The Lamplighter

by Maria S. Cummins

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The Lamplighter

By MARIA S. CUMMINS

Author of "MABEL VAUGHAN," "EL FUREIDIS," "HAUNTED HEARTS."

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THE LAMPLIGHTER

CHAPTER I.

LIGHT IN DARKNESS.

"Good God! to think upon a child That has no childish days, No careless play, no frolics wild, No words of prayer and praise." —Landon.

It was growing dark in the city. Out in the open country it would be light for half-an-hour or more; but in the streets it was already dusk. Upon the wooden door-step of a low-roofed, dark, and unwholesome-looking house, sat a little girl, earnestly gazing up the street. The house-door behind her was close to the side-walk; and the step on which she sat was so low that her little unshod feet rested on the cold bricks. It was a chilly evening in November, and a light fall of snow had made the narrow streets and dark lanes dirtier and more cheerless than ever.

Many people were passing, but no one noticed the little girl, for no one in the world cared for her. She was clad in the poorest of garments; her hair was long, thick, and uncombed, and her complexion was sallow, and her whole appearance was unhealthy. She had fine dark eyes; but so large did they seem, in contrast to her thin, puny face that they increased its peculiarity without increasing its beauty. Had she had a mother (which, alas! she had not), those friendly eyes would have found

something in her to praise. But the poor little thing was told, a dozen times a-day, that she was the worst-looking child in the world, and the worst-behaved. No one loved her, and she loved no one; no one tried to make her happy, or cared whether she was so. She was but eight years old, and alone in the world.

She loved to watch for the coming of the old man who lit the street-lamp in front of the house where she lived; to see his bright torch flicker in the wind; and then when he so quickly ran up his ladder, lit the lamp, and made the place cheerful, a gleam of joy was shed on a little desolate heart, to which gladness was a stranger; and though he had never seemed to see, and had never spoken to her, she felt, as she watched for the old lamplighter, as if he were a friend.

"Gerty," exclaimed a harsh voice within, "have you been for the milk?"

The child made no answer, but gliding off the door-step, ran quickly round the corner of the house, and hid a little out of sight. "What's become of that child?" said the woman who spoke, and who now showed herself at the door.

A boy who was passing, and had seen Gerty run, and who looked upon her as a spirit of evil, laughed aloud, pointed to the corner which concealed her, and walking off with his head over his shoulders, to see what would happen next, said to himself, "She'll catch it!"

Gerty was dragged from her hiding-place, and with one blow for her ugliness and another for her impudence (for she was making faces at Nan Grant), was despatched down a neighbouring alley for the milk.

She ran fast, fearing the lamplighter would come and go in her absence, and was rejoiced, on her return, to catch a sight of him just going up his ladder. She stood at the foot of it, and was so engaged in watching the bright flame, that she did not observe the descent of the man; and, as she was directly in his way, he struck against her, and she fell upon the pavement. "Hallo, my little one!" exclaimed he, "how's this?" as he stooped to lift her up. She was on her feet in an instant; for she was used

to hard knocks, and did not mind a few bruises. But the milk was all spilt.

"Well! now, I declare!" said the man, "that's too bad!—what'll mammy say?" and looking into Gerty's face, he exclaimed, "My, what an odd-faced child!—looks like a witch!" Then, seeing that she looked sadly at the spilt milk, he kindly said, "She won't be hard on such a mite as you are, will she? Cheer up, my ducky! never mind if she does scold you a little. I'll bring you something to-morrow that you'll like; you're such a lonely-looking thing. And if the old woman makes a row, tell her I did it.—But didn't I hurt you? What were you doing with my ladder?"

"I was seeing you light the lamp," said Gerty, "and I an't hurt a bit; but I wish I hadn't spilt the milk."

Just then Nan Grant came to the door, saw what had happened, and pulled the child into the house, amidst blows and profane, brutal language. The lamplighter tried to appease her, but she shut the door in his face. Gerty was scolded, beaten, deprived of her usual crust for her supper, and shut up in her dark attic for the night. Poor little child! Her mother had died in Nan Grant's house five years before; and she had been tolerated there since, not so much because when Ben Grant went to sea he bade his wife to keep the child until his return—he had been gone so long that no one thought he would ever come back—but because Nan had reasons of her own for doing so, and, though she considered Gerty a dead weight upon her hands, she did not care to excite inquiries by trying to dispose of her elsewhere.

When Gerty found herself locked up for the night in the dark garret—Gerty hated and feared the dark—she stood for a minute perfectly still, then suddenly began to stamp and scream, tried to beat open the door, and shouted, "I hate you, Nan Grant! Old Nan Grant, I hate you!" But nobody came near her; and she grew more quiet, lay down on her miserable bed, covered her face with her little thin hands, and sobbed as if her heart would break. She wept until she was exhausted; and then gradually she became still. By-and-by she took her hands from her face, clasped

them together convulsively, and looked up at a little glazed window near the bed. It was but three panes of glass unevenly stuck together. There was no moon; but as Gerty looked up, she saw shining upon her one bright star. She thought she had never seen anything half so beautiful. She had often been out of doors when the sky was full of stars, and had not noticed them much; but this one, all alone, so large, so bright, and yet so soft and pleasant-looking, seemed to speak to her; to say, "Gerty! Gerty! poor little Gerty!" She thought it seemed like a kind face, such as she had a long time ago seen or dreamt about. Suddenly she asked herself, "Who lit it? Somebody lit it! Some good person, I know. Oh! how could he get up so high?" And Gerty fell asleep, wondering who lit the star.

Poor little, untaught, benighted soul! Who shall enlighten thee? Thou art God's child, little one! Christ died for thee. Will he not send man or angel to light up the darkness within, to kindle a light that shall never go out, the light that shall shine through all eternity!

Gerty awoke the next morning, not as children wake who are roused by merry voices, or by a parent's kiss, who have kind hands to help them dress, and knowing that a nice breakfast awaits them; but she heard harsh voices below; Nan's son, and two or three boarders had come in to breakfast, and Gerty's only chance of obtaining any share of the meal was to be on the spot when they had finished, to take that portion of what remained which Nan might shove towards her. So she crept downstairs, waited a little till they had all gone out, and then she slid into the room. She met with a rough greeting from Nan, who told her she had better drop that ugly, sour look; eat some breakfast, if she wanted it, but keep out of her way, and not come near the fire, where she was at work, or she'd get another dressing, worse than she had last night. Gerty had not looked for any other treatment, so she was not disappointed; but, glad of the miserable food left for her on the table, she swallowed it eagerly, and she took her little old hood, threw on a ragged shawl, which had belonged to her mother, and ran out of the house.

Back of Nan Grant's house was a large wood and coal-yard, and beyond that a wharf, and the thick, muddy water of a dock. Gerty might have found many playmates in this place. She sometimes did mingle with the boys and girls, ragged like herself, who played in the yard; but not often—there was a league against her among the children of the place. Poor, ragged, and miserably cared for, as they were, they knew that Gerty was more neglected and abused. They had often seen her beaten, and daily heard her called an ugly, wicked child; told that she belonged to nobody, and had no business in any one's house. Thus they felt their advantage, and scorned the little outcast. Perhaps this would not have been the case if Gerty had mingled freely with them, and tried to be on friendly terms; but, while her mother lived, she did her best to keep her little girl away from the rude herd. Perhaps that habit of avoidance, but still more a something in the child's nature, kept her from joining in their rough sports, after her mother's death had left her to do as she liked. She seldom had any intercourse with them. Nor did they abuse her except in words; for, singly, they dared not cope with her—spirited, sudden, and violent, she had made herself feared as well as disliked. Once a band of them had united to vex her; but, Nan Grant coming up just when one of the girls was throwing the shoes, which she had pulled from Gerty's feet, into the dock, had given the girl a sound whipping, and put them all to flight. Gerty had not had a pair of shoes since; but Nan Grant, for once, had done her a good service, and the children now left her in peace.

It was a sunshiny, though a cold day, when Gerty sought shelter in the wood-yard. There was an immense pile of timber in one corner of the yard, almost out of sight of any of the houses. Of different lengths, the planks formed, on one side, a series of irregular steps. Near the top was a little sheltered recess, overhung by some long planks, and forming a miniature shed, protected by the wood on all sides but one, and from that looking out upon the water.

This was Gerty's haven of rest, and the only place from which she never was expelled. Here, during the long summer days, the little lonesome child sat brooding

over her griefs, her wrongs, and her ugliness; sometimes weeping for hours. Now and then she would get a little more cheerful, and enjoy watching the sailors as they laboured on board their vessels, or rowed to and fro in little boats. The warm sunshine was so pleasant, and the men's voices so lively, that the poor little thing sometimes forgot her woes.

But summer was gone, and the schooner and the sailors were gone too. The weather was cold, and for a few days had been so stormy, that Gerty had to stay in the house. Now, however, she made the best of her way to her little hiding-place; and, to her joy, the sunshine had dried up the boards, so that they felt warm to her bare feet, and was still shining so bright and pleasant, that Gerty forgot Nan Grant, forgot how cold she had been, and how much she dreaded the long winter. Her thoughts rambled about sometime; but, at last, fixed upon the kind look and voice of the old lamplighter; and then, for the first time since the promise was made, it came into her mind that he had engaged to bring her something the next time he came. She could not believe he would remember it; but still he might—he seemed to be so sorry for her fall.

What would he bring? Would it be something to eat? Oh, if it were only some shoes! Perhaps he did not notice that she had none?

Gerty resolved to go for her milk in season to be back before it was time to light the lamp, so that nothing should prevent her seeing him. The day seemed very long, but darkness came at last; and with it came True—or rather Trueman Flint, for that was the lamplighter's name. Gerty was on the spot, though she took good care to elude Nan Grant's observation.

True was late about his work that night, and in a great hurry. He had only time to speak a few words to Gerty; but they were words coming straight from a good and honest heart. He put his great, smutty hand on her head in the kindest way, told her how sorry he was she got hurt, and said. "It was a plaguy shame she should have

been whipped, too, and all for a spill o' milk, that was a misfortin', and no crime."

"But here," added he, diving into one of his huge pockets, "here's the critter I promised you. Take good care on't; don't 'buse it; and I'm thinking, if it's like the mother I've got at home, 'twon't be a little ye'll be likin' it, 'fore you're done. Good-bye, my little gal;" and he shouldered his ladder and went off, leaving in Gerty's hands a little grey-and-white kitten.

Gerty was so taken by surprise on finding in her arms a live kitten, something so different from what she had anticipated, that she stood irresolute what to do with it. There were a many cats, of all sizes and colours, inhabitants of the neighbouring houses and yard; frightened-looking creatures, which, like Gerty herself, ran about, and hid themselves among the wood and coal, seeming to feel, as she did, great doubts about their having a right to be anywhere. Gerty had often felt a sympathy for them, but never thought of trying to catch one, and carry it home; for she knew that food and shelter were grudgingly accorded to herself, and would not be extended to her pets. Her first thought, therefore, was to throw the kitten down, and let it run away. But while she was hesitating, the little animal pleaded for itself in a way she could not resist. Frightened by its long journey in True Flint's pocket, it crept from Gerty's arms up to her neck, clung there, and, with feeble cries, seemed to ask her to take care of it. Its eloquence prevailed over all fear of Nan Grant's anger. She hugged pussy to her bosom, and resolved to love and feed it, and keep it out of Nan's sight.

How much she came in time to love that kitten no words can tell. Her little, fierce, untamed, impetuous nature had hitherto expressed itself only in angry passion, sullen obstinacy, and hatred. But there were in her soul fountains of warm affection, a depth of tenderness never yet called out, and a warmth and devotion of nature that wanted only an object upon which to expend themselves.

So she poured out such wealth of love on the poor kitten as only such a desolate

little heart has to spare. She loved the kitten all the more for the care she was obliged to take of it, and the trouble it gave her. She kept it, as much as possible, out among the boards, in her favourite haunts. She found an old hat, in which she placed her hood, to make a bed for pussy. She carried it a part of her scanty meals; she braved for it what she would not have done for herself—for almost every day she abstracted from the kettle, when she returned with the milk for Nan Grant, enough for pussy's supper, at the risk of being discovered and punished, the only risk of harm the poor ignorant child knew or thought of, in connection with the theft; for her ideas of abstract right and wrong were utterly undeveloped. So she would play with her kitten for hours among the boards, talk to it, and tell it how much she loved it. But in very cold days she was puzzled to know how to keep herself warm out of doors, and the risk of bringing the kitten into the house was great. She would then hide it in her bosom, and run with it into her little garret. Once or twice, when she had been off her guard, her little playful pet had escaped from her, and scampered through the lower room and passage. Once Nan drove it out with a broom; but there cats and kittens were not so uncommon as to excite inquiry.

How was it that Gerty had leisure to spend all her time at play? Most children of the poorer class learn to be useful while they are young. Nan Grant had no babies; and being a very active woman, with but a poor opinion of children's services, she never tried to find employment for Gerty, much better satisfied for her to keep out of her sight; so that, except her daily errand for the milk, Gerty was always idle—a fruitful source of unhappiness and discontent.

Nan was a Scotchwoman, not young, and with a temper which, never good, became worse as she grew older. She had seen life's roughest side, and had always been a hard-working woman. Her husband was a carpenter, but she made his house so uncomfortable, that for years he had followed the sea. She took in washing, and had a few boarders; by which she earned what might have been an ample support for herself, had it not been for her son, a disorderly young man, spoilt in early life by his

mother's management, and who, though a skilful workman, squandered his own and a large part of his mother's earnings. Nan had reason for keeping Gerty, though they were not so strong as to prevent her often being inclined to get rid of the encumbrance.

CHAPTER II.

COMFORT AND AFFLICTION.

"Mercy and love have met thee on thy road, Thou wretched outcast!" —Wordsworth.

Gerty had had her kitten about a month, when she took a violent cold from exposure to damp and rain; and Nan, fearing she should have trouble with her if she became seriously ill, bade her stay in the house, and keep in the warm room. Gerty's cough was fearful; and she would have sat by the fire all day, had it not been for her anxiety about the kitten. Towards night the men were heard coming in to supper. Just as they entered the door of the room where Nan and Gerty were, one of them stumbled over the kitten, which had slyly come in with them.

"Cracky! what's this 'ere?" said the man whom they called Jemmy; "a cat, I vow! Why, Nan, I thought you hated cats!"

"Well, 'tan't none o' mine; drive it out," said Nan.

Jemmy tried to do so; but puss, making a circuit round his legs, sprang forward into the arms of Gerty.

"Whose kitten's that, Gerty?" said Nan.

"Mine!" said Gerty, bravely.

"Well, how long have you kept cats?" asked Nan. "Speak! how came you by this?"

Gerty was afraid of the men. She did not like to confess to whom she was indebted

for the kitten; she knew it would only make matters worse, for Nan had never forgiven True Flint's rough expostulation against her cruelty in beating the child for spilling the milk, and Gerty could not think of any other source to which she could ascribe the kitten's presence, or she would not have hesitated to tell a falsehood; for her limited education had not taught her a love or habit of truth where a lie would better serve her turn, and save her from punishment. She was silent, and burst into tears.

"Come," said Jemmy, "give us some supper, Nan, and let the gal alone." Nan complied, ominously muttering, however.

The supper just finished, an organ-grinder began to play at the door. The men stepped out to join the crowd, who were watching the motions of a monkey that danced to the music. Gerty ran to the window to look out. Delighted with the gambols of the creature, she gazed until the man and monkey moved off—so intently, that she did not miss the kitten which had crept down from her arms, and, springing upon the table, began to devour the remnants of the repast. The organ-grinder was not out of sight when Gerty saw the old lamplighter coming up the street. She resolved to watch him light his lamp, when she was startled by a sharp and angry exclamation from Nan, and turned just in time to see her snatch her darling kitten from the table. Gerty sprang to the rescue, jumped into a chair, and caught Nan by the arm; but she firmly pushed her back, and threw the kitten half across the room. Gerty heard a sudden splash and a piercing cry. Nan had flung the poor creature into a large vessel of steaming hot water. The poor animal writhed an instant, then died in torture.

Gerty's anger was aroused. Without hesitation, she lifted a stick of wood, and violently flung it at Nan, and it struck the woman on the head. The blood started from the wound; but Nan hardly felt the blow, so greatly was she excited against the child. She sprang upon her, caught her by the shoulder, and opening the house-door,

thrust her out. "Ye'll never darken my doors again, yer imp of wickedness!" said she, leaving the child alone in the cold night.

When Gerty was angry, she always cried aloud—uttering a succession of piercing shrieks, until she sometimes quite exhausted her strength. When she found herself in the street she commenced screaming—not from fear of being turned away from her only home, and left alone at nightfall to wander about the city, and perhaps freeze before morning—she did not think of herself for a moment. Horror and grief at the dreadful fate of the only thing she loved in the world entirely filled her little soul. So she crouched down against the side of the house, her face hid in her hands, unconscious of the noise she was making. Suddenly she found herself placed on Trueman Flint's ladder, which leaned against the lamp-post. True held her high enough to bring her face opposite his, and saw his old acquaintance, and kindly asked her what was the matter.

But Gerty could only gasp and say, "Oh, my kitten! my kitten!"

"What! the kitten I gave you? Well, have you lost it? Don't cry! there—don't cry!"

"Oh, no! not lost! Oh, poor kitty!" and Gerty cried louder and coughed so dreadfully, that True was frightened for the child. Making every effort to soothe her, he told her she would catch her death o' cold, and she must go into the house.

"Oh, she won't let me in!" said Gerty "and I wouldn't go if she would."

"Who won't let you in?—your mother?"

"No! Nan Grant?"

"Who's Nan Grant?"

"She's a horrid, wicked woman, that drowned my kitten in bilin' water."

"But where's your mother?"

"I ha'n't got none."

"Who do you belong to, you poor little thing?"

"Nobody; and I've no business anywhere!"

"With whom do you live, and who takes care of you?"

"Oh, I lived with Nan Grant; but I hate her. I threw a stick of wood at her head, and I wish I had killed her!"

"Hush! hush! you musn't say that! I'll go and speak to her."

True moved to the door, trying to draw Gerty in; but she resisted so forcibly that he left her outside, and, walking into the room, where Nan was binding up her head with a handkerchief, told her she had better call her little girl in, for she would freeze to death out there.

"She's no child of mine," said Nan; "she's the worst little creature that ever lived; it's a wonder I've kept her so long; and now I hope I'll never lay eyes on her agin—and, what's more, I don't mean. She ought to be hung for breaking my head! I believe she's got an ill spirit in her!"

"But what'll become of her?" said True. "It's a fearful cold night. How'd you feel, marm, if she were found to-morrow morning all friz up on your door-step!"

"How'd I feel! That's your business, is it? S'posen you take care on her yourself! Yer make a mighty deal o' fuss about the brat. Carry her home, and try how yer like her. Yer've been here a talkin' to me about her once afore, and I won't hear a word more. Let other folks see to her, I say; I've had more'n my share, and as to her freezin', or dyin' anyhow, I'll risk her. Them children that comes into the world, nobody knows how, don't go out of it in a hurry. She's the city's property—let 'em look out for her; and you'd better go, and not meddle with what don't consarn you."

True did not wait to hear more. He was not used to an angry woman, who was the most formidable thing to him in the world. Nan's flashing eyes and menacing attitude warned him of the coming tempest, and he hastened away. Gerty had ceased crying when he came out, and looked into his face with the greatest interest.

"Well," said he, "she says you shan't come back."

"Oh, I'm so glad!" said Gerty.

"But where'll you go to?"

"I don't know! p'raps I'll go with you, and see you light the lamps."

"But where'll you sleep to-night?"

"I don't know where; I haven't got any home. I'll sleep out where I can see the stars. But it'll be cold, won't it?"

"My goodness! You'll freeze to death, child."

"Well, what'll become of me, then?"

"The Lord only knows!"

True looked at Gerty in perfect wonder. He could not leave her there on such a cold night; but he hardly knew what he could do with her at home, for he lived alone, and was poor. But another violent coughing decided him to share with her his shelter, fire, and food, for one night, at least. "Come," said he, "with me;" and Gerty ran along by his side, never asking whither.

True had a dozen lamps to light before his round was finished. Gerty watched him light each with as keen an interest as if that were the only object for which she was in his company; and it was only after they had walked on for some distance without stopping, that she inquired where they were going.

"Going home," said True.

"Am I going to your home?" said Gerty.

"Yes," said True, "and here it is."

He opened a little gate leading into a small yard, which stretched along the whole length of a two-storied house. True lived in the back part of it; and both went in. Gerty was trembling with the cold; her little bare feet were quite blue with walking on the pavements. There was a stove in the room, but no fire in it. True immediately

disposed of his ladder, torch, etc., in an adjoining shed, and bringing in a handful of wood, he lit a fire. Drawing an old wooden settle up to the fire, he threw his great-coat over it, and lifting little Gerty up, he placed her gently upon the seat. He then prepared supper; for True was an old bachelor, and did everything for himself. He made tea; then, mixing a great mugful for Gerty, with plenty of sugar and all his milk, he brought a loaf of bread, cut her a large slice, and pressed her to eat and drink as much as she could; for he concluded, from her looks, that she had not been well fed; and so much pleased did he feel in her enjoyment of the best meal she had ever had, that he forgot to partake of it himself, but sat watching her with a tenderness which proved that he was a friend to everybody, even to the most forlorn little girl in the world.

Trueman Flint was born in New Hampshire; but, when fifteen years old, being left an orphan, he had made his way to Boston, where he supported himself by whatever employment he could obtain; having been a newspaper-carrier, a cab-driver, a porter, a wood-cutter, indeed, a jack-at-all-trades; and so honest, capable, and good-tempered had he always shown himself, that he everywhere won a good name, and had sometimes continued for years in the same employ. Previous to his entering upon the service in which we find him, he had been a porter in a large store, owned by a wealthy and generous merchant. Being one day engaged in removing some casks, he was severely injured by one of them falling upon his chest. For a long time no hope was entertained of his recovery; and when he began to mend, his health returned so gradually that it was a year before he was able to be at work again. This sickness swallowed up the savings of years; but his late employer never allowed him to want for any comforts, provided an excellent physician, and saw that he was well taken care of.

But True had never been the same man since. He rose from his sick-bed debilitated, and apparently ten years older, and his strength so much enfeebled, that he was only fit for some comparatively light employment. It was then that his kind master

obtained for him the situation of lamplighter; and he frequently earned considerable sums by sawing wood, shovelling snow, and other jobs. He was now between fifty and sixty years old, a stoutly-built man, with features cut in one of nature's rough moulds, but expressive of much good nature. He was naturally reserved, lived much by himself, was little known, and had only one crony, the sexton of a neighbouring church.

But we left Gertie finishing her supper, and now she is stretched upon the wide settle, sound asleep, covered up with a warm blanket, and her head resting upon a pillow. True sits beside her; her little, thin hand lies in his great palm—occasionally he draws the blanket closer around her. She breathes hard; suddenly she gives a nervous start, then speaks quickly; her dreams are evidently troubled. True listens intently to her words, as she exclaims eagerly, "Oh, don't! don't drown my kitty!" and then, again, in a voice of fear, "Oh, she'll catch me! she'll catch me!" once more; and now her tones are touchingly plaintive and earnest—"Dear, dear, good old man! let me stay with you; do let me stay!"

Tears are in Trueman Flint's eyes; he lays his great head on the pillow and draws Gerty's little face close to his; at the same time smoothing her long, uncombed hair with his hand. He, too, is thinking aloud—what does he say? "Catch you!—no, she shan't! Stay with me!—so you shall, I promise you, poor little birdie! All alone in this big world—and so am I. Please God, we'll bide together."

CHAPTER III.

THE LAW OF KINDNESS.

Little Gerty had found a friend and a protector; and it was well she had, for neglect and suffering had well-nigh cut short her sad existence. The morning after True took her home, she woke in a high fever. She looked around, and found she was alone in

the room; but there was a good fire, and preparation for breakfast. For a moment or two she was puzzled to know where she was, and what had happened to her; for the room seemed quite strange, it now being daylight. A smile passed over her face when she recalled the events of the previous night, and thought of kind old True, and the new home she had found with him. She went to the window to look out, though her head was giddy, and she could hardly walk. The ground was covered with snow, and which dazzled Gerty's eyes, for she suddenly found herself quite blinded—her head grew dizzy, she staggered and fell.

Trueman came in a moment after, and was frightened at seeing Gerty stretched upon the floor, and was not surprised that she had fainted in trying to walk. He placed her in bed, and soon succeeded in restoring her to consciousness; but for three weeks she never sat up, except when True held her in his arms. True was a rough and clumsy man about most things; but not so in the care of his little charge. He was something of a doctor and nurse in his simple way; and, though he had never had much to do with children, his warm heart taught him all that was necessary for Gerty's comfort.

Gerty was patient; but would lie awake whole nights suffering from pain and weariness through long confinement to a sick-bed, without uttering a groan, lest she might waken True, who slept on the floor beside her, when he could so far forget his anxiety about her as to sleep at all. Sometimes, when in great pain, True carried her in his arms for hours; but Gerty would try to appear relieved before she was so, and feign sleep that he might put her to bed again and take some rest himself. Her little heart was full of love and gratitude to her kind protector, and she spent much time in thinking what she could do for him when she got well. True was often obliged to leave her to attend to his work; and during the first week she was much alone, though everything she could possibly want was put within her reach. At last she became delirious, and for some days had no knowledge how she was taken care of. One day, after a long sleep, she woke restored to consciousness, and saw a woman

sitting by her bedside sewing. She sprang up in bed to look at the stranger, who had not observed her open her eyes, but who started when she heard her move, and exclaimed, "Oh, lie down, my child! lie down!" laying her hand gently upon her.

"I don't know you," said Gerty; "where's my Uncle True?" for that was the name by which True had told her to call him.

"He's gone out, dear; he'll be home soon. How do you feel—better?"

"Oh, yes! much better. Have I been asleep long?"

"Some time; lie down now, and I'll bring you some gruel—it will be good for you."

"Does Uncle True know you are here?"

"Yes. I came in to sit with you while he was away."

"Come in?—From where?"

"From my room. I live in the other part of the house."

"I think you're very good," said Gerty. "I like you. I wonder why I did not see you when you came in."

"You were too sick, dear, to notice; but I think you'll soon be better now."

The woman prepared the gruel, and, after Gerty had taken it, reseated herself at her work. Gerty laid down in bed, with her face towards her new friend, and, fixing her large eyes upon her, watched her while she sat sewing. At last the woman looked up, and said, "Well, what do you think I am making?"

"I don't know," said Gerty; "what are you?"

The woman held up her work, so that Gerty could see that it was a dark calico frock for a child.

"Oh! what a nice gown!" said Gerty. "Who it is for?—your little girl?"

"No," said the woman, "I haven't got any little girl; I've only got one child, my boy Willie."

"Willie; that's a pretty name," said Gerty. "Is he a good boy?"

"Good? He's the best boy in the world, and the handsomest!" answered the woman.

Gerty turned away, and a look so sad came over her countenance, that the woman thought she was getting tired, and ought to be kept very quiet. She told her so, and bade her to go to sleep again. Gerty lay still, and then True came in.

"Oh, Mrs. Sullivan," said he, "you're here still! I'm very much obleeged to you for stayin'; I hadn't calkerlated to be gone so long. And how does the child seem to be, marm?"

"Much better, Mr. Flint. She's come to her reason, and I think, with care, will do well now. Oh, she's awake," he added, seeing Gerty open her eyes.

True came to the bedside, stroked back her hair, now cut short, and felt her pulse, and nodded his head satisfactorily. Gerty caught his great hand between both of hers, and held it tight. He sat down on the side of the bed, and said, "I shouldn't be surprised if she needed her new clothes sooner than we thought of, marm. It's my opinion we'll have her up and about afore many days."

"So I was thinking," said Mrs. Sullivan; "but don't be in too great a hurry. She's had a very severe sickness, and her recovery must be gradual. Did you see Miss Graham to-day?"

"Yes, I did see her, poor thing! The Lord bless her sweet face! She axed a sight o' questions about little Gerty here, and gave me this parcel of arrer-root, I think she called it. She says it's excellent in sickness. Did you ever fix any, Mrs. Sullivan, so that you can jist show me how, if you'll be so good; for I declare I don't remember, though she took a deal o' pains to tell me."

"Oh, yes; it's very easy. I'll come in and prepare some by-and-by. I don't think Gerty'll want any at present; she's just had some gruel. But father has come home, and I must be seeing about our tea. I'll come in again this evening, Mr. Flint."

"Thank you, marm, thank you; you're very kind."

During the few following days Mrs. Sullivan came in and sat with Gerty several times. She was a gentle woman, with a placid face, very refreshing to a child that had long lived in fear, and suffered a great deal of abuse. One evening, when Gerty had nearly recovered, she was sitting in True's lap by the fire, carefully wrapped in a blanket. She had been talking to him about her new acquaintance and friend, when suddenly she said, "Uncle True, do you know what little girl she's making a gown for?"

"For a little girl," said True, "that needs a frock and a many other things; for she hasn't got any clothes, except a few old rags. Do you know any such little girl, Gerty?"

"I guess I do," said Gerty, with a very knowing look.

"Well, where is she?"

"An't she in your lap?"

"What, you!—Why, do you think Mrs. Sullivan would spend her time making clothes for you?"

"Well," said Gerty hanging her head, "I shouldn't think she would, but then you said——"

"Well, what did I say?"

"Something about new clothes for me."

"So I did," said True; "they are for you—two whole suits, with shoes and stockings."

Gerty opened her large eyes in amazement, and clapped her hands, and True laughed too.

"Did she buy them, Uncle True? Is she rich?" asked Gerty.

"Mrs. Sullivan?—no, indeed!" said True. "Miss Graham bought 'em, and is going to pay Mrs. Sullivan for making them."

"Who is Miss Graham?"

"She's a lady too good for this world—that's sartin. I'll tell you about her some time; but better not now, for it's time you were abed and asleep."

One Sabbath, after Gerty was nearly well, she was so much fatigued that she went to bed before dark, and for three hours slept soundly. On awaking, she saw that True had company. An old man, much older than True, was sitting on the opposite side of the stove, smoking a pipe. His dress, though ancient and homely, was neat; and his hair was white. He had sharp features, and Gerty thought from his looks he could say sharp things. She rightly conjectured that he was Mrs. Sullivan's father, Mr. Cooper; and she did not widely differ from most other people who knew the old church-sexton. But both his own face and public opinion somewhat wronged him. His nature was not a genial one. Domestic trials, and the fickleness of fortune, had caused him to look on the dark side of life—to dwell upon its sorrows, and frown upon the bright hopes of the young and the gay. His occupation did not counteract a disposition to melancholy; his duties in the church were solitary, and in his old age he had little intercourse with the world, had become severe toward its follies, and unforgiving toward its crimes. There was much that was good and benevolent in him, however; and True Flint knew it. True liked the old man's sincerity; and many a Sabbath evening had they sat by that same fireside, and discussed questions of public policy, national institutions, and individual rights. Trueman Flint was the reverse of Paul Cooper in disposition and temper, being very sanguine, always disposed to look upon the bright side of things, and ever averring that it was his opinion 'twould all come out right at last. On this evening they had been talking on several of such topics; but when Gerty awoke she found herself the subject of conversation.

"Where," asked Mr. Cooper, "did you say you picked her up?"

"At Nan Grant's," said True. "Don't you remember her? she's the same woman

whose son you were called up to witness against, at the time the church-windows were broken. You can't have forgotten her at the trial, Cooper; for she blew you up with a vengeance, and didn't spare his honour the judge either. Well, 'twas just such a rage she was in with this 'ere child the first time I saw her; and the second time she'd just turned her out o' doors."

"Ah, yes, I remember the she-bear. I shouldn't suppose she'd be any too gentle to her own child, much less a stranger's; but what are you going to do with the foundling, Flint?"

"Do with her?—Keep her, to be sure, and take care on her."

Cooper laughed rather sarcastically.

"Well, now, I s'pose, neighbour, you think it's rather freakish in me to be adoptin' a child at my time o' life; and pr'haps it is; but I'll explain. She'd a died that night I tell yer on, if I hadn't brought her home with me; and many times since, what's more, if I, with the help o' your darter, hadn't took good care on her. Well, she took on so in her sleep, the first night ever she came, and cried out to me all as if she never had a friend afore (and probably she never had), that I resolved then she should stay, at any rate, and I'd take care on her, and share my last crust with the wee thing, come what might. The Lord's been very marciful to me, Mr. Cooper, very marciful! He's raised me up friends in my deep distress. I knew, when I was a little shaver, what a lonesome thing it was to be fatherless and motherless; and when I see this little sufferin' human bein' I felt as if, all friendless as she seemed, she was more specially the Lord's, and as if I could not sarve Him more, and ought not to sarve Him less, than to share with her the blessings He had bestowed on me. You look round, neighbour, as if you thought 'twan't much to share with any one; and 'tan't much there is here, to be sure; but it's a home,—yes, a home; and that's a great thing to her that never had one. I've got my hands yet, and a stout heart, and a willin' mind. With God's help, I'll be a father to the child; and the time may come when she'll be God's

embodied blessin' to me."

Mr. Cooper shook his head doubtfully, and muttered something about children, even one's own, not being apt to prove blessings.

Trueman added, "Oh, neighbour Cooper, if I had not made up my mind the night Gerty came here, I wouldn't have sent her away after the next day; for the Lord, I think, spoke to me by the mouth of one of his holy angels, and bade me persevere in my resolution. You've seen Miss Graham. She goes to your church regular, with the fine old gentleman her father. I was at their house shovelling snow, after the great storm three weeks since, and she sent for me to come into the kitchen. Well may I bless her angel face, poor thing!—if the world is dark to her she makes it light to other folks. She cannot see heaven's sunshine outside, but she's better off than most people, for she's got it in her, I do believe, and when she smiles it lets the glory out, and looks like God's rainbow in the clouds. She's done me many a kindness since I got hurt so bad in her father's store, now five years gone; and she sent for me that day, to ask how I did, and if there was anything I wanted that she could speak to the master about. So I told her all about little Gerty; and, I tell you, she and I both cried 'fore I'd done. She put some money into my hand, and told me to get Mrs. Sullivan to make some clothes for Gerty; more than that, she promised to help me if I got into trouble with the care of her; and when I was going away, she said, 'I'm sure you've done quite right, True; the Lord will bless and reward your kindness to that poor child.'"

True was so excited that he did not notice what the Sexton had observed. Gerty had risen from her bed and was standing beside True, her eyes fixed upon his face, breathless with the interest she felt in his words. She touched his shoulder; he looked round, saw her, and stretched out his arms. She sprang into them, buried her face in his bosom, and, bursting into tears, exclaimed, "Shall I stay with you always?"

"Yes, just as long as I live," said True, "you shall be my child."

CHAPTER IV.

FIRST STEPS TO IMPROVEMENT.

It was a stormy evening. Gerty was standing at the window, watching for True's returning from his lamplighting. She was neatly dressed, her hair smooth, her face and hands clean. She was now quite well—better than for years before her sickness; a pale, slender-looking child, with eyes and mouth disproportionately large to her other features; her look of suffering had given place to a happy though rather grave expression. On the wide window-sill in front of her sat a plump and venerable cat, parent to Gerty's lost darling, and for that reason very dear to her; she was quietly stroking its back, while the constant purring that the old veteran kept up proved her satisfaction at the arrangement.

Suddenly a rumbling, tumbling sound was heard in the wall. The house was old, and furnished with ample accommodation for rats. One would have thought a chimney was falling brick by brick. But it did not alarm Gerty; she was used to rat-inhabited walls, and accustomed to hearing such sounds all her life, when she slept in the garret at Nan Grant's. Not so, however, with the ancient grimalkin, who pricked up her ears, and gave every sign of a disposition to rush into battle.

Gerty glanced round the room with an air of satisfaction; then, clambering upon the window-sill, where she could see the lamplighter as he entered the gate, she took the cat in her arms, smoothed her dress, and gave a look of pride at her shoes and stockings, and strove to become patient. But it would not do; she could not be patient; it seemed to her that he never came so late before, and she was beginning to think he never would come at all, when he turned into the gate. He had brought some person with him. He did not look tall enough to be Mr. Cooper, but she concluded it must be he, for whoever it was stopped at his door further up the yard and went it. Impatient as Gerty had been for True's arrival, she did not run to meet

him as usual, but waited until she heard him come in through the shed, where he was in the habit of stopping to hang up his ladder and lantern. She then ran and hid behind the door by which he must enter the room. She evidently had some great surprise in store for him. The cat was more mindful of her manners, and went to meet him, rubbing her head against his legs, which was her customary welcome.

"Hollo, whiskers," said True, "where's my little gal?"

He shut the door behind him as he spoke, thus disclosing Gerty to view. She sprang forward with a bound, laughed, and looked first at her own clothes and then in True's face, to see what he would think of her appearance.

"Well, I declare!" said he, lifting her up in his arms, and carrying her nearer to the light; "little folks do look famous! New frock, apron, shoes! got 'em all on! And who fixed your hair? My! you an't none too handsome, sartain, but you do look famous nice!"

"Mrs. Sullivan dressed me all up, and brushed my hair; and more too—don't you see what else she has done?"

True followed Gerty's eyes as they wandered around the room. He looked amazed to satisfy her anticipations, great as they had been. He had been gone since morning, and things had indeed undergone a transformation. Woman's hands had evidently been at work clearing up and setting to rights.

Until Gerty came to live with True his home had never been subjected to female intrusion. Living alone, and entertaining scarcely any visitors, he tried to make himself comfortable in his own way, regardless of appearances. In his humble apartment sweeping day came but seldom, and spring-cleaning was unknown. The corners of the ceiling were festooned with cob-webs; the mantle-piece had accumulated a curious medley of things, while there was no end to the rubbish that had collected under the grate. During Gerty's illness, a bed made up on the floor for True, and the various articles required in her sick-room, had increased the clutter to

such an extent that one almost needed a pilot to conduct him in safety through the apartment.

Mrs. Sullivan was the soul of neatness in her rooms, in her own dress for simplicity, and freedom from the least speck or stain. It was to nurse Gerty, and take care of her in True's absence, that she first entered a room the reverse of her own; the contrast was painful to her, and it would have been a real pleasure to clear up and put it to rights; and she resolved as soon as Gerty got well, to exert herself in the cause of cleanliness and order, which was, in her eyes, the cause of virtue and happiness, so completely did she identify outward neatness and purity with inward peace.

On the day previous to that on which the great cleaning operations took place, Gerty was observed by Mrs. Sullivan standing in the passage near her door, and looking wistfully in. "Come in, Gerty," said the kind little woman; "come in and see me.—Here," added she, seeing how timid the child felt in intruding into a strange room; "you may sit up here by the table and see me iron. This is your little dress. I am smoothing it out, and then your things will all be done! You'll be glad of some new clothes, shan't you?"

"Very glad, marm," said Gerty. "Am I to take them away, and keep them all myself?"

"Yes, indeed," said Mrs. Sullivan.

"I don't know where I'll put 'em all; there an't no place in our room—at least, no very nice place," said Gerty, glancing at the open drawer, in which Mrs. Sullivan was placing the little dress, adding it to a pile of neatly-folded garments.

"Why, part of them, you know, you'll be wearing," said Mrs. Sullivan; "and we must find some good place for the rest."

"You've got good places for things," said Gerty, looking round the room; "this is a beautiful room."

"Why, it isn't very different from Mr. Flint's. It's just the same size, and two front

windows like his. My cupboard is the best; yours is only a three-cornered one; but that's all the difference."

"Oh, but yours don't look a bit like ours. You haven't got any bed here, and all the chairs stand in a row, and the table shines, and the floor is so clean, and the stove is new, and the sun comes in so bright! I wish our room was like this! I think ours is not half so big. Why, Uncle True stumbled over the tongs this morning, and he said there wasn't room to swing a cat."

"Where were the tongs?" said Mrs. Sullivan.

"About the middle of the floor, marm."

"Well, you see I don't keep things in the middle of the floor. I think if your room were all cleaned up, and places found for everything, it would look almost as well as mine."

"I wish it could be made as nice," said Gerty; "but what could be done with those beds?"

"I've been thinking about that. There's that little pantry—or bathing-room, I think it must have been when this house was new, and rich people lived in it; that's large enough to hold a small bedstead and a chair or two; 'twould be quite a comfortable little chamber for you. The rubbish in it might just as well be thrown away."

"Oh, that'll be nice!" said Gerty; "then Uncle True can have his bed back again, and I'll sleep on the floor in there."

"No," said Mrs. Sullivan; "you shan't sleep on the floor. I've got a very good little cross-legged bedstead that my Willie slept on when he lived at home; and I'll lend it to you, if you'll take good care of it and of everything else that is put into your room."

"Oh, I will," said Gerty. "But can I?" added she, hesitating; "do you think I can? I don't know how to do anything."

"You never have been taught to do anything, my child; but a girl eight years old can do many things if she is patient and tries to learn. I could teach you to do a great deal that would be useful, and that would help your Uncle True very much."

"What could I do?"

"You could sweep the room every day, you could make the beds, with a little help in turning them; you could set the table, toast the bread, and wash the dishes. Perhaps you would not do these things so well at first; but you would keep improving, and get to be a nice little housekeeper."

"Oh, I wish I could do something for Uncle True!" said Gerty; "but how could I ever begin?"

"In the first place, you must have things cleaned up for you. If I thought Mr. Flint would like it, I'd get Kate M'Carty to come in some day and help us; and I think we could greatly improve his home."

"Oh, I know he'd like it," said Gerty; "'twould be grand! May I help?"

"Yes, you may do what you can; but Kate'll be the best hand; she's strong, and knows how to do cleaning very well."

"Who's she?" said Gerty.

"Kate?—She's Mrs. M'Carty's daughter in the next house. Mr. Flint does them many a good turn—saws wood, and so on. They do most of his washing; but they can't half pay him all the kindness he's done that family. Kate's a clever girl; she'll be glad to come and work for him any day. I'll ask her."

"Will she come to-morrow?"

"Perhaps she will."

"Uncle True's going to be gone all day to-morrow," said Gerty; "he's going to get in Mr. Eustace's coal. Wouldn't it be a good time?"

"Very," said Mrs. Sullivan. "I'll try and get Kate to come to-morrow."

Kate came. The room was thoroughly cleaned and put in order. Gerty's new clothes were delivered to her own keeping; she was neatly dressed in one suit, the other placed in a little chest found in the pantry, and which accommodated her small wardrobe very well.

It was the result of Mrs. Sullivan's, Kate's, and Gerty's combined labour which astonished True on his return from his work; and the pleasure he manifested made the day a memorable one in Gerty's life, one to be marked in her memory as long as she lived, as being the first in which she had known that happiness—perhaps the highest earth, affords—of feeling that she had been instrumental in giving joy to another. Gerty had entered heart and soul into the work, when she had been allowed. She could say with truth, "We did it—Mrs. Sullivan, Kate, and I." None but a loving heart like Mrs. Sullivan's would have sympathized in the feeling which made Gerty so eager to help. But she did, and allotted to her many little services, which the child felt herself more blessed in being permitted to perform than she would have done at almost any gift bestowed upon her. She led True about to show him how cleverly Mrs. Sullivan had made the most of the room and the furniture; how, by moving the bed into a recess, she had reserved the whole square-area, and made a parlour of it. It was some time before he could be made to believe that half of his property had not been spirited away, so incomprehensible was it to him that so much additional space and comfort could be acquired by a little system. But his astonishment and Gerty's delight reached their climax when she took him into the lumber-closet, now transformed into a snug and comfortable bed-room.

"Well, I declare! Well, I declare!" was all the old man could say. He sat down beside the stove, now polished, and made, as Gerty declared, new, just like Mrs. Sullivan's; warmed his hands, for they were cold with being out in the frosty evening, and then took a general view of his reformed domicile, and of Gerty, who was about to set the table, and toast the bread for supper. Standing on a chair, she was taking down the cups and saucers from among the regular rows of dishes shining in three-cornered

cupboard, being deposited on the lower shelf, where she could reach them from the floor, a plate containing some smoothly cut slices of bread, which the thoughtful Mrs. Sullivan had prepared for her. True watched her motions for a minute or two, and then indulged in a short soliloquy. "Mrs. Sullivan's a clever woman, sartain, and they've made my old house here complete, and Gerty's getting to be like the apple of my eye, and I'm as happy a man as——"

CHAPTER V.

WHERE IS HEAVEN?

Here True was interrupted by a sudden and unceremonious opening of the door. "Here, Uncle True, here's your package. You forgot all about it, I guess; and I forgot it, too, till mother saw it on the table, where I'd laid it down. I was so taken up with just coming home, you know."

"Of course—of course!" said True. "Much obleeged to you, Willie, for fetchin' it for me. It's brittle stuff it's made of, and most likely I should have smashed it 'fore I got it home."

"What is it?—I've been wondering."

"Why, it's a little knick-knack I've brought home for Gerty here, that——"

"Willie! Willie!" called Mrs. Sullivan from the opposite room, "have you been to tea, dear?"

"No, indeed, mother; have you?"

"Why, yes; but I'll get you some."

"No, no," said True; "Stay and take tea with us, Willie; take tea here, my boy. My little Gerty is making some famous toast, and I'll have the tea presently."

"So I will," said Willie! "No matter about any supper for me, mother, I'm going to

have my tea here with Uncle True. Come, now, let's see what's in the bundle; but first I want to see little Gerty; mother's been telling me about her. Where is she? Has she got well? She's been very sick, hasn't she?"

"Oh, yes, she's nicely now," said True. "Here, Gerty, look here. Why, where is she?"

"There she is, hiding behind the settle," said Willie, laughing. "She ain't afraid of me, is she?"

"Well, I didn't know as she was shy," said True; "you silly little girl," added he, "come out here and see Willie. This is Willie Sullivan."

"I don't want to see him," said Gerty.

"Don't want to see Willie!" said True; "why, you don't know what you're sayin'. Willie's the best boy that ever was; I 'spect you and he'll be great friends by-and-by."

"He won't like me," said Gerty; "I know he won't."

"Why shan't I like you?" said Willie, approaching the corner where Gerty had hid herself. Her face was covered with her hands. "I guess I shall like you first-rate when I see you."

He stooped down, and, taking her hands from her face and holding them in his own, he fixed his eyes full upon her, and pleasantly said, "How are you, cousin Gerty—how do you do?"

"I an't your cousin!" said Gerty.

"Yes, you are," said Willie; "Uncle True's your uncle, and mine too!—so we're cousins—don't you see?—and I want to get acquainted."

Gerty could not resist Willie's good-natured words and manner. She suffered him to draw her out of the corner towards the lighter end of the room. As she came near the lamp, she tried to free her hands in order to cover her face up again; but Willie would not let her, and, attracting her attention to the unopened package, he succeeded in diverting her thoughts from herself, and in a few minutes she was quite

at her ease.

"There, Uncle True says it's for you," said Willie; "and I can't think what 'tis, can you?"

Gerty felt, and looked wonderingly in True's face.

"Undo it, Willie," said True.

Willie produced a knife, cut the string, took off the paper, and disclosed one of those white plaster images, so familiar to every one, representing the little Samuel in an attitude of devotion.

"Oh, how pretty!" exclaimed Gerty, full of delight.

"Why didn't I think?" said Willie; "I might have known what 'twas by feeling."

"Why! did you ever see it before?" said Gerty.

"Not this same one; but I've seen lots just like it."

"Have you?" said Gerty. "I never did. I think it's the beautifullest thing that ever was. Uncle True, did you say it was for me? Where did you get it?"

"It was by an accident I got it. A few minutes before I met you, Willie, I was stoppin' at the corner to light my lamp, when I saw one of those furrin boys with a sight o' these things, and some black ones too, all set up on a board, and he was walking with 'em a-top of his head. I was just a wonderin how he kept 'em there, when he hit the board agin my lamp-post, and the first thing I knew, whack they all went! he'd spilt them everyone. Lucky enough for him, there was a great bank of soft snow close to the side-walk, and the most of 'em fell into that and wasn't hurt. Some went on to the bricks, and were smashed. Well, I kind o' pitied the feller; for it was late, and I thought like enough he hadn't had much luck sellin' of 'em, to have so many left on his hands——"

"On his head, you mean," said Willie.

"Yes, Master Willie, or on the snow," said True; "any way you've a mind to have it."

"And I know what you did, Uncle True, just as well as if I'd seen you," said Willie; "you set your ladder and lantern right down, and helped him to pick 'em all up—that's just what you'd be sure to do for anybody."

"This feller, Willie, didn't wait for me to get into trouble; he made return right off. When they were all set right, he bowed and scraped, and touched his hat to me, as if I'd been the biggest gentleman in the land; talkin,' too, he was, all the time, though I couldn't make out a word of his lingo; and then he insisted on my takin' one o' the figurs. I wasn't agoin' to take it, for I didn't want it; but I happened to think little Gerty might like it."

"Oh, I shall like it!" said Gerty. "I shall like it better than—no, not better, but almost as well as my kitten; not quite as well, because that was alive, and this isn't; but almost. Oh, an't he a cunning boy?"

True, finding that Gerty was wholly taken up with the image, walked away and began to get the tea, leaving the two children to entertain each other.

"You must take care and not break it, Gerty," said Willie. "We had a Samuel once, just like it, in the shop; and I dropped it out of my hand on to the counter, and broke it into a million pieces."

"What did you call it?" asked Gerty.

"A Samuel; they're all Samuels."

"What are Sammles?" inquired Gerty.

"Why, that's the name of the child they're taken for."

"What do you s'pose he's sittin' on his knee for?"

Willie laughed. "Why, don't you know?" said he.

"No," said Gerty; "what is he?"

"He's praying," said Willie.

"Is that what he's got his eyes turned up for, too?"

"Yes, of course; he looks up to heaven when he prays."

"Up to where?"

"To heaven."

Gerty looked up at the ceiling in the direction in which the eyes were turned, then at the figure. She seemed very much dissatisfied and puzzled.

"Why, Gerty," said Willie, "I shouldn't think you knew what praying was."

"I don't," said Gerty; "tell me."

"Don't you ever pray—pray to God?"

"No, I don't.—Who is God? Where is God?"

