves of solemn, pallid, spectral light, —
Illumed the pines that climb thy sides e’en now,
In vain attempts to reach thy forehead’s height.

“ And oft the storm has dropped his veil of mist
Around thee, hiding thy translucent blue,
Till, all his anger gone, by sunshine kissed,
’Twas softly raised, and left thee clear and true.

“ Yes! fair in all thy changeful forms thou art,
And near and dear as human friend to me; —
And memories sweet, though sad — within my heart,
Where’er I go, I’ll carry still of thee.”

CHAPTER XIX.

It cannot be supposed that I had lived to the age of almost nineteen, with no thoughts about "*la grande passion*." Indeed, some expressions in my Crawford journal betray my feelings on a subject universally associated with one's *teens*. For general admiration, I cared little. But this very indifference to society at large, intensified my nature. An outcast from home, without an intimate friend whom I could take into my soul, and with no object of interest sufficient to enlist all my energies, my heart was left to prey on itself. And the more I dwelt on my embittered past, the greater was my desire for a loving, happy future. Life, however, lay before me in dark perspective. For the occupation of teaching, I had no natural affinity. Indeed, disheartened by my unfortunate experience, it had become positively distasteful. And yet, a teacher I seemed doomed to be, to the end of my days.

Into such reveries as these, I unwittingly fell, while travelling over the weary miles towards my new destination. But for my proud resolve to be independent of my father, and a certain latent force of character, which, in spite of my timidity, carried me over great obstacles; I should have fallen into my old torpor. As it was, I kept up a desperate struggle, till at length courage gained the ascendancy.

My good friend, Dr. Preston, had given me a line of intro-

duction to a brother-clergyman in Albany, who saw me on board a canal boat, placing me under the care of a western merchant, who was returning to Illinois. He was civil enough, but not being communicative, I was left mostly to my own thoughts.

My tedious days and nights in the slow moving canal boat, interrupted only by frequent thumping collisions with other boats, were at length terminated by a willing return to the plodding stage-coach.

Of the western prairies, I had entertained a somewhat romantic idea. I was on the watch for a boundless sea of the richest green, stretching out in interminable billows, and gemmed with fair islands of the most superb flowers. It so turned out, that having travelled all night in the stage, I was just catching a stray nap, when Mr. Smith touched me, saying, —

“Miss Frazer, you wished to see a prairie. Here is one.”

Starting with eagerness, I gazed long and earnestly. The whole eastern sky was aglow with the crimson hues of morning, but I saw nothing else of interest. Concluding I must be looking in the wrong direction, I at length asked, —

“Where is it?”

“There, just where you are looking.”

I rubbed my eyes to be sure I was awake, but nothing greeted my expectant vision except a boundless extent of level ground, covered with coarse, brown stubble.

“That a prairie!” I exclaimed, in manifest disappointment. “Why, I see neither verdure nor flowers.”

“Of course not; why should you?” said he, a little nettled. “There has been a long drought, and the grass and flowers are dried up.”

"I made no allowance for that," replied I, lapsing into common-placeism, and striving to moderate my expectations in all directions.

"I will prepare myself to see a fright in my landlady," said I, mentally; "indeed, what could reasonably be expected of any one by the name of Brimblecum?"

"This is Ironton," remarked Mr. Smith, after we had travelled far enough, as I thought, to reach the Rocky Mountains.

"A very pretty place," said I, observing with satisfaction a thrifty village of good size, and quite resembling the New England villages I had passed through.

In due time we arrived at Miss Brimblecum's spacious mansion, which, as I remember, was painted a light brown, and adorned with pea-green blinds. A bustling maid promptly answered my summons, and leaving me standing in the hall, went in search of her mistress.

"Miss Frazer!" said I, introducing myself.

"How are you, ma'am?" — with a stiff bow.

Ushering me into a large, dark parlor, and setting out a chair, she went to one of the windows, and turned down the blinds, so as to admit a few horizontal rays, thence proceeding to straighten matters here and there. Wherever she went, my eyes involuntarily followed her, and, to confess the truth, with a strong inclination to laugh and cry at the same time. Imagine a tall, lank figure (crinoline was not then in vogue), with quick, angular movements, arms that hung like pump-handles at her side, a copper-colored wig setting off a saffron complexion, small, green, ferreting eyes, and a prim, tight mouth, that looked as if it opened only to let out thin, vapid speeches. This notable maiden was

arrayed in a cinnamon calico, covered with immense flowers ; while her wrinkled forehead was adorned with a pair of steel mounted spectacles, which seldom descended upon her nose, where indeed they would have been of little use, as, whenever by chance they happened there, she invariably threw back her head to peep under them. Eying me from time to time as she moved about, she finally made a sudden pause, inquiring, —

“ Would you like to go to your room ? ”

“ I should, if convenient. ”

I had momentarily been dreading the advent of the principal, and remembering my first encounter with Mr. Jones, wished to make myself a little decent before I passed a similar review. So I was glad to follow the hostess to my chamber, which was a large and pleasant room.

“ Mr. Northrup selected this for you. ”

“ So he thought of my comfort, ” said I, mentally, with something like warmth at my heart.

Looking from my window upon the fields and groves that met my sight, whence also I could command the western sky, I said cordially, —

“ I like his choice. ”

“ Of course you do, ” replied she, sharply, seeming to resent the expression of my satisfaction as wholly superfluous.

“ What is your tea hour ? ” I inquired, as she was leaving.

“ Six o'clock, precisely. ”

I looked at my watch, and finding it already half past five, concluded not to change my travelling dress.

Having made the needful preparations for tea, I sat down by an open window, and began to wonder what sort of a man Mr. Northrup might be. Not for the first time, how-

ever. But not having the smallest data to build upon, I had indulged myself in conjuring up a great variety of characters answering to the name of Northrup, though taking good care to keep as far as possible from the similitude of Mr. Jones.

The ominous supper-bell! I soon found myself at a long table, filled with strange faces. Our landlady introduced me to no one, and which among all the gentlemen was Mr. Northrup, and why he did not make himself known, I was unable to divine. When we were nearly through, the lady next me inquired of Miss Brimblecum, —

“Where is Mr. Northrup?”

“Gone out to tea;” — a response which put an end to my wonder, and relieved me from the impression that he could not be a gentleman.

I had ventured only to cast my eyes furtively round the table, and had no distinct idea of any one except my left-hand neighbor, whom our hostess addressed as Miss Betts. This same Hepzibah Betts was a little wiry woman, with an unattractive countenance, ornamented on either side by a bunch of short curls. Her attire was youthful, both in color and make, while the highly juvenile manners she had adopted were in strict accordance with her style of dress. From all I could gather, I judged that she had so long striven to convince others that she was young, that at length she had practised the imposition upon herself. She had a quick, outside laugh, and bowed her head this way and that, causing a graceful flutter in her cherished curls, and the bright ribbons that adorned her head. She was extremely affable to all, and patronized poor little me with wonderful zeal, asking questions faster than I could answer them, and passing me the various dishes with untiring assiduity.

"I shall come in and see you very soon," she called out in an encouraging voice as I was leaving the dining-hall.

I have not wished to caricature this picture, as it lies photographed in memory. At first I regarded Miss Betts as well meaning, though weak-minded and frivolous, but subsequent acquaintance obliged me somewhat to modify my opinion. Doubtless she had her good points, though unfortunately they did not come under my notice.

Most thankful was I to escape to my own room, where I again seated myself at the window, too tired to unlock my trunk, and glad that Belinda Lawson was not there to set me working. How many things I thought of in that long, weary hour!

Twilight was still lingering, when the chambermaid brought a message.

"Mr. Northrup sends his compliments, and would be glad to see you in the parlor, if you're not too tired to come down."

"Tell him I will be there directly."

I slowly descended the stairs, and, with a sudden feeling of shyness, paused before entering the room. But finding delay had no tendency to increase my courage, I opened the door. A young man instantly rose, and with an agreeable, though assured air, came forward, and cordially offering his hand, set out a rocking-chair for me by the window.

"It was hardly generous to request your presence this evening, Miss Frazer, for I know you must be very weary, but I was —" and he paused, as if at a loss how to finish.

"Somewhat curious to see me?" I ventured to add.

"I plead guilty," replied he, smiling with evident satisfaction that the ice was thus effectually broken. "But in order

that I may satisfy my curiosity, and Miss Frazer hers, we must have a better view of one another ;” and, rising, he ordered lights.

“What a ridiculous blunder I have made !” was my disagreeable reflection. “And now, instead of the pleasant chat we might have had, he will be staring at me in disappointment.”

But there was no retrieving my mistake. The lights were brought ; and placing them where they would fall on my face, Mr. Northrup sat down opposite, and playfully fixed his smiling eyes upon me. Resisting a strong temptation to extinguish the lights, but with a feeling of chagrin which I could not wholly conceal, I made out to say, —

“Since I have dared you to the encounter, I will not flinch.”

Whether he too felt that he was cheated, or whether he was sorry for my embarrassment, I could not tell ; but, with an entire change of manner, he began to inquire about my journey. Bent on sociability, I told him of my prairie-disappointment, at which he heartily laughed, assuring me, however, that another June would restore my early idea.

Not a word about “programmes,” or “prescribed duties,” or “undivided attention,” or even Granville Seminary till we parted, when he simply said, —

“I will not trouble you with business till you find yourself rested.”

What a weight was lifted from me ! And how I thanked him in my heart, as I returned to my chamber !

Let me recall that first picture of Mr. Northrup, as it still lingers in my mind. Of medium height, well proportioned, and of easy, sprightly address ; a profusion of curly brown

hair upon a smooth, open forehead; kindly eyes, of deep blue, which readily laughed; and a mouth denoting sweetness and mobility, rather than firmness. In my own room that first night, I thought over this sketch, as young girls will sometimes do. And I felt a grateful emotion for the relief and satisfaction so pleasant a picture afforded me. More than that, I projected it into the future, wondering if it would ever be any less agreeable.

The following morning I was seated at the breakfast table, next to Miss Betts, when Mr. Northrup made his appearance.

“Good morning, Miss Frazer! Good morning, Miss Betts! Miss Brimblecum, I intended to have begged a seat beside Miss Frazer. Please make the change this noon, if she does not object.”

“But I have claimed her,” said Miss Betts. “Suppose you should sit the other side of me.”

“I will take a seat *between* you,” replied he, with a sly glance at me. “I shall then be able to protect you against each other.”

“That will do, and we will be quite a social set among ourselves.”

“No doubt of that,” replied he, laughing.

From that time he sat between us, warding off Miss Betts’ volleys of gay talk, and always seeing that I was well provided for.

Miss Brimblecum had her favorites, of whom I proved not to be one; indeed, they were mostly of the masculine gender. Among these, Mr. Northrup stood preëminent — a fact which he well understood. In his general kindness, therefore, I felt secure against marked neglect from our hostess.

From Miss Betts' persistent determination to be intimate with me, she was becoming more and more of an annoyance. In spite of my attempts to distance her, she made me frequent calls, in which she invariably posted me up, not merely in all the gossip relating to our fellow-boarders, but also in that of the whole neighborhood. Her insatiable curiosity would not allow her to rest content without knowing every person who called at our boarding-house, and for what purpose. Even now, I behold her stretching her neck clear over the balusters, to see who might be entering the door; and, failing in this, putting down her ear to catch the voice floating upward. And I seem once more to note the glow of triumph which never failed to brighten her face when successful in her experiment.

But I must not close this chapter without alluding to my situation as a teacher. The whole atmosphere of the school was in striking contrast to that of Symmington Academy. Our pupils were expected to behave like young ladies and gentlemen. Thrown thus on their own responsibility, and treated with uniform kindness and courtesy by Mr. Northrup, who was a great favorite with them, the result was what might be anticipated — an orderly and agreeable school. Under these circumstances, teaching assumed a different aspect; indeed, I found myself coming to feel a positive pleasure in the employment. And as the gentlemanly principal took good care that my labors should not be onerous, I had every reason to be content. This I was, in full measure, so far at least as the externals of life were concerned.

But I had come more and more to neglect my religious duties, and, in consequence, my conscience was ill at ease. To quiet its accusations, I took a class in the Sunday School,

to which I endeavored to be faithful. All these outward observances, however, lacked vitality, and were thence wearisome and profitless. And my heart was depressed by the occasional return of my former gloomy moods. At these times, my soul was so tortured by the old agonizing doubts, that it longed — oh, how intensely! — to utter itself in some human ear.

CHAPTER XX.

"I HAVE invited our friend, Miss Frazer, to take a walk after tea," said Miss Betts one day, at the supper-table.

"And has she accepted?" asked Mr. Northrup, with one of his sideway glances at my face.

"She seems to hesitate, but I thought perhaps you might persuade her."

Turning towards me with one of his fascinating smiles; "Miss Frazer, will you not give Miss Betts and myself the pleasure of your company in our anticipated walk?"

"I believe I must be excused," I replied, for having manifested a reluctance to accept of her invitation, I felt some scruples in allowing myself to be persuaded by him.

"Do not condemn me to go without you," whispered he, in a tone of entreaty, and with such a laughable look of distress, that I made no further objection.

It proved a pleasant walk, notwithstanding Miss Betts' constant flow of words. The frank good humor and sportiveness of Mr. Northrup played like sunlight upon my serious nature, kindling me to unwonted gayety. Perhaps my enjoyment of his society was the greater, because I had been so little accustomed to anything of the sort. At any rate, this free and kindly intercourse was a new and pleasant chapter in my history.

Leaving the village, we strolled onward till we reached

the banks of the Mississippi, where we stood watching the easy flow of its clear waters. The meadows stretching at its side, usually so verdant, now lay scorched and brown.

“In all the time you have lived here, did you ever know such a dry season, Miss Betts?”

“I believe not; but, Mr. Northrup,” added she with a sudden accession of sentiment, “I should think one who had known me so long might call me by my Christian name.”

“But would you allow me that privilege?” asked he, with one of his mischievous looks.

“Certainly I would; how can you doubt it?”

“Henceforth, then, I may venture to address you as Miss Hepzibah;” and lifting his hat, he made her a courtly bow.

“That is delightful, it is so home-like.”

Not long after, in crossing a brook, he offered his hand, saying, —

“Miss Hepsy, shall I have the pleasure of assisting you?”

“That is better yet,” replied she, blushing, as she gave him her hand, and finally adding, “you seem very much like an old friend.”

“And such I beg you always to consider me, Miss Hepsy.”

The scene was now becoming quite romantic. Miss Betts blushed and giggled, as she ventured, —

“Would you like me to call you Walter?”

“The fates forefend!” replied he, shaking his head with an expression of dismay. “No, no, excuse me; but as I have the misfortune to be young, and have, therefore, need of all the dignity I can assume, I could poorly afford to exchange any title of respect, even for the familiar household name of my boyhood, and that from the lips of a valued

friend like yourself. But do not hesitate to command me in any other way in which I can serve you."

Miss Hepsy looked mystified, while Hope Frazer turned away to hide her face, being so naughty as to find enjoyment in Mr. Northrup's tantalizing wickedness.

"You seem charmed with the prospect, Miss Frazer," said he, stealing to my side, and looking under my bonnet with a comical expression. "Are you studying the Mississippi?"

"O no! A far more insignificant study—that of human nature."

"I trust you do not consider me deserving of a rebuke,"—pointing to Miss Betts, who was just then wandering off by herself.

"I am not quite sure. I certainly should, if she were a trifle less—"

"Youthful, and vain, and silly."

"I did not say that."

"But I did."

"And I ought to resent the charge, and defend my sex."

"Miss Frazer has too much sense, as well as candor, to advocate an unworthy cause."

"Do you mean, sir, by flattery, to buy off a merited rebuke?" asked I, looking into his face.

"If I *had* intended this, I should never make the attempt again."

"Shall we rejoin Miss Betts? I fear she may consider herself slighted."

"I have no wish to do so, but will obey your commands."

"Suppose you find her—"

"Resentful? I will take a peace-offering."

And, breaking off a branch from a tree, we overtook her. She turned upon us her smiling countenance, unsuspecting that there had been any joking at her expense.

"A dreadful waste?" observed he, *sotto voce*, throwing away the branch. "But I owe you an *amende*."

And gathering a cluster of autumnal leaves, he brought them to me.

"Not as an apology," said I, withholding my hand.

"As un *gage d'amitié*?"

"What, the sere and dead leaf?"

"It is the best offering in my reach. The other, you would, of course, have rejected."

Looking a little chagrined, he was on the point of throwing them away.

"No," said I, "I want them."

He hesitated.

"I always thought the autumnal leaf more beautifully emblematic than any other," I added, continuing to hold out my hand till he placed them in it.

Opposite me at the table sat a middle-aged bachelor, a merchant, in good circumstances and highly esteemed, but a decided oddity. He had an unusual share of the milk of human kindness in his composition, and this, I think, was what led him to take to me. For he saw, or could have seen, that I was self-distrustful, and apt to get on a long face. After his own fashion, he treated me with great politeness, furnished me with hot-house flowers, tickets to concerts, books, pieces of music, and similar et ceteras, and all in such a matter-of-course way that I never thought of refusing them. Thus Philander Benedict and I had come

to be on the best possible terms. For his many favors, I took pleasure in making the best returns in my power, mending his gloves, hemming and marking his handkerchiefs, playing and singing to him, and chatting with him whenever we were both in the mood. For he had his silent turns, as well as I.

But in spite of his friendship and all my other pleasant surroundings, the blue demons sometimes attacked me with more force than ever. Mr. Northrup frequently rallied me on my sober face. And one evening, when we had been singing together, he suddenly turned towards me, —

“Miss Frazer, may I ask if you have always been as subject to the blues as since you came here?”

“You may, sir.”

“Well?”

“And I suppose I may take the liberty to decline an answer.”

“Perhaps you think me obtrusive,” said he, as a shade of vexation crossed his face.

“By no means, Mr. Northrup, but I prefer not to talk of myself. Life was early poisoned for me, and I have only to battle it as I best can. So much I say in answer to your question, but please not allude to this subject again.”

He looked serious, and more than that — almost sorrowful. At last he continued, —

“Your mind is preying upon itself, and needs a tonic. Have you ever studied Greek?”

I shook my head.

“Have you any objection to the undertaking?”

“None at all, if I can master it.”

“Will you let me assist you?”

“Gladly, if you can find time.”

I was speedily immersed in Greek roots, and I think I never went into anything with more enthusiasm. Having conquered the verbs, Mr. Northrup put me into the "Cyrœpædia." And with his help I soon read a little of old Homer.

Midwinter had now come, but the weather was still mild. During the long evenings I made rapid progress in my now favorite study. How much I owed to the interest taken in the matter by my teacher, I cannot say; but it were vain to deny that I looked forward to my evenings as the most attractive part of the day. Yet I was dissatisfied with myself for even so much as this. I had sounded Mr. Northrup, and found him wanting in depth, in consistency of character, and in stability of feeling and purpose. Of this I was entirely satisfied. But there was a strange attraction for me in his smiling eye, his easy, nonchalant air, and his impressive nature. Besides,—let me plead what excuses I may,—I was at the susceptible age, we were constantly thrown together, and, more than all, my heart was starving;—is it a shame to own the truth? Yet all this time I tenaciously hugged my self-respect; all this time I waged the old warfare, feeling that I was doomed to be miserable.

As I was arranging my hair one well-remembered Saturday morning, I leaned my head on my hands, and looked long and earnestly into the mirror. I saw there a thin, care-worn face, old before its time; folds of dark hair shading a pale forehead, and simply braided round the head; features, certainly of no Grecian type; no rich bloom on cheek or lip; and large eyes, neither violet nor black, but a gray which alternately resembled both. Even to me they looked so melancholy! And I pitied myself as I gazed into their sad, inquiring depths. Ah, how unlike another face which I

beheld every day, and which sometimes looked so kindly upon me! How fresh it was! — and how full of life and hope! vitalizing every one who came within its sphere.

Awaking from my profitless reverie, I unsparingly rebuked my own folly. Even as a mere friend, Mr. Northrup did not come up to my ideal. A friendship between us must of necessity be a one-sided affair, in which I should never receive the half I gave. But then — so I reasoned — this might be owing to the difference between man and woman.

Dissatisfied alike with the subject of my thoughts and with myself, I turned to my Greek. But the pages were blurred, and I could not read. Angry at my own absurdity, I went down into the parlor, (there was no school, and Mr. Northrup was out of town,) and began to play some lively tunes.

Not long after, Miss Brimblecum and Miss Betts came in, and sitting down by the fire, put their heads confidentially together. As I continued listlessly to drum on the piano, I overheard the *young* old maid say to the *old* old one in suppressed tones, —

“Yes, I think Mr. Northrup is a real gentleman, and the most patient man I ever knew.”

“So he is. He waits on that Miss Frazer as if he considered it a real pleasure.”

“Yes,” chimed in Miss Betts, “and that, when we all have the best of reason to know it is only compassion he feels for her.”

“She’s dreadful homely,” remarked Miss Brimblecum.

“Yes,” echoed Miss Betts, “and old-looking.” And glancing into the mirror, I could see her bridling and tossing her head as if *she* knew somebody that was young-looking.

“He says she’s a good teacher,” remarked the elder.

“I know he does, and on that account he would be sorry to lose her. And so, as she’s such a touchy piece, he has to give in to many things, for fear of vexing her.”

“But if she only knew what a bore he considers her —”

“And how much he thinks of beauty —”

“She’s pride enough to untie him from her apron-strings —”

“And to keep out of his way.”

“Can’t you advise her?”

“I would, if I didn’t hate to hurt her feelings.”

“Yes, I believe you would, Miss Betts, for you’ve always been kind to her.”

“I don’t know why, but I really have taken a sort of fancy to her. But then beauty in one woman is nothing to another, nor ugliness either.” And she giggled, as if delighted at her own wit.

I gave no sign or token that I had caught one word, but after thrumming on for a while, commenced the performance of a brilliant piece, which completely drowned their voices. I had heard enough. They might go on now till doomsday, if they listed. What a dull, aching pain had their words driven down deep into my heart!

That same evening Mr. Northrup invited me to attend a concert. I coolly declined. The next day I told him I was not in the mood for Greek, and should therefore suspend it.

“Have I offended you, Miss Frazer?”

“No, sir;” and fearing to trust myself further, I hastened from the room.

So matters went on till a comfortless formality was induced between us. Under these circumstances, finding my

seat next him somewhat embarrassing, I took advantage of the arrival of a new boarder, and removed to the other end of the table. My friend, Mr. Benedict, took his place beside me, saying that I could not get along without somebody to quarrel with.

Néver was Miss Betts more gracious, or more disagreeable than now. Not that I bore her any conscious ill will. But she was always offending my taste, as well as my nicer instincts. She continued to bestow on Mr. Northrup her abundant benignities, which he received with his usual non-chalance.

Time wore on, and I became more silent and repulsive, while Mr. Benedict grew more communicative and complaisant. On a sweet midsummer evening, he invited me to take a drive. As this was not an unusual attention, I did not hesitate, and besides, I hoped it would put me into better humor. So I made myself ready, and, driving rapidly, we were soon beyond the limits of the town. Coming into the forest road, Mr. Benedict slacked the reins, and the horse, falling into a walk, moved lazily on.

The golden-footed fairies continued to play at bo-peep through the leafy branches of those magnificent old trees, the merrier, as it would seem, the nearer their bed-time. And the rich old autocrat, their father, lighted up the primeval woods with an utter lavishness of splendor, such as any other monarch, at half the cost of his kingdom, would vainly seek to imitate. The breath of that August evening was spicy with fir and piny odors, while, across the silvery tinkling of a distant waterfall, broke, now and then, the strange wail of the whippoorwill, the melody of the thrush, or the droning of the insect world.

My companion had not spoken for some time—a silence I fully appreciated; for at such an hour, who would not rather feel than talk? But suddenly I was jolted out of Dreamland by his abrupt remark,—

“Miss Frazer, I have never expected to marry.”

“So I supposed,” said I, looking innocently into his face, and wondering to what his singular affirmation was the prelude.

“And I have never *desired* to,” continued he, tying the reins into a knot, and then pausing.

“So I concluded,” replied I, still more perplexed.

“Till since I knew you.”

Those words cost him effort. And having uttered them, he grew very red. I gazed at him with more wonder than ever. For an exuberance of kindness, I had given him full credit, but to attach to it any such significance, never entered my head.

“You look as if you doubted my capacity to feel. But you don’t know me. I have thought of this matter a long time. I am alone in the world, and you seem so. Why cannot we be something to one another? I know I am much older, but —” And he worked away vigorously at his knot.

The idea of Philander Benedict’s seriously wooing any one, most of all, my insignificant self, seemed very ludicrous. And yet my heart consciously warmed towards him; and the thought came over me—I frankly avow it—that it was without doubt the only offer of marriage I should ever have. I knew that, if I accepted it, I should be most tenderly cared for. But this self-parleying did not amount to a temptation.

I soon contrived to let Mr. Benedict understand the real

state of the case. He looked very sober, nay, more than that; and, for some little time, there was an awkward silence. At length with a sigh, which, I must admit, somewhat touched me, he remarked, —

“Then I never shall marry.”

“Oh, yes, you will. I have now great hopes of you.”

“If you would only give me the smallest word of encouragement, I could serve patiently as long as Jacob did.”

“I assure you that I appreciate your interest, but I could not, in sincerity, give such a word.” He looked so pained, that I immediately added, “But why need our friendship be interrupted?”

“You mean that, after this great piece of presumption, you will be my friend as much as ever?”

“Presumption, I am far from considering it. But, to be sure, I mean just what I said; why not?”

“And you won’t change your seat at the table? And you will ride and walk with me the same as ever?”

“With the greatest pleasure, provided we fully understand each other.”

“I do, — I will. But I see I was a fool for fancying you might —”

“I shan’t allow you to scandalize Mr. Benedict, for he is one of my best friends. And we are bound to keep on good terms.”

“So we are;” and he paused a minute. Then opening an old-fashioned pocket-book, he took out a folded piece of tissue paper, saying, with a forced smile, “I bought this, vain fellow that I was, expressly for you. And now you’ll wear it, won’t you, as a token of my friendship?”

The last word came out with something very like a sob,

but, affecting not to notice it, I opened the paper, and, behold! a glittering diamond ring!

"This is fit for a duchess," said I, playfully, "but you must put it away for that future fair one who is destined to cross your orbit."

He shook his head vigorously, saying, "I am perfectly confident I shall never want it."

"Wait a while, and we shall see. Besides, this is rather too sentimental a token for me. If you are determined to give me a present, and if a recipient may ever be a chooser, I should prefer some book of poems."

"You shall have your choice," replied he, taking back the ring with a disappointed look.

"When the time comes for you to dispose of it, you must allow me to laugh at you."

"As much as you please. But I do assure you that you will never have the chance." And his countenance was distressingly solemn and protesting.

"Remember!" and I shook my finger at him.

So that act in the drama was closed.

CHAPTER XXI.

TIME wore on, but brought no relief to my restless and unhappy moods. In the light of those zealous purposes which I had once so resolutely formed, how miserably dwarfed did my every-day practice appear! I was severe in my self-scrutiny, constantly analyzing my hidden motives, and taking my imagination to task for its ceaseless vagaries. But all my efforts availed me nothing. In this state of discouragement and gloom, I felt that if I could have secured heaven by daily acts of penance, or by some long and painful pilgrimage, the conditions would have been most easy, compared with what was actually required.

One afternoon I was invited to take tea at Mr. Richardson's, the pastor of the Presbyterian church, who had a daughter in the Academy. I was so depressed, that I should have declined, but for a sudden resolve to seek an opportunity for religious conversation with him. He was an earnest and eloquent preacher, and I felt as if he might do me good.

In the course of the evening he took a seat near me. After some general conversation, I said to him, —

“Mr. Richardson, I am tossing on a stormy sea; can you help me?”

“I would gladly do so.”

“When may I come and talk with you?”

“Any hour Saturday afternoon I shall be at liberty.”

The appointed time arrived, and with the most shrinking sensitiveness, I went to the parsonage. Mrs. Richardson met me at the door, and, evidently understanding my object, led me into the study, where her husband cordially received me.

How much had I anticipated from this visit! Perhaps I was leaning too confidently on a human arm, and needed disappointment. At any rate, I found it. Mr. Richardson was a truly good man, and was manifestly disposed to assist me. But it soon became evident that there was a wall between us. Not to every one can we give the key to our souls, confident that our hidden troubles will be rightly grasped.

In my desire to conceal nothing, I told Mr. Richardson some of my dreadful questionings and doubts. His face assumed a grave and almost forbidding expression, while he made some reply that I could not quite understand, but in a tone which was far from putting me at ease. As the interview proceeded, I felt hurt, though I could not have told exactly what inflicted the pain. If Mr. Richardson supposed himself to be probing my wounds, I can only say it was in a way that tended to aggravate, rather than to heal, them. It had been at a great cost of feeling that I had laid open my heart. With bitter regret that I had made so useless a sacrifice, I rose to leave, when he said, —

“I don't think I can do you any good. I have neither time nor inclination to argue with one disposed to unbelief. Indeed, there is no encouragement for you, till you abandon those foolish speculations to which you have given yourself.”

I looked up as if he had struck me.

“I repeat it, Miss Frazer. Your questionings, as I fear,

spring from an unwomanly ambition to be wise above what is written. Correct this, be willing to take your proper place, and there may possibly be hope for you."

I could not utter one word, but walked away with a swelling heart, feeling that, when I had asked for bread, he had given me a stone. There it lay on my soul—that stifling weight against which I cried out instinctively. For a time I was indignant against Mr. Richardson for his harsh, and, I think, unmerited charge. But at length I consoled myself by reflecting, that between certain minds there are subtle antagonisms which prevent a full comprehension, and which no amount of mutual good will, or labored reasoning, can overcome. And why should it not be thus? If in the world of matter there are chemical substances which refuse to unite, why may there not be impassable gulfs between one soul and another?

There was a young lady of Ironton, a Miss Helen Ware, whom I had met once or twice in company, and to whom I had felt instinctively attracted. But she had shortly after left town, so that we had formed but little acquaintance.

One morning, a few weeks after my call at the parsonage, I went out for a solitary stroll. Nature was full of buoyancy and brightness, but not one of her glad voices reached my heart. Wandering into the primeval forest, I found a place of deep seclusion. As I gazed upwards into the topmost branches of those regal trees, I thought how near they were to heaven, how far removed was I. Should I ever be any nearer? I threw myself on the grass, and buried my face in my hands. Suddenly I heard footsteps, and raising my head, Helen Ware stood before me. She started as she came upon me in my solitude.

"Miss Frazer, I believe."

I simply bowed.

"I trust I am not an intruder;" and then, in a gentle voice, as if asking a favor, "may I take a seat in your hermitage?"

"I have no right to exclude any one, but I recommend you to seek more agreeable company."

"I shall make the most of your permission," said she, seating herself beside me, "for there must be some affinity between us to draw us both to this spot."

"The same kind of affinity that there is between bitter and sweet, I presume," answered I, a little sharply, "or between the polar and the tropical climes."

"A union of which may be better than either alone. So you see I am not to be repelled."

Then reaching up, she broke off a blossoming branch, playfully adding, —

"Shall I crown you, Miss Frazer?"

"With thorns, if it is to have any significance."

"Nay, for there is One who has worn a crown of thorns, that he might win for us a crown of rejoicing."

"Not for me."

"And why not, dear Miss Frazer?"

"Because," said I, moved by one of my sudden impulses, "there is no help for me on earth, or in heaven."

"Ask and ye shall receive."

Gradually she had drawn nearer, and now she put her arm round me. Involuntarily I laid my head on her shoulder, while the tears began to drop. She said nothing, but let me weep in silence.

We had not been together long, before her gentle hand

lifted the veil from my sorrowing heart. There was no wall between us, — not so much as the shadow of one. Intuitively she divined my meaning, even before the thought or feeling was half expressed. And her words, so low and tender, fell on me with the most soothing influence. There, under the trees, we sat and talked till my heart was knit to hers. And when we parted, I went home with the feeling that I had *gained a friend*.

CHAPTER XXII.

How vividly does the image of Helen Ware rise before me, with that sweet Madonna face, lighted up by the softest hazel eyes! She had strangely stirred my wayward nature. But it was not by her external loveliness, in striking contrast with that of the bewitching Ednah, who was my ideal of superb beauty. There was a subduing influence about her, which it cost me some study to account for. She was a true, pure-minded woman, with lofty aims. Yet this was not the secret of her spell. It was a wonderful power of appreciation and of sympathy, which fitted her to be a comforting angel. She wore a mantle of charity broad enough to inwrap the meanest and most miserable of her fellow-beings. But her general kindness did not interfere with her particular friendships. In that respect she met all my desires, and that is saying not a little for so ardent and exclusive a nature as mine.

I soon found that Helen had early been put to school to that cross-grained dame, Sorrow. Indeed, one would know this instinctively. Without some such experience, the rich minor chords, so essential to the highest harmony of the soul, must inevitably be wanting. But in her, those sweeter, softer tones came out so fully as to indicate that she had experienced some great adversity.

I had promised to spend the coming Saturday with my

new friend. And, after a good deal of parleying with myself, I concluded to open my heart still more fully; which I found easier than I anticipated. I told her how utterly all my purposes had failed, and how I had become convinced that, for all the good I had so strenuously attempted, my motives were wholly selfish. I also added, that God seemed to me a hard Master, exacting of miserable human nature what it was impossible to render.

Tenderly pressing my hand, —

“You are not cold and indifferent, as you imagine, dear Hope. On the contrary, you feel intensely. But, in some way, I think you misconceive the character of God. And you will never gain light or peace by dwelling on the terrors of the law, or by dissecting your own emotions. Have you read Isaac Taylor’s ‘Natural History of Enthusiasm’?”

I shook my head.

“Then you must let me give you some extracts.”

Leaving the room, she soon returned with the book, from which she read aloud several passages, which went straight to my heart. Some of these I cannot forbear copying.

“There are anatomists of piety who destroy all the freshness and vigor of faith, and hope, and charity, by immuring themselves night and day in the infected atmosphere of their own bosoms. Let a man of warm heart, who is happily surrounded with the dear objects of the social affections, try the effect of a parallel practice; let him institute anxious scrutinies of his feelings towards those whom, hitherto, he has believed himself to regard with unfeigned love; let him use in these inquiries all the fine distinctions of a casuist, and all the profound analyses of a metaphysician, and spend hours daily in pulling asunder every complex emotion of

tenderness that has given grace to the domestic life ; and moreover, let him journalize these examinations, and note particularly, and with the scrupulosity of an accomptant, how much of the mass of his kindly sentiments he has ascertained to consist of genuine love, and how much was selfishness in disguise ; and let him, from time to time, solemnly resolve to be, in future, more disinterested and less hypocritical in his affection towards his family. What, at the end of a year, would be the result of such a process ? What, but a wretched debility and dejection of the heart, and a strangeness and a sadness of the manners, and a suspension of the native expressions and ready offices of zealous affection ?

“ If the heart be a dungeon of foul and vaporous poisons, — if it be a cage of unclean birds, — * * * let the vault of damp and dark impurity be thrown open to the purifying gales of heaven, and to the bright shining of the sun ; so shall the hated occupants leave their haunts, and the noxious exhalations be exhausted, and the death-chills be expelled.”

As Helen read, I listened with almost breathless interest. When she closed the book, I remained silent.

“ Our Lord has no pleasure in self-torture, dear Hope. But it seems to me you make your cross an intolerable burden, and then lash yourself because you sink under it. Your duties are distasteful, because performed upon compulsion. Is it not so ? ”

“ It may be.”

She continued earnestly, —

“ You do God injustice in believing that your discomforts and self-inflicted penances can give him pleasure. What doth he ‘ require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy,

and to walk humbly with thy God'? Can you not take him at his word? 'He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax.'"

I could only falter out, "My way is very dark; help me to understand myself."

"It is not light, but love, you need, my dear friend. I wish you would take into your heart the tender promises of God, in all their richness and extent."

As she continued, I began to see how useless had been my most earnest efforts, — how wasted my self-introspection, — how barren all my years in His sight who "measures life by love." But this very consciousness only increased my darkness and discouragement; for what could insure me against a similar failure in the future? So I could only answer, —

"I cannot see my way. The state you describe is as far off from me as the serene depths of ether, to which I look up despairingly."

In a low voice, she repeated those touching words of Scripture, —

"'He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, and with his stripes we are healed.' 'Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us.' Ah, Hope! here is love — the infinite God assuming our nature, that he might come near to us, and, reconciling us to himself, win us back from sin and ruin, to holiness and heaven. In this ineffable mystery of the Incarnation is infolded our redemption. You have been striving to purify and perfect yourself. Can you not commit your soul to Him who is able to cleanse it from all sin?"

"He is so glorious that I cannot freely approach him."

"But he is infinitely tender in his sympathy. 'For we

have not a High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are.' Will you not trust him?"

"I will try."

"God bless you, my dear sister, and make you to know his love which passeth knowledge."

The day which I spent with my friend formed one of those crises to which the soul ever looks back. Her desire to do me good was not, I presume, any more sincere than that of Mr. Richardson. But she had met my difficulties with a more intimate knowledge of the heart, and with a tenderer sympathy, if not a diviner skill. And I think her labor was not altogether in vain. The hard, stony soil had been before ploughed in deep furrows, and in them, as I trust, were now scattered a few seeds of that supernal plant, blossoming so richly in her own life.

CHAPTER XXIII.

ONE evening, as I was leaving the dining-room, after tea, Mr. Northrup met me at the door, —

“Miss Frazer, I have been waiting to beg a song from you. I hope you will not refuse me, for it is an age since I have had that pleasure.”

Without better reasons than any I might offer, I could not well decline. So, as I had stood sufficiently long upon my dignity to relieve him from the necessity of irksome civilities, I yielded, and went into the parlor. After I had played and sung a few pieces, I rose to go.

“Miss Frazer,” asked he, with his old playfulness, “why are you afraid of me?”

“Afraid of you!” I echoed, — with some anger, I doubt not, in my tone.

“Well, *anything* to get at the truth. I have made up my mind not to be repelled by you any longer.”

“Indeed!”

“I will endure all your mocking words and tones till I have finished, but you must hear me. For a long time we were good friends. I was not conscious of doing anything to displease you, or of persecuting you with my attentions, but took the liberty to treat you with the freedom of a friend. Something, however, has come between us.”

“Very complaisant, truly! So you cannot conceive of a

lady's falling out with you, or being wearied of your company!"

"I cannot conceive that Miss Frazer is one to treat a friend capriciously or unjustly."

"You may have been mistaken in her."

"Why do you persist in treating me thus? If I were suing for your hand, and were unpleasantly urgent, you might deem me presumptuous, and scorn me, if you chose. But surely it is little that I ask—only that the natural intercourse between associate teachers may continue as it was in the beginning."

How humiliated I felt to have these words thrown at me thus! For a moment I was unable to reply, and he continued:—

"Even a rejected lover you treat with more favor than you do me; though I am utterly unconscious of having lost my claim to your friendship."

"What do you mean?"

"Just what I say. But I don't intend to take offence, so you had better reserve your indignation for some less amiable person. Indeed, what possible use is there in our quarrelling, Miss Frazer? If you will convict me of any naughty deeds, I will ask pardon. And more than that, I am generous enough to forgive, unsolicited, all your disdainful treatment. Now, please answer me honestly. Has this affair been a mere woman's caprice? Or has any one made mischief between us? Or, again, have you *really* anything against me?" And he looked at me earnestly.

Feeling that I could no longer evade the question, I determined to deal with him frankly.

"I have nothing against you, Mr. Northrup; but I heard

that your friendly attentions were dictated by compassion, and as such, I scorned to receive them."

"'Twas she! 'twas that meddlesome old Betts, who is as false as her hair," replied he, with a good-natured laugh.

I was annoyed at the coolness with which he said this, but could not deny his inference.

"I understand all. Now let us shake hands and be friends."

I struggled down my tingling pride. It was, in his case, an open, hearty good will, without the smallest shade of sentiment; whereas, my friendship for him, like my few other friendships, was strongly tinged with romance.

"Is all made up?" asked he, looking at me with an arch expression.

"All, so far as I am concerned," replied I, carelessly.

"Then will you come back to your old seat at the table?"

"I prefer to remain where I am," I tartly made answer, glad of a chance to thwart him in something.

"So you really prefer Mr. Benedict's vicinage to mine," commented he, with provoking indifference. "Well, he certainly need not despair."

Thus the old manner of things again came about between us. We returned to our Greek, and in one way and another, were thrown much together. To set myself more at ease, I dropped the slightly confidential air, which formerly had stolen between us, and took pains to exhibit my native perverseness. I contradicted him; I treated him to badinage and ridicule; I often refused his requests; and was in every way captious and unreasonable. Thus I met indifference with indifference, protecting myself against him with a barricade of bristling words. But what was my surprise when I found

that by this instinctive warfare I was making undesigned aggressions upon my neighbor's territory.

In the course of three months our positions were respectively changed, though I think Mr. Northrup was hardly conscious of it. But my saucy tongue had won me some victories which did more to cure my self-distrust than would whole days of argument. I could not shut my eyes to the fact that my influence with my fellow-teacher was daily increasing.

As the weeks flew away, this game between two hearts made rapid progress. There came to be an eager lighting of Mr. Northrup's eye, and a quick flushing of his cheek, which I could not well misunderstand. Judging him as I did, I ought instantly to have changed my mode of treatment. But, mingled with a certain feeling of dissatisfaction and anxiety, was also a strange content. Affection was the thing I most coveted. It would be soon enough to determine whether I should reject it, when it was offered me. In the mean time, I would sun myself in this pleasant friendship. Thus speciously did I shut the mouth of reason.

I think Helen Ware began to feel a little solicitude, though she said nothing. It was a subject on which I could not speak, and perhaps she felt that interference would do no good. In love, as in other matters, every one prefers to acquire wisdom for himself, at whatever cost.

My twentieth birthday! How Mr. Northrup ascertained this, I cannot say, but I was surprised, after our Greek reading the evening before, to hear him ask, —

“Did you know I had taken the liberty to give the school a holiday to-morrow?”

"But why take a holiday this warm weather, when you can't make any use of it?"

"Do you suppose I know nothing about your red-letter days? I have been presuming enough to order a horse and carriage, relying on your granting me a favor on which I have set my heart."

"What may that be, Mr. Presumption?"

"The pleasure of taking you to Greenwood Pond."

"I have a great mind to do no such thing."

"But I am sure you will not disappoint me," said he, with a beseeching look.

"No gentleman has any business to engage a horse for such a purpose till he knows the lady's mind. But since you have done so, I recommend you to invite Miss Betts."

"Do not mock me, Miss Frazer," said he, with an angry flush. "Unless you go with me, of course I shall not go at all."

"Then, to save your credit at the livery stable, I will go."

"And not in the least to please yourself, or me? I pray you, do not keep me on such spare diet, but drop a gracious word, once in a month, at farthest."

"You get as much grace as you deserve."

"That may be, but from you I crave more. At what hour shall we start?"

"I will be amiable, and leave that to you."

"It will be cooler and pleasanter riding before the dew is off the grass. Will you think me crazy if I propose to leave before breakfast — at six o'clock?"

"At six, then, let it be; but now good night, for I have a call to make."

"May I not accompany you?"

“No, thank you.”

Mr. Northrup's room was above mine, and I could hear him walking back and forth to a late hour. But for all that, he was up at five, for I caught his quick step. At the appointed time, I heard a carriage drive up. Then a slight tap at my door, and I was escorted down stairs. While he was adjusting the harness, I jumped in.

“You always cheat me thus, but I hope to be revenged some day. But look up at that front window, *silly*.”

I cast my eye towards Miss Betts' window, and there stood the veritable lady, peeping at us through her blinds. She had not the smallest idea that we could see her, or she, of all persons, would never have stood there in her *robe de soir*, and — without her wig. After Mr. Northrup had taken his seat, he looked up, and roguishly raising his hat, made one of his most graceful bows, whereat she instantly dodged, and we saw her no more.

“Now, Jupiter,” said my companion to his spirited horse, “we will shortly be out of the highway;” and putting him to a rapid trot, we were soon on the forest road, when the reins were slackened.

What a superb morning that was! And with what charming coquetry did the gay sunbeams peep through the leafy branches of those magnificent old trees, lighting up the gems that night had heaped upon them into a splendor of beauty. We rode more and more slowly. At length I took hold of the reins, and stopping the horse, was out before Mr. Northrup had any idea of what I was doing. In a moment he was beside me.

“I must stand here and gaze up through these trees.”

“Always self-sufficient, never willing to depend on another,

—what would you do, Miss Frazer, if you should sprain your ankle?”

“Let you wait upon me to your heart’s content.”

“I could almost wish then —”

“Is not this enchanting?” — I broke in.

He looked pleased with my enjoyment, but as if not quite satisfied.

“I think I have never before delighted in nature as I have this summer,” I remarked.

“I have noticed the improvement in your spirits, but have attributed some of it—and I have no doubt correctly—to your pleasure in tormenting me.”

“You are right there, and I hope to have a great deal more such pleasure.”

“Now admit honestly, was not that, after all, your chief inducement for accepting my invitation?”

“What if it was? I don’t intend to be disappointed.”

“But have you then no spot of tenderness in your heart?” asked he, with a searching glance.

“I challenge you to find any,” answered I, composedly meeting his gaze.

He sighed, and was silent for a moment, but presently resumed, —

“I suppose you know there are other pleasant places awaiting our presence.”

“Then I will go at once;” and declining his offered hand, I got back into the carriage.

At length we reached Lindenville, where we stopped for breakfast at a charming house, kept for the entertainment of those who came to visit the pond. What a pleasant meal that was! The cosy table with its snowy cloth, the hot

muffins, the nice eggs boiled to perfection, and the delicious coffee, which I told the maid to place on the table in the urn, — every thing is still vividly before me.

“Will you walk or ride to the pond?”

“Walk, to be sure;” and we were soon on our way.

We rambled on like children, running after butterflies, and stopping to gather flowers, with which we merrily pelted one another. But play as we might, the road was at length travelled over, and we stood on the borders of Greenwood Pond. Then we amused ourselves with skipping stones, and watching the eddying circles they made. When tired of this, we sat under the spreading trees, and gazed at the placid waters. Leaving me a moment, Mr. Northrup returned with a forget-me-not.

“Will you be gracious enough,” said he, playfully bending his knee, “to accept my flower and grant its petition?”

“Neither,” replied I, carelessly tearing it to pieces. “I have no faith in vows of everlasting remembrance.”

“You have no heart, I verily believe,” exclaimed he, with an air of vexation, presently adding, “but have you then no faith in *me*?”

“Faith in your good intentions, much; but in your everlasting remembrance, not a bit of it.”

“And are you absolutely determined —”

“I am absolutely determined to secure that lily,” said I, interrupting him.

Running down to the water, I stepped on a log, and was trying to reach the lily, when my foot slipped. Mr. Northrup, who had not moved since I left him, now sprang, but too late to prevent my falling. That was the last thing I remembered.

CHAPTER XXIV.

WHEN I became conscious, I found myself lying on the grass, while my knight was drenching my forehead with a wet handkerchief. His face was full of concern as he bent over me.

"What is it?" asked I; but attempting to rise, the pain in my ankle soon brought everything to my recollection.

Faint as I was, I could not help smiling as I recalled our morning conversation. I saw that he thought of it also, but was too generous to note his advantage.

"Now, the next question is, — what am I to do?"

"I don't see but you will have to wait upon me," said I, trying to submit cheerfully to what was inevitable.

His eye lighted with pleasure, but in a moment he became grave.

"If I could only relieve your suffering ankle and make you comfortable. But to take you home now, and lose all this anticipated enjoyment!"

"Nonsense! Do you take me for so poor a heroine? You noticed that little house where we turned in. If you will go there and beg some arnica, or laudanum, and a strip of flannel, all will be right. Fortunately, you insisted on taking my large shawl."

He returned sooner than I expected, bringing what I had named, and a pair of pillows besides, so that he was able to

make me quite a comfortable couch on the sloping lawn. I hardly know why I dwell on these particulars, and yet it is natural, I suppose. The slight pain I had endured, together with my sense of dependence, must have softened my words and tones, or else *my time had come*.

Having done everything he could think of for my comfort, even to the plucking of the identical lily I had so vainly sought, Mr. Northrup seated himself on the grass beside me. Then stole in one of those strange silences we all have known.

I can scarcely tell how it happened. But, opposed as my judgment had been to his suit, I was not in the mood longer to resist him. There were certain magnetic passages between our eyes, when he whispered, — “Forever?”

And I answered, — “Forever.”

After a brief silence, — “I fear I am not so sorry about your sprain as I ought to be.”

“You don’t look very sorry.”

“How can I? But I should really like to know how long the siege would have lasted, but for your misfortune, which is my good fortune.”

“I might *never* have surrendered.”

“Well, now that you belong to me, I suppose I may call you Hope, without fear of your displeasure.”

“You can make the trial if you choose. But at home, I was often called Esperance, and sometimes Espy.”

“Then I shall experiment with that, dear Esperance, for I like it much. But, do you know,” added he playfully, “what I thought of your face when I first saw you?”

“Oh, yes, I know very well. Do you suppose I have for-

gotten daring you to the encounter the evening of my arrival, or your ill-concealed look of disappointment? But of course you think me a beauty now."

"Well—yes—this very minute, I do think exactly so. You have been growing less plain in my eyes till I had ceased to think anything about it, natural worshipper of beauty as I am. But to-day—*now*—you are really—"

"All in your eyes."

"It is not in my eyes. Independent of everything, you are at this present moment—"

"Nay, not independent of love,"—again interrupting him.

I got a forfeit for that speech, and then he went on with his flatteries, which, I must admit, were not at all unpalatable.

"Now," said I at length, "we have both been dreaming. But it is time to wake up, and behave like reasonable pedagogues as we are. What would our scholars—what would Miss Brimblecum and Miss Betts say to this scene?"

"Truly; and what would friend Benedict say?"

"They must not have a chance to say anything, for you must get me home as fast as you can."

"It is only half past two, and it will be better to reach our boarding-house when it is nearer twilight. So do grant me another hour."

"Agreed, if we can spend the time in returning to common life."

"Very well. And since I have spoken of *my* first impressions, I have a claim to know yours."

"Do you really wish to know them?"

"Certainly, provided you think well enough of me now."

"Better than you deserve, I fear."—Here he put his hand

over my mouth. "I have read you as a true gentleman, of noble and generous impulses, but as wanting in depth and stability, and therefore not one to be unhesitatingly relied on. Shall I proceed?"

"Of course," replied he, looking rather hurt.

"Not if it pains you."

"I prefer you would; so please go on."

"Some considerable love of approbation, with a good measure of self-assurance — amiability — let me see — what else?"

"And what must I think of Miss Frazer, to trust herself with such a character?"

"Think that she has her weaknesses, as well as you; that she has all along resisted your attractions, and repelled you to the utmost of her power; but that, with a woman's genuine inconsistency, she now gives herself to you, heart and soul, and in spite of her former opinion, puts entire faith in you."

"You shall never repent your confidence, dear Hope."

"But will you always feel as now?"

"Always, dearest."

"But suppose I should grow uglier than I was in your eyes when we first met?"

"You could not look ugly to me."

"And blind?"

"I would be eyes to you. But Heaven forbid such a misfortune!"

"And deaf?"

"I would find some way of communion."

"But suppose a younger, fairer face should come in your way?"

"No face could attract me from you."

"But, Walter, what do you love me for?"

"Because, to begin with, I cannot help it. Then I have felt that I *could* rely implicitly upon you. I am forced to admit that your opinion of me is not incorrect. I am, by nature, changeable and irresolute. Your decision of character first surprised me as a new experience of woman; then, it interested me; and, at last, I came to feel that it was just what I needed as a complement to my own nature. But I did not argue thus till I found myself in love. I cannot tell how it happened, for it was a result contrary to all my expectations. I am not worthy of you; but, such as I am, dear Esperance, take me, and make me as much better as you can. You shall be my good angel."

"May God help us both, and may we never wander from him!"

"Amen!" and there was another sweet silence.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE hour had passed, and again the question came, — how was I to be moved? After some consultation, it was concluded that Walter should go to the little house near by, and send some one for the carriage.

The ride being at length safely accomplished, my hero assisted me to my own room. Further, he took upon himself all the explanations and arrangements, procuring a little girl expressly to wait upon me. In the course of the next day, I sent her out with the following note: —

“DEAR HELEN: A great wonder has happened. Everything is rose-color, and life bounds joyously in my veins. Can you not guess why? I am sure you can.

My beloved Helen, dearer this moment than ever, I am unworthy of this great boon. And yet I have a feeling that you may not be satisfied; that you may think, as I did until yesterday, that we are unsuited to one another. I have long resisted what, it seems, is my destiny, fearing that Mr. Northrup — for of course you know it must be he — was too much of a surface-man, that he was not capable of so passionate and exclusive an affection as I felt to be necessary; in short, that he was not strong enough to support and guide so impulsive and wayward a being. But I have changed my mind, though I cannot explain why. And what is the

use of reasoning? He has wooed and he has won ; and, Heaven helping me, he shall never regret it. I will not deny that I have moments of sadness. I should not be I, if it were not so ; and indeed, is not sorrow always more or less remotely allied to joy? Yet, notwithstanding such moments, I am only too happy in loving and being beloved. And if you knew what clouds had hung over all my life, you would not wonder that this happiness has something of exultation in it.

But I have not told you of my sprained ankle, which had no small share in what has come to pass, and which will confine me prisoner for some days. My company is claimed this evening, but I shall expect you without fail to-morrow.

Now, I can heartily subscribe myself

ESPERANCE."

"DEAR FRIEND: I rejoice immeasurably in your joy, and pray that, through your happiness, many may be made happy. If I have had an impression that Mr. Northrup was not suited to you, I waive it all, and yield to your judgment. Besides, I really know him but little.

My heart breathes the earnest wish that you may be happy in each other, happier in doing good together, and happiest in the love of God.

Faithfully,

Your HELEN."

What delightful days were those of my confinement! To be sure, Miss Brimblecum was rather crabbed, evidently not liking the aspect of affairs ; and Miss Betts, who liked it still less, bridled and giggled, and " guessed she knew one or

two things," and, by sundry dark hints and surmisings, seemed endeavoring to dash my happiness. But in vain.

Helen came in almost every day, and entered with her usual unselfish interest into all my feelings and plans. But the evenings — those Elysian evenings! How I watched for *his* step on his return from school! And when I heard him lightly climbing the stairs, sometimes two at a time, how strangely were the throbs of my heart multiplied! I would listen to that rapid step above my head till it descended again; then a light tap, and he was kneeling at my couch with some offering of fruits, or flowers which exhaled fragrance as a censer its perfume. But it was the fragrance of the love that gave them which wrapped me in silent joy.

In those days, when my heart went out towards everything, I thought of my sainted mother and my sweet Ada. And then I thought of my father, towards whom I had so long cherished an unforgiving spirit. After all, he was my *father*; and did I owe him no filial treatment? I pondered long as to what was my duty in the case, and finally resolved to consult Helen. To no human being had I ever told my history, nor did I now intend to do it. But by stating a few general facts, I thought I might secure her opinion.

The next time she came, I opened the subject. I told her that my father was proud and reserved, and that, in an excited mood, I had several times forgotten what was due to a parent, and had so conducted as to bring upon me his displeasure. Nor did I conceal the fact, that I had met his severity with a resentment and defiance, which had never wholly died out of my heart. After a long conversation, she advised me to write to my father, fully acknowledging every-

thing that had been wrong on my part, and then to ask forgiveness, and beg for his affection.

“But I have reason to suppose that any such communication may only displease him.”

“Then you will have done all that you can now do, and must leave the rest with God. But I am sure you will be happier for having taken such a step; and that if, unconsciously, a little of the old leaven is still hidden in your soul, there is no better process for purging it out.”

“I have no doubt there is plenty of such leaven. It has always been very hard for me to bear with any measure of injustice.”

“It is one of the hardest lessons for any of us, dear Hope. But there is One, on whom injustice and indignity of every sort were heaped, who is our tender Helper, and who can instil into us his own forgiving spirit.”

“I fear my letter may appear as if constrained by a sense of duty.”

“The only way to avoid that,” replied she, smiling, “is to have the heart just right, and then let it overflow. And you know as well as I, that to become right, it must be bathed in the fulness of divine love, so that it shall regard even unlovely characters with tender interest and affection.”

I had a long struggle with myself that night; but my earnest cries were heard, and I was enabled to obtain the victory over that resentful spirit which I had so long indulged, and to rejoice in a new baptism of love—a love which could embrace even him who had most injured me.

After many unsuccessful attempts, I succeeded in writing to my father, adding at the close of my letter that some time, if agreeable to him, I should be happy to visit home. I con-

sidered it doubtful whether I should have any reply, but it was not long before I received the following:—

“Your letter arrived in due season. As you have come to a sense of your mistakes, I am quite willing to forgive you. I may have been unduly severe, but of that I will not now speak, except to say that I was deceived when I charged you with being untruthful.

“Your aunt Drummond, with whom Joy has been staying for more than a year, is dead, and Joy has returned home, but it is not the place for her. Horatio, I am sorry to tell you, has been expelled from college.

“I will only add, come home as soon as you please, and stay as long as you feel inclined. Let me know beforehand, and John shall meet you.”

I shrank from speaking to Mr. Northrup of this correspondence, though I at once made known the plans I formed in consequence. I could not disregard the voice which told me I ought to visit home. At the end of the school-year Walter was to leave teaching, and complete his law studies. I had been solicited to fill his place, and, after talking it over, concluded to do so. But we both felt that it would be best for me to take the next summer for my journey and visit.

“I will come on in August,” said Walter, “and we will spend a month in travelling, returning by way of Canada and Niagara. And some time before you leave, we must go down the Mississippi to St. Louis. But I shall be widowed indeed without you.”

“You will learn to appreciate my great value.”

“True, but at an expense which I cannot willingly incur. However, I will try to imitate your bravery. And, besides, there are long months of enjoyment before we need think of separation.”

It seemed to me that old *Tempus* must have taken to himself a new pair of wings to have “*fugited*” so rapidly as he did. Certainly, the long winter days melted away like snow-flakes in the sun. Nor was it strange, for we were in the sunniest clime on earth — the clime of *Love*, whose skies are always fair, and its verdure bright. So I found myself borne onward into the future, long before I had done with the joyous present. If any misgivings as to my betrothal stole over me, I arraigned them as traitors, and sentenced them to immediate execution. My own Walter! it was ungrateful to doubt his steadfastness or his worth!