Willie looked inexpressibly shocked at Gerty's ignorance, and answered reverently, "God is in heaven, Gerty."

"I don't know where that is," said Gerty. "I believe I don't know nothin' about it."

"I shouldn't think you did," said Willie. "I believe heaven is up in the sky; but my Sunday-school teacher says, 'Heaven is anywhere where goodness is,' or some such thing," he said.

"Are the stars in heaven?" asked Gerty.

"They look so, don't they?" said Willie. "They're in the sky, where I always used to think heaven was."

"I should like to go to heaven," said Gerty.

"Perhaps, if you're good, you will go some time."

"Can't any but good folks go?"

"No."

"Then I can't ever go," said Gerty, mournfully.

"Why not?" asked Willie; "an't you good."

"Oh no! I'm very bad."

"What a queer child!" said Willie. "What makes you think yourself so very bad?"

"Oh, I am," said Gerty, in a very sad tone; "I'm the worst of all. I'm the worst child in the world."

"Who told you so?"

"Everybody. Nan Grant says so, and she says everybody thinks so; I know it too, myself."

"Is Nan Grant the cross old woman you used to live with?"

"Yes. How did you know she was cross?"

"Oh, my mother's been telling me about her. Well, I want to know if she didn't send you to school, or teach you anything?"

Gerty shook her head.

"Why, what lots you've got to learn! What did you used to do when you lived there?"

"Nothing."

"Never did anything; don't know anything; my gracious!"

"Yes, I do know one thing," said Gerty. "I know how to toast bread;—your mother taught me;—she let me toast some by the fire."

As she spoke, she thought of her own neglected toast, and turned towards the stove; but she was too late—the toast was made, the supper ready, and True was just putting it on the table.

"Oh, Uncle True," said she, "I meant to get the tea."

"I know it," said True, "but it's no matter; you can get it to-morrow."

The tears came into Gerty's eyes; she looked very much disappointed, but said nothing. They all sat down to supper. Willie put the Samuel in the middle of the table for a centre ornament, and told so many funny stories that Gerty laughed

heartily, forgot that she did not make the toast herself, forgot her sadness, and showed herself, for once, a merry child. After tea, she sat beside Willie on the great settle, and, in her peculiar way, gave him a description of her life at Nan Grant's, winding up with a touching account of the death of her kitten.

The two children were in a fair way to become as good friends as True could possibly wish. True sat on the opposite side of the stove, smoking his pipe; his elbows on his knees, his eyes bent on the children, and his ears drinking in all their conversation. He laughed when they laughed; took long whiffs at his pipe when they talked quietly; ceased smoking entirely, letting his pipe rest on his knee, and secretly wiping away a tear, when Gerty recounted her childish griefs. He often heard it afterwards, but never without crying.

After Gerty had closed her tale of sorrows, she sat for a moment without speaking, then becoming excited, as her ungoverned and easily roused nature dwelt upon its wrongs, she burst forth in a very different tone, and began uttering the most bitter invectives against Nan Grant. The child's language expressed unmitigated hatred, and even a hope of future revenge. True looked troubled at hearing her talk so angrily. Since he brought her home he had never witnessed such a display of temper, and had fondly believed that she would always be as quiet and gentle as during her illness and the few weeks subsequent to it. True's own disposition was so amiable and forgiving, that he could not imagine that anyone, and especially a little child, should long retain feelings of anger and bitterness. Gerty had shown herself so mild and patient since she had been with him, that it had never occurred to him to dread any difficulty in the management of the child. Now, however, as he observed her flashing eyes, and noticed the doubling of her little fist as she menaced Nan with her future wrath, he had an undefined, half-formed presentiment of coming trouble in the control of his little charge. For the moment she ceased, in his eyes, to be the pet and plaything he had hitherto considered her. He saw in her something which needed a check, and felt himself unfit to apply it.

He was totally unfit to cope with a spirit like Gerty's. It was true he possessed over her one mighty influence—her strong affection for him, which he could not doubt. It was that which made her so submissive and patient in her sickness, so grateful for his care and kindness, so anxious to do something in return. It was that love, illumined by a higher light, which came in time to sanctify it, that gave her, while yet a mere girl, a woman's courage, a woman's strength of heart and self-denial. It was that which cheered the old man's latter years, and shed joy on his dying bed.

Willie tried once or twice to stop the current of her abusive language; but soon desisted, for she did not pay the least attention to him. He could not help smiling at her childish wrath, nor could he resist sympathising with her in a degree. But he was conscious that Gerty was exhibiting a very hot temper, and began to understand what made everybody think her so bad.

After Gerty had railed about Nan a little while, she stopped of her own accord; though an unpleasant look remained on her countenance. It soon passed away, however; and when, a little later in the evening, Mrs. Sullivan appeared at the door, Gerty looked bright and happy, listened with evident delight while True uttered warm expressions of thanks for the labour which had been undertaken in his behalf, and, when Willie went away with his mother, said her good night, and asked him to come again so pleasantly, and her eyes looked so bright, that Willie said, as soon as they were out of hearing, "She's a queer little thing, an't she, mother? But I kind o' like her."

CHAPTER VI.

THE FIRST PRAYER.

It would have been difficult to find two children of the poorer class whose situations in life had presented a greater contrast than those of Gerty and Willie. Gerty was a

neglected orphan; she had received little of that care, and still less of that love, which Willie had enjoyed. Mrs. Sullivan's husband was an intelligent country clergyman; but as he died when Willie was a baby, leaving little property for the support of his family, the widow and her child went home to her father. The old man needed his daughter; for death had made sad inroads in his household since she left it, and he was alone.

From that time the three had lived together in humble comfort, for, though poor, industry and frugality secured them from want. Willie was his mother's pride, her hope, her constant thought. She spared no care to provide for his physical comfort, his happiness, and his education and virtue.

She might well be proud of a boy whose uncommon beauty, winning disposition, and early evidences of a noble nature, won him friends even among strangers. It was his broad, open forehead, the clearness and calmness of his full grey eye, the expressive mouth, so determined and yet so mild, the well-developed figure and ruddy complexion, proclaiming high health, which gave promise of power to the future man. No one could have been in the boy's company half an hour without loving and admiring him. He had a warm-hearted, affectionate disposition, which his mother's love and the world's smiles had fostered; an unusual flow of animal spirits, tempered by a natural politeness towards his superiors; a quick apprehension; a ready command of language; and a sincere sympathy in others' pleasures and pains. He was fond of study, and until his twelfth year his mother kept him constantly at school.

At that time he had an opportunity to enter into the service of an apothecary, who did an extensive business, and wanted a boy to assist in the shop. The wages offered by Mr. Bray were not great, but there was a prospect of an increased salary; and it was not a chance to be overlooked. Fond as he was of his books, he had long been eager to be at work, helping to bear the burden of labour in the family. His mother

and grandfather consented to the plan, and he gladly accepted Mr. Bray's proposals. He was sadly missed at home; for, as he slept at his employer's during the week, he rarely could make a passing visit to his mother, except on Saturday, when he came home at night and passed Sunday. So Saturday night was Mrs. Sullivan's happy night, and the Sabbath became a more blessed day than ever.

When Willie reached his mother's room on the evening of which we have been speaking, he sat down with her and Mr. Cooper, and for an hour conversation was brisk with them. Willie had always much to relate concerning the occurrences of the week. Mrs. Sullivan was interested in everything that interested Willie, and it was easy to see that the old grandfather was more entertained by the boy than he was willing to appear; for though he sat with his eyes upon the floor, and did not seem to listen, he usually heard all that was said. He seldom made comments, but would occasionally utter an impatient or contemptuous expression regarding individuals or the world in general; thereby evidencing want of confidence in men's honesty and virtue, and this formed a marked trait in his character. Willie's spirits would receive a momentary check, for he loved and trusted everybody. Willie did not fear his grandfather, who had never been severe to him, or interfered with Mrs. Sullivan's management; but he sometimes felt chilled, though he hardly knew why, by his want of sympathy with his own warm-heartedness. On the present occasion the conversation turned upon True Flint and his adopted child. Mr. Cooper had been unusually bitter, and, as he took his lamp to go to bed, declared that Gerty would never be anything but a trouble to Flint, who was a fool not to send her to the almshouse at once.

There was a pause after the old man left the room; then Willie exclaimed, "Mother, what makes grandfather hate folks?"

"Why, he don't, Willie."

"I don't mean exactly hate—I don't suppose he does that, quite; but he don't seem to

think a great deal of anybody—do you think he does?"

"Oh yes; he does not show it much," said Mrs. Sullivan, "but he thinks a great deal of you, Willie, and he wouldn't have anything happen to me for the world; and he likes Mr. Flint, and——"

"Oh yes; but I don't mean that; he doesn't think there's much goodness in folks, nor to think anybody's going to turn out well, and——"

"You're thinking of what he said about little Gerty."

"Well, she an't the only one. That's what made me speak of it now, but I've often noticed it before, particularly since I went away from home, and am only here once a week. Now I think everything of Mr. Bray; and when I was telling how much good he did, and how kind he was to old Mrs. Morris and her sick daughter, grandfather looked just as if he didn't believe it, or didn't think much of it."

"Oh, well, Willie, you mustn't wonder much at that. Grandpa's had many disappointments. You know he thought everything of Uncle Richard, and there was no end to the trouble he had with him; and there was Aunt Sarah's husband—he seemed to be such a fine fellow when Sally married him, but he cheated father at last, so that he had to mortgage his house in High Street, and finally gave it up entirely. He's dead now, and I don't want to say anything against him; but he didn't prove what we expected, and it broke Sally's heart. That was a dreadful trial to father, for she was the youngest, and his pet. And just after that, mother was taken down with her death-stroke, and a quack doctor prescribed for her, and father always thought that did her more hurt than good. So that he has had a great deal to make him look on the dark side now, but you mustn't mind it, Willie; you must take care and turn out well yourself, my son, and then he'll be proud enough; he's as pleased as he can be when he hears you praised, and expects great things of you one of these days."

Here the conversation ended; but Willie added another to his many resolves, that, if

his health and strength were spared, he would prove to his grandfather that hopes were not always deceitful, and that fears were sometimes groundless.

Oh, what a glorious thing it is for a youth when he has ever present with him a high, a noble, and unselfish motive! What an incentive to exertion, perseverance, and self-denial! Fears that would otherwise appal, discouragements that would dishearten, labours that would weary, opposition that would crush, temptation that would overcome, all, all lie powerless, when, with a single-hearted and worthy aim, he struggles for the victory! Persons born in wealth and luxury seldom achieve greatness. They were not born for labour; and, without labour, nothing that is worth having can be won. A motive Willie had long had. His grandfather was old, his mother weak, and both poor. He must be the staff of their old age; must labour for their support and comfort; he must do more:—they hoped great things of him; they must not be disappointed. He did not, however, while arming himself for future conflict with the world, forget the present, but sat down and learned his Sunday-school lessons. After which, according to custom, he read aloud in the Bible; and then Mrs. Sullivan, laying her hand on the head of her son, offered up a simple, heart-felt prayer for the boy—one of those mother's prayers which the child listens to with reverence and love, and remembers for life.

After Willie went home that evening, and Gerty was left alone with True, she sat beside him for some time without speaking. Her eyes were intently fixed upon the white image which lay in her lap. True was not the first to speak; but finding Gerty unusually quiet, he looked inquiringly in her face, and said—"Well, Willie's a pretty clever sort of a boy, isn't he?"

Gerty answered "Yes" without, however, seeming to know what she was saying.

"You like him, don't you?" said True.

"Very much," said Gerty, in the same absent way. It was not Willie she was thinking of. True waited for Gerty to talk about her new acquaintance; but she did not speak

for a minute or two. Then looking up suddenly, she said—"Uncle True, what does Samuel pray to God for?"

True stared. "Samuel!—pray!—I guess I don't know exactly what you're saying."

"Why," said Gerty, holding up the image, "Willie says this little boy's name is Samuel; and that he sits on his knees, and puts his hands on his breast so, and looks up, because he's praying to God, that lives up in the sky. I don't know what he means—way up in the sky—do you?"

True took the image and looked at it attentively; scratched his head, and said—"Well, I s'pose he's about right. This 'ere child is prayin', sartain, though I didn't think on it afore. But I don't jist know what he calls it a Samuel for. We'll ask him sometime."

"Well, what does he pray for, Uncle True?"

"Oh, he prays to make him good: it makes folks good to pray to God."

"Can God make folks good?"

"Yes. God is very great; He can do anything."

"How can He hear?"

"He hears and sees everything in the world."

"And does He live in the sky?"

"Yes," said True—"in heaven."

Many more questions Gerty asked, which True could not answer; many questions that he had never asked himself. True had a humble, loving heart, and a child-like faith; he had enjoyed but little religious instruction, but he earnestly tried to live up to the light he had. True had never inquired into the sources of belief, and he was not prepared to answer the questions suggested by the inquisitive mind of little Gerty. He answered her as well as he could, however; and, where he was at fault, referred her to Willie, who, he told her, went to Sunday-school, and knew a great deal about

such things. All the information that Gerty could gain amounted to the knowledge of these facts: that God was in heaven; that His power was great; and that people were made better by prayer. But her mind was so intent upon the subject, that the thought even of sleeping in her new room could not efface it. After she had gone to bed, with the white image hugged close to her bosom, and True had taken away the lamp, she lay for a long time with her eyes wide open. Just at the foot of the bed was the window. The sky was bright with stars; and they revived her old wonder and curiosity as to the Author of such distant and brilliant lights. As she gazed, there darted through her mind the thought, "God lit them! Oh, how great He must be! But a child might pray to Him!" She rose from her little bed, approached the window, and, falling on her knees and clasping her hands precisely in the attitude of Samuel, she looked up to heaven. She spoke no word, but her eyes glistened with a tear that stood in each. Was not each tear a prayer? She breathed no petition, but she longed for God and virtue. Was not that very wish a prayer? Her little, uplifted heart throbbed vehemently. Was not each throb a prayer? And did not God in heaven, without whom not a sparrow falls to the ground, hear and accept that first homage of a little, untaught child; and did it not call a blessing down?

CHAPTER VII.

TREASURED WRONGS.

"Revenge, at first though sweet, Bitter ere long back on itself recoils."—Milton.

The next day was Sunday. True generally went to church half the day at least, with the sexton's family; but Gerty having no bonnet could not go, and True would not leave her. So they spent the morning wandering round among the wharves and looking at the ships, Gerty wearing her old shawl over her head.

Willie came in the evening to say good-bye before returning to Mr. Bray's. He was

in a hurry, for his master had his doors closed early, especially on a Sunday night. But Mr. Cooper made his usual visit; and when he had gone, True, finding Gerty sound asleep on the settle, thought it a pity to wake her, and laid her in bed with her clothes on.

She did not wake until morning; and then, surprised and amused at finding herself dressed, ran out to ask True how it happened. True was making the fire; and Gerty having been told all about it, helped to get the breakfast ready, and to put the room in order. She followed Mrs. Sullivan's instructions, and in a few weeks she learned to make herself useful in many ways, and, as Mrs. Sullivan had prophesied, gave promise of becoming a clever little housekeeper. Her active and willing feet saved True many steps, and she was of essential aid in keeping the rooms neat, that being her especial ambition. Mrs. Sullivan looked in occasionally, to praise and assist her; and nothing made Gerty happier than learning how to do some new thing. She met with a few trials and discouragements, to be sure. Kate M'Carty thought her the smartest child in the world, and would oft come in and wash the floor, or do some other work which required more strength than Gerty possessed.

One Sunday Gerty, who had a nice little hood, bought by True, was returning with Mr. Cooper, Mr. Flint, and Willie, from the afternoon service at church. The two old men were engaged in discussion, and the children talked earnestly about the church, the minister, the people, and the music, all of which were new to Gerty, and greatly excited her wonder.

As they drew near home, Willie remarked how dark it was growing in the streets; and then, looking down at Gerty, whom he held by the hand, he said, "Gerty, do you ever go out with Uncle True, and see him light the lamps?"

"No, I never did," said Gerty, "since the first night I came. I've wanted, but it's been so cold, he would not let me; he said I'd have the fever again."

"It won't be cold this evening," said Willie; "it'll be a beautiful night; and, if Uncle

True's willing, we will go with him. I've often been; you can look into the windows and see folks drinking tea, and sitting round the fire in their parlours."

"And I like to see him light those great lamps," said Gerty; "they make it look so bright and beautiful all around. I hope he'll let us go; I'll ask him; come," said she, pulling him by the hand.

"No—wait," said Willie; "he's busy talking with grandpa—we can ask him at home."

As soon as they reached the gate she broke away from him, and, rushing up to True, made known her request. He readily consented, and the three soon started on the rounds.

For a time Gerty's attention was so engrossed by the lamplighting that she could see and enjoy nothing else. But when they reached the corner of the street, and came in sight of a large apothecary's shop, her delight knew no bounds. The brilliant colours displayed in the windows captivated her fancy; and when Willie told her that his master's shop was similar she thought it must be a fine place to spend one's life in. Then she wondered why this was open on Sunday, when all the other stores were closed, and Willie, stopping to explain, they found that True was some distance in advance. He hurried Gerty along, telling her that they were now in the finest street they should pass through, and they must haste, for they had nearly reached the house he most wanted her to see. When they came up with True, he was placing his ladder against a post opposite a fine block of buildings. Many of the front windows were shaded, so that the children could not see in; but some had no curtains, or they had not yet been drawn. In one parlour there was a pleasant wood-fire, around which a group were gathered; and here Gerty would fain have lingered. In another, a brilliant chandelier was lit, and though the room was vacant, the furniture was so showy, and the whole so brilliant, that the child clapped her hands in delight, and Willie could not prevail upon her to leave the spot, until he told her that farther down the street

was another house, equally attractive, where she would perhaps see some beautiful children.

"How do you know there'll be children there?" said she, as they walked along.

"I don't know, certainly," said Willie; "but I think there will. They used always to be up at the window when I came with Uncle True, last winter."

"How many?" asked Gerty.

"Three, I believe; there was one little girl with such beautiful curls, and such a sweet, cunning little face. She looked like a wax doll, only a great deal prettier."

"Oh, I hope we shall see her!" said Gerty, dancing along on the tops of her toes.

"There they are!" exclaimed Willie; "all three, I declare, just as they used to be!"

"Where?" said Gerty; "where?"

"Over opposite, in the great stone house. Here, let's cross over. It's muddy; I'll carry you."

Willie lifted Gerty carefully over the mud, and they stood in front of the house. True had not yet come up. It was he that the children were watching for. Gerty was not the only child that loved to see the lamps lit.

It was now quite dark, so that persons in a light room could not see any one out of doors; but Willie and Gerty had so much better chance to look in. The mansion was a fine one, evidently the home of wealth. A clear coal fire, and a bright lamp in the centre of the room, shed abroad their cheerful blaze. Rich carpets, deeply-tinted curtains, pictures in gilded frames, and huge mirrors, reflecting the whole on every side, gave Gerty her first impressions of luxurious life. There was an air of comfort combined with all this elegance, which made it still more fascinating to the child of poverty and want. A table was bountifully spread for tea; the cloth of snow-white damask, the shining plate, above all, the home-like hissing tea-kettle, had a most inviting look. A gentleman in gay slippers was in an easy chair by the fire; a lady in

a gay cap was superintending a servant-girl's arrangements at the tea-table; and the children of the household, smiling and happy, were crowded together on a window-seat, looking out, as we have just narrated.

They were sweet, lovely-looking little creatures; especially a girl, of the same age as Gerty, the eldest of the three. Her fair hair fell in long ringlets over a neck as white as snow; she had blue eyes, a cherub face, and a little round plump figure. Gerty's admiration and rapture were such, that she could find no expression for them, and directing Willie's notice first to one thing and then another; "Oh, Willie, isn't she a darling? and see what a beautiful fire—what a splendid lady! What is that on the table? I guess it's good! There's a big looking-glass; and oh, Willie! an't they dear, handsome children?"

True now came up, and as his torch-light swept along the side-walk Gerty and Willie became the subjects of notice and conversation. The curly-haired girl saw them, and pointed them out to the notice of the other two. Though Gerty could not know what they were saying, she did not like being stared at and talked about; and hiding behind the post, she would not move or look up, though Willie laughed at her, and told her it was now her turn to be looked at. When True moved off, she began to run, so as to escape observation; but Willie calling to her, and saying that the children were gone from the window, she ran back to have one more look, and was just in time to see them taking their places at the tea-table. Then the servant-girl drew down the window-blinds. Gerty then took Willie's hand, and they tried to overtake True.

"Shouldn't you like to live in such a house as that, Gerty!" said Willie.

"Yes, indeed," said Gerty; "an't it splendid?"

"I wish I had just such a house," said Willie. "I mean one of these days."

"Where will you get it?" exclaimed Gerty, much amazed at so bold a declaration.

"Oh, I shall work, and grow rich, and buy it."

"You can't; it would take a lot o' money!"

"I know it; but I can earn a lot, and I will, too. The gentleman that lives in that grand house was a poor boy when he first came to Boston; and why can't one poor boy get rich as well an another?"

"How do you suppose he got so much money?"

"I don't know how he did; there are a great many ways. Some people think it's all luck, but I guess it's as much smartness as anything."

"Are you smart?"

Willie laughed. "An't I?" said he. "If I don't turn out a rich man one of these days, you may say I an't."

"I know what I'd do if I was rich," said Gerty.

"What?" asked Willie.

"First, I'd buy a great nice chair for Uncle True, with cushions all in the inside, and bright flowers on it—just exactly like that one the gentleman was sitting in; and next, I'd have great big lamps, ever so many all in a bunch, so as to make the room as light—as light as it could be!"

"Seems to me you're mighty fond of lights, Gerty," said Willie.

"I be," said the child. "I hate old, dark, black places; I like stars, and sunshine, and fires, and Uncle True's torch——"

"And I like bright eyes!" interrupted Willie; "yours look just like stars, they shine so to-night. An't we having a good time?"

"Yes, real."

And so they went on—Gerty dancing along the side-walk, Willie sharing in her gaiety and joy, and glorying in the responsibility of entertaining and protecting the wild little creature. They talked of how they would spend that future wealth which they both calculated upon one day possessing; for Gerty had caught Willie's spirit,

and she, too, meant to work and grow rich. Willie said his mother was to wear a gay cap, like that of the lady they had seen; this made Gerty laugh. She thought that demure little widow would be ridiculous in a flowered headgear. Good taste is inborn, and Gerty had it in her. She felt that Mrs. Sullivan, attired in anything that was not simple, neat, and sober-looking, would altogether lose her identity. Willie had no selfish schemes; the generous boy suggested nothing for his own gratification; it was for the rest he meant to labor, and in and through them that he looked for his reward. Happy children! What do they want of wealth? What of anything, material or tangible, more than they now possess? They have what is worth more than riches or fame—they are full of childhood's faith and hope. With a fancy and imagination unchecked by disappointment, they are building those same castles that so many thousand children have built before, that children will always be building to the end of time. Far off in the distance they see bright things, and know not what myths they are. Undeceive not the little believers, ye wise ones! Check not that God-given hopefulness, which will, perhaps, in its airy flight, lift them in safety over many a rough spot in life's road. It lasts not long at the best; then check it not, for as it dies out the way grows hard.

They had reached the last lamp-post in the street, but scarcely had they gone a dozen steps before Gerty stopped short, and, positively refusing to proceed any further, pulled hard at Willie's hand, and tried to induce him to retrace his steps.

"What's the matter, Gerty?" said he, "are you tired?"

"No, oh no! but I can't go any further."

"Why not?"

"Oh, because—because—" and here Gerty putting her mouth close to Willie's ear, whispered, "there is Nan Grant's; I see the house! I had forgot Uncle True went there; and I am afraid!"

"Oho!" said Willie, drawing himself up with dignity, "I should like to know what

you're afraid of, when I'm with you! Let her touch you if she dares! And Uncle True, too!—I should laugh."

Very kindly did Willie plead with the child, telling her that Nan would not be likely to see them, but they might see her; and that was just what he wanted—nothing he should like better. Gerty's fears were soon allayed. When they stood in front of the house, Gerty was rather hoping than otherwise to catch sight of Nan. Nan was standing opposite the window, engaged in an animated dispute with one of her neighbours. Her countenance expressed great anger, and her face was now so sufficient an index to her character, that no one could see her thus and afterwards question her right to the title of vixen, virago, or scold.

"Which is she?" said Willie; "the tall one, swinging the coffee-pot in her hand? I guess she'll break the handle off, if she don't look out."

"Yes," said Gerty, "that's Nan."

"What's she doing?"

"Oh, she's fighting with Mrs. Birch; she does always with somebody. She don't see us, does she?"

"No, she's too busy. Come, don't let's stop; she's an ugly-looking woman, just as I knew she was. I've seen enough of her, and I'm sure you have—come."

Gerty lingered. Courageous in the knowledge that she was safe and unseen, she was gazing at Nan, and her eyes glistened, not with the innocent excitement of a cheerful heart, but with the fire of kindled passion—a fire that Nan had kindled long ago, which had not yet gone out, and which the sight of Nan had now revived in full force. Willie, thinking it was time to be at home, and perceiving Mr. Flint and his torch far down the street, left Gerty, and started himself, to draw her on, saying, "Come, Gerty, I can't wait."

Gerty turned, saw that he was going, then, quick as lightning, stooped, and picking up a stone, flung it at the window. There was a crash of broken glass, and an

exclamation in Nan's well-known voice; but Gerty was not there to see the result. The instant she heard the crash her fears returned, and flying past Willie, she paused not until she was safe by the side of True.

Willie did not overtake them until they were nearly home, and then came running up, exclaiming, breathlessly, "Why, Gerty, do you know what you did?—You broke the window!"

Gerty jerked her shoulders from side to side to avoid Willie, pouted, and declared that was what she meant to do.

True inquired what window? and Gerty acknowledged what she had done, and avowed that she did it on purpose. True and Willie were shocked and silent. Gerty was silent too, for the rest of the walk; there were clouds on her face, and she felt unhappy in her little heart.

Willie bade them good night at the house door, and as usual they saw no more of him for a week.

CHAPTER VIII.

A NEW FRIEND.

"Father," said Mrs. Sullivan, one afternoon, as he was preparing to take a number of articles which he wanted for his Saturday's work in the church, "why don't you get little Gerty to go with you, and carry some of your things? You can't take them all at once; and she'd like to go, I know."

"She'd only be in the way," said Mr. Cooper; "I can take them myself."

But when he had swung a lantern and an empty coal hod on one arm, taken a little hatchet and a basket of chips in his hand, and hoisted a small ladder over his shoulder, he was fain to acknowledge that there was no accommodation for his hammer and a large paper of nails. Mrs. Sullivan called Gerty, and asked her to go

and help him carry his tools. Gerty was pleased with the proposal, and started off with great alacrity.

When they reached the church the old sexton took them from her hands, and telling her she could play about until he went home, but to be sure and do no mischief, he went into the vestry to commence sweeping, dusting, and building fires. Gerty had ample amusement for some time, to wander round among the empty aisles and pews, and examine closely what, hitherto, she had only viewed from a corner of the gallery. Then she ascended the pulpit, and in imagination addressed a large audience. She was growing weary and restless, however, when the organist, who had entered unseen, commenced playing some low, sweet music; and Gerty, seating herself on the pulpit stairs, listened with the greatest pleasure. He had not played long before the door opened and two visitors entered. One was an elderly man, dressed like a clergyman, with hair thin and grey, and features rather sharp; but remarkable for his benignant expression of countenance. A young lady, apparently about twenty-five years of age, was leaning on his arm. She was attired with great simplicity, wearing a dark brown cloak, and a bonnet of the same colour, relieved by some light-blue ribbon about the face. She was somewhat below the middle size, but had a good figure. Her features were small and regular; her complexion clear but pale; and her light-brown hair was neatly arranged. She never lifted her eyes as she walked slowly up the aisle.

The two approached the spot where Gerty sat, but without perceiving her. "I am glad you like the organ," said the gentleman; "I am not much of a judge of music, but they say it is a superior instrument, and that Hermann plays it remarkably well."

"Nor is my opinion of any value," said the lady; "for I have little knowledge of music, much as I love it. But that symphony sounds very delightful to me; it is a long time since I have heard such touching strains; or, it may be partly owing to their striking so sweetly on the solemn quiet of the church this afternoon. I love to

go into a large church on a week-day. It was very kind of you to call for me this afternoon. How came you to think of it?"

"I thought you would enjoy it, my dear. I knew Hermann would be playing about this time; and, besides, when I saw how pale you were looking I knew the walk would do you good."

"It has done me good. I was not feeling well, and the clear, cold air was just what I needed; I knew it would refresh me; but Mrs. Ellis was busy, and I could not go out alone."

"I thought I should find the sexton here," said the gentleman. "I want to speak to him about the light; the afternoons are so short now, and it is dark so early, I must ask him to open more of the blinds, or I cannot see to read my sermon to-morrow. He may be in the vestry-room; he is always about here on Saturday; I will go and look for him."

Just then Mr. Cooper entered the church, and, seeing the clergyman, came up, and after receiving his directions about the light, requested him to go with him somewhere, for the gentleman hesitated, glanced at the young lady, and then said, "I suppose I ought to go to-day; and, as you say you are at leisure, it is a pity I should not; but I don't know——"

Then, turning to the lady, he said, "Emily, Mr. Cooper wants me to go to Mrs. Glass's with him; and I shall be absent some time. Should you mind waiting here until I return? She lives in the next street; but I may be detained, for it's about the library-books being so mischievously defaced, and I am afraid that her oldest boy had something to do with it. It ought to be inquired into before to-morrow."

"Oh, go, by all means," said Emily; "don't mind me; it will be a pleasure to sit here and listen to the music. Mr. Hermann's playing is a great treat to me, and I don't care how long I wait; so do not hurry on my account, Mr. Arnold."

Thus assured, Mr. Arnold led the lady to a chair beneath the pulpit, and went with

Mr. Cooper.

All this time Gerty had been unnoticed, and had remained very quiet on the upper stair, secured from sight by the pulpit. Hardly had the doors closed, however, with a loud bang, when the child got up, and began to descend the stairs. The moment she moved, the lady, whose seat was very near, started, and exclaimed, "Who's that?"

Gerty stood still, and made no reply. Strange the lady did not look up, though she must have perceived that the movement was above her head. There was a moment's pause, and then Gerty began again to run down the stairs. The lady sprang up, and, stretching out her hand, said, "Who is it?"

"Me," said Gerty, looking up in the lady's face; "it's only me."

"Will you stop and speak to me?" said the lady.

Gerty not only stopped, but came close up to Emily's chair, irresistibly attracted by the sweetest voice she had ever heard. The lady placed her hand on Gerty's head, and said, "Who are you?"

"Gerty."

"Gerty who?"

"Nothing else but Gerty."

"Have you forgotten your other name?"

"I haven't got any other name."

"How came you here?"

"I came with Mr. Cooper, to help him to bring his things."

"And he's left you here to wait for him, and I'm left too; so we must take care of each other, mustn't we?"

Gerty laughed at this.

"Where were you?—On the stairs?"

"Yes."

"Suppose you sit down on this step by my chair, and talk with me a little while: I want to see if we can't find out what your other name is. Where do you say you live?"

"With Uncle True."

"True?"

"Yes. Mr. True Flint I live with now. He took me home to his house one night, when Nan Grant put me out on the side-walk."

"Why, are you that little girl? Then I've heard of you before. Mr. Flint told me all about you."

"Do you know my Uncle True?"

"Yes, very well."

"What's your name?"

"My name is Emily Graham."

"O! I know," said Gerty, springing suddenly up, and clapping her hands together; "I know. You asked him to keep me; he said so—I heard him say so; and you gave me my clothes; and you're beautiful; and you're good; and I love you! O! I love you ever so much!"

As Gerty spoke with a voice full of excitement, a strange look passed over Miss Graham's face, a most inquiring and restless look, as if the tones of the voice had vibrated on a chord of her memory. She did not speak, but, passing her arm around the child's waist, drew her closer to her. As the peculiar expression passed from her face, and her features assumed their usual calmness, Gerty, as she gazed at her with a look of wonder, exclaimed, "Are you going to sleep?"

"No.—Why?"

"Because your eyes are shut."

"They are always shut, my child."

"Always shut!—What for?"

"I am blind, Gerty; I can see nothing."

"Not see!" said Gerty; "can't you see anything? Can't you see me now?"

"No," said Miss Graham.

"O!" exclaimed Gerty, drawing a long breath, "I'm so glad."

"Glad!" said Miss Graham, in the saddest voice that ever was heard.

"O yes!" said Gerty, "so glad you can't see me!—because now, perhaps, you'll love me."

"And shouldn't I love you if I saw you?" said Emily, passing her hand softly and slowly over the child's features.

"Oh, no!" answered Gerty, "I'm so ugly! I'm glad you can't see how ugly I am."

"But just think, Gerty," said Emily, in the same sad voice, "how would you feel if you could not see the light, could not see anything in the world?"

"Can't you see the sun, and the stars, and the sky, and the church we're in? Are you in the dark?"

"In the dark all the time—day and night in the dark."

Gerty burst into a paroxysm of tears. "Oh!" exclaimed she, as soon as she could find voice amid her sobs, "It's too bad! it's too bad!"

The child's grief was contagious; and, for the first time for years, Emily wept bitterly for her blindness.

It was but for a few moments, however. Quickly recovering herself, she tried to compose the child also, saying, "Hush! hush! don't cry; and don't say it's too bad! It's not too bad; I can bear it very well. I'm used to it, and am quite happy."

"I shouldn't be happy in the dark; I should hate to be!" said Gerty. "I an't glad you're

blind; I'm really sorry. I wish you could see me and everything. Can't your eyes be opened, any way?"

"No," said Emily; "never; but we won't talk about that any more; we will talk about you. I want to know what makes you think yourself so very ugly."

"Because folks say that I am an ugly child, and that nobody loves ugly children."

"Yes, people do," said Emily, "love ugly children, if they are good."

"But I an't good," said Gerty, "I'm really bad!"

"But you can be good," said Emily, "and then everybody will love you."

"Do you think I can be good?"

"Yes, if you try."

"I will try."

"I hope you will," said Emily. "Mr. Flint thinks a great deal of his little girl, and she must do all she can to please him."

She then asked concerning Gerty's former way of life, and became so interested in the recital of the little girl's early sorrows and trials, that she was unconscious of the flight of time, and quite unobservant of the departure of the organist, who had ceased playing, closed his instrument, and gone away.

Gerty was very communicative. The sweet voice and sympathetic tones of Emily went straight to her heart, and though her whole life had been passed among the poorer and lowest classes of people, she felt no awe and constraint on her encountering, for the first time, a lady of polished mind and manners. On the contrary, Gerty clung to Emily as affectionately, and stroked her soft boa with as much freedom, as if she had herself been born in a palace. Once or twice she took Emily's nicely-gloved hand between both her own, and held it tight; her favourite mode of expressing her warmth of gratitude and admiration. The excitable but interesting child took no less strong a hold upon Miss Graham's feelings. The latter

perceived how neglected the little one had been, and the importance of her being educated, lest early abuse, acting upon an impetuous disposition, should prove destructive to a nature capable of the best attainments. The two were still entertaining each other, when Mr. Arnold entered the church hastily. As he came up the aisle, he called to Emily, saying, "Emily; dear, I fear you thought I had forgotten you. I have been longer than I intended. Were you not tired of waiting?"

"I thought it was but a very little while. I have had company, you see."

"What, little folks," said Mr. Arnold, good-naturedly. "Where did this little body come from?"

"She came to the church this afternoon with Mr. Cooper. Isn't he here for her?"

"Cooper?—No: he went straight home after he left me; he's probably forgotten all about the child. What's to be done?"

"Can't we take her home? Is it far?"

"It is two or three streets from here, and directly out of our way; altogether too far for you to walk."

"Oh, no, it won't tire me; I'm quite strong now, and I would know she was safe home."

If Emily could but have seen Gerty's grateful face that moment, she would indeed have felt repaid for almost any amount of weariness.

CHAPTER IX.

MENTAL DARKNESS.

The blind girl did not forget little Gerty. Emily Graham never forgot the sufferings, the wants, the necessities of others. She could not see the world without, but there was a world of love and sympathy within her, which manifested itself in abundant

charity, both of heart and deed. She loved God with her whole heart, and her neighbour as herself. Her own great misfortunes and trials were borne without repining; but the misfortunes and trials of others became her care, the alleviation of them her greatest delight. Emily was never weary of doing good. But never had she been so affected as now by any tale of sorrow. Children were born into the world amid poverty and privation. She could not account to herself for the interest she felt in the little stranger; but the impulse to know more of her was irresistible, and sending for True, she talked a long time with him about the child.

True was highly gratified by Miss Graham's account of the meeting in the church, and of the interest the little girl had inspired in one for whom he felt the greatest admiration and respect. Gerty had previously told him how she had seen Miss Graham, and had spoken in the most glowing terms of the dear lady who was so kind to her, and brought her home when Mr. Cooper had forgotten her, but it had not occurred to the old man that the fancy was mutual.

Emily asked him if he didn't intend to send her to school?

"Well, I don't know," said he; "she's a little thing, and an't much used to being with other children. Besides, I don't exactly like to spare her."

Emily suggested that it was time she was learning to read and write; and that the sooner she went among other children, the easier it would be to her.

"Very true, Miss Emily, very true," said Mr. Flint. "I dare say you're right; and if you think she'd better go, I'll ask her, and see what she says."

"I would," said Emily. "I think she might enjoy it, besides improving very much; and, about her clothes, if there's any deficiency, I'll——"

"Oh, no, no, Miss Emily!" interrupted True; "there's no necessity; she's very well on't now, thanks to your kindness."

"Well," said Emily, "if she should have any wants, you must apply to me. You know we adopted her jointly, and I agreed to do anything I could for her; so you must

never hesitate—it will be a pleasure to serve either of you. My father always feels under obligations to you, Mr. Flint, for faithful service that cost you dear in the end."

"Oh, Miss Emily," said True, "Mr. Graham has always been my best friend; and as to that 'ere accident that happened when I was in his employ, it was nobody's fault but my own; it was my own carelessness, and nobody's else."

"I know you say so," said Emily, "but we regretted it very much; and you mustn't forget what I tell you, that I shall delight in doing anything for Gerty. I should like to have her come and see me, some day, if she would like, and you'll let her."

"Sartain, sartain," said True, "and thank you kindly; she'd be glad to come."

A few days after Gerty went with True to see Miss Graham, but the housekeeper, whom they met in the hall, told them that she was ill and could see no one. So they went away full of disappointment and regret.

Emily had taken a severe cold the day she sat so long in the church, and was suffering with it when they called; but, though confined to her room, she would have been glad to have a visit from Gerty, and was sorry that Mrs. Ellis should have sent them away.

On Saturday evening, when Willie was present, True broached the subject of Gerty's going to school. Gerty was much displeased with the idea; but it met with Willie's approbation; and when Gerty learned that Miss Graham also wished it, she consented, though reluctantly, to begin the next week, and try how she liked it. So next Monday Gerty went with True to one of the primary schools, was admitted, and her education began. When Willie came home the next Sunday, he rushed into True's room, eager to hear how Gerty liked going to school. She was seated at the table, with her spelling-book; and she exclaimed, "Oh, Willie! Willie! come and hear me read!"

Her performance could hardly be called reading. She had not got beyond the alphabet, and a few syllables she had learned to spell; but Willie bestowed upon her

much well-merited praise, she had been very diligent. He was astonished to hear that Gerty liked going to school, liked the teachers and the scholars, and had a fine time at recess. He had fully expected that she would dislike the whole business, and go into tantrums about it—which was the expression he used to denote her fits of ill-temper. Willie promised to assist her in her studies; and the two children's literary plans soon became as high-flown as if one had been a poet-laureate and the other a philosopher.

For two or three weeks all appeared to go on smoothly. Gerty went regularly to school, and made rapid progress. Every Saturday Willie heard her read and spell, assisted, praised, and encouraged her. But he had heard that, on two occasions, she had nearly had a brush with some large girls, for whom she began to show symptoms of dislike. This soon reached a crisis. One day, when the children were in the school-yard, during recess, Gerty saw True in his working-dress, passing down the street, with his ladder and lamp-filler. Shouting and laughing, she pursued and overtook him. She came back in a few minutes, seeming much delighted, and ran into the yard full of happy excitement. The troop of large girls, whom Gerty had already had some reason to distrust, had been observing her, and one of them called out saying——

"Who's that man?"

"That's my Uncle True," said Gerty.

"Your what?"

"My Uncle, Mr. Flint, that I live with."

"So you belong to him, do you?" said the girl, in an insolent tone of voice. "Ha! ha! ha!"

"What are you laughing at?" said Gerty, fiercely.

"Ugh! Before I'd live with him!" said the girl—"Old Smutty!"

The others caught it up, and the laugh and epithet Old Smutty circulated freely in the corner of the yard where Gerty was standing. Gerty was furious. Her eyes glistened, she doubled her little fist, and, without hesitation, came down in battle upon the crowd. But they were too many for her, and, helpless as she was with passion, they drove her out of the yard. She started for home on a full run, screaming with all her might.

As she flew along the side-walk, she brushed stiffly against a tall, stiff-looking lady, who was walking slowly in the same direction, with a much smaller person leaning on her arm. "Bless me!" said the tall lady, who had almost lost her equilibrium from the suddenness of the shock. "Why, you horrid little creature!" As she spoke, she grasped Gerty by the shoulder, and, before she could break away, gave her a slight shake. This served to increase Gerty's anger, and, her speed gaining in proportion, it was but a few minutes before she was crouched in a corner of True's room behind the bed, her face to the wall, and covered with both her hands. Here she was free to cry as loud as she pleased; for Mrs. Sullivan was gone out, and there was no one in the house to hear her.

But she had not indulged long in her tantrum when the gate at the end of the yard closed with a bang, and footsteps were heard coming towards Mr. Flint's door. Gerty's attention was arrested, for she knew by the sound that a stranger was approaching. With a strong effort she controlled herself so as to keep quiet. There was a knock at the door, but Gerty did not reply to it, remaining concealed behind the bed. The knock was not repeated, but the stranger lifted the latch and walked in.

"There doesn't seem to be any one at home," said a female voice, "what a pity."

"Isn't there? I'm sorry," replied another, in the sweet musical tones of Miss Graham. Gerty knew the voice at once.

"I thought you'd better not come here yourself," rejoined the first speaker, who was no other than Mrs. Ellis, the identical lady whom Gerty had so frightened and

disconcerted.

"Oh, I don't regret coming," said Emily. "You can leave me here while you go to your sister's, and very likely Mr. Flint or the little girl will come home in the meantime."

"It don't become you, Miss Emily, to be carried round everywhere, and left, like an express parcel, till called for. You caught a horrid cold that you're hardly well of now, waiting there in the church for the minister; and Mr. Graham will be finding fault next."

"Oh, no, Mrs. Ellis; it's very comfortable here; the church must have been damp, I think. Come, put me in Mr. Flint's arm-chair, and I can make myself quite contented."

"Well, at any rate," said Mrs. Ellis, "I'll make up a good fire in this stove before I go."

As she spoke, the energetic housekeeper seized the poker, and, after stirring up the coals, and making free with all True's kindlewood, waited till the fire burnt up, and then, having laid aside Emily's cloak, went away with the same firm step with which she had come, and which had so overpowered Emily's noiseless tread, that Gerty had only anticipated the arrival of a single guest. As soon as Gerty knew that Mrs. Ellis had really departed, she suspended her efforts at self-control, and, with a deep-drawn sigh, gasped out, "O dear! O dear!"

"Why, Gerty!" exclaimed Emily, "is that you?"

"Yes," sobbed Gerty.

"Come here."

The child waited no second bidding, but, starting up, ran, threw herself on the floor by the side of Emily, buried her face in the blind girl's lap, and once more commenced crying aloud. Her whole frame was agitated.

"Why, Gerty," said Emily, "what is the matter?"

But Gerty could not reply; and Emily desisted from her inquiries until the little one should be somewhat composed. She lifted Gerty up into her lap, laid her head upon her shoulder, and with her handkerchief wiped the tears from her face. Her soothing words and caresses soon quieted the child, and when she was calm, Emily, instead of recurring at once to the cause of her grief, questioned her upon other topics. At last, however, she asked her if she went to school.

"I have been," said Gerty, raising her head from Emily's shoulder; "but I won't ever go again!"

"What!—Why not!"

"Because," said Gerty, angrily, "I hate those girls; yes, I hate 'em! ugly things!"

"Gerty," said Emily, "don't say that; you shouldn't hate anybody."

"Why shouldn't I?" said Gerty.

"Because it's wrong."

"No, it's not wrong; I say it isn't!" said Gerty; "and I do hate 'em; and I hate Nan Grant, and I always shall! Don't you hate anybody?"

"No," answered Emily, "I don't."

"Did anybody ever drown your kitten? Did anybody ever call your father Old Smutty?" said Gerty. "If they had, I know you'd hate 'em just as I do."

"Gerty," said Emily, solemnly, "didn't you tell me, the other day, that you were a naughty child, but that you wished to be good, and would try!"

"Yes," said Gerty.

"If you wish to become good and be forgiven, you must forgive others." Gerty said nothing.

"Do you not wish God to forgive and love you?"

"God, who lives in heaven—who made the stars?" said Gerty.

"Yes."

"Will he love me, and let me some time go to heaven?"

"Yes, if you try to be good and love everybody."

"Miss Emily," said Gerty, after a moment's pause, "I can't do it, so I s'pose I can't go."

Just at this moment a tear fell upon Gerty's forehead. She looked thoughtfully up into Emily's face, then said—

"Dear Miss Emily, are you going there?"

"I am trying."

"I should like to go with you," said Gerty.

Still Emily did not speak. She left the child to the working of her own thoughts.

"Miss Emily," said Gerty, at last, in the lowest whisper, "I mean to try, but I don't think I can."

"God bless you, and help you, my child!" said Emily, laying her hand upon Gerty's head.

For fifteen minutes or more not a word was spoken by either. Gerty lay perfectly still in Emily's lap. By-and-by the latter perceived, by the child's breathing, that, worn out with the fever and excitement of all she had gone through, she had dropped into a quiet sleep. When Mrs. Ellis returned, Emily pointed to the sleeping child, and asked her to place her on the bed. She did so, and turning to Emily, exclaimed, "My word, Miss Emily, that's the same rude, bawling little creature that came so near being the death of us!" Emily smiled at the idea of a child eight years old overthrowing a woman of Mrs. Ellis' inches, but said nothing.

Why did Emily weep long that night, as she recalled the scene of the morning? Why did she, on bended knees, wrestle so vehemently with a mighty sorrow? Why did

she pray so earnestly for new strength and heavenly aid? Why did she so beseechingly ask of God His blessing on the little child? Because she had felt, in many a year of darkness and bereavement, in many an hour of fearful struggle, in many a pang of despair, how a temper like that of Gerty's might, in one moment of its fearful reign, cast a blight upon a lifetime, and write in fearful lines the mournful requiem of early joy. And so she prayed to heaven for strength to keep her firm resolve, and aid in fulfilling her undying purpose, to cure that child of her dark infirmity.

CHAPTER X.

AN EARTHLY MESSENGER OF PEACE.

The next Sabbath afternoon found Gerty seated on a stool in Emily's room. Her large eyes were fixed on Emily's face, which always seemed to fascinate the little girl; so attentively did she watch her features, the charm of which many an older person than Gerty had felt, but could not describe. It was not beauty; though once her face was illumined by beautiful hazel eyes: nor was it fascination of manner, for Emily's manner and voice were so soft and unassuming that they never took the fancy by storm. It was not compassion for her blindness, though that might well excite sympathy. But it was hard to realise that Emily was blind. It was a fact never forced upon her friend's recollection by any repining or selfish indulgence on the part of the sufferer; and, as there was nothing painful in the appearance of her closed lids, shaded and fringed as they were by her long eyelashes, it was not unusual for persons to converse upon things which could only be evident to the sense of sight, and even direct her attention to one object and another, quite forgetting, for the moment, her sad deprivation: and Emily never sighed, never seemed hurt at their want of consideration, or showed any lack of interest in objects thus shut from her gaze, but quite satisfied with the pictures which she formed in her imagination,

would talk pleasantly upon whatever was uppermost in the minds of her companions. Some said that Emily had the sweetest mouth in the world, and they loved to watch its ever varying expression. But true Christians knew the source whence she derived that power by which her face and voice stole into the hearts of young and old, and won their love—they would have said the same as Gerty did, when she sat gazing so earnestly at Emily on the very Sunday afternoon of which we speak, "Miss Emily, I know you've been with God."

Gerty was a strange child; but she had felt Emily's superiority to any being she had ever seen; and she reposed confidence in what she told her, allowed herself to be guided by one whom she felt loved her and sought her good; and, as she sat at her feet, and listened to her gentle voice while she gave her first lesson upon the distinction between right and wrong, Emily, though she could not see the little thoughtful face, knew, by her earnest attention, and by the little hand which had sought hers, and held it tight, that one great point was won.

Gerty had not been to school since the day of her battle with the girls. True's persuasions had failed; she would not go. But Emily understood the child's nature better than True did, and urged upon her more forcible motives than the old man had thought of employing, that she succeeded where he had failed. Gerty considered that her old friend had been insulted, and that was the chief cause of her indignation with her schoolmates; but Emily placed the matter in a different light, and convincing her at last that, if she loved Uncle True, she would show it much better by obeying his wishes than by retaining her foolish anger, she finally obtained Gerty's promise that she would go to school the next morning.

The next morning True, much pleased, went with her, and inquiring for the teacher, stated the case to her in his blunt, honest way, and then left Gerty in her special charge. Miss Browne, who was a young woman of good sense and good feelings, saw the matter in the right light; and taking an opportunity to speak privately to the

girls who had excited Gerty's temper by their rudeness, made them so ashamed of their conduct, that they ceased to molest the child.

The winter passed away, and spring days came, when Gerty could sit at the open window, when birds sang in the morning among the trees, and the sun at evening threw bright rays across True's great room, and Gerty could see to read almost until bed-time. She had been to school steadily all winter, and had improved rapidly. She was healthy and well; her clothes were clean and neat, for her wardrobe was well stocked by Emily, and the care of it superintended by Mrs. Sullivan. She was bright and happy too, and tripped round the house so joyously, that True declared his birdie knew not what it was to touch her heel to the ground, but flew about on the tips of her toes.