CHAPTER XXVI.

ON a certain balmy morning, in the month of June, we took the steamer which passes Iron-ton on its way to St. Louis. Finding a quiet corner on deck, we secured possession of it.

“It is like a dream to be here,” said I to Walter. “From my childhood, I have longed to sail on the broad bosom of this Father of Waters. In one respect, however, I am agreeably disappointed. I used to hear of the muddy Mississippi, but I have seen nothing to give significance to that name; on the contrary, its waters are clear and placid.”

“Wait till you have passed Alton, before you make up your mind.”

We soon fell into silence. My thoughts were of our approaching separation, and yet they were not so sad as to prevent my deep happiness in the present. Suddenly Walter broke the lull.

“What would become of me, Esperance, if you should prove unfaithful?”

“I unfaithful!—”

“I don’t suppose there is any danger, and yet—”

“You have some fears, perhaps, as to your own constancy.”

“Pray, spare your sarcasm; you know my heart.”

“In all its windings?”

"I have concealed nothing," replied he, with a little vexation in his tone. "Do you begin to repent your trust in me?"

"Not in the least, Walter. And no one but yourself can ever induce me to distrust you. But look!"

We were nearing the junction; and it was to me a remarkable spectacle. The Mississippi was flowing on in tranquil majesty and purity, when the boiling, turbid Missouri approached it. Then ensued a strange and desperate contest. The smoothly flowing stream at first withstood the fierce onset of the swift, infuriated waters,—gentle, transparent eddies resisting raging and impure gorges. But, after a time, the latter caught the former in their mad sweep, and whirled them round and round, till at length they were swallowed up in one vast, foul, and furious whirlpool, when they rolled on in dark wedlock, a turbid, wrathful, and gigantic flood. Not a word had been spoken as we watched the strange phenomenon; but now Walter asked,—

"Why do you sigh so profoundly?"

"I did it unconsciously; but that is a sight of mournful interest."

"Moralizing, as usual, my little preacher. But why is it a mournful sight?"

"Because it symbolizes the conflict between right and wrong,—purity and impurity. And I am sad that the latter should get so easy and complete a victory. Look! There is not the smallest resistance now. The Mississippi rolls along with its great, filthy burden, just as contentedly as if it had never known anything better."

"You must not scandalize this glorious river, or you will draw down vengeance upon your head. Why, it is the very *Thor* of these Western people. And its muddy water is delightful to their taste."

“You don’t mean that they drink it.”

“Certainly I do, and with downright gusto. And why should they not? It is as pleasant a drink as the far-famed and equally turbid waters of the Nile. And as to that, you know there is a saying among the Mohammedans, that if their prophet had but tasted them, he would have asked of God immortality upon the earth, that he might drink of them forever.”

“Well, I can believe anything after such a story.”

“I will order you the delicious draught, if you like.”

“Never,” said I, shaking my head in disgust.

“All association, Esperance.”

Our point of destination was St. Louis. So we disembarked at the landing, and taking a carriage, drove up over the noble quays into the thriving city, where we made several *détours* for the sake of passing through the principal streets. At length we reached the hotel where we were to dine. Alighting, Walter gave me his arm, and we were ushered into a private parlor. I untied my bonnet and threw myself into a comfortable chair. Walter went to the door with the servant, who soon appeared with a tray, containing a large glass pitcher of what I judged to be iced-lemonade. Walter filled a goblet, and, being quite thirsty, I was not long in emptying it.

“Allow me,” said he, lifting the pitcher to refill it. I gave him the glass, remarking, —

“It is not lemonade, as I thought; but a still pleasanter drink. What is it?”

“Sandarony,” replied he, with the utmost gravity, touching his glass to mine, while he added, “To your health, Miss Frazer.”

"As I was leisurely sipping it, he looked at me with a decidedly mischievous expression."

"What makes you look so wicked?"

"Oh, nothing; only I am glad you find the muddy Mississippi so charming a drink."

I instantly set down my goblet, making a wry face, while Walter laughed at me without mercy. But in spite of all my faces, I am obliged to report myself as being beguiled by that naughty man into drinking of that same muddy water with my dinner.

In the afternoon, we visited some of the public buildings, and, among them, the Roman Catholic Institution, with its fine library. A priest—a Jesuit, as I believe—did the honors. He was an old man of such urbanity and kindness, that I ventured to assail him with questions. He answered them with marked courtesy, and, when we left, made several bows, expressing his assured hope of seeing me again.

"The good man thinks he has half converted you."

"It would take the whole college of cardinals, and the pope in the bargain, to do that."

"But you often express a peculiar interest in certain things connected with Romanism."

"Oh, yes! I should like to worship in a solemn, old cathedral, with its dim, religious light, and its grand orchestral music. And I am fond of a ritual. In certain moods, our simple Congregational service seems rather barren. And I do not wonder that those who are brought up in the Episcopal church, become strongly attached to its forms and observances. But a great, dead, cumbersome machinery,—a splendid body with no soul, such as I have supposed the Romanist system to be,—it would take something little short of a miracle to make me a convert to that."

“Yet Thomas à Kempis and Madame Guyon are favorites with you.”

“To be sure they are. Who can help loving such spirits, by whatever name they are called?”

“I, on the contrary, must own to the feeling that Madame Guyon was fanatical, if not insane.”

“I wish such insanity was multiplied a hundred fold. But nowadays, there is such a noisy pressure of external duties, that the still voice of the Spirit is often drowned.”

“You are an enthusiast, dear Espy. I almost wonder you were never impelled to take the veil, and spend your days in some cloistered shade.”

“Oh, but I believe in work, too. However, if I were a Roman Catholic, I have no doubt my vocation would be a convent-life.”

“And mine, then, to scale the wall, and persuade you back to life and love.”

Thus we chatted as we walked down to the landing, and found our morning's corner upon deck. The next day I was to start for the East, and as I sat there, fancy strove to construct a bridge between our parting and our next meeting. Walter, too, was unusually taciturn, so that at length I felt it incumbent on me to break the silence.

“Could anything be more delightful than this brilliant sunset on the water?”

“One thing only—the re-union after our separation.”

“Oh, but that is a great fall. In plain view of such a glorious spectacle, it is treason to think of ourselves.”

“But my heart is full of you, dear Espy. I know not how to let you go. You cannot imagine how miserably weak I am without you.”

“Nonsense! If *you* are weak, what is to become of me?”

“You are strong enough to stand alone. You were made expressly for a heroine. And —”

“You are a lucky man to have secured so inestimable a prize? Was that what you intended to say?”

“Do not speak in mockery now.”

And looking up, I saw a tender mist over his eyes. The contagion seized me, but for his sake I controlled my emotion, and laying my hand on his arm, I said cheerfully, —

“We will be faithful to each other, Walter, and God will bless our love.”

CHAPTER XXVII.

I HAD not been an hour in the home of my childhood, before I saw that a great change had taken place. My father, who had met me, not affectionately, as I had hoped, but very courteously, looked considerably older and more care-worn than when I last saw him. Ednah was beautiful as ever; but an unyielding, defiant air had taken the place of that bewitching softness I so well remembered. She was barely civil. Joy was out when I arrived, but returned in the evening, appearing on my vision a very dream of loveliness. Petite, slender, and buoyant, a head that moved with a bird-like motion, soft violet eyes, a complexion which, at the risk of being termed sentimental, I shall liken to rose leaves crushed on ivory, with lips that looked as if made on purpose to be kissed. This witching picture was set in a frame of rippling, golden hair. What this fair casket held, I had yet to determine. But I was glad to discover that Joy was quite favorably disposed towards her long absent sister.

It seemed to me that no effort or sacrifice would be too great if I could only prove a blessing to my father's family. But my past miserable failures had taught me my own weakness and want of wisdom, and often, during those days, did I lift up my heart to heaven for guidance. I think God helped me, for my father treated me with more and more confidence. And, to my great surprise, he proposed that Joy

should return with me, and attend the Seminary at Ironton, — a proposition with which my sister seemed quite pleased.

Under the circumstances, I did not care to invite Mr. Northrup to my home. So it was arranged that he should meet me at Fairfield, my sister joining us afterwards at Saratoga.

The morning I left, my father sent for me into the library. As I entered, he met me with a bill of a large amount in his hand, saying, —

“I hope your unwillingness to receive anything from your father has passed away.”

“My salary is ample enough for all my wants; and as it is so, I trust you will excuse my love of independence. Besides, I shall one of these days be drawing on you for a *trousseau*.”

His face darkened, and I continued, “But with all my independence, whenever I can be any comfort to you, I will leave everything and come home.”

“If you are too proud to receive a small favor from me, I certainly shall never send for you.”

“Then I yield.”

As I took the bill, I ventured to press his hand to my lips — the first token of filial affection I ever remembered to have given him. I fancied he was moved, though he said nothing.

From the library I proceeded to Ednah’s private parlor, the place of so many varied associations, and which I had not entered since I so fatally displeased her.

“Ednah, I have taken the liberty to come here to say good-by. If I have wronged you in anything, forgive me, and let us part in peace.”

"It is I who have been wrong; but my destiny was upon me. I am miserable, and am plunging into still deeper misery."

"Dear Ednah, it is not too late to begin a new life, and God will help you."

"Don't speak that name,"—she exclaimed fiercely;—"It is too late, Espy. My doom cannot be averted. Your father—I loathe him."

"I ought not to hear this, dear Ednah, but my heart is full of tenderness and pity for you. I implore you not to yield to temptation. May God forgive and bless you."

She clasped me for one moment in her arms, then turned away, and I left her.

The stage stopped at the Fairfield Hotel, and in a moment those laughing eyes, now brimful of joy, met mine. Why should I ever have feared for him?

"You precious little Hope," said he, hurrying me into the parlor. Then lifting up my face, he gazed at me steadily.

"It seems to me you are a trifle thinner. I do believe you have been pining for me."

He thereupon began a series of demonstrations.

"Be quiet, you savage man, or you will spoil my new cottage straw."

"Take it off, then, and let me come nearer."

And without waiting, he untied it, and drew me close beside him.

"Am I not faithful and trustworthy, and all that? And aren't you glad you concluded to confide in me?"

"You haven't been through fire and water yet, so I can't tell how you would endure the trial."

“Nonsense! you little infidel. Now do comfort me by saying that you are delighted to see my face.”

“You must discover that for yourself.”

“Look straight at me then, so that I can gaze down into those depths. Well, that is a satisfactory answer.”

In a few days we reached Saratoga. I had told Walter about my little sister, who was to be with us the next day.

“I fear she will come between us, and engross your time. And, after such a dearth of your society, I want a monopoly.”

“That is a naughty selfishness. Besides, Joy is only a child, and will not interfere with our enjoyment.”

At the expected time my sister arrived. Walter, as he afterwards told me, was silent from amazement, saying that he had prepared himself to see a little girl of ten or twelve.

“She is but fifteen,” I replied, “and I always think of her as a child.”

After a week or two at Saratoga, we started in the stage-coach for the North, being joined in our excursion by Mr. and Mrs. Mordecai, — a Jewish gentleman and lady, — and a gallant young Southron, Benjamin Nelson by name. We were a merry company, and contrived most thoroughly to spice our enjoyment of the country through which we passed. We took an early supper at Glenn’s Falls, and then left for Lake George. A heavy thunder shower came up suddenly, which so terrified Joy that it took both Walter and myself to quiet her. We stopped for a transient refuge at the sign of “The Golden Ball,” where the gentlemen made an arch for us of umbrellas, thus gallanting us to the house. There, for the lack of chairs, we sat on cider-barrels and boxes — an odd-looking group.

As there seemed no prospect of cessation from showers, and our quarters were uncomfortable, we soon returned to the coach, and rode leisurely through the forests. There was just enough of obscurity to give that indefiniteness of view which affords so fine a play for the imagination. We revelled in the enchantment produced by the soft light reflected from our — (must I say it?) — *lanterns*, causing the drops of rain on the dark green foliage to glitter like so many jewels. The shadowy openings into the woods, with their rich canopy of glistening branches, seemed like bowers of the wood-nymphs. But, beautiful as this was, we were not sorry to arrive at Caldwell, on Lake George.

The next morning, on looking from my windows, I found that the village was as fresh and blooming as if spring had just flung over it her bridal attire. After breakfast we strolled through the place, coming down finally to the shores of the lake, where we all got into a sail-boat. Young Nelson devoted himself to my sister, while Walter and I sat together, looking down into the crystal waters, in which were mirrored the surrounding lofty hills.

“This is indeed a beautiful lake,” said Walter. “Our landlord tells me it is thirty or forty feet deep; and yet, look at that yellow, glistening sand on its bottom. I think it should retain its Indian name, Horicon, or Silver Water.”

“I like the name of *Lac Sacrement*, also. And I hardly wonder at the Catholics having used it at the Eucharist instead of wine.”

We had but one day for Lake George, and the next morning were awaked at four, to take passage in the Mountaineer for Ticonderoga, where we were duly thrilled with patriotic emotions. We found Mr. and Mrs. Mordecai agreeable

fellow-travellers, while our chivalrous Southron abounded in all manner of fun. He was evidently charmed with Joy's lovely face, and, naturally enough, had become her constant attendant. I felt a little disturbed, and the more so, when Walter asked me if I observed the admiring glances which the young stranger bestowed on her.

"I cannot let this go on," said I.

"But how can you help it?"

"I see no way but for us to be self-sacrificing, and part company for a time. You must take charge of my little Joy, and Nelson will have to content himself with me."

"But, dear Espy —"

"You must make no objection. I was anticipating too much from this journey, and must bear my disappointment patiently. It won't do, either, for my sister to be regretting Nelson's company; — so you must make yourself as agreeable as possible."

"And, in return for my self-denial, will you promise me an hour's recompense every evening?"

"I dare not promise. We must forget ourselves, and take our chance for enjoyment."

The next day Walter commenced with his new programme. Joy was evidently surprised, and not over pleased. But Walter exerted himself, and I soon had the relief of seeing her satisfied with the exchange. Indeed, how could she help liking him?

Nelson saw through our *ruse*, as he told me a few days after.

"I dare say you were wise," said he, "that is, if you were bound to dispel the enchantment. For, on my word, I was getting enamoured. But pray, what objection have you to me?"

“Not the smallest. But two such children as you and Joy ought not to enter on such a game these many years.”

“What a Minerva you are!” replied he, giving me an amused look. “But I wonder how Mr. Northrup could obey you. I declare I have almost ceased to regret that bewitching face, you make yourself so entertaining. If I were only a little older, I do believe I could fall in love with you.”

“You might do a worse thing, Mr. Nelson. It would be an admirable idea to secure such an experienced friend and wise counsellor as I. Just consider.”

CHAPTER XXVIII.

WE were now on Lake Champlain, that mirror of poetry and beauty. But I could not talk romance with Nelson, for he had not a particle of sentiment about him. So I chatted gayly, admiring in silence whenever I could get a chance.

From St. John's to La Prairie and beyond, the roads were wretched, while the rain poured in torrents. The side curtains were down, but through the window on the middle seat, Nelson caught glimpses of the barren country, as we were whirled, or rather jerked, from one ditch to another. He glowingly described the miserable shanties, as if they were superb mansions, pretending to be in raptures with the curious faces he saw peering out of the windows. Especially did he expatiate upon the merits of a large waste of moorland, entitling it "her majesty's royal park."

On reaching Montreal, we mounted caleches, and made a grand *début* into the city, driving through mud and mire till we brought up on the square, in front of Goodenough's hotel.

That same evening I was sitting in an alcove in the parlor, rather weary and dispirited. For some reason, I was not in the mood for joining the merry group gathered around the table, among whom Walter's clear laugh was distinguishable.

"Where is Miss Frazer?" at length asked Nelson.

"To be sure, where is she?" repeated Walter, glancing round the room.

"There she is, in that alcove, half concealed by the drapery," said Nelson.

As I saw Walter approaching, I left my retreat.

"You look weary," observed Nelson, kindly.

"I am so, and think I had better seek for rest in some more quiet spot. So good night to you all."

I had no sooner left the room than I felt a hand on my shoulder.

"You look sad, Esperance. Have I displeased you?"

"I am tired," replied I, coldly. "Please let me pass."

"I cannot, till you have answered my question. I have a right to know if I have offended you."

As I continued silent, Walter looked so troubled that I relented. He saw the change, and leading me into a little ante-room, made me sit down beside him.

"Are you displeased because I comply with your request, and endeavor to be agreeable to your sister?"

"Certainly not. On the contrary, I feel under great obligations."

"What is the matter, then?"

"I have told you. I am tired, and my head aches."

"We should both have been happier," said he, in a half tender, half reproachful tone, "if you had left your sister at home. You see she *does* come between us, as I feared. This way of living really saddens me."

Seeing that he was sincere, I put aside my own feelings of discomfort, not to say of injury, and responded frankly, —

"It saddens me too, Walter."

Clasping my cold hands in his, he exclaimed, —

"Give yourself to me for a few days at least. You would not hesitate could you read my whole soul. I need you, I must have you, dear Espy;" and tears stood in his eyes.

I was surprised, for I had never seen him in such a mood. But his sorrowful clinging to me went straight to my heart, and banished every feeling of distrust and coldness.

"Hope," said he, after a few minutes' silence, "I am unworthy of you; but do not, I beg you, let any one come between us again. It makes me miserable.

"But I have often heard your gay laugh, and thought you in unusual spirits."

"You were mistaken, however. I have had no peace since I left your side."

As I went to my room that night, the load was lifted from my heart. Joy was asleep, her golden hair rippling over her shoulders down the snowy pillow, and a bright flush on her cheek. I softly kissed the fair sleeper, and commending myself and those I loved to Heaven, I lay down beside her.

But not to sleep. Was he then so covetous of my exclusive affection? It was plainly not my duty to send him from my side just now.

"Do you feel better?" asked Joy, as she opened her eyes the next morning.

I had been sitting by a window, leaning on my elbow, while my hair fell round my face. Her question roused me, and I replied, though with an absent mind, —

"Yes, I believe so." ■

Then, moving to the side of the bed, I bent over her till my jet-black locks blended with those sunny waves of hers, forming as great a contrast as existed between her buoyant, careless nature, and my earnest, brooding one.

"What makes your eyes shine so, Esperance? Ah, I know. You sat a long time with Mr. Northrup last night."

"I will not deny it, darling."

"Sometimes you are so gloomy, and then again in such fine spirits! And for a day or two, Mr. Northrup has seemed quite depressed. I wonder if I shall ever be in love?"

And those violet eyes had an unquiet look, as if already disturbed with some prescience of the tempest-god.

"Do you suppose I shall have lovers?"

"Yes, dear Joy, for beauty always wins hearts; but remember, my pretty sister, that it is only goodness that retains them."

"He is almost my brother," she suddenly exclaimed, "and I will call him Walter."

"I had rather you would not, for he is not your brother yet, and you are but a child."

"A child, am I?" And she pouted, and tossed back her curls; then, in a changed voice, "Well, I shall tell him what you say, and that he need not treat me so formally."

"Any way to suit yourself. But take care, or you will be late for breakfast."

That morning we walked through some of the principal streets, and visited the *Sœurs Noires* and the *Hotel Dieu*, and then went into the chapel connected with the latter.

I had indulged in many dreams about young and graceful nuns, robed in innocence and white, and must own to something of a shock when a long procession of old women, dressed in coarse gray bombazet, and some of them sufficiently ugly, passed in file before me, chanting their *Ave Marias*.

In the afternoon, while Mr. and Mrs. Mordecai were visiting some of their Jewish friends, Mr. Evans, an acquaintance of young Nelson's father, took us out for a drive. This was quite to our advantage, for he was able to give us many

items of information about the place. From him we learned that, as early as the middle of the sixteenth century, a religious association was organized in France for the express purpose of colonizing the Island of Montreal, or Mount Royal, as it was then called, and that the king ceded it with this intent. The superior of the Jesuits consecrated the spot selected for the city, and it was at first named *La Ville Marie*, in honor of the virgin mother. The whole of this delightful domain, the "garden of Canada," soon came into possession of the St. Sulpicians of Paris, and was by them conveyed to the seminary of their order established at Montreal. When Great Britain made the conquest of Canada, the property and revenues of the seigniories, and the estates connected with the religious institutions, were guaranteed to the possessors.

It was a charming landscape that was spread out before us as we drove round the mountain;—the priests' gardens, the very choicest of the land, and under the richest cultivation; the mountains in the distance softened in the purple haze that lay upon them; the St. Lawrence, with its myriad isles of witchery and romance; and then, adding beauty by variety, the city with its lofty spires, and its plated roofs glistening in the sunlight.

On Sunday we went to the church of *Notre Dame*. The gentlemen were obliged to go into the galleries, while we *mesdames* followed the beadle in his uniform through one of the many aisles of this vast cathedral. After what seemed an interminable walk, we were bestowed in one of the front pews, with a fine view of the altar before us. There was so much to bewilder in the grand *tout ensemble*, that it was some time before I could take a deliberate survey of anything.

As I gazed round the building, lifting my eyes to its triple rows of galleries, and looking across from one end to the other, it seemed to me that more than half the people collected were children—an illusion owing to the immense size of the church.

There was much to interest in the service, and, with many, there was an appearance of devotion. But what a contrast was the whole to the simple worship of the primitive church! “And is it necessary,” I said to myself, “to interpose all this gorgeous ceremonial—these vain traditions of men—between the sinning soul and its Redeemer? Nay, let me come near to Him, as did Mary Magdalene, and bathe his feet with my repenting tears. And let me hear—not my absolution pronounced by an erring mortal like myself, but those blessed words from his own divine lips, ‘Go in peace; thy sins are forgiven thee.’”

CHAPTER XXIX.

ON leaving Montreal, our faces were turned towards Niagara. For some time we made frequent exchanges from the stage-coach to the steamboat, and then back again, but either way of travelling had its attractions.

After riding for some time, I suddenly missed my large shawl, which event procured me many expressions of regret.

"You shall have my overcoat as a substitute," said Walter.

A moment after, our gallant Southron was missing, nor did we see him till we were about embarking in the Great Britain, when he suddenly reappeared, waving aloft my missing shawl. After tea, when the young people were collected for a dance upon deck, I quietly withdrew to a little distance, and gazed at the long wake of the vessel.

When we came upon Lake Ontario, I felt almost as if we were on the boundless ocean. The evenings, especially, were charming.

"Blue rolled the waters, blue the sky
Spread like an ocean hung on high,
Bespangled with those isles of light,
So wildly, spiritually bright.
Who ever gazed upon them shining,
And turned to earth without repining,
Nor longed for wings to flee away,
And mix with their ethereal ray?"

In answer to this last poetical question, I suppose I ought to except *lovers*. At that time, certainly, I had no wish for wings on which to soar from earth.

"I am *so* tired!" exclaimed Joy, as we began to climb Brock's Monument, having landed at Queenstown for the purpose.

And she threw herself down, as if completely wearied out. Although Nelson was with her, yet Walter sprang forward, and then, as suddenly, arrested himself.

"You had better not try to ascend any farther," said I, "and I will stop with you."

"No, you shall go on, Hope," interposed Walter, "and I will remain."

"Thank you, but I am determined to go up, if I have to creep. I *must* reach the top."

"Then, Walter, you can go the other side and assist her. I am stronger than she, and can manage alone."

"Do you wish it?" asked he, with some hesitation.

"Certainly I do."

As he stooped to help her rise, Nelson stood still for a moment, but, impelled by his chivalric feeling, at length said,—

"Mr. Northrup, I presume, is stronger than I, and can give all the support you need. And as to you, Miss Frazer, you must condescend to accept my help, for you shall not stir alone."

And he gave me his arm.

"Then," said Joy, "you had better pass on, for we shall not move as rapidly as you."

So, as she hung confidently on Walter's arm, we passed

them in silence. And I caught his low voice, "Lean entirely on me, Joy." And as, even then, she seemed unable to climb, he proposed her resting a few minutes. Nelson exerted himself to be agreeable, and, to show my appreciation of his efforts, I laughed and talked gayly. On reaching the summit, I sank down, more weary in mind than body. Casting my eye from those heights, I saw the twain still slowly ascending. To render the more assistance, Walter had thrown his arm round her, and was, at that moment, looking down into the fair face leaning against his shoulder. At length they gained the summit. When he had seated Joy, he said to me, —

"Your sister is completely exhausted. What can we do for her?"

"We will improvise a couch on these seats," replied I, trying to forget my own fatigue.

So we prepared a place, and Walter tenderly assisted her there.

The next moment he turned away, and seemed to be gazing down those heights. Soon he came to me, and, with an assiduous air, inquired, —

"Are you not tired, Espy?"

"Not in the least. I belong to that tribe of women called Amazons, who need no assistance."

He gave me a keen glance, as he said, —

"But Mr. Nelson —"

"Oh, yes. I had help enough. I was only speaking of my capability."

On our descent we found a boat ready to ferry us over to Lewiston. That deep ravine, and those precipices hanging over the water, clothed to their summits with green, made a

fine spectacle for those who had eyes to enjoy it. We had been told that at this place we should take the "new green coach." But we soon found that it was designed to beguile us into another. Against this, Nelson stubbornly protested. In vain did the landlord tell him there was another coach about to start, which would go empty unless we were willing to make the exchange.

"But," said Nelson, pointing to the rear of the hotel, "that is the renowned green coach of which I have heard so much."

The landlord could not deny it.

"And it is the best on the line."

Nor could he deny that.

"And," continued Nelson, with one of his most winning smiles, "I always think the best is good enough for me. Now, if you love me, you will wish me to ride in that green coach, whose fame is so illustrious."

My host was fairly flattered into compliance, and, with alacrity, put us in speedy possession of the coveted green coach.

From the time of our leaving the monument, Walter had been all devotion to me. And I gave myself up to anticipations of delight in the wonderful spectacle we were approaching. We passed an Indian encampment, and caught sight of tall, shadowy figures moving round the fire they had kindled. But I felt such an eagerness to behold Niagara, that I had little concern for other sights.

It was night when we reached the hotel; and as it was cloudy as well as late, there seemed no alternative but to be quiet till morning. With what impatience did I raise my curtains at early dawn, and gaze upon the rapids, dashing

onward to the glorious leap! After breakfast we started — Walter and I first, then Nelson and Joy, and behind them Mr. and Mrs. Mordecai. I seemed treading on air. On we went, in search of the chainless flood. Soon we were on the extremity of Terrapin Bridge, at that time hanging just over the boiling gulf. As I stood there, the visible universe faded from my thoughts, and God and eternity filled my whole being. Every fibre quivered; every nerve was on fire; every feeling was aroused and blended in one overpowering emotion, subsiding at length into a solemn sadness. Then came that strange impulse to fling myself down the thundering abyss. Glorious Niagara! Yet —

“What art thou to Him
Who poured thee from his hollow hand,
And hung his bow upon thy awful front?”

Ay! while the waters beneath, maddened by their frantic leap, lash and foam in wild fury, there, serenely arched above them, hangs God's eternal bow — its unshorn beams stretching away into a misty glory.

As I stood with that voice of God resounding in my ear, how did the pomp and circumstance of life, its din and turmoil, its vain pursuits and bitter strifes, fade into nothingness!

Beauty everywhere in that vicinity is strangely mingled with the sublime and awful. Blooming along the path spring up sweet flowers of every tint, — not only in the Arcadian groves, but piercing the crags, and growing on the very brink of the mighty cataract — an august home, truly, for the birth and cradling of such delicate creations!

As we were wandering about, there came a familiar sum-

mons, and all our grand scenery, with its attendant raptures, was exchanged for a substantial dinner, and its attendant satisfaction. After this necessary business was accomplished, we recorded our names in the book kept for the purpose, while one of our company read aloud the following lines, which had just been written in the same book:—

“Dash on—in thunder dash— eternal flood :
 My soul would spring to meet thy spirit-form,
 And share the grandeur of thy revelry!
 But may I dare to claim thy fellowship?
 Niagara! I feel my nothingness!
 When he who gazes on thee now, shall sleep
 Where not the thunders of thy voice may break
 His rest, thou wilt, in thy magnificent,
 Unbroken march, roll on the same—the *same*;
 Thy form unchanged—thy voice as when it
 Mingled with the choir that sang Time’s birth,
 When the Almighty God first struck the lyre,
 And the grand chorus of created worlds
 Began their song.—

Thou form sublime!

The Spirit of Eternity alone
 May claim thy brotherhood! His voice is heard
 In thine. His banner in thy rainbow waves!
 His mantle in thy drapery floats!
 Unchanging form—unceasing roar—
 Niagara! what art thou?
 Spray—Thunder—Foam!
 The breath—the voice—the robes of God!”

The signature appended to this poem, was F. Lopdarl, an acquaintance, as it proved, of Nelson, and a fresh graduate from college. Nelson soon found him, and we had the pleas-

ure of an introduction, and a pleasant chat with the young poet. He told us he was expecting to leave the next day, but would be happy to attach himself to our party for the afternoon if we would allow it, which accession was cordially welcomed.