The old man could not have loved her better had she been his own child; and he sat by her side on the wide settle, which, in warm weather, was moved outside the door, and listened patiently and attentively while she read various pleasing stories. The old man's interest in the story-books was as keen as if he had been a child himself.

Emily, who gave these books, knew their influence on the hearts of children, and most judiciously did she select them. Gerty's life was now as happy as it had been wretched and miserable. All the days in the week were joyous; but Saturday and Sunday were marked days; for Saturday brought Willie home to hear her recite her lessons, walk, laugh, and play with her. He had so many pleasant things to tell, was so full of life, so ready to enter into all her plans, and promote her amusement, that on Monday morning she began to count the days until Saturday would come again.

Sunday afternoon Gerty always spent with Emily, listening to her sweet voice, and imbibing a portion of her sweet spirit. Emily preached no sermons, nor did she weary the child with precepts. It did not occur to Gerty that she went there to be taught anything; but gradually the blind girl imparted light to the child's dark soul, and the lessons that are divine were implanted in her so naturally, that she realized

not the work that was going on, but long after—when goodness had grown strong within her, and her first feeble resistance of evil, her first attempts to keep her childish resolves, had matured into deeply-rooted principles—she felt, as she looked back, that on those blessed Sabbaths, sitting at Emily's knee, she had received into her heart the first beams of that immortal light that never could be quenched.

It was a grievous trial to Gerty to learn that the Graham's were about to go into the country for the summer. Mr. Graham had a pleasant residence about six miles from Boston, to which he resorted as soon as the planting season commenced; for though devoted to business during the winter, he had of late years allowed himself much relaxation during the summer; and ledgers and day-books were to be supplanted by the delights of gardening. Emily promised Gerty that she should pass a day with her when the weather was fine; a visit which Gerty enjoyed three months in anticipation, and more than three in retrospection.

It was some compensation for Emily's absence that, as the days got long, Willie was often able to leave the shop and come home for an hour or two in the evening; and Willie's visits always tended to comfort Gerty.

CHAPTER XI.

PROGRESS OF KNOWLEDGE.

It was one pleasant evening in April that Gerty, who had been to see Miss Graham and bid her good-bye, before her departure for the country, stood at the back part of the yard, weeping bitterly. She held in her hand a book and a new slate, Emily's parting gifts; but she had not removed the wrapper from the one, and the other was bedewed with tears. She was so full of grief that she did not hear any one approach, until a hand was placed upon each of her shoulders; and, as she turned round, she found herself encircled by Willie's arms, and face to face with Willie's sunny

countenance. "Why, Gerty!" said he, "this is no welcome, when I've come home on a week-night to stay with you all the evening. Mother and grandfather are gone out, and when I come to look for you, you're crying so I can't see your face for tears. Come, come! do leave off; you don't know how you look!"

"Willie!", sobbed she, "do you know Miss Emily's gone?"

"Gone where?"

"Way off, six miles, to stay all summer!"

But Willie only laughed. "Six miles!" said he; "that's a terrible way, certainly!"

"But I can't see her any more!" said Gerty.

"You can see her next winter," rejoined Willie.

"Oh, but that's so long!" said the child.

"What makes you think so much of her?"

"She thinks much of me; she can't see me, and she likes me better than anybody, but Uncle True."

"I don't believe it; I don't believe she likes you half as well as I do. I know she don't! How can she, when she's blind, and never saw you in her life, and I see you all the time, and love you better than I do anybody in the world, except my mother."

"Do you really, Willie?"

"Yes, I do. I always think, when I come home—Now I'm going to see Gerty; and everything that happens all the week, I think to myself—I shall tell Gerty that."

"I shouldn't think you'd like me so well."

"Why not?"

"Oh, because you're so handsome, and I an't handsome a bit. I heard Ellen Chase tell Lucretia Davis, the other day, that she thought Gerty Flint was the worst-looking girl in the school."

"Then she ought to be ashamed of herself," said Willie, "I guess she an't very good-looking. I should hate the looks of her or any other girl that said that."

"Oh, Willie!" exclaimed Gerty, "it's true."

"No, it an't true," said Willie. "To be sure, you haven't got long curls, and a round face, and blue eyes, like Belle Clinton's, and nobody'd think of setting you up for a beauty; but when you've been running, and have rosy cheeks, and your great black eyes shine, and you laugh so heartily, I often think you're the brightest-looking girl I ever saw in my life: and I don't care what other folks think, as long as I like your looks. I feel just as bad when you cry, or anything's the matter with you, as if it were myself, and worse."

Such professions of affection by Willie were frequent, and always responded to by a like declaration from Gerty. Nor were they mere professions. The two children loved each other dearly. That they loved each other there could be no doubt; and if in the spring the bond between them was already strong, autumn found it cemented by still firmer ties; for, during Emily's absence, Willie filled her place, and his own too; and though Gerty did not forget her blind friend, she passed a most happy summer, and made such progress in her studies at school that, when Emily returned in October, she could hardly understand how so much had been accomplished in so short a time.

Miss Graham's kindly feeling towards her little protégé had increased by time and absence, and Gerty's visits to Emily became more frequent than ever. The profit derived from these visits was not all on Gerty's part. Emily had, during the previous winter, heard her read occasionally, that she might judge of her proficiency; now she had discovered that the little girl had attained to a much greater degree of excellence. She read understandingly, and her accent and intonations were so admirable that Emily found rare pleasure in listening to her.

For the child's benefit, and for her own gratification, she proposed that Gerty should come every day and read to her for an hour. Gerty was only too happy to oblige her

dear Miss Emily, who, in making the proposal, represented it as a personal favour to herself, and a plan by which Gerty's eyes could serve for them both. It was agreed that when True started on his lamplighting expeditions he should take Gerty to Mr. Graham's, and call for her on his return. Thus Gerty was punctual in her attendance at the appointed time; and none but those who have tried it are aware what a large amount of reading may be effected in six months, if an hour is devoted to it each day. Emily, in her choice of books, did not confine herself to such as came strictly within a child's comprehension. She judged that a girl of such keen intelligence as Gerty was naturally endowed with would be benefited by what was beyond her comprehension; but that, in the effort she would be called upon to make, would enlarge her capacity, and be an incentive to her genius. So history, biography, and books of travels were perused by Gerty at an age when most children's literary pursuits are confined to stories and pictures. The child gave the preference to this comparatively solid reading; and, aided by Emily's explanations, she stored up in her mind much useful information.

From the time Gerty was first admitted until she was twelve years old, she attended the public schools, and was rapidly promoted; but what she learned with Miss Graham, and acquired by study with Willie at home, formed nearly as important a part of her education. Willie was very fond of study, and was delighted at Gerty's participation in his favourite pursuit. They were a great advantage to each other, for each found encouragement in the other's sympathy and co-operation. After the first year or two of their acquaintance, Willie was in his fifteenth year, and beginning to look quite manly. But Gerty's eagerness for knowledge had all the more influence upon him; for if the little girl of ten years was patient and willing to labour at her books until after nine o'clock, the youth of fifteen must not rub his eyes and plead weariness. When they had reached these ages, they began to study French together. Willie's former teacher continued to feel a kindly interest in the boy who had long been his best scholar, and who would certainly have borne away from his class the

first prizes, had not a higher duty called him to inferior labours previous to the public exhibition. Finding that Willie had much spare time, he advised him to learn the French language, which would prove useful to him—and offered to lend him such books as he would need at the commencement.

Willie availed himself of his teacher's advice and his kind offer, and began to study in good earnest. When he was at home in the evening, he came into True's room, partly for the sake of quiet and partly for the sake of being with Gerty, who was at the time occupied with her books. Gerty had a strong desire to learn French too. Willie wished her to try, but thought she would not persevere. But to his surprise, she discovered a wonderful determination, and a decided talent for language; and as Emily furnished her with books like Willie's, she kept pace with him, oftentimes translating more during the week than he could find time to do. On Saturday evening, when they had always had a fine study-time together, True would sit on his old settle watching Willie and Gerty side by side, at the table, with their eyes bent on the page, which to him seemed a labyrinth. Gerty looked out the words with great skill, her bright eyes diving, as if by magic, into the dictionary, and transfixing the right word at a glance, while Willie's province was to make sense. Almost the only occasion when True disturbed them was when he heard Willie talk about making sense. "Making sense, Willie!" said the old man; "is that what ye're after? Well, you couldn't do a better business. I'll warrant you a market for it; there's want enough on't in the world!"

It was but natural that, with Emily to advise and direct, and Willie to aid and encourage, her intellect should rapidly expand and strengthen. But how is it with that little heart of hers, that, at once warm and affectionate, impulsive, sensitive, and passionate, now throbs with love and gratitude, and now again burns as vehemently with the consuming fire that a sense of wrong, a consciousness of injury to herself or her friends, would at any moment enkindle? Has she, in two years of happy childhood, learned self-control? Has she also attained to an enlightened sense of the

distinction between right and wrong, truth and falsehood? In short, has Emily been true to her self-imposed trust, her high resolve, to soften the heart and instruct the soul of the little ignorant one? Has Gerty learned religion? Has she found out God, and begun to walk patiently in that path which is lit by a holy light and leads to rest?

She has begun; and though her footsteps often falter, though she sometimes turns aside, and, impatient of the narrow way, gives the rein to her old irritability, she is yet but a child, and there is a foundation for hopefulness in the sincerity of her good intentions, and the depth of her contrition when wrong has had the mastery. Emily has taught her where to place her strong reliance, and Gerty looks to higher aid than Emily's, and she leans on a mightier arm.

How much Gerty had improved in the two years that had passed since she first began to be so carefully instructed and provided for, the course of our story must develop. We cannot pause to dwell upon the trials and struggles, the failures and victories, that she experienced. It is sufficient to say that Miss Graham was satisfied and hopeful, True proud and over-joyed, while Mrs. Sullivan, and even old Mr. Cooper, declared she had improved wonderfully in her behaviour and her looks.

CHAPTER XII.

AN ADVENTURE AND A MISFORTUNE.

One Saturday evening in December Willie came in with his French books under his arm, and, after the first salutations, exclaimed, as he put the grammar and dictionary on the table, "Oh, Gerty! before we begin to study, I must tell you and Uncle True the funniest thing that happened to-day; I have been laughing so at home, as I was telling mother about it!"

"I heard you laugh," said Gerty. "If I had not been so busy, I should have come in to hear what it was that was so very droll. But do tell us!"

"Why, you will not think it's anything like a joke when I begin, and I should not be much amused, if she hadn't been the very queerest old woman that ever I saw in my life."

"Old woman!—You haven't told us about one!"

"But I'm going to," said Willie. "You noticed how everything was covered with ice this morning. How splendidly it looked, didn't it? I declare, when the sun shone on that great elm-tree in front of our shop, I thought I never saw anything so handsome in my life. But, there, that's nothing to do with my old woman—only that the side-walks were just like everything else, a perfect glare."

"I want to hear about your old woman," said Gerty.

"I was standing at the shop-door, about eleven o'clock, looking out, when I saw the strangest-looking figure coming down the street. She had on some kind of a black silk or satin gown, made very scant, and trimmed all round with some brownish-looking lace—black it had been once, but it isn't now—then she had a grey cloak, of silk material, that you certainly would have said came out of the Ark, if it hadn't been for a little cape, of a different colour, that she wore outside of it, and which must have been dated a generation further back. Her bonnet! Oh dear! it was twice as big as anybody's else, and she had a figured lace veil thrown over one side, that reached nearly to her feet. But her goggles crowned all; such immense horrid-looking things I never saw. She had a work-bag made of black silk, with pieces of cloth of all the colours in the rainbow sewed on to it, zigzag: then her pocket-handkerchief was pinned to her bag, and a great feather fan—at this season of the year!—that was pinned on somewhere—by a string, I suppose—and a bundle-handkerchief, and a newspaper! Oh, gracious! I can't think of half the things; but they were all pinned together with great brass pins, and hung in a body on her left arm. Her dress, though, wasn't the strangest thing about her. What made it funny was her way of walking: she looked quite old and infirm, and it was evident she

could hardly keep her footing on the ice; and yet she walked with such a consequential little air! Oh, Gerty, it's lucky you didn't see her! you'd have laughed from then till this time."

"Some poor, crazy crittur, wasn't she?" asked True.

"Oh, no!" said Willie, "I don't think she was; though queer enough, but not crazy. Just as she got opposite the shop door her feet slipped, and she fell flat on the pavement. I rushed out, for I thought the fall might have killed the poor little thing; and Mr. Bray, and a gentleman whom he was waiting upon, followed me. She did appear stunned at first; but we carried her into the shop and she came to her senses in a minute or two. Crazy you asked if she were, Uncle True! No, not she! She's as bright as you are! As soon as she opened her eyes, and seemed to know what she was about, she felt for her work-bag and all its appendages; counted them up, to see if the number were right, and then nodded her head very satisfactorily. Mr. Bray poured out a glass of cordial and offered it to her. By this time she had got her airs and graces back again; so when he recommended her to swallow the cordial, she retreated with a little old-fashioned curtsey, and put up both her hands to express her horror at the idea of such a thing. The gentleman standing by smiled, and advised her to take it, as it would do her no harm. She turned round, made another curtsey to him, and asked, in a little cracked voice, 'Can you assure me, sir, as a gentleman of candour and gallantry, that it is not an exhilarating potion?' The gentleman could hardly keep from laughing; but he told her it was nothing that would hurt her. 'Then,' said she, 'I will venture to sip the beverage; it has most aromatic fragrance.' She seemed to like the taste as well as the smell, for she drank every drop of it; she turned to me and said, 'Except upon this gentleman's assurance of the harmlessness of the liquid, I would not have swallowed it in your presence, my young master, if it were only for the example. I have set my seal to no temperance pledge, but I am abstemious because it becomes a lady; it is with me a matter of choice, a matter of taste.' She now seemed quite restored, and talked of starting again on her walk; but it

was not safe for her to go alone on the ice, and Mr. Bray thought so, for he asked her where she was going? She told him, in her roundabout way, that she was going to pass the day with mistress somebody, that lived near the Common. I touched Mr. Bray's arm, and said, in a low voice, that if he could spare me, I'd go with her. He said he shouldn't want me for an hour; so I offered her my arm and told her I should be happy to wait upon her. You ought to have seen her then. If I had been a grownup man, and she a young lady, she couldn't have tossed her head or giggled more. But she took my arm and we started off. I knew Mr. Bray and the gentleman were laughing to see us, but I didn't care; I pitied the old lady, and I did not mean she should get another tumble.

"Every person we met stared at us; we were such a grotesque looking couple. She accepted my proffered arm, and clasped her hands together round it, making a complete handle of her two arms; and so she hung on with all her might. But I ought not to laugh at the poor thing, for she needed somebody to help her along, and I'm sure she wasn't heavy enough to tire me out, if she did make the most of herself. I wonder who she belongs to. I shouldn't think her friends would let her go about the streets so, especially such walking as it is to-day."

"What's her name?" inquired Gerty. "Didn't you find out?"

"No," answered Willie; "she wouldn't tell me. I asked her, but she only said, in her little cracked voice (and here Willie began to laugh immoderately), that she was the incognito, and that it was the part of a true and gallant knight to discover the name of his fair lady. Oh, I promise you she was a case! Why, you never heard anyone talk so ridiculously as she did! I asked her how old she was. Mother said that was very impolite, but it's the only uncivil thing I did or said, as the old lady would testify herself if she were here."

"How old is she?" said Gerty.

"Sixteen."

"Why, Willie, what do you mean?"

"That's what she told me," said Willie; "and a true and gallant knight must believe his fair lady."

"Poor body!" said True; "she's childish!"

"No, she isn't Uncle True," said Willie; "you'd think so part of the time, to hear her run on with her nonsense; and then, the next minute, she'd speak as sensible as anybody, and say how much obliged she was to me for being willing to put myself to so much trouble for the sake of an old woman like her. Just as we turned into Beacon Street we met a school of girls, blooming beauties, handsome enough to kill, my old lady called them; and when they came in sight, she seemed to take it for granted I should get away from her, and run after some of them. But she held on with a vengeance! It's lucky I had no idea of forsaking her, for it would have been impossible! Some of them stopped and stared at us—of course I didn't care how much they stared; but she seemed to think I should be terribly mortified; and when we had passed them all, she complimented me again and again on my spirit of conformity, her favourite expression."

Here Willie was out of breath. True clapped him upon the shoulder. "Good boy, Willie?" said he, "clever boy! You always look out for the old folks, and that's right. Respect for the aged is a good thing; though your grandfather says it's very much out of fashion."

"I don't know much about fashion, Uncle True; but I should think it was a pretty mean sort of a boy that would see an old lady get one fall on the ice, and not save her from another by seeing her safe home."

"Willie's always kind to everybody," said Gerty.

"Willie's either a hero," said the boy, "or else he has got two pretty good friends—I rather think it's the latter. But, come, Gerty, Charles the Twelfth is waiting for us, and we must study as much as we can to-night. We may not have another chance

very soon, for Mr. Bray isn't well this evening; he seems threatened with a fever, and I promised to go back to the shop after dinner to-morrow. If he should be sick, I shall have plenty to do without coming home at all."

"Oh, I hope Mr. Bray is not going to have a fever," said True and Gerty, in the same breath.

"He's such a clever man!" said True.

"He's so good to you, Willie!" added Gerty.

Willie hoped not, too; but his hopes gave way to his fears, when he found on the following day that his kind master was not able to leave his bed, and the doctor pronounced his symptoms alarming. A typhoid fever set in, which in a few days terminated the life of the excellent apothecary.

The death of Mr. Bray was a dreadful blow to Willie. The shop was closed, the widow having decided to dispose of the stock, and remove into the country. Willie was thus left without employment, and deprived of Mr. Bray's valuable assistance. His earnings had promoted the comfort of his mother and grandfather, who had thus been enabled to relax their own labours. The thought of being a burden to them was intolerable to the independent spirit of the boy; and he tried to obtain another place. He applied to the different apothecaries in the city, but none of them wanted a youth of his age. He returned home at night, disappointed, but not discouraged. If he could not obtain employment with an apothecary, he would do something else. But what should he do? That was the question. He had long talks with his mother about it. She felt that his talents and education entitled him to fill a position equal to that he had already occupied; and could not endure the thought of his descending to more menial service. Willie, without pride, thought so too. He knew he could give satisfaction in a station which required more business talent than his situation at Mr. Bray's had ever given scope to. So he had made every possible inquiry, but he had no one to speak a good word for him, and so he met with no success, and day after

day returned home silent and depressed.

CHAPTER XIII.

BRIGHTENING PROSPECTS.

This was altogether a new experience to Willie, and a very trying one. But he bore it bravely; kept all his worst struggles from his anxious mother and desponding grandfather, and resolved to hope against hope. Gerty was now his chief comforter. He told her all his troubles, and, young as she was, she was a wonderful consoler. Always looking on the bright side, she did much towards keeping up his hopes and strengthening his resolutions. She knew more than most children of the various ways, in which she sometimes made valuable suggestions to Willie, of which he gladly availed himself. Among others, she one day asked him if he had applied at the agency offices. He had never thought of it—wondered he had not, but would try. He did so, and for a time was buoyed up with hopes held out to him; but they proved fleeting, and he was now almost in despair, when his eye fell upon an advertisement in a newspaper, which seemed to afford another chance. He showed it to Gerty. It was just the thing.

Gerty was so sanguine, that Willie presented himself the next day at the place specified with a more eager countenance than he had ever yet worn. The gentleman talked with him some time; asked a great many questions, hinted his doubts about his capability, and finally declared he was not eligible. He returned with such a heavy heart that he could not meet his mother, and so he went to True's room. It was the night before Christmas. True had gone out, and Gerty was alone. She was preparing a cake for tea—one of the few branches of the cooking department in which she had acquired some skill. She was just coming from the pantry, with a scoop-full of meal in her hand, when Willie entered. He tossed his cap upon the settle, and leaned his head upon his hands, and this betrayed the defeat the poor boy

had met with. It was so unlike Willie to come in without speaking—it was such a strange thing to see his bright young head bowed down with care, and his elastic figure looking tired and old, that Gerty knew at once his brave heart had given way. She laid down the scoop, and walking up to him, touched his arm with her hand, and looked up anxiously into his face. Her sympathetic look was more than he could bear. He laid his head on the table, and in a minute more Gerty heard great heavy sobs, each one of which sank deep into her soul. She often cried herself—it seemed only natural; but Willie—the laughing, happy, light-hearted Willie—she had never seen him cry; she didn't know he could. She crept up on the rounds of his chair, and putting her arm round his neck, whispered, "I shouldn't mind, Willie, if I didn't get the place; I don't believe it's a good place."

"I don't believe it is, either," said Willie, lifting up his head; "but what shall I do? I can't get any place, and I can't stay here doing nothing."

"We like to have you at home," said Gerty.

"It's pleasant enough to be at home. I was always glad enough to come when I lived at Mr. Bray's and was earning something, and could feel as if anybody was glad to see me."

"Everybody is glad to see you now."

"But not as they were then," said Willie; "mother always looks as if she expected to hear I'd got something to do; and grandfather, I believe, never thought I should be good for much; and now, as I was beginning to earn something, and be a help to them, I've lost my chance!"

"But that an't your fault, Willie; you couldn't help Mr. Bray's dying. I shouldn't think Mr. Cooper would blame you for not having anything to do now."

"He don't blame me; but if you were in my place you'd feel just as I do, to see him sit in his arm-chair in the evening, and groan and look up at me, as much as to say, 'It's you I'm groaning about.'"

"Have heart," said Gerty; "I think you'll be rich, some time—and then won't he be astonished!"

"Oh, Gerty! you're a nice child, and I think I can do anything. If ever I am rich, I promise to go shares with you; but 'tan't so easy. I used to think I could make money when I grew up; but it's pretty slow business."

Here he was on the point of leaning down upon the table again, and giving himself up to melancholy; but Gerty caught hold of his hands. "Come," said she, "Willie, don't think any more about it. People have troubles always, but they get over 'em; perhaps next week you'll be in a better shop than Mr. Bray's, and we shall be as happy as ever. Do you know," said she, changing the subject, "it's just two years to-night since I came here?"

"Is it?" said Willie. "Did Uncle True bring you home with him the night before Christmas?"

"Yes."

"Why, that was Santa Claus carrying you to good things, instead of bringing good things to you, wasn't it?"

Gerty did not know anything about Santa Claus, that special friend of children; and Willie, who had only lately read about him in some book, undertook to tell her what he knew of the veteran toy-dealer. Finding the interest of the subject had engaged his thoughts, Gerty returned to her cooking, listening attentively to his story. When he had finished, she was kneeling by the stove; her eyes twinkled with such a merry look, that Willie exclaimed, "What are you thinking of, Gerty, that makes you look so sly?"

"I was thinking that perhaps Santa Clans would come for you to-night. If he comes for folks that need something, I expect he'll come for you, and carry you to some place where you'll have a chance to grow rich."

"Very likely," said Willie; "he'll clap me into his bag and trudge off with me as a

present to somebody—some old Cr[oe]sus, that will give me a fortune for the asking. I do hope he will; for, if I don't get something to do soon, I shall despair."

True now came in, and interrupted the conversation by the display of a fine turkey, a Christmas present from Mr. Graham. He had also a book for Gerty, a gift from Emily.

"Isn't that queer," exclaimed Gerty. "Willie was just saying you were my Santa Clans, Uncle True; and I do believe you are." As she spoke she opened the book, and in the frontispiece was a portrait of that individual. "It looks like him, Willie, I declare it does!" shouted she; "a fur cap, a pipe, and just such a pleasant face; oh, Uncle True, if you only had a sack full of toys over your shoulder, instead of your lantern and that great turkey, you would be a complete Santa Claus. Haven't you got anything for Willie, Uncle True?"

"Yes, I've got a little something; but I'm afeared he won't think much on't. It's only a bit of a note."

"A note for me?" inquired Willie. "Who can it be from?"

"Can't say," said True, fumbling in his pockets; "only just round the corner I met a man who stopped me to inquire where Mrs. Sullivan lived. I told him she lived jist here, and I'd show him the house. When he saw I lived here too, he gave me this little scrap o' paper, and asked me to hand it to Master William Sullivan. I s'pose that's you, an't it?" He handed Willie the slip of paper; and the boy, taking True's lantern in his hand, and holding the note up to the light, read aloud:—"R. H. Clinton would like to see William Sullivan on Thursday morning, between ten and eleven o'clock, at No. 13 —— Wharf."

Willie looked up in amazement. "What does it mean?"? said he; "I don't know any such person."

"I know who he is," said True; "why, it's he that lives in the great stone house in —— street. He's a rich man, and that's the number of his store—his counting-room

rather—on —— Wharf!"

"What! father to those pretty children we used to see in the window?"

"The very same."

"What can he want of me?"

"Very likely he wants your sarvices," suggested True.

"Then it's a place!" cried Gerty, "a real good one, and Santa Claus came and brought it: I said he would! Oh, Willie, I'm so glad!"

Willie did not know whether to be glad or not. He could not but hope, as Gerty and True did, that it might prove the dawning of some good fortune; but he had reasons for believing that no offer from this quarter could be available to him, and therefore made them both promise to give no hint of the matter to his mother or Mr. Cooper.

On Thursday Willie presented himself at the appointed time and place. Mr. Clinton, a gentlemanly man, received him kindly, asked but few questions, and telling him that he was in want of a young man to fill the place of junior clerk in his counting-room, offered him the situation. Willie hesitated; for, though the offer was most encouraging, Mr. Clinton made no mention of any salary; and that was a thing the youth could not dispense with. Seeing that he was undecided, Mr. Clinton said, "Perhaps you do not like my proposal, or have made some other engagement?"

"No, indeed," answered Willie, quickly. "You are very kind to feel so much confidence in a stranger as to be willing to receive me, and your offer is a most welcome one; but I have been in a retail store, where I obtained regular earnings, which were very important to my mother and grandfather. I had far rather be in a counting-room like yours, sir, and I think I might learn to be of use; but I think there are numbers of boys, sons of rich men, who would be glad to be employed by you, and would ask no compensation for their services, so that I could not expect any salary, at least for some years. I should indeed, be well repaid, at the end of that time, by the knowledge I might gain of mercantile affairs; but, unfortunately, sir, I

can no more afford it than I could afford to go to college."

The gentleman smiled. "How did you know so much of these matters, my young friend?"

"I have heard, sir, from boys who were at school with me, and are now clerks in mercantile houses, that they received no pay, and I always considered it a perfectly fair arrangement; but it was the reason why I felt bound to content myself with the position I held in an apothecary's shop, which, though it was not suited to my taste, enabled me to support myself, and to relieve my mother, who is a widow, and my grandfather, who is old and poor."

"Your grandfather is——"

"Mr. Cooper, sexton of Mr. Arnold's church."

"Aha!" said Mr. Clinton, "I know him. What you say, William, is true. We do not pay any salary to our young clerks, and are overrun with applications at that rate; but I have heard good accounts of you, my boy (I shan't tell you where I had my information, though I see you look very curious), and, moreover, I like your countenance, and believe you will serve me faithfully. So, if you will tell me what you received from Mr. Bray, I will pay you the same next year, and after that increase your salary, if I find you deserve it; and you may commence with me on the first of January."

Willie thanked Mr. Clinton and departed. The merchant was reminded of the time when he too, the only son of his mother, and she a widow, had come alone to the city, sought long for employment, and finding it at last, had sat down to write and tell her how he hoped soon to earn enough for himself and her. And the spirits of those mothers who have wept, prayed, and thanked God over similar communications from much-loved sons, may know how to sympathise with good Mrs. Sullivan, when she heard from Willie the joyful tidings. True exclaimed, "Ah! Master Willie, they needn't have worried about yon, need they? I've told your

grandfather more than once, that I was of the 'pinion 'twould all come out right at last."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE MINISTERING ANGEL.

"I wonder," said Miss Peekout, as she leaned on the sill of the front window, and looked up and down the street—"I wonder who that slender girl is that walks by here every morning, with that feeble-looking old man leaning on her arm? I always see them at just about this time, when the weather permits. She's a nice child, and seems to be very fond of the old man—probably her grandfather. I notice she's careful to leave the best side of the walk for him, and she watches every step he takes; she needs to do so, for he totters sadly. Poor little thing! she looks pale and anxious; I wonder if she takes all the care of the old man!" But they are now quite out of sight.

"I wonder," said old Mrs. Grumble, as she sat at her window, a little further down the street, "if I should live to be old and infirm—(Mrs. Grumble was over seventy, but as yet suffered from no infirmity but that of a very irritable temper)—I wonder if anybody would wait upon me, and take care of me as that little girl does of her grandfather! No, I'll warrant not! Who can she be?"

"There, look, Belle!" said one young girl to another, on their way to school; "there's the girl that we meet every day with the old man. How can you say you don't think she's pretty? I admire her looks!"

"You always do manage, Kitty, to admire people that everybody else thinks are horrid-looking."

"Horrid-looking!" replied Kitty; "she's anything but horrid-looking! Do notice, now, Belle, when we meet them, she has the sweetest way of looking up in the old man's face, and talking to him. I wonder what is the matter with him! Do see how his arm

shakes—the one that's passed through hers!"

The two couples are now close to each other, and they pass in silence.

"Don't you think that she has an interesting face?" said Kitty, eagerly, as soon as they were out of hearing.

"She's got handsome eyes," answered Belle. "I don't see anything else that looks interesting about her. I wonder if she don't hate to walk in the street with that old grandfather; trudging along so slow, with the sun shining in her face, and he leaning on her arm, and shaking so that he can hardly keep on his feet! Catch me doing it."

"Why, Belle!" exclaimed Kitty, "how can you talk so? I'm sure I pity that old man dreadfully."

"Lor!" said Belle, "what's the use of pitying? If you are going to begin to pity, you'll have to do it all the time. Look,"—Belle touched her companion's elbow—"there's Willie Sullivan, father's clerk: an't he a beauty? I want to speak to him."

But before she could address a word to him, Willie, who was walking very fast, passed her with a bow, and a pleasant "Good morning, Miss Isabel;" and ere she had recovered from the surprise and disappointment, was some rods down the street.

"Polite!" muttered the pretty Isabel.

"Why, Belle! do see," said Kitty, who was looking back over her shoulder, "he's overtaken the old man and my interesting little girl. Look—look! He's put the old man's other arm through his, and they are all three walking off together. Isn't that quite a coincidence?"

"Nothing very remarkable," replied Belle, who seemed a little annoyed. "I suppose they are persons he's acquainted with. Come, make haste; we shall be late at school."

Reader! Do you wonder who they are, the girl and the old man? or have you already conjectured that they are Gerty and Trueman Flint? True is no longer the brave, strong, sturdy protector of the lonely child. True has had a paralytic stroke. His

strength is gone, his power even to walk alone. He sits all day in his arm-chair, or on the old settle, when he is not out walking with Gerty. The blow suddenly struck down the robust man, and left him feeble as a child. And the little orphan girl who, in her weakness, her loneliness, and her poverty, found in him a father and a mother, she now is all the world to him—his staff, his comfort, and his hope. During four or five years that he has cherished the frail blossom, she has been gaining strength for the time when he should be the leaning, she the sustaining power; and when the time came, she was ready to respond to the call. With the simplicity of a child, but a woman's firmness; with the stature of a child, but a woman's capacity; the earnestness of a child, but a woman's perseverance—from morning till night, the faithful little nurse and housekeeper labours untiringly in the service of her first, her best friend. Ever at his side, ever attending to his wants, and yet most wonderfully accomplishing many things which he never sees her do, she seems, indeed, to the fond old man, what he once prophesied she would become—God's embodied blessing to his latter years, cheering his pathway to the grave.

Though disease had robbed True's limbs of their power, the blast had spared his mind, which was clear and tranquil as ever; while his pious heart was fixed in humble trust on that God whose presence and love he had ever acknowledged, and on whom he so fully relied, that even in this bitter trial he was able to say, in perfect submission, "Thy will, not mine, be done!"

Only about two months previous to the morning of which we have been speaking had True been stricken down. He had been in failing health, but had still been able to attend to his duties until one day in June, when Gerty went into his room, and found, to her surprise, that he had not risen, although it was much later than his usual hour. On going to the bedside and speaking to him, she saw that he looked strangely, and had lost the power of speech. Bewildered and frightened, she ran to call Mrs. Sullivan. A physician was summoned, the case pronounced one of paralysis, and for a time it was feared that it would prove fatal. He soon, however, began to amend,

recovered his speech, and in a week or two was well enough to walk about with Gerty's assistance.

The doctor had recommended as much gentle exercise as possible, and every pleasant morning, before the day grew warm, Gerty presented herself equipped for those walks, which excited so much observation. At the same time she made such little household purchases as were necessary, that she might not go out again and leave True alone.

On the occasion alluded to, Willie accompanied them as far as the provision shop; and, having seen True comfortably seated, proceeded to the Wharf, while Gerty stepped up to the counter to bargain for the dinner. She purchased a bit of veal suitable for broth, gazed wistfully at some tempting summer vegetables, turned away and sighed. She held in her hand the wallet which contained all their money; it had now been in her keeping for some weeks, and was growing light; it was no use to think about the vegetables; and she sighed, for she remembered how True enjoyed the green peas last year. "How much is the meat?" asked she of the butcher, who named the sum. It was so little that it almost seemed to Gerty as if he had seen into her purse, and her thoughts too, and knew how glad she would be that it did not cost any more. As he handed her the change, he leaned over the counter, and asked, in an undertone, what kind of nourishment Mr. Flint was able to take.

"The doctor said any wholesome food."

"Don't you think he'd relish some green peas? I've got some first-rate ones, fresh from the country; and, if you'd think he'd eat 'em, I should like to send you some. My boy shall take round half-a-peck or so, and I'll put the meat right in the same basket."

"Thank you," said Gerty; "he likes green peas."

"Very well! Then I'll send him some beauties;" and he turned away to wait upon another customer, so quick that Gerty thought he did not see how the colour came

into her face and the tears into her eyes. But he did see, and that was the reason he turned away so quickly.

True had an excellent appetite, enjoyed and praised the dinner exceedingly, and, after eating heartily of it, fell asleep in his chair. The moment he awoke, Gerty sprung to his side, exclaiming, "Uncle True, here's Miss Emily!—here's dear Miss Emily come to visit you."

"The Lord bless you, my dear, dear young lady!" said True, trying to rise from his chair and go towards her.

"Don't rise, Mr. Flint; I beg you will not," said Emily, whose quick ear perceived the motion. "From what Gerty tells me, I fear you are not able. Please give me a chair, Gerty, nearer to Mr. Flint."

She drew near, took True's hand, but looked inexpressibly shocked as she observed how tremulous it had become.

"Ah, Miss Emily," said he, "I'm not the same man as when I saw you last; the Lord has given me a warning, and I shan't be here long."

"I am so sorry I did not know of this!" said Emily. "I should have come to see you before, but I never heard of your illness until to-day. George, my father's man, saw you and Gertrude at a shop this morning, and he told me. Gertrude should have sent me word."

Gerty was standing by True's chair, smoothing his grey locks with her slender fingers. As Emily mentioned her name, he turned and looked at her. O what a look of love he gave her! Gerty never forgot it.

"Miss Emily," said he, "'twas no need for anybody to be troubled. The Lord provided for me His own self. All the doctors and nurses in the land couldn't have done half so much for me as this little gal o' mine. It wa'nt at all in my mind, some four or five years gone—when I brought the little barefoot mite of a thing to my home, and when she was sick and e'en a'most dyin' in this very room, and I carried

her in my arms night and day—that her turn would come so soon. Ah! I little thought then, Miss Emily, how the Lord would lay me low—how those same feet would run about in my service, how her bit of a hand would come in the dark nights to smooth my pillow, and I'd go about daytimes leaning on her little arm. Truly God's ways are not like our ways, nor his thoughts like our thoughts."

"Oh, Uncle True!" said Gerty, "I don't do much for you, I wish I could do a great deal more. I wish I could make you strong again."

"I dare say you do, my darlin', but that can't be in this world; you've given me what's far better than strength o' body. Yes, Miss Emily," added he, "it's you we have to thank for all the comfort we enjoy. I loved my little birdie; but I was a foolish man, and I should ha' spiled her. You knew better what was for her good, and mine too. You made her what she is now, one of the lambs of Christ, a handmaiden of the Lord. If anybody'd told me, six months ago, that I should become a poor cripple, and sit in my chair all day, and not know who was going to furnish a living for me or birdie either, I should ha' said I never could bear my lot with patience, or keep up any heart at all. But I've learned a lesson from this little one. When I first got so I could speak, after the shock, and tell what was in my mind, I was so troubled a' thinkin' of my sad case, and Gerty with nobody to work or do anything for her, that I said, 'What shall we do now?—what shall we do now?' And then she whispered in my ear, 'God will take care of us, Uncle True!' And when I forgot the sayin', and asked, 'Who will feed and clothe us now!' she said again, 'The Lord will provide.' And, in my deepest distress, when one night I was full of anxiety about my child, I said aloud, 'If I die, who will take care of Gerty?' the little thing that I supposed was sound asleep in her bed, laid her head down beside me, and said, 'Uncle True, when I was turned out into the dark street all alone, and had no friends nor any home, my heavenly Father sent you to me; and now, if He wants you to come to Him, and is not ready to take me too, He will send somebody else to take care of me the rest of my life.' After that, Miss Emily, I gave up worryin' any more. Her words, and the

blessed teachin's of the Holy Book that she reads every day, have sunk deep into my heart, and I'm at peace.

"I used to think that, if I lived and had my strength spared me, Gerty would be able to go to school and get a sight o' larnin', for she has a nateral liking for it, and it comes easy to her. She's but a slender child, and I never could bear the thought of her bein' driv to hard work for a livin'; she don't seem made for it, somehow. I hoped, when she grew up, to see her a school-mistress, like Miss Browne, or somethin' in that line; but I've done bein' vexed about it now. I know, as she says, it's all for the best, or it wouldn't be."

Gerty, whose face had been hid against his shoulder, looked up, and said bravely, "Oh, Uncle True, I'm sure I can do almost any kind of work. Mrs. Sullivan says I sew very well, and I can learn to be a milliner or a dressmaker; that isn't hard work."

"Mr. Flint," said Emily, "would you be willing to trust your child with me? If you should die, would you feel as if she were safe in my charge?"

"Miss Emily," said True, "would I think her safe in angel-keepin'? I should believe her in little short o' that, if she could have you to watch over her."

"Oh, do not say that," said Miss Emily, "or I shall fear to undertake so solemn a trust. I know that my want of sight, my ill-health, and my inexperience, almost unfit me for the care of a child like Gerty. But, since you approve of the teaching I have already given her, and are so kind as to think a great deal better of me than I deserve, I know you will at least believe in the sincerity of my wish to be of use to her; and if it will be any comfort to you to know that in case of your death I will gladly take Gerty to my home, see that she is well educated, and, as long as I live, provide for and take care of her, you have my solemn assurance (and here she laid her hand on his) that it shall be done, and that to the best of my ability I will try to make her happy."

Gerty's first impulse was to rush towards Emily, and fling her arms around her neck;

but she was arrested in the act, for she observed that True was weeping like an infant. In an instant his feeble head was resting upon her bosom; her hand was wiping away the great tears that had rushed to his eyes. It was an easy task, for they were tears of joy—of a joy that had quite unnerved him in his present state of prostration and weakness.

The proposal was so utterly foreign to his thoughts or expectations, that it seemed to him a hope too bright to be relied upon; and, after a moment's pause, an idea occurring to him which seemed to increase his doubts, he gave utterance to it in the words—"But your father, Miss Emily!—Mr. Graham!—he's partickler, and not over-young now. I'm afeard he wouldn't like a little gal in the house."

"My father if indulgent to me," replied Emily; "he would not object to any plan I had at heart, and I have become so much attached to Gertrude that she would be of great use and comfort to me. I trust, Mr. Flint, that you will recover a portion, at least, of your health and strength, and be spared to her for many a year yet; but, in order that you may in no case feel any anxiety on her account, I take this opportunity to tell you that, if I should outlive you, she will be sure of a home with me."

"Ah, Miss Emily!" said the old man, "my time's about out, I feel right sure o' that; and, since you're willin', you'll soon be called to take charge on her. I haven't forgot how tossed I was in my mind the day after I brought her home with me, with thinkin' that p'raps I wasn't fit to undertake the care of such a little thing, and hadn't ways to make her comfortable; and then, Miss Emily, do you remember you said to me, 'You've done quite right; the Lord will bless and reward you?' I've thought many a time since that you was a true prophet, and that your words were, what I thought 'em then, a whisper right from heaven! And now you talk o' doing the same thing yourself; and I, that am just goin' home to God, and feel as if I read his ways clearer than ever afore, I tell you, Miss Emily, that you're doin' right, too; and, if the Lord rewards you as he has done me, there'll come a time when this child will pay you

back in love and care all you ever do for her.—Gerty?"

"She's not here," said Emily; "I heard her run into her own room."

"Poor birdie!" said True, "she doesn't like to hear o' my leavin' her; I'm sad to think how some day soon she'll almost sob her heart away over her old uncle. Never mind now! I was goin' to bid her be a good child to you; but I think she will, without biddin'; and I can say my say to her another time. Good-bye, my dear young lady;"—for Emily had risen to go, and George, the man-servant, was waiting at the door for her—"if I never see you again, remember that you made an old man so happy that he's nothing in this world left to wish for; and that you carry with you a dyin' man's best blessin', and his prayer that God may grant such perfect peace to your last days as now He does to mine."

That evening, when True had already retired to rest, and Gerty had finished reading aloud in her little Bible, as she always did at bed-time, True called her to him, and asked her, as he had often done of late, to repeat his favourite prayer for the sick. She knelt at his bedside, and with a solemn and touching earnestness fulfilled his request.

"Now, darlin', the prayer for the dyin';—isn't there such a one in your little book?"

Gerty trembled. There was such a prayer, a beautiful one; and the thoughtful child, to whom the idea of death was familiar, knew it by heart—but could she repeat the words? Could she command her voice? Her whole frame shook with agitation; but Uncle True wished to hear it, it would be a comfort to him, and she would try. Concentrating all her energy and self-command, she began; and, gaining strength as she proceeded, went on to the end. Once or twice her voice faltered, but with new effort she succeeded, in spite of the great bunches in her throat; and her voice sounded so clear and calm, that Uncle True's devotional spirit was not once disturbed by the thought of the girl's sufferings; for, fortunately, he could not hear how her heart beat and throbbed, and threatened to burst.

She did not rise at the conclusion of the prayer—she could not—but remained kneeling, her head buried in the bedclothes. For a few moments there was a solemn stillness in the room; then the old man laid his hand upon her head.

She looked up.

"You love Miss Emily, don't you, birdie?"

"Yes, indeed."

"You'll be a good child to her when I'm gone?"

"O, Uncle True!" sobbed Gerty, "you mustn't leave me! I can't live without you, dear Uncle True!"

"It is God's will to take me, Gerty; He has always been good to us, and we mustn't doubt Him now. Miss Emily can do more for you than I could, and you'll be very happy with her."

"No, I shan't—I shan't ever be happy again in this world! I never was happy until I came to you; and now, if you die, I wish I could die too!"

"You mustn't wish that, darlin'; you are young, and must try to do good in the world, and bide your time. I'm an old man, and only a trouble now."

"No, no, Uncle True!" said Gerty, earnestly; "you are not a trouble—you never could be a trouble! I wish I'd never been so much trouble to you."

"So far from that, birdie, God knows you've long been my heart's delight! It only pains me now to think that you're a spendin' all your time, and slavin' here at home, instead of goin' to school, as you used to; but, O! we all depend on each other so!—first on God, and then on each other! And that 'minds me, Gerty, of what I was goin' to say. I feel as if the Lord would call me soon, sooner than you think for now; and, at first, you'll cry, and be sore vexed, no doubt; but Miss Emily will take you with her, and she'll tell you blessed things to comfort you;—how we shall all meet again and be happy in that world where there's no partin's; and Willie'll do

everything he can to help you in your sorrer; and in time you'll be able to smile again. At first, and p'raps for a long time, Gerty, you'll be a care to Miss Emily, and she'll have to do a deal for you in the way o' schoolin', clothin', and so on; and what I want to tell you is, that Uncle True expects you'll be as good as can be, and do just what Miss Emily says; and, by-and-by, may be, when you're bigger and older, you'll be able to do somethin' for her. She's blind, you know, and you must be eyes for her; and she's not over strong, and you must lend a helpin' hand to her weakness, just as you do to mine; and, if you're good and patient, God will make your heart light at last, while you're only tryin' to make other folks happy; and when you're sad troubled (for everybody is sometimes), then think of old Uncle True, and how he used to say, 'Cheer up, birdie, for I'm of the 'pinion 'twill all come out right at last.' There, don't feel bad about it; go to bed, darlin', and to-morrow we'll have a nice walk—and Willie's goin' with us, you know."

Gerty tried to cheer up, for True's sake, and went to bed. She did not sleep for some hours; but when, at last, she did fall into a quiet slumber, it continued unbroken until morning.

She dreamed that morning was already come; that she and Uncle True and Willie were taking a pleasant walk; that Uncle True was strong and well again—his eye bright, his step firm, and Willie and herself laughing and happy.

And, while she dreamed the beautiful dream, little thinking that her first friend and she should no longer tread life's paths together, the messenger came—a gentle, noiseless messenger—and, in the still night, while the world was asleep, took the soul of good old True, and carried it home to God!

CHAPTER XV.

A NEW HOME.

Two months have passed since Trueman Flint's death, and Gertrude has for a week been domesticated in Mr. Graham's family. It was through the newspaper that Emily first heard of the little girl's sudden loss, and, acquainting her father with her plans concerning the child, she found no opposition to fear from him. He reminded her, however, of the inconvenience that would attend Gertrude's coming to them at once, as they were soon to start on a visit to some distant relatives, and would not return until near the time to remove to the city for the winter. Emily felt the force of this objection; for, although Mrs. Ellis would be at home during their absence, she knew that she would be a very unfit person to console Gertrude in her time of sorrow.

This thought troubled Emily; and she regretted much that this unusual journey should take place so inopportunely. But there was no help for it; for Mr. Graham's plans were arranged, unless she would make Gertrude's coming, at the very outset, disagreeable. She started for town, therefore, the next morning, quite undecided what course to pursue.

The day was Sunday, but Emily's errand was one of charity and love, and would not admit of delay; and an hour before the time for morning service Mrs. Sullivan saw Mr. Graham's carriage stop at the door. She ran to meet Emily, and guided her into her neat parlour to a comfortable seat, placed in her hand a fan (for the weather was very warm), and then told her how thankful she was to see her, and how sorry she felt that Gertrude was not at home. Emily wonderingly asked where Gertrude was, and learned that she was out walking with Willie. A succession of inquiries followed, and a touching story was told by Mrs. Sullivan of Gertrude's agony of grief, and the fears she had entertained lest the girl would die of sorrow.

"I couldn't do anything with her myself," said she. "There she sat, day after day, last week, on her little stool, by Uncle True's easy-chair, with her head on the cushion, and I couldn't get her to move or eat a thing. She didn't appear to hear me when I spoke to her; and if I tried to move her, she didn't struggle, but she seemed just like a

dead weight in my hands: and I couldn't bear to make her come away into my room, though I knew it would change the scene, and be better for her. If it hadn't been for Willie, I don't know what I should have done, I was getting so worried about the poor child; but he knows how to manage her better than I do. When he is at home we get along very well, for he takes her right up in his arms (he's very strong, and she's as light as a feather), and either carries her into some other room, or out in the yard; and he contrives to cheer her wonderfully. He persuades her to eat, and in the evenings, when he comes home from the store, takes long walks with her. Last evening they went over Chelsea Bridge, where it was cool and pleasant; and I suppose he diverted her attention and amused her, for she came home brighter than I've seen her, and quite tired. I got her to go to bed in my room, and she slept soundly all night, so that she really looks like herself to-day. They've gone out again this morning, and, being Sunday, and Willie at home all day, I've no doubt he'll keep her spirits up, if anybody can."

"Willie shows very good judgment," said Emily, "in trying to change the scene for her, and divert her thoughts. I'm thankful she has had such kind friends. I promised Mr. Flint she should have a home with me when he was taken away, and not knowing of his death until now, I consider it a great favour to myself, as well as her, that you have taken such excellent care of her. I felt sure you have been all goodness, or it would have given me great regret that I had not heard of True's death before."

"O, Miss Emily!" said Mrs. Sullivan, "Gertrude is so dear to us, and we have suffered so much in seeing her suffer, that it was a kindness to ourselves to do all we could to comfort her. Why, I think she and Willie could not love each other better if they were own brother and sister: and Willie and uncle True were great friends! indeed, we shall all miss him very much. My old father doesn't say much about it, but I can see he's very downhearted."

Mrs. Sullivan now informed Emily that a cousin of hers, a farmer's wife, living about twenty miles from Boston, had invited them all to pass a week or two with her at the farm; and, as Willie was now to enjoy his usual summer vacation, they proposed accepting the invitation. She spoke of Gertrude's accompanying them, and enlarged upon the advantage it would be to her to breathe the country air, and ramble about the fields and woods, after all the fatigue and confinement she had endured.

Emily, finding that Gertrude would be a welcome guest, cordially approved of the visit, and also arranged with Mrs. Sullivan that she should remain under her care until Mr. Graham removed to Boston for the winter. She was then obliged to leave, without waiting for Gertrude's return, though she left many a kind message for her, and placed in Mrs. Sullivan's hands a sufficient sum of money to provide for all her wants.

Gertrude went into the country, and abundance of novelty, country fare, healthful exercise, and kindness and sympathy, brought the colour into her cheek, and calmness and happiness into her heart. Soon after the Sullivan's return from their excursion, the Grahams removed to the city, and Gertrude had now been with them about a week. "Are you still standing at the window, Gertrude. What are you doing, dear?"

"I'm watching to see the lamps lit, Miss Emily."