While Walter was lounging, as he was fond of doing at this time of day, I strolled off by myself for an hour's solitary enjoyment. When I returned, Mr. Lopdarl was in the parlor, and all the company were ready to undertake the various exploits expected of travellers. Of course, we could not be content till we were half drowned, and had wholly lost our breath in the far-famed Cave of the Winds. Then we crossed the Ferry at the foot of the Falls, in the Maid of the Mist—a regular witch, as she proved herself. Disguised in rubber garments, so that we looked like a company of Esquimaux; dripping with the spray that enveloped us in thick clouds; running up and down the deck as if half crazed; catching hold of strangers whom we mistook for those of our own party, and dragging them along to behold some newly discovered wonder, while quaint snatches of rhyme from our young poet, and shouts of admiration and laughter, were strangely spiced with innumerable gay and solemn interjections, running from the lowest base all along through the gamut up to the shrillest treble;—we presented a merry and grotesque masquerade that would well befit the maddest carnival Rome ever witnessed. I never saw Walter in finer spirits. Several times, when his masked figure was approaching, I took him for a stranger, till some sign or token, well understood in our freemasonry, taught me my error.

We returned to our hotel, completely tired out. And

after supper our company dispersed, most of them professing themselves unable to sit up another minute. But Walter would not suffer my departure. So we strolled out till we found a rock that accommodated us both.

“Has it been a happy day to you, Esperance?”

“It could not have been richer in enjoyment.”

“And which part of it have you found the most pleasant?” — asked he, with an arch look into my face.

“It is rather difficult to decide.”

“Your eyes belie your answer.”

“Read for yourself then.”

“I do, and am proud of my influence.”

“Pride goeth before destruction, you know.”

“There is no danger of such a catastrophe when I am with you.”

“But when away —”

“You must not let me be away. You are my pole-star, and when out of sight, there is no predicting what may happen.”

He must have seen a shade settle on my face, for instantly there came, to silence my doubts, a series of arguments that I could not resist. And then “we tore ourselves asunder.”

“Only for the night,” I said, to reassure myself, as an ugly, fitting doubt passed over me.

To shame it away, I brought face to face with it Walter’s passionate tenderness. And warming my shivering heart in the glow of these sweet recollections, I soon fell into a sound and tranquil slumber.

CHAPTER XXX.

Not long after breakfast, Joy suddenly appeared, her golden hair straying down beneath her gypsy hat, and her cheeks flushed and dimpling with loveliness. She ran directly to Walter, saying, —

“ I have been walking all alone.”

“ Alone ! How could you ? ”

“ Because I wanted to be independent, like Espy. But dear me ! I met ever so many gentlemen, and they stared at me till I got frightened.”

“ No wonder they stared. I should have been likely to do the same myself,” replied Walter, with an admiring gaze.

“ Ah, but *you* could not alarm me ; so I have come back for you to go with me, and keep off all those eyes.”

“ But your sister — ”

“ Hope, won't you spare him to me a little while ? ”

“ Certainly, as long as you wish.”

“ There, she gives you leave.”

He still hesitated ; I saw it plainly. But her persuasive look prevailed, and, with a quick glance at me, he accompanied her. I hastened to my room, and watched them moving slowly along. Her face was turned up to his, and his bent down to hers, — and both of them so handsome ! But what of that ? Was their beauty any reason why they should not

look at one another? No! — I was foolish. She was a mere child, and he was my betrothed. How could I doubt him? But while I was reasoning thus with myself, the air grew strangely close. I must go out and inhale the pure breath of heaven. I would ramble by myself to Goat Island; in those sweet shades I might drink in repose.

Passing the bridge, I strolled along till I came to a nook, protected from prying eyes by luxuriant foliage. I seated myself on a bank, and, leaning against an old oak, I lifted up my burdened spirit to heaven, asking that the intensity of my nature might be tempered — that my inordinate affections might be moderated.

Suddenly a faint sound of footsteps and of murmuring voices caught my ear. I kept quiet lest I should be discovered. The sounds grew nearer, till two figures, which I at once recognized, were in sight.

“Let us stop here,” said that voice I knew so well.

So he placed her on a rustic bench, and then seated himself beside her. I thought of our happy day at Greenwood Pond, and it seemed as if years had passed over my head since then. And yet he wore the same look as when he told his love. O Walter, Walter!

Joy tried to untie her hat.

“Let me!”

And his hands (I saw them tremble as they did it) loosened the knot, and hung the pretty hat with its fluttering ribbons on a green bough. Then she threw aside her shawl, and shaking her head, that wealth of hair fell about her face and shoulders like a glittering veil. Was it unmanlike that he should be charmed? — he, such a worshipper of beauty, and she, so bent on conquest? I could not

the effect of his admiration in the delicate flush that stole over her cheek.

"May I?" asked he, lifting those golden threads, and fixing his persuasive eyes on hers.

He found there no refusal, for he pressed them to his lips. Then she coquettishly snatched them away, saying, —

"You don't deserve that I should be so good to you."

"What have I done?"

"Oh, you leave me with Mr. Nelson, when I like you so much better."

"But *do* you like me better?"

"You know it very well, and that, I believe, is the reason why you do so."

"No, Joy, that is not the reason, as you would know if you had the least discernment."

"What is it then?"

"I don't think I ought to tell you."

"Then I shall be very unhappy."

"Well, if I must own it," said he in a low voice, "it is because I am afraid of liking you too well."

"I don't believe a word of it, for when you meet me, you often turn away as if I was an ugly, disagreeable girl."

"Instead of which," he eagerly replied, "you are the most beautiful creature I ever beheld. Are you satisfied now?"

"Partly," she replied, her eyes falling beneath his gaze. "But how shall I know it is not all flattery?"

"O Joy, why did I ever meet you? If—" and he stopped.

"If what?" asked she, timidly lifting her downcast eyes.

"I must not say it; but if I could, you would be convinced that my words are anything but flattery."

“I want to be convinced.”

He shook his head with a gloomy air.

“Please tell me, Mr. Northrup.” And putting her hand on his arm, she looked up in his face.

“Irresistible tempter!” exclaimed he, in a half desperate, half melancholy tone. “I have again and again forced back the words, but if you *will* have them, you *must*. I was going to say that I could easily convince you I am no flatterer, if I was only at liberty to ask you to be *my* Joy. There—you have it now.”

And he relapsed into a moody silence, while her face was lighted by a smile. She sat for a moment rolling her curls over her fingers, and then, creeping nearer to him, she half whispered, —

“Why are you not at liberty?”

“Don’t, Joy;—you know nothing of the struggles you have already cost me.” And with a shudder he turned from her.

Putting her hand under his chin, she brought back his face towards her.

“You see what I dare for you. Indeed, you shan’t turn from me so. What have I done?”

“You have bewitched me out of my reason.”

He said this so fiercely, that Joy seemed almost terrified.

“O, Mr. Northrup,” she exclaimed, “I can’t bear to have you displeased with me.” And tears stole to her eyes.

“What a brute I am! Your gentle nature is frightened by such vehemence. Forgive me—will you not?”

When I speak of my sister as coquettish, I do not mean that she was essentially artful or deceptive in character. I have not a doubt that Walter had unconsciously inspired her

with a real, girlish interest. And selfishly, as I must admit, but thoughtlessly, she had played upon him all her insnaring arts, though with little idea of the agony she was causing to a heart that loved her.

But this is not telling the story. What was I saying last? Ah, I remember. Walter asked her forgiveness. And, as her answer, she put her hand into his, and looked kindly into his eyes. Is it strange they glowed upon her as he exclaimed, —

“O Joy, in mercy leave me, or I shall sin still further against my poor Espy.” And he covered his face with his hands.

Should I rush to his rescue? No! he must fight his own battles. I could do nothing but wait the issue.

“I cannot leave you till I have made you happier. Tell me how to comfort you.”

“Alas! what avail my struggles against such a siren? May I be forgiven, but I *must* this once — ”

I saw his perjured lips press hers. And I did not faint or cry, but instead, sat spell-bound, watching every look and movement, listening for every word, every breath.

The deed was done, and written down in my heart's blood. Then a deep sigh escaped him, and groaning aloud, he exclaimed, —

“O Joy, I have done this — I — the betrothed of another. And she is noble, and she loves me.”

“And don't *I* love you?”

“But that only increases my misery. For I am bound to her by every law of honor.”

“And have you not just bound yourself to me, who have never known sorrow? You wouldn't forsake me?”

“Alas! what can I do? I have struggled, as you know; and now you know how vainly. But I have committed a great wrong — against you, sweet one, against her, and against God. How can I repair it but by returning at once to my plighted wife?”

The tears were dropping from her eyes. He took her hand, and continued, —

“Sweet one, it would be bliss to have you for my own. But I am not free. We have both wronged your sister. Help me to be strong, to flee from you, to atone to poor Hope.” Was not the scorn that raged in my heart hot enough to consume him where he sat? “I have never done a base thing.” Ha! “I cannot do one now. I will not break my vow, though I may die in giving you up.”

She lifted her drooping face to his, and began to sob. He smoothed her locks, he kissed her forehead — oh, so tenderly, and thus toying with temptation, began to hesitate.

“If I could only honorably free myself! Tell me, precious one, *is* there any way?”

“Espy is strong, and does not need you. She can bear suffering better than I; don't you think so?”

“I know she can. And who can say that I ought not to become your protector, and shield you from all unhappiness?”

“Why don't you, then?”

“Why don't I? How little my bird knows of this terrible conflict! Why don't I? It is a very serious question, Joy, and must be decided when you are not by to beguile my judgment.”

As her tears again flowed, he gently asked, “Can you not wait till I have time to consider? Will you not trust me?”

"I am afraid of losing you. I *cannot* wait."

"And do you really love me *so*? That should help my decision, for your heart is too tender to struggle with disappointment."

"I shall not let you go till you promise," said she, laying her hand on his.

"Charming bondage! I *may* break the other, I never can this. On my bridal day, your face would come between me and her."

"Promise, then."

"Promise? Don't you believe that if there is any possible way to free myself, I shall discover it? But if I trample on my vows for your sake, what will you do for mine?"

"I will be your pet. Will not that be reward enough?" And she looked archly into his face.

"Ah, you know your power too well. You will be a little tyrant. But how will you pay me *now*?"

"How *can* I pay you?"

"Why, you must love me *so* and *so*, and not let me have time to repent."

And as he rained upon her his fond caresses, the stings of remorse were stifled in the sweets of his fresh sinning.

"Are you satisfied?" asked Joy, at length.

"I am satisfied, my darling."

And I—his betrothed—heard all. Did I spring out upon them, with reproaches? No, none of this. I only clasped my hands closely over my heart to still its loud throbbings. I only stifled the groans of my lacerated soul, and sat in a silence like that of death.

How long they lingered there I know not. I only know

that I outsat them. Patiently? Yes, patient as such agony makes one. And when their passionate tones and words had died out of my ears, and their passionate looks and embraces out of my eyes, — not out of my heart, — they could never, *never* die out there; when *ages* seemed to have passed since I saw them sitting just in front of me, I lifted myself, veiled my face, and tottered on as best I could.

Once in my room, I bolted my door, and threw myself — not on the bed — the floor better suited my mood. And there I lay, with reeling senses, and a brain on fire, while in my trampled and bruised heart were wildly struggling, tenderness and scorn, love and hate, life and death. Oh, the unutterable anguish of those hours, when no tears would come to my burning eyes! I could only lie there in my pitiful misery and helplessness, while stifled groans were forced from me, which might have moved an enemy, could he have known from what depths they were wrung.

The slow-moving hours tolled a mournful requiem, as the long procession of stricken hopes and joys were borne onward to their death and burial. And I — the victim — turned executioner. Gathering them all together, my own hand kindled the fire which consumed them to a smouldering heap. And I — the bereft — the sole mourner — I dug the grave, and with trembling, but not unheroic hands, entombed the happy past — my one dream of love.

CHAPTER XXXI.

NIGHT had departed, hiding in her faithful bosom my fearful secret. Allowing no time for vain regrets, I girded myself for what remained.

It was a lovely morning, — so they all said, — though to me the skies wore a leaden hue. After repeatedly bathing my eyes to efface all signs of my vigils, I stood before the mirror, and began to arrange my hair. I did it with unusual care, intent on what would be most becoming. Woman-like, was it not? But I had a triumph to win, and must make the most of what goes so far — good looks. I felt a sort of pity for myself when I observed my wan face. But a certain thought brought a faint tinge to my cheeks, and a light to my dimmed eyes, which I did not note without satisfaction.

Descending to the parlor, I gave a careless good morning, first to Nelson, who stood near the door, and afterwards to the rest of our company.

“I was sorry, Joy, to exclude you from my room, but a severe headache was my excuse. The chambermaid took my message to you, I suppose.”

“She did,” answered Joy, with deepening color.

“I hope my illness gave you no disturbance,” — next addressing Walter, “Did you pass a comfortable night?”

“No, I did not sleep very well. But I am glad to see you in such good spirits this morning.”

I have no doubt he felt so.

"Thank you. And you shall have the benefit of them if you will take a stroll with me after breakfast."

"With pleasure," replied he, coloring, as he exchanged a quick glance with Joy.

Walter sat opposite me at the table, and during breakfast I exerted every power to be entertaining. When we left the dining-room, I hastened to tie on my bonnet, stealing a glance at the mirror to convince myself that my mask was impenetrable. In a moment more my arm was linked in Walter's, and we were taking a lover's walk. It seemed to me I must have been breathing pure oxygen, so elastic was my step, so airy my words.

"Where shall we go, Esperance?"

"Wherever you please; to Goat Island, perhaps."

He started, and then pressed my arm closer.

I am not conscious of ever playing the coquette before or since. But I did it that morning, and I flatter myself I acted my part well. I had a sufficient motive to stimulate every energy. A proud woman's loving heart had been flung back in her face. I spurned the humiliation, and was resolved to triumph over it.

I was well aware of the strength of my influence over Walter in certain directions,—that I ruled in his deeper nature. And that morning no means were left untaxed that might tend to refetter my almost escaped captive. I alternately piqued and flattered him; in short, I made free use of all a woman's artillery. Nor did I remit my efforts till I saw that my lover's plastic nature was in my hands, ready for the costly mould I had prepared. All thought of acknowledging his affection for another had vanished. There

was no longer any struggle to escape. Sense had yielded to higher powers, and that hour he was all my own.

He had several times attempted to take some accustomed liberty, but I had continued playfully to thwart him. At length we came to a beautiful little dingle.

“Sit here — will you not?”

“If you wish,” said I, carelessly tossing aside my hat.

“What makes you so coy to-day, dear Hope?”

“Oh, you know woman is privileged to be capricious.”

“But you have never been so with me before, and I shall not permit it now.”

“Shall not? Let me see you help yourself.”

“What ails you, Esperance?”

“Contrariness ails me.”

“Don’t tantalize me so; I have my rights.”

“And I, being a woman, have a right to deny your rights — have I not?” And I looked saucily into his face.

“You have a right to captivate me, I suppose. Really, I was never more enamoured.”

“And you never wish to break from my charming thralldom?”

Blushing at my earnest gaze, he yet unhesitatingly replied, “Never.”

“And you would be miserable without me?”

“I certainly should, and comparatively worthless besides.”

“And you find me exactly what you need?”

“Exactly; — that is — of course — when I am myself. Are you not satisfied, dearest?”

“Perfectly. I have the utmost confidence in the sincerity of your words, as expressing your present feelings.”

“Why turn from me, then?” And he fixed his eyes on mine, with the old winning expression.

For a moment I faltered. But I lashed my swerving purpose, and when I next looked at him, it was with a cool eye and a mocking smile.

"I cannot bear this, Espy," exclaimed he, in an excited tone. "Don't you believe me when I say I love you?"

"Certainly."

"Then don't hold me at such arms' length. Torment me, if you must, at another time. But *now*, give me some token of affection. Mind, I do not claim it as a right, but entreat it as a favor. I hope I am humble enough to suit you," he added, with some bitterness.

It may seem an inexcusable weakness, but the wish to grant his request came over me. Yet I sternly denied it.

"Walter," said I, looking kindly, but seriously into that still too beloved face, "we have had some happy days together — have we not?"

"To be sure we have."

"But notwithstanding this, my first impression that we were totally unsuited to each other has become a settled conviction. We must, therefore, separate. From this moment you are free."

And how did he receive the release for which he had so longed? With an agony of tears and supplications.

"Dearest Hope, I shall be nothing without you. I am unworthy; I admit it freely; but spare me this blow."

He pleaded long and importunately, and it was very hard to convince him that I was inexorable.

"If you insist on this cruel step, what will become of me?"

"You will speedily find some one, who will prove a more fitting bride than I."

He looked at my face searchingly, but could not spell a syllable of its meaning. After a brief silence, he threw himself on his knees, and confessed the whole. Weak and vacillating as he had been, he was truthful to the letter — he palliated nothing.

“It has been a dazzling of the senses — a mere worship of beauty. I confess it truly — it has almost frenzied me. And whether you have suspected my weakness or not, your dismissal is a just penalty. But pity me, dear Hope. I feel this moment your greatly superior attractions, and I conjure you, save me from myself.”

“I would do much for you, Walter ; but I cannot do that. The man whom I could call husband, I must respect above all other men. I always knew this, but somehow, for a time, you made me forget it. I cannot look up to you, Walter ; I cannot rely on you.”

He winced under my words, but humbly urged, “Try me six months, or a year even.”

“And what could you say to Joy?”

“Alas ! I have hopelessly involved myself. But don't you think she would soon be consoled in some other love?”

“I do.”

“Then?”

“It is of no use ; I know you better than you know yourself.”

He bowed his head on my shoulder and wept. But, though my heart was gushing towards him with inexpressible tenderness, I did not waver.

“Now, Walter, you must go for my sister. Tell her as much as you think best, and then bring her here. The sooner you are plighted to each other, the better.”

“Plighted to another? And that when I felt so assured of my own constancy? Dear Espy, you have been more to me than I can express. I *cannot* —” Then he checked himself.

Walking back and forth with folded arms, he at length stood before me, and in a broken voice, —

“I am not worthy, but before I go, I long to hold you to my heart once more. It would ease the bitter parting.”

“That would not be right, Walter; you belong to my sister now.”

He looked perfectly woe-begone, but made no reply. After a moment’s silence, he took my hand, kissed it, and then slowly withdrew.

CHAPTER XXXII.

I HAD triumphed. Yet what it cost me, the Infinite alone knew. I had sundered those bonds which I once deemed inviolable. But my very soul was sick. The dreariness of desolation stretched out into the distant future, measureless, hopeless. I thought of those laughing eyes, in whose light my heart had come to its blossoming. A thousand tender recollections rushed over me. All Walter's better traits came to mind, — even his weaknesses seemed pardonable. And I was the one he *needed*; of that I readily persuaded myself. As to Joy, she was not of the pining sort.

How many a similar struggle has woman's heart endured! — a struggle between love and reason, desperate in proportion to the intensity of her nature. And I wept far bitterer tears than he had just poured out before me.

Dare I relent? No; it would be madness. And he would presently be consoled; nay, was he not this very moment making love to Joy? But for *me*! I once more set my face towards the wilderness.

The storm was laid before they came — the new young lovers. I caught their footsteps on the soft piny carpet. And then I heard him say, —

“Have no fear, Joy. It is all her own doing.”

I believe I felt most of all sorry for my poor, foolish sister. And I determined to try to make her worthy of him.

After Walter left, I had walked along till I reached that rural seat where the scene of yesterday took place. And there they found me. I saw them exchange wondering glances; but without heeding this, I made them sit, one on each side of me. Then I told Joy I had become convinced that Walter was not quite enough of a man to suit me (I saw his eye flash, but I quietly continued), and that I was not beautiful enough for one of his taste, but that I thought both difficulties would be remedied, if they two could make an agreement.

“Can you love Walter?”

Her eyes drooped, as she nestled close to me. And I was proud that I could bestow him as my gift.

I took her dainty little hand. “Your hand, Walter.”

Clasping them together, I said, fervently, —

“God bless you, my brother and sister, and help you always to be true to one another!”

Then motioning Walter to sit beside Joy, my heart rose to heaven for its choicest blessings on them both. Walter was entirely overcome.

“Don’t feel so troubled. I do love you very much, and I will try to be as good as Hope.”

He softly stroked her head as he would that of a child, though her words failed to quiet him. But I had no longer any business there. So I said, cheerfully, —

“You must make the most of to-day, for to-morrow we shall start for Ironton. Be sure to come back by dinner-time.”

And leaving Joy in the place of Hope, I departed.

One cannot live forever on heroism. The Real will at times become too strong for the Ideal; and nature, however

dexterously thrust aside or sternly silenced, will continue clamoring, till she gets her way. So I felt, as with languid step, I re-trod that path over which I had so lately passed with unflinching nerves.

When we left Niagara, we should separate from our other friends. I must not lose credit with them; so I whipped up my flagging spirits, and sat down for a lively chat with Nelson.

“Where are Mr. Northrup and Miss Joy?”

“I will tell you,” I replied, in a confidential tone. “I just left them at Goat Island, a plighted pair, full of sentiment and happiness.”

“Ah! indeed! — why, I thought —”

Nor was *he* able to read my face. So he continued, —

“A fine match, truly,” with somewhat of a puzzled air.

When I had helped him to recover his faculties, he broke into a hearty laugh.

“Ah! Madam Minerva, what has become of your wisdom? I thought your sister was too much of a child to play that game.”

“She is. But she contrived to get the start of me. Besides, Mr. Northrup is quite a patriarch compared with you, so that relieves the matter.”

“Well, you are beyond my comprehension; that is all. But will you play chess with me?”

“With pleasure.”

“We were in the midst of an exciting game — exciting, I mean, to my partner; and my wonderful knight was continually calling out, ‘Check!’ ‘Check!’ to Nelson’s king, when the lovers entered. His eye turned to them with a curious and searching glance.

Walter looked serious and protecting, as though he had just assumed a great responsibility, as indeed he had. But when his eye glanced down upon the graceful creature by his side, lifting up her radiant face confidently into his, an air of satisfaction came over him, as if conscious of the rare beauty of his prize. It was pardonable, I thought; and as I gazed upon them, I could not help acknowledging that they were more fitly paired than he and I had been. Joy seemed very happy; and I could not but hope the effect on her character would be favorable. As to myself, of what consequence —

I was startled from my reverie by hearing Nelson say, —

“What a deep fit of abstraction! Here I have been intimating in various ways the desirableness of your making a move. But for all your hearing me, you might as well have been in Canton.”

“Pardon me, I had forgotten the dubious condition of your king, but will now pursue him with my utmost vigor. ‘Check! — check! — check!’”

“Fairly conquered, notwithstanding your absent-mindedness. If you achieve such conquests when indifferent, what would you do if bent on winning?”

“Be foiled in my turn, probably, and cry out for mercy.”

“I should like to be your antagonist in such a case.”

“Unkind Nelson.”

“Not unkind. To conquer *you* would be a triumph indeed. And if I could make you cry out for mercy, I should have some hope of crowning you as my queen.”

“Nonsense! You are truly a gallant Southron. But now we must go to dinner?”

“May I take you in?”

“May you? Don’t you see you *must*?”

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE close of that eventful day had at length come. I retired early, telling Joy that as I had so long been accustomed to sleep alone, I found it hard to form a contrary habit, and that I had engaged for her a little room adjoining mine.

“Walter, I rely on you not to detain my sister after ten o'clock.”

“I will not,” replied he, without venturing to look at me.

There may be those who will say that when I discovered the weakness of Mr. Northrup, it was unwomanly longer to love. They know little of a woman's heart. I had always been aware that there was an unfitness in our relation. Without any assumption of superiority, I could not but admit that I was the stronger of the two. And it did not suit me. So I was fully convinced that a separation was best. But my heart ached none the less at its necessity. And in spite of my complacency at my own management, the stubborn fact remained—I had been forsaken for another. Is it strange that I felt the need of employment for head, heart, and hands?—that I longed, with feverish impatience, to get back to Ironton?

Having parted cordially with our southern friends, I hastened on our little company through our long, tedious journey—how tedious to me, my fellow-travellers never

guessed. Outwardly, my past relation to Walter was as though it had never been; and, instead, I had become an older sister, to whom he looked for counsel. I felt the responsibility in my hands, and sometimes feared his life would prove a failure. Joy was not the one to stimulate him, intellectually or morally; and I had some anxiety lest her easy, shallow nature, and her want of sterling principle, might prove a drag to him. But I was resolved, with the help of God, to do all I could to elevate and ennoble her, before she became his bride.

“Walter,” said I, when alone with him one day, “it will not do for you to study law at Ironton.”

“Why not?”

“Joy is only fifteen, and her character is still to be formed. Indeed, you both need to acquire strength, and absence will help you.”

“But when —” and he paused.

“When may you claim her? Not one minute before she is nineteen.”

“You are cruel.”

“No!” replied I, “only wise.”

“And how often will your ladyship permit me to visit her?”

“Oh, about three or four times a year; and, to give you the whole of your prescription, you must exchange letters but once a fortnight.”

“How extremely gracious you are!” with an air of great vexation.

As he met my eye, a blush of confusion stole over his face, but I took no notice of it.

At length Ironton was reached, and my fair sister fol-

lowed me out to tea at Miss Brimblecum's long table. Every one's eyes were fastened upon her, and upon Walter also, who sat between us, and attended to her wants as if he had a right to — continuing, however, as polite as ever to me. I have no doubt that Miss Brimblecum and Miss Betts put their heads together in many a nightly conference, to discuss the momentous question, whether Mr. Walter Northrup was still betrothed to Miss Hope Frazer, or whether, having become wearied of her, he had plighted his faith to Miss Joy Frazer. How they settled it, of course I could not tell; but so that they had something to expend their wits upon, I was content.

The excitement of opening the school, of arranging classes for myself and assistant, and of getting Joy pleasantly settled in the little room next mine, was of essential service. Those busy days, following upon my long, sleepless nights, helped me to drown the voices of memory, and that sense of wrong and desolation which came upon me in solitude.

With my one successful attempt, my coquetry was ended; and having purposely laid aside my old teasing manner, as well as my playful vivacity, and assumed the kindly gravity of a solicitous friend, — any points of contrast between me and my sister, in my favor, were entirely removed. So that in all my private interviews with Walter, of which we had many in reference to the future, nothing occurred to recall that brief dream. Most easily did he fall into the new state of things, congratulating himself, I doubt not, that in addition to all the advantages he once hoped from my affection, and realized without abatement in my friendship, he had won for his own a young girl, than whom there could be no fairer.

The fact that I felt it wise to limit their intercourse undoubtedly strengthened her influence with him. For them I thought and planned, taking pains to bring out Joy's best traits, and in every way possible, to rivet the chain which I had unbound from myself, that I might fling it over her. For, having made up my mind to the necessity of the sacrifice, I had pride, if not principle enough, not wilfully to mar it by any petty want of magnanimity.

But did it require no effort to meet my former lover's quiet eye, and his cool indifference of manner, in contrast with his impassioned devotion to my sister? Was it nothing to note his eager glances, his tender, protecting manner? I was no stoic. And this was the ashes of bitterness, on which, for dreary days and weeks, I was obliged to feed.

And what did Helen Ware say to this change in my prospects? From the pressure of my cares, it was some time after my return before we had an opportunity for free conversation. But one Saturday afternoon, when Walter and Joy were at Greenwood Pond (I wondered if he recalled *our* eventful day there), Helen came to sit with me in my pleasant chamber. I was exhausted by the week's labors, and my heart ached for human sympathy. And when I met her, I threw myself into her arms, and gave way to my emotion.

"It is hard, Esperance," she said, at length, "but be assured it is for the best. I was always more dissatisfied than I was willing to have you know. You will see, at last, how much better our Father orders our affairs than we can do, and will bless him for the sorrow which I trust will ripen your Christian character as prosperity could never have done."

"This is where I am most troubled, dear Helen. I have

pride, or self-respect, enough to treat the case so as to merit my own approval, but the higher fruits, I fear, will be wanting. How can the sweet blossoms of charity spring up in such a seared heart?"

"There is One, you know, who can make the desert blossom as the rose. And your heart, dear, is not the hardest that ever was," added she, kissing me affectionately.

"But I have suffered so much in the past! And now the iron hand of fate is again upon me. Ah, Helen, why is it that life plays us so false? that everything disappoints us?"

"Dear Espy, it is not the iron hand of fate, but the loving hand of a wise Father. All will be made clear in the bright hereafter. Be patient till then."

"You talk of patience, who know nothing of these struggles. Forgive me," I presently added, "but I sometimes chafe so at my bitter destiny!"

She tenderly pressed my hand, saying, in a low voice, "Shall I tell you of myself, Hope?"

"Not if it will give you pain," replied I, struck with a sudden self-reproach.

"It is but a short tale. Not many years since, Lyndon Seymour, a man in every respect my superior, wooed and won me. A few Eden-days, and suddenly, in the act of saving a drunkard from a watery grave, he sacrificed his own life. At first my heart was full of rebellion, but God forgave me, and at last sent me peace. You see that I know how to sympathize with the sorrowful, for dear Lyndon was all that woman's heart can ask."

I could only press her hand in silence, wondering at this great mystery of sorrow, which contrives ever to entangle itself in the web of our mortal life.