"But they will not be lit at all. The moon will rise at eight o'clock, and light the streets sufficiently for the rest of the night."

"I don't mean the street-lamps."

"What do you mean, my child?" said Emily, coming towards the window, and lightly resting a hand on Gertrude's shoulders.

"I mean the stars, dear Miss Emily. Oh, how I wish you could see them, too!"

"Are they very bright?"

"O, they are beautiful! and there are so many! The sky is as full as it can be."

"How well I remember when I used to stand at this very window, and look at them as you are doing now! It seems to me as if I saw them this moment, I know so well how they look."

"I love the stars—all of them," said Gertrude; "but my own star I love the best."

"Which do you call yours?"

"That splendid one over the church-steeple; it shines into my room every night, and looks me in the face. Miss Emily (and she spoke in a whisper), it seems to me as if that star were lit on purpose for me. I think Uncle True lights it every night. I always feel as if he were smiling up there, and saying, 'See, Gerty, I'm lighting the lamp for you.' Dear Uncle True! Miss Emily, do you think he loves me now?"

"I do, indeed, Gertrude; and I think, if you make him an example, and try to live as good and patient a life as he did, that he will really be a lamp to your feet, and as bright a light to your path as if his face were shining down upon you through the star."

"I was patient and good when I lived with him; at least, I almost always was; and I'm good when I'm with you; but I don't like Mrs. Ellis. She tries to plague me, and she makes me angry, and I don't know what I do or say. I did not mean to be impertinent to her to-day, and I wish I hadn't slammed the door; but how could I help it, Miss Emily, when she told me before Mr. Graham, that I tore up the last night's Journal, and I know that I did not. It was an old paper that she saw me tying your slippers up in, and I am almost sure that she lit the library fire with the Journal herself; but Mr. Graham will always think I did it."

"I have no doubt, Gertrude, that you had reason to feel provoked, and I believe you when you say that you were not to blame for the loss of the newspaper. But remember, my dear, that there is no merit in being patient and good-tempered, when there is nothing to irritate you. I want you to learn to bear even injustice, without

losing your self-control. Mrs. Ellis has been here a number of years; she has had everything her own way, and is not used to young people. She felt, when you came, that it was bringing new care and trouble upon her, and it is not strange that when things go wrong she should sometimes think you in fault. She is a very faithful woman, very kind and attentive to me, and very important to my father. It will make me unhappy if I have any reason to fear that you and she will not live pleasantly together."

"I do not want to make you unhappy; I do not want to be a trouble to anybody," said Gertrude, with some excitement; "I'll go away! I'll go off somewhere, where you will never see me again!"

"Gertrude!" said Emily, seriously and sadly. Her hands were still upon the young girl's shoulders, and, as she spoke, she turned her round, and brought her face to face with herself. "Gertrude, do you wish to leave your blind friend? Do you not love me?" So touchingly grieved was the expression of the countenance that met her gaze, that Gertrude's proud spirit was subdued. She threw her arms round Emily's neck, and exclaimed, "No! dear Miss Emily, I would not leave you for all the world! I will do just as you wish. I will never be angry with Mrs. Ellis again for your sake."

"Not for my sake, Gertrude," replied Emily, "for your own sake; for the sake of duty and of God. A few years ago I should not have expected you to have been pleasant and amiable towards anyone whom you felt ill-treated you; but now that you know so well what is right; now that you are familiar with the life of that blessed Master who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; now that you have learned faithfully to fulfil so many important duties; I had hoped that you had learned also to be forbearing under the most trying circumstances. But do not think, Gertrude, because I remind you when you have done wrong I despair of your becoming one day all I wish to see you. What you are experiencing now being a new trial, you must bring new strength to bear upon it; and I have such confidence in you as to believe that,

knowing my wishes, you will try to behave properly to Mrs. Ellis on all occasions."

"I will, Miss Emily, I will. I'll not answer her back when she's ugly to me, if I have to bite my lips to keep them together."

"O, I do not believe it will be so bad as that," said Emily, smiling. "Mrs. Ellis's manner is rather rough, but you will get used to her."

Just then a voice was heard in the entry, "To see Miss Flint! Really! Well, Miss Flint is in Miss Emily's room. She's going to entertain company, is she?" Gertrude coloured, for it was Mrs. Ellis's voice, and her tone was very derisive. Emily stepped to the door, and opened it.—"Mrs.Ellis."

"What say, Emily?"

"Is there anyone below?"

"Yes; a young man wants to see Gertrude; it's that young Sullivan, I believe."

"Willie!" exclaimed Gertrude, starting forward.

"You can go down and see him, Gertrude," said Emily, "Come back here when he's gone; and, Mrs. Ellis, I wish you would step in and put my room a little in order. I think you will find plenty of pieces for your rag-bag about the carpet—Miss Randolph always scatters so many when she is engaged with her dressmaking."

Mrs. Ellis made her collection, and then, seating herself on a couch at the side of the fire-place, with her coloured rags in one hand and the white in the other, commenced speaking of Gertrude.

"What are you going to do with her, Emily?" said she; "send her to school?"

"Yes. She will go to Mr. W.'s this winter."

"Why! Isn't that a very expensive school for a child like her?"

"It is expensive, certainly; but I wish her to be with the best teacher I know of, and father makes no objection to the terms. He thinks as I do, that if we undertake to fit her to instruct others, she must be thoroughly taught herself. I talked with him about

it the first night after we came into town for the season, and he agreed with me that we had better put her out to learn a trade at once, than half-educate, make a fine lady of her, and so unfit her for anything. He was willing I should manage the matter as I pleased, and I resolved to send her to Mr. W.'s. So she will remain with us for the present. I wish to keep her with me as long as I can, not only because I am fond of the child, but she is delicate and sensitive; and now that she is so sad about old Mr. Flint's death, I think we ought to do all we can to make her happy; don't you, Mrs. Ellis?"

"I always calculate to do my duty," said Mrs. Ellis, rather stiffly. "Where is she going to sleep when we get settled?"

"In the little room at the end of the passage."

"Then, where shall I keep the linen press?"

"Can't it stand in the back entry? I should think the space between the windows would accommodate it."

"I suppose it must," said Mrs. Ellis, flouncing out of the room, and muttering to herself, "everything turned topsy-turvy for the sake of that little upstart!"

Mrs. Ellis was vexed. She had long had her own way in the management of all household matters at Mr. Graham's, and had become rather tyrannical. She was capable, methodical, and neat; accustomed to a small family, and now for many years quite unaccustomed to children; Gertrude was in her eyes an intruder—one who must of necessity be in mischief, continually deranging her most cherished plans.

She saw in the new inmate a formidable rival to herself in Miss Graham's affections; and Mrs. Ellis could not brook the idea of being second in the regard of Miss Emily, who, owing to her peculiar misfortune, and to her delicate health, had long been her special charge, and for whom she felt the greatest tenderness. Owing to these circumstances, Mrs. Ellis was not favourably disposed towards Gertrude; and

Gertrude was not yet prepared to love Mrs. Ellis very cordially.

CHAPTER XVI.

WHO ARE HAPPY?

Emily sat alone in her room. Mr. Graham had gone to a meeting of bank-directors. Mrs. Ellis was stoning raisins in the dining-room. Willie detained Gertrude in the little library, and Emily was indulging in a long train of meditation. Her head rested on her hand; her face, usually so placid, was sad; and her whole appearance denoted despondency. As thought pressed upon thought, and past sorrows arose in quick succession, her head gradually sank upon the cushions of the couch where she sat, and tears slowly trickled through her fingers. Suddenly a hand was laid softly upon hers. She gave a quick start, as she always did when surprised, for her unusual pre-occupation of mind had made Gertrude's approaching step unheard. "Is anything the matter, Miss Emily?" said Gertrude. "Do you like best to be alone, or may I stay?"

The sympathetic tone, the delicacy of the child's question, touched Emily. She drew her towards her, saying, as she did so, "O, yes, stay with me;" then observing, as she passed an arm round the little girl, that she trembled, and seemed violently agitated, she added, "But what is the matter with you, Gerty? What makes you tremble and sob so?"

At this, Gertrude broke forth with, "O, Miss Emily, I thought you were crying when I came in, and I hoped you would let me come and cry with you; for I'm so miserable I can't do anything else."

Calmed herself by the agitation of the child, Emily tried to discover the cause of this new affliction. Willie had been to tell her that he was going away, going out of the country; as Gertrude expressed it, to the other end of the world—to India. Mr.

Clinton was interested in a mercantile house in Calcutta, and had offered William the most favourable terms to go abroad as clerk to the establishment. The prospect was far better than he could hope for by remaining at home; the salary was sufficient to defray all his own expenses, and provide for the wants of those who were now becoming more dependent upon him. The chance, too, of future advancement was great; though the young man's affectionate heart clung fondly to home and friends, there was no hesitation in his mind as to the course which both duty and interest prompted. He agreed to the proposal, and whatever his own struggles were at the thought of five, or perhaps ten years' banishment, he kept them manfully to himself, and talked cheerfully about it to his mother and grandfather.

"Miss Emily," said Gertrude, when she had acquainted her with the news, "how can I bear to have Willie go away? How can I live without Willie? He is so kind, and loves me so much! He was always better than any brother, and, since Uncle True died, he has done everything in the world for me. I believe I could not have borne Uncle True's death if it had not been for Willie; and now how can I let him go away?"

"It is hard, Gertrude," said Emily, kindly, "but it is no doubt for his advantage; you must try and think of that."

"I know it," replied Gertrude—"I suppose it is; but, Miss Emily, you do not know how I love Willie. We were so much together; and there were only us two, and we thought everything of each other; he was so much older than I, and always took such good care of me. O, I don't think you have any idea what friends we are!"

Gertrude had unconsciously touched a chord that vibrated through Emily's whole frame. Her voice trembled as she answered, "I, Gertrude! not know, my child! I know better than you imagine, how dear he must be to you. I, too, had——" then she paused abruptly, and there were a few moments' silence, during which Emily got up, walked hastily to the window, pressed her aching head against the frosty glass, and

then returning, said, in a low voice which had recovered its usual calmness, "O Gertrude! in the grief that oppresses you now, you little realise how much you have to be thankful for. Think, my dear, what a blessing it is that Willie will be where you can often hear from him, and where he can have constant news of his friends."

"Yes," replied Gerty; "he says he shall write to me and his mother very often."

"Then, too," said Emily, "you ought to rejoice at the good opinion Mr. Clinton must have of Willie: the confidence he must feel in his uprightness, to place in him so much trust. I think that is very flattering."

"So it is," said Gerty; "I did not think of that."

"And you have lived so happily together," continued Emily, "and will part in such perfect peace. O Gertrude! Gertrude! such a parting as that should not make you sad; there are so much worse things in the world. Be patient, my dear child; do your duty, and perhaps there will some day be a happy meeting, that will repay you for all you suffer in the separation."

Emily's voice trembled as she uttered the last few words. Gertrude's eyes were fixed upon her friend with a puzzled expression. "Miss Emily," said she, "I begin to think that everything has trouble."

"Certainly, Gertrude; can you doubt it?"

"I did not use to think so. I knew I had, but I thought other folks were more fortunate. I fancied that rich people were all very happy; and, though you are blind, and that is a dreadful thing, I supposed you were used to it; and you always looked so pleasant and quiet, I took it for granted nothing ever vexed you now. And then, Willie!—I believed once that nothing could make him look sad, he was always so gay; but when he hadn't any place, I saw him really cry; and then, when Uncle True died, and now again to-night, when he was telling me about going away, he could hardly speak, he felt so badly. And so, Miss Emily, since I see that you and Willie have troubles, and that tears will come, though you try to keep them back, I think the

world is full of trials, and that every one gets a share."

"It is the lot of humanity, Gertrude, and we must not expect it to be otherwise."

"Then, who can be happy, Miss Emily?"

"Those, only, my child, who have learned submission; those who, in the severest afflictions, see the hand of a loving Father, and obedient to his will, kiss the chastening rod."

"It is very hard, Miss Emily."

"It is hard, my child, and therefore few in this world can rightly be called happy; but if, even in the midst of our distress, we can look to God in faith and love, we may, when the world is dark around, experience a peace that is a foretaste of heaven."

Willie's departure was sudden, and Mrs. Sullivan had only a week in which to make those arrangements which a mother's thoughtfulness deems necessary. Her hands were therefore full of work, and Gerty, whom Emily at once relinquished for the short time previous to the vessel's sailing, was of great assistance to her. Willie was very busy during the day, but was always with them in the evening.

On one occasion, he returned home about dusk, and his mother and grandfather both being out, and Gertrude having just put aside her sewing, he said to her, "Come, Gerty, if you are not afraid of taking cold, come and sit on the door-step with me, as we used to do in old times; there will be no more such warm days as this, and we may never have another chance to sit there, and watch the moon rise above the old house at the corner."

"O Willie!" said Gertrude, "do not speak of our never being together in the old place again! I cannot bear the thought; there is not a house in Boston I could ever love as I do this."

"Nor I," replied Willie; "but there is one chance in a hundred if I should be gone five years that there would not be a block of brick stores in this spot when I come to look

for it. I wish I did not think so, for I shall have many a longing after the old home."

"But what will become of your mother and grandfather if this house is torn down?"

"It is not easy to tell, Gerty, what will become of any of us by that time; but, if there is any necessity for their moving, I hope I shall be able to provide a better house than this for them."

"You won't be here, Willie."

"I know it, but I shall be always hearing from you, and we can talk about it by letters, and arrange everything. The idea of any such changes, after all," added he, "is what troubles me most in going away; I think they would miss me and need me so much. Gertrude, you will take care of them, won't you?"

"I!" said Gertrude, in amazement; "such a child as I!—what can I do?"

"If I am gone five or ten years, Gerty, you will not be a child all that time, and a woman is often a better dependence than a man, especially such a good brave woman as you will be. I have not forgotten the beautiful care you took of Uncle True; and, whenever I imagine grandfather or mother old and helpless, I always think of you, and hope you will be near them; for I know if you are, you will be a greater help than I could be. So I leave them in your care, Gerty, though you are only a child yet."

"Thank you, Willie," said Gertrude, "for believing I shall do everything I can for them. I certainly will, as long as I live. But, Willie, they may be strong and well all the time you are gone; and I, although I am so young, may be sick and die—nobody knows."

"That is true enough," said Willie, sadly; "and I may die myself; but it will not do to think of that. It seems to me I never should have courage to go, if I didn't hope to find you all well and happy when I come home. You must write to me every month, for it will be a much greater task to mother, and I am sure she will want you to do nearly all the writing; and, whether my letters come directed to her or you, it will be

all the same, you know. And, Gerty, you must not forget me, darling; you must love me just as much when I am gone—won't you?"

"Forget you, Willie! I shall be always thinking of you, and loving you the same as ever. What else shall I have to do? But you will be off in a strange country, where everything will be different, and you will not think half as much of me, I know."

"If you believe that, Gertrude, it is because you do not know. You will have friends all around you and I shall be alone in a foreign land; but every day of my life my heart will be with you and my mother."

They were now interrupted by Mr. Cooper's return, nor did they afterwards renew the conversation; but the morning Willie left them, when Mrs. Sullivan was leaning over a neatly-packed trunk in the next room, trying to hide her tears, and Mr. Cooper's head was bowed lower than usual, Willie whispered to Gerty, "Gerty, dear, for my sake take good care of our mother and grandfather—they are yours almost as much as mine."

On Willie's thus leaving home, for the first time, to struggle and strive among men, Mr. Cooper, who could not yet believe that the boy would be successful in the war with fortune, gave him many a caution against indulgent hopes which never would be realised. And Mrs. Sullivan, with tears, said, "Love and fear God, Willie, and do not disappoint your mother." We pause not to dwell upon the last night the youth spent at his home, his mother's last evening prayer, her last morning benediction, the last breakfast they all took together (Gertrude among the rest), or the final farewell embrace. And Willie went to sea. And the pious, loving, hopeful woman, who for eighteen years had cherished her boy with tenderness and pride, maintained now her wonted spirit of self-sacrifice, and gave him up without a murmur. None knew how she struggled with her aching heart, or whence came the power that sustained her.

And now began Gertrude's residence at Mr. Graham's, hitherto in various ways interrupted. She attended school, and laboured diligently at her studies. Her life was

varied by few incidents, for Emily never entertained much company, and in the winter scarcely any, and Gertrude formed no intimate acquaintance among her companions. With Emily she passed many happy hours; they took walks, read books, and talked much with each other, and Miss Graham found that in Gertrude's observing eyes, and her feeling and glowing descriptions of everything that came within their gaze, she was herself renewing her acquaintance with the outer world. In errands of charity and mercy Gertude was either her attendant or her messenger; and all the dependants of the family, from the cook to the little boy who called at the door for the fragments of broken bread, agreed in loving and praising the child, who, though neither beautiful nor elegantly dressed, had a fairy lightness of step, a grace of movement, and a dignity of bearing which impressed them all with the conviction that she was no beggar in spirit, whatever might be her birth or fortune. Mrs. Ellis's prejudices against her was still strong; but, as Gertrude was always civil, and Emily prudently kept them much apart, no unhappy result ensued.

She went often to see Mrs. Sullivan, and, as the spring advanced, they began to look for news of Willie. No tidings had come, however, when the season arrived for the Grahams to remove into the country for the summer. A letter written by Gertrude to Willie, soon after they were established there, will give some idea of her situation and mode of life.

After dwelling upon the disappointment of having not yet heard from him, and giving an account of the last visit she had made to his mother before leaving the city, she wrote: "But you made me promise, Willie, to write about myself, and said you should wish to hear everything that occurred at Mr. Graham's which concerned me in anyway; so if my letter is more tedious than usual, it is your own fault, for I have much to tell of our removal to D——, and of the way in which we live here, so different from our life in Boston. I think I hear you say, when you have read so far, 'O dear! now Gerty is going to give me a description of Mr. Graham's country-house!'—but you need not be afraid; I have not forgotten how, the last time

I undertook to do so, you placed your hand over my mouth to stop me, and assured me you knew the place as well as if you had lived there all your life, for I oft described it to you. Everything looks smaller and less beautiful than it seemed to me then; and, though I will not describe it to you again, I must just tell you that the entry and piazzas are much narrower than I expected, the rooms lower, and the garden and summer-houses not nearly so large. Miss Emily asked me, a day or two ago, how I liked the place, and if it looked as it used formerly. I told her the truth; and she was not at all displeased, but laughed at my old recollections of the house and grounds, and said it was always so with things we had seen when we were little children.

"I need not tell you that Miss Emily is kind to me as ever; for nobody who knows her as you do would suppose she could ever be anything but the best and loveliest person in the world. I can never do half enough, Willie, to repay her for all her goodness to me; and yet, she is so pleased with little gifts, and so grateful for trifling attentions, that it seems as if everybody might do something to make her happy. I found a few violets in the grass yesterday, and when I brought them to her she kissed and thanked me as if they had been so many diamonds; and little Ben Gately, who picked a hatful of dandelion-blossoms, without a single stem, and then rang at the front-door bell, and asked for Miss Ga'am, so as to give them to her himself, got a sweet smile for his trouble, and a 'thank you, Bennie,' that he will not soon forget. Wasn't it pleasant in Miss Emily, Willie?

"Mr. Graham has given me a garden, and I mean to have plenty of flowers for her by-and-by—that is, if Mrs. Ellis doesn't interfere; but I expect she will, for she does in almost everything. Willie, Mrs. Ellis is my great trial. She is just the kind of person I cannot endure. I believe there are some people that other people can't like—and she is just the sort I can't. I would not tell anybody else so, because it would not be right, and I do not know that it is right to mention it at all; but I always tell you everything. Miss Emily talks to me about her, and says I must learn to love her, and when I do I shall be an angel.

"There, I know you will think that is some of Gerty's old temper; and perhaps it is, but you don't know how she tries me; it is in little things that I cannot tell very easily, and I would not plague you with them if I could, so I won't write about her any more—I will try to love her dearly.

"You will think that now, while I am not going to school, I shall hardly know what to do with my time; but I have plenty to do. The first week after we came here I found the mornings very dull. You know I am always an early riser; but, as it does not agree with Miss Emily to keep early hours, I never see her until eight o'clock, full two hours after I am up and dressed. When we were in Boston, I always spent that time studying; but this spring, Miss Emily, who noticed that I was growing fast, and heard Mr. Arnold notice how pale I looked, fancied it would not do for me to spend so much time at my books; and so, when we came to D——, she planned my study-hours, which are very few, and arranged that they should take place after breakfast, and in her own room. She always advised me, if I could, to sleep later in the morning; but I could not, and was up at my usual time, wandering around the garden. One day I was quite surprised to find Mr. Graham at work, for it was not like his winter habits; but he is a queer man. He asked me to come and help him plant onion-seeds, and I rather think I did it pretty well; for after that he let me plant a number of things, and label little sticks to put down by the side of them. At last, to my joy, he offered to give me a piece of ground for a garden, where I might raise flowers. And so I am to have a garden. But I am making a very long story, Willie, and have not time to say a thousand other things that I want to. O! if I could see you, I could tell you in an hour more than I could write in a week. In five minutes I expect to hear Miss Emily's bell, and then she will send for me to come and read to her.

"I long to hear from you, dear Willie, and pray to God morning and evening, to keep you in safety, and soon send tidings of you to your loving Gerty."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE RULING PASSION CONTROLLED.

A few weeks after the date of this letter, Gerty learned through George, who went daily to the city to attend to the marketing, that Mrs. Sullivan had left word at the shop of our old acquaintance, the butcher, that she had received a letter from Willie, and wanted Gerty to come into town and see it. Emily was willing to let her go, but afraid it would be impossible to arrange it, as Charlie, the only horse Mr. Graham kept, was in use, and she saw no other way of sending her. "Why don't you let her go in the omnibus?" asked Mrs. Ellis. Gerty looked gratefully at Mrs. Ellis; it was the first time that lady had ever seemed anxious to promote her views.

"I don't think it's safe for her to go alone in the coach," said Emily.

"Safe!—What, for that great girl!" said Mrs. Ellis, whose position in the family had no forms of restraint with Miss Graham.

"Do you think it is?" inquired Emily. "She seems a child to me, to be sure; but as you say, she is almost grown up, and I dare say is capable of taking care of herself. Gertrude, are you sure you know the way from the omnibus-office in Boston to Mrs. Sullivan's?"

"Perfectly well, Miss Emily."

A place was therefore secured, and Gertrude set forth on her expedition with beaming eyes and a full heart. She found Mrs. Sullivan and Mr. Cooper well, and rejoicing over the tidings from Willie, who, after a long but agreeable voyage, had reached Calcutta in health and safety. A description of his new home, his new duties and employers, filled all the rest of the letter, except what was devoted to affectionate messages and inquiries, a large share of which were for Gerty. Gertrude dined with Mrs. Sullivan, and then hastened to the omnibus. She took her seat, and as she waited for the coach to start, amused herself with the passers-by. It was nearly

three o'clock, and she began to think she should be the only passenger, when she heard a strange voice proceeding from a person whose approach she had not perceived. She moved towards the door, and saw, standing at the back of the coach, the most singular-looking being she had ever beheld. It was an old lady, small, and considerably bent with years. She had been vainly endeavouring to mount the inconvenient vehicle, and now, with one foot upon the lower step, was calling to the driver to help her. "Sir," said she, in measured tones, "is this travelling equipage under your honourable charge?"

"What say, marm?—Yes, I'm the driver;" saying which, he came up to the door, opened it, and without waiting for the polite request which was on the old lady's lips, placed his hand beneath her elbow, and lifted her into the coach and shut the door. "Bless me!" ejaculated she, as she seated herself opposite Gertrude, and began to arrange her veil and other draperies, "that individual is not versed in the art of assisting a lady, without detriment to her habiliments. O dear, O dear!" added she, "I've lost my parasol."

She rose as she spoke; but the sudden starting of the coach threw her off her balance, and she would have fallen, had it not been for Gertrude, who caught her by the arm, and reseated her, saying as she did so, "Do not be alarmed, madam; here is the parasol."

As she spoke she drew into view the missing article, which, though nearly the size of an umbrella, was fastened to the old lady's waist by a green ribbon, and, having slipped out of place, was supposed lost. And not a parasol only did she bring to light; numerous other articles, connected with the same green string—a large reticule of various colours, a black lace cap, a large feather fan, and other articles. They were partly hidden under a thin black silk shawl, and Gertrude began to think her companion had been on a pilfering expedition. If so, however, the culprit seemed remarkably at ease, for, before the coach had gone many steps, she deliberately

placed her feet on the opposite seat, and proceeded to make herself comfortable. In the first place, much to Gertrude's horror, she took out all her teeth, and put them in her work-bag; then drew off a pair of black silk gloves, and replaced them by cotton ones; removed her lace veil, folded and pinned it to the green string. She next untied her bonnet, threw over it, as a protection from the dust, a large cotton handkerchief, and loosing her fan, applied herself diligently to the use of it, closing her eyes as she did so, evidently intending to go to sleep. She did fall into a doze, for she was very quiet, and Gertrude, occupied with observing some heavy clouds that were rising from the west, forgot to observe her fellow traveller, until she was startled by a hand suddenly laid upon her own, and an abrupt exclamation of "My dear young damsel, do not those dark shadows betoken adverse weather?"

"I think it will rain very soon," replied Gertrude.

"This morn, when I ventured forth," soliloquised the old lady, "the sun was bright, the sky serene; even the winged songsters took part in the universal joy; and now before I get home, my delicate lace flounces (glancing at the skirt of her dress) will prove a sacrifice to the pitiless storm."

"Does the coach pass your door?" asked Gertrude.

"No; Oh, no! not within half-a-mile. Does it better accommodate you, my young miss?"

"No. I shall have a mile to walk."

The coach had reached its destination, and the two passengers alighted. Gertrude would have started at once on her walk, but was prevented by the old lady, who begged her to wait, as she was going the same way. The old lady refused to pay the fare demanded by the driver; and declared it was not the regular fare, and accused the man of an intention to put the excess into his pocket. Gertrude was impatient, for she was every moment expecting to see the rain pour in torrents; but the matter being compromised, she was permitted to proceed. They had walked about a

quarter-of-a-mile, and at a very slow rate, when the rain fell; and now Gertrude was asked to unloose the huge parasol, and carry it over her companion and herself. In this way they had walked nearly as much more of the distance, when the waters began to descend as if all the reservoirs of heaven were thrown open. Just then Gertrude heard a step behind them, and, turning, she saw George, Mr. Graham's man, running in the direction of the house. He recognised her at once, and exclaimed, "Miss Gertrude, you'll be wet through; and Miss Pace too. Sure, and ye'd better baith hasten to her house, where ye'll be secure."

So saying, he caught Miss Pace in his arms, and signing to Gertrude to follow, rushed across the street, and hurrying on to a cottage near by, did not stop until he had placed the old lady in safety beneath her own porch; and Gerty also gained its shelter. Miss Pace was so bewildered that it took her some minutes to recover her consciousness; and it was arranged that Gertrude should stop where she was for an hour or two, and that George should call for her when he passed that way with the carriage on his return from the depot.

Miss Patty Pace was not a person of much hospitality. She owned the cottage which she occupied and lived alone, keeping no servants and entertaining no visitors. She was herself a famous visitor; and, as but a small part of her life had been passed in D——, and all her friends and connexions lived either in Boston or at a much greater distance, she was a constant frequenter of omnibuses. But though, through her travelling propensities and her regular attendance at church, she was well known, Gertrude was perhaps the first visitor who had ever entered her house.

Even when she was at her door, she had to take the old lady's key, unlock and open it herself, and finally lead her hostess into the parlour, and help her off with her innumerable capes, shawls, and veils. Once come to a distinct consciousness of her situation, however, and Miss Patty Pace conducted herself with all the elegant politeness for which she was remarkable. Suffering a thousand regrets at the trying

experience her own clothes had sustained, she expressed nearly as many fears lest Gertrude had ruined every article of her dress. It was only after many assurances from the latter that her boots were scarcely wet at all, her gingham dress and cape not hurt by rain, and her nice straw bonnet safe under the scarf she had thrown over it, that Miss Patty could be prevailed upon to so far forget the duties of a hostess as to retire, and change her lace flounces for something more suitable for home wear. As soon as she left the room, Gertrude, whose curiosity was excited, took a nearer view of many articles, both of ornament and use, which had attracted her attention, from their singular appearance. Miss Pace's room was remarkable as its owner. Its furniture, like her apparel, was made up of the gleanings of every age and fashion. Gertrude's quick eye was revelling amid the few relics of ancient eloquence, and the numerous specimens of folly and bad taste, when the old lady returned.

A neat though quaint black dress having taken the place of the much-valued flounces, she now looked more lady-like. She held in her hand a tumbler of pepper and water, and begged her visitor to drink, assuring her it would warm her stomach and prevent her taking cold; and when Gertrude, who could scarcely keep from laughing in her face, declined the beverage, Miss Patty seated herself, and, while enjoying the refreshment, carried on a conversation which at one moment satisfied her visitor she was a women of sense, and the next that she was either foolish or insane. The impression which Gertrude made upon Miss Patty was more decided. Miss Patty was delighted with the young miss, and declared she had an intellect that would do honour to a queen, a figure that was airy as a gazelle, and motions more graceful than those of a swan. When George came for Gertrude, Miss Pace was sorry to part with her, invited her to come again, and she promised to do so.

The satisfactory news from Willie, and the amusing adventures of the afternoon, had given to Gertrude such a feeling of buoyancy, that she bounded into the house, and up the stairs, with that fairy quickness Uncle True had so loved to see in her, and which, since his death, her subdued spirits had rarely permitted her to exercise.

At the door of her room she met Bridget, the housemaid. On inquiring what was going on there, she learned that during her absence her room had received a thorough cleaning. Alarmed at the idea of Mrs. Ellis having invaded her premises, she surveyed the apartment with a slight feeling of agitation, which, as she continued her observations, swelled into angry excitement.

When Gertrude went from Mrs. Sullivan's to Mr. Graham's house in the city, she took with her a trunk containing her wardrobe, an old bandbox, which she put on the shelf of a closet in her chamber. There it remained during the winter, unpacked, and when the family went into the country, the box went also, carefully protected by its owner, who had put it in a corner behind the bed, and the evening before her expedition to the city had been engaged in inspecting its contents, endeared to her by the charm of old association, and many a tear had the little maiden shed over her stock of valuables. There was the figure of the Samuel, Uncle True's first gift, defaced by time and accident. There, too, were his pipes, dark with smoke and age; but as she thought what comfort they had been to him, she felt them a consolation to her. She had also his lantern, for she had not forgotten its pleasant light, the first that ever fell upon the darkness of her life; also his fur cap, beneath which she had often seen the kindly smile, and could hardly realise that there was not one for her still hidden beneath its crown.

All these things, excepting the lantern and cap, Gertrude had left upon the mantel-piece; and on entering the room, her eye sought her treasures. They were gone. The mantel-piece was empty. She ran towards the corner for the old box. It was gone. To rush after the housemaid and question her was but the work of an instant.

Bridget was a new-comer, a stupid specimen, but Gertrude obtained from her all the information she needed. The image, the pipes, and the lantern were thrown among a heap of broken glass and crockery, and smashed to atoms. The cap, said to be

moth-eaten, and the other articles had been cast into the fire at Mrs. Ellis's orders. Gertrude allowed Bridget to depart, unaware of the greatness of her loss; then, shutting the door, she wept.

She rose from the bed suddenly, and started for the door; then, some new thought seeming to check her, she returned again to the bedside, and, with a loud sob, fell upon her knees, and buried her face in her hands. Once or twice she lifted her head, and seemed on the point of rising and going to face her enemy; but each time something came across her mind and detained her. It was not fear; oh, no! Gertrude was not afraid of anybody. It must have been some stronger motive than that. Whatever it might be, it was something that had a soothing influence, for, after every fresh struggle, she grew calmer, and rising, seated herself in a chair by the window, leaned her head on her hand, and looked out. The shower was over, and the smiles of the refreshed earth were reflected in a glowing rainbow. A little bird came and perched on a branch of a tree close to the window, and shouted forth a Te Deum. A Persian lilac-bush, in full bloom, sent up a delicious fragrance. A wonderful calm stole into Gertrude's heart, and she felt "the grace that brings peace succeed to the passions that produce trouble." She had conquered; she had achieved the greatest of earth's victories, a victory over herself. The brilliant rainbow, the carol of the bird, the fragrance of the blossoms, all the bright things that gladdened the earth after the storm, were not half so beautiful as the light that overspread the face of the young girl when, the storm within her laid at rest, she looked up to heaven and her heart sent forth its silent offering of praise.

The sound of the tea-bell startled her. She bathed her face and brushed her hair, and went downstairs. There was no one in the dining-room but Mrs. Ellis; Mr. Graham had been detained in town, and Emily was suffering severe headache. Gertrude took tea alone with Mrs. Ellis, who, unaware of the great value Gertrude attached to her old relics, was conscious she had done an unkind thing.

Next day Mrs. Prime, the cook, came to Emily's room, and produced the little basket, made of a nut, saying, "I wonder now, Miss Emily, where Miss Gertrude is; for I've found her little basket in the coal-hole, and I guess she'll be right glad on't—'tan't hurt a mite." Emily inquired, "What basket?" and the cook, placing it in her hands, gave an account of the destruction of Gertrude's property, which she had herself witnessed with indignation. She described the distress of Gertrude when questioning Bridget, which the sympathising cook had heard from her chamber.

As Emily listened to the story, she thought the previous afternoon she heard Gertrude sobbing in her room, but that she concluded that she mistook. "Go," said she, "and carry the basket to Gertrude; she is in the little library; but please, Mrs. Prime, don't tell her that you have mentioned the matter to me." Emily expected for several days, to hear from Gertrude the story of her injuries; but Gertrude kept her trouble to herself.

This was the first instance of complete self-control to Gerty. From this time she experienced more and more the power of governing herself; and, with each new effort gaining new strength, became at last a wonder to those who knew the temperament she had had to contend with. She was now nearly fourteen years old, and so rapid had been her recent growth that, instead of being below the usual stature, she was taller than most girls of her age. Freedom from study, and plenty of air and exercise, prevented her, however, from suffering from this circumstance. Her garden was a source of great pleasure to her, and flowers prospering under her careful training, she had always a bouquet ready to place by Emily's plate at breakfast-time.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE NURSE.

Mr. Graham's garden was very beautiful, abounding in rich shrubbery, summer houses, and arbours covered with grape-vines; but a high, broad fence hid it from public view, and the house, standing back from the road, was old-fashioned in its appearance. The summer was passing most happily, and Gertrude, in the enjoyment of Emily's society, and in the consciousness that she was rendering herself useful and important to this excellent friend, was finding in every day new causes of contentment and rejoicing, when a stop was suddenly put to all her pleasure.

Emily was taken ill with a fever, and Gertrude, on her entering the sick-room, to share in its duties, was rudely repulsed by Mrs. Ellis, who had constituted herself sole nurse, and who declared that the fever was catching, and Miss Emily did not want her there.

For three or four days Gertrude wandered about the house, inconsolable. On the fifth morning after her banishment from the room, she saw Mrs. Prime, the cook, going upstairs with some gruel; and, giving her some beautiful rose-buds which she had gathered, she begged her to give them to Emily, and ask if she might not come in and see her. She lingered about the kitchen awaiting Mrs. Prime's return, in hopes of some message, at least, from the sufferer. But when the cook came down the flowers were still in her hand, and as she threw them on the table, the kind-hearted woman gave vent to her feelings.

"Well! folks do say that first-rate cooks and nurses are allers as cross as bears! 'Tan't for me to say whether it's so 'bout cooks, but 'bout nurses there an't no sort o'doubt! I would not want to go there, Miss Gertrude; I'm sure she'd bit your head off."

"Wouldn't Miss Emily take the flowers?" asked Gertrude, looking quite grieved.

"Well, she hadn't no word in the matter. You know she couldn't see what they were; and Mrs. Ellis flung 'em outside the door, vowin' I might as well bring pison into the room with a fever as roses. I tried to speak to Miss Emily, but Mrs. Ellis set up such a hush-sh-sh I s'posed she was goin' to sleep, and jest made the best o' my way out.

Ugh! don't she begin to scold when there's anybody taken sick!"

Gertrude sauntered out into the garden. She had nothing to do but think anxiously about Emily, who, she feared, was very ill. Her work and her books were all in Emily's room, where they were usually kept; the library might have furnished amusement, but it was locked up. So the garden was the only thing left for her, and there she spent the rest of the morning; and many others, for Emily grew worse, and a fortnight passed away without Gertrude's seeing her, or having any other intimation regarding her health than Mrs. Ellis's occasional report to Mr. Graham, who, as he saw the physician every day, and made frequent visits to his daughter, did not require that particular information which Gertrude was eager to obtain. Once or twice she had asked Mrs. Ellis, who replied, "Don't bother me with questions! what do you know about sickness?"

One afternoon Gertrude was sitting in a large summer-house at the end of the garden; her own piece of ground, fragrant with mignonette and verbena, was close by, and she was busily engaged in tying up some little papers of seeds, when she was startled by hearing a step beside her, and looking up, saw Dr. Jeremy, the family physician, entering the building.

"Ah! what are you doing?" said the doctor, in a quick manner peculiar to him. "Sorting seeds, eh?"

"Yes, sir," replied Gerty, blushing, as she saw the doctor's keen black eyes scrutinising her face!

"Where have I seen you before?" asked he, in the same blunt way.

"At Mr. Flint's."

"Ah! True Flint's! I remember all about it. You're his girl! Nice girl, too! And poor True, he's dead! Well, he's a loss to the community! So this is the little nurse I used to see there. Bless me! how children do grow!"

"Doctor Jeremy," asked Gertrude, in an earnest voice, "will you please to tell me

how Miss Emily is?"

"Emily! she an't very well just now."

"Do you think she'll die?"

"Die! No! What should she die for? I won't let her die, if you'll help me to keep her alive. Why an't you in the house taking care of her?"

"I wish I might!" exclaimed Gertrude, starting up; "I wish I might!"

"What's to hinder?"

"Mrs. Ellis, sir; she won't let me in; she says Miss Emily doesn't want anybody but her."

"She's nothing to say about it, or Emily either; it's my business, and I want you. I'd rather have you to take care of my patients than all the Mrs. Ellises in the world. She knows nothing about nursing; let her stick to her cranberry-sauce and squash-pies. So, mind, to-morrow you're to begin."

"O, thank you, doctor."

"Don't thank me yet; wait till you've tried it—it's hard work taking care of sick folks. Whose orchard is that?"

"Mrs. Bruce's."

"Is that her pear-tree?"

"Yes, sir."

"By George, Mrs. Bruce, I'll try your pears for you!"

As he spoke, the doctor, a man some sixty-five years of age, stout and active, sprung over a stone wall, which separated them from the orchard, and reached the foot of the tree almost at a bound.

As Gertrude watched the proceeding, she observed the doctor stumble over some obstacle, and only saved himself from falling by stretching forth both hands, and

sustaining himself against the trunk of the tree. At the same instant a head, adorned with a velvet smoking-cap, was slowly lifted from the long grass, and a youth, about sixteen or seventeen years of age, stared at the intruder.

Nothing daunted, the doctor at once took the offensive ground towards the occupant of the place, saying, "Get up, lazy bones! What do you lie there for, tripping up honest folks?"

"Whom do you call honest folks, sir?" inquired the youth, apparently undisturbed by the doctor's epithet and inquiry. He showed much sang froid.

"I call myself and my little friend here remarkably honest people," replied the doctor, winking at Gertrude, who, standing behind the wall and looking over, was laughing at the way in which the doctor had got caught. The young man turned, and gave a broad stare at Gertrude's merry face.

"Can I do anything for you, sir?" asked he.

"Yes, certainly," replied the doctor. "I came here to help myself to pears; but you are taller than I—perhaps, with the help of that crooked-handled cane of yours, you can reach that best branch."

"A remarkably honourable and honest errand!" muttered the young man. "I shall be happy to be engaged in so good a cause." And, drawing down the branch, so that he could reach it with his hand, shook it vigorously. The ripe fruit fell on every side; and the doctor, having filled his pockets, and both his hands, started for the other side of the wall.

"Have you got enough?" asked the youth, in a very lazy tone of voice.

"Plenty, plenty," said the doctor.

"Glad of it," said the boy, indolently throwing himself on the grass, and still staring at Gertrude.

"You must be very tired," said the doctor, stepping back a pace or two; "I'm a

physician, and should advise a nap."

"Are you, indeed!" replied the youth, in the same half-drawling, half-ironical tone of voice; "then I think I'll take your advice;" and he threw himself upon the grass, and closed his eyes.

Having emptied his pockets upon the seat of the summer-house, and invited Gertrude to partake, the doctor, still laughing at his boyish feat, looked at his watch. "Half-past four! The cars go in ten minutes. Who's going to drive me down to the depot?"

"I don't know, sir," replied Gertrude.

"Where's George?"

"He's gone to the meadow to get in some hay, but he left white Charlie harnessed in the yard; I saw him fasten him to the chain, after he drove you up from the cars."

"Ah! then you can drive me down to the depot."

"I can't, sir; I don't know how."

"But you must; I'll show you how. You're not afraid?"

"O, no, sir; but Mr. Graham——"

"Never you mind Mr. Graham—do you mind me. I'll answer for your coming back safe enough."

Gertrude was naturally courageous; she had never driven before, but, having no fears, she succeeded admirably, and, being often afterwards called upon by Dr. Jeremy to perform the same service, she soon became skilful in the use of the reins.

Dr. Jeremy was true to his promise of installing Gertrude in Emily's sick room. The next visit he made to his patient, he spoke in terms of the highest praise of Gertrude's devotion to her old uncle, and her capability as a nurse, and asked why she had been expelled from the chamber.

"She is timid," said Emily, "and is afraid of catching the fever."

"Don't believe it," said Dr. Jeremy; "'tan't like her."

"Do you think not?" inquired Emily, earnestly. "Mrs. Ellis——"

"Told a lie," interrupted the doctor. "Gerty wants to come and take care of you, and she knows how as well as Mrs. Ellis any day; it isn't much you need done. You want quiet, and that's what you can't have with that great talking woman about. So I'll send her to Jericho to-day, and bring my little Gertrude up here. She's a quiet little mouse, and has got a head on her shoulders."

It is not to be supposed that Gertrude could provide for Emily's wants any better than Mrs. Ellis; and Emily, knowing this, took care that the housekeeper should not be sent to Jericho; for, though Dr. Jeremy, a man of strong prejudices, did not like her, she was excellent in her department, and could not be dispensed with.

So, though Emily, Dr. Jeremy, and Gertrude were all made happy by the free admission of the latter to the sick-room, the housekeeper was never conscious that anyone knew her ill-will to Gertrude.

There were care and tenderness in Gertrude, which only the warmest love could have dictated. When Emily awoke at night from a troubled sleep, she found a cooling draught ready at her lips, and knew from Mrs. Ellis's deep snoring that it was not her hand that held it—when she observed that all day long no troublesome fly was ever permitted to approach her pillow, her aching head was relieved by hours of patient bathing, and the little feet that were never weary were always noiseless—she realised the truth that Dr. Jeremy had brought her a most excellent medicine. A week or two passed away, and she was able to sit up, though not yet able to leave her room. A few weeks more, and the doctor began to insist upon air and exercise. "Drive out two or three times every day," said he.

"How can I?" said Emily. "George has so much to do, it will be very inconvenient."

"Let Gertrude drive you; she is a capital hand."

"Gertrude," said Emily, smiling, "I believe you are a great favourite of the doctor's;

he thinks you can do anything. You never drove, did you?"

"Hasn't she driven me to the depot every day for these six weeks?" inquired the doctor.

"Is it possible?" asked Emily.

Upon her being assured this was the case, and the doctor insisting that there was no danger, Charlie was harnessed into the carriage, and Emily and Mrs. Ellis went out to drive with Gertrude, an experiment which, being often repeated, was a source of health to the invalid, and pleasure to them all. In the early autumn, when Emily's health was restored, old Charlie was daily called into requisition; sometimes Mrs. Ellis accompanied them, but, as she was often engaged in household duties, they oft went by themselves, in a large, old-fashioned buggy, and Emily declared that Gertrude's learning to drive had proved a great source of happiness. Once or twice, in the course of the summer and autumn, Gertrude saw again the lazy youth whom Dr. Jeremy had stumbled over when he went to steal pears. Once he came and sat on the wall while she was at work in her garden, professed himself astonished at her activity, talked a little with her about her flowers, asked some questions concerning her friend Dr. Jeremy, and ended by requesting to know her name.

Gertrude blushed; she was sensitive about her name, and, though she went by that of Flint, and did not think much about it, she could not fail to remember, when the question was put to her point-blank, that she had no surname of her own. Emily had tried to find Nan Grant, in order to learn from her something of Gertrude's early history; but Nan had left her old habitation, and for years nothing had been heard of her.

CHAPTER XIX.

CHANGES.

It was the twilight of a sultry September day, and, wearied by excessive heat, Emily sat on the front piazza of her father's house, inhaling a delicious and refreshing breeze. The western sky was still streaked with brilliant lines of red, the lingering effects of a gorgeous sunset, while the moon, now nearly at the full, and triumphing in the close of day and the commencement of her nightly reign, cast her full beams upon Emily's white dress, and gave to the beautiful hand and arm, which, escaping from the draperied sleeve, rested on the side of her rustic arm-chair, the semblance of polished marble. Ten years had passed since Emily was introduced to the reader; and yet, so slight were the changes wrought by time, that she looked little older than on her first meeting Gertrude in Mr. Arnold's church.

She had even then experienced much of the sorrows of life, and learned how to distil from the bitter dregs of suffering a balm for every pain. Even then, that experience, and the blessed knowledge she had gained from it, had both stamped themselves upon her countenance; therefore, time had little power upon her; as she was then so was she now; lovely in her outward appearance, and still more lovely in heart and life. Still a close observer might perceive in her a greater degree of buoyancy of spirit, keenness of interest in what was going on about her, and evident enjoyment of life, and this was due, as Emily acknowledged, to her recent close companionship with one to whom she was bound by the warmest affection, and who, by her sympathy, her constant devotion, her natural appreciation of the entertaining and the ludicrous, and the beautiful and true, and her unsparing efforts to bring her much-loved friend into communion with everything she herself enjoyed, had called into play faculties which blindness had rendered almost dormant, and become, what Uncle True bade her be, eyes to her benefactor.

On the present occasion, as Emily sat alone, her thoughts were sad. She held her head a little on one side, in a listening attitude, and, as often as she heard the sound of the gate swinging in the breeze, she would start, while a look of anxiety, and even pain, would cross her features.

At length, some one approaches the gate. None but Emily's quick ear could have distinguished the light step; but she hears it at once, and, rising, goes to meet the new comer, whom we must pause to introduce, for, though an old acquaintance, time has not left her unchanged, and it would be hard to recognize in her our little quondam Gertrude, for she has now become a young lady. She is some inches taller than Emily, and her figure is slight and delicate. Her complexion is dark, but clear, and rendered brilliant by the rosy hue that flushes her cheeks; but that may be the effect of her rapid walk from the railroad station.

Gertrude's eyes have retained their old lustre, and do not now look too large for her face; and, if her mouth be less classically formed than the strict rule of beauty would commend, it is atoned for by two rows of small pearly teeth, which are as regular as a string of beads. Her neat dress of spotted muslin fits close to her throat, and her black mantle does not hide the roundness of her taper waist.

Is Gertrude a beauty? By no means. Hers is a face and form about which there would be a thousand different opinions, and few would pronounce her beautiful. But there are faces whose ever-varying expression one loves to watch—tell-tale faces, that speak the truth and proclaim the sentiment within; faces that now light up with intelligence, now beam with mirth, now sadden at the tale of sorrow, now burn with a holy indignation for that which the soul abhors, and faces sanctified by the divine presence, when the heart turns from the world and itself, and looks upward in the spirit of devotion. Such a face was Gertrude's. There are forms which, though neither dignified nor fairy-like, possess a grace, an ease, a power of moving airily in their sphere—and such a form was Gertrude's. Whatever charm these attractions might give her—and many estimated it highly—it was greatly enhanced by an utter unconsciousness, on her part, of possessing any attractions at all.

As she perceived Miss Graham coming to meet her, she quickened her pace, and joining her near the door-step, where a path led into the garden, passed her arm

affectionately over Emily's shoulder, in a manner which the latter's blindness, and Gertrude's superior height and ability to act as guide, had rendered usual, and said, while she drew the shawl closer around her blind friend, "Here I am again, Miss Emily! Have you been alone since I went away?"

"Yes, dear, most of the time, and have been worried to think you were travelling about in Boston this excessive warm day."

"It has not hurt me in the least; I only enjoy this cool breeze all the more—it is such a contrast to the heat and dust of the city!"

"But, Gerty," said Emily, stopping short in their walk, "what are you coming away from the house for? You have not been to tea, my child."

"I know it, Emily, but I don't want any supper."

They walked slowly and in perfect silence. At last Emily said, "Well, Gertrude, have you nothing to tell me?"

"O yes, a great deal, but——"

"But you know it will be sad news to me, and so you don't like to speak it; is it not so?"

"I ought not to have the vanity, dear Emily, to think it would trouble you very much; but ever since last evening, when I told you what Mr. W. said, and what I had in my mind, and you seemed to feel so badly at the thought of our being separated, I have felt almost doubtful what it was right for me to do."

"And I, on the other hand, Gertrude, have been reproaching myself for allowing you to have any knowledge of my feeling in the matter, lest I should be influencing you against your duty. I feel that you are right, Gertrude, and that, instead of opposing, I ought to do everything I can to forward your plans."

"Dear Emily!" said Gertrude, "if you thought so from what I told you yesterday, you would be convinced had you observed all that I have to-day."

"Why! Are matters any worse than they were at Mrs. Sullivan's?"

"Much worse than I described to you. I did not then know all that she had to contend with; but I have been at their house since I left home this morning (for Mr. W. did not detain me five minutes), and it does not seem safe for such a delicate woman as Mrs. Sullivan to be alone with Mr. Cooper, now that his mind is in such a state."

"But do you think you can do any good?"

"I know I can, dear Emily; I can manage him much better than she can, and do more for his comfort. He is like a child now, and full of whims. When he can be indulged, Mrs. Sullivan will please him at any amount of inconvenience, and even danger to herself, not only because he is her father, and she feels it her duty, but she is afraid of him, he is so irritable and violent. She tells me he often takes it into his head to do the strangest things, such as going out late at night, when it is unsafe, and sleeping with his window wide open."

"Poor woman!" exclaimed Emily; "what does she do in such cases?"

"I can tell you, Emily, for I saw an instance of it to-day. When I went in this morning, he was preparing to make a coal-fire in the grate, notwithstanding the heat, which was becoming intense in the city."

"And Mrs. Sullivan?" said Emily.

"Was sitting on the lower stair, in the front entry, crying."

"Poor thing!" murmured Emily.

"She could do nothing with him," continued Gertrude, "and had given up in despair."

"She ought to have a strong woman or a man to take care of him."

"That is what she dreads worse than anything. She says it would kill her to see him unkindly treated, as he would be sure to be by a stranger; and, besides, she shrinks from the idea of having anyone in the house to whom she is unaccustomed. She is

very neat and particular in all her arrangements, has always done her work herself; and declares she would sooner admit a wild beast into her family than an Irish girl."

"Her new house has not been a source of much pleasure to her yet, has it?"

"Oh, no. She was saying to-day how strange it seemed when she had been looking forward so long to the comfort of a new tenement, that, just as she had moved in and got everything furnished to her mind, she should have this great trial."

"It seems strange to me," said Emily, "that she did not sooner perceive its approach. I noticed when I went with you the failure in the old man's intellect."

"I had observed it for a long time," remarked Gertrude, "but never spoke of it to her; and I do not think she was in the least aware of it, until about their removal, when the breaking-up of old associations affected his mind."

"Sad thing!" said Emily. "How old is he?"

"I believe he is very old; I remember Mrs. Sullivan's telling me some time ago that he was near eighty."

"Is he so old as that? Then I am not surprised that these changes have made him childish."

"Oh, no. Melancholy, as it is, we may come to the same if we live to his age; and as he seems generally contented, I do not lament it so much on his own account as Mrs. Sullivan's."

"Does it seem hard for her to bear up under it?"

"I think it would not be if she were well; but there is something the matter with her, and I fear it is more serious than she allows, for she looks very pale, and has had several alarming ill turns lately."

"Has she consulted a physician?"

"No; she doesn't wish for one, and says she shall soon be better; but I do not feel sure that she will, especially as she takes no care of herself; and that is one reason I

wish to be in town as soon as possible. I am anxious to have Dr. Jeremy see her, and I can bring it about without her knowing that he comes on her account."

"You speak confidently of being in town, Gertrude; so I suppose it is all arranged."

"Oh, I have not told you, have I, about my visit to Mr. W.? Dear, good man, how grateful I ought to be to him! He has promised me the situation."

"I had no doubt he would, from what you told me he said to you at Mrs. Bruce's."

"You hadn't, really! Why, Emily, I was almost afraid to mention it to him. I couldn't believe he would have sufficient confidence in me; but he was so kind! I hardly dare tell you what he said about my capacity to teach, you will think me so vain."

"You need not tell me, my darling; I know from his own lips how highly he appreciates your ability."

"Dear Uncle True always wanted me to be a teacher; it was the height of his ambition. He would be pleased, wouldn't he, dear Emily?"

"Yes, proud to see you assistant in a school like Mr. W.'s. But he would think as I do, that you are undertaking too much. You expect to be occupied in the school the greater part of every morning, and yet you propose to be nurse to Mrs. Sullivan, and guardian to her poor old father. My dear child, you are not used to so much care, and I shall be constantly troubled for you, lest your own health and strength give way."

"Oh, dear Emily, there is no cause for any anxiety on my account. I am well and strong, and capable of all that I have planned for myself. My only trouble is in leaving you; and I fear you will miss me, and perhaps feel as if——"

"I know what you would say, Gertrude. You need not fear that; I am sure of your affection. I am sure you love me next to your duty, and I would not that you should give me the preference. So dismiss that thought from your mind, and do not believe that I would be selfish enough to desire to retain you. I only wish, my dear, that for the present you had not thought of entering the school. You might then have gone to

Mrs. Sullivan's, stayed as long as needed, and perhaps found, by the time we are ready to start on our southern tour, that your services could be dispensed with; in which case you could accompany us on a journey which I am sure your health will by that time require."

"But, dear Emily, how could I do that? I could not propose myself as a visitor to Mrs. Sullivan, however useful I might intend to be to her; nor could I speak of nursing to a woman who will not confess that she is ill. It seemed to me impossible, with all the delicacy and tact in the world, to bring it about; for I have been with you so long that Mrs. Sullivan thinks me entirely unfitted for her primitive way of life. It was only when Mr. W. spoke of his wanting an assistant, and hinted that he should like to employ me in that capacity, that the present plan occurred to me. I knew if I told Mrs. Sullivan that I was engaged to teach there, and that you were not coming to town, and represented to her that I wanted a boarding-place for the winter, she would insist that I should go nowhere else."

"And it proved as you expected?"

"Exactly; and she showed so much pleasure at the thought of my being with her, that I realised still more how much she needed some one."

"She will have a treasure in you, Gertrude."

"No, indeed! The feeling I have is, that however little I may be able to accomplish, it will be more than anyone else could do for Mrs. Sullivan. She has lived so retired that she has not an intimate friend in the city, and I do not know of anyone, except myself, whom she would willingly admit under her roof. She is used to me, and loves me; I am no restraint upon her, and she allows me to assist in whatever she is doing, although she often says I live a lady's life now, and am not used to work. She knows, too, that I have an influence over her father; and I have—strange as it may seem to you—I have more than I know how to account for myself. I think it is partly because I am not afraid of him, and am firm in opposing his unreasonable fancies,

and partly because I am more of a stranger than Mrs. Sullivan. But there is another cause; he associates me in his mind with Willie; for we were for some years constantly together, both left the house at the same time, and he knows that it is through me that the correspondence with him is carried on. Since his mind has been so weak, he thinks continually of Willie, and I can at any moment, however irritable he may be, make him calm and quiet, by proposing to tell him the latest news from his grandson. It does not matter how often I repeat the contents of the last letter, it is always new to him; and you have no idea, Emily, what power this gives me. Mrs. Sullivan sees how easily I can guide his thoughts, and I noticed what a load of care was taken from her mind by having me there to-day. She looked so happy when I came away to-night, and spoke so hopefully of the comfort it would be during the winter to have me with her, that I felt repaid for any sacrifice it has been to me. But when I came home, and saw you, and thought of your going so far away, and of the length of time it might be before I should live with you again, I felt as if——" Gerty could say no more. She laid her head on Emily's shoulder, and wept.

Emily soothed her with the greatest tenderness. "We have been very happy together, Gerty," said she, "and I shall miss you sadly; half the enjoyment of my life has of late years been borrowed from you. But I never loved you half so well as I do now, at the time we must part; for I see in the sacrifice you are making of yourself one of the noblest and most important traits of character a woman can possess. I know how much you love the Sullivans, and you have certainly every reason for being attached to them; but your leaving us at this time, and renouncing without a murmur the southern tour from which you expected so much pleasure, proves that my Gerty is the brave, good girl I always hoped and prayed she might become. You are in the path of duty, Gertrude, and will be rewarded by the approbation of your own conscience, if in no other way."

As Emily finished speaking, they reached a corner of the garden, and were met by a servant-girl, who announced that Mrs. Bruce and her son were in the parlour, and

had asked for them both.

"Did you get her buttons in town, Gertrude?" inquired Emily.

"Yes, I found some that were an excellent match for the dress; she probably wants to know what success I had; but how can I go in?"

"I will return to the house with Kate, and you can go in at the side-door, and reach your own room without being seen. I will excuse you to Mrs. Bruce for the present; and when you have bathed your eyes, and feel composed, you can come in and report concerning the errand she entrusted to you."

CHAPTER XX.

FRUSTRATED PLANS.

When Gertrude entered the room in half-an-hour, her face showed no mental distress. Mrs. Bruce nodded to her good naturedly from a corner of the sofa. Mr. Bruce rose and offered his chair at the same time that Mr. Graham pointed to a vacant window-seat near him, and said kindly, "Here is a place for you, Gertrude."

Declining these civilities, she withdrew to an ottoman near an open glass door, where she was immediately joined by Mr. Bruce, who, seating himself in an indolent attitude upon the upper row of a flight of steps which led from the window to the garden, commenced conversation with her.

Mr. Bruce—the gentleman who, some years before, wore a velvet smoking-cap, and took afternoon naps in the grass—had recently returned from Europe, and, glorifying in the renown acquired from a moustache, a French tailor, and the possession of a handsome property in his own right, now viewed himself with more complacency than ever.

"So you've been in Boston all day, Miss Flint?"

"Yes, nearly all day."

"Didn't you find it distressingly warm?"

"Somewhat so."

"I tried to go in to attend to some business that mother was anxious about, and even went down to the depot; but I had to give it up."

"Were you overpowered by the heat?"

"I was."

"How unfortunate!" remarked Gertrude, in a half-compassionate, half-ironical tone of voice.

Mr. Bruce looked up, to judge from her countenance whether she were serious or not; but there being little light in the room, on account of the warmth of the evening, he could not decide the question, and therefore replied, "I dislike the heat, Miss Gertrude, and why should I expose myself to it unnecessarily?"

"Oh, I beg your pardon; I thought you spoke of important business."

"Only some affair of my mother's. Nothing I felt any interest in, and she took the state of the weather for an excuse. If I had known that you were in the cars, as I have since heard, I should certainly have persevered, in order to have had the pleasure of walking down Washington Street with you."

"I did not go down Washington Street."

"But you would have done so with a suitable escort," suggested the young man.

"If I had gone out of my way for the sake of accompanying my escort, the escort would have been a very doubtful advantage," said Gertrude, laughing.

"How very practical you are, Miss Gertrude! Do you mean to say that, when you go to the city, you always have a settled plan of operations, and never swerve from your course?"

"By no means. I trust I am not difficult to influence when there is a sufficient motive."

The young man bit his lip. "Then you never act without a motive; pray, what is your motive in wearing that broad-brimmed hat when you are at work in the garden?"

"It is an old habit, adopted some years ago from motives of convenience, and still adhered to, in spite of later inventions, which would certainly be a better protection from the sun. I must plead guilty, I fear, to a little obstinacy in my partiality for that old hat."

"Why not confess, Miss Gertrude, that you wear it in order to look fanciful and picturesque, so that the neighbours' slumbers are disturbed by the thoughts of it? My own morning dreams, for instance, are so haunted by that hat, as seen in company with its owner, that I am daily drawn, as if by magnetic attraction, in the direction of the garden. You will have a heavy account to settle with Morpheus, one of these days, for defrauding him of his rights; and your conscience too will suffer for injuries to my health, sustained by continued exposure to early dews."

"It is hard to condemn me for such unintentional mischief; but since I am to experience so much future remorse on account of your morning visits, I shall take upon myself the responsibility of forbidding them."

"Oh, you wouldn't be so unkind!—especially after all the pains I have taken to impart to you the little I know of horticulture."

"Very little I think it must have been; or I have but a poor memory," said Gertrude, laughing.

"Have you forgotten the pains I took yesterday to acquaint you with the different varieties of roses? Don't you remember how much I had to say of damask roses and damask bloom; and how before I finished, I could not find words enough in praise of blushes, especially such sweet and natural ones as met my eyes while I was speaking?"

"I know you talked a great deal of nonsense. I hope you don't think I listened to it all."

"Oh, Miss Gertrude! It is of no use to say flattering things to you; you always regard my compliments as jokes."

"I have told you, several times, that it was most useless to waste so much flattery upon me. I am glad you are beginning to realise it."

"Well, then, to ask a serious question, where were you this morning at half-past seven?"

"On my way to Boston in the cars."

"Is it possible?—so early! Why, I thought you went at ten. Then, all the time I was watching by the garden wall to say good-morning, you were half-a-dozen miles away. I wish I had not wasted that hour so; I might have spent it in sleeping."

"Very true, it is a great pity."

"And then half-an-hour more here this evening! How came you to keep me waiting so long?"

"I was not aware of doing so. I certainly did not take your visit to myself."

"My visit certainly was not meant for anyone else."

"Ben," said Mr. Graham, approaching rather abruptly, and taking part in the conversation, "are you fond of gardening? I thought I heard you just now speaking of roses?"

"Yes, sir; Miss Flint and I were having quite a discussion upon flowers—roses especially."

Gertrude, availing herself of Mr. Graham's approach, tried to escape and join the ladies at the sofa; but Mr. Bruce, who had risen on Mr. Graham's addressing him, saw her intention, and frustrated it by placing himself in the way, so that she could not pass him without positive rudeness. Mr. Graham continued, "I propose placing a small fountain in the vicinity of Miss Flint's flower garden; won't you walk down with me, and give your opinion of my plan?"

"Isn't it too dark, sir, to——"

"No, no, not at all; there is ample light for our purpose. This way, if you please;" and Mr. Bruce was compelled to follow where Mr. Graham led, though, in spite of his acquaintance with Paris manners, he made a wry face, and shook his head menacingly.

Gertrude was now permitted to relate to Mrs. Bruce the results of the shopping which she had undertaken on her account, and display the buttons, which proved very satisfactory. The gentlemen, soon returning, took seats near the sofa, and the conversation became general.

"Mr. Graham," said Mrs. Bruce, "I have been asking Emily about your visit to the south; and I think it will be a charming trip."

"I hope so, madame; it will be an excellent thing for Emily, and as Gertrude has never travelled, I anticipate a great deal of pleasure for her."

"Ah! then you are to be of the party, Miss Flint?"

"Of course," said Mr. Graham, without giving Gertrude a chance to speak for herself; "we depend upon Gertrude; couldn't get along without her."

"It will be delightful for you," continued Mrs. Bruce, her eyes still fixed on Gertrude.

"I did expect to go with Mr. and Miss Graham," answered Gertrude, "and looked forward to the journey with the greatest eagerness; but I have just decided that I must remain in Boston this winter."

"What are you talking about, Gertrude?" asked Mr. Graham. "What do you mean? This is all news to me."

"And to me, too, sir, or I should have informed you of it before. I supposed you expected me to accompany you, and there is nothing I should like so much. I should have told you before of the circumstances that now make it impossible; but they are

of quite recent occurrence."

"But we can't give you up, Gertrude; I won't hear of such a thing; you must go with us in spite of circumstances."

"I fear I shall not be able," said Gertrude, smiling pleasantly, but still retaining her firmness of expression; "you're very kind, sir, to wish it."

"Wish it!—I tell you I insist upon it. You are under my care, child, and I have a right to say what you shall do."

Mr. Graham was excited. Gertrude and Emily looked troubled, but neither spoke.

"Give me your reasons, if you have any," said Mr. Graham, vehemently, "and let me know what has put this strange notion into your head."

"I will explain it to you to-morrow, sir."

"To-morrow! I want to know now. Tell me what all this means? Here I plan my business, and make all my arrangements, to give up this winter to travelling—not so much on my own account as to please both of you, and, just as all is settled, and we are on the point of starting, Gertrude says that she has concluded not to go."

Emily undertook to explain Gertrude's motives, and ended by expressing her approbation of her course. As soon as she had finished, Mr. Graham, who had listened very impatiently, and interrupted her with many a "pish!" and "pshaw!" burst forth with redoubled indignation. "So Gerty prefers the Sullivans to us, and you seem to encourage her in it! I should like to know what they have ever done for her, compared with what I have done."

"They have been friends of hers for years, and now that they are in great distress, she does not feel as if she could leave them, and I confess I do not wonder at her decision."

"I do. She prefers to make a slave of herself in Mr. W.'s school, and a greater slave in Mrs. Sullivan's family, instead of staying with us, where she has been treated like

a lady, and like one of our own family."

"Oh, Mr. Graham!" said Gertrude, earnestly, "it is not a matter of choice, except as I feel it to be a duty."

"And what makes it a duty? Just because you used to live with them, and that boy out in Calcutta has sent you home a camel's-hair scarf and a cage full of miserable little birds, and written you letters, you must forfeit your own interest to take care of his sick relations! Can their claim compare with mine? Haven't I given you the best of educations, and spared not expense for your improvement and happiness?"

"I did not think, sir," said Gertrude, humbly, and yet with dignity, "of counting up the favours I had received, and measuring my conduct accordingly. In that case my obligations to you are immense, and you would certainly have the greatest claim upon my services."

"Services! I don't want your services, child. Mrs. Ellis can do quite as well as you can for Emily, or me either; but I like your company, and think it is very ungrateful in you to leave us, as you talk of doing."

"Father," said Emily, "I thought the object in giving Gertrude a good education was to make her independent of all the world, and not simply dependent upon us."

"Emily," said Mr. Graham, "I tell you it is a matter of feeling—you don't seem to look upon the thing in the light I do; but you are both against me, and I won't talk any more about it."

So saying, Mr. Graham went to his study, and was seen no more that night.

Poor Gertrude! Mr. Graham, who had been so generous, who had seldom or ever spoken harshly to her, and had always treated her with great indulgence, was now deeply offended. He had called her ungrateful; he felt that she had abused his kindness, and believed that he and Emily stood in her imagination secondary to other far less warm-hearted friends. Deeply wounded, she hastened to say good-night to the no less afflicted Emily, and, seeking her own room, gave way to

feelings that caused her a sleepless night.

CHAPTER XXI.

SELFISHNESS.

Left at three years of age dependent upon the charity of a world in which she was friendless and alone, Gertrude had, during her residence at Nan Grant's, found little of that charity. But, although her turbulent spirit rebelled at the treatment she received, she was then too young to reason upon the subject, or come to any conclusions upon the hardness and cruelty of humanity; and, had she done so, such impressions would have been effaced in the home of her kind foster-father.

And having, through a similar providence, found in Emily additional proof of the fact that the tie of kindred blood is not always needed to bind heart to heart in the closest bonds of sympathy and affection, she had hitherto, in her unusually happy experience, felt none of the evils that spring from dependence upon the bounty of strangers.

From Mr. Graham she had until now experienced only kindness. On her first coming to live with them, he had taken little notice of her, so long as she was quiet, well-mannered, and no trouble to anybody, had been indifferent about her. He observed that Emily was fond of the girl, and, though he wondered at her taste, was glad that she should be indulged. But he soon noticed in his daughter's favourite a quickness of mind and propriety of deportment which created an interest in her that soon increased to positive partiality, especially when he discovered her taste for gardening and her love of flowers. Emily formed no plan as to Gertrude's education to which she did not obtain a ready assent from her father; and Gertrude, grateful for so much bounty, spared no pains to evidence her sense of obligation and regard, by treating Mr. Graham with the greatest respect.

But, unfortunately for the continuance of these amicable relations, Mr. Graham had neither the disinterested forbearing spirit of Uncle True, nor the saintly patience and self-sacrifice of Emily. Mr. Graham was a liberal and highly respectable man; he had the reputation of being a high-minded and honourable man; and his conduct justified this report of him. But he was a selfish man, and often took one-sided views. He had supported and educated Gertrude—he liked her—she was the person whom he preferred for a travelling companion for himself and Emily—and he either could not or would not see that her duty lay in any other direction.

During a wakeful and restless night, Gertrude reviewed and considered her own circumstances. At first her only emotion was one of grief, but that gradually subsided, as other bitter thoughts rose up in her mind.

"What right," thought she, "has Mr. Graham to treat me this way—to tell me I shall go with him on his southern journey, and speak as if my other friends were ciphers in his estimation, and ought to be in my own? Does he consider my freedom is to be the price of my education, and am I no longer able to say yes or no? Emily does not think so; Emily, who loves and needs me a thousand times more than Mr. Graham, thinks I have acted rightly, and she assured me that it was my duty to carry out the plans I had formed. And my solemn promise to Willie! is that to be held for nothing? No, it would be tyranny in Mr. Graham to insist on my remaining with them, and I am glad I have resolved to break away from such thraldom. Besides, I was educated to teach, and Mr. W. says it is important to commence while my studies are fresh in my mind." So much said pride; and Gertrude's heart listened awhile to such suggestions. But not long. She had accustomed herself to view the conduct of others in that spirit of charity which she desired should be exercised towards her own, and milder thoughts took the place of these excited feelings.

"Perhaps," said she to herself, "it is, after all, pure kindness that prompted Mr. Graham's interference. He may think as Emily does, that I am undertaking too much.

It is impossible for him to know how strong my motives are, how deep I consider my obligations to the Sullivans, and how much I am needed by them at this time. I had no idea, either, that I was to be one of the party to the south; for though Emily talked as if she took it for granted, Mr. Graham never asked me to go, and I could not suppose it would be any great disappointment to him to refuse; but, after planning the journey to please us both, I do not wonder at his being annoyed. He probably feels, too, as if I had been under his guardianship so long that he has almost a right to decide upon my conduct. And he has been very indulgent to me—and I a stranger with no claims! Shall I then decide to give up my teaching, to go to the south, and leave Mrs. Sullivan to suffer, perhaps die, while I am away? No, that is impossible. I will never be such a traitor to my own heart, and my sense of right; sorry as I shall be to offend Mr. Graham, I must not allow his anger to turn me from my duty."

Having thus resolved to brave the tempest, and committed her cause to Him who judgeth righteously, Gertrude tried to compose herself to sleep. Dreams of a painful nature started her back to consciousness. In some of these visions she beheld Mr. Graham angry, and threatening her with his displeasure if she dared to thwart his plans; and then she seemed to see Willie, the same boyish youth from whom she had parted five years before, beckoning her with a sad countenance to the room where his pale mother lay in a swoon, as Gertrude had a few weeks before seen her. Exhausted by such harassing images, she at length gave up the attempt to obtain any rest, and rising, seated herself at the window, where, watching the approach of dawn, she found, in quiet self-communing, the courage which she felt would be requisite to carry her calmly and firmly through the next day—a day destined to witness her sad separation from Emily, and her farewell to Mr. Graham, which would probably be more distressing. The tyrannical disposition of Mr. Graham was well understood in his family, each member of which was accustomed to respect all his wishes and whims; and though he was always indulgent and kind, none ever

braved a temper which, when excited, was so violent. It cannot, then, be surprising that Gertrude's heart should have failed her when she stood, half-an-hour before breakfast-time, with the handle of the dining-room door in her hand, summoning all her energies for another meeting with the opposer of her plans. She paused but a moment, and then went in. Mr. Graham was sitting in his arm-chair, and on the breakfast-table lay the morning paper. It had been Gertrude's habit to read that paper aloud to the old gentleman at this same hour, and it was for that purpose she had now come. She advanced toward him with her usual "Good morning."

The salutation was returned in a constrained voice. She seated herself, and leaned forward to take the newspaper. But he placed his hand upon it to prevent her.

"I was going to read the news to you, sir."

"And I do not wish to have you read, or do anything else for me, until I know whether you have concluded to treat me with the respect I have a right to demand from you."

"I certainly never intended to treat you otherwise than with respect, Mr. Graham."

"When girls or boys set themselves up in opposition to those older and wiser than themselves, they manifest the greatest disrespect they are capable of; but I am willing to forgive the past, if you assure me, as I think you will, after a night's reflection, that you have returned to a right sense of your duty."

"I cannot say, sir, that I have changed my views with regard to what that duty is."

"Do you mean to tell me," asked Mr. Graham, rising from his chair, and speaking in a tone which made Gerty's heart quake, "do you mean to tell me that you have an idea of persisting in your folly?"

"Is it folly, sir, to do right?"

"Right! There is a great difference of opinion between you and me as to what is right in this case."

"But, Mr. Graham, I think if you knew all the circumstances, you would not blame my conduct. I have told Emily the reasons that influence me, and she——"

"Don't quote Emily to me!" interrupted Mr. Graham; "I don't doubt she'd give her head to anybody that asked for it; but I hope I know a little better what is due to myself; and I tell you plainly, Miss Gertrude Flint, without any more words in the matter, that if you leave my house, as you propose doing, you leave it with my displeasure; and that, you may find one of these days, it is no light thing to have incurred—unnecessarily too, as you are doing."

"I am very sorry to displease you, Mr. Graham, but——"

"No, you're not sorry; if you were, you would not walk straight in the face of my wishes," said Mr. Graham, who began to observe the expression of Gertrude's face, which, though troubled, had acquired additional firmness, instead of quailing before his severe and cutting words. "But I have said enough about a matter which is not worthy of so much notice. You can go or stay, as you please. I wish you to understand, if you go, I utterly withdraw my protection and assistance from you. You must take care of yourself, or trust to strangers. I suppose you expect your Calcutta friend will support you, perhaps come home and take you under his especial care; but if you think so, you know little of the world. I dare say he is married to an Indian by this time, and, if not, has forgotten you."

"Mr. Graham," said Gertrude, proudly, "Mr. Sullivan will not probably return to this country for many years, and I assure you I neither look to him nor anyone else for support; I intend to earn a maintenance for myself."

"A heroic resolve!" said Mr. Graham, contemptuously, "and pronounced with a dignity I hope you will be able to maintain. Am I to consider, then, that your mind is made up?"

"It is, sir," said Gertrude, not a little strengthened for the dreaded necessity of pronouncing her final resolution by Mr. Graham's sarcastic speeches.

"And you go?"

"I must. I believe it to be my duty, and am, therefore, willing to sacrifice my own comfort, and, what I assure you I value far more, your friendship."

Mr. Graham did not seem to take the least notice of the latter part of her remark, and so far forgot his usual politeness as to drown her voice in the violent ringing of the table-bell.

It was answered by Katy with the breakfast; and Emily and Mrs. Ellis coming, all seated themselves at the table, and the meal was commenced in unusual silence and constraint, for Emily had heard the loud tones of her father's voice, while Mrs. Ellis plainly saw that something unpleasant had occurred.

When Mr. Graham had finished eating a hearty breakfast, he turned to Mrs. Ellis, and invited her to accompany himself and Emily on their journey to the south, mentioning the probability that they should pass some weeks in Havana.

Mrs. Ellis accepted the invitation with pleasure, and asked a number of questions concerning the proposed route and length of absence; while Emily hid her agitated face behind her tea-cup; and Gertrude, who had lately been reading Letters from Cuba, and was aware that Mr. Graham knew the strong interest she felt in the place, pondered in her mind whether it could be possible that he could be guilty of the mean desire to vex and mortify her.

Breakfast over, Emily hastily sought her room, where she was joined by Gertrude. In answering Emily's inquiries as to the scene which had taken place, Gertrude forbore to repeat Mr. Graham's most bitter and wounding remarks; for she saw from her kind friend's countenance how deeply she participated in her own sense of wrong. She told her, however, that it was now well understood by Mr. Graham that she was to leave, and, as his sentiments towards her were far from kindly, she thought it best to go at once, especially as she could never be more needed by Mrs. Sullivan than at present. Emily saw the reasonableness of the proposal, assented to it, and agreed to

accompany her to town that afternoon; for, deeply sensitive at any unkindness manifested towards Gertrude, she preferred to have her depart thus abruptly, rather than encounter her father's contemptuous neglect. The remainder of the day was spent by Gertrude in packing and other preparations, while Emily sat by, counselling the future conduct of her adopted darling, lamenting the necessity of their separation, and exchanging with her reiterated assurances of undiminished affection.

"Oh, if you could only write to me, dear Emily, during your long absence, what a comfort it would be," exclaimed Gertrude.

"With Mrs. Ellis's assistance, my dear," replied Emily, "I will send you such news as I can of our movements; but, though you may not be able to hear much from me, you will be ever in my thoughts, and I shall never forget to commend my beloved child to the protection and care of One who will be to her a better friend than I can be."

In the course of the day Gertrude sought Mrs. Ellis, and astonished that lady by stating that she had come to have a few farewell words with her. Surprise, however, was soon superseded by the housekeeper's eagerness to expatiate upon the generosity of Mr. Graham, and the delights of the excursion in prospect. After wishing her a great deal of pleasure, Gertrude begged to hear from her by letter during her absence; to which request Mrs. Ellis only replied by asking if Gertrude thought a Thibet dress would be uncomfortable on the journey; and, when it was repeated with great earnestness, she, with equal unsatisfactoriness to the suppliant for epistolary favours, begged to know how many pairs of undersleeves she would probably require. Having responded to her questions, and at last gained her attention, Gertrude obtained from her a promise to write one letter, which would, she declared, be more than she had done for years.

Before leaving the house, Gertrude sought Mr. Graham's study, in hopes that he would take a friendly leave of her; but on her telling him that she had come to bid

him "Good-bye," he indistinctly muttered the simple words of that universal formula—so deep in its meaning when coming from the heart; so chilling when uttered, as on the present occasion, by stern and nearly closed lips—and turning his back upon her, took up the tongs to mend his fire. So she went away, with a tear in her eye and a sadness in her heart.

A far different scene awaited her in the upper kitchen, where she went to seek Mrs. Prime and Katy. "Bless yer soul, dear Miss Gertrude!" said the former, stumbling up the staircase which led from the lower room, and wiping her hands on her apron—"how we shall miss yer! Why, the house won't be worth livin' in when you're out of it. My gracious! if you don't come back, we shall all die out in a fortnight. Why, you're the life and soul of the place! But there, I guess you know what's right; so, if you must go, we must bear it—though Katy and I'll cry our eyes out, for aught I know."

"Sure, Miss Gairthrue," said Irish Katy, "and it's right gude in you to be afther comin' to bid us good-bye. I don't see how you gets memory to think of us all, and I'm shure ye'll never be betther off than what I wish yer. I can't but think, miss, it'll go to help yer along, that everybody's gude wishes and blessin' goes with yer."

"Thank you, Katy, thank you," said Gertrude, touched by the simple earnestness of these good friends. "You must come and see me some time in Boston; and you too, Mrs. Prime, I shall depend upon it. Good-bye;" and the good-bye that now fell upon Gertrude's ear was a hearty and a true one; it followed her through the hall, and as the carriage drove away she heard it mingling with the rattling of the vehicle.

CHAPTER XXII.

A FRIEND IN AFFLICTION.

Passing over Gertrude's parting with Emily, her cordial reception by Mrs. Sullivan,

and her commencement of school duties, we will record the events of a day in November, about two months after she left Mr. Graham's.

Rising with the sun, she made her neat toilet in a room so cold that her hands were half benumbed; nor did she omit, ere she began the labours of the day, to supplicate Heaven's blessing upon them. Then, noiselessly entering the adjoining apartment, where Mrs. Sullivan was still sleeping, she lit a fire, and performed a similar service at the cooking-stove, which stood in a comfortable room, where, now that the weather was cold, the family took their meals. The table was set for breakfast when Mrs. Sullivan entered, pale, thin, and feeble in her appearance, and wrapped in a large shawl.

"Gertrude," said she, "why did you let me sleep so late, while you are up and at work?"

"For the very best reason in the world, auntie; because I sleep all the early part of the night, and am wide awake at day-break, and with you it is quite the reverse. Besides, I like to get the breakfast; I make such beautiful coffee. Look!" said she, pouring some into a cup, and then lifting the lid of the coffee-pot, and pouring it back again; "see how clear it is! Don't you long for some of it?"

Mrs. Sullivan smiled, for, Uncle True having always preferred tea, Gertrude did not at first know how to make coffee.

"Now," said Gertrude, "I want you to sit down here and watch the tea-kettle boil, while I run and see if Mr. Cooper is ready to let me tie up his cue."

She went, leaving Mrs. Sullivan to think what a good girl she was; and presently returning with the old man, she placed a chair for him, and having waited while he seated himself, and then pinned a napkin about his throat, she proceeded to place the breakfast on the table.

While Mrs. Sullivan poured out the coffee, Gertrude removed the skin from a baked potato, and the shell from a boiled egg, and placing both on the plate destined for

Mr. Cooper, handed him his breakfast in a state of preparation which obviated the difficulty the old man experienced in performing these tasks for himself. Poor Mrs. Sullivan had no appetite, and it was with difficulty Gertrude persuaded her to eat anything; but a few fried oysters, unexpectedly placed before her, proved such a temptation that she was induced to eat several, with a degree of relish she rarely felt for any article of food. As Gertrude gazed at her languid face, she realized, more than ever, the change which had come over the active little woman; and confident that nothing but positive disease could have effected such a transformation, she resolved that not another day should pass without her seeing a physician.

Breakfast over, there were dishes to wash, rooms to be put in order, dinner to be partially prepared; and all this Gertrude saw accomplished, chiefly through her own labour, before she went to re-arrange her dress, previous to her departure for the school where she had now been some weeks assistant teacher. A quarter before nine she looked in at the kitchen door, and said, in a cheering tone, to the old man, who was cowering gloomily over the fire—"Come, Mr. Cooper, won't you go over and superintend the new church a little while this morning? Mr. Miller will be expecting you; he said yesterday that he depended on your company when at work."

The old man rose, and taking his great-coat from Gertrude, put it on with her assistance, and accompanied her in a mechanical sort of way, which implied great indifference about going. As they walked in silence down the street, Gertrude could not but resolve in her mind the singular coincidence which had thus made her the almost daily companion of another infirm old man; nor could she fail to draw a comparison between the warm-hearted Uncle True, and the gloomy Paul Cooper. Unfavorable as the comparison was to the latter, it did not diminish the kindness of Gertrude towards her present charge, who was in her eyes an object of sincere compassion. They soon reached the new church—a very handsome edifice. It was not yet finished, and a number of workmen were completing the interior. A man with a hod full of mortar preceded Gertrude and her companion up the steps which

led to the main entrance, but stopped inside the porch, on hearing himself addressed by name, and turned to respond to the well-known voice. "Good morning, Miss Flint," said he. "I hope you're very well, this fine day. Ah! Mr. Cooper, you've come to help me a little, I see—that's right. We can't go on very well without you—you're so used to the place. Here, sir, if you'll come with me I'll show you what has been done since you were here last; I want to know how you think we are getting along."

So saying, he was walking away with the old sexton; but Gertrude asked him if he would see Mr. Cooper safe home when he passed Mrs. Sullivan's house on his way to dinner.

"Certainly, Miss Flint," replied the man, "with all pleasure; he has usually gone with me readily, when you have left him in my care." Gertrude then hastened to the school, rejoicing that Mr. Cooper would be safe during the morning; and that Mrs. Sullivan would have the quiet she so much needed.

This man was a respectable mason, who had often been in Mr. Graham's employ, and whose good-will Gertrude had won by the kindness she had shown his family during the previous winter, when they were sick. In her daily walk past the church, she had oft seen Mr. Miller at work, and it occurred to her that, if she could awaken in Mr. Cooper's mind an interest in the new structure, he might find amusement in watching the workmen. She had some difficulty in persuading him to visit a building to the erection of which he had been opposed. Once there, he became interested in the work, and as Mr. Miller tried to make him comfortable, and made him believe that he was useful, he gradually acquired a habit of passing the greater part of every morning in watching the workmen. Sometimes Gertrude called for him on her return from school; and sometimes Mr. Miller took him home.

Since Gertrude had been at Mrs. Sullivan's there was a great alteration in Mr. Cooper. He was more manageable, and manifested less irritability, and his favourable change, together with the cheering influence of Gertrude's society, had

produced a beneficial effect upon Mrs. Sullivan; but within the last few days, her increased debility, and two sudden attacks of faintness, had awakened Gertrude's fears. She determined, as soon as she should be released from her school duties, to seek Dr. Jeremy and request his attendance.

Of Gertrude's school-duties, she was found by Mr. W. competent to the performance of them, and that she met with those trials only which all teachers are subjected, from the idleness or stupidity of their pupils. On this day she was detained to a later hour than usual, and the clock struck two as she was ringing Dr. Jeremy's door-bell. The girl who opened the door knew Gertrude, and telling her that, although the doctor was just going to dinner, she thought he would see her, asked her into the office. He advanced to meet Gertrude, holding out both his hands. "Gertrude Flint, I declare!" exclaimed he. "Why, I'm glad to see you, my girl. Why haven't you been here before, I should like to know?" Gertrude explained that she was living with friends, one of whom was very old, the other an invalid; and that so much of her time was occupied in school, that she had no opportunity for visiting.

"Poor excuse," said the doctor; "poor excuse. But, now we've got you here, we shan't let you go very soon!" and going to the foot of the staircase, he called out loudly, "Mrs. Jeremy! Mrs. Jeremy! come down to dinner as quick as you can, and put on your best cap—we've got company.—Poor soul!" added he, in a lower tone, smiling, "she can't hurry, can she, Gerty?—she's so fat."

Gertrude protested against staying to dinner, declaring she must hasten home, and announcing Mrs. Sullivan's illness and the object of her visit.

"An hour can't make much difference," insisted the doctor. "You must stay and dine with me, and then I'll take you with me in the buggy." Gertrude hesitated; the sky had clouded over, and a few flakes of snow were falling; she should have an uncomfortable walk; and, moreover, it would be better for her to accompany the doctor, as the street in which she lived was principally composed of new houses, not

yet numbered, and he might have some difficulty in finding the right tenement. Mrs. Jeremy now entered. Fat she certainly was, uncommonly fat, and flushed with the excitement of dressing. She kissed Gertrude, and then, seeing that no one else was present, exclaimed, glancing reproachfully at the doctor—"Why, Dr. Jeremy!—an't you ashamed of yourself? I never will believe you again; you made me think there was some great stranger here."

"And pray, Mrs. Jeremy, who's a greater stranger in this house than Gerty Flint?"

"Sure enough!" said Mrs. Jeremy. "Gertrude is a stranger, and I've got a scolding in store for her on that very account; but, you know, Dr. Jeremy, I shouldn't have put on my lilac-and-pink for Gertrude to see; she likes me just as well in my old yellow, if she did tell me, when I bought it, the saucy girl, that I'd selected the ugliest cap in Boston. Do you remember that Gerty?" Gerty laughed heartily at the recollection of an amusing scene that took place when she went shopping with Mrs. Jeremy. "But come, Gerty, dinner's ready; take off your cloak and bonnet, and come into the dining-room; the doctor has much to say, and has been wanting dreadfully to see you."

They had been sitting some minutes without a word having been spoken, when the doctor suddenly commenced laughing till tears came into his eyes. Gertrude looked at him, inquiringly, and Mrs. Jeremy said, "There, Gertrude!—for a whole week he had just such a laughing fit, two or three times a-day. I was as much astonished at first as you are; and I don't understand now what could have happened between him and Mr. Graham that was so very funny."

"Come, wife," said the doctor, "don't you forestall my communication. I want to tell the story myself. I don't suppose, Gertrude, you've lived five years at Mr. Graham's without finding out what a cantankerous, opinionative, obstinate old hulk he is!"

"Doctor!" said Mrs. Jeremy, "be careful."

"I don't care, wife; I'll speak my mind with regard to Mr. Graham; and Gertrude,

here, has done the same, I haven't a particle of doubt, only she's a good girl, and won't say so."

"I never saw anything that looked like it," said Mrs. Jeremy; "I've seen as much of him as most folks. I meet him in the street almost every day, and he looks as smiling as a basket of chips, and makes a beautiful bow."

"I dare say," said the doctor; "Gertrude and I know what gentlemanly manners he has when one does not walk in the very teeth of his opinions—eh, Gertrude!—but when one does——"

"In talking politics, for instance," suggested Mrs. Jeremy. "It's your differences with him on politics that have set you against him so."

"No, it isn't," replied the doctor. "A man may get angry talking politics, and be a good-natured man too. I get angry myself on politics, but that isn't the sort of thing I refer to. It's Graham's wanting to lay down the law to everybody that comes within ten miles of him that I can't endure; his dictatorial way of acting as if he were the Grand Mogul of Cochin China. I thought he'd improved of late years; he had a serious lesson enough in that sad affair of poor Philip Amory's; but I believe he's been trying the old game again. Ha! ha! ha!" shouted the good doctor, leaning forward and giving Gertrude a light tap on the shoulder—"wasn't I glad when I found he'd met at last with a reasonable opposition! and that, too, where he least expected it!"

Gertrude looked her astonishment at his evident knowledge of the misunderstanding between herself and Mr. Graham. "You wonder where I got my information; I'll tell you. It was partly from Graham himself; and what diverts me is to think how hard the old chap tried to hide his defeat, and persuade me that he'd had his own way, when I saw through him, and knew that he'd found his match in you."

"Dr. Jeremy," said Gertrude, "I hope you don't think——"

"No, my dear, I don't think you a professional pugilist; but I consider you a girl of

sense—one who knows what's right—and will do what's right, in spite of Mr. Graham; and when you hear my story you will know the grounds on which I formed my opinion with regard to the course things had taken. One day—about two months ago—I was summoned to go and see one of Mr. W.'s children, who had an attack of croup. Mr. W. was talking with me, when he was called away to see a visitor, and on his return he mentioned that he had secured your services in his school. I knew Emily intended you for a teacher, and I was thankful you had got so good a situation. At Mr. W.'s door I encountered Mr. Graham, and he entertained me as we went down the street with an account of his plan for the winter. 'But Gertrude Flint is not going with you,' said I.—'Gertrude!' said he; 'certainly she is.'—'Are you sure of that?' I asked. 'Have you invited her?'—'Invited her! No,' was his answer; 'but, of course, I know she will go, and be glad of the opportunity; it isn't every girl that is so fortunate.' Now, Gerty, I felt provoked at his way of speaking, and I answered, in as confident a tone as his own, 'I doubt whether she will accept the invitation.' Upon that, Mr. Dignity straightened up, and such a speech as he made! I never can recall it without being amused, especially when I think of the come-down that followed so soon after. I can't repeat it; but one would have thought to hear him that it was not only impossible you should oppose his wishes, but actual treason in me to suggest such a thing. I knew better than to tell what I had just heard from Mr. W., but I never felt a greater curiosity about anything than I did to know how the matter would end. Two or three times I planned to drive to see Emily, and hear the result; but a doctor never can call a day his own, and I got prevented. On Sunday I heard Mrs. Prime's voice in the kitchen (her niece lives here), and down I went to make my inquiries. She told me the truth, I rather think; though not, perhaps, all the particulars. It was not more than a day or two after that before I saw Graham. 'Ah,' said I; 'when do you start?'—'To-morrow,' replied he. 'Really,' I exclaimed; 'then I shan't see your ladies again. Will you take a little package from me to Gertrude?'—'I know nothing about Gertrude,' said he, stiffly.—'What!' rejoined I, affecting great surprise, 'has Gertrude

left you?'—'She has,' answered he. 'And dared,' continued I, 'to treat you with such disrespect—to trifle so with your dignity?'—'Dr. Jeremy!' exclaimed he, 'I don't wish to hear her mentioned; she has behaved as ungratefully as she has unwisely.'—'Why, about the gratitude, Graham,' said I, 'I believe you said it would only be an additional favour on your part if you took her with you, and I think it is wisdom in her to make herself independent at home. But I really am sorry for you and Emily; you will miss her so much.'—'We can dispense with your sympathy, sir,' answered he; 'for that which is no loss.'—'Ah! really,' I replied; 'now, I was thinking Gertrude's society would be quite a loss.'—'Mrs. Ellis goes with us,' said he, with emphasis, that seemed to say her company compensated for all deficiencies.—'Ah!' said I, 'charming woman, Mrs. Ellis!' Graham looked annoyed, for he is aware that Mrs. Ellis is my antipathy."

"Well, you ought to have known better, Dr. Jeremy," said his kind-hearted wife, "than to have attacked a man so on his weak point: it was only exciting his temper for nothing."

"I was taking up the cudgels for Gertrude, wife."

"And I don't believe Gertrude wants you to take up the cudgels for her. I have no manner of doubts that she has the kindest of feelings towards Mr. Graham, this blessed minute."

"I have, Mrs. Jeremy," said Gertrude; "he has been a most generous and indulgent friend to me."

"Except when you wanted to have your own way," suggested the doctor.

"Which I seldom did when it was in opposition to his wishes. I always considered it my duty to submit to him, until at last a higher duty compelled me to do otherwise."

"And then, my dear," said Mrs. Jeremy, "I dare say it pained you to displease him; and that is a right woman's feeling, and one that Dr. Jeremy, in his own heart, can't but approve of, though one would think, to hear him talk, that he considered it pretty

in a young girl to take satisfaction in browbeating an old gentleman. But don't let us talk any more about it; he has had his say, and now it's my turn. I want to hear how you are situated, Gerty, where you live, and how you like teaching."

Gertrude answered all these questions: and the doctor, who had heard Mrs. Sullivan spoken of as a friend of True's and Gerty's, made many inquiries as to her health. It was now snowing fast, and Gertrude's anxiety to return home in good season being very manifest to her kind host and hostess, they urged no further delay, and, after she had promised to repeat her visit, she drove away with the doctor.

CHAPTER XXIII.

CARES MULTIPLIED.

"I have been thinking," said Gertrude, as she drew near home, "how we shall manage, doctor, so as not to alarm Mrs. Sullivan."

"What's going to alarm her?" asked the doctor.

"You, if she knows at once you are a physician. I think I had better introduce you as a friend, who brought me home in the storm."

"Oh! so we are going to act a little farce, are we? Stage manager, Gertrude Flint—unknown stranger, Dr. Jeremy. I'm ready. What shall I say first?"

"I leave that to a wiser head than mine, doctor, and trust entirely to your own discretion to obtain some knowledge of her symptoms, and only gradually disclose to her that you are a physician."

"Ah, yes! pretend at first to be only a private individual of an inquiring mind. I can manage it." As they opened the door, Mrs. Sullivan rose from her chair with a troubled countenance, and hardly waited for the introduction to Gertrude's friend before she asked if Mr. Cooper were not with them.

"No, indeed," replied Gertrude. "Hasn't he come home?"

Upon Mrs. Sullivan saying that she had not seen him since morning, Gertrude informed her, with a composure she was far from feeling, that Mr. Miller had undertaken the care of him, and could, undoubtedly, account for his absence. She would seek him at once.

"Oh, I'm so sorry," said Mrs. Sullivan, "that you should have to go out again in such a storm; but I feel very anxious about grandpa—don't you, Gerty?"

"Not very: I think he's safe in the church. But I'll go for him at once; you know, auntie, I never mind the weather."

"Then take my great shawl, dear." And Mrs. Sullivan went to the closet for her shawl, giving Gertrude an opportunity to beg of Dr. Jeremy that he would await her return; for she knew that any unusual agitation of mind would often cause an attack of faintness in Mrs. Sullivan, and was afraid to have her left alone, to dwell with alarm upon Mr. Cooper's prolonged absence.

It was a very disagreeable afternoon, and already growing dark. Gertrude hastened along the wet footpath, exposed to the blinding storm, and, after passing through several streets, gained the church. She went into the building, now nearly deserted by workmen, saw that Mr. Cooper was not there, and began to fear she should gain no information concerning him, when she met Mr. Miller coming from the gallery. He looked surprised at seeing her, and asked if Mr. Cooper had not returned home. She answered in the negative, and he informed her that his efforts were insufficient to persuade the old man to go home at dinner-time, and that he had therefore taken him to his own house; he had supposed that long before this hour he would have been induced to allow one of the children to accompany him to Mrs. Sullivan's.

As it seemed probable that he was still at Mr. Miller's, Gertrude proceeded thither at once. After an uncomfortable walk, she reached her destination. She knocked at the door, but there was no response, and after waiting a moment, she opened it, and went in. Through another door there was the sound of children's voices, and so much

noise that she believed it impossible to make herself heard, and, therefore, without further ceremony, entered the room. A band of startled children dispersed at the sight of a stranger, and ensconced themselves in corners; and Mrs. Miller, in dismay at the untidy appearance of her kitchen, hastily pushed back a clothes-horse against the wall, thereby disclosing to view the very person Gertrude had come to seek, who, in his usual desponding attitude, sat cowering over the fire. But, before she could advance to speak to him, her attention was arrested by a most unexpected sight. Placed against the side of the room, opposite the door, was a narrow bed, in which some person seemed to be sleeping. Hardly, however, had Gertrude presented herself in the doorway before the figure suddenly raised itself, gazed fixedly at her, lifted a hand as if to ward off her approach, and uttered a piercing shriek.

The voice and countenance were not to be mistaken, and Gertrude, pale and trembling, felt something like a revival of her old dread as she beheld the well-known features of Nan Grant.

"Go away! go away!" cried Nan, as Gertrude advanced into the room. Again Gertrude paused, for the wildness of Nan's eyes and the excitement of her countenance were such that she feared to excite her further. Mrs. Miller now came forward and said, "Why, Aunt Nancy! what is the matter? This is Miss Flint, one of the best young ladies in the land."

"No, 'tan't!" said Nan. "I know better."

Mrs. Miller now drew Gertrude aside into the shadow of the clothes-horse, and conversed with her in an undertone, while Nan, leaning on her elbow, and peering after them, maintained a watchful, listening attitude. Gertrude was informed that Mrs. Miller was a niece of Ben Grant's, but had seen nothing of him or his wife for years, until, a few days previous. Nan had come there in a state of the greatest destitution, and threatened with the fever under which she was now suffering. "I could not refuse her a shelter," said Mrs. Miller; "but, as you see, I have no

accommodation for her; and it's not only bad for me to have her sick here in the kitchen, but, what with the noise of the children, and all the other discomforts, I'm afraid the poor old thing will die."

"Have you a room that you could spare above-stairs?" asked Gertrude.

"Why, there's our Jane," answered Mrs. Miller; "she's a good-hearted girl as ever lived; she said, right off, she'd give up her room to poor Aunt Nancy, and she'd sleep in with the other children. I don't feel, though, as if we could afford to keep another fire agoing, and so I thought we'd put a bed here for a day or two, and just see how she got along. But she's looked pretty bad to-day; and now, I'm thinking from her actions that she's considerable out of her head."

"She ought to be kept quiet," said Gertrude; "and, if you will have a fire in Jane's room at my expense, and do what you can to make her comfortable, I'll send a physician here to see her." Mrs. Miller was beginning to express the warmest gratitude, but Gertrude interrupted her with saying, "Don't thank me, Mrs. Miller; Nancy is not a stranger to me; I have known her before, and, perhaps, feel more interested in her than you do yourself."