“One thing more, and I have done,” resumed my friend. “After God gave me the grace of submission, he inspired me with the desire to do good, if in ever so humble a way. I could not bear to think that the poor wretch for whom such a sacrifice had been made, should continue in his degradation. God blessed my efforts in his behalf, and he is now a sincere Christian.”

This talk gave me courage; and in my moments of despondency, the remembrance of Helen’s patient endurance sometimes brought me strength and good cheer. Was I not, by my trials, more closely united to the great brotherhood of man?

So I tried to believe, and, in this fact, to find fresh cause for acquiescence. I sought to banish all morbid memories of the past, to meet bravely every duty of the present, and to wait patiently for the revelations of the great future. But it was often only a dreary endeavor, a sickening failure.

“Oh, life at cross with will! My senses pine;
Upon my narrow wall no sunbeams shine,
Nor branching trees send gladness through my glass;
I yearn, I sob, I faint, in sorrow bound,
And tread with burning step my weary round,
Too drunk with discontent to let it pass.”

CHAPTER XXXIV.

ONE busy Saturday, as I was bound on a shopping expedition, I saw a large boy snatch an orange from a little ragged lad of not more than three years, who, thereupon, set up a loud cry. Being quite given to interfere in such matters, I bestowed an admonition on the large boy, and another orange, which I bought for the purpose, on the little one. A certain expression in his face interested me, and after a few questions, I was impelled to accompany him to his forlorn home. His mother, in the faded remnants of what had once been a lady's garments, sat by the window, looking listlessly out, and occasionally jogging a cradle. On seeing me she started up, gazed sharply into my face, and then, with a sudden rush, threw her arms round my neck, exclaiming, —

“It is my old friend, Hope Frazer.”

I looked hard at her in return, but could find nothing to identify her with any one I had known.

“Have you forgotten Eleanor Cottrell?”

Then recognition came, and I sat down to hear her story. She had eloped with Orlando Granger, as may be remembered. When cast off by his father, they came into Illinois, and being forced to live on her narrow income, without foresight or economy, they fell from bad to worse, all the while making their case more desperate by mutual recriminations. Their infidel principles precipitated their downward course.

Neglecting her family, Eleanor spent her time in reading pernicious books, while her husband, in desperation, resorted to drinking. At length, after a violent quarrel, he embarked as a sailor to a distant port, leaving her with little Orlando and an infant. Through the influence of a friend, she had recently removed to Ironton, not far from her first married home.

"Notwithstanding all our quarrels," said Eleanor, "we really did love each other, and since he left me, I have been a wretched woman. But you, Hope, how well you look! You must have had prosperous times."

"God has dealt very kindly with me, Eleanor."

"So you still believe in that nonsense?"

"Have you been better or happier for your unbelief?"

"No! but that fact cannot alter my convictions."

What a singular providence it seemed that had thus brought my old friend into a renewed relation to me! Earnestly did I resolve, that, God helping me, she should not remain in her miserable scepticism. But my zeal was not according to discretion. Taking up various points, I entered into argument with her. The more I argued, however, the more she argued. The better to prepare myself, I went to Mr. Richardson, begging the loan of books on the various subjects of our discussion. I did not tell him my motive, but he kindly lent himself to the matter, and always had some volume to offer in exchange for what I returned. But fortify myself as I might, I made no progress. When pressed for argument, Eleanor used ridicule and wit unsparingly, and at the end of three months I found her only confirmed in her rejection of the truth.

Helen Ware, who had been absent from town, now re-

turned; and in my discouragement, I sought her counsel, telling her the course I had pursued, and with what results.

“Don’t you think it possible that if her heart should be touched, these speculative objections might vanish of themselves?”

“Perhaps so. But I had supposed her reason must be convinced before her heart could be reached.”

“It was only yesterday that I was looking over a sermon which has some relation to this subject. I should like to read you two or three passages.”

“Whatever we talk about, you always have something apropos at hand. But I should like to hear.”

“‘There is an evidence of Christianity; not an argument, but an apprehension; not a balancing of affirmations and negatives, but a direct sight. * * * Without reasoning upon it, without deduction, or premise, or analysis, we consent. By faith, we say it is so; it is borne in upon us as a conviction, like the goodness of the friend we love; and no dialectics will make it more true.’

“‘This doctrine will remove, if we suffer it, many of those hinderances to setting in earnest about the Christian life, which spring from a mistaken impression that the teachings of religion must first be encased in the formulas of reasoning, or seen through by the understanding, instead of humbly welcomed by faith. That mistake will only confuse, darken, and cripple the soul. If we put the reason where faith belongs, we shall fail of our highest glory, miss the heavenly peace, * * * and stay ignorant of the first wisdom.’”

As she read, a new train of thought was awakened, and I began to have a clear vision of what, it then seemed, I must have been very dull not to see before. Closing the book, Helen said, —

“According to your account, your friend has fortified her brain against your most formidable assaults. But she has not thought to barricade her heart, if indeed she is able to do it. If you can only get possession of that, you will be sure of reaching this divine instinct. And should the love of God be kindled in her soul, her sceptical difficulties would melt away at once.”

“I see that I have made a great mistake, and have only rivetted her chains the tighter,” exclaimed I, thoroughly vexed with myself.

“You have no reason for self-reproach, dear Hope. Any one would have been likely to fail in the first attempt. But you have begun a good work, and, with divine help, will, I have no doubt, complete it.”

“I shall make no further miserable experiments, but shall yield the case to your more skilful hands.”

Helen demurred, and I persisted, until at length she promised to call with me.

When I notified Eleanor of my intention to bring a friend to see her, an angry flush overspread her cheek, as she exclaimed, —

“I suppose you have enlisted her to help convert me. I hate the whole canting race.” As I made no reply, she added, “But I know you meant it in kindness, so I will bear the infliction as well as I can.”

When I introduced Miss Ware to Mrs. Granger, she bowed coldly, assuming her most repulsive manner. Helen took no notice of this, but was intent on making the acquaintance of Orlando. Lifting him upon her lap, she told him stories till the little fellow was charmed. She then talked with Eleanor a few minutes on the most general

topics, and finally, with the promise of soon bringing a jack-knife to Orlando, we left together.

After this she called frequently; and as I ran in from time to time, I perceived a gradual softening of Eleanor's defiant spirit, till one day, a few weeks after Helen's first call, I found her, to my great amazement, reading the Bible. Of her own accord, she spoke of the change in her feelings, expressing the hope that she had commenced a new life.

I thought it now time to speak to Mr. Richardson. He went to see her immediately, and entered into her case with great interest. Nor did he confine his efforts to her, but wrote to the missionaries at the port for which Mr. Granger had sailed, making inquiries concerning him. When tidings of the long absent wanderer at length came back to Eleanor, she sent him a letter which might have moved the coldest heart. And before the year was ended, she was folded in the arms of her repentant husband.

It was not long after this that old Mr. Granger's forgiveness was obtained, and his house offered to them as their future home.

"What a marvellous power there is in religion!" thought I, as I sat with Eleanor, not long before she was to leave for her southern abode. The whole expression of her countenance was changed, and she had lost that bitterness of tone and feeling which I had observed in her from her first call on me in the old Crawford days.

"You, dear Hope, have been the instrument of my earthly, as well as of my spiritual salvation," said Eleanor, looking up from her work. "And how can I ever repay you?"

"Precious little do you owe me. It is Miss Ware and Mr. Richardson that have done everything for you."

"But it was through you that they took any interest in me, so you cannot evade my thanks."

She was silent a moment, and then, with an earnest look, she continued, —

"When you came in that first day, I thought everything had been prospering with you. But I soon perceived that I was mistaken — that you had your trials, bravely as you bore yourself under them. I have no wish to pry into your secrets, but I remember well what you were in our Crawford days. I used then to fancy that your pride would stand in the way of your happiness, and I will confess to something of the same fear now."

"To what is all this the prelude?"

"I will tell you frankly. I have my heart set on your marrying Dr. Bentley, who, I am sure, is attached to you."

"Indeed! Has he made you his confidant, then?"

"Not at all. But when I was sick, he came here often. And knowing our former acquaintance, he had some talks with me about you, from which I divined his interest. He has fine taste and culture, and one of the best hearts in the world. And what you value more, he has true piety."

"I admit all you say, and have the highest esteem for him. But your kind wishes are doomed to disappointment. My mission is not to one man in particular, but to mankind in general. So you have no right to undertake any monopoly of me."

"I must say I never saw a woman so completely independent, so entirely sufficient for herself."

How often since, in my hours of heart-hunger, have I recalled Eleanor's speech!

CHAPTER XXXV.

TIME, which fleets by for the sorrowing, as truly as for the rejoicing, had passed on his way. It was now more than a year since those scenes occurred which had shaken my being to its foundations. And coming to know more of Walter, — to study him impartially, — I had become *more* than resigned to our separation. With all his excellences, he could never permanently have filled my vision, or satisfied my heart. “Better no object of exclusive love,” I now often said to myself, “yes, far better a lonely though not barren life, than an uncongenial union.”

I ought, perhaps, to have stated long ago, that, at the time of the change in our relations, I had smoothed over the matter as plausibly as possible to my father. He expressed his concurrence, and left all the arrangements regarding Joy in my hands, saying that he felt entire confidence in my judgment.

Notwithstanding my wise suggestions, Walter was set on attaining to his legal ownership of Joy at the first possible moment. And he had left his studies, and come all the way to Ironton on purpose to persuade me to relent. He was the more urgent, because I had not concealed from him that Joy’s many attractions exposed her to constant admiration. In spite of my careful duennaship, more than one heart had already been laid at her feet, which, with her girlish impressibleness,

she had some hesitation in declining. As I wrote of these things to Walter, with the natural reflection that he was paid in his own coin, I had a good opportunity to indulge my love of sarcasm, had I been so disposed.

But in spite of her weakness on this point, Joy had greatly improved. And though I did not expect her to develop into a strong character, yet I felt more and more encouraged that if she could only run, unharmed, the gantlet of her long train of admirers, she and Walter might yet prove a well-paired and happy couple.

But this was not the only *affaire du cœur* in which I felt a genuine interest. It so happened that there was in Ironton an intelligent and comely widow, usually spoken of as Dame Margaret Weatherwax. Owing to the loss of property, she and her daughter Peggy, a pretty girl of seventeen, had taken humble lodgings, where they supported themselves by needlework. It was in their sewing for me that I became acquainted with them, and formed thereupon certain nice little plans, which, however, I carefully kept to myself. When I had occasion to give them work, I sometimes took with me my good friend, Philander Benedict, who was ready at all times to be my attendant. And I usually remained a little while, drawing Dame Weatherwax into conversation, that I might show her off to advantage. While this was going on, her young daughter sat by in silence, working away most industriously, and hardly lifting up her head, even when we took our leave. She was so excessively bashful that no one could look at her, without her blushing. But she was a dutiful daughter and a good girl, as one could tell by her face.

I was soon encouraged by noticing one or two acts of

kind consideration on friend Benedict's part. For instance, one day when the mother was naming the time in which she would send Peggy home with the work, he offered to come for it himself. Mrs. Weatherwax hesitated, saying, —

“ But Peggy needs the exercise.”

“ She can find pleasanter walks than through the streets.”

“ That is the sure way to the mother's heart,” I thought to myself.

Next I began to notice beautiful bouquets, which Peggy was careful to keep in fresh water, and arrange in the little tidy sitting-room to the best advantage. Soon followed rare plants set out in tasteful pots, denoting a still higher rise in the social temperature. Then I noticed, on the small, square, red pine stand, a splendid family Bible, and not long after, a handsome edition of the British Poets, with two or three dainty little volumes beside it. It was something stronger than a suspicion that I now felt. But, whatever it was, it increased to a moral certainty one day, when I saw a large basket of oranges and a hamper of Madeira standing in the tiny front entry, which they almost filled.

“ Dame Weatherwax is in delicate health,” I soliloquized. “ She is to be strengthened by this cordial, and what is left will do for the wedding.”

Not having been to the cottage in company with Mr. Benedict for some time, I made an errand there the next day, inviting him to accompany me. I was glad to find that he had made a commendable progress in sociability with the good lady, though, with my sharpest vision, I was unable to discern an iota of sentiment in their intercourse. This quite disappointed me, but I reconciled myself by reflecting that this was not necessary at their age.

In the midst of my cogitations, little Peggy, who had been out of an errand, suddenly returned. On seeing us, her face was covered with blushes. Indeed, had she been detected doing something very naughty, she could not have looked more guilty. A little perplexed, I glanced at my old bachelor, and was thoroughly provoked to find him in the same predicament. And in spite of all my efforts, he sat, during the rest of our call, completely tongue-tied.

“Ah,” thought I, “the pretty witch has completely outwitted me. That is not at all the match on which my heart was set. It is by no means so appropriate. But since I cannot have what I wanted, I must take what I can get. And after all, what is the harm? People always *have* chosen for themselves, and always will, I suppose. And really, I wonder I never thought of this before. It will turn out to be something quite romantic; and as for sentiment, their blushes are full of it.”

Such were some of my meditations on our way home, for Philander hardly opened his mouth. The next day, however, he begged a private interview; but when I granted him a gracious audience, he sat for full two minutes at his old trick of making knots, without uttering a single word.

“Did you have anything to say to me?”

He started, as if suddenly waked, grew red, and then ventured, —

“Do you remember my saying that I should never marry?”

“Perfectly; and do you recall my reply?”

“I do, Miss Frazer. But I hope you won't think it strange if I should, after all, want to get married.”

“Is it possible you have such a treacherous thought?” asked I, with a mischievous glance at him, as he sat tying the corner of his red silk handkerchief.

He looked up gravely, but, meeting my eye, blushed and smiled at the same time.

“You don’t think —”

“Oh, no! I don’t think anything, except that it is very *man-like*. You know I never placed much faith in those vows of everlasting remembrance. So you have my best wishes for your success.”

“Do you think she — do you think I —” and he stopped.

“Yes, I rather think you both do.”

He resolutely tied another knot.

“Miss Frazer, will you be kind enough to speak to her for me?”

“To whom, sir?”

“I thought you knew. To — to — your friend.”

“I happen to have several friends. To which of them do you refer? I may guess, however. Dame Weatherwax is the fortunate woman — is she not?”

“Oh, no, *no!*”

“Indeed! Why, I thought you had a high regard for her.”

“And so I have — the very highest; but — but — it’s Miss Peggy that I want you to speak to.”

“And what do you wish me to say?”

“Tell her I — ask her if — if — she will be my wife,” at length broke from him in desperation.

“No, Mr. Benedict. You must make your own offer, and let little Peggy have the pleasure of softening her refusal.”

“Do you think then —?” began he, in an alarmed tone.

“What do *you* think?”

“I have dared to hope, sometimes.”

“I am glad of it, for you know the old adage — ‘Faint heart never won fair lady.’ So make the trial with good

courage. But suppose you should conclude to offer your hand to the mother; would not that be more suitable, and your chance of success greater?"

"I can't, Miss Frazer, indeed I can't."

"And why not?"

"Because I love dear Peggy," he exclaimed, with sudden energy.

"That alters the case. By all means, then, try for 'dear Peggy.'"

"But you can't think how I dread it. Won't you say one word to embolden me?"

"I can only say that if little Peggy always blushes when she meets you, as she did yesterday, she will probably blush harder than ever when you ask her to become Mrs. Benedict."

"And what then?" said he, coloring as if he had received a proposal himself.

"Why, *that* you must take for your answer, for she is too bashful to say she loves you. And it would distress her to have you insist upon it."

"But what then *am* I to do?" asked he, with a very red face, while he twisted his handkerchief into knot third.

"I will tell you, if you will stop tying knots, and wait till Mr. Richardson can tie one for you."

He obeyed, looking anxiously into my face.

"Why, then, you must *kiss* her, to be sure."

"But can I?—may I?—will she?" he asked, with the greatest trepidation.

"Oh, yes! You can, you may, and she will; that is, if she loves you, as I half think she does."

The blood rushed in torrents to his honest face.

“When had I better go?”

“This evening, straight from the tea-table.” For I longed to have the good man through with the agonies of suspense.

The next morning, for a wonder, Mr. Benedict was late at breakfast. And when he came, he evidently had no idea what he was about. He began with bidding everybody good night. He put salt and pepper into his coffee, sprinkled sugar over his baked potatoes, and poured cream on his beefsteak. Then he tipped over my cup, and knocked the cream-pitcher into my plate, with a hearty “Thank you, Miss Weatherwax.” I did my best to cover his awkwardness, but fortunately he was unaware of his own blunders. He persisted, however, in so many out-of-the-way things, that I felt confident he had made his proposals, and was bewildered at his success.

“I don’t need to inquire as to the result of your call,” said I, in a low voice, as we left the table.

“No, no! Come into the parlor.”

So I followed him at his own hurried pace.

“She’s an angel, Miss Frazer.”

“So are all girls when betrothed.”

“But — but — you don’t know — why — in short, I’m the happiest man in Christendom. I did everything exactly as you told me. And when I asked her, you never saw any one blush as she did. I thought I couldn’t be mistaken, and that I oughtn’t to distress her by pressing for an answer. Besides, I really couldn’t help myself. So I ventured to do it.”

“Quite right,” said I, scarcely able to control my risibles.

“And she did not reprove you?”

“Not at all. By this time, you must know, I had grown

quite bold, and so I —. But I shan't tell you any more, except that she has consented to be married in a month, — that is, if *you* think best. She insisted on that condition."

"If it was the mother, as it ought to have been, I should have no difficulty; but Peggy is altogether too young to become a married woman."

"You mustn't put any difficulties in the way."

"I suppose it would be of no use if I should; so I yield."

"I knew you would, and I told her so. You remember that house of mine in High Street. Well, we are to live there — Mrs. Weatherwax, Peggy, and all of us."

"By which *all*, I conclude you mean yourself and myself."

"You are joking; but never mind. We will all be so happy — on my word we will; and my little Peggy shall have everything she wants."

"Don't go to spoiling her, pray. She is now an amiable, sensible girl; but if you indulge every whim, who knows?"

"Whim? She has no whims. She *couldn't* have a whim. She's a darling, and she shall be petted in everything," exclaimed he, warmly. "And she can't be spoiled; she's too good to be spoiled. Oh, Miss Frazer, I thank you, more than I can ever express, for taking me to Dame Weatherwax's. Did you think of such a result?"

"And suppose I did?"

"You are a true friend, a *very* true friend;" and he caught up my hand and kissed it. A strange liberty for him, but he was well nigh beside himself.

"That is altogether gratuitous. It was *my* plan to have you marry the mother."

"Ha, ha! And so not marry my dear little Peggy — my poor little Peggy, who loves me so!"

“But I am reconciled. On the whole you have chosen better than I.”

Again he caught my hand, saying, —

“She’s an angel. And I only wish you might be just as happy as I am.”

“If I could marry an angel, there would be some hope. But it is the women who are angels, and unfortunately, I can’t marry a woman. If I could, I should know whom to choose very quickly. But I must leave you now.”

“And will you call and see her to-day? And will you consent to my plan?”

“Oh, yes! I will call, and I will consent, and I will do everything I can to forward the affair. I congratulate you and her, and the neglected dame, with my whole heart. You do not doubt it, with all my badinage.”

“No, Miss Frazer, you have always been a real friend, God bless you.” And the tears stood in his eyes.

When I had reached the door, he called me back.

“Just one minute — I may as well confess, for you will see it on her finger — that ring, you know.”

A laugh involuntarily broke from me, as I exclaimed, —

“What! that splendid diamond ring which you were so sure you should never want!”

He looked a little abashed as he replied, —

“Don’t reproach me, for I was perfectly sincere.”

“And equally so now, I take it.”

“To be *sure* I am. But I told her all about that old affair; so I think you might spare me.”

“Do you forget our agreement, that if such an impossibility should ever happen, I was to laugh at you as much as I pleased?”

“Well,” said he, resignedly, “I suppose I must submit. It is very natural you should feel like laughing, for I was so certain about it, I could have taken my oath that I should never marry. But I had not seen Peggy then. And I don’t mind so much your bantering me for my fickleness when I’m alone, if you won’t do it in her presence. She is very sensitive you know, and it might worry her, and perhaps make her distrustful.”

“I have brought no charge of fickleness ; indeed, I totally absolve you there. You have proved yourself a most honorable man, upright in intention and deed. So I shall heartily congratulate your Peggy on the prize she has won. And you may rest assured, Mr. Benedict, that I shall never torment *her*, but shall reserve that pleasure exclusively for your private benefit.”

As I closed the door, I glanced back, and was well pleased with the satisfaction that glowed in his honest features. As for myself, I felt a gladness, an exultation even, as if I alone had wrought out that sweet idyl.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

AND so it came to pass that, on a bright summer morning, Joy and I entered the neat little parlor of Dame Margaret Weatherwax, where a very few friends and neighbors were gathered. It was not long before Mr. Benedict appeared, with Peggy, in her neat, fawn-colored travelling dress, nestling timidly but trustingly to his side, even as the delicate violet hides beneath some protecting shrub. As I looked at her, I could not forbear soliloquizing, "What can be more lovely and lovable than a pretty young girl? Nor is it marvellous that bachelors and widowers are so apt to become cognizant of this fact." Then I recalled the story related of a good Scotch minister who was arraigned by his presbytery for the offence of marrying a young lady, he being somewhat advanced in years. In answering to the charge, he pleaded, —

"Can any of you point me to the chapter and the *verse* wherein an old man is forbidden to marry a young woman? And indeed, brethren, I put it straight to yer own consciences, whether, under similar circumstances, ye wouldn't every one of ye do the same thing, *if ye could!*"

But I must recall these stray thoughts. As Mr. Richardson proceeds to tie the knot, Peggy's drooping face is suffused with a succession of blushes. Mr. Benedict, on the contrary, stands more erect than I ever before saw him, his eyes fairly dancing with happiness and pride.

What a charming contrast ! — he, in the strength of a somewhat rough but truly noble manhood, exulting in the conscious power of his protecting love ; she, timidly but fondly clinging to him, happy, proud even, in the entireness of her surrender, — a true woman's sweetest lot, her most blessed destiny. There may be honest protesters against this doctrine, but so long as the world endureth, it will still remain a fact, that, except the holy ministries of the "sisterhood of charity," no other fate so befits and ennobles woman.

Dreaming again ! — But I could not help it. With some little complacency as to my own agency in the matter, my eyes, which had been fastened on a small figure in the faded carpet, returned to the bridal pair. "She is a pretty, gentle, loving creature," said I to myself, "and Philander well deserves her. No more wearisome days and anxious nights for her and her mother ! They have a friend who will bring sunshine enough to banish every sad memory. God bless them !"

It was Mr. Richardson who took up, first Mrs. Weatherwax, and then me and my sister, to greet the couple. I cordially kissed the bride, and next, since Philander *would* have it so, I cordially kissed the bridegroom also. Then the cake and wine were dispensed — that very Madeira I had seen in the little entry ; — after which, I went up stairs into her small attic bedroom with Peggy, who was trembling with excitement. The moment I had her all to myself, she burst into tears. I made her sit down, and lay her head on my shoulder.

"Dear Miss Frazer," she sobbed out, "it seems so like a dream, and I owe it all to you."

"Not a bit of it, dear, but to your own sweet self."

"But he told me *he* owed it to you, and of course I do. I wish you knew how happy I am. Yet I am so unworthy. But you can't begin to think how good and noble he is."

"God has been very kind to you, Peggy."

"Yes, indeed. And I want to be grateful and grow better. Do you think God is displeased because I love Mr. Benedict so much?"

"How much, dear Peggy?" asked I, with a sly look at her demure face.

Instantly that face crimsoned all over, while at the same moment, who should open the door and put in his head, but Philander? Peggy started, and then hid her telltale face.

"You are taking a husband's liberties very soon," said I.

"Her mother gave me leave; but is anything the matter?" with a face of the tenderest concern.

"Your wife has only been confessing that she cares nothing at all about you, and —"

Here Peggy lifted up her head, and gave him such a look that he — but thereupon I made good my retreat, leaving him to console her as he best could.

In the course of half an hour, we — that is, Mr. and Mrs. Benedict, Mrs. Weatherwax and myself — were taken in a carriage to their handsome new house on High Street. And in another half hour the bridegroom and bride set off on their journey. They went in style, for Mr. Benedict had secured a bright new close carriage, into which, with an entire disregard of external scenery, he shut himself up with his bride, allowing to his coachman an exclusive monopoly of all the thrifty farms and various water privileges they passed. As I stood, saying my adieus through the window which was let down, I added, —

“You have no idea what you are going to lose in that close box.”

“But I know what I’ve *found*—don’t I, Peggy?” Whereupon he tantalized me with the sight of his adoring glances.

“As to that matter, however, you real Orientalist, you might just as well have locked yourself up with her in that cosy little parlor of yours. But — *de gustibus*.”

“I guess we shall survive our imprisonment — shan’t we, Peggy?”

As he spoke, he turned towards her; and two such provokingly contented looking people gazing into each other’s faces I never saw. As I knew well enough what would follow such a gaze, and did not care to be any further aggravated, I kissed my hand to them, and turned away just in season to escape the blissful climax.

Ah, Peggy! I frankly confess it — I envied you, not your husband, — but I *did* envy your *fate*.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Two years since Joy's betrothal!

She still remained with me, and continued to gain in womanliness of character. Her attachment to Walter had become more consolidated, so that the danger of her slipping through his hands seemed past. Indeed, he had induced her to join him in persuasions for an earlier "consummation of their happiness," as he called it.

"And are you not happy enough now?"

"Not quite. Walter says I am too far off, and that he is impatient for the time which will make me his."

"Nonsense! You are that already."

"Oh, but that is not what he means; he wants to have me always beside him."

"But are you sure you would like that?"

"What if I should? Is there any harm in it?"

"I don't blame you in the least," replied I, kissing her rosy cheek, "nor him either. The feeling is very natural, I dare say, (how wisely I talked!) but then we must consult reason in such matters. And I think you are too young to be married."

"I am no younger than Peggy Weatherwax was."

"The circumstances are very different. And in the real experience of life, she was far older than you."

"But I should get experience a great deal faster if you would only let us be married."

“ Ah, Joy! you are a dear little ignoramus. Content yourself and Walter to let the sweet blossoms hang a little longer on the tree, and ripen in the sunshine. And don't think me a cross old sister, but be a good girl, and try to make Walter feel that it is best to wait.”

Was *I* changed in all this time? I can only say that I seemed to myself, now turned of twenty-three, a score of years older than on my twentieth birthday. As I looked back over those years to that brief, tropical season, when my lonely nature suddenly put forth the quick blossoms of affection, I wondered over and over again at the intensity of feeling that had concentrated on Walter Northrup. The contrast between my present and my former self was almost painful.

It cost me many a sharp pang to think of the hot tears I had *wasted*—of the bitter anguish I had endured, for the sake of a love which had now wholly died out of my life. He who, in the light of an idealizing affection, had stood transfigured before me, was, to my cleared vision, but *a man*; nay, an ordinary, a weak man.

My old tendency to dream had forsaken me. To my quickened perception, there seemed no longer any heroes upon the earth. And marvellous, I thought, must be the combination of manly virtues that could move my now unimpressible nature.

“ You had no chance,” some one may suggest. Not so! But my answer, in such cases, never cost me an hour's sleep.

From my father I had heard only three or four times since I left home. But at length there came sad tidings.

“ I am a degraded man. Not content with embittering the last three years, *she* has fled with that villain. If you

can forgive and forget the past, come to me as soon as possible."

I immediately informed the trustees of the Seminary that circumstances compelled me to resign my situation. And having sent a despatch to Mr. Northrup, Joy and I began to make preparations for our journey homeward.

The next afternoon, I went out to make some last calls; for, oppressed as I was, I could not take my departure without one more look at a few loved faces. And first, I found myself at the hospitable mansion in High Street. Dame Weatherwax met me at the door, and directed me to the library.

It was a charming picture that greeted me, and I stood for a moment to enjoy it. Mr. Benedict was in a luxurious arm-chair, while Peggy sat on an ottoman, nestling close to him, as usual. She was working a pair of slippers, — and very tasteful they were, — while he held an open book in his hand, from which he was reading aloud. He was not, however, so absorbed by the volume but that he could oversee her work. And occasionally he would pause, and looking down upon her in all the pride of possession, would lay his large, awkward hand on her graceful young head. I was about entering when he resumed reading, and I paused another minute.

“ She tell what blood her veins and arteries fill!
 Enough for her to feel its burning thrill.
 She gaze upon the moon, as if she took
 An observation! Love was in her look
 All gentle as the moon. Herself perplex
 With light original or light reflex!
 Enough for her, ‘By thy pale beam,’ to say,
 ‘Alone and pensive I delight to stray,

And watch thy shadow trembling in the stream !
 O maid, thrice lovelier than thy lovely dream !
 And is the race extinct ? Or where is hid
 She with the blushing cheek and downcast lid,
 Tremblingly delicate, and, like the deer,
 Gracefully shy, and beautiful in fear ?”

“I could answer the poet’s question — couldn’t I, little wife ?” fondly patting her cheek.

“I fear not ; that is, if you refer to any one in particular.”

“Of course I do refer to somebody very particular. How could he better have described Peggy Benedict ?”

I began to feel that I had no business to stand there, gazing with my profane eyes right into their Paradise. So with, “I hope I am not an intruder,” I ventured in.