Mrs. Miller looked surprised; but Gertrude could not stop to enter into a further explanation. Anxious to speak to Nan, and assure her of her friendly intentions, she went up to the side of the bed, in spite of the wild and glaring eyes which were fixed steadily upon her. "Nan," said she, "do you know me?"

"Yes! yes!" replied Nan, in a half-whisper, speaking quickly, and catching her breath; "what have you come for?"

"To do you good, I hope."

But Nan still looked incredulous, and in the same undertone, and with the same nervous accent, inquired, "Have you seen Gerty? Where is she?"

"She is well," answered Gertrude, astonished at the question, for she had supposed herself recognised.

"What did she say about me?"

"She says that she forgives and pities you, and is in hopes to do something to help you and make you well."

"Did she?" said the sick woman; "then you won't kill me?"

"Kill you?—No, indeed. We are in hopes to make you comfortable and cure you."

Mrs. Miller, who had been preparing a cup of tea, now drew near with it in her hand. Gertrude took it and offered it to Nan, who drank eagerly of it, staring at her over the edge of the cup. When she had finished, she threw herself heavily upon the pillow, and began muttering some indistinct sentences, the only distinguishable word being the name of her son Stephen. Finding the current of her thoughts thus apparently diverted, Gertrude now feeling in haste to return and relieve Dr. Jeremy, who had so kindly agreed to stay with Mrs. Sullivan, moved a little from the bedside, saying as she did so, "Good-bye, I will come and see you again."

"You won't hurt me?" said Nan, starting up.

"Oh, no. I will bring you something you will like."

"Don't bring Gerty here with you! I don't want to see her."

"I will come alone," replied Gertrude.

Nan now laid down, and did not speak again while Gertrude remained in the house, though she watched her steadily until she was outside the door. Mr. Cooper made no objection to accompanying his young guide, and though the severity of the storm was such that they did not escape a thorough wetting, they reached home in safety.

Dr. Jeremy, seated with his feet upon the fender, had the contented appearance of one who is quite at home. He had been talking with Mrs. Sullivan about the people of a country town where they had both passed some time in their childhood, and the timid woman had come to feel so much at her ease in the society of the social and entertaining physician, that, though he had accidentally disclosed his profession, she

allowed him to question her upon the state of her health, without any of the alarm she had fancied she should feel at the sight of a doctor. By the time Gertrude returned, he had made himself well acquainted with the case, and was prepared, on Mrs. Sullivan's leaving the room, to provide dry clothes for her father, to report to Gertrude his opinion.

"Gertrude," said he, as soon as the door was shut, "that's a very sick woman."

"Do you think so, Dr. Jeremy?" said Gertrude, much alarmed, and sinking into the nearest chair.

"I do," replied he. "I wish I had seen her six months ago."

"Why, doctor? Do you date her illness so far back as that?"

"Yes, and much farther. She has borne up under the gradual progress of a disease which is now, I fear, beyond the aid of medical treatment."

"Dr. Jeremy," said Gertrude, "you do not mean to tell me that auntie is going to die and leave me, and her poor old father, and without ever seeing Willie again, too? Oh, I had hoped it was not nearly so bad as that!"

"Do not be alarmed, Gertrude," said the doctor. "I did not mean to frighten you;—she may live some time yet. I can judge better of her case in a day or two. But it is absolutely unsafe for you to be here alone with these two friends of yours—to say nothing of its overtasking your strength. Has not Mrs. Sullivan the means to keep a nurse, or even a domestic? She tells me she has no one."

"Yes, indeed," answered Gerty; "her son supplies her wants most generously. I know that she never draws nearly the whole of the amount he is anxious she should expend."

"Then you must speak to her about getting some one to assist you at once; for, if you do not, I shall."

"I intend to do it," said Gertrude. "I have seen the necessity for some time past; but

she has such a dread of strangers, that I hated to propose it."

"Nonsense," said the doctor; "that's only imagination in her; she would soon get used to being waited upon."

Mrs. Sullivan now returned, and Gertrude, giving an account of her unexpected re-encounter with Nan Grant, begged Dr. Jeremy to go the next day and see her. "It will be a visit of charity," said she, "for she is probably penniless; and, though staying with your old patients, the Millers, she is but distantly connected, and has no claim upon them. That never makes any difference with you, however, I know very well."

"Not a bit, not a bit," answered the doctor. "I'll go and see her to-night, if the case requires it, and to-morrow I shall look in to report how she is, and hear the rest of what Mrs. Sullivan was telling me about her wakeful nights. But, Gertrude, do you go, child, and change your wet shoes and stockings. I shall have you on my hands next."

Mrs. Sullivan was delighted with Dr. Jeremy. "So different," said she, "from common doctors" (a portion of humanity for which she seemed to have an unaccountable aversion); "so social and friendly! Why, I felt, Gertrude, as if I could talk to him about my sickness as freely as I can to you."

Gertrude joined in the praises bestowed upon her much-valued friend, and it was tea-time before Mrs. Sullivan was weary of the subject. After the evening meal was over, and Mr. Cooper had been persuaded to retire to rest, while Mrs. Sullivan, reclining on the sofa, was enjoying what she always termed her happiest hour, Gertrude broached the subject recommended by Dr. Jeremy. Contrary to her expectations, Mrs. Sullivan no longer objected to the proposal of introducing a domestic into the family. She was convinced of her own incompetency to perform any active labour, and was equally opposed to the exertion on Gertrude's part which had, during the last week, been requisite. Gertrude suggested Jane Miller as a girl

well suited to their wants, and it was agreed that she should be applied for on the next morning.

One more glance at Gertrude, and we shall have followed her to the conclusion of the day. She is alone. It is ten o'clock, and the house is still. Mr. Cooper is sound asleep. Gertrude has just listened at his door, and heard his loud breathing. Mrs. Sullivan, under the influence of a soothing draught recommended by Dr. Jeremy, has fallen into an unusually quiet slumber. The little Calcutta birds, ten in number, that occupy a large cage in the window, are nestled side by side on their slender perch, and Gertrude has thrown a warm covering over them, that they might not suffer from the cold night air. She has locked the doors, made all things safe and comfortable, and now sits down to read, to meditate, and pray. Her trials and cares are multiplying. A great grief stares her in the face, and a great responsibility; but she shrinks not from either. No! on the contrary, she thanks God that she is here; that she had the resolution to forsake pleasure and ease, and in spite of her own weakness and man's wrath, to place herself in the front of life's battle, and bravely wait its issues. She thanks God that she knows where to look for help. But, though her heart is brave and her faith firm, she has a woman's tender nature; and, as she sits alone she weeps—weeps for herself, and for him who, far away in a foreign land, is counting the days, the months, and years which shall restore him to a mother he is destined never to see again. But remembering that she is to stand in the place of a child to that parent, and that her hand must soothe the pillow of the invalid, and minister to all her wants, comes the stern necessity of self-control—a necessity to which Gertrude has long since learned to submit—and, rallying all her calmness and fortitude, she wipes away the tears, and commends herself to Him who is strength to the weak and comfort to the sorrowing.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE VISION.

It was fortunate for Gertrude that the vacation at Mr. W.'s school was approaching, when she would be more at leisure to attend to her multiplied cares. She considered herself favoured in obtaining the services of Jane, who consented to come and help Miss Gertrude. She did not, she said, exactly like living out, but couldn't refuse a young lady who had been so good to them in times past. Gertrude had feared that, with Nan Grant sick in the house, Mrs. Miller would not be able to give up her eldest daughter; but Mary, a second girl, having returned home unexpectedly, one of them could be spared. Under Gertrude's tuition, Jane was able to relieve Mrs. Sullivan of her household duties, and to leave Gertrude at liberty to visit Nan, whose fever rendered her claim for aid the most imperative. In Gertrude's still vivid recollection of her former sufferings under Nan there was no bitterness, no revenge. If she remembered the past, it was only to pity and forgive her persecutor.

Therefore, night after night found her watching by the bedside of the sick woman, who, still delirious, had entirely lost the dread she had at first seemed to feel at her presence. Nan talked much of little Gerty—sometimes in a way that led Gertrude to believe herself recognised, but more frequently as if the child were supposed to be absent; and it was not until a long time after that Gertrude was led to adopt the correct supposition, which was, that she had been mistaken for her mother, whom she much resembled, and whom, though tended in her last sickness by Nan herself, the fevered and conscience-stricken sufferer believed had come back to claim her child at her hands. It was only the continued assurances of good-will on Gertrude's part, and her unwearied efforts to soothe and comfort her, that finally led Nan to the belief that the injured mother had found her child in safety, and was ignorant of the wrongs and unkindness she had endured.

One night—it was the last of Nan's life—Gertrude, who had scarcely left her during the day, and was still watching, heard her own name mingled with those of others in

a few rapid sentences. She listened intently, for she was always in hopes, during these ravings, to gain some information concerning her own early life. Her name was not repeated, however, and for some time the muttering of Nan's voice was indistinct. Then, suddenly starting up and addressing herself to some imaginary person, she shouted aloud, "Stephie! Stephie! give me back the watch, and tell me what you did with the rings?—They will ask—those folks!—and what shall I tell them?" Then, after a pause, she said, in a more feeble, but equally earnest voice, "No, no, Stephie, I never'll tell—I never, never will!" The moment the words had left her lips, she started, turned, saw Gertrude standing by the bedside, and with a frightful look, shrieked, rather than asked, "Did you hear? Did you hear?—You did," continued she, "and you'll tell! Oh, if you do!" She was here preparing to spring from the bed, but overcome with exhaustion, sunk back on the pillow. Summoning Mr. and Mrs. Miller, the agitated Gertrude, believing that her own presence was too exciting, left the dying woman to their care, and sought another part of the house. Learning, about an hour afterwards, from Mrs. Miller, that Nan had become comparatively calm, but seemed near her end, Gertrude thought it best not to enter the room again; and, sitting down by the kitchen fire, pondered over the strange scene she had witnessed. Day was just dawning when Mrs. Miller came to tell her that Nan had breathed her last.

Gerty's work of mercy, forgiveness, and Christian love being thus finished, she hastened home to recruit her strength, and fortify herself for the labour and suffering yet in store for her. In three weeks from Nan Grant's death, Paul Cooper was smitten by the Destroyer's hand, and he, too, was laid to his last rest; and though the deepest feelings of Gertrude's heart were not in either case fully awakened, it was no slight call upon the mental and physical endurance of a girl of eighteen to bear up under the self-imposed duties caused by each event, and that, too, at a time when her mind was racked by the apprehension of a new and more intense grief. Emily's absence was also a sore trial to her, for she was accustomed to rely upon her for advice and

counsel, and in seasons of peculiar distress, to learn patience and submission. Only one letter had been received from the travellers, and that, written by Mrs. Ellis, contained little that was satisfactory. It was written from Havana, where they were boarding in a house kept by an American lady, and crowded with visitors from Boston, New York, and other northern cities.

"It an't so very pleasant, after all, Gertrude," wrote Mrs. Ellis, "and I wish we were safe home again; and not on my own account either, so much as Emily's. She feels kind of strange here; and no wonder, for it's a dreadful uncomfortable sort of a place. The windows have no glass about them, but are grated like a prison; and there is not a carpet in the house, nor a fire-place, though sometimes the mornings are cold. There's a widow here, with a brother and some nieces. The widow is a flaunting kind of a woman, that I begin to think is either setting her cap for Mr. Graham, or means to make an old fool of him. She is one of your loud-talking women, that dress up a good deal, and like to take the lead; and Mr. Graham is silly enough to follow after her party, and go to all sorts of rides and excursions;—it's so ridiculous—and he over sixty-five years old! Emily and I have pretty much done going into the parlour, for these gay folks don't take any sort of notice of us. Emily doesn't say a word, or complain a bit, but I know she is not happy here, and would be glad to be back in Boston; and so should I, if it wasn't for that horrid steamboat. I liked to have died with sea-sickness, Gertrude, coming out; and I dread going home so, that I don't know what to do."

Gertrude wrote frequently to Emily, but, as Miss Graham was dependent upon Mrs. Ellis's eyesight, and the letters must, therefore, be subject to her scrutiny, she could not express her innermost thoughts and feelings as she was wont to do in conversation with her sympathising and indulgent friend. Every Indian mail brought news from William Sullivan, who, prosperous in business, and rendered happy even in his exile by the belief that the friends he loved best were in the enjoyment of the fruits of his exertions, wrote always in a strain of cheerfulness.

One Sabbath afternoon, a few weeks after Mr. Cooper's death, found Gertrude with an open letter in her hand, the numerous post-marks upon the outside of which proclaimed from whence it came. It had that day been received, and Mrs. Sullivan, as she lay stretched upon the couch, had been listening for the third time to the reading of its contents. The bright hopes expressed by her son, and the gay tone in which he wrote, all unconscious of the cloud of sorrow that was gathering for him, formed so striking a contrast to her own reflections, that she lay with her eyes closed, and oppressed with an unwonted degree of sadness; while Gertrude, as she glanced at the passage in which Willie dilated upon the "joy of once more clasping in his arms the dear mother whom he so longed to see again," and then turned her gaze upon the wasted form and cheek of that mother, felt a chill at her heart. Dr. Jeremy's first fears were confirmed, and, her disease still further aggravated by the anxiety which attended her father's sickness and death, Mrs. Sullivan was rapidly passing away.

Whether she was herself aware of this Gertrude had not yet been able to determine. She had never spoken upon the subject, or intimated a conviction of her approaching end; and Gertrude was almost inclined to believe that she was deceiving herself with the expectation of recovery. All doubt of this was soon removed; for after remaining a short time engaged in deep thought, or perhaps in prayer, Mrs. Sullivan opened her eyes, fixed them upon the young attendant, and said, in a calm, distinct voice—"Gertrude, I shall never see Willie again." Gertrude made no reply.

"I wish to write and tell him so myself, or, rather, if you will write for me, I should like to tell you what to say; and I feel that no time is to be lost, for I am failing fast, and may not long have strength enough to do it. It will devolve upon you, my child, to let him know when all is over; but you have had too many sad duties already, and it will spare you somewhat to have me prepare him to hear bad news. Will you commence a letter to-day?"

"Certainly, auntie, if you think it best."

"I do, Gerty. What you wrote by the last mail was my father's sickness and death; and there was nothing mentioned likely to alarm him on my account, was there?"

"Nothing at all."

"Then it is time he should be forewarned, poor boy! I do not need Dr. Jeremy to tell me that I am dying."

"Did he tell you so?" asked Gertrude, as she went to her desk, and began to arrange her writing materials.

"No, Gerty! he was too prudent for that; but I told him and he did not contradict me. You have known it some time, have you not?" inquired she, gazing earnestly in the face of Gertrude.

"Some weeks," replied Gertrude, as she spoke imprinting a kiss upon the pale brow of the sufferer.

"Why did you not tell me?"

"Why should I, dear auntie?" said Gertrude. "I knew the Lord could never call you at a time when your lamp would not be trimmed and burning."

"Feebly, it burns feebly!" said she.

"Whose, then, is bright," said Gertrude, "if yours be dim! Have you not, for years past, been a living lesson of piety? Unless it be Emily, auntie, I know of no one who seems so fit for heaven."

"Oh, no, Gerty! I am a sinful creature, full of weakness; much as I long to meet my Saviour, my earthly heart pines with the vain desire for one more sight of my boy, and all my dreams of heaven are mingled with the aching regret that the one blessing I most craved on earth has been denied me."

"Oh, auntie!" exclaimed Gertrude, "we are all human! Until the mortal puts on immortality, how can you cease to think of Willie, and long for his presence in this

trying hour! It cannot be a sin—that which is so natural!"

"I do not know, Gerty; perhaps it is not; and, if it be, I trust before I go hence, I shall be blessed with a spirit of perfect submission, to atone for the occasional murmuring of a mother's heart? Read to me, my dear, some holy words of comfort; you always seem to open the good book at the passage I most need. It is sinful, indeed, to me, Gertrude, to indulge the least repining, blessed as I am in the love and care of one who is dear to me as a daughter!"

Gertrude took her Bible, and opening it at the Gospel of St. Mark, her eye fell upon the account of Our Saviour's agony in the garden of Gethsemane. She rightly believed that nothing could be more appropriate to Mrs. Sullivan's state of mind than the touching description of the struggle of our Lord's humanity; nothing more likely to sooth her spirit, and reconcile her to the occasional rebellion of her own mortal nature, then the evident contest of the human with the divine so thrillingly narrated by the disciple; and that nothing could be more inspiring than the example of that holy Son of God, who ever to His thrice-repeated prayer that, if possible, the cup might pass from him, added the pious ejaculation, "Thy will, not mine, be done." The words were not without effect; for, when she had finished, she observed that as Mrs. Sullivan lay still upon her couch, her lips seemed to be repeating the Saviour's prayer. Not wishing to disturb her meditations, Gertrude made no reference to the proposed letter to Willie, but sat silently, and Mrs. Sullivan fell asleep. It was a gentle slumber, and Gertrude sat and watched with pleasure the peaceful happy expression of her features. Darkness had come on before she awoke, and so shrouded the room that Gertrude, who still sat there, was invisible in the gloom. She started on hearing her name, and, hastily lighting a candle, approached the couch.

"O, Gertrude!" said Mrs. Sullivan, "I have had such a beautiful dream! Sit down by me, my dear, and let me tell it to you; it could not have been more vivid, if it had all been reality:—"

The Dream:—"I thought I was sailing rapidly through the air, and for some time I seemed to float on and on, over clouds and among bright stars. The motion was so gentle that I did not grow weary, though in my journey I travelled over land and sea. At last I saw beneath me a beautiful city, with churches, towers, monuments, and throngs of gay people moving in every direction. As I drew nearer, I could distinguish the faces of these numerous men and women, and among them, in the crowded street, there was one who looked like Willie. I followed him, and soon felt sure it was he. He looked older than when we saw him last, and much as I have always imagined him, since the descriptions he has given in his letters of the change that has taken place in his appearance. I followed him through several streets, and at last he turned into a fine, large building, which stood near the centre of the city. I went in also. We passed through large halls and beautifully furnished rooms, and at last stood in a dining-saloon, in the middle of which was a table covered with bottles, glasses, and the remains of a rich desert, such as I never saw before. There was a group of young men round the table, all well-dressed, and some of them fine-looking, so that at first I was quite charmed with their appearance. I seemed, however, to have a strange power of looking into their hearts, and detecting all the evil there was there. One had a very bright, intelligent face, and might have been thought a man of talent—and so he was; but I could see better than people usually can, and I perceived, by a sort of instinct, that all his mind and genius were converted into a means of duping and deceiving those who were so foolish or so ignorant as to be ensnared.

"Another seemed by his wit and drollery to be the charm of the company; but I could detect marks of intoxication.

"A third was vainly attempting to look happy; but his soul was bared to my searching gaze, and I saw that he had the day before lost at the gaming-table his own and a part of his employer's money, and was tortured with anxiety lest he might not this evening win it back.

"There were many others present, and all, more or less, sunk in dissipation, had reached various stages on the road to ruin. Their faces, however, looked gay, and, as Willie glanced from one to another, he seemed pleased and attracted.

"One of them offered him a seat at the table, and all urged him to take it. He did so, and the young man at his right filled a glass with bright wine, and handed it to him. He hesitated, then took it and raised it to his lips. Just then I touched him on the shoulder. He turned, saw me, and instantly the glass fell from his hand, and was broken. I beckoned, and he rose and followed me. The gay circle he had left called loudly upon him to return; one of them even laid a hand upon his arm, and tried to detain him; but he would not listen or stay—he shook off the hand, and we went on. Before we had got outside the building, the man whom I had first noticed, and whom I knew to be the most artful of the company, came out from a room near the door, which he had reached by some other direction, and, approaching Willie, whispered in his ear. Willie faltered, turned, and would perhaps have gone back; but I stood in front of him, held up my finger menacingly, and shook my head. He hesitated no longer, but, flinging aside the tempter, rushed out of the door, and was instantly down the long flight of steps. I seemed to move with great rapidity, and was soon guiding my son through the intricate, crowded streets of the city. Many were the snares we found laid for the unwary. More than once my watchful eye saved the thoughtless boy by my side from some pitfall or danger, into which, without me, he would have fallen. Occasionally I lost sight of him, and had to turn back; once he was separated from me by the crowd, and missed his way, and once he lingered to witness or join in some sinful amusements. Each time, however, he listened to my warning voice, and we went on in safety.

"At last, however, in passing through a brilliantly-lighted street—for it was now evening—I suddenly observed that he was absent from my side. I hunted the streets, and called him by name; but there was no answer. I then unfolded my wings, and, soaring high above the crowded town, surveyed the whole, hoping that in that one

glance I might, as I had at first done, detect my boy.

"I was not disappointed. In a gorgeous hall, dazzlingly lit, and filled with a fashionable crowd, I beheld Willie. A brilliant young creature was leaning on his arm, and I saw into her heart, and knew that she was not blind to his beauty or insensible to his attractions. But, oh! I trembled for him now! She was lovely and rich, and also fashionable and admired. But I saw into her soul, and she was proud, cold-hearted, and worldly; and if she loved Willie, it was his beauty, his winning manners, and his smile that pleased her—not his noble nature, which she knew not how to prize. As they promenaded through the hall, and she, whom crowds were praising, gave all her time and thoughts to him, I, descending in an invisible shape, and standing by his side, touched his shoulder. He looked around, but, before he could see his mother's face, the siren's voice attracted all his attention. Again and again I endeavoured to win him away; but he heard me not. At length she spoke some word that betrayed to my high-minded boy the folly and selfishness of her worldly soul. I seized the moment when she had thus weakened her hold upon him, and, clasping him in my arms, spread my wings, and soared far, far away, bearing with me the prize I had toiled after and won. As we rose into the air, my manly son became in my encircling arms a child again, and there rested on my bosom the same little head, with its soft, silken curls, that had nestled there in infancy. Back we flew, over sea and land, and paused not until, on a soft, grassy slope, under the shade of green trees, I thought I saw my darling Gerty, and was flying to lay my precious boy at her feet, when I awoke pronouncing your name."

"And now, Gertrude, the bitterness of the cup I am called upon to drink is passed away. A blessed angel has ministered unto me. I no longer wish to see my son again on earth, for I am persuaded that my departure is in accordance with the schemes of a merciful Providence. I now believe that Willie's living mother might be powerless to turn him from temptation and evil; but the spirit of that mother will be mighty still, and in the thought that she, in her home beyond the skies, is ever watching

around his path, and striving to lead him in the narrow way, he may find a truer shield from danger, a firmer rest to his tempted soul, than she could have been while on earth. Now, oh, my Father, I can say, from the depths of my heart, 'Thy will, not mine, be done!'"

From this time until her death, which took place about a month afterward, Mrs. Sullivan's mind remained in a state of perfect resignation. The last pang had lost its bitterness. In the letter which she dictated to Willie, she expressed her trust in the goodness and wisdom of Providence, and exhorted him to cherish the same submissive love for the All-wise. She reminded him of the early lessons she had taught him, the piety and self-command, which she had inculcated, and made it her dying prayer that her influence might be increased, rather than diminished, and her presence felt to be a continual reality.

After Gertrude had folded the letter, and left for her duties in school, Mrs. Sullivan re-opened the sheet, and, with her feeble hand, recounted the disinterested and loving devotion of Gertrude, thus: "So long, my son, as you cherish in your heart the memory of your grandfather and mother, cease not to bestow all the gratitude of which that heart is capable upon one whose praises my hand is too feeble to portray."

So slow and gradual was the decline of Mrs. Sullivan, that her death at last came as an unexpected blow to Gertrude, who, though she saw the ravages of disease, could not realise that a termination must come to their work. In the dead hours of the night, with no one to sustain and encourage her but the frightened Jane, did she watch the departing spirit of her much-loved friend. "Are you afraid to see me die, Gertrude?" asked Mrs. Sullivan, an hour before her death. On Gertrude's answering that she was not—"Then turn me a little towards you," said she, "that your face, my darling, may be the last to me of earth."

It was done, and, with her hand locked fast in Gertrude's, and a look that spoke the

deepest affection, she expired.

CHAPTER XXV.

MORE CHANGES.

Not until her work of love was ended did Gertrude become conscious that her lengthened labours by night and day had worn upon her frame, and exhausted her strength. For a week after Mrs. Sullivan was in her grave, Dr. Jeremy feared a severe illness for Gertrude. But, after struggling with her dangerous symptoms for several days, she rallied; and, though still pale and worn by care and anxiety, was able to resume her school duties, and make arrangements for another home.

Several homes had been offered to her, with a warmth and cordiality which made it difficult to decline their acceptance; but Gertrude, though deeply touched by the kindness thus manifested towards her in her loneliness, preferred to seek a permanent boarding-place, and when the grounds on which she based her decision were understood by her friends, they approved her course.

Mrs. Jeremy at first felt hurt at Gertrude's refusal to live with them for any length of time that she chose; and the doctor was so peremptory with his "Come, Gertrude, come right home with us—don't say a word!" that she was afraid lest, in her weak state of health, she should be carried off, without a chance to remonstrate. But, after he had taken upon himself to give Jane orders about packing her clothes and sending them after her, and then locking up the house, he gave Gertrude an opportunity to state her reasons for wishing to decline the generous proposal.

But all her reasoning upon general principles proved insufficient to convince the warm-hearted couple. "It was all nonsense about independent position. She would be perfectly independent with them, and her company would be such a pleasure that she need feel no hesitation in accepting their offer, and might be sure she would be

conferring a favour, instead of being the party obliged." At last she was compelled to make use of an argument which had greatly influenced her own mind, and would, she felt sure, carry no little weight with it in the doctor's own estimation.

"Dr. Jeremy," said she, "I hope you will not condemn in me a motive which has strengthened my firmness in this matter. I should be unwilling to mention it if I did not know that you are so far acquainted with the state of affairs between Mr. Graham and myself as to understand and sympathize with my feelings. You know that he was opposed to my leaving them and remaining here this winter, and must suspect that, when we parted, there was not a perfectly good understanding between us. He hinted that I should never be able to support myself, and should be driven to a life of dependence; and, since the salary which I receive from Mr. W. is sufficient for all my wants, I wish to be so situated on Mr. Graham's return that he will perceive that my assurance that I could earn my own living was not without foundation."

"So Graham thought that, without his sustaining power, you would soon come to beggary—did he? With your talents, too? that's just like him!"

"Oh, no, no!" replied Gertrude, "I did not say that; but I seemed to him a mere child, and he did not realise that in giving me an education he had paid my expenses in advance. It was very natural he should distrust my capacity—he had never seen me compelled to exert myself."

"I understand—I understand," said the doctor. "He thought you would be glad enough to come back to them; yes, yes, just like him!"

"Well, now," said Mrs. Jeremy, "I don't believe he thought any such thing. He was provoked, and didn't mind what he said. Ten to one he will never think of it again, and it seems to me it is only a kind of pride in Gertrude to care anything about it."

"I don't know that, wife," said the doctor. "If it is pride, it's an honourable pride that I like; and I am not sure but, if I were in Gertrude's place, I should feel just as she

does; so I shan't urge her to do any other ways than she proposes. She can have a boarding-place, and yet spend much of her time with us."

"Yes, indeed," said Mrs. Jeremy; "and, if you feel set about it, Gerty, dear, I am sure I shall want you to do whatever pleases you best; but one thing I do insist on, and that is, that you leave this house, which must look very dreary, this very day, go home with me, and stay until you get recruited."

Gertrude, gladly consenting to a short visit, compromised the matter by accompanying them without delay, and it was chiefly owing to the doctor's persevering skill and care bestowed upon his young guest, and the motherly nursing of Mrs. Jeremy, that she escaped the illness which had threatened her.

Mr. and Mrs. W., who felt great sympathy for Gertrude, pressed her to come to their house, and remain until the return of Mr. Graham and Emily; but, on being assured by her that she was unaware of the period of their absence, and should not probably reside with them for the future, they were satisfied that she acted with wisdom and judgment in at once providing herself with an independent situation.

Mr. and Mrs. Arnold, who had been constant in their attentions, both to Mrs. Sullivan and Gertrude, and were the only persons, except the physician, who had been admitted to the sick room of the invalid, felt that they had a peculiar claim to the care of the doubly-orphaned girl, and urged her to become a member of their household. Mr. Arnold's family being large, and his house and salary small, true benevolence alone prompted this proposal; and on Gertrude's acquainting his economical and prudent wife with the ample means she enjoyed from her own exertions, and the decision she had formed of procuring an independent home, she received the warm approbation of both, and found in the latter an excellent adviser and assistant.

Mrs. Arnold had a widowed sister who was in the habit of receiving, as boarders, a few young ladies. Gertrude did not know this lady personally, but had heard her

warmly praised; and she indulged the hope that through her friend, the minister's wife, she might obtain with her an agreeable and not too expensive residence. In this she was not disappointed. Mrs. Warren had fortunately vacant a large front chamber; and, Mrs. Arnold having recommended Gertrude in the warmest manner, suitable terms were agreed upon, and the room placed at her disposal. Mrs. Sullivan had bequeathed to her all her furniture, and Mrs. Arnold and her daughters insisted that, in consideration of her recent fatigue and bereavement, she should attend only to her school duties, and leave to them the furnishing of her room with such articles as she preferred to have placed there, and superintended the packing away of all other movables; for Gertrude was unwilling that anything should be sold. On entering the dining-room the first evening after she took up her residence at Mrs. Warren's, she expected to meet only strangers at the tea-table, but was agreeably disappointed at the sight of Fanny Bruce, who, left in Boston while her mother and brother were spending the winter in travelling, had now been several weeks an inmate of Mrs. Warren's house. Fanny was a school-girl, twelve or thirteen years of age; a near neighbour to Gertrude, had been in the habit of seeing her often at Mr. Graham's, and had sometimes begged flowers from her, borrowed books, and obtained assistance in her fancy-work. She admired Gertrude much; had hailed with delight the prospect of knowing her better, as she hoped to do at Mrs. Warren's; and when she met the gaze of her large, dark eyes, and saw a smile of pleasure overspread her countenance at the sight of a familiar face, she came forward to shake hands, and beg that Miss Flint would sit next her at the table.

Fanny Bruce was a girl of good disposition and warm heart, but she had been much neglected by her mother, whose pride was in her son, the same Ben of whom we have previously spoken. She had often been left behind in some boarding-house, while her pleasure-loving mother and indolent brother passed their time in journeying; and had not always been so fortunately situated as she was at present.

Gertrude had not been long at Mrs. Warren's before she observed that Fanny

occupied an isolated position in the family. She was a few years younger than her companions, three dressy misses, who could not condescend to admit her into her clique. Although the privacy of her own room was pleasing to Gertrude's feelings, pity for poor Fanny induced her to invite her frequently to come and sit with her, and she often so far forgot her own griefs as to exert herself in providing entertainment for her young visitor, who considered it a privilege to share Gertrude's retirement, read her books, and feel confident of her friendship. During the stormy month of March Fanny spent almost every evening with Gertrude; and she, who at first felt that she was making a sacrifice of her comfort and ease by giving another constant access to her apartment, realised the force of Uncle True's prophecy, that, in her efforts for the happiness of others, she would at last find her own; for Fanny's lively and amusing conversation drew Gertrude from brooding over her sorrows.

April arrived, and still no news from Emily; Gertrude's heart ached with longing to once more pour out her griefs on the bosom of that dear friend, and find her consolation and support. Gertrude had written regularly, but of late she had not known where to direct her letters; and since Mrs. Sullivan's death there had been no communication between her and the travellers. She was sitting at her window one evening, thinking of those friends lost by absence and by death, when she was summoned to see Mr. Arnold and his daughter Anne. After the usual civilities, Miss Arnold said, "Of course you have heard the news, Gertrude?"

"No," replied Gertrude. "I have heard nothing special."

"What!" exclaimed Mr. Arnold, "have you not heard of Mr. Graham's marriage?"

Gertrude started up in surprise. "Do you really mean so, Mr. Arnold? Mr. Graham married! When? To whom?"

"To the widow Holbrook, a sister-in-law of Mr. Clinton's; she has been staying at Havanna, with a party from the north, and the Grahams met her there."

"But, Gertrude," asked Mr. Arnold, "how does it happen you have not heard of it? It

is in all the newspapers—'Married in New Orleans, J. H. Graham, Esq., to Mrs. Holbrook.'"

"I have not seen a newspaper for a day or two," replied Gertrude.

"And Miss Graham's blindness, I suppose, prevents her writing," said Anne; "but I thought Mr. Graham would send wedding compliments."

Gertrude made no reply, and Miss Arnold said, "I suppose his bride engrosses all his attention."

"Do you know anything of this Mrs. Holbrook?" asked Gertrude.

"Not much," answered Mr. Arnold. "I have seen her occasionally at Mr. Clinton's. She is a handsome, showy woman, fond of society, I should think."

"I have seen her very often," said Anne. "She is a coarse, noisy, dashing person, just the one to make Miss Emily miserable."

Gertrude looked distressed, and Mr. Arnold glanced reprovingly at her. "Anne," said he, "are you sure you speak advisedly?"

"Belle Clinton is my authority, father. I only judge from what I used to hear her say at school about her Aunt Bella, as she always used to call her."

"Did Isabel represent her aunt so unfavourably?"

"Not intentionally; she meant the greatest praise, but I never liked anything she told us about her."

"We will not condemn her until we can decide upon acquaintance," said Mr. Arnold; "perhaps she will prove the reverse of what you suppose."

"Can you tell me anything concerning Emily?" asked Gertrude, "and whether Mr. Graham is soon to return?"

"Nothing," said Miss Arnold. "When did you hear from them yourself?"

Gertrude mentioned the date of the letter from Mrs. Ellis, the account she had given of a gay party from the north, and suggested that probably Mrs. Graham was the

widow she had described.

"The same, undoubtedly," said Mr. Arnold.

Their knowledge of facts were so slight, however, that little remained to be said concerning the marriage, and other topics of conversation were introduced. But Gertrude found it impossible to think of any other subject; the matter was so vitally important to Emily, that her mind constantly recurred to it. The conversation was interrupted by the sudden entrance of Dr. and Mrs. Jeremy. The former held in his hand a sealed letter, directed to Gertrude, in the handwriting of Mr. Graham; and, as he handed it to her, he rubbed his hands, and looking at Anne Arnold, exclaimed, "Now, Miss Anne, we shall hear all about these famous nuptials!"

Finding her visitors eager to learn the contents of her letter, Gertrude broke the seal, and hastily perused its contents. The envelope contained two or three pages closely written by Mrs. Ellis, and also a lengthy note from Mr. Graham. Surprised as Gertrude was at any communication from one who had parted from her in anger, her desire was to hear from Emily, and she preferred the housekeeper's document as most likely to contain the desired information. It ran as follows:—

"New York, March 31, 1852.

"Dear Gertrude,—As there were plenty of Boston folks at the wedding, you have heard before this of Mr. Graham's marriage. He married the widow Holbrook, the same I wrote to you about. She was determined to have him, and she's got him. I don't hesitate to say he's got the worst of the bargain. He likes a quiet life, and he's lost the chance of that—poor man!—for she's the greatest hand for company that ever I saw. She followed Mr. Graham up pretty well at Havanna, but I guess he thought better of it, and didn't mean to have her. But when we got to New Orleans, she was there; and she carried her point, and married him. Emily behaved beautifully; she never said a word against it, and always treated the lady as pleasantly as could be; but, dear me! how will our Emily get along with so many

folks about all the time, and so much noise and confusion? For my part, I an't used to it, and it's not agreeable. The new lady is civil enough to me, now she's married. I daresay she thinks it stands her in hand, as long as she's one of the family, and I've been in it so long. But I suppose you've been wondering what had become of us, Gertrude, and will be surprised to find we have got so far as New York, on our way home—my way home, for I'm the only one that talks of coming at present. I kept meaning to write while we were in New Orleans, but there was so much going on I didn't get the chance; and, after that horrid steamboat from Charleston here, I wasn't good for anything for a week. But Emily was so anxious that I couldn't put off writing any longer. Poor Emily isn't very well; I don't mean that she's downright sick—it's low spirits more than anything. She gets tired and worried very quick, and easily disturbed, which didn't used to be the case. It may be the new wife, and all the nieces and other disagreeable things. She never complains, and nobody would know but what she was pleased to have her father married again; but she hasn't seemed happy all winter, and now it troubles me to see how she looks sometimes. She talks a sight about you, and felt dreadfully not to get any more letters. But to come to the principal thing, they are all going to Europe—Emily and all. I take it, it's the new wife's idea. Mr. Graham wanted me to go, but I would as soon be hung as venture on the sea again, and I told him so. So now he has written for you to go with Emily; and if you are not afraid of sea-sickness, I hope you won't refuse, for it would be dreadful for her to have a stranger, and you know she always needs somebody on account of her blindness. I do not think she has the least wish to go; but she would not ask to be left behind, for fear her father should think she did not like the new wife.

"As soon as they sail—the last of April—I shall come back to the house in D——, and see to things there while they are away. I write a postscript to you from Emily, and we shall be very impatient to hear your answer; and I hope you will not refuse to go with Emily.

"Yours very truly,

"Sarah H. Ellis."

The postscript contained the following:—

"I need not tell my darling Gertrude how much I have missed her, and longed to have her with me again; how I have thought of her by night and day, and prayed God to strengthen and fit her for many trials and labours. The letter written soon after Mr. Cooper's death is the last that has reached me, and I do not know whether Mrs. Sullivan is still living. Write to me at once, my dear child, if you cannot come to us. Father will tell you of our plans, and ask you to accompany us to Europe. My heart will be light if I can take my dear Gerty with me; I trust to you, my love, to decide aright. You have heard of father's marriage. It is a great change for us all, but will, I trust, result in happiness. Mrs. Graham has two nieces, who are with us at the hotel. They are to be of our party to go abroad, and are, I understand, very beautiful girls, especially Bella Clinton, whom you saw in Boston some years ago. Mrs. Ellis is very tired of writing, and I must close with assuring my dearest Gertrude of the devoted affection of

"Emily Graham."

It was with great curiosity that Gertrude unfolded Mr. Graham's epistle. She thought it would be awkward for him to address her, and wondered much whether he would maintain his authoritative tone, or condescend to apologise. Had she known him better, she would have been assured that nothing would ever induce him to do the latter, for he was one of those persons who never believe themselves in the wrong.

"Miss Gertrude Flint,—I am married, and intend to go abroad on the 28th of April. My daughter will accompany us, and as Mrs. Ellis dreads the sea, I propose that you join us in New York, and attend the party as a companion to Emily. I have not forgotten the ingratitude with which you once slighted a similar offer on my part, and nothing would compel me to give you another opportunity to manifest such a

spirit, but a desire to promote the happiness of Emily, and a sincere wish to be of service to a young person who has been in my family so long that I feel a friendly interest in providing for her. By complying with our wishes, you will remove the recollection of your past behaviour; and, if you choose to return to us, I shall enable you to maintain the place and appearance of a lady. As we sail the last of the month, it is important you should write and name the day. I will meet you at the boat. Mrs. Ellis being anxious to return to Boston, I hope you will come as soon as possible. I enclose a sum of money to cover expenses. If you have contracted debts, let me know to what amount, and I will see that all is paid before you leave. Trusting you are now come to a sense of your duty, I subscribe myself your friend,

"J. H. Graham."

Gertrude was sitting near a lamp, whose light fell directly upon her face, which, as she glanced over Mr. Graham's note, flushed crimson with wounded pride. Dr. Jeremy observed her colour change, and during the few minutes that Mr. and Miss Arnold stayed to hear the news, he gave an occasional glance of defiance at the letter, and as soon as they were gone, begged to be made acquainted with its contents.

"He writes," said Gertrude, "to invite me to accompany them to Europe."

"Indeed!" said Dr. Jeremy, with a low whistle; "and he thinks you'll be silly enough to pack up and start off at a minute's notice!"

"Why, Gerty," said Mrs. Jeremy, "you'll like to go, shan't you, dear? It will be delightful."

"Delightful—nonsense! Mrs. Jeremy," exclaimed the doctor; "what is there delightful, I want to know, in travelling about with an arrogant old tyrant, his blind daughter, upstart dashy wife, and her two fine-lady nieces? A pretty position Gertrude would be in—a slave to the whims of all that company."

"Why, Dr. Jeremy," interrupted his wife, "you forget Emily."

"Emily—to be sure, she's an angel, and never would impose upon anybody, least of all her own pet; but she'll have to play second fiddle herself, and I'm mistaken if she doesn't find it very hard to defend her rights and maintain a comfortable position in her father's enlarged family circle."

"So much the more need, then," said Gertrude, "that someone should be enlisted in her interests, to ward off the approach of every annoyance."

"Do you mean, then, to put yourself in the breach?" asked the doctor.

"I mean to accept Mr. Graham's invitation," replied Gertrude, "and join Emily at once; but I trust the harmony that seems to subsist between her and her new connections will continue undisturbed, so that I shall have no cause to take up arms on her account, and on my own I have not a single fear."

"Then you think you shall go?" said Mrs. Jeremy.

"I do," said Gertrude; "nothing but my duty to Mrs. Sullivan and her father led me to think of leaving Emily. That duty is at an end. I see from Mrs. Ellis's letters that Emily is not happy; and nothing which I can do to make her so must be neglected. Only think, Mrs. Jeremy, what a friend she has been to me."

"I know it," said Mrs. Jeremy, "and I dare say you will enjoy the journey, in spite of all the scarecrows the doctor sets up to frighten you; but it does seem a sacrifice for you to leave your comforts for such an uncertain sort of life."

"Sacrifice!" said the doctor; "it's the greatest sacrifice that ever I heard of! It is not merely giving up a good income of her own earning, and as pleasant a home as there is in Boston; it is relinquishing all the independence that she has been striving after, and which she was so anxious to maintain."

"No, doctor," said Gertrude, warmly; "nothing that I do for Emily's sake can be called a sacrifice; it is my greatest pleasure."

"Gerty always finds her pleasure in doing what is right," remarked Mrs. Jeremy.

"The thought," said Gertrude, "that our dear Emily was dependent upon a stranger for all those little attentions that are only acceptable from those she loves, would make me miserable; our happiness for years has been in each other; and when one has suffered, the other has suffered also. I must go to her; I cannot think of doing otherwise."

"I wish," muttered Dr. Jeremy, "that your sacrifice would be half appreciated. But Graham, I'll venture to say, thinks it will be the greatest favour to take you back again. Perhaps he addressed you as a beggar; it wouldn't be the first time he's done such a thing. I wonder what would have induced poor Philip Amory to go back. Has he made any apology in his letter for past unkindness?"

"I do not think he considered any to be needed," replied Gertrude.

"Then he didn't make any excuse for his ungentlemanly behaviour? I declare it's a shame you should be exposed to any more such treatment; but I always did hear that women were self-forgetful in their friendship, and I believe it. Gertrude makes an excellent friend. Mrs. Jeremy, we must cultivate her regard; and sometime or other, perhaps, make a loud call upon her services."

"And if ever you do, sir, I shall be ready to respond to it; if there is a person in the world who owes a debt to society, it is myself. I hear the world called cold, selfish, and unfeeling; but it has not been so to me. I should be ungrateful if I did not cherish a spirit of universal love; how much more so, if I did not feel bound, heart and hand, to those dear friends who have bestowed upon me such affection as no orphan ever found before!"

"Gertrude," said Mrs. Jeremy, "I believe that you were right in leaving Emily when you did, and that you are right in returning to her now; and, if your being such a good girl as you are is at all due to her, she certainly has a great claim upon you."

"She has a claim, indeed, Mrs. Jeremy! It was Emily who first taught me the difference between right and wrong——"

"And she is going to reap the benefit of that knowledge in you," said the doctor, in continuation of her remark. "That's fair! But if you are resolved to take this European tour, you will be busy enough with your preparations. Do you think Mr. W. will be willing to give you up?"

"I hope so," said Gertrude. "I am sorry to be obliged to ask it of him, for he has been very indulgent to me, and I have been absent from school two weeks out of the winter already; but as it will shortly be the summer vacation, he will, perhaps, be able to supply my place."

Mrs. Jeremy interested herself in Gertrude's arrangements, offered an attic-room for the storage of her furniture, gave up to her a dressmaker she had engaged for herself, and a plan was laid out, by which Gertrude could start for New York in less than a week.

Mr. W., on being applied to, relinquished Gertrude, though deeply regretting to lose so valuable an assistant; and after a few days occupied in preparation, she bade farewell to the tearful Fanny Bruce, the bustling doctor, and his kind-hearted wife, all of whom accompanied her to the railroad station. She promised to write to the Jeremys; and they agreed to forward her any letters that might arrive from Willie.

In less than a fortnight from the time of her departure, Mrs. Ellis returned to Boston, and brought news of the safe conclusion of Gertrude's journey. A letter received a week after by Mrs. Jeremy announced that they should sail in a few days. She was, therefore, surprised when a second epistle was put into her hands, dated the day succeeding that on which she supposed Mr. Graham's party to have left the country. It was as follows:—

"New York, April 29th.

"My dear Mrs. Jeremy,—As yesterday was the day on which we expected to sail for Europe, you will be astonished to hear that we are yet in New York, and still more so to learn that the foreign tour is now postponed. Only two days since Mr. Graham

was seized with the gout, and the attack was so violent as to threaten his life. Although to-day somewhat relieved, and considered by his physician out of immediate danger, he remains a great sufferer, and a sea-voyage is pronounced impracticable. His great anxiety is to be at home; and, as soon as he can bear the journey, we shall hasten to the house in D——.I enclose a note for Mrs. Ellis. It contains various directions which Emily is desirous she should receive; and, as we did not know how to address her, I have sent it to you, trusting to your kindness to see it forwarded. Mrs. Graham and her nieces, who had been anticipating much pleasure from going abroad, are, of course, greatly disappointed. It is particularly trying to Miss Clinton, as her father has been absent more than a year, and she was hoping to meet him in Paris.

"It is impossible that either me or Emily should regret a journey of which we felt only dread, and, were it not for Mr. Graham's illness being the cause of its postponement, we should find it hard not to realise a degree of satisfaction in the prospect of returning to the dear old place in D——, where we hope to be established in the course of the next month. I say we, for neither Mr. Graham nor Emily will hear of my leaving them again.

"With the kindest regards to yourself, and my friend the doctor,

"I am, yours very sincerely,

"Gertrude Flint."

CHAPTER XXVI.

JEALOUSY.

Mr. Graham's country-house boasted a fine, old fashioned entry, with a door at either end, both of which usually stood open during the warm weather, admitting a current of air, and rendering the neighbourhood of the front entrance a favourite

resort of the family, during the early hours of the day, when the sun had no access to the spot. Here, on a pleasant June morning, Isabel Clinton and her cousin, Kitty Ray, had made themselves comfortable.

Isabel had drawn a large arm-chair close to the door-sill, ensconced herself in it, and was gazing idly down the road. She was a beautiful girl, tall and well-formed, with a delicate complexion, clear blue eyes, and rich, light, flowing curls. The same lovely child, whom Gertrude had gazed upon with rapture, as, leaning against the window of her father's house, she once watched old True while he lit his lamp, had ripened into an equally lovely woman. At an early age deprived of her mother, and left for some years to the care of servants, she soon learned to appreciate, at more than their true value, her outward attractions; and her aunt, under whose tutelage she had been since she left school, did not counteract this undue self-admiration. An appearance of conscious superiority which distinguished her, and her independent air, might be attributed to her conviction that Belle Clinton, the beauty and the heiress, attired in a blue cashmere morning-dress, richly embroidered, and open in front, for the purpose of displaying an equally rich flounced cambric petticoat.

On a low step at her feet sat Kitty Ray, a complete contrast to her cousin in looks, manners and many points of character. She was a sweet little creature, lively, playful, and affectionate. She was so small that her childish manners became her; so full of spirits that her occasional rudeness claimed pardon on that score; and for all other faults her warm-heartedness and generous enthusiasm must plead an excuse to one who wished to love her as she wished and expected to be loved by everybody. She was a pretty girl, always bright and animated, mirthful and happy; fond of her cousin Belle, and sometimes influenced by her, though often enlisting on the opposite side of some contested question. Unlike Belle, she was seldom well dressed, for she was very careless. On the present occasion her dark silk wrapper was half-concealed by a crimson flannel sack, which she held tightly around her, for she said it was a chilly morning, and she was half-frozen to death—she certainly

would go and warm herself at the kitchen fire, if she did not fear encountering that she-dragon, Mrs. Ellis; she was sure she did not see, if they must sit in the doorway, why Belle couldn't come to the side-door, where the sun shone beautifully. "O, I forgot, though," added she; "her complexion!"

"Complexion!" said Belle; "I'm no more afraid of hurting my complexion than you are; I never freckle, or tan either."

"But you burn all up, and look like a fright."

"Well, if I didn't, I shouldn't go there to sit; I like to be at the front of the house, where I can see the passing. I wonder who those people are coming up the road."

Kitty stood up, and looked as Belle pointed. After observing the approaching couple for a minute or two she exclaimed, "Why, that's Gertrude Flint! I wonder where she's been! And who can that be with her? I didn't know there was a beau to be had about here."

"Beau!" said Belle, sneeringly.

"And why not a beau, Cousin Belle? I'm sure he looks like one."

"I wouldn't give much for any of her beaux!" said Belle.

"Wouldn't you?" said Kitty. "Wait until you see who they are; you near-sighted people shouldn't decide in such a hurry. I can tell you that he is a gentleman you wouldn't object to walking with yourself; it's Mr. Bruce, the one we met in New Orleans."

"I don't believe it!" exclaimed Belle, starting up.

"You will soon have a chance to see for yourself; for he is coming home with her."

"He is! What can he be walking with her for?"

"To show his taste, perhaps. I am sure he could not find more agreeable company."

"You and I don't agree about that," replied Belle. "I don't see anything very agreeable about her."

"Because you are determined not to, Belle. Everybody else thinks her charming, and Mr. Bruce is opening the gate for her as politely as if she were a queen. I like him for that."

"Do see," said Belle; "she's got on that white cape-bonnet of hers! and that checked gingham dress! I wonder what Mr. Bruce thinks of her, and he such a critic in regard to ladies' dress."