The pretty tableau was instantly broken up, for both of them rose to meet me. And nothing would do but I must take off my bonnet, and stop to tea.

“I have only an hour to spare, and if you choose to make me drink a cup of tea during that time, very well. But what were you reading, Mr. Benedict, that has given such a fresh color to Peggy’s cheeks ?”

“A little poem, called ‘Factitious Life,’ by Richard Dana. Why not spend the evening here, and read it to us yourself ?”

“And let you and Peggy personate old-fashioned lovers, and illustrate what I read ?”

“Yes,” replied he, laughing ; “that is, I am willing, if Peggy is.”

“It would be a delightful drama ; but, unfortunately, I have come to say good by.”

“Good by ! What do you mean ?”

"That I have resigned my place here, and to-morrow start for Clydeville."

I had no idea the tidings would cast such a shadow over their sunny faces. And when it was communicated to the mother, she seemed fully to share their feeling. With our united efforts, we could scarcely keep up a social tea-table.

When I had said my adieus to Mrs. Weatherwax and Peggy, I turned to Philander.

"Not now, by your permission. I am going to claim my old privilege."

"But I go to Mr. Richardson's, and from there to Mrs. Ware's, where I expect to pass the night."

"That makes no difference. I shall see you safe to your quarters."

I could not hasten him beyond a slow walk, for he was full of Peggy and Peggy's mother.

At Mrs. Ware's door, I lingered a moment for a few last words.

"I shall never find another such friend as you, Miss Frazer. I don't mean Peggy, of course, but she is *my wife*. And I owe her entirely to you."

"You give me altogether more credit than I deserve. And, besides, your friendship has been as much to me as mine to you."

"I thank you for that," warmly shaking my hand. "Now, don't forget our claim on you for a visit."

"I will not. And some time, I shall hope to see you and Peggy in the East."

At length, with a hearty "God bless you," he again wrung my hand, and departed.

"Good Philander Benedict!" I thought, "I shall never look upon your like again."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

My last night in Ironton. Most full and comforting was my communion with Helen, during its long, sleepless hours. Two or three times she bade me good night, saying that, as I was to journey the next day, I needed rest. And turning my head on my pillow, I would resolutely close my eyes. But presently something would suggest itself which I knew not how to repress, and we would again set sail on the stream of confidential talk.

At length the first faint ray of morning shot through the window.

“And you have not slept one wink all night, dear Espy.”

“Nor you.”

“But I shall have a chance to sleep to-day.”

“And I shall be only too glad to catch some naps in the stage; and thus beguile the tedium of my journey.”

Mrs. Ware had an abundant breakfast, but I could take nothing except a cup of coffee, after which Helen accompanied me to Miss Brimblecum's.

“I learn that Dr. Bentley was here last night,” said I, as I returned, after having left her for a moment. “When you see him, please say that I was very sorry to miss his call, and that I left a special good by for him.”

We were then in my chamber, the same which Walter had selected for me so long ago. And now it was to be

occupied by a stranger. But would it not be haunted by the thoughts and feelings which I had lived into it? And in the spectral hours of night, what if these grim ghosts of the past should come from their hiding-places, and look the new occupant in the face! This thought I expressed to my friend, as we sat hand in hand. She smiled at my fancy.

“I have very strong local attachments,” I continued. “The rooms which I occupy for any length of time seem to grow so into my being, that I cannot leave them without feeling as if something was torn from me. And I hang all the nails, and fill every cranny and crevice, so full of my own thoughts, that I can never quite dispossess myself of the idea that they retain an occupancy after I myself have deserted the spot.”

“If I were going to succeed you in this room, I should expect continual company from these lingerers.”

“You would have it. The place would certainly be haunted. But think, Helen, how startled we should be if our thoughts were suddenly to assume form! I have sometimes had strange fancies of this kind. And were those thoughts and feelings which spring up spontaneously in certain moods, — as if to re-assert with emphasis the deep depravity of the human heart, — were these dreadful, though unuttered breathings of our lower nature to be projected into corresponding forms, and stand as it were photographed in all their ugliness before us, — it seems to me they would terrify and torture the heart as no penal infliction could possibly do. I can conceive of no worse, no more awful hell than forever to be face to face with these fearful phantoms. I remember being impressed with this thought

when reading a poem of Dana's, and how long his words rang in my memory.

“Look there, my soul! and thine own features trace!
And all through time and down eternity,
Where'er thou go'st, that face shall look on thee!”

“I don't know that I ever had just such a conception, dear Hope. And yet there seems a philosophy in it. But dreadful as is the view in one aspect, in another it is exactly the reverse. To be pure in heart, to have only high and noble thoughts and feelings to be thus mirrored before the soul —”

At this moment the postman's loud horn was heard, and presently the stage rolled up to the door. We exchanged a parting embrace, and went below. Walter, who was to ride out a few miles with us and Joy, followed me into the stage; the driver cracked his whip, and we were whirled away. As I turned my head, the last object I caught was my beloved Helen standing in the door-way. I waved my handkerchief, she waved hers,—and the unsympathizing vehicle jolted us out of her sight.

One moment ago, our hands were clasped. Now, we were as actually sundered as though the wide sea rolled between us. O Life!

My fit of abstraction was broken by finding that we had stopped at the hotel, and that Dr. Bentley was standing by the stage window. Presenting me with a beautiful bouquet, he extended his hand to say farewell. He did not attempt to speak, but I saw that his eye was moist as he turned away.

We too had parted.

The relentless wheels bore me onward, yet my heart lingered. Dropping my thick veil, and hidden behind a broad-shouldered man, who occupied the middle seat, I took the liberty to weep. Indeed, I could not help it. The last silent parting had affected me more than any other I had passed through. I did not love Dr. Bentley; with all his worth, and with all my own amiable efforts, I had failed to do this. Yet my friendship for him had something of that tenderness, which we can scarcely help indulging towards one who has shown us a peculiar regard.

Glad that Mr. Northrup and Joy were absorbed in each other, I fell into a fit of musing, which was not broken till the stage stopped, and Walter bade us adieu. I then taxed my energies for the consolation of my sister. But she too had been wakeful the previous night; so, after a while, she laid her weary head on my shoulder, and fell asleep. Resting my own against the side of the stage, I also at last slept heavily.

So we dragged on our tedious way till we arrived at Detroit, where we took the steamboat across the lake for Buffalo. This was a delightful change, and refreshed me more than all the sleep I had had since leaving Ironton.

As Joy and I sat together on deck, I noticed a gentleman walking slowly back and forth, with folded arms, and eyes bent upon the floor. As he casually lifted his hat, on which he wore a broad weed, I involuntarily remarked, "What a fine head!"

"Whose?" asked Joy.

"That gentleman's who is walking the deck," I replied, in a low voice.

"He's not half as handsome as Walter."

“Walter is very handsome,” I replied, with a smile, and we relaxed into silence.

The stranger’s face was grave, but peculiarly expressive; and as I had nothing to do except to look about, I came to feel a sort of pleasure in watching it. Half an hour, perhaps, he had thus promenaded, when, as he had just turned from us to go to the other end of the boat, I happened to say to Joy, “I wish I had a book with me.”

Instantly my *unknown* stopped short, gave me a hasty glance, and then said courteously, “I have a book in my valise which may interest you if you have not read it. It is John Foster’s ‘Essays.’”

“I have only read the one ‘On Decision of Character,’ but from that specimen, I am sure I should like the book.”

He went below, and presently returning, placed it in my hand, and then withdrew. The first thing I did, when sure he was out of sight, was to turn to the fly-leaf. I was not disappointed. In a bold hand was written — “Howard Ferguson,” — H. F. — my own initials. I could not help noting the singular coincidence. But why could he not have put down his residence, while he was about it? So I thought; then smiled at my own curiosity.

The next thing was to glance over the pages hastily, in doing which I caught sight of several pencilled passages. Doubtless they were the cream of the book, and I must secure them first. But this indulgence only stimulated my curiosity, for I was conscious of a warm response to every passage. While thus employed, Joy complained of being tired, and went down to recline in the saloon. I again opened the book, commencing the essay “On the Application of the Epithet Romantic.” I read till I came to the following passage, which was pencilled heavily: —

“I should deem it the indication of a character not destined to excel in the liberal, the energetic, or the devout qualities, if I observed in the youthful age a close confinement of thought to bare truth and minute accuracy, with an entire aversion to the splendors, amplifications, and excursions of fancy. This opinion is warranted by instances of persons so distinguished in youth, who have become subsequently very sensible indeed, but dry, cold, precise, devoted to detail, and incapable of being carried away one moment by any inspiration of the beautiful or the sublime.”

As I was reading this for the second time, I heard a step beside me; and, looking up, I met the stranger's searching glance.

“May I ask what interests you so much?”

I pointed out the passage, though not without slight reluctance. This led to a pleasant discussion, and this, again, to other subjects, in which both of us happened to strike the same key-note. Suddenly, the chambermaid, whom I had requested to have an oversight for me, appeared, saying that as I had no gentleman with me, it was time to take my place at the supper-table. I rose to follow her, when the stranger detained me.

“I ask pardon, but as you are alone, allow me to attend you. My name is Ferguson.”

“I frankly accept your offer. And I am Miss Frazer.”

He too noticed the coincidence, and, with a smile, quietly remarked,—

“A good Scotch name, like my own, Miss Frazer. Shall we look up your friend?”

“My sister? Yes, sir.” And, taking his offered arm, we went below, where we found Joy, and proceeded into the dining-hall.

If any one should pronounce me inconsiderate for so readily accepting the services of a stranger, involving, as it did, subsequent intercourse, I must plead as my apology that he carried in his face the best possible introduction. Besides, his was the instinctive offer of a gentleman, in seeing a lady who needed protection. Why, then, should I have refused it on the ground of mere etiquette?

From this time till we reached Buffalo, my sister and I were well cared for. But while attentive and courteous, Mr. Ferguson could not be called social. Our few conversations, however, while they did not afford the slightest clew to his personal history, had the effect greatly to increase the interest his thoughtful air had at first awakened, and there was that about him which wins instant respect and confidence — a kind of magnetism, against which one struggles in vain. From his mourning weeds, I thought it possible that his grave reticence of manner might be owing in part to some peculiar circumstances. Be that as it may, I did not learn his residence, his profession, if he had one, or his plans, — except indeed one of them, which incidentally escaped at the last moment.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

I WAS glad that our route did not lead us through Niagara. The place where we have suffered retains its unpleasant associations even when the suffering is over, and I did not feel strength to encounter again the ghosts of memory.

But as we travelled in that general direction, I could not help speculating painfully upon the mechanism of the soul, over whose tempests of agony so insidiously steals the cold breath of indifference and apathy.

Not more shifting and inconstant are the sands of the desert, than are the ever-changing feelings of the human heart. At every turn of destiny, the soul assumes a new configuration. Love, hate, scorn, indifference, joy, sorrow, remorse, — all its multiplied feelings and passions, — give place one to another, blending, separating, appearing, disappearing, and re-appearing in kaleidoscopic fashion. What is this thing which we deem immortal? And why is such a mysterious destiny appointed it?

Rapidly glided the boat across the beautiful lake. The heavens were of the bluest, and the glassy waters mirrored their tranquil beauty.

Banishing, so far as I could, all thoughts of the trying scenes I was soon to encounter, I gave myself up to the mingled influences of the charming weather, the prospect, and the occasion. Every hour had its pleasure, every moment its drop of content.

But the devouring Past, hurrying on with frantic haste, tore from me the Present, with its burden of unconscious happiness, and sent me shrinking into the dreaded Future.

The steamboat was at the wharf. As we stood on the lower deck, watching the busy crowd, I handed Mr. Ferguson the "Essays."

"Have you been able to finish the volume?"

"Not quite."

"Will you not, then, do me the favor to retain it?"

I shook my head.

"But I have read it twice."

I still hesitated, saying that I had scruples in appropriating the book of a stranger.

"But do you, then, regard me as a stranger?"

He gave me such a look, that the telltale blood rushed to my face, as I answered, —

"Not exactly, sir. But I have no claims on you for such a courtesy. Besides, I see it is an English edition, and you may not readily replace it."

"I hoped it might prove a not unpleasant memento of the brief journey we have made together. It has been truly a pleasant one to me," he added, in a tone of peculiar earnestness, "although I have carried an absorbed mind, as you may have noticed. One word to remove your scruple; I hope to see John Foster himself in the course of a few months."

I looked at him earnestly.

"I expect to sail shortly for Europe."

"For a tour on the continent?" — almost unconsciously escaped me.

"For a few years' absence, in the course of which time, I shall, probably, travel somewhat extensively."

At that moment, — I could not tell why, — a cold shudder passed over me, and my head began to swim. But with a determined effort, I rallied, and, taking the volume which he once more held out, said, with as much calmness as I could assume, —

“ I will no longer refuse it.”

One of those smiles that we do not easily forget crossed his countenance. Then he asked, playfully, —

“ Will you not intrust me with some commands for Europe? ”

“ My homage to the sultan, and all crowned heads, and my love to Switzerland and Italy,” — in the same playful tone.

“ But will you not let me bring you back some souvenir from the old world? ”

My eyes dropped beneath his, as I replied, —

“ If you put Aladdin’s lamp into my hand, I will, perhaps, venture to express a single wish; ” and there I hesitated.

“ What is it, Miss Frazer? ”

“ That you pluck me a flower from the shores of Genesaret.”

“ I will,” — in a voice that trembled a little.

Then he took my hand in silence.

Another parting!

And what excuse can I offer for the depression which followed it? But have *you*, then, never felt a keener pang at parting with a comparative stranger, than with a near relative, or an intimate acquaintance? And why, but that the strong, recognized ties, binding you to the familiar friend, bring relief to the farewell-moment? The separation is painful, but your communion is not interrupted. You may ex-

change letters ; at all events, your claims on each other are acknowledged, and you confidently expect to meet again.

But between you and this other, so late a stranger, there are no such external bonds. You may have had glimpses of each other's inmost soul ; — you may have interwoven precious threads of thought and sentiment. No matter ! At the appointed moment, the relentless Parcæ cut those intermingled threads, and you have no expectation that they will ever be rejoined. Or, if some sweet hope insidiously nestles into your bosom, you dare not look at it, — you sternly order it out, — you bar the door against its return, and then, perhaps, sit down and weep because it is gone.

CHAPTER XL.

ONCE more I rode through the old linden avenue. Again I stood on those broad stone steps, and glanced hastily round. The place was unchanged, but I was no longer the same being as when I last left it. The difference between *then* and *now*, was as that between love's glowing dream, and its cold, gray ashes.

Silently entering the door, a chilling breeze seemed to pass over me, as if there had been a recent funeral in the mansion.

"Miss Hope," said John Riley, after we had exchanged salutations, "Mr. Frazer wishes to see you in the library."

So, laying my bonnet on the hall table, and opening the door, I saw my father as he stood leaning against a high-backed chair. I hastened towards him, and threw my arms round his neck. And the dear man stooped and kissed me.

Never shall I forget that moment—the first time in my life that he had given me such a token of affection. I had long ceased to feel the exceeding bitterness of my dreadful early humiliation. But the scar had remained in my heart, ineffaceable, as I thought. By the wondrous magic of that paternal kiss, it was instantly, and forever, removed.

I helped him to a seat, and then, standing beside him, tried to give vent to my sympathy and affection. I could feel him tremble, as with tender reverence I put back his silvered

locks, and ventured to press my lips on that brow, furrowed more by trial than by years.

“I have come, dearest father, to claim a daughter’s privilege of ministering to you.”

A tear dropped from his eyes, while he groaned aloud. I asked if Joy might come, and, upon his assent, went in search of her. I told her that our father was greatly broken by his trials, and that we must treat him with the utmost tenderness and respect. Then taking her hand, we descended the familiar staircase.

He was sitting where I had left him. Joy knelt, and put up her lips to his. It was a sweet picture — that radiant young face laid against his haggard and prematurely wrinkled cheek.

Looking at her earnestly, —

“You are the image of your dear mother, as she was when I first saw her.”

Ah! he was beginning to do her justice now.

That night John brought me a letter which Mrs. Frazer had charged him to deliver into my hands. I tore it open, and hastily ran over the following lines: —

“It is all over, Esperance. My doom has at length seized me. In an angry moment, I mockingly told Mr. Frazer that from the very beginning of our acquaintance, he had been my dupe. Since that moment he has been a hateful tyrant. When he found, by his despicable spies, — for he was not too mean to employ them, — that I was corresponding with Levere, he set himself about an application for a divorce. He would not have scrupled one moment to drag me before the world, and ruthlessly to blast my reputation. And since, in any

event, I must be publicly disgraced, I may as well secure what consolation I can. Therefore I flee to a freer land with one, who, in spite of my better judgment, has long ruled in my heart. He may, perchance, break it in the end, for his nature is cold and merciless. Yet I shall enjoy a few rapturous days. And when I have thus inflicted a deadly wound on Mr. Frazer's proud heart, my revenge will be ample.

But, Espy, I am truly sorry to grieve you. I know you will think me dreadfully wrong — a monster — thus to desert my child. It almost breaks my heart to think of her. But you are noble. You will be a mother to 'my little Ednah, and bring her up to be pure and good, as I, alas! never was. Say nothing of this to your father, or he will be sure to thwart my wishes.

EDNAH."

"Where is Ednah?" I asked Nancy, the next morning.

"She is kept in the children's rooms, clean out of the way of your father. Somehow, he seems to have taken a dreadful spite against her."

I followed her to the nursery, where, taking a key out of her pocket, she unlocked the door. I looked surprised.

"Them's the orders, and we darsen't break 'em. You've no idee, Miss Hope, what awful times we've had here. And I'm sure I never was so thankful in my life as to hear you was a-coming home."

Listless and unhappy, if one could judge by her face, stood the poor child, a perfect miniature of her mother, drumming on the table. The floor was strewn with dolls and broken toys, while, tipped back in a rocking-chair by the window,

with her feet lifted up on a stool, sat Dolly, her young nurse, deep in a story book. My sympathies were at once drawn out towards my little sister in her truly orphan condition; and seating myself, I took her into my lap, and looked kindly into her cloudy, hazel eyes.

“Ednah, I am your sister Espy.”

She gave back my earnest look, and then threw her arms round my neck, exclaiming, —

“Take me to mamma, then. She is angry when papa has me shut up.”

Gradually soothing the excited child, I told her I had come from a great way off to stay at home, and that, if she was good, she should be my own little girl, and sleep with me. This was an impulsive promise, but my heart warmed strangely towards her. And besides, was not my duty plain?

Not long after, my father told me he had been waiting till I came, before he determined where to send little Ednah. I ventured to express my wish to take charge of her myself. As he seemed greatly displeased, I immediately turned the subject. So it was left unnamed between us for some weeks. I fulfilled my promise to the child, but it required constant watchfulness to keep her out of my father's way. To him I devoted most of my time, reading the newspapers aloud, singing and playing for his amusement, and taking daily drives with him. So that I had only odd moments to give Ednah. But then she often woke when I came to my room at night, begging for “more tory.”

When the management of affairs had pretty much come into my own hands, I felt that it was time to decide about

the child. So I asked him one day,—assuming that she was to remain,—

“Don’t you think our little girl can have a wider range without annoying you?”

The shades gathered on his face.

“You know not how strong my dislike is to that child.”

“But, dear father—”

“And then, I cannot hear that name uttered.”

“I feel as you do about that. But suppose we should call her Vesta!”

“Well, Hope,” he said, after a long pause, “I have thwarted you enough. For your sake I yield.”

Hoping for this result, I had previously accustomed the household and the little girl herself to her new name, and also to speak of her father as Mr. Frazer. That night I told her she was to go where she pleased, but that, as Mr. Frazer had not been well, she must be quiet while with him, and not ask questions. Her joy knew no bounds, and she would be “the bestest girl I ever saw.” As indeed she was, being careful to put a curb on her spirits in the presence of her father. I noticed, however, that she eyed him with curiosity, and something of dread, which at length was softened to pity.

One day after dinner, as my father, according to his custom, sat back in his chair, Vesta asked me,—

“May I carry the little cricket and put it under Mr. Frazer’s feet? I will be *so* softly.”

“Yes, dear.”

She went on tiptoe, and having placed it before him, she stood a moment looking wistfully into his face. Then she turned to me,—

"May I say just one thing?"

"I think you may."

"I am sorry you have been sick, Mr. Frazer. Mayn't I love you a *little*?"

He was fairly overcome; and opening his arms, she climbed into his lap, and softly stroked his withered cheek, till the tears trickled down over it.

"Have I been naughty, Mr. Frazer?"

"No, child; but you must call me papa."

She looked over at me triumphantly.

"And may I tell you *ever* so many questions?"

"As many as you please."

"Do you hear that, Epsy?" Then turning to him, "She said I mustn't tell you any questions, and that I must call you Mr. Frazer."

"Ask her leave, then."

"May I, Epsy?"

"Always mind papa."

So the reconciliation was sealed. And it bore sweet fruits for both father and child.

I think I have not stated that after my brother was expelled, he had been sent on a whaling voyage. During that winter the news of his sudden death came to us. I could see that, in addition to my father's grief, he struggled with a load of self-reproaches. And if he suffered from remorse, I was by no means exempt, for I had worse than wasted all my opportunities of acquiring a sisterly influence over him. But a subject so painful, and about which there was so little to be said, found no place in our conversation. And from that time, the name of Horatio was dropped from among us.

CHAPTER XLI.

HAVING completed his studies, Mr. Northrup had established himself in Reston, about thirty miles from Clydeville. He and Joy together, especially as my father had been induced to join them, were more than a match for me; so it was settled that they were to be married early in the spring. And a busy winter we had in making up pretty things for the bride.

At length the long anticipated day arrived. The wedding, which was a private one, occurred in the morning; after which the happy pair took their departure. I had become tenderly attached to Joy, and the house seemed very lonely without her. But I saw that my father was depressed, and for his sake I made a great effort to wear a cheerful countenance. Under these circumstances, our little Vesta proved a genuine sunbeam. If she was long out of his sight, my father invariably missed her. The pretty creature well understood her importance, and knew how to turn it to good account. So that many was the frolic into which she drew him, grave as he was.

“Whoa, Jerry!” And Dr. Belden reined in the old beast, calling out, “How are you, Miss *Epsy*? — as the little one has it.”

“All the better for your painstaking to inquire.”

“But there you are mistaken, my young lady. I stopped with no such design at all.”

“Excuse me; I will pass on.”

“Stop, I say. What a smart piece you are!”

“Did you stop me to make that assertion?”

“I cannot do anything with you in the street. I might talk all day, and never come to the point. Get in — will you?”

“But I am in too much haste to enjoy a ride.”

“I haven’t asked you to ride. I only want to drive round the corner.”

“But I have no wish for such a drive.”

Instantly the still active doctor was on the ground, when, taking me by the arm, he lifted me with an energetic “Get in, without any more ado.”

Seeing that he was in earnest, I obeyed, and we were presently in motion.

“What trouble you girls like to give an old fellow!” said he, looking comically at me over his glasses. “I should like to see you under subjection — that’s what I should.”

“That, you *do* see at this moment. What but your authority seated me in this buggy?”

“Is that so? Then I must improve my chance, or your fit of obedience will be over. I was just going to ride on to the hill, to invite you to take tea with us to-night, when, fortunately, the old adage proved true, and you were on hand to answer for yourself.”

“Do you still invite me?”

“Of course I do.”

“But have you any particular reason for my coming to-night. If not, I should prefer another day.”

"But wife and I do happen to have the most particular reasons."

"Am I permitted to ask for them?"

"Certainly, but you will get no answer. You are to come, though; on that point, I am strenuous."

"In full dress?" asked I, laughing.

"No. Wear something half way between."

"Are you particular as to the time?"

"To be sure. Come at five, precisely. I shall then be at home."

"I will be punctual. And now, if you have done with me, I should like to dismount from your buggy."

"I can take you a little farther."

"I have some shopping to do, and this is my nearest point."

At the appointed hour, I stood at Dr. Belden's door. Coming to meet me himself, he took me by both hands, and was about putting me into the parlor.

"Have you other company?" asked I, holding back.

"Only a little — no strangers."

"But you must let me take off my bonnet, and look at myself," said I, resolutely drawing away my hands.

"Oh, the vanity of women!" And he opened the door into the sitting-room, where hung a small looking-glass.

"Now, gaze!" — placing me square before it.

"I intend to," replied I, throwing off my things. Then smoothing my hair, and arranging my collar and sleeves, I took a general survey of myself in the glass.

As soon as I withdrew, he took my place, and having coolly imitated my performance, turned round and gravely asked, "Will I do?"

“Passably.”

“Then let us proceed.”

On entering the parlor, the first object that I caught sight of was a venerable man sitting in an arm-chair. He was talking with Mrs. Belden, and I could not see his face. But, as he turned, great was my amazement and delight at encountering my dear, good Dr. Kendrick, of Crawford memory. He seemed equally glad to see me, though not surprised, as he was expecting my appearance.

We shook hands again and again, all the time looking earnestly at each other.

“You are greatly changed, Miss Hope. If I had not been forewarned, I should hardly have known you.”

“It is several years since those Crawford days, and I have had time to grow old. But you, sir, are scarcely altered, except, indeed, that your hair is a little whiter. I should have known you in Jerusalem.”

“I should like to meet you in that place,” replied he, smiling kindly.

We soon returned to the past; and, in reply to his questions, I told him something of my internal history, not omitting to mention the mistake into which I fell at the time I knew him.

“I tried my best, sir, to make duty answer instead of love; but I had no spiritual enjoyment till I learned another gospel.”

“It is very likely I was in part to blame for such an error,” said he, with great candor. “I, too, have learned more of love since that time. It is the key-stone, and nothing can take its place.”

We then made mutual inquiries concerning some of my

old fellow-pupils, with many of whom he had been acquainted. Among others, I asked him if he had ever heard of Belinda Lawson.

"She went out to the valley of the Mississippi as a teacher, where she married an excellent home missionary, and has made as energetic, industrious, and self-sacrificing a laborer as there is in the whole valley."

"I'll venture to say you found our young friend, here, a hard case," said Dr. Belden, when a pause occurred.

"Rather a hard one, sir. She was always trying to solve mysteries — a very unsatisfactory employment. But she yielded at last, and I had much hope of her."

"She has a little of the old leaven yet," added the doctor, dryly, casting a sly glance at me.

"The tempter has not deserted our earth, as you see, sir," replied I, addressing myself to Dr. Kendrick.

After supper, the good man and I sat down together in a cosy corner, and had a long, delightful conversation, which thoroughly warmed my heart towards him.

"What do you think of the reverend divine now?" asked Dr. Belden, as he went home with me.

"I think him wonderfully improved. He could not be *better* than he was, but he is far more genial and lovable."

"And how do you account for the change, my little lady? On the principle that good wine grows better as it grows older?"

"Not altogether. At the time I knew him, he had an abruptness, almost sharpness of manner, occasioned, perhaps, by a kind of sternness in his belief. Indeed, I may as well

admit that there was a certain dogmatism about him; and that is always repellent. But in silvering his hair, time seems not only to have softened the sharp edges of his theology, but to have mellowed his whole nature."

"The Spirit has long dwelt in his heart, and you know that among the fruits of that Spirit are long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, and meekness."

"As, however, we sometimes have to take these fruits for granted, it is particularly pleasant to get a *sight* of them. Formerly, I liked Dr. Kendrick in spite of himself; but now, he is so charming that one cannot help positively loving him."

We walked on silently, till I suddenly exclaimed, —

"But I have not yet asked you how you came to know Dr. Kendrick."

"Bless you, child! he was my minister, when I was a lad, and used to hear me recite my *catechise*."

Walter and Joy had been home two or three times; but my father had never been able to make up his mind to visit them at Refton, and I was unwilling to go without him. Towards the last of December, we received a letter from Walter, informing us of their welcome Christmas gift in the shape of a son and heir.

"And he is my niece, and I am his aunty," said Vesta, jumping up and down, and clapping her hands for joy.

"Your nephew, you mean," said her grandpa, who was scarcely less delighted than she.

"Shall you not be prevailed on to visit Refton now?" I inquired.

"In a few weeks we will all go; that is, if the sleighing continues good."

I wrote immediately of our intentions, begging the privilege of naming the child, which I promised to do on our arrival. In the mean time they must call him *baby*.

Walter answered as follows : —

“ We cordially assent to your request, dear Sister, though with some curiosity as to your choice. I presume, however, that you are intending to honor our son and heir with one of the most illustrious names that grace the annals of history. I only beg, in behalf of the unconscious child, that you will not select such a one as he will be likely to eschew when he arrives of age.

We shall be eagerly anticipating your visit, and we promise you all the best entertainment for mind and body.

WALTER NORTHRUP.

P. S. Be sure and not choose Lycurgus, Æschylus, or Demosthenes. And if you prefer a Scripture name, beware of Jehoiakim, Nebuchadnezzar, and Zebedee. To almost anything else we will submit.”

“ Where is my ownty downty nephew ? ” was Vesta’s first question, on our arrival at Reston.

The new planet was speedily brought forward, and exhibited to our admiring gaze.

“ Now for his name,” said Walter, “ for we cannot wait another minute.”

“ His name,” said I, laying him in my father’s arms, “ is Horatio Frazer.”

He tenderly kissed him, and then giving him to Walter, he held me to his heart, softly murmuring, “ God bless you, my child ! ”

CHAPTER XLII.

“MISS HOPE FRAZER,
CLYDEVILLE, N. Y.”

So was the square, thin parcel directed, which had just arrived by Express, pre-paid from New York city. When Ann brought it up stairs, I was sitting by my chamber window, writing to Joy. I took it in my hands, and turned it all round, wondering what it could be, — for I had ordered nothing, and was expecting nothing. I slowly untied the string, and opened the thick brown wrapper. Then appeared another of white drawing paper, on which the same direction was written, though in a very different hand.

What was there in my own name that arrested my attention, and quickened my pulses? It was in a handwriting of which I had seen but a single specimen — only two words. Yet I knew it in one moment. It was the very same capital H. and F.

Then a feeling which had no voice, surged up from the depths of my being — “He has not forgotten thee, O waiting Heart.” It stirred me like a touch from some loved spirit-hand, and, strangely agitated, I bowed my head upon my desk. Presently I lifted it, and looking again at the white wrapper, I caught sight of some lightly pencilled words in one corner. They were simply, “*From Italy.*” But they

explained the whole. The parcel had been sent with other packages to New York, with the request that it should be enclosed and forwarded. But what did it contain?

My trembling fingers could scarcely loosen the knot, tied so carefully in that far-off land. Yet I would not cut it. So, resting a moment, I tried again, and with better success. Eagerly removing the covering, my treasure was revealed. It was the beautiful engraving founded on the legend of St. Christopher.

Long I sat gazing upon it with dim, tearful eyes. At length I went to my book-shelves, and, taking down a familiar book, I turned to the fly-leaf, and compared the writing there with that on the inner wrapper of the parcel. Not that I *needed* to do it, but because I found pleasure in re-assuring myself of what I already knew. Then, carefully cutting out the direction, I laid it in the book. I did this to preserve it, and with no other design. But, having done so, I could not avoid an indefinable emotion at seeing, side by side, those two names, with the same initials, and written by the same hand.

How long my reverie lasted I know not. But I was suddenly roused by discordant words. Reason was sharply expostulating — “Have you not suffered enough, foolish Heart? Would you venture once more within the fatal precincts of Dreamland?”

Then my heart pleaded that I was still too young utterly to renounce what is dearest in life.

“But would you cheat yourself again? And *now*, you have not the slightest foundation on which to build.”

“How learned you that? There are things in heaven and earth not revealed to your cold eyes. What if I should tell

you of looks and tones, still treasured up, which I *know* were not false ! ”

“Beware, or thy fair castle will be tumbling, and drag thee down in its ruins.”

“In spite of your warning, I shall cling to my faith. There *are* those who cannot deceive.”

In this contest, Instinct prevailed over Reason. But a sharp pang had suddenly seized me, and that not for the first time. It was the memory of my betrothal to Walter.

“Would that it had never been ! ” was my earnest thought,—“that so, if I should meet my ideal, I could present him a heart on which no name had been written. Yet should my true mate appear, he will find that, so far from being impoverished in my capacities of affection, I am all the richer for my experience.”

Arousing myself, I smiled sadly at my own soliloquy. If those severed threads were indeed to be rejoined, it could only be in the far future. In the mean time I had plenty of work to do.

So I tried to set myself about something ; but imagination had got the start, and it was hard to fetter its wings. At length it occurred to me that it would be a good time to look over my Crawford journal, which I had long been wishing to do, but had deferred for lack of courage. I could bear it now. Rapidly running over the hasty record, I could not help contrasting my present condition with the almost unbroken wilderness of my childhood. The piece which Eleanor Cottrell had stolen and criticised, was an exact transcript of my old morbid state. It was indeed, as I had called it, the “Cry of my Heart.” And its perusal, somehow, seemed to bring me back into my old, miserable mood.

In order to exorcise this spirit, I hastily penned a few verses, which, if no better poetry, at least breathe a more Christian spirit.

THE ANSWERING VOICE.

Thou wanderer down Life's rapid stream,
On whom shines no celestial beam, —
O'er whose frail bark wild billows break, —
And must thou, then, a shipwreck make ?

Look yonder, where, through clouds afar,
Gleams on thee Bethlehem's cheering star.
Upon that star now fix thine eye,
And thou shalt know a Friend is nigh.

Engird thy bark with Faith's sure band,
And place in mine thy trusting hand, —
So will I guide thee to that shore,
Where angry billows break no more.

For thee has no relentless Fate
Poured out a poisoned cup of hate ;
A Father's hand thy lot ordains, —
His heart thine aching heart sustains.

In every struggling, doubting hour,
Shall Faith reveal her conquering power ; —
And in Affliction's darkest night,
Shall clearest shine her holy light.

Reposing thus upon my breast,
In quietness thy soul shall rest,
Till all these storms of life are o'er,
And thou hast gained th' eternal shore.

CHAPTER XLIII.

Two years and a half since my return from Ironton, and in all that time not a word of tidings concerning Ednah! But I could not banish her from my mind. And of late I had thought of her more than ever.

One night I had a strangely vivid dream, in which, with a haggard face and clasped hands, she appeared before me, imploring help. When I awoke, the sad image still haunted me.

About ten o'clock, I was summoned to the parlor to meet Dr. Belden. He wore so grave a face, that I instinctively exclaimed, —

“You have brought news from Ednah.”

“You are a wonderful diviner,” replied he, handing me a letter directed to himself in her well-known writing.

“DR. BELDEN: May I beg you, with your own hand, to deliver the enclosed to Miss Frazer?”

EDNAH HALSTED.”

Greatly agitated, I broke the seal, and, tearing open the letter, devoured its contents at a glance.

“MYSTIC, May 10th.

“DEAREST ESPERANCE: I plunged into sin, which, in its turn, has plunged me into misery and want. We, too, have

parted. That basest of men drove me wild with anger. I vented it in his face, and, leaving him in France, I am here, only twelve miles from you, — worn out, faded, sick and poor, with but one desire — to embrace my child. If you hesitate to grant it, at least come to me yourself, and let me beseech you on my knees. You will not scorn me, Hope. You are the only being I can trust on the broad earth. If you could know what I have suffered, bad as I am, you would pity me. But I can write no more. The thought of being so near my darling has produced an excitement which exhausts my strength.”

Adding directions how to find her, she closed her unhappy letter. I handed it to the doctor. As he read it, he was more than once obliged to take out his handkerchief, and rub his glasses.

“You will go,” said he, emphatically. “I will carry you over myself, for she may need medical advice.”

“How soon?”

“At half past eleven.”

Finding my father, I told him that, with his permission, Dr. Belden and I were going out for a drive, and might not be back till night.

“Go, by all means, for it will do you good.”

It was between one and two when we drove up to the Mystic tavern and lunched. Then I walked over to Mrs. Parsons’s cottage, and inquired for Mrs. Halsted, as she had directed. I was shown into a small room, where, lying on a couch covered with coarse patch, reclined the once beautiful Ednah. In a moment she was on the floor, with her hands clasping my knees.

"No, dear Ednah, you must not kneel to me;" and, assisting her back, I stooped down, and tenderly kissed her.

This overcame her, and, throwing her arms round my neck, she clung to me in silence. At length she whispered the name of her child.

"She is very well, and shall come and see you to-morrow."

She warmly pressed my hand, but could not reply. I then gave her a brief account of what had taken place since she left, not omitting the change of the child's name. At the recital of my father's relenting, and his present great kindness, she turned very pale, murmuring, —

"If he is kind to my darling, I revoke my curse."

She then told me that, in order to reach America, she had been obliged to dispose of her jewels, and was now possessed of only a few dollars.

"I suppose I shall end my days in an almshouse," said she, with a bitter smile; "that is, unless I have the courage to shorten them. But for my child, I should have floated out into the darkness before now. You remember I don't believe in any hereafter. Nothing after death, for me, but oblivion! Oh, how I long for oblivion!"

She closed her eyes, but in a moment sprang up with the look of a maniac, exclaiming, "There they are — the fiends! They never fail to come when I talk of death. Dancing round me! — they come nearer! — they clutch at my soul! Oh, save me!" And with a piercing shriek, she sank back exhausted.

The noise brought in Dr. Belden, who immediately gave her a quieting draught. In a few minutes she was asleep, while we sat in silence, noting her sunken eyes, and her

worn, haggard face. Then I looked at the doctor, who sadly shook his head, repeatedly wiping his eyes.

"She needs entire rest, and a generous diet, with the best of cordials. I have some very old wine of the first quality, which I will bring over to-morrow."

She was awake when we left, and earnestly repeated, "You will bring her?"

"Yes, Ednah, if you will promise not to talk in her presence as you have to-day."

An expression of pain crossed her face as she replied, "I do promise."

For a little distance my companion and I rode in silence. But at length he broke out, —

"My God, what a wreck she is!" adding, presently, in a more cheerful tone, "But we must save her — body and soul."

"Has she any particular disease?"

"No; her malady is mostly mental. But she must have the very best of care." Then, turning to me, he exclaimed, "Why, how you look, child! You've got on your old churchyard face. It'll never do in the world to go home to your father in that style. He'll think you've been robbed and murdered. So cheer up, cheer up. It will all come right in the end."

Making a great effort to throw off the weight which oppressed me, I asked, "How can we best manage this matter?"

"Oh, I've planned it all out. Putting the present time out of the question, you look miserably."

"I always did that."

“Nay, none of your Cayenne peppering now. The long and the short of it is, you need recruiting. I shall see your father to-night, and recommend that you go to Saratogy for a few weeks. You needn’t shake your wise head. It is just the prescription for Mrs. Frazer—beg your pardon—for Mrs. Holster.”

“Halsted.”

“Halsted, then. It’s rather early in the season, but better for her than if it were the fashionable time. And you could take Vesty along.”

“But my father?”

“Hist! I haven’t done yet. When you are all off at Saratogy, I reckon I can gradually break the matter to him. And I think he’s enough of a Christian now to be persuaded to settle something on the poor woman he once thought so much of. What do you say to my scheme?”

“A very good one, if you can make it work.”

“It’ll work fast enough, if you’ll only put your shoulder to the wheel. I’ll warrant that.”

As we drove into the avenue, — “I hope you are intending to invite me to tea to-night, for I’m in a hurry to begin.”

“Will you stop and take tea with us this evening, Dr. Belden?”

“You see, Mr. Frazer,” I heard him say, as I was entering the room, “there’s nothing like those mineral waters for fetching up the appetite and strength, and for curing all sorts of spleen;” and he gave me a sly wink.

“I agree with you, doctor. And I wish you could persuade Hope to go and spend a few weeks there. Indeed, I’ve half a mind to go myself.”

The doctor knit his brows, and, with a doleful face, replied, —

“ I recommend *you* to keep in your corner at home. Such gayeties are not for men of our age. But, for a reasonable sum, I'll engage to persuade this perverse daughter of yours to start in one week ;” and he nodded his head energetically.

“ I fully authorize your attempt.”

“ And don't you think Vesty had better accompany her?”

“ I don't know how I could spare them both at once.”

“ I thought the little chipper one might keep up Hope's spirits.”

“ Well, perhaps she had better go, then.”

“ I'll come and see you every day, sir, if my company is worth anything.”

“ Thank you ; it will be a great comfort.”

“ Suppose I should take Hope and Vesty out on a drive to-morrow?”

“ A very good plan, if you can find time.”

“ Oh, yes ; for I give most of my business to my young partner. Well, my lady, shall we start at nine?”

Vesta was delighted at the proposal of a drive with us. And all the way to Mystic she chatted like a magpie. I had sometimes talked to her of her mother who had gone over the waters. When I told her of the long journey she had taken to see her, she was wild with excitement.

The scene that took place in the cottage I shall not attempt to describe. Sure I am that no eye could have beheld it unmoistened. That childish, blooming face of innocence by the side of that faded, pallid, suffering countenance, — what a contrast they formed ! And it was the more striking from the singular resemblance between the two.

Ednah had evidently feared that her child would be alienated from her. And when she found how different it was, she thanked me with great emotion. It seemed as if she could never gaze enough on that sweet face.

As we were returning home, I told Vesta she had better say nothing about her mother.

“Not to papa?”

“No, my dear.”

She opened her great, wondering eyes upon me, as if perplexed, but, at the same time, readily assented, saying, —

“I will not speak one word if you will take me to see her again. I will be so careful.”

The next day I overheard the following colloquy: —

“Did you have a pleasant drive yesterday?”

“Yes, papa.”

“Where did you go?”

“I mustn’t tell,” — assuming a look of vast importance.

“Did you call anywhere?”

“You mustn’t ask, papa, because it’s my secret.”

“Where did you put your book, Vesta?” I asked, rushing to the rescue. “Run quick, and find it.”

“But, please, don’t tell him the secret.”

“No, no, child; run along.”

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE next week, we went to Saratoga, taking the rooms which Dr. Belden had engaged for us in one of the most retired houses. Ednah was so feeble that, at first, I had serious fears concerning her; but, after a time, she began slowly to recruit. It was my most earnest desire to see her a sincere penitent. The obstacles in the way, however, were great, and I was far less sanguine as to any efforts of my own than I had been in the case of my friend, Eleanor Granger. Indeed, I had learned such self-distrust from my past failures, that I shunned all argument.

As Ednah gained strength, her mental conflicts increased. She did not, however, forget her promise, being always careful how she talked in the presence of her child. But sometimes, when we were alone, the bitter unbelief and defiance of her heart burst forth spontaneously.

One day, when Vesta had gone to ride with some other children, I sat reading to her in her chamber. She evidently paid no attention to what I read, and suddenly broke out almost fiercely, —

“Can you tell me, Esperance, why I was born? Or, if doomed to exist, why destiny has forever thwarted me? — No, you cannot,” she continued with vehemence. “You say, it is God who orders every event. Well! — grant there is a God. Then, I affirm that He is a Being hard and inexo-

rable as fate, — creating us with passions which we have no power to control, and then launching us upon an existence, where He has provided beforehand every variety of snare to lure us to destruction. We cannot lift a finger to help ourselves. If we attempt to escape, then comes along some fierce temptation, — *Providence*, I suppose you would call it, — and, with resistless force, bears us down the swift current. After this, according to your faith, come the consequences, viz., everlasting punishment. We are first *doomed* to sin, and then doomed to punishment, for fulfilling our doom. Is this the boasted righteousness of God?"

"Don't, don't, dear Ednah," exclaimed I, recoiling from her impious language.

"You know that I am uttering the truth, and I *will* have out my say. I boldly assert that, if the reckless happening of things in our world has not the excuse of mere chance, we are driven to a far more shocking supposition. The playthings of an omnipotent Will, we grope on blindly, becoming more and more entangled in the web of circumstances which that Will has contrived, until, conquered by the evil forces it has set in motion, we sink to the lowest bottom. And yet, if, in the madness of our struggles, we are impelled to ask, "Why hast thou made me thus?" every hand is lifted in horror at what is stigmatized as blasphemy. Your God, Hope, is not a whit better than the destroying Siva of the Hindoos."

"I cannot hear you, Ednah. You know not the God you revile, the love you set at nought."

"You *shall* hear me. I will not own such a Being. Worship him! No, I *defy* him! Let him do his worst!"

As she spoke, her expression of scorn and defiance suddenly gave place to that of blank horror. Such a look I never before saw on the human countenance. It was the very agony of despair.

“The fiends!—O God—the fiends! They are dragging me down. Yes, I *do* believe in a God. I feel his wrath. It is burning, burning, burning hell-fire in my soul. I have cursed my Maker, and now He is avenging himself. The fiends are strangling—” And she fell back on the couch.

I stood there for a moment, stricken dumb. Then, lifting up my heart for the guidance of Heaven, I knelt beside her. Laying my hand on her clammy forehead, I entreated Him, who, in the days of his flesh, healed those that were possessed of devils, that He would cast out the evil spirit from this wretched sufferer, and that He would show himself to her, in his tender compassion, as one ready to forgive, and not willing that any should perish.

If I ever prayed with my whole soul, it was then. And if I ever had reason to believe that prayer is answered, it was then and there. The terror in her face softened into the deepest sadness, and as the tears stole down her cheek, she looked at me earnestly.

“Do you think He heard you?”

“I am sure He did.”

“And will He answer you?”

“I believe He will; but you must pray for yourself, dear Ednah.”

“I can't, Espy.”

“Unless you do, no other's prayers can avail.”

“But I don’t know what to say.”

“You remember the prayer of the publican. Say that.”

For a moment her face was full of thought. Then, clasping her wan hands upon her breast, she lifted up her streaming eyes, and said, in tones that must have come from the depths of a convicted heart,—

“GOD BE MERCIFUL TO ME A SINNER!”

It seemed to me like a miracle—the subdued look and manner that stole over her. The convulsions of blasphemy were exchanged for the pleadings of penitence; the agonies of a hopeless resistance and despair, for the sweet peace of submission.

The bitter scorn and defiance, just now written on every line of her speaking face, had all disappeared. In their stead was a peculiar lighting of the eye, and an indescribable something, which I may, perhaps, call the *restful* expression of a soul that has ceased from its long conflict with God, and has gained that first wonderful revelation of his blessed character.

“Ah!” she exclaimed, “what a miserable, mistaken wretch I have been! One earnest look to God has taught me what years of argument could not do,—the infinity of my own ingratitude and guilt, and the infinity of the divine love. Oh, Esperance, if I may only be spared to undo a little of the vast evil I have done, and to lead some poor prodigal to Christ, as you have led me,—it is all I ask!”

CHAPTER XLV.

THE first evening after our return to Clydeville, I had a long conversation with my father. He told me that, notwithstanding Dr. Belden's cautious preparation, the announcement of Ednah's return was a great shock to him.

"My old faults of character," he continued, "are hard to overcome! It seemed to me that I never could forgive that woman, and, least of all, acknowledge that she had any claim on me for maintenance. 'Let her go to the poor-house,' I said in my wrath. But the good man would not give me up. He continued to argue the matter till I was conquered. I freely forgive her, my child. And I will settle an income of a thousand dollars upon her, for she couldn't live on less."

"Another miracle!" I thought, as I kissed his hand.

"Since I concluded on this, Hope," added he, wiping his eyes, "the millstone which had been hanging round my neck is all gone. But let her go off out of the reach of Vesta. That is the only condition I make."

This was not the time to object; so, taking my work, I sat down by the window, and gave myself up to my own thoughts. But I was not too absorbed to take notice of what was passing between my father and the child, who had just entered.

"Did you have a pleasant time at Saratoga, my little girl?"

"Yes, papa."

"And what made it so pleasant?"

"The lady did, my own mamma. She loves me more than tongue can tell."

When the little gypsy had got off the words, she looked frightened, saying, —

"Have I told the secret, Epsy?"

"You have done no harm, dear. Papa knows about the lady."

"She cries a great deal," said Vesta, putting on a face of solemnity. "And she must be comforted, mustn't she, papa?"

As no reply was made, she proceeded earnestly, "Did you know she had learned to pray, papa? But I don't think you did, for Epsy told her how when we were at — what do you call it?"

"She isn't the only one your dear sister has taught to pray."

"No, papa. She taught *me*. And did she teach you too? I know you didn't use to pray."

"Yes, Vesta, she taught me, too."

"Well, papa, I know Epsy wants mamma to live where I can go and see her. I heard her tell Dr. Belden so. And it's best — isn't it? — because she taught us all how to pray. And so we ought to do everything she wants us to. Please have my mamma live in a pretty house, where I can go and comfort her."

"We'll see, child. Run away, now."

"See means he'll do it;" and, clapping her hands, she skipped away.

He no longer attempted to restrain his emotion. And

when I left my work, and knelt down beside him, he said brokenly, —

“What am I, that I should be making conditions, when God has forgiven me outright? So find her a home wherever you like. And if she is a changed woman, and you think no harm would come to Vesta, she shall spend a portion of the time with her. God knows I have reason to be merciful to others, for He has shown great mercy to me, who sinned so cruelly against my poor Mary.”

In a few days, Dr. Belden called to inform me that in Glencoe, a small village not seven miles from us, there was a beautiful cottage offered for sale. With the approbation of my father, it was immediately secured, and neatly furnished. And the good doctor, being the one delegated to make Ednah acquainted with the arrangements, reported, on his return, that she was entirely overcome by the generous treatment she had received.

She felt that she deserved nothing from God or man but to be a miserable outcast. Yet the One had manifested to her the marvellous power of his reconciling love, and the other, under the transforming influence of that same love, had now provided for her earthly comfort in a way that showed all resentment to have died out of his heart.

On the appointed day, John Riley drove me over to Mystic, from which place we took Ednah to her new home. In fitting up the cottage, I had taken great pains to have every thing as tasteful as was consistent with the severe simplicity which, in her present circumstances, I knew she would prefer. The piano, which my father had purchased for her express use, was the only article of furniture taken from our

house. When she saw that set up in the pleasant little parlor, she sank down, and, covering her face, wept aloud.

“I cannot bear it, Espy. It is too much kindness to such a wretch.”

“It is but a faint imitation, dear Ednah, of what our heavenly Father is continually doing for his ungrateful children.”

“I feel it. I acknowledge it freely. What a wonderful principle is that which has so changed a cold, vindictive nature like your father’s, and has enabled him to manifest such a forgiving and delicate generosity! I have sinned against him, wickedly and cruelly. Tell him, Esperance, how much I feel his magnanimity, and that I humbly entreat his forgiveness. It will not disturb him to say *so* much. After that, he need never again hear my name.”

Such a time as we had, loading my father’s long wagon! Quite a number of small trees from our grounds were first laid in, and then shrubs and bushes, to almost any extent, were stowed away among them, together with such roots as John thought would endure removal at that season. In the whole process, Vesta was the busiest of busybodies, making her appearance suddenly, and at surprisingly short intervals, from all points of the compass, and always with her hands full.

“Are you going to carry over that splendid ivy? Oh, won’t she be glad? And I’ll give her my beautiful daisy.”

Bounding away, she presently returned with her little pot, which she placed carefully in the flat basket beside my large one of English ivy, climbing up into the wagon to do so.

“Whither now, I should like to know? And what in the world is all this flurry and skurry about?” And Dr. Belden stood, large as life, before us.

"It's for my own mamma," cried Vesta, taking the words out of my mouth. "And I and John have been digging them up all day, for papa said we might have whatever I and Epsy wanted. And mamma'll be just as glad as she can be."

"Why, you look as if you were moving west. And who is to have the honor of driving you over to Glencoe?"

"John is. Papa said he might, and help set all the things out."

"But, indeed, John is *not*; for, with your sister's leave, I shall take the reins myself."

"There would be no use in objecting," I answered, "for you always have your own way."

"As is right and proper. But I should like to have John notify wife of my proceedings, lest she advertise me as a runaway."

While he was giving John his message, Vesta disappeared, but soon came back with a small covered basket in her hands, gravely remarking, —

"I thought I would give her Spot, because you know I've got Tinker and Emily besides; and she'll *like* Spot."

"There, reach me your hand, little miss," — and chirruping to Jenny, a handsome black horse, which my father had recently given me, we were soon in motion.

"Now, child, what about Spot, and Emily, and *Timothy*? — for I thought I was acquainted with every member of the family."

"You are the funniest man I ever saw. It isn't Timothy, but Tinker. And then, only think of his not knowing Spot, Epsy! Why, she's my dear little black kitty, with a beautiful round white spot on the middle of her neck." As

she prattled away, the doctor made great round eyes of wonder, which only increased her volubility. "And Emily and Tinker are kitties, too. And I'm carrying Spot to mamma. And if you want to take just one peep at her, you may, only you must be very quick, or she'll spring out. There, I must shut the cover, little Spot," — looking cautiously into the basket, to be sure the doctor hadn't spirited her away. "Won't mamma be delighted? Only, I'm afraid she'll forget to feed her. But perhaps she'll remember, after seeing me do it, for we're going to stay there two whole days."

"Whoa, Jenny! Whoa, I say."

And the nag stood stock still in the middle of the road, while Vesta looked at the doctor in wondering inquiry, who looked back at her without a word of explanation.

"What are you stopping Jenny for?" — with slight impatience.

"Because you have caught me in a trap. I was anticipating a pleasant evening ride with you back to Clydeville, when, lo! it appears that I am doomed to go entirely alone. Do you think that's right?"

The child looked very sober for a minute; then brightening, exclaimed, —

"You can stay, too."

"Can I? then go on, Jenny," — shaking the reins. "At any rate, old fellow, I shall be sure of *your* company back."

Ah! but what a different countenance appeared on the threshold of the cottage from that haggard one on which I lately gazed almost with terror — a countenance where hatred, agony, and despair were struggling for expression. If the wretchedness of total unbelief, and of such a prodigal life,

had been exchanged for a child-like trust, with that peace which springs from forgiving love, to God be all the glory.

But such reflections were speedily scattered by Vesta's buoyant demonstrations.

"Mamma, dear, we've brought you all the bushes you can think of, and ivy, and daisy, and everything. And I dug them up, only John helped me. And I put them almost all into the wagon, except the big trees. And Dr. Belden is going to help me set them out, when it isn't too hot; and I'm going to give you my Spot, and she's *such* a beauty! And I and Epsy are going to stay two days. And perhaps Dr. Belden will;" — dancing round the wagon all the while.

Ednah did not make much reply, but her face was eloquent with her new emotions as she sat down on the doorstep, and held out her arms to the little capering girl. And when Vesta came bounding towards her, she put both hands under her chin, and looked so tenderly into her eyes, that the child was quite moved, and could hardly find ways enough to express her affection.

It was a beautiful picture in the back yard of that tasteful cottage; — my pretty Jenny daintily nibbling the grass, and the sweet sunshine smiling on the radiant face of that restored mother, softly stroking those golden curls. Nor must I omit from the scene our beloved doctor, as he walked back and forth, trying his best to look indifferent, but with a signal lack of success. And the loaded, Christmas-looking wagon! how it reminded me of that day of the Nativity, when the Lord of glory assumed our fallen nature, not only opening a way to the Celestial City, but kindly planting that perennial tree which is ever green, and ever hanging full of all natural and spiritual gifts!

But my musings were again broken in upon by Vesta. And presently Ednah's rosy-cheeked damsel appeared at the kitchen door, and all hands were employed in unloading the wagon.

While we were at supper in the cosiest of dining-rooms, Dr. Belden inquired, —

“How is it, Mrs. Halsted? Have I proved a true prophet in regard to your rector?”

“Mr. Spencer is one of the very best of men, and just the minister I need.”

“I met him when I was travelling last summer, and judged him to be of the true metal. He is not one of your rose-water doctrine or white-kid-glove ministers. And I reckon he isn't afraid to call things by their right name, or to take hold of them by their right handle, — even though he don't belong to the ‘standing order,’ as we say.”

“He doesn't seem to have much fear of man in him.”

“Our Hope here needs to be preached to a little. Suppose I should call on him as I go back, and ask him to drop in to-morrow?”

“‘Our Hope’ would be glad to see him,” I replied — “that is, if madam has no objection.”

“Well, if I am to set out trees and make a call too, I must be about it, or midnight will be upon me before I get back.”

Two or three hours later, as we sat in Ednah's room, Vesta knelt by her side, and offered her evening prayer.

“O God, bless me, and forgive all my wicked sins. And bless my darling mamma, and take good care of her. And let me comfort her two whole days. And bless my Epsy and

Joy and brother Walter and the children. And bless dear papa, and don't let him feel lonely while we're gone. And bless Spot, and Tinker, and Emily, and Jenny. And bless all the bodies I know and all the bodies I don't know, amen ;" — closing with the Lord's prayer.

When she rose, she kissed Ednah good night, whispering to me, —

"Don't feel bad because I sleep with mamma ; for you know she hasn't had any little girl for a great while."

"Oh, no, darling ! I understand all about it," — returning her embrace. Then she crept under the white counterpane, and was soon asleep.

And there Ednah and I sat, watching the western sky, as its glowing tints gradually faded through twilight into darkness. As we gazed, she talked of her past life, and of God's peculiar discipline, by which He had brought her from the famine of her prodigal-wanderings to the love and plenty of the Fatherly house. Then she told me of her plans for Vesta when she might be with her, and of her desire to make herself useful in the neighborhood.

"Mr. Spencer invited me to take a class in the Sunday School, but I couldn't feel it would be best. If, however, there are any neglected ones, or outcasts, whom I could gather into a class at my own house, I should take great pleasure in teaching them, if you think I am fit for it."

My heart was so filled at these proofs of the wonderful change in Ednah, that I could only reply by pressing her hand. She then went on to tell me that although Mr. Spencer was acquainted with her history, he had urged her joining a class of instruction, preparatory to confirmation.

"I hesitated a long time before I could feel that it would be

right for me to do this. But my doubts were removed when I read the account of the 'woman which was a sinner,' whom Christ suffered to perform for him such ministries of love. Surely, I also, who have been forgiven much, may claim the privilege of loving much, and of publicly consecrating my remaining life to His service. O Esperance! no language can express the view I sometimes have of that love which passeth knowledge."

Far into the night we sat, communing thus of earthly and heavenly things. And when I sought my pillow, it was long before I could close my eyes in slumber.