Gertrude and her companion now drew near to the house. The former looked up, saw the young ladies in the doorway, and smiled pleasantly at Kitty, who was making strange grimaces and giving insignificant glances over Belle's shoulder; but Mr. Bruce did not observe either of them; and they heard him say, as he handed Gertrude a small parcel he had been carrying for her, "I believe I won't come in; it's such a bore to have to talk to strangers. Do you work in the garden, mornings, this summer?"

"No," replied Gertrude, "there is nothing left of my garden but the memory of it."

"Why, Miss Gertrude!" said the young man, "I hope these new-comers haven't interfered with——" Here, observing the direction of Gertrude's eyes, he raised his own, saw Belle and Kitty standing opposite to him; and compelled now to speak with them, went forward to shake hands, trusting to his remarks about strangers in general, and these new-comers in particular, not having been overheard. Although overheard, the young ladies chose to take no notice of that which they supposed intended for unknown individuals.

They were mistaken, however, for Mr. Bruce knew, perfectly well that the nieces of the present Mrs. Graham were the same girls whom he met at the south, and was indifferent about renewing his acquaintance. But his vanity was not proof against the evident pleasure they both manifested at seeing him again; and he soon engaged in an animated conversation with them, while Gertrude entered the house. She sought Emily's room, and was giving an account of her morning's expedition to the village,

and how she had accomplished various commissions and errands, when Mrs. Ellis came, and said, with distressed voice, "Hasn't Gertrude?—Oh, there you are! Do tell me what Mrs. Wilkins said about the strawberries?"

"I engaged three quarts; hasn't she sent them?"

"No, but I'm thankful to hear they're coming; I have been so plagued about the dinner."

She now came in, and seating herself, exclaimed, "I declare, Emily, such an ironing as our girls have got to do to-day! You never saw anything like it! There's no end to the fine clothes Mrs. Graham and her nieces put into our wash. It's a shame! Rich as they are, they might put out their washing. I've been helping, myself, as much as I could; but, as Mrs. Prime says, one can't do everything at once; and I've had to see the butcher, make puddings and blancmange, and been worried to death all the time, because I forgot to engage those strawberries. So Mrs. Wilkins hadn't sent her fruit to market when you got there?"

"No, but she was in a great hurry getting ready; it would have been gone in a very short time."

"Well, that was lucky. I don't know what I should have done without, for I've no time to hunt up anything else for dessert. I've got just as much as I can do till dinner-time. Mrs. Graham never kept house before, and don't know how to make allowance for anything. She comes home from Boston, expects to find everything in apple-pie order, and never asks or cares who does the work."

Mrs. Prime called out, "Mrs. Ellis, the boy has brought your strawberries, and the stalks an't off; he said they hadn't no time."

"That's too bad," exclaimed the tired housekeeper. "Who's going to take the stalks off, I should like to know? Kate is busy, and I can't do it."

"I will, Mrs. Ellis; let me do it," said Gertrude, following Mrs. Ellis, who was now half-way downstairs.

"No, no! don't you, Miss Gertrude," said Mrs. Prime; "they'll only stain your fingers all up."

"No matter if they do; my hands are not made of white kid. They'll bear washing."

Mrs. Ellis was only too thankful for Gertrude's help. Belle and Kitty were doing their best to entertain Mr. Bruce, who, sitting on the door-steps, from time to time cast his eyes down the entry, and up the staircase, in hopes of Gertrude's reappearance; and despairing of it, he was about to depart, when his sister Fanny came running up the yard, and rushed past the assembled trio for the house.

Her brother, however, stretched out his arm, caught her, and before he let her go whispered something in her ear.

"Who is that wild Indian?" asked Kitty Ray, as Fanny ran across the entry and disappeared.

"A sister of mine," answered Ben, in a nonchalant manner.

"Why! is she?" inquired Kitty, with interest; "I have seen her here several times, and never took any notice of her. I didn't know she was your sister. What a pretty girl she is."

"Do you think so?" said Ben; "sorry I can't agree with you. I think she's a fright."

Fanny now reappeared, and stopping a moment on her way upstairs called out, without any ceremony, "She says she can't come, she's busy."

"Who?" asked Kitty, in her turn catching Fanny and detaining her.

"Miss Flint."

Mr. Bruce coloured slightly, and Belle Clinton observed it.

"What is she doing?" inquired Kitty.

"Picking strawberries."

"Where are you going, Fanny?"

"Upstairs."

"Do they let you go all over the house?"

"Miss Flint said I might go up and bring down the birds."

"What birds?"

"Her birds. I am going to hang them in the sun, and they'll sing beautifully."

She went, and soon returned with a cage containing the little monias sent by Willie from Calcutta.

"There Kitty," cried Belle; "those are the birds that wake us so early every morning."

"Very likely," said Kitty; "bring them here. Goodness! what little creatures they are!—do look at them, Mr. Bruce—they are sweetly pretty."

"Put them down on the door-step, Fanny," said Ben, "so that we can see them better."

"I'm afraid you'll frighten them," replied Fanny; "Miss Gertrude doesn't like to have them frightened."

"No, we won't," said Ben; "we're disposed to be very friendly to Miss Gertrude's birds. Where did she get them? Do you know, Fanny?"

"Why, they are Indian birds; Mr. Sullivan sent them to her."

"Who is he?"

"Oh, he is a very particular friend; she has letters from him every little while."

"What Mr. Sullivan?" asked Belle. "Do you know his Christian name?"

"I suppose it's William," said Fanny. "Miss Emily always calls the birds little Willies."

"Belle!" exclaimed Kitty, "that's your William Sullivan."

"What a favourite man he seems to be!" said Mr. Bruce, in a tone of sarcasm; "the property of one beautiful lady and the particular friend of another."

"I don't know what you mean, Kitty," said Belle, tartly. "Mr. Sullivan is a junior partner of my father's, but I have not seen him for years."

"Except in your dreams, Belle," suggested Kitty. "You forget."

"Do you dream about Mr. Sullivan?" asked Fanny, fixing her eyes on Belle as she spoke. "I mean to go and ask Miss Gertrude if she does."

"Do," said Kitty; "I'll go with you."

They ran across the entry into the dining room, and put the question at the same time. Taken by surprise, Gertrude neither blushed nor looked confused, but answered, quietly, "Yes, sometimes; but what do you know of Mr. Sullivan?"

"Oh, nothing," answered Kitty; "only some others do, and we are inquiring around to see how many there are;" and she ran back in triumph to tell Belle she might as well be frank, like Gertrude, and plead guilty to the weakness; it looked so much better than blushing and denying it.

But it would not do to joke with Belle any longer; she was offended, and did not conceal the fact. Mr. Bruce felt annoyed, and soon left, leaving the two cousins to settle their difficulty as best they could. As soon as he had gone, Belle folded up her work, and walked upstairs to her room with great dignity, while Kitty stayed behind to laugh over the matter, and improve her opportunity to make friends with Fanny Bruce; for Kitty laboured under the idea that in cultivating the acquaintance of the sister she should advance her cause.

She therefore called Fanny to sit beside her, put her arm round her waist, and commenced talking about Gertrude, and the origin and extent of the intimacy which seemed to exist between her and the Bruce family. Fanny, who was always communicative, willingly informed her of the circumstances which had attached her so strongly to a friend who was some years her senior.

"And your brother," said Kitty, "he has known her some time, hasn't he?"

"Yes, I suppose so," answered Fanny, carelessly.

"Does he like her?"

"I don't know; I should think he would; I don't see how he can help it."

"What did he whisper to you when you came up the steps?"

"Oh, he bade me ask Miss Gertrude if she wasn't coming back to see him again, and tell her he was tired to death waiting for her."

Kitty pouted and looked vexed. "Has Miss Flint been in the habit of receiving company here, and been treated like an equal?"

"Of course she has," answered Fanny, with spirit; "why shouldn't she? She's the most perfect lady I ever saw, and mother says she has beautiful manners, and I must take pattern by her."

"Oh, Miss Gertrude!" called she, as Gertrude, who had been to place the strawberries in the refrigerator, crossed the back part of the long entry, "Are you ready now?"

"Yes, Fanny, I shall be in a moment," answered Gertrude.

"Ready for what?" inquired Kitty.

"To read," said Fanny. "She is going to read the rest of Hamlet to Miss Emily; she read the first three acts yesterday, and Miss Emily let me sit in her room and hear it. I can't understand it when I read it myself, but when I listen to Miss Gertrude it seems quite plain. She's a splendid reader, and I came in to-day on purpose to hear the play finished."

Kitty's last companion having deserted her, she lay on the entry sofa and fell asleep. She was wakened by her aunt, who returned from the city a short time before dinner—"I say Kitty Ray, wake up and go dress for dinner! I saw Belle at the chamber window looking like a beauty. I wish you'd take half the pains she does to improve your appearance."

Kitty yawned, and, after delaying a little, followed Mrs. Graham's directions. It was Kitty's policy, after giving offence to her cousin Belle, to appear utterly unconscious of the existence of any unkind feelings; and, though Belle often manifested some degree of sulkiness, she was too dependent upon Kitty's society to retain that disposition long. They were soon chatting together as usual.

"Belle," said Kitty, as she stood arranging her hair at the glass, "do you remember a girl we used to meet every morning on our way to school, walking with a paralytic old man?"

"Yes."

"Do you know, I think it was Gertrude Flint. She has altered very much, to be sure; but the features are still the same, and there certainly never was but one such pair of eyes."

"I have no doubt she is the same person," said Belle, composedly.

"Did you think of it before?"

"Yes, as soon as Fanny spoke of her knowing Willie Sullivan."

"Why, Belle, why didn't you speak of it?"

"Lor', Kitty, I don't feel so much interest in her as you and some others do."

"What others?"

"Why, Mr. Bruce; don't you see he is half in love with her?"

"No, I don't see any such thing; he has known her for a long time (Fanny says so), and, of course, he feels a respect for a girl that the Grahams make so much account of. But I don't believe he'd think of such a thing as being in love with a poor girl like her, with no family connections to boast of."

"Perhaps he didn't think of being."

"Well, he wouldn't be. She isn't the sort of person that would suit him. He has been in society a great deal, not only at home, but in Paris; and he would want a wife that

was very lively and fond of company, and knew how to make a show with money."

"A girl, for instance, like Kitty Ray."

"How ridiculous, Belle! just as if people couldn't talk without thinking of themselves all the time! What do I care about Ben Bruce?"

"I don't know that you care anything about him; but I wouldn't pull all the hair out of my head about it, as you are doing. There's the dinner-bell."

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE DISAPPOINTED WOOER.

Twilight found Gertrude and Emily seated at a window which commanded a delightful western view. Gertrude had been describing to her blind friend the gorgeous picture presented to her vision by the masses of brilliantly-painted cloud; and Emily, as she listened to the glowing description, experienced a participation in Gertrude's enjoyment. The glory had now faded away, save a long strip of gold which skirted the horizon; and the stars as they came out, one by one, seemed to look in at the chamber window with a smile of recognition.

In the parlour below there was company from the city, and the sound of mirth and laughter came up on the evening breeze; so mellowed, however, by distance, that it contrasted with the peace of the quiet room, without disturbing it.

"You had better go down, Gertrude," said Emily; "they appear to be enjoying themselves, and I love to hear your laugh mingling with the rest."

"Oh, no, dear Emily!" said Gertrude; "I prefer to stay with you: they are nearly all strangers to me."

"As you please, my dear; but don't let me keep you from the young people."

"You can never keep me with you, dear Emily, longer than I wish to stay; there is no

society I love so well." And so she stayed, and they resumed their pleasant conversation. They were interrupted by Katy, whom Mrs. Graham sent to announce a new visitor—Mrs. Bruce—who had inquired for Emily.

"I suppose I must go down," said Emily; "you'll come too, Gertrude?"

"No, I believe not, unless she asked for me. Did she, Katy?"

"Mrs. Graham was only afther mintioning Miss Emily," said Katy.

"Then I will stay here," said Gertrude; and Emily, finding it to be her wish, went without her. There was soon another loud ring at the door-bell. It seemed to be a reception evening, and this time Gertrude's presence was particularly requested, to see Dr. and Mrs. Jeremy.

When she entered the parlour a great number of guests were assembled, and every seat occupied. As she came in alone, and unexpected by most of the company, all eyes were turned upon her. Contrary to the expectation of Belle and Kitty, who were watching her with curiosity, she manifested no embarrassment, but glancing leisurely at the various groups, until she recognised Mrs. Jeremy, crossed the large saloon with characteristic grace, and as much ease as if she were the only person present. After greeting that lady with her usual cordiality, she turned to speak to the doctor; but he was sitting next Fanny Bruce, in the window-seat, and was half-concealed by the curtain. Before he came Mrs. Bruce nodded pleasantly from the opposite corner, and Gertrude went to shake hands with her; Mr. Bruce, who formed one in a gay circle of young ladies and gentlemen collected in that part of the room, and who had been observing Gertrude's motions so attentively as to make no reply to a question put to him by Kitty Ray, now offered his chair, saying, "Miss Gertrude, do take this seat."

"Thank you," said Gertrude, "but I see my friend the doctor on the other side of the room; he expects me to speak to him, so don't let me disturb you."

Dr. Jeremy now came half-way across the room to meet her, and led her into the

recess formed by the window, and placed her in his own seat next to Fanny Bruce. To the astonishment of all who knew him, Ben Bruce brought his own chair, and placed it for the doctor opposite to Gertrude. So much respect for age was not anticipated from the man of fashion.

"Is that a daughter of Mr. Graham's?" asked a young lady of Belle Clinton, who sat next her.

"No, indeed," replied Belle; "she is a person to whom Miss Graham gave an education, and now she lives here to read to her and be a sort of companion; her name is Flint."

"What did you say that young lady's name was?" asked a dashing lieutenant, addressing Isabel.

"Miss Flint."

"Flint, ah! she's a genteel-looking girl. How peculiarly she dresses her hair!"

"Very becoming, however, to that style of face," remarked the young lady who had first spoken. "Don't you think so?"

"I don't know," replied the lieutenant; "something becomes her; she makes a fine appearance. Bruce," said he, as Mr. Bruce returned, after his unusual effort of politeness, "who is that Miss Flint?—I have been here two or three times, and I never saw her before."

"Very likely," said Mr. Bruce; "she won't always show herself. Isn't she a fine-looking girl?"

"I haven't made up my mind yet; she's got a splendid figure; but who is she?"

"She's a sort of adopted daughter of Mr. Graham's, I believe, a protégée of Miss Emily's."

"Ah, poor thing! An orphan?"

"Yes, I suppose so," said Ben, biting his lips.

"Pity!" said the young man; "poor thing! but she's good-looking, particularly when she smiles; there is something very attractive about her face."

There certainly was to Ben, for, a moment after, Kitty Ray missed him from the room, and immediately espied him, standing on the piazza, and leaning through the open window to talk with Gertrude, Dr. Jeremy, and Fanny. The conversation soon became very lively; there seemed to be a war of wits going on; the doctor, especially, laughed very loud, and Gertrude and Fanny often joined in the merry peal. Kitty endured it as long as she could, and then ran, joined the party, and heard what they were having so much fun about.

But it was all an enigma to Kitty. Dr. Jeremy was talking with Mr. Bruce concerning something which had happened many years ago; there was a great deal about a fool's cap, with a long tassel, and taking afternoon naps in the grass; the doctor was making queer allusions to some old pear-tree, and traps set for thieves, and kept reminding Gertrude of circumstances which attended their first acquaintance with each other and with Mr. Bruce.

Kitty was beginning to feel that she had placed herself in the position of an intruder, and began to feel embarrassed, when Gertrude touched her arm, and making room for her next herself, motioned to her to sit down, saying, as she did so, "Dr. Jeremy is speaking of the time when he (or he and I, as he chooses to have it) went fruit-stealing in Mrs. Bruce's orchard, and were unexpectedly caught by Mr. Bruce."

"You mean, my dear," interrupted the doctor, "that Mr. Bruce was discovered by us. Why, it's my opinion he would have slept until this time if I hadn't given him such a thorough waking up."

"My first acquaintance with you was certainly the greatest awakening of my life," said Ben, speaking as if to the doctor, but looking meaningly at Gertrude; "that was not the only nap it cost me. How sorry I am, Miss Gertrude, that you've given up working in the garden, as you used to! Pray, how does it happen?"

"Mrs. Graham has had it remodelled," replied Gertrude, "and the new gardener neither needs nor desires my services. He has his own plans, and it is not well to interfere with the professor of an art; I should be sure to do mischief."

"I doubt whether his success compares with yours," said Ben. "I do not see anything like the same quantity of flowers in the room that you used to have."

"I think," said Gertrude, "that he is not as fond of cutting them as I was. I did not care so much for the appearance of the garden as for having plenty of flowers in the house; but with him it is the reverse."

Kitty made remark to Mr. Bruce on the subject of gardening, and Gertrude, turning to Dr. Jeremy, continued in conversation with him, until Mrs. Jeremy rose to go, when she said, "Dr. Jeremy, have you given Gertrude her letter?"

"Goodness me!" exclaimed the doctor. Then feeling in his pocket, he drew forth an evidently foreign document, the envelope literally covered with various coloured post-office stamps. "See here, Gerty, genuine Calcutta; no mistake!"

Gertrude took the letter, and, as she thanked the doctor, her countenance expressed pleasure at receiving it; a pleasure, however, somewhat tempered by sadness, for she had heard from Willie but once since he learned the news of his mother's death, and that letter had been such an outpouring of his vehement grief, that the sight of his handwriting almost pained her, as she anticipated something like a repetition of the outburst.

Mr. Bruce, who kept his eyes upon her, and expected to see her change colour, and look disconcerted, on the letter being handed to her in the presence of so many witnesses, was reassured by the composure with which she took it, and held it openly in her hand, while she bade the doctor and his wife good evening. She followed them to the door, and was retreating to her own apartment, when she was met by Mr. Bruce, who had noticed the movement, and now entered from the piazza in time to arrest her steps, and ask if her letter was of such importance that she must

deny the company the pleasure of her society in order to study its contents.

"It is from a friend of whose welfare I am anxious to hear," said Gertrude, gravely. "Please excuse me to your mother, if she inquires for me; and, as the rest of the guests are strangers, I shall not be missed by them."

"Oh, Miss Gertrude," said Mr. Bruce, "it's no use coming here to see you, you are so frequently invisible. What part of the day is the most likely to find you disengaged?"

"Hardly any part," said Gertrude. "I am always a busy character; but good night, Mr. Bruce—don't let me detain you from the other young ladies;" and Gertrude ran upstairs, leaving Mr. Bruce uncertain whether to be vexed with himself or her.

Contrary to Gerty's expectations, William Sullivan's letter proved very soothing to the grief she had felt on his account. His spirit had been so crushed by the death of his grandfather, and by his second and still greater loss, that his first communication to Gertrude had alarmed her, from its despairing tone; she had feared lest his Christian fortitude would give way to the force of his double affliction. She was much relieved to find that he wrote in a calmer strain; that he had taken to heart his mother's last entreaty and prayer for a submissive disposition on his part; and that, although deeply afflicted, he was schooling himself to patience and resignation.

The three closely-written pages were devoted to fervent expressions of gratitude to Gertrude for the kindness and love which had comforted the last days of his much-regretted friends. He prayed that Heaven would bless her, and reward her self-denying efforts, and closed with saying, "You are all that is left to me, Gertrude. If I loved you before, my heart is now bound to you by ties stronger than those of earth; my hopes, my labours, my prayers, are all for you. God grant that we may some day meet again!"

For an hour Gertrude sat lost in meditation; her thoughts went back to her home at Uncle True's, and the days when she and Willie passed so many happy hours in close companionship, little dreaming of the long separation so soon to ensue. She

was startled at last from her reverie by the voices of Mrs. Graham's visitors, who were now taking leave.

Mrs. Bruce and her son lingered a little, until the carriages had left with the guests for the city, and, as they were making their farewells on the door-step, beneath Gertrude's window, she heard Mrs. Graham say, "Remember, Mr. Bruce, we dine at two; and, Miss Fanny, we shall hope to see you also."

Mr. Bruce's attentions to her had that day been marked; and the professions of admiration he had whispered in her ear had been still more so. Both these attentions and this admiration were unsought and undesired; neither were they flattering to the high-minded girl, who was superior to coquetry, and whose self-respect was wounded by the assured manner in which Mr. Bruce made his advances. As a youth of seventeen, she had marked him as indolent and ill-bred. Her sense of justice, however, would have obliterated this recollection, had his character and manner been changed on the renewal of their acquaintance, some years after. But this was not the case, for outward polish could not cloud Gertrude's discernment; and she perceived that his old characteristics remained, rendered more glaring by ill-concealed vanity. As a boy, he had stared at Gertrude from impudence, and inquired her name out of idle curiosity; as a youthful coxcomb he had resolved to flirt with her, because his time hung heavy on his hands. But, to his surprise, he found the country girl quite insensible to the flattery and notice which many a city belle had coveted; and that when he tried raillery, he usually proved the disconcerted party.

It was something new to Mr. Bruce to find any lady thus indifferent to his merits; and proved such an awakening to his ambition, that he resolved to recommend himself to Gertrude, and consequently improved every opportunity of gaining admittance to her society. But while labouring to inspire her with a due appreciation of himself, he fell into his own snare; for though he failed in awakening Gertrude's

interest, he could not be equally insensible to her attractions. Even the dull intellect of Ben Bruce was capable of measuring her vast superiority to most girls of her age; and her vivacious originality was a contrast to the insipidity of fashionable life, which at length completely charmed him.

His earnestness and perseverance began to annoy the object of his admiration before he left Mr. Graham's in the autumn; and she was glad soon after to hear that he had accompanied his mother to Washington, as it insured her against meeting him again for months to come.

Mr. Bruce regretted losing sight of Gertrude, but amid the gaiety of southern cities wasted his time with tolerable satisfaction. He was reminded of her again on meeting the Graham party at New Orleans, and it is some credit to his understanding to say, that in the comparison which he constantly drew between her and the vain daughters of fashion, she stood higher than ever in his estimation. He did not hesitate to tell her so on the morning already mentioned, when, with evident satisfaction, he had recognized and joined her; and, the increased devotion of his words and manner, which now took a tone of truth in which they had before been wanting, alarmed Gertrude, and led to a serious resolve to avoid him on all possible occasions.

On the day succeeding the one of which we have been speaking, Mr. Graham returned from the city about noon, and joined the young ladies in the entry, unfolded his newspaper, and, handing it to Kitty, asked her to read the news. "What shall I read?" said Kitty, taking the paper rather unwillingly.

"The leading article, if you please."

Kitty turned the paper inside and out, looked hastily up and down its pages, and then declared her inability to find it. Mr. Graham was astonished, and pointed in silence to the paragraph. She began, but had scarcely read a sentence before Mr. Graham stopped her, saying, "Don't read so fast—I can't hear a single word!" She now

drawled so intolerably that he interrupted her again, and bade her give the paper to her cousin.

Belle took it from the pouting Kitty, and finished the article—not, however, without being once or twice compelled to go back and read more intelligibly.

"Do you wish to hear anything more, sir?" asked she.

"Yes; won't you turn to the ship-news, and read me the list by the steamer?" Belle, more fortunate than Kitty, found the place, and commenced. "At Canton, April 30th, ship Ann Maria, Ray, d-i-s-c-g. What does that mean?"

"Discharging, of course; go on."

"S-l-d—a-b-t 13th," spelt Belle, looking dreadfully puzzled all the while.

"Stupid!" muttered Mr. Graham, almost snatching the paper out of her hands; "not know how to read ship-news! Where's Gertrude? Where's Gertrude Flint? She's the only girl I ever saw that did know anything. Won't you call her, Kitty?"

Kitty went, though reluctantly, to call Gertrude, and told her for what she was wanted. Gertrude was astonished; since the day when she had persisted in leaving his house, Mr. Graham had never asked her to read to him; but, obedient to the summons, she presented herself, and, taking the seat which Belle had vacated near the door, commenced with the ship-news, and, without asking questions, turned to various items of intelligence, taking them in the order which she knew Mr. Graham preferred.

The old gentleman, leaning back in his easy-chair, and resting his gouty foot upon an ottoman opposite to him, looked amazingly satisfied; and when Belle and Kitty had gone off to their room, he remarked, "This seems like old times, doesn't it, Gertrude?" He closed his eyes, and Gertrude was soon aware that he had fallen asleep. Seeing that, as he sat, it would be impossible for her to pass without waking him, she laid down the paper, and was preparing to draw some work from her pocket, when she observed a shadow in the doorway, and, looking up, saw the

person whom she had yesterday resolved to avoid.

Mr. Bruce was staring in her face, with an indolent air of ease and confidence, which she always found very offensive. He had in one hand a bunch of roses, which he held up to her admiring gaze. "Very beautiful!" said Gertrude, as she glanced at the little branches, covered with a luxurious growth of moss rose-buds, both pink and white.

She spoke in a low voice, fearing to awaken Mr. Graham. Mr. Bruce, in a whisper, remarked, as he dangled them above her head, "I thought they were pretty when I gathered them, but they suffer from the comparison. Miss Gertrude," and he gave a meaning look at the roses in her cheeks.

Gertrude, to whom this was a stale compliment, coming from Mr. Bruce, took no notice of it, but, rising, advanced to make her exit by the front-door, saying, "I will go across the piazza, Mr. Bruce, and send the ladies word that you are here."

"O, pray, don't!" said he, putting himself in her way. "It would be cruel; I haven't the slightest wish to see them." He so effectually prevented her, that she was unwillingly compelled to retreat from the door and resume her seat. As she did so, she took her work from her pocket, her countenance in the meantime expressing vexation.

Mr. Bruce looked triumphant.

"Miss Gertrude," said he, "will you oblige me by wearing these flowers in your hair to-day?"

"I do not wear gay flowers," replied Gertrude, without lifting her eyes from the piece of muslin on which she was employed.

Supposing this to be on account of her mourning (for she wore a plain black dress), he selected the white buds from the rest, and, presenting them to her, begged that, for his sake, she would display them in contrast with her dark silken braids.

"I am much obliged to you," said Gertrude; "I never saw more beautiful roses, but I

am not accustomed to be so much dressed, and, believe me, you must excuse me."

"Then you won't take my flowers?"

"Certainly I will, with pleasure," said she, rising, "if you will let me get a glass of water, and place them in the parlour, where we can all enjoy them."

"I did not cut my flowers, and bring them here for the benefit of the whole household," said Ben, in a half-offended tone. "If you won't wear them, Miss Gertrude, I will offer them to somebody that will."

This, he thought, would alarm her, for his vanity was such that he attributed her behaviour wholly to coquetry.

"I will punish her," thought he, as he tied the roses together again, and arranged them for presentation to Kitty, who he knew would be flattered to receive them.

"Where's Fanny to-day," asked Gertrude, anxious to divert the conversation.

"I don't know," answered Ben, which implied that he had no idea of talking about Fanny.

"How attentive you are to your work!" said he, at last: "your eyes seemed nailed to it. I wish I were as attractive as that piece of muslin!"

"I wish you were as inoffensive," thought Gertrude.

"I do not think you take much pains to entertain me," added he, "when I've come here on purpose to see you."

"I thought you came by Mrs. Graham's invitation," said Gertrude.

"And didn't I have to court Kitty for an hour in order to get it?"

"If you obtained it by artifice," said Gertrude, smiling, "you do not deserve to be entertained."

"It is much easier to please Kitty than you," remarked Ben.

"Kitty is very amiable and pleasant," said Gertrude.

"Yes; but I'd give more for one smile from you than——"

Gertrude now interrupted him with, "Ah! here is an old friend coming to see us; please let me pass, Mr. Bruce?"

The gate at the end of the yard swung to as she spoke, and Ben, looking in that direction, saw the person whom Gertrude seemed desirous to go and meet.

"Don't be in such a hurry to leave me!" said Ben; "that little crone, whose coming seems to give you so much satisfaction, can't get here this half hour, at the rate she is travelling."

"She is an old friend," replied Gertrude, "I must go and welcome her." Her countenance expressed so much earnestness that Mr. Bruce was ashamed to persist in his incivility, and, rising, permitted her to pass. Miss Patty Pace was over-joyed at seeing Gertrude, and commenced waving, in a theatrical manner, a huge feather fan, her favourite mode of salutation. As she drew near, Miss Patty took her by both hands, and stood talking with her some minutes. They entered the house at the side door, and Ben, thus disappointed of Gertrude's return, sallied into the garden in hopes to attract the notice of Kitty.

Ben Bruce had such confidence in the power of wealth and a high station in fashionable life that it never occurred to him to doubt that Gertrude would gladly accept his hand and fortune if they were placed at her disposal. Many a worldly-wise mother had sought his acquaintance; many a young lady of property and rank had received his attention with favour, and believing, as he did, that he had money enough to purchase. He determined to win Gertrude's good opinion and affection; and although more interested in her than he was aware of himself, he at present made that his ultimate object. He felt conscious that as yet she had given no evidence of his success; and having resolved to resort to some new means of winning her, he, with a too common baseness, fixed upon a method which was calculated, if successful, to end in the mortification, if not the unhappiness, of a third

party. He intended, by marked devotion to Kitty Ray, to excite the jealousy of Gertrude.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

TRUE POLITENESS.

A half-hour before dinner Mrs. Graham and her nieces, Mr. Bruce, his sister Fanny, and Lieutenant Osborne, as they sat in the large room, had their curiosity much excited by the merriment which existed in Emily's room. Gertrude's clear laugh was distinguishable, and even Emily joined in the outburst, while another person appeared to be of the party, as a most singular voice mingled with the rest.

Kitty ran to the entry two or three times to listen, and at last returned with the announcement that Gertrude was coming down stairs with the very queen of witches. Presently Gertrude opened the door, which Kitty had slammed behind her, and ushered in Miss Patty Pace, who advanced with measured, mincing steps to Mrs. Graham, and, stopping in front of her, made a low curtsey.

"How do you do, ma'am?" said Mrs. Graham, half inclined to believe that Gertrude was playing off a joke upon her.

"This, I presume, is the mistress," said Miss Patty.

Mrs. Graham acknowledged her claim to that title.

"A lady of presence!" said Miss Patty, to Gertrude, in an audible whisper, pronouncing each syllable with a manner and emphasis peculiar to herself. Then, turning to Belle, who was shrinking into the shadow of a curtain, she approached her, held up both her hands in astonishment, and exclaimed, "Miss Isabella, as I still enjoy existence! and radiant, too, as the morning! Bless my heart! how your youthful charms have expanded!"

Belle had recognised Miss Pace the moment she entered the room, but was ashamed

to acknowledge the acquaintance of so eccentric an individual, and would have still feigned ignorance, but Kitty now came forward, exclaiming, "Why, Miss Pace, where did you come from?"

"Miss Catharina," said Miss Pace, taking her hands in an ecstasy of astonishment, "then you know me! Blessings on your memory of an old friend!"

"Certainly, I knew you in a minute; you're not so easily forgotten, I assure you. Belle, don't you remember Miss Pace? It's at your house I've always seen her."

"Oh, is it she?" said Belle, with a poor attempt to conceal the fact that she had any previous knowledge of a person who had been a frequent visitor at her father's house, and was held in esteem by both her parents.

"I apprehend," said Miss Patty to Kitty, in the same loud whisper, "that she carries a proud heart." Then, without having appeared to notice the gentlemen, who were directly behind her, she added, "Sparks, I see Miss Catharina, young sparks! Whose?—yours or hers?"

Kitty laughed, for she saw that the young men heard her, and were much amused, and replied without hesitation, "O mine, Miss Patty, mine, both of 'em!" Miss Patty now looked around the room, and, missing Mr. Graham, advanced to his wife, saying, "And where, madam, is the bridegroom?"

Mrs. Graham, a little confused, replied that her husband would be in presently, and invited Miss Pace to be seated.

"No, mistress, I am obliged to you; I have an inquiring mind, and, with your leave, will take a survey of the apartment. I love to see everything that is modern." She then examined the pictures upon the walls, but had not proceeded far before she turned to Gertrude and asked, loud enough to be heard, "Gertrude, my dear, what have they done with the second wife?" Gertrude looked surprised, and Miss Pace corrected her remark, saying, "Oh, it is the counterfeit that I have reference to; the original, I am aware, departed long since; but where is the counterfeit of the second

Mrs. Graham? It always hung here, if my memory serves me."

Gertrude whispered a reply to this question, and Miss Pace then uttered the following soliloquy: "The garret! well, 'tis the course of nature; what is new obliterates the recollection, even, of the old."

She now linked her arm in Gertrude's, and made her the companion of her survey. When they had completed the circuit of the room, she stopped in front of the group of young people, all of whom were eyeing her with great amusement, and claimed the acquaintance of Mr. Bruce, and asked to be introduced to that member of the war department, as she styled Lieutenant Osborne. Kitty introduced her with great formality, and at the same time presented the lieutenant to Gertrude. A chair was now brought, Miss Patty joined their circle and entertained them until dinner time. Gertrude again sought Emily's room.

At the table, Gertrude sat next to Emily, whose wants she always made her care, and with Miss Patty on the other side, had no time or attention to bestow on anyone else; much to the chagrin of Mr. Bruce, who was anxious she should observe his assiduous devotion to Kitty, whose hair was adorned with the moss-rose buds, and her face with smiles.

Belle was also made happy by the marked admiration of the young officer. Occasionally, some remark made by Miss Pace irresistibly attracted the attention of every one at the table, and extorted either the laughter it was intended to excite, or a mirth which, though perhaps ill-timed, it was impossible to repress.

Mr. Graham treated Miss Patty with politeness and attention, and Mrs. Graham spared no pains to bring out the old lady's conversational powers. She found that Miss Patty was acquainted with everybody, and made most amusing comments upon almost every person who became the topic of conversation. Mr. Graham at last led her to speak of herself and her lonely mode of life; and Fanny Bruce, who sat next, asked her bluntly, why she never got married.

"Ah, my young miss," said she, "we all wait our time, and I may take a companion yet."

"You should," said Mr. Graham. "Now you have property, Miss Pace, and ought to share it with some nice thrifty man."

"I have but an insignificant trifle of worldly wealth," said Miss Pace, "and am not as youthful as I have been; but I may suit myself with a companion, notwithstanding. I approve of matrimony, and have my eye upon a young man."

"A young man!" exclaimed Fanny Bruce, laughing.

"O yes, Miss Frances," said Miss Patty; "I am an admirer of youth, and of everything that is modern. Yes, I cling to life—I cling to life."

"Certainly," remarked Mrs. Graham. "Miss Pace must marry somebody younger than herself; someone to whom she can leave all her property, if he should happen to outlive her."

"Yes," said Mr. Graham; "at present you would not know how to make a will, unless you left all your money to Gertrude, here; I rather think she would make good use of it."

"That would certainly be a consideration to me," said Miss Pace; "I should dread the thought of having my little savings squandered. Now, I know there's more than a sufficiency of pauper population; and plenty that would be glad of legacies; but I have no intention of bestowing on such. Why, sir, nine-tenths of them will always be poor. No, no! I shouldn't give to such! No, no! I have other intentions."

"Miss Pace," asked Mr. Graham, "what has become of General Pace's family?"

"All dead!" replied Miss Patty, promptly, "all dead! I made a pilgrimage to the grave of that branch of the family. It was a touching scene," said she in a pathetic tone. "There was a piece of grassy ground, belted about with an iron railing, and in the centre a beautiful white marble monument, in which they were all buried; it was

pure as alabaster, and on it was inscribed these lines:

'Pace.'"

"What were the lines?" inquired Mrs. Graham.

"Pace, ma'am, Pace; nothing else."

Solemn as was the subject, a universal titter pervaded the circle: and Mrs. Graham, perceiving that Kitty and Fanny would soon burst into uncontrollable fits of laughter, made the move for the company to quit the table.

The gentlemen did not care to linger, and followed the ladies into the wide entry, the coolness of which invited every one to loiter there during the heat of the day. Miss Patty and Fanny Bruce compelled the unwilling Gertrude to join the group there assembled; and Mrs. Graham, who could not forego her afternoon nap, was the only one who absented herself.

So universal was the interest Miss Patty excited, that all private dialogue was suspended, and close attention given to whatever topic the old lady was discussing.

Belle maintained a slightly scornful expression of countenance, and tried with partial success to divert Lieutenant Osborne's thoughts into another channel; but Kitty was so delighted with Miss Pace's originality, that she made no attempt at any exclusive conversation, and, with Mr. Bruce sitting beside her and joining in her amusement, looked more than contented.

Dress and fashion, two favourite themes with Miss Patty, were now introduced, and, after discoursing upon her love of the beautiful, as witnessed in the mantua-making and millinery arts, she deliberately left her seat, and going towards Belle (who wished to avoid her), began to examine the material of her dress, and requested her to rise and permit her to further inspect the mode in which it was made, declaring the description of so modern a master-piece of art would be a feast to the ears of some of her junior acquaintances.

Belle indignantly refused to comply, and shook off the hand of the old lady as if there had been contamination in her touch.

"Do stand up, Belle," said Kitty, in an undertone; "don't be so cross."

"Why don't you stand up yourself," said Belle, "and show off your own dress, for the benefit of her low associates?"

"She didn't ask me," replied Kitty, "but I will, with pleasure, if she will condescend to look at it. Miss Pace," continued she gaily, placing herself in front of the inquisitive Miss Patty, "do admire my gown at your leisure, and take a pattern of it, if you like, I should be proud of the honour."

For a wonder, Kitty's dress was pretty and well worthy of observation. Miss Patty made many comments, and her curiosity being satisfied, commenced retreating towards the place she had left, first glancing behind her to see if it was still vacant, and then moving towards it with a backward motion, consisting of a series of curtseys.

Fanny Bruce, who stood near, observing that she had made an exact calculation how many steps would be required to reach her seat, placed her hand on the back of the chair, as if to draw it away; and encouraged by a look and smile from Isabel, moved it, slightly, but still enough to endanger the old lady's safety.

On attempting to regain it, Miss Pace stumbled, and would have fallen, but Gertrude—who had been watching Fanny's proceedings—sprang forward in time to fling an arm around her, and place her safely in the chair, casting at the same time a reproachful look at Fanny, who, much confused, turned to avoid Gertrude's gaze, and in doing so accidentally trod on Mr. Graham's gouty toes, which drew from him an exclamation of pain.

"Fan," said Mr. Bruce, who had observed the latter accident only, "I wish you could learn politeness."

"Whom am I to learn it from?" asked Fanny, pertly,—"you?"

Ben looked provoked, but forbore to reply; while Miss Pace, who had recovered her composure, said—"Politeness! Ah, a lovely but rare virtue; perceptibly developed, however, in the manners of my friend Gertrude, which I hesitate not to affirm would well become a princess."

Belle curled her lip, and smiled disdainfully. "Lieutenant Osborne," said she, "don't you think Miss Devereux has beautiful manners?"

"Very fine," replied the lieutenant; "the style in which she receives company, on her reception-day, is elegance itself."

"Who are you speaking of?" inquired Kitty; "Mrs. Harry Noble?"

"Miss Devereux, we were remarking upon," said Belle; "but Mrs. Noble is also very stylish."

"I think she is," said Mr. Bruce; "do you hear, Fanny?—we have found a model for you,—you must imitate Mrs. Noble."

"I don't know anything about Mrs. Noble," retorted Fanny; "I'd rather imitate Miss Flint. Miss Gertrude," said she, "how shall I learn politeness?"

"Do you remember," asked Gertrude, speaking low, "what your music-master told you about learning to play with expression? I should give you the same rule for improvement in politeness."

Fanny blushed deeply. "What is that?" said Mr. Graham; "Fanny, what is Gertrude's rule for politeness."

"She only said," answered Fanny, "that it was the same my music-master gave me last winter."

"And what did he say?" inquired her brother.

"I asked Mr. Hermann," said Fanny, "how I should learn to play with expression, and he said, 'You must cultivate your heart, Miss Bruce, you must cultivate your heart.'"

This new direction for the attainment of a great accomplishment was received with countenances that indicated as great a variety of sentiments as there was difference of character among Fanny's audience. Mr. Graham bit his lip, and walked away; for his politeness was founded on no such rule, and he knew that Gertrude's was. Belle looked glorious disdain; Mr. Bruce and Kitty, puzzled and half amused; while Lieutenant Osborne proved himself not quite callous to a noble truth, by turning upon Gertrude a glance of admiration. Emily's face evidenced how fully she coincided in the opinion thus unintentionally made public, and Miss Patty expressed her approbation.

"Miss Gertrude's remark is a verity," said she. "The only politeness which is trustworthy is the spontaneous offering of the heart. Perhaps this goodly company of masters and misses would condescend to give ear to an old woman's tale of a rare instance of true politeness, and the fitting reward it met."

All expressed strong desire to hear Miss Patty's story, and she began: "On a winter's day, some years ago, an old woman, of many foibles and weaknesses, but with a keen eye and her share of worldly wisdom—Miss Patty Pace by name—started, by special invitation, for the house of one worshipful Squire Clinton, the honoured parent of Miss Isabella, the fair damsel yonder. Every tall tree in our good city was spangled with frost work, more glittering far than gems that sparkle in Golconda's mine, and the side-walk were a snare to the feet of the old and unwary.

"I lost my equilibrium, and fell. Two gallant gentlemen lifted and carried me to a neighboring apothecary's emporium, restored my scattered wits, and, revived me with a fragrant cordial. I went on my way with many a misgiving, however, and scarcely should I have reached my destination with bones unbroken, had it not been for a knight with a rosy countenance, who overtook me, placed my old arm within his own more strong and youthful one, and protected my steps to the end of my journey. No slight courage either, my young misses, did my noble escort need, to

carry him through what he had undertaken. Paint to your imagination a youth, fresh and beautiful as a sunbeam, straight as an arrow—a perfect Apollo—linked to the little bent body of poor Miss Patty Pace. I will not spare myself, young ladies; for, had you seen me then, you would have considered me now vastly ameliorated in outer presentment. My double row of teeth were stowed away in my pocket, my frisette was pushed back from my head by my recent fall, and my gogs—the same my father wore before me—covered my face, and they alone attracted attention, and created some excitement. But he went on unmoved; and, in spite of many a captivating glance and smile from rows of beautiful young maidens whom we met, and many a sneer from youths of his own age, he sustained my feeble form with as much care as if I had been an empress, and accommodated his buoyant step to the slow movement which my infirmities compelled. Ah! what a spirit of conformity he manifested! my knight of the rosy countenance! Could you have seen him, Miss Catharina, or you, Miss Frances, your palpitating hearts would have taken flight for ever. He was a paragon, indeed.

"Whither his own way tended I cannot say, for he moved in conformity to mine, and left me not until I was safe at the abode of Mistress Clinton. I hardly think he coveted my old heart, but I sometimes believe it followed him, for truly he is still a frequent subject of my meditations."

"Ah! then that was his reward!" exclaimed Kitty.

"Not so, Miss Kitty; guess again."

"I can think of nothing so desirable, Miss Patty."

"His fortune in life, Miss Catharina—that was his reward; it may be that he cannot yet estimate the full amount of his recompense."

"How so?" exclaimed Fanny.

"I will briefly narrate the rest. Mistress Clinton encouraged me always to converse much in her presence. She knew my taste was disposed to humour me, and I was

pleased to be indulged. I told my story, and enlarged upon the merits of my noble youth, and his wonderful spirit of conformity. The squire, a gentleman who estimates good breeding, was present, with his ears opened, when I recommended my knight, with all the eloquence I could command; he was amused, interested, pleased. He promised to see the boy, and did so; the noble features spake for themselves, and gained him a situation as clerk; from which he has since advanced in the ranks, until now he occupies the position of partner and confidential agent in a creditable and wealthy house. Miss Isabella, it would rejoice my heart to hear the latest tidings from Mr. William Sullivan."

"He is well, I believe," said Isabella, sulkily. "I know nothing to the contrary."

"Oh, Gertrude knows," said Fanny. "Gertrude knows all about Mr. Sullivan; she will tell you."

All turned, and looked at Gertrude, who, with face flushed, and eyes glistening with the interest she felt in Miss Patty's narrative, stood leaning upon Emily's chair. Miss Patty now appealed to her, much surprised, however, at her having any knowledge of her much admired young escort. Gertrude drew near, and answered all her questions without the least hesitation or embarrassment.

Gertrude gave Miss Pace an account of the curiosity which Willie and his friends had felt concerning the original author of his good fortune; and the old lady was so delighted at hearing the various conjectures about Mr. Clinton's unexpected summons, and of the matter being attributed to the agency of Santa Claus, that she loudly laughed. Miss Pace was just taxing Gertrude with messages of remembrance to be despatched in her next letter to Willie, when Mrs. Graham presented herself, and arrested the attention of the whole company by exclaiming, in her abrupt manner and loud tones—"What! are you all here? I thought you were bound for a walk in the woods. Kitty, what has become of your cherished scheme of climbing Sunset Hill?"

"I proposed it, aunt, an hour ago, but Belle insisted it was too warm. I think the weather is just right for a walk."

"It will soon be growing cool," said Mrs. Graham, "and I think you had better start; it is some distance, if you go round through the woods."

"Who knows the way?" asked Kitty.

No one responded to the question, and all professed ignorance; much to the astonishment of Gertrude, who believed that every part of the woody ground and hill beyond were familiar to Mr. Bruce. She did not stay, however, to hear any further discussion of their plans; for Emily was beginning to suffer from headache and weariness, and Gertrude insisted that she should seek the quiet of her own room, and she went with her. She was just closing the chamber door, when Fanny called from the staircase, "Miss Gertrude ain't you going for a walk with us?"

"No," replied Gertrude; "not to-day."

"Then I won't go," said Fanny, "if you don't. Why don't you go, Miss Gertrude?"

"I shall walk with Miss Emily, by-and-bye, if she is well enough; you can accompany us, if you like, but you would enjoy going to Sunset Hill much more."

Meantime a whispered consultation took place below, in which someone suggested that Gertrude was well acquainted with the path which the party wished to follow through the woods. Belle opposed her being invited to join them; Kitty hesitated between her liking for Gertrude and her fears regarding Mr. Bruce's allegiance; Lieutenant Osborne forbore to urge what Belle disapproved; and Mr. Bruce remained silent, trusting to the final necessity of her being invited to act as guide, in which capacity he had purposely concealed his own ability to serve. This necessity was so obvious, that, as he had foreseen, Kitty was at last despatched to find Gertrude and make known their request.

CHAPTER XXIX.

HAUTEUR.

Gertrude would have declined, and made her attendance upon Emily an excuse for non-compliance; but Emily, believing that the exercise would be beneficial to Gertrude, interfered, and begged her to agree to Kitty's proposal; and, on the latter declaring that the expedition must otherwise be given up, she consented to join it. To change her slippers for thick walking boots occupied a few minutes only; a few more were spent in a vain search for her flat hat, which was missing from the closet where it usually hung.

"What are you looking for?" said Emily, hearing Gertrude twice open the door of the closet.

"My hat! but I don't see it. I believe I shall have to borrow your sun-bonnet again," and she took up a white sun-bonnet, the same she had worn in the morning, and which now lay on the bed.

"Certainly, my dear," said Emily.

"I shall begin to think it mine before long," said Gertrude, gaily, as she ran off, "I wear it so much more than you do." Emily now called from the staircase, "Gertrude, my child, have you thick shoes? It is always very wet in the meadow beyond Thornton place." Gertrude assured her that she had; but fearing that the others were less carefully equipped, inquired of Mrs. Graham whether Belle and Kitty were insured against the dampness they might encounter.

Mrs. Graham declared they were not. "I have some very light india-rubbers," said Gertrude; "I will take them with me, and Fanny and I shall be in time to warn them before they come to the place."

It was an easy matter to overtake Belle and the lieutenant, for they walked very slowly, and seemed not unwilling to be left in the rear. The reverse was the case with Mr. Bruce and Kitty, who appeared purposely to keep in advance; Kitty hastening her steps from her reluctance to allow an agreeable tête-à-tête to be

interfered with, and Ben from a desire to give Gertrude a fair opportunity to observe his devotion to Kitty, which increased the moment she came in sight.

They had now passed the Thornton farm, and only one field separated them from the meadow, which was in the centre a complete quagmire, and only passable to the thickly-shod, by keeping close to the wall, and thus skirting the field. Gertrude and Fanny were some distance behind, and nearly out of breath with a pursuit in which the others had gained so great advantage. As they were passing the farm-house, Mrs. Thornton came to the door and addressed Gertrude, who, foreseeing that she would be detained some minutes, bade Fanny run on, acquaint her brother and Kitty with the nature of the soil in advance, and begged them to wait at the bars until the rest of the party came up. Fanny was too late, notwithstanding the haste she made; they were half across the meadow when she reached the bars, proceeding in perfect safety, for Mr. Bruce was conducting Kitty by the only practicable path, close under the wall, proving to Gertrude, who in a few moments joined Fanny, that he was no stranger to the place. When they were half-way across, they encountered some obstacle, for Kitty stood poised on one foot and clinging to the wall, while Mr. Bruce placed a few stepping-stones across the path. He then helped her over, and they went on, their figures soon disappearing in the grove beyond.

Isabel and the lieutenant were so long making their appearance that Fanny became very impatient, and urged Gertrude to leave them to their fate. They at last turned the corner near the farm-house, and came on, Belle maintaining her leisurely pace. "Are you lame, Miss Clinton?" called out Fanny, so soon as they were within hearing.

"Lame!" said Belle; "what do you mean?"

"Why, you walk so slow," said Fanny; "I thought something must be the matter with your feet."

Belle disdained any reply, and, tossing her head, entered the damp meadow, in close

conversation with her devoted young officer, not deigning even to look at Gertrude, who, without appearing to notice her haughtiness, took Fanny's hand, and, turning away from the direct path, to make the circuit of the field, said to Belle, with calm courtesy of manner, "This way, if you please, Miss Clinton; we have been waiting to guide you through this wet meadow."

"Is it wet?" asked Belle, in alarm, glancing down at her delicate slipper. She then added, in a provoked tone, "I should have thought you would have known better than to bring us this way. I shan't go across."

"Then you can go back," said the pert Fanny; "nobody cares."

"It was not my proposition," remarked Gertrude, mildly, though with a heightened colour; "but I think I can help you through the difficulty. Mrs. Graham was afraid you had worn thin shoes, and I brought you a pair of india-rubbers."