After breakfast the next morning, we went into Ednah's chamber, while Vesta read in course from her own Bible, which she had brought with her. She was one of those who were never balked, or retarded even, by difficulties in reading. If she knew the word, it was well; if not, it was just as well. Her chapter for the day contained the following verse:—

"And there shall be wheat, and barley, and fig-trees, and pomegranates; and thou shalt eat bread without scarceness all the days of thy life;" which she read with the utmost fluency, "And there shall be wheat, and *brandy*, and *fir*-trees, and *plum-trees*; and thou shalt eat bread without *saucers* all the days of thy life."

Then Ednah read the fifty-first psalm; after which we all knelt down, while she repeated for the day one of those brief prayers of the church, which are so appropriate, and at the same time so comprehensive and comforting. And under such influences— as widely sundered from those of the old Clydeville times as are the two poles— did the new day begin.

After surveying the grounds, and seeing that all our shrubs had been set out right side up, we took a pleasant stroll into some neighboring woods, to gather ferns and mosses, as well as wild flowers. The delight of Vesta knew no bounds as she skipped here and there, reporting the most astonishing discoveries, and heaping up her basket with treasures of every description, while, for myself, it seemed as if nature had never before unfolded so many beauties.

During the day, Mr. Spencer made a call which fully confirmed all the good things Ednah and Dr. Belden had said. There was in him a union of common sense and high-toned spiritual views, which, in my opinion, qualified him for uncommon usefulness, as I was glad to say to Ednah after his departure.

“ You don’t feel, I trust, that my uniting with the Episcopal church is going to separate me from you.”

“ Not in the least, dear Ednah. I should be sorry if I were so poor a disciple of my Master, that I could not have true fellowship with Christians of every denomination. Besides, Providence has made your course plain by leading you to this place, where the Episcopal church is almost next door to you.”

“ So I have felt. And then, after my sceptical and undisciplined manner of life, I find a great help in the order for the daily reading of the Word. And the liturgy and other arrangements of the church seem to help me in my weakness, and my hard struggles against wandering thoughts and the wicked suggestions sometimes breathed into my ear.”

“ You can’t think, Dr. Belden, what a good time we’ve had. And I shouldn’t want to go back, only for dear papa.”

And I and mamma are going to read the same chapter every day, and so get through the Bible together; won't that be nice?"

"What a rare faculty of talking does your sex possess!" replied the doctor, giving me one of his comical looks over his glasses, while Vesta was bestowing on him her most impressive hugs. "After two days' quiet, I don't know how papa will get along with your noise and all your other proceedings."

"I know all about papa; so you needn't try to frighten me; — and, with a final hug, she vanished.

Ednah would not listen to our leaving till we had taken tea, after which, our preparations were soon made, and we were seated in an open buggy, on our way homeward.

"Who could ever have believed that such wonders would have come to pass with" — the doctor paused as he caught Vesta's eye fixed earnestly upon him; and then, significantly winking at me, he continued, — "well — with — mankind in general, for instance; — among whom I include both sides of the house, male and female, you understand."

"Ah! you've got some secret you want to tell Epsy, and you're trying to keep it from me. But I can guess it."

"Guess, then, little Miss *Why-why*."

"I guess it's about papa's letting me take over a lot of hens and chickens to mamma."

"Pretty good, though not *exactly* it. Still it is near enough for all practical purposes."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that you're a little great-grand-daughter of old Mrs. Adam."

CHAPTER XLVI.

ONE day I entered my watch tower. Lighting carefully the torch of memory, lest some falling sparks might kindle too suddenly the charred cinders of past joys and sorrows, I softly held it up. Then came before me the long road over which I had travelled. And, out of the confused mist and darkness, were gradually evolved distinct images and forgotten scenes.

Away back in the distance, lingered those deep shadows which had desolated my childhood, and warped my naturally loving, trusting spirit. The single thing that brightened all that dreary waste, was my mother's love; and when that faded out, the bitterness of an unbroken gloom succeeded. My father's unnatural dislike of me, aggravated, by my proud and defiant manner, to a vindictive hatred, returned vividly to mind. In this connection, the memory of certain dreadful passages in my history rushed over me with overwhelming force.

The scene changed. Fascinated by an engrossing, but dangerous friendship, I drank the poisoned cup of unhealthy excitement. In that brief thralldom, conscience was stifled, prayer forgotten, the Holy Word doubted and denied, and God's love set at nought. Then came the sudden and violent death of my first friendship, causing a bitterness of disappointment which colored many years of my life.

Over all this period shone only one pure star — my saintly Ada. And that, alas! was speedily extinguished. Soon followed long struggles and new resolves; and not long after, the “tug of war,” — the hard battles of life, in which the Actual waged deadly war against the Ideal, — the Practical with the Theoretical.

The scene changed. I was thrown into new circumstances. In my vague longings for some satisfying earthly good, it was not, perhaps, strange that I mistook a phantasm for the beautiful goddess, and surrendered to her blandishments.

Upon this brief inebriation, followed disappointment, chagrin and agony. But, gradually, came submission, consciousness of what, to me, would have proved an evil, escaped, and quiet, if not happiness. And these had not left me. These were still mine. More than this, my father was reconciled, and Ednah was saved. I had good cause for gratitude also.

But in all the past, was there nothing bright to which I could cling, as a token for future happiness? Did not one memory linger still, sweet as a dream of Paradise?

If there did, I told no one. Scarcely to my own entreating heart would I whisper the faith that had not died out, — that, somehow, would not die out. I was reticent on this subject, even with myself.

Years had passed since that happy passage over the lake, — since those invisible threads were wound about my heart, which still unconsciously drew me, as the magnet draws the

unwitting needle. Years had passed. Ought I not, then, to wake from that brief dream?

But was I forgotten?

There, before my eyes, hung that dear, only memento — the St. Christopher, crossing the foaming waters, with the Holy Child upon his broad shoulders. And, although only this single token had come, might there not be reason for this long, strange silence?

I could wait. I could trust my Father's love. And if — if, after all, the only earthly good which I coveted was denied me, — then I could wait still — wait, till, in the heavenly Jerusalem, my heart's cravings should all be satisfied.

CHAPTER XLVII.

MY hand fairly ached from his grasp, yet it seemed as if Philander Benedict would never let it go. The sight of his honest face was such a joyful surprise, that, for a moment, I could only look at him in amazement. But, at last, I found voice to inquire, "How *did* you come, and why isn't Peggy with you?"

"Because she sent me off without her."

Then, in his old, abrupt way, "We planned it long ago, you know — this journey, I mean, — that is, Peggy and I — well, we only waited till Miss Hope was ready for us," — straightening himself, until he seemed nearly a head taller.

"Ready for you! Why, you know I am *always* ready for you and Peggy. And I am quite vexed to think you left her behind."

"So she has kept her promise," — half to himself.

"Kept her promise? What do you mean?"

"Your friend, Miss Ware, of course; who else could it be, pray? And I mean that I am delighted to see you."

Rubbing his hands and chuckling, he began to walk up and down, till, turning suddenly, he faced me with seeming gravity, but with lurking mischief in his eye.

"The long and short of it is, we wanted to surprise you, that is, — I did, and — well, I charged Miss Ware not to allude to it, you know — and so — well, I'm glad she didn't, — *very*."

Then, giving my hand another grip, —

“I’m the happiest man in the world, and we’re *all* so happy. Why, you’ve no conception.”

“I remember your rhapsodizing just so once on a time, long ago, but supposed you had come back to common sense. Well, how is your ‘angel,’ in these days?”

“Peggy, do you mean?”

“Whom else could I mean?”

“Oh, yes! — Peggy, to be sure. Why, you’ve no idea anything about it, — not the smallest.”

“And I see you have no intention *I shall* know. But one thing I am resolved on: you are to stop and make me a visit, for I know Peggy wouldn’t object.”

“Not she! Why, it’s the very thing we — I mean, I — came for.”

“Where is your trunk, then?”

“You’re sure it’s quite convenient? And that your father won’t mind my noise? — for sometimes I’m as noisy as a child.”

I began to think he was beside himself, but cordially replied, —

“Oh, no, he will rejoice in all the noise you make.”

“I do believe he will, so I’ll go for my trunk.”

“Why not wait till after dinner?”

“I can’t.”

“Then I will send for it.”

“Not for the world. I’ll be back soon, never fear. At the Albion, you know.”

Making for the door, he rushed down the avenue like a distracted man, leaving me in some concern lest his wits had taken their final departure.

It must have been an hour after, that I was still sitting in the parlor, quite cross at Mr. Benedict's delay, when the door opened.

Could I believe my eyes? Or was I dreaming? and was that beautiful vision one of the fairy folk? If it *was* a vision, it was evidently one of flesh and blood, for the next minute two dimpled arms were hugging my neck.

Looking into eyes that reminded me of my lost Ada's, I exclaimed,—

“Where *did* you come from, you little witch?”

“I isn't a *switch*, — I is papa's *sooder-plum*.”

“But where in the world did you come from?”

“I didn't tum from the world; I did tum from my papa. He did *stweeze* me so,” — giving me another hug, — “and he did tell me to *stweeze* you.”

“But what is your name?” — in a maze of bewilderment.

“Litty Eppy Fazer.”

A moment later, I found myself the centre of as joyous a group as the sun ever looked down upon. How the *dénouement* was managed I cannot say. But there I stood, with — I don't know how many arms round my neck, receiving and returning three sets of kisses, — not quite distinct sets, however, for though they started separately, they all converged to a focus.

So the cat was let out of the bag. The secret so long hoarded, and all for the sake of this happy surprise-party, now danced before me in the shape of my little namesake, — as lovely an apparition as ever blessed mortal eyes!

Having exhausted our stock of embraces, we prepared to take a good look at one another.

Imagine four delighted people in a circle, their chairs drawn as close together as possible ; — Mr. Benedict with his homely face more radiant even than on his wedding-day, his arm round Peggy, who reflected all his sunshine, while their gypsy-queen — the occasion of all this glad hubbub — stood in the middle, looking from one to another with great, wondering eyes. And as I caught sight of myself in a large pier-glass opposite, I was well satisfied with my smiling image as a part of the rare group.

What the servants — who had now and then opened and shut the door — thought about these strange theatricals in the parlor, I know not. But at length, when the tumult had somewhat subsided, Ann ventured to approach, —

“ Mr. Frazer wishes me to say that he fears the dinner will be spoiled.”

“ I had forgotten we were on this mundane sphere, where dinners have to be eaten. Well, Ann, you can tell the cook not to wait any longer, and to charge all the mischief to me.”

So I went for my father, whom I found impatiently walking up and down the dining-room, and introduced my friends to him. Vesta happened to be at Glencoe, but her high chair was appropriated to little Eppy, whom I placed beside Mr. Benedict. For this act I read a hearty *thank you* in the sweet face of Peggy, as she took her seat at the opposite side of the table.

Peggy was one of those timid, confiding beings, who seem to have a special claim on the protection of mankind, and who almost always secure it. I was well pleased with my father's chivalrous attentions to her, as also with the graceful way in which she received them.

When we returned to the parlor, Eppy climbed fearlessly

into the lap of "danpa," as she called him, asking to see his "tick-tick," which she said "talked too loud."

Soon after, looking gravely in his face, —

"I must doe, now, and tumfort my papa."

Presently she had both arms round Mr. Benedict's neck, with her rosy, dimpled cheeks close to his rough face, and her brown curls mingled with his stiff, gray locks. The sight reminded me of the beautiful cactus, blooming on as homely and prickly a plant as one can well find.

But, to my dear little namesake, her father wore as fair a face as her mother, for it was the face of love, and love is always beautiful. I never beheld a more remarkable affection than existed between Philander and his little girl, each of them seeming uneasy when long out of the other's sight.

Yet Eppy was a genuine child; and when Vesta, who had been immediately sent for, opened to her little guest the wonders of her play-room, never was child more exultant. The wonderful ark gave up Mr. and Mrs. Noah, with Messrs. Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and their wives, followed by scores of antiquated, misshapen beasts and fowls, such as our modern eyes have never been privileged to behold in life. There, too, were numberless dolls, every one of which had sustained some mortal injury. Great was Eppy's compassion for the poor armless, headless things, and many were her attempts to mend their broken bones; yet often, in the midst of her occupations, she would run to the door, saying, —

"Dood by, my children, for now I must doe and tee my papa."

"Don't you think the attachment between Mr. Benedict and little Hope is peculiarly strong?" asked Peggy one day when we were walking in the grove.

"I never saw anything like it, and I have sometimes wondered if you hadn't enough of human infirmity about you to feel a twinge of jealousy."

The dear innocent soul looked at me with astonishment, and then replied, with her wonted simplicity, —

"Such a feeling would be impossible, Miss Frazer. I don't think you have any idea of Mr. Benedict's goodness, and I never can feel grateful enough that God has made me the mother of a child that brings him so much happiness."

"You are the same dear little Peggy as ever. But I want you to tell me how he behaved in the first transports of his fatherhood."

"I don't believe it would be possible to describe those scenes. You should have beheld him kneeling by the bed, with his face close to baby's, and his finger clasped in its little hand, while he thanked God for his precious gift."

"I see you think as much of your husband as ever."

"Ah, Miss Frazer," — the rich blood mantling her cheek, — "I hope it is not wicked; but I love him so that it seems as if I could never bear to see him unhappy. And if God were willing, I should rather go myself, than to have him lose his darling; for much as he loves me, it would sooner break his heart to part with her."

"Nonsense, you little goose! It would break it ten times over to part with *you*. But I never saw such a worshipping set as you three are. See, there they come!"

And Philander made his appearance with Eppy mounted on his shoulder.

The little ones being anxious to sleep together, it was arranged that Eppy should go to bed with Vesta in my room,

and be removed to her crib when we elders retired. As I thought it possible Vesta might begin on some of her wonderful stories, and talk quite late, I told her that Eppy was tired, and they must be good little girls, and go to sleep.

“But can't we talk any?”

“Why, yes, you may talk together ten minutes.”

When she knelt at my side to say her prayers, she added to her usual petitions, —

“O God, please make ten minutes last all night!”

“What's in the wind now?”

Such was Dr. Belden's greeting, stopping short as he encountered me on my return from a walk with my namesake, who was in high glee over a large wax doll I had bought her.

“Where in the world did you pick up that gypsy?” he continued, gazing at her with curiosity.

“This gypsy is little Hope Frazer, if you have no objection.”

“And suppose I have!”

“It will avail nothing.”

“Precious little information will *you* vouchsafe. Baby, can you tell me your father's name?”

“His name is papa.”

“Dr. Belden, allow me the pleasure of introducing to you Miss H. F. Benedict, late from Ironton, Illinois.”

“That's it, is it?” taking up the child and kissing her.

“Kiss my *Peddy* now,” holding up to his mouth the new dolly which she had named for “dear mamma.”

The doctor pretended to comply, but contrived that his kiss should fall on baby Benedict's lips. All this time he was walking with me towards our gate. When we reached it, —

“Do you want me to stop, little Epsy?”

“Eppy does.”

So he entered the house with us, and was a witness of the child's delight in exhibiting her new treasure.

Dr. Belden liked to quiz little folks as well as great ones, and when he took Eppy in his lap, I saw by his face that he was intent on one of his catechisings. But she was ahead of him, for she instantly began, —

“Has you dut any litty children?”

“Oh, yes, I have hundreds of them, scattered all over the world.”

“That is funny,” looking at him with undisguised astonishment, “for my papa hasn't dut only Eppy. But are they dood litty children?”

“I hope they are.”

“Does you know where they will doe when they die?”

“Do *you* know, pussy?”

“My mamma knows, and she did tell me,” — looking very wise.

“And won't you tell *me*?”

“They will all doe into Desus' bosom.”

“I am glad to hear it.”

“Isn't Desus' bosom large, to hold so much litty children?”

“Do you think there will be any room for *you*?”

“Oh, yes, indeed, for I is Desus' litty lamb; and when I die, the aindels will tarry me up and put me right into his bosom. It's plenty big for *all* the litty children.”

“But isn't it big enough for me, too?”

“Oh, no, tos oo is a man; so what will *oo* do?”

“What *can* I do?”

She thought a moment, and then, clapping her hands, exclaimed, —

“*Oo mus det into Dod’s bosom. There’ll be room there for all the big folks.*”

I can see her now, just as she looked that evening in her white frock and blue sash, gazing into the doctor’s face with her loving eyes and serious little mouth, while all the rest of us were gazing at her. Ah, my darling!

The next morning, Peggy brought down the report that Hope seemed a little unwell, and that Mr. Benedict preferred to stay with her till she could take his place. When he appeared, he just tasted of his beefsteak and sipped a spoonful or two of coffee, and then, pushing back his plate, rose abruptly, saying, —

“I think I will go for Dr. Belden.”

“Oh, you silly, doting papa!” I replied; for I had been up to see the child, and found her quite like herself, only a little more flushed than usual. “But if you *must* see the doctor, I will send for him.”

When, a little later, I took Dr. Belden into the chamber, Mr. Benedict was in an easy chair, with the little one in a blue Thibet wrapper of Vesta’s, on one knee, and *Peddy* on the other. Her head was resting rather languidly against his shoulder, but she brightened up as the doctor drew near.

“We have frolicked too hard, I am afraid, little *sooder-plum*,” said he, taking her into his lap.

Having carefully examined her symptoms, he prescribed a simple medicine, thinking her only slightly feverish from a cold she had taken. How little any of us foresaw the morrow!

CHAPTER XLVIII.

OVER the whole house rested the stillness of the grave. Even the servants in the kitchen moved softly about, for all of them had come to love the little sunny face. Ever since our good doctor had pronounced her sickness a case of fever, we had not allowed Vesta to enter the room. We should have sent her to Glencoe for safe keeping, but she begged so earnestly to remain that we yielded. So she would sit hour after hour on the stairs, asking every one who passed whether baby was any better.

On this sad day of which I speak, there was very little moving, for all unnecessary business had been suspended. Every feeling of the household was centred in the white-draped chamber where our little blossom was fading away from our sight.

While the case had continued hopeful, Mr. Benedict had hardly suffered his child to be out of his arms. But when a shadow of doubt crept into his heart, he was too agitated to sit quietly; so he resigned his darling to Peggy, whose endurance seemed to increase with the tax laid upon it. After a time, the child became so emaciated that she seemed to be more comfortable on her little crib, except as she was held a few moments for a change.

Till within a few hours, Eppy had kept her doll close beside her. But as her languor increased, she said to her father, —

"I *tarnt hud* my Peddy any more. Teep her, papa, till Eppy dets well."

Then, as a sudden thought flashed on her, —

"If I die, I will take my Peddy into Desus' bosom wid me. Don't fordet it, papa."

"You may go in now, Vesta, for I think the angels are coming for our darling."

So I led in the little girl, who stood, looking awe-struck at the wasted form before her. That restlessness we so often see in the dying, and the convulsions of pain, from which the dear child had at times suffered, had all passed away. White as a lily she lay, with no expression in her blue eyes, while her little busy hands were folded quietly on her bosom. Her father stood beside her, in indescribable agony, drops of sweat standing all over his forehead; and near him sat the mother, with clasped hands, and a face which every drop of blood seemed to have forsaken.

All struggling was over, and it was difficult to determine that the little one breathed. Dr. Belden stood over her, now putting his fingers on her pulse, and now wetting her pale lips. At last he laid his hand on Mr. Benedict's shoulder, saying, in a low voice, —

"Almost ready to plume her wings."

The poor man groaned aloud, and then hastened from the room.

A few minutes passed. The doctor turned to Peggy, who still sat rigid and motionless, —

"I want you to go with Miss Frazer and try to get a little rest. I will send for you in time —"

As I led her to the door, he whispered, "Return instantly!"

Peggy was docile, and made no objection to lying down ; indeed, she hardly seemed conscious of what she was doing. I threw a shawl over her, and softly withdrew ; but, glancing from the door, her eyes followed me with such a look of misery, that I went back and kissed her, whispering, —

“ He doeth all things well.”

“ Hope,” said the doctor, as I returned, “ can you see any difference ? ”

“ I cannot,” — looking earnestly at the child ; — “ what is it you mean ? ”

“ That there is a bare possibility we may save her. But I must try some desperate remedies ; and should they fail, they may cause convulsions, which I would not have those parents witness for all Clydeville. Now, can you take hold and help me, or are your nerves unstrung ? ”

“ I can do *any* thing, doctor, with such a possibility before me.”

For an hour we worked over the dear child, applying both external and internal stimulants, and using every possible means to retain the departing vitality. There was a concentrated purpose on the doctor’s face I had never seen there before, and I blindly followed his directions, though I sometimes felt as if we were struggling in the very valley of the shadow of death, for I could not discern the smallest change ; indeed, one might have pronounced the child already lifeless.

At last, Dr. Belden, having looked at his watch, said, —
“ Now, child, there is nothing more we can do but pray.”

And, kneeling down, he earnestly besought our darling’s life. When we arose, we seated ourselves one on each side of the little crib. Minutes seemed to stretch into hours, as

we silently watched that baby face on which the shadows of death were gathered. Once or twice I looked out of the window into the garden, where poor Mr. Benedict was hurriedly pacing back and forth as if he could thus escape the coming sorrow. Oh, how earnestly did I pray that he might be spared that bitter cup!

At length a sigh escaped the little sufferer.

"Thank God!" fervently exclaimed the doctor.

And pouring a few drops from a vial, he put the spoon to her mouth. Soon after she closed her eyes, and began to breathe perceptibly, though faintly. Dr. Belden occasionally glanced at me, and nodded significantly, while his look of distress gradually disappeared. Ah, me! what a weight was lifted from my heart!

"Mayn't I go and whisper one word of comfort to those poor parents?"

"Not so fast. The crisis is hardly over, and you might bring a moment's relief, only to plunge them into deeper misery. Just be patient."

This was not so easy, when I knew that every moment was a little age of agony to those loving parents. But I acquiesced; and when the doctor had given his patient a little more brandy, we resumed our watch. Her slumber grew more and more profound, till he once more broke the silence.

"I believe the child is saved; so bring back the parents, only don't go to speaking too confidently."

Waiting for no second intimation, I softly opened Peggy's door, to encounter those same imploring eyes. My expression must have changed, for, springing up, she hastened into the chamber. Then giving one glance at the dear child, she knelt down by the bed, and burst into tears. When I went

down stairs for Mr. Benedict, he instantly entered the house, supposing I had come to tell him that all was over. The sudden change in his countenance as he reached the bedside, I shall not attempt to describe. Dropping on his knees, he exclaimed, in tones I can never forget, —

“ My God, I thank thee! Oh, my darling, my sweet one!”

Just then the dear child opened her eyes, and seeing his radiant face bent over her, smiled on him, saying, —

“ Hold Eppy, my papa.”

The doctor pointed him to the easy chair, and then laid the darling in his arms.

“ Now don't go to getting crazy over baby, for she needs the greatest care, or she will yet slip from us.”

So there Philander sat with Eppy in his arms, and Peggy's hand tightly clasped in his. As I looked on his transfigured face, I wondered I could ever have thought the good man homely. But I did not speak; indeed, we could none of us utter one word.

CHAPTER XLIX.

WEEKS, months rolled on.

A delicious day late in the month of blossoms!

“The flowers appear on the earth ;
The time of the singing of birds is come,
And the voice of the turtle is heard in our land.”

Here I sit at my old window, drinking in perfume and music, and gazing upon the mountains with their cloud-capped summits. Beloved mountains! In some moods, as they stand towering to heaven in their solemn majesty, I look up to them as a type of the Infinite. But again, as I watch their changing countenance, — clouds and sunshine, tears and smiles, rapidly chasing each other, — I am conscious of something very like human companionship.

It is thus to-day. Deep shadows sleep upon their sides, but ever and anon they are pierced by sharp arrows of dazzling light; and I look far, far away through the clear rifts into what seems fairy-land. The Pine Orchard House, perched on its steep crag, reminds me of the wild mountain eyry in which the Gheber Hafed surprised Hinda, the daughter of his Moslem foe.

“ I climbed the gory vulture’s nest,
And found a trembling dove within.”

How do one’s hopes take wing in this blossoming season! I look around me with a thrilling consciousness of coming enjoyment. The lawn, so lately withered and brown, is covered with a fresh velvet carpet of the softest, deepest green. The trees, in their holiday robes, and decked out with gay, fluttering trimmings, clap their hands for joy.

Not yet is nature’s life-giving sap exhausted. I feel it in my veins. It rejuvenates me, as it does everything I see and hear. Hark! How brimful of it is that robin’s song! And my canary, hanging out of my window, breathes the subtle oxygen, and pipes a sweeter, madder lay than has gladdened me all winter long.

Hearing such music, gazing on such a landscape, I can be hopeful, trusting. Strengthen me, O Father, to wait thy time—even if I wait till the eternal morning dawns on my weary eyes. Let my blind human will fold its fluttering wings in thy presence. I would taste no cup of merely earthly joy. I ask for nothing that is unsweetened by thy love.

As I look out, I see Vesta skipping up and down the avenue with her hands full of homely but lovable dandelions. A figure is slowly climbing the hill. It comes nearer. It is a man.

He has just disappeared behind the old lindens, as they stand arrayed in their new festal garments.

He enters the gate. Vesta runs to meet him. He has put something into her hands, and now disappears again.

What can he have brought? But why should I care?

Vesta runs towards the house, and my calmness has vanished. I know what ails me. Fancy has been wandering off to the shores of the broad Atlantic, and wistfully gazing over the blue, boundless expanse. I pine for a breath from the old world — for some little sign or token. I have waited and waited these many weary months. Will nothing ever come?

A child's rap at my door. Be quiet, beating heart.

"Come in, Vesta."

She enters. She holds it up before me. She dances round and round. And I sit very still, trying to watch her. But a dazzling mist before my eyes prevents my seeing distinctly. Besides, I will not hurry her. I will not spoil her pleasure. I can wait now.

I *knew* it would come this month. I have felt the fine silken cords drawing closer and closer round my heart. Now I know why.

There! she has had her sport, and has laid the parcel in my hands — the parcel, directed like the other.

"Now run, child."

She kisses me, and is gone. I lock my door.

How my heart throbs! — this strange, hoping, fearing, ever-changing human heart!

I have no speculations about this parcel, as I had about the other. So, quietly, though my hands tremble a *very* little, I untie the string, and lay aside the first covering.

"*From England,*" is finely pencilled in a corner of the second envelope.

He is returning, then; — O welcome tidings!

I take off the last wrapper. An exquisite Tyrolese land-

scape lies before me. But I hardly look at it, for another, a still dearer messenger greets my longing eyes. In a single instant I seize the precious words it bears.

“The sacred flower from beside Lake Gennesaret is plucked, and lies between the leaves of my Greek Testament. In September next I hope to bring it to you.

“You see I speak as knowing you to be in life and health, for on this point I have kept myself informed. The hope of seeing you again has been my talisman through these long years of exile.

“I believe you have faith in me, as I have in you. Indifferent or forgetful, I am sure you have never thought me. Yet I hardly need say that I shall not be sorry when the seal of silence is broken from my long-closed lips;—when I am at liberty to explain all that has seemed unaccountable;—more than this,—to plead my own cause, as I have never cared to plead it with any other woman.

“I have not forgotten, in all this time, that you know almost nothing of my history, or of my external relations and circumstances. And I am well aware that some would pronounce any trust you may repose in me, on such uncertainties, romantic and unreasonable, if not hazardous. I know there are those who regard as indiscreet the cherishing any deep sentiment except after a long acquaintance and a close study of character. And I am ready to admit that this is the only safe general rule.

“But there are exceptions to this rule. And, however limited may have been our actual intercourse, I doubt whether we have not had a deeper insight into each other's character, and a fuller communion of spirit, than is sometimes gained

by years of acquaintance and friendship. * When I come to Clydeville, however, I shall hope to satisfy your friends that, in some respects, at least, I am not altogether unworthy of the treasure I covet.

“ If I speak with a measure of confidence, you will not accuse me of vanity. Is it presumption to believe that we both feel the heaven-ordained law of mutual attraction?—that in those well-remembered hours, on the lake, we were each instinctively conscious of needing the other?—of resting on the other as we can rest only on *one*? There are certain sweet and tender recollections which strengthen this belief.

“ Will you pardon me if I speak with still greater boldness?—if I venture to express the assurance that your soul belongs to mine? And,—ever since that silent parting, in which, fettered by inexorable Circumstance, I dared not tell you what I felt,—I have presumed to judge you by myself.

“ Yet, strong as is this feeling, I cannot deny that a painful timidity sometimes oppresses me—a fear lest I may have deceived myself. I shall be impatient till I can ask a single question. God grant that I may hear from your lips a kind response, or read it in your eyes!—that so I may venture to call you *MY* Esperance, as I have longed to do all these years.

“ More I must not write now. God bless and keep you !”
Oh, the world of meaning hidden in this precious missive ! How instinctively, how entirely do I assent to every word !

Yes, *THY* Esperance !—*Could* I ask for more? With what true reverence can I look up to this superior being !—with what sweet, unbounded confidence can I repose on his strong, tender nature !

A great hush, like the broad wings of a seraph, broods over my unquiet spirit. Softly there steals upon me, creeping down, — away down into the surging deeps of my heart, and stilling all its vague yearnings and wildest cravings, — the delicious sense of a trusting, satisfied human love; — a love that refines every feeling, exalts every faculty, and ennobles the whole being; — a love that begins in time, to endure through eternity. My eyes fill, — I clasp my hands and murmur,

“ I THANK THEE, O INFINITE FATHER ! ”