Belle took them, and, without the grace to express any thanks, said, as she unfolded the paper in which they were wrapped, "Whose are they?"

"Mine," replied Gertrude.

"I don't believe I can keep them on," muttered Belle; "they'll be immense, I suppose."

"Allow me," said the lieutenant; and, taking one of the shoes, he stooped to place it on her foot, but found it difficult to do so, as it was too small. Belle, perceiving it, bent down to perform, the office for herself, and treated Gertrude's property with such angry violence that she snapped the strap which passed across the instep, and even then only succeeded in partially forcing her foot into the shoe.

Meantime, as she bent forward, Fanny's attention was attracted by a very tasteful broad-brimmed hat, which she wore jauntily on one side of her head, and which Fanny recognised as Gertrude's. It was a somewhat fanciful article of dress, that Gertrude would hardly have thought of purchasing for herself, but which Mr. Graham had brought home to her the previous summer to replace a common garden

hat which he had accidentally crushed. As the style of it was simple and in good taste, she had been in the habit of wearing it often in her country walks, and kept it hung in the closet, where it had been found and appropriated by Belle. It had been seen by Fanny in Gertrude's room at Mrs. Warren's; she had also been permitted to wear it on one occasion, when she took part in a charade. Having heard Gertrude say it was missing, she was astonished to see it adorning Belle; and, as she stood behind her, made signs to Gertrude, and performed a series of pantomimic gestures expressive of an intention to snatch it from Miss Clinton's head, and place it on that of its rightful owner.

Gertrude's gravity nearly gave way. She shook her head at Fanny, held up her finger, made signs to her to forbear, and, with a face whose laughter was only concealed by the deep white bonnet which she wore, took her hand, and hastened with her along the path, leaving Belle and her beau to follow.

"Fanny," said she, "you must not make me laugh so; if Miss Clinton had seen us she would have been very much hurt."

"She has no business to wear your hat," said Fanny, "and she shan't."

"Yes, she shall," replied Gertrude; "she looks beautiful in it, I am delighted to have her wear it, and you must not intimate to her that it is mine."

The walk through the woods was delightful, and Gertrude and her young companion, in the quiet enjoyment of it, had almost forgotten that they were members of a gay party, when they suddenly came in sight of Kitty and Mr. Bruce. They were sitting at the foot of an old oak, Kitty earnestly engaged in the manufacture of an oak-wreath, which she was just fitting to her attendant's hat; while he himself, when Gertrude first caught sight of him, was leaning against the tree in a careless attitude. But as soon as he perceived their approach, he bent forward, inspected Kitty's work, and when they came within hearing, was uttering a profusion of thanks and compliments, which he took care should reach Gertrude's ears, and

Kitty received with manifest pleasure—a pleasure which was still further enhanced by her perceiving that Gertrude had apparently no power to withdraw his attention from her. Poor, simple Kitty! she believed him honest while he bought her heart with counterfeits. "Miss Gertrude," said Fanny, "I wish we could go into some pine woods, so that I could get some cones to make baskets and frames of."

"There are plenty of pines in that direction," said Gertrude, pointing with her finger.

"Why can't we go and look for cones?" asked Fanny; "we could get back by the time Belle Clinton reaches this place."

Gertrude and Fanny started off, having first tied their bonnets to the branch of a tree. They were gone some time, for Fanny found plenty of cones, but was at a loss how to carry them home. "I have thought," said she, at last; "I will run back and borrow brother Ben's handkerchief; or, if he won't let me have it, I'll take my own bonnet and fill it full." Gertrude promised to await her return, and she ran off. When she came near the spot where she had left Kitty and Mr. Bruce, she heard several voices and loud laughter. Belle and the lieutenant had arrived, and they were having great sport about something. Belle was standing with the white cape bonnet in her hand. She had bent it completely out of shape, so as to give it the appearance of an old woman's cap, had adorned the front with white-weed and dandelions, and finally pinned on a handkerchief to serve as a veil. She held it up on the end of the lieutenant's cane, and was endeavouring to obtain a bid for Miss Flint's bridal bonnet.

Fanny listened a moment with an indignant countenance, then advanced with a bound, as if just running from the woods. Kitty caught her frock as she passed, and exclaimed, "Why, Fanny, are you here? Where's Gertrude?"

"Oh, she's in the pine woods!" replied Fanny, "and I'm going back; she only sent me to get her hat, the sun's so warm where we are."

"Ah, yes!" said Belle, "her Paris hat. Please give it to her, with our compliments."

"No, that isn't hers," said Fanny; "that is Miss Emily's. This is hers;" and she laid her hand upon the straw head-dress which the gentlemen had but a moment before been assuring Belle was vastly becoming, and, without ceremony, snatched it from her head.

Belle's eyes flashed angrily. "What do you mean?" said she; "you saucy little creature! Give me that hat!" and she stretched out her hand to take it.

"I shan't do any such thing!" said Fanny; "it's Gertrude's hat. She looked for it this afternoon, but concluded it was either lost or stolen, and so borrowed Miss Emily's cape-bonnet; but she'll be very glad to find it, and I'll carry it to her. I rather think," said she, looking over her shoulder, as she ran off, "I rather think Miss Emily would be willing you should wear her bonnet home, if you'll be careful, and not bend it."

A few moments of anger to Belle, laughter from Kitty and Mr. Bruce, and concealed amusement on Lieutenant Osborne's part, and Gertrude came hastily from the woods, with the hat in her hand, Fanny following her; and, taking advantage of Belle's position, with her back towards her, resumed her pantomimic threats and insinuations. "Miss Clinton," said Gertrude, as she replaced the hat in her lap, "I am afraid Fanny has been very rude in my name. I did not send her for either hat or bonnet, and shall be pleased to have you wear this as often as you like."

"I don't want it," said Belle, scornfully; "I'd no idea it belonged to you."

"Certainly not; I am aware of it," said Gertrude. "But I trust that will not prevent you making use of it for to-day, at least." Without urging the matter further, she proposed that they should hasten on to the top of the hill, which they could not otherwise reach before sunset; and set the example by moving forward in that direction, Fanny accompanying her, and busying herself as she went by stripping the decorations from Emily's despised bonnet; Belle tying an embroidered handkerchief under her chin; and Mr. Bruce swinging on his arm the otherwise neglected hat.

Belle did not recover her temper during the evening; the rest found their excursion

agreeable, and it was nearly dark when they reached the Thornton farm on their return. Here Gertrude left them, telling Fanny that she had promised to stop and see Jenny Thornton, one of her Sunday-school class, who was in a fever, and refusing to let her remain, as her mother might not wish her to enter the house, where several of the family were sick. About an hour after, as Gertrude was walking home in some haste, she was joined near Mr. Graham's house by Mr. Bruce, who, with her hat still hanging on his arm, seemed to have been awaiting her return. She started on his abruptly joining her, for it was so dark that she did not at once recognise him, and supposed it might be a stranger.

"Miss Gertrude," said he, "I hope I don't alarm you."

"Oh no," said she, reassured by the sound of his voice; "I did not know who it was."

He offered his arm, and she took it; for his recent devotion to Kitty had served in some degree to relieve her of any fear she had felt lest his attentions carried meaning with them; and concluding that he liked to play beau-general, she had no objection to his escorting her home.

"We had a very pleasant walk this evening," said he; "at least, I had. Miss Kitty is a very entertaining companion."

"I think she is," replied Gertrude; "I like her frank, lively manners much."

"I am afraid you found Fanny rather poor company. I should have joined you occasionally, but I could hardly find an opportunity to quit Miss Kitty, we were so much interested in what we were saying."

"Fanny and I are accustomed to each other, and very happy together," said Gertrude.

"Do you know we have planned a delightful drive for to-morrow?"

"No; I was not aware of it."

"I suppose Miss Kay expects I shall ask her to go with me; but supposing, Miss Gertrude, I should give you the preference, and ask you, what should you say?"

"That I was much obliged to you, but had an engagement to take a drive with Miss Emily," replied Gertrude, promptly.

"Indeed!" said he, in a suppressed and provoked tone; "I thought you would like it; but Miss Kitty, I doubt not will accept. I will go in and ask her. Here is your hat."

"Thank you," said Gertrude, and would have taken it; but Ben still held it by one string, and said——

"Then you won't go, Miss Gertrude?"

"My engagement with Miss Emily cannot be postponed on any account," answered Gertrude, thankful that she had so excellent a reason for declining.

"Nonsense!" said Mr. Bruce; "you could go with me if you chose; and if you don't, I shall certainly invite Miss Kitty."

The weight he seemed to attach to this threat astonished Gertrude. "Can it be possible," thought she, "that he expects thus to pique and annoy me?" and she replied by saying, "I shall be happy if my declining prove the means of Kitty's enjoying a pleasant drive; she is fond of variety, and has few opportunities here to indulge her taste."

They now entered the house. Mr. Bruce sought Kitty in the recess of the window, and Gertrude, not finding Emily present, stayed but a short time in the room—long enough, however, to observe Mr. Bruce's exaggerated devotion to Kitty, which was marked by others beside himself. Kitty promised to accompany him the next day, and did so. Mrs. Graham, Mrs. Bruce, Belle, and the lieutenant, went also in another vehicle, and Emily and Gertrude took a different direction, and driving white Charlie in the old-fashioned buggy, rejoiced in their quiet independence.

CHAPTER XXX.

VANITY.

Days and weeks passed on, and no marked event took place in Mr. Graham's household. The weather became intensely warm, and no more walks and drives were planned. The lieutenant left the city, and Isabel, who could neither endure with patience excessive heat nor want of society, grew more irritable than ever.

To Kitty, however, these summer days were fraught with interest. Mr. Bruce visited constantly at the house, and had great influence upon her outward demeanour and her inward happiness, which fluctuated as his attentions were freely bestowed or altogether suspended. No wonder the poor girl was puzzled to understand one whose conduct was certainly inexplicable to any but those initiated into his motives. Believing, as he did, that Gertrude would in time show a disposition to win him back, he was anxious only to carry his addresses to Kitty to such a point as would excite a serious alarm in the mind of the poor protégée of the Grahams, who dared to slight his proffered advances. Acting then as he did almost wholly with reference to Gertrude, it was only in her presence, or under such circumstances that he was sure it would reach her ears, that he manifested a marked interest in Kitty; and his behaviour was, therefore, in the highest degree, unequal, leading the warm-hearted Kitty to believe one moment that he felt for her almost the tenderness of a lover, and the next to suffer under the apprehension of having unconsciously wounded or offended him. Unfortunately, too, Mrs. Graham took every opportunity to congratulate her upon her conquest, thereby increasing the simple girl's confidence in the sincerity of Mr. Bruce's admiration.

Gertrude, whose eyes were soon opened to the existing state of things, was filled with apprehension on account of Kitty, for whose peace and welfare she felt great concern. The suspicions to which Mr. Bruce's conduct gave rise were soon strengthened into convictions; for, on several occasions, after he had offered Kitty proofs of devotion, he tested their effect upon Gertrude by some attention to herself; intimating that she had it in her power to rob Kitty of all claim upon his favour.

Gertrude availed herself of every opportunity to acquaint him with the truth, that he could not render himself more odious in her eyes than by the use of such mean attempts to mortify her; but attributing her warmth to jealousy, which he desired to excite, the selfish young man persevered in his course of wickedness. As he only proffered his attentions, and made no offer of his heart and hand, Kitty, having forgotten that she had a few weeks back looked upon Gertrude as a rival, now chose her for her bosom friend; and the transparency of her character was such that she betrayed her secret to Gertrude. Though no one but Gertrude appeared to observe it, Kitty was wonderfully changed;—the gay, laughing, careless Kitty had now her fits of musing—her sunny face was subject to clouds, that flitted across it, and robbed it of all its brightness. If she found Gertrude sitting alone in her room she would approach, throw her arm around her, and talk on her favourite topic. She would relate the complimentary speeches and polite attentions of Mr. Bruce, talk about him for an hour, and question Gertrude as to her opinion of his merits. She would ask if Gertrude really supposed he meant all he said, and add, that of course she didn't believe he did—it was all nonsense. And if Gertrude avowed the same opinion, and declared it was best not to trust his flatteries, poor Kitty's face would fail, and she would give her reasons for sometimes thinking he was sincere—he had such a truthful, earnest way of speaking.

At last Mr. Bruce tried Gertrude's firmness by offering to her acceptance a rich ring. Not a little surprised at his presumption, she declined it without ceremony, and the next day saw it on the finger of Kitty, who was eager to give an account of its presentation.

"And did you accept it?" asked Gertrude, with such a look of astonishment, that Kitty observed it, and evaded an acknowledgment of having done so, by saying, with a blushing countenance, that she agreed to wear it a little while.

"I wouldn't," said Gertrude.

"Why not?"

"Because, in the first place, I do not think it is in good taste to receive such rich gifts from gentlemen; and then, again, if strangers notice it, you may be subjected to unpleasant, significant remarks."

"What would you do with it?" asked Kitty.

"I should give it back."

Kitty looked very undecided; but concluded to offer it to Mr. Bruce, and tell him what Gertrude said. She did so, and that gentleman, little appreciating Gertrude's motives, and believing her only desirous of making difficulty between him and Kitty, jumped at the conclusion that her heart was won at last. He was disappointed, therefore, when, on his next meeting with her, she treated him as she had invariably done of late, with cool civility; indeed, it seemed to him that she was more insensible than ever to his attractions, and hastily quitted the house, much to the distress of Kitty.

"Shall I," thought he, "marry this poor girl? Shall I, who have a handsome fortune, and additional expectations to make a brilliant alliance, condescend to share my wealth with this adopted child of the Grahams? If she were one atom less charming, I would disappoint her, after all! I wonder how she'd feel if I should marry Kitty! I dare say that she would come to my wedding, bend her slender neck as gracefully as ever, and say, 'Good evening, Mr. Bruce,' as calmly as she does now, every time I go to the house! But, as Mrs. Bruce, I should be proud of that manner, certainly. I wonder how I ever got in love with her; I'm sure I don't know. She isn't handsome; mother thinks she isn't, and so does Belle Clinton. But Lieutenant Osborne noticed her the minute she came into the room; and Fan raves about her beauty. I don't know what I think myself; I believe she's bewitched me, so that I'm not capable of judging; but, if it isn't beauty, it's something more than mere good looks."

About this time, Mrs. Graham and Mrs. Bruce, with their families, received cards for

a levée at the house of an acquaintance five miles distant. Mrs. Bruce, who had a close carriage, invited both the cousins to go; and, as Mr. Graham's carriage, when closed, would only accommodate himself and lady, the proposal was acceded to.

The prospect of a gay assembly revived Isabel's drooping spirits. Her rich evening dresses were brought out, and she stood before her mirror, and tied on first one wreath, and then another, and looked so beautiful in each that it was difficult to choose. Kitty, who stood by, went to consult Gertrude.

"Gertrude," said Kitty, "what shall I wear this evening? I've been trying to get Belle to tell me, but she never will hear what I ask her, when she's thinking about her own dress! She's dreadfully selfish."

"Who advises her?" asked Gertrude.

"Oh, nobody; she always decides for herself; but then she has so much taste, and I haven't the least in the world! So do tell me, Gertrude, what had I better wear to-night?"

"I'm the last person you should ask, Kitty; I never went to a fashionable party in my life."

"That doesn't make any difference. I'm sure if you did go, you'd look better than any of us; and I'm not afraid to trust to your opinion, for I never in my life saw you wear anything that didn't look genteel—even your gingham morning-gown has a sort of stylish air."

"Stop, stop, Kitty; you are going too far; you must keep within bounds if you want me to believe you."

"Well then," said Kitty, "to say nothing of yourself (for you're superior to flattery, Gertrude—somebody told me so)—who furnishes Miss Emily's wardrobe? Who selects her dresses?"

"I have done so lately, but——"

"I thought so!—I thought so!" interrupted Kitty. "I knew poor Miss Emily was indebted to you for always looking so nice and so beautiful."

"No, indeed, Kitty, you are mistaken; I have never seen Emily better dressed than she was the first time I met her; and her beauty is not borrowed from art—it is all her own."

"Oh, I know she is lovely, and everybody admires her; but no one can suppose she would take pains to wear such pretty things, and put them on so gracefully, just to please herself."

"It is not done merely to please herself; it was to please her father that Emily first made the exertion to dress with taste as well as neatness. I have heard that, for some time after she lost her eyesight, she was disposed to be very careless; but, having accidentally discovered that it was an additional cause of sorrow to him, she roused herself at once, and, with Mrs. Ellis's assistance, contrived always afterwards to please him in that particular. But you observe, Kitty, she never wears anything showy or conspicuous."

"No, indeed, that is what I like; but, Gertrude, hasn't she always been blind?"

"No; until she was sixteen she had beautiful eyes, and could see as well as you can."

"What happened to her? How did she lose them?"

"I don't know."

"Didn't you ever ask?"

"No."

"Why not?—how queer!"

"I heard that she didn't like to speak of it."

"But she would have told you; she worships you."

"If she had wished me to know, she would have told without my asking."

Kitty stared at Gertrude, wondering much at such unusual delicacy and

consideration, and instinctively admiring a forbearance of which she was conscious she should herself have been incapable.

"But your dress!" said Gertrude, smiling at Kitty's abstraction.

"Oh, yes! I had almost forgotten what I came here for," said Kitty. "What shall it be, then—thick or thin; pink, blue, or white?"

"What has Isabel decided upon?"

"Blue—a rich blue silk; that is her favourite colour, always; but it doesn't become me."

"No, I should think not," said Gertrude; "but come, Kitty, we will go to your room and see the dresses, and I will give my opinion."

Kitty's wardrobe having been inspected, a delicate white crape was fixed upon. And now her head-dresses did not prove satisfactory. "I cannot wear any of them," said Kitty; "they look so mean by the side of Isabel's; but oh!" exclaimed she, glancing at a box which lay on the dressing-table, "these are just what I should like! Oh, Isabel, where did you get these beautiful carnations?" and she took up some flowers which were, indeed, a rare imitation of nature, and, displaying them to Gertrude, added that they were just what she wanted.

"Oh, Kitty," said Isabel, angrily, "don't touch my flowers! you will spoil them!" and snatching them from her, she replaced them in the box, and deposited them in the bureau, and locked them up—an action which Gertrude witnessed with astonishment, mingled with indignation.

"Kitty," said she, "I will arrange a wreath of natural flowers for you, if you wish."

"Will you, Gertrude?" said the disappointed and provoked Kitty. "Oh that will be delightful. I should like it of all things! And, Isabel, you cross old miser, you can keep all your wreaths to yourself!"

Gertrude prepared a head-dress for Kitty; and tastefully mingled the choicest

productions of the garden, that, when Isabel saw her cousin look so beautiful with it, she felt a sharp pang of jealousy of Kitty and dislike to Gertrude.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE REJECTED.

Emily was not well this evening. It was often the case, lately, that headache, weariness, or a nervous shrinking from noise and excitement sent her to her own room or to her couch at an early hour. After Mrs. Graham and her nieces had gone downstairs to await Mr. Graham's pleasure, and Mrs. Bruce's arrival, Gertrude returned to Emily, and found her suffering more than usual from her head. She was easily induced to seek the only infallible cure—sleep; and Gertrude, seating herself on the bedside, as she was frequently in the habit of doing, bathed her temples until she fell into a quiet slumber. The noise of Mrs. Bruce's carriage disturbed her a little; but she was soon in so sound a sleep that, when Mr. and Mrs. Graham departed, the loud voice of the latter did not startle her in the least. Gertrude sat some time longer without changing her position, then, quietly rising, and arranging everything for the night, according to Emily's wishes, she closed the door, sought a book in her own room, and, entering the parlour, seated herself at a table to enjoy the rare opportunity for stillness and repose. But she soon left her seat, and going towards the glass doors and leaning her head upon her hands, was absorbed in meditation.

She had not long sat thus when she heard a footstep in the room, and, turning, saw Mr. Bruce beside her. She started, and exclaimed, "Mr. Bruce! is it possible? I thought you had gone to the wedding."

"No, there were greater attractions for me at home. Could you believe, Miss Gertrude, I should find any pleasure in a party which did not include yourself?"

"I certainly should not have the vanity to suppose the reverse?" replied Gertrude.

"I wish you had a little more vanity, Miss Gertrude. Perhaps then you would believe what I say."

"I am glad you have the candour to acknowledge, Mr. Bruce, that, without that requisite, one would find it impossible to put faith in your fair speeches."

"I acknowledge no such thing. I only say to you what any other girl but yourself would be willing enough to believe; but how shall I convince you that I am serious, and wish to be so understood?"

"By addressing me with simple truthfulness, and sparing me those words and attentions which I wish to convince you are unacceptable to me and unworthy of yourself."

"But I have a meaning, Gertrude, a deep meaning. I have been trying long to find an opportunity to tell you of my resolve, and you must listen to me now;" for he saw her change colour and look anxious and uneasy. "You must give me an answer at once, and one that will, I trust, be favourable to my wishes. You like plain speaking; and I will be plain enough, now that my mind is made up. My relatives and friends may talk and wonder as much as they please at my choosing a wife who has neither money nor family to boast of; but I will defy them all, and offer without hesitation to share my prospects with you. What is money good for, if it does not make a man independent to do as he pleases? And, as to the world, I don't see but that you can hold your head as high as anybody, Gertrude; so, if you've no objection to make, we'll play at cross purposes no longer;" and he endeavoured to take her hand.

But Gertrude drew back; the colour flushed her cheeks, and her eyes glistened as she fixed them upon his face, with an expression of astonishment and pride. The penetrating look of those dark eyes spoke volumes, and Mr. Bruce replied to their inquiring gaze in these words: "I hope you are not displeased at my frankness."

"With your frankness," said Gertrude, calmly; "no, that is a thing that never displeases me. But what I have unconsciously done to inspire you with so much

confidence, that, while you defend yourself for defying the wishes of your friends, you hardly give me a voice in the matter?"

"Nothing," said Bruce; "but I thought you had laboured under the impression that I was disposed to trifle with your affections, and had therefore kept aloof and maintained a distance towards me which you would not have done had you known I was in earnest; but, believe me, I only admired you the more for behaving with so much dignity, and if I have presumed upon your favour, you must forgive me."

The expression of wounded pride vanished from Gertrude's face. "He knows no better," thought she; "I should pity his vanity and ignorance, and sympathize in his disappointment; and, in disclaiming with a positiveness which left no room for self-deception, any interest in Mr. Bruce beyond that of an old acquaintance and well-wisher, she nevertheless softened her refusal by the choice of the mildest language. She felt gratitude and consideration were due to the man who, however little she might esteem him, had paid her the highest honour;" and, though her regret in the matter was tempered by the thought of Kitty, and the strangeness of Mr. Bruce's conduct towards her, now rendered doubly inexplicable, she did not permit that reflection to prevent her from maintaining the demeanour of a perfect lady, who, in giving pain to another, laments the necessity of so doing. But she almost felt as if her thoughtfulness for his feelings had been thrown away, when she perceived the spirit in which he received her refusal.

"Gertrude," said he, "you are either trifling with me or yourself. If you are still disposed to coquet with me, I shall not humble myself to urge you further; but if, on the other hand, you are so far forgetful of your own interests as deliberately to refuse such a fortune as mine, I think it's a pity you haven't got some friend to advise you. Such a chance doesn't occur every day, especially to poor school-mistresses; and if you are so foolish as to overlook it, you'll never have another."

Gertrude's old temper rose at this insulting language; but her feelings had been too

long under strict regulation to yield, and she replied in a tone which, though slightly agitated, was far from being angry, "Allowing I could so far forget myself, Mr. Bruce, I would not do you such an injustice as to marry you for your fortune. I do not despise wealth, for I know the blessing it may often be; but my affections cannot be bought with gold;" and as she spoke she moved towards the door.

"Stay!" said Mr. Bruce, catching her hand; "listen to me one moment; let me ask you one question. Are you jealous of my late attentions to another?"

"No," answered Gertrude; "but I confess I have not understood your motives."

"Did you think," asked he, "that I care for silly Kitty? Did you believe that I had any other desire than to show you that my devotion was acceptable elsewhere? No, I never had the least particle of regard for her; my heart has been yours all the time, and I only danced attendance upon her, in hopes to win a glance from you—an anxious glance, if might be. Oh, I have wished that you would show only one quarter of the pleasure that she did in my society; would blush and smile as she did; would look sad when I was dull, and laugh when I was merry; so that I might flatter myself that your heart was won. But as to loving her,—pooh! Mrs. Graham's poodle-dog might as well try to rival you as that soft——"

"Stop! stop!" exclaimed Gertrude; "for my sake, if not for your own! Oh, how——" She could say no more; but, sinking into a seat, burst into tears, and hiding her face in her hands, as had been her habit in childhood, wept without restraint.

Mr. Bruce stood by in utter amazement; at last he approached her, and asked, in a low voice, "What is the matter? what have I done?"

It was some minutes before she could reply; then, lifting her head, and tossing the hair from her forehead, she displayed features expressive only of the deepest grief, and said, in broken accents, "What have you done? Oh, how can you ask? She is gentle, and amiable, and affectionate. She loves everybody, and trusts everybody. You have deceived her, and I was the cause of it. Oh, how, how could you do it!"

Ben exclaimed, "She will get over it." "Get over what!" said Gertrude; "her love for you? Perhaps so; I know not how deep it is. But, think of her happy, trusting nature, and how it has been betrayed! Think how she believed your flattering words, and how hollow they were, all the while! Think how her confidence has been abused! how that fatherless and motherless girl, who had a claim to the sympathy of all the world, has been taught a lesson of distrust."

"I didn't think you would take it so," said Ben.

"How else could I view it?" asked Gertrude; "could you expect that such a course would win my respect?"

"You take it very seriously, Gertrude; such flirtations are common."

"I am sorry to hear it," said Gertrude. "To my mind, unversed in the ways of society, it is a dreadful thing to trifle thus with a human heart. Whether Kitty loves you is not for me to say; but what opinion, alas! will she have of your sincerity?"

"I think you're rather hard, Miss Gertrude, when it was my love for you that prompted my conduct."

"Perhaps I am," said Gertrude. "It is not my place to censure; I speak only from the impulse of my heart. One orphan girl's warm defence of another is but natural. Perhaps she views the thing lightly, and does not need an advocate; but, oh, Mr. Bruce, do not think so meanly of my sex as to believe that one woman's heart can be won to love and reverence by the author of another's betrayal! She were less than woman who could be so false to her sense of right and honour."

"Betrayal!—Nonsense! you are very high-flown."

"So much so, Mr. Bruce, that half-an-hour ago I could have wept that you should have bestowed your affection where it met with no requital; and if now I wept for the sake of her whose ears have listened to false professions, and whose peace has, to say the least, been threatened on my account, you should attribute it to the fact that my sympathies have not been exhausted by contact with the world."

A short silence ensued. Ben went a step or two towards the door, then stopped, came back, and said, "After all, Gertrude Flint, I believe the time will come when your notions will grow less romantic, and you will look back to this night and wish you had acted differently." He immediately left the room, and Gertrude heard him shut the hall-door with a bang.

A moment after the silence that ensued was disturbed by a slight sound which seemed to proceed from the recess in the window. Gertrude started, and, as she went towards the spot, heard a smothered sob. She lifted a curtain, and there, upon the window-seat, her head buried in the cushions, and her little slender form distorted into a strange attitude, sat, or rather crouched, poor Kitty Ray.

"Kitty?" cried Gertrude. At the sound of her voice Kitty sprung suddenly from her recumbent posture, threw herself into Gertrude's arms, laid her head upon her shoulder, and though she did not, could not weep, shook with an agitation uncontrollable. Her hand which grasped Gertrude's was cold; her eyes fixed; and at intervals the same hysterical sound which had at first betrayed her in her hiding-place alarmed her young protector, to whom she clung. Gertrude supported her to a seat, and then, folding the slight form to her bosom, chafed the cold hands, and again and again kissing the rigid lips, succeeded in restoring her to something like composure. For an hour she lay thus, receiving Gertrude's caresses with evident pleasure, and now and then returning them convulsively, but speaking no word and making no noise. Gertrude, with the truest delicacy, refrained from asking questions, or recurring to a conversation, the whole of which had been thus overheard and comprehended; but, patiently waiting until Kitty grew more calm, prepared for her a soothing draught; and then, finding her completely prostrated, both in mind and body, passed her arm around her waist, guided her upstairs, and took her into her own room, where, if she proved wakeful, she would be spared the scrutiny of Isabel. Still clinging to Gertrude, the poor girl, to whose relief tears came at last, sobbed herself to sleep. Gertrude, though nearly the same age as Kitty, had seen too much

trouble to enjoy in times of disquiet the privilege of sinking easily to repose. She felt under the necessity, too, of remaining awake until Isabel's return, that she might inform her what had become of Kitty, whom she would be sure to miss from the room which they both occupied. It was past midnight when Mrs. Graham and her niece returned home, and Gertrude went immediately to inform the latter that her cousin was asleep in her room. The noise of the carriage, however, had awakened the sleeper, and when Gertrude returned she was rubbing her eyes, and trying to collect her thoughts. Suddenly the recollection of the scene of the evening flashed upon her, and with a deep sigh she exclaimed, "Oh, Gertrude, I have been dreaming of Mr. Bruce! Should you have thought he would have treated me so?"

"No, I should not," said Gertrude; "but I wouldn't dream about him, Kitty, nor think of him any more; we will both go to sleep and forget him."

"It is different with you," said Kitty, with simplicity. "He loves you, and you do not care for him; but I—I——" Here her feelings overpowered her, and she buried her face in her pillow.

Gertrude approached, laid her hand kindly upon the head of the poor girl, and finished the sentence for her.

"You have such a large heart, Kitty, that he found some place there, perhaps; but it is too good a heart to be shared by the mean and base. You must think no more of him—he is not worthy of your regard."

"I can't help it," said Kitty; "I am silly, just as he said."

"No, you are not," said Gertrude, encouragingly; "and you must prove it to him."

"How?"

"Let him see that, with all her softness, Kitty Ray is brave; that she believes not his flattery, and values his professions at just what they are worth."

"Will you help me, Gertrude? You are my best friend; you took my part, and told

him how wicked he had been to me. May I come to you for comfort when I can't make believe happy any longer to him, and my aunt, and Isabel?"

Gertrude's fervent embrace assured her.

"You will be as bright and as happy as ever in a few weeks," said she; "you will soon cease to care for a person whom you no longer respect."

Kitty disclaimed the possibility of ever being happy again; but Gertrude was more hopeful. She saw that Kitty's outburst of sobs and tears was like an impetuous grief, but that the deepest recesses of her nature were safe. She felt a deep compassion for her, and many fears lest she would want sufficient strength of mind to behave with dignity and womanly pride in her future intercourse with Mr. Bruce.

Fortunately, the trial was spared her by Mr. Bruce's absenting himself from the house, and in a few days leaving home for the remainder of the summer; and, as this circumstance involved his own and Mrs. Graham's family in wonder as to the cause of his sudden departure, Kitty's trials were in the perpetual questionings from her aunt and cousin as to her share in this occurrence. Had she quarrelled with him?—and why? Kitty denied that she had; but she was not believed.

Mrs. Graham and Isabel were aware that Kitty's refusing at the last moment to attend the wedding levée was owing to her having learned, just before the carriage drove to the door, that Mr. Bruce was not to be one of the party; and, as they got her to confess that he had passed a part of the evening at the house, they came to the conclusion that some misunderstanding had arisen between the lovers.

Isabel was too well acquainted with Kitty's sentiments to believe she had voluntarily relinquished an admirer who had evidently been highly prized; and she also saw that the sensitive girl winced under every allusion to the deserter. Where was her affection? For she made Mr. Bruce and his disappearance her constant topic; and, on the slightest difference between herself and Kitty, she distressed the latter by cutting sarcasm relative to her late love-affair. Kitty would then seek refuge with Gertrude,

and claim her sympathy; and she not only found in her a friendly listener to her woes, but invariably acquired in her society greater strength and cheerfulness than she could elsewhere rally to her aid.

Many a time, when Isabel had been tantalising Kitty beyond what her patience could endure, a little figure would present itself at the door of Miss Graham's room, and with the sweetest of voices say, "I hear you, Kitty; come in, my dear; we shall be glad of your pleasant company;" and seated by the side of Gertrude, learning from her some little art in needlework, listening to an agreeable book, or Emily's more agreeable conversation, Kitty passed hours which were never forgotten, so peaceful were they, so serene, so totally unlike any she had ever spent before.

None could live in familiar intercourse with Emily, listen to her words, observe the radiance of her heavenly smile, and breathe in the pure atmosphere that environed her very being, and not carry away with them the love of virtue and holiness, if not something of their essence. She was so unselfish, so patient, notwithstanding her privations, that Kitty would have been ashamed to repine in her presence; and there was a contagious cheerfulness ever pervading her apartment, which, in spite of Kitty's recent cause of unhappiness, often led her to forget herself, and break into her natural tone of buoyancy and glee.

CHAPTER XXXII.

ENVY, HATRED, AND MALICE.

Little did Gertrude imagine, while she was striving to promote the welfare of Kitty, who had thrown herself upon her love and care, the jealousy and ill-will she was exciting in others. Isabel, who had never liked one whose tone of action and life reproached her own vanity and selfishness, and who saw in her the additional crime of being the favoured friend of a youth of whose interesting boyhood she herself

retained a sentimental recollection, was eager to render her odious to Mrs. Graham. She was not slow to observe the confidence that existed between Kitty and Gertrude; that her cousin had forsaken her own room for that of the latter the night after her probable quarrel and parting with Bruce; and her resentment, excited still further by the growing friendship which her own unkindness to Kitty served only to confirm, she communicated to Mrs. Graham her suspicion that Gertrude had selfishly made a difficulty between Bruce and Kitty, and fostered and widened the breach, and succeeded in breaking off the match. Mrs. Graham readily adopted Belle's opinion. "Kitty," said she, "is weak-minded, and much under Miss Flint's influence. I shouldn't be surprised if you were right, Belle!"

Thus they tried to entrap Kitty into a confession that Gertrude had driven away her lover. But Kitty, while she indignantly denied Gertrude's having injured her, refused to reveal the occurrences of the eventful evening. Mrs. Graham and Belle were angry, and many were their private discussions on the subject, and as they became more and more incensed against Gertrude, so they began to manifest it in their demeanour.

Gertrude soon perceived their incivility. With wonderful patience, however, did she preserve her equanimity. She had never looked for kindness and attention from Mrs. Graham and Isabel. They were irritated by her calmness and patience, now made their attack in another quarter; and Emily, the sweet, lovely, and unoffending Emily, became the object against which they aimed many of their shafts of ill-will.

Gertrude could bear injury, injustice, and even cruel language, towards herself only; but her blood boiled when she perceived that her cherished Emily was becoming the victim of neglect and ill-usage. To address the gentle Emily in other words than those of courtesy was next to impossible; it was equally hard to find fault with the actions of one whose life was so good and beautiful; and the isolated position which she occupied on account of her blindness seemed to render her free from

interference. But Mrs. Graham was coarse and blunt, Isabel selfish and unfeeling; and long before the blind girl was aware of any unkind intention on their part, Gertrude's spirit had rebelled at the knowledge of many a word and act well calculated to distress a sensitive mind. Many a stroke was warded off by Gertrude; many a nearly defeated plan, which Emily was known to have had at heart, carried through by Gertrude's perseverance and energy; and for some weeks Emily was kept ignorant of the fact that many a little office formerly performed for her by a servant was now fulfilled by Gertrude, who would not let her know that Bridget had received from her mistress orders which were quite inconsistent with her usual attendance upon Miss Graham's wants.

Mr. Graham was absent on business at New York. His presence would have been a great restraint upon his wife, who was well aware of his devoted affection for his daughter. His love for Emily, and the devotion manifested towards her by every member of the household, had rendered her an object of jealousy to Mrs. Graham.

Shortly before Mr. Graham's return, Mrs. Graham and Isabel were indulging themselves in an unlimited abuse of the rest of the household, when a letter was brought to Mrs. Graham, which proved to be from her husband. After glancing over its contents, she remarked, with an air of satisfaction, "Here is good news for us, Isabel, and a prospect of some pleasure in the world." And she read aloud the following—"The troublesome affair which called me here is nearly settled, and the result is very favourable to my wishes and plans. I now see nothing to prevent our starting for Europe the latter part of next month, and the girls must make their arrangements accordingly. Tell Emily to spare nothing towards a full and complete equipment for herself and Gertrude."

"He speaks of Gertrude," said Isabel, sneeringly, "as if she were one of the family. I'm sure I don't see any very great prospect of pleasure in travelling all through Europe with a blind woman, and her disagreeable appendages; I can't think what Mr.

Graham wants to take them for."

"I wish he would leave them at home," said Mrs. Graham; "it would be a good punishment for Gertrude. But, mercy! he would as soon think of going without his right hand as without Emily."

"I hope, if ever I'm married," exclaimed Isabel, "it won't be to a man that's got a blind daughter! Such a dreadful good person, too, whom everybody has got to worship, and admire, and wait upon!"

"I don't have to wait upon her," said Mrs. Graham; "that's Gertrude's business—it's what she's going for."

"That's the worst of it; a blind girl has to have a waiting-maid, and a waiting-maid is a great lady, who doesn't mind cheating your nieces out of their lovers, and even robbing them of each other's affection."

"Well, what can I do, Belle? I'm sure I don't want Gertrude's company any more than you do; but I don't see how I can get rid of her."

"I should think you'd tell Mr. Graham some of the harm she's done already. If you have any influence over him, you might prevent her going."

"It would be no more than she deserves," said Mrs. Graham; "and I may give him a hint of her behaviour; he'll be surprised enough when he hears of Bruce's sudden flight. I knew he thought it would be a match between him and Kitty."

As Isabel descended the staircase, to meet with smiles and compliments the guests whom in her heart she wished a thousand miles away on this intensely hot afternoon, Gertrude came up from the kitchen, and passed along a passage to her own room. She carried, over one arm, a dress of white muslin, and a number of collars, sleeves, and ruffles, with other articles fresh from the ironing-board. Her face was heated; she looked tired, and, as she reached her room, and deposited her burden upon the bed, she drew a long breath, as if fatigued, seated herself by a window, brushed the hair back from her face, and threw open a blind. Just then Mrs. Prime put her head in

at the door; and, seeing Gertrude alone, entered the room, but stood in astonishment on observing the evidences of her recent laborious employment; then, glancing at the fruits of her diligence, she burst forth indignantly, "My sakes alive! Miss Gertrude, I believe you've been doin' up them muslins yourself, after all!"

Gertrude smiled, but did not reply.

"Now, if that ain't too bad!" said the kind-hearted woman; "to think you should ha' been at work down in that 'ere hot kitchen, and all the rest on us takin' a spell o' rest in the heat of the day. I'll warrant if Miss Emily knew it, she'd never put on that white gown!"

"It hardly looks fit for her to wear," said Gertrude. "I'm not much used to ironing, and have had a great deal of trouble with it; one side got dry before I could smooth out the other."

"It looks elegant, Miss Gertrude; but what should you be doin' Bridget's work for, I want to know?"

"Bridget always has enough to do," said Gertrude, evading a direct answer; "and it's very well for me to have some practice; knowledge never comes amiss, you know, Mrs. Prime."

"'Tant no kind of an afternoon for 'speriment o' that sort; and you wouldn't ha' done it, I'll venture to say, if you hadn't been afeard Miss Emily would want her things, and find out they wan't done. Times is changed in this house, when Mr. Graham's own daughter, that was once the head of everything, has to have her clothes laid by to make room for other folks. Bridget ought to know better than to mind these upstarters, when they tell her, as I heard Miss Graham yesterday, to let alone that heap o' muslins, and attend to something that was o' more consequence. Our Katy would ha' known better; but Bridget's a new-comer like all the rest. Thinks I to myself then, what would Miss Gertrude say, if she suspected how Miss Emily was bein' neglected! But I'll tell Miss Emily, as sure as my name's Prime, just how things

go—you shan't get so red in the face with ironing agin, Miss Gertrude. If the kind o' frocks she likes to wear can't be done up at home—and yourn too, what's more—the washin' ought to be put out. There's money enough, and some of it ought to be spent for the use o' the ladies as is ladies! I wish to heart that Isabella would have to start round a little lively; 'twould do her good; but, Lor', Miss Gertrude, it goes right to my heart to see all the vexatious things as is happenin' nowadays! I'll go right to Miss Emily this minute, and tell how things go on."

"No, you won't, Mrs. Prime," said Gertrude, persuasively; "when I ask you not. You forget how unhappy it would make her, if she knew that Mrs. Graham was so wanting in consideration. I would rather iron dresses every day, or do anything else for our dear Miss Emily, than let her suspect even that anybody could willingly be unkind to her."

Mrs. Prime hesitated. "Miss Gertrude, I thought I loved our dear young lady as well as anybody, but I believe you love her better still, to be so thoughtful all for her sake; and I wouldn't say nothing about it, only I think a sight o' you, too; you've been here ever since you was a little gal, and we all set lots by you, and I can't see them folks ride over your head, as I know they mean to."

"I know you love me, Mrs. Prime, and Emily too; so, for the sake of us both, you mustn't say a word to anybody about the change in the family arrangements. We'll all do what we can to keep Emily from pain; and, as to the rest, we won't care for ourselves; if they don't pet and indulge me as much as I have been accustomed to, the easiest way is not to notice it."

"Lord bless yer heart, Miss Gertrude, them folks is lucky to have you to deal with; it isn't everybody as would put up with 'em. They don't come much in my way, thank fortin! I let Miss Graham see, right off, that I wouldn't put up with interference; cooks is privileged to set up for their rights, and I scared her out o' my premises pretty quick, I tell yer! It's mighty hard for me to see our own ladies imposed upon;

but since you say 'mum,' Miss Gertrude, I'll try and hold my tongue as long as I can. It's a shame, though, I do declare."

An hour after, Gertrude was at the glass, braiding her long hair, when Mrs. Ellis, after a slight knock, entered. "Well, Gertrude," said she, "I didn't think it would come to this!"

"Why, what is the matter?" inquired Gertrude, anxiously.

"It seems we are going to be turned out of our rooms!"

"Who?"

"You, and I next, for ought I know."

Gertrude coloured, but did not speak, and Mrs. Ellis related that she had received orders to fit up Gertrude's room for some visitors who were expected. She was astonished to hear that Gertrude had not been consulted on the subject. Mrs. Graham had spoken so carelessly of her removal, and seemed to think it so agreeable for Emily to share her apartment with her young friend, that Mrs. Ellis concluded the matter had been pre-arranged.

Deeply wounded and vexed on her own and Emily's account, Gertrude stood for a moment silent. She then asked if Mrs. Ellis had spoken to Emily on the subject. She had not. Gertrude begged her to say nothing about it.

"I cannot bear," said she, "to let her know that the little sanctum she fitted up so carefully has been unceremoniously taken from me. I sleep in her room more than half the time, as you know; but she always likes to have me call this chamber mine, that I may be sure of a place where I can read and study. If you will let me remove my bureau into your room, Mrs. Ellis, and sleep on a couch there occasionally, we need not say anything about it to Emily."

Mrs. Ellis assented. She had grown strangely humble and compliant within a few months, and Gertrude had won her good-will, first by forbearance, and latterly by

the frequent assistance she had rendered to the overburdened housekeeper. But, though yielding and considerate towards Gertrude, whom, with Emily and Mrs. Prime, she now considered members of the injured party to which she herself belonged, no words could express her indignation with regard to the late conduct of Mrs. Graham and Isabel. "It is all of a piece," said she, "with the rest of their conduct! Sometimes I almost feel thankful that Emily is blind; it would grieve her to see the goings-on. I should have liked to box Isabella's ears for taking your seat at the table so impudently as she did yesterday, and then neglecting to help Emily to anything at all; and there sat dear Emily, angel as she is! all unconscious of her shameful behaviour, and asking her for butter as sweetly as if it were by mere accident that you had been driven from the table, and she left to provide for herself. And all those strangers there, too! I saw it all from the china-closet! And then Emily's dresses and muslins!—there they laid in the press-drawer, till I thought they would mildew. I'm glad to see Bridget has been allowed to do them at last, for I began to think Emily would, one of these warm days, be without a clean gown in the world. But all I wish is, that they'd all go off to Europe, and leave us here to ourselves. You don't want to go, do you, Gertrude?"

"Yes, if Emily goes."

"Well, you're better than I am; I couldn't make such a martyr of myself even for her sake."

It is needless to detail the many petty annoyances to which Gertrude was daily subjected; nor with all the pains taken to prevent it, could Emily be long kept in ignorance of the light estimation in which both herself and Gertrude were regarded. Kitty, incensed at the incivility of her aunt and Isabel, and indifferent towards the visitors, hesitated not to express both to Emily and Gertrude her sense of the injuries they sustained. But Kitty was no formidable antagonist to Mrs. Graham and Belle, for her spirits were greatly subdued, and she no longer dared, as she would once

have done, to stand between her friends and the indignities to which they were exposed.

But Mrs. Graham became at last entangled in difficulties of her own weaving. Her husband returned, and it now became necessary to set bounds to her own insolence, and, what was far more difficult, to that of Isabel. Mrs. Graham knew just how far her husband's forbearance would extend—just the point to which his perceptions might be blinded. But in his absence she permitted Belle to fill the house with her lively young acquaintances, and winked at the many flagrant violations of politeness manifested by the young people towards the daughter of their absent host, and their youthful friend and attendant. But now a check must be put to all indecorous proceedings; and, unfortunately for the execution of the wife's precautions, the head of the family returned unexpectedly, and under circumstances which forestalled any preparation. He arrived just at dusk, having come from town in an omnibus. It was a cool evening, the windows and doors were closed, and the drawing-room was so brilliantly lighted that he suspected that a large company was being entertained there. He felt vexed, for it was Saturday night, and, in accordance with New England customs, Mr. Graham loved to see his household quiet on that evening. He was also suffering from a violent headache, and, avoiding the drawing-room, passed on to the library, and then to the dining-room. He then went upstairs, walked through several rooms, glanced indignantly at their slovenly appearance, and finally gained Emily's chamber.

A bright wood fire burned upon the hearth; a couch was drawn up beside it, on which Emily was sitting; and Gertrude's little rocking-chair occupied the opposite corner. The peaceful face of Emily, and the radiant expression of Gertrude's countenance, as she saw the father of her blind friend looking pleasantly in upon them, proved such a charming contrast to the scenes presented in other parts of the house, that the old gentleman, warmed to more than usual satisfaction with both of the inmates, greeted his surprised daughter with a hearty paternal embrace, and gave

Gertrude an equally affectionate greeting, exclaiming, as he took the arm-chair, "Now, girls, this looks pleasant and home-like! What in the world is going on downstairs?" Emily explained that there was company staying in the house.

"Ugh! company!" grunted Mr. Graham, in a dissatisfied tone. "I think so! Been emptying rag-bags about the chambers, I should say, from the looks."

Gertrude asked if he had been to tea. He had not, and should be thankful for some; he was tired.

"Don't tell anybody that I've got home, Gerty," called he, as she left the room; "I want to be left in peace to-night, at least."

While Gertrude was gone, Mr. Graham questioned Emily as to her preparations for the European tour. To his surprise, he learned that she had never received his message communicated in the letter to Mrs. Graham, and knew nothing of his plans. Astonished and angry, he restrained his temper; he did not like to acknowledge to himself, far less to his daughter, that his commands had been disregarded by his wife. After he had enjoyed a comfortable repast, at which Gertrude presided, they both returned to Emily's room; and now Mr. Graham's first inquiry was for the Evening Transcript.

"I will go for it," said Gertrude, rising.

"Ring!" said Mr. Graham, imperatively. He had observed that Gertrude's ringing was disregarded, and wished to know the cause of so strange a piece of neglect. Gertrude rang several times, but obtained no answer to the bell. At last she heard Bridget's step in the entry, and, opening the door, said to her, "Bridget, won't you find the Transcript, and bring it to Miss Emily's room?" Bridget soon returned with the announcement that Miss Isabella was reading it, and declined to give it up.

A storm gathered on Mr. Graham's brow. "Such a message to my daughter!" he exclaimed. "Gertrude, go yourself and tell the impertinent girl that I want the paper! What sort of behaviour is this?" he muttered.

Gertrude entered the drawing-room with great composure, and, amid the stares of the company, spoke in a low tone to Belle, who immediately yielded up the paper, looking much confused as she did so. Belle was afraid of Mr. Graham; and, on her informing her aunt of his return, that lady was also disconcerted. She had fully calculated upon seeing her husband before he had access to Emily. But it was too late now, but she used all her tact to disperse her friends at an early hour, and then found Mr. Graham smoking in the dining-room.

He was in an unpleasant mood; but she contrived to conciliate rather than irritate him, avoided all discordant subjects, and the next morning introduced to her friends an apparently affable host.

But this serenity was disturbed long before the Sabbath drew to a close. As he walked up the aisle, before morning service, with Emily, according to custom, leaning upon his arm, his brow darkened at seeing Isabel complacently seated in that corner of the old fashioned pew which had for years been sacred to his blind daughter. Mrs. Graham winked at her niece, but Isabel was mentally rather obtuse, and was subjected to the mortification of having Mr. Graham remove her from the seat, in which he placed Emily, while the displaced occupant, who had been so mean for the last three Sundays to deprive Miss Graham of this old-established right, was compelled to sit in the only vacant place, beside Mr. Graham, with her back to the pulpit. And very angry was she at observing the smiles visible upon many countenances in the neighboring pews.

Mr. Graham had not been at home a week before he understood the state of feeling in the mind of his wife and Isabel, and the manner in which it was likely to act upon the happiness of the household. He saw that Emily was superior to complaint; she had never in her life complained; he observed, too, Gertrude's devotion to his much-loved child, and it stamped her in his mind as one who had a claim to his regard which should never be disputed. It is not, then, to be wondered at, that when

Mrs. Graham made her intended insinuations against his youthful protégée, Mr. Graham treated them with contempt.

He had known Gertrude from a child. She was high-spirited—he had sometimes thought her wilful—but never mean or false. It was no use to tell him all that nonsense;—he was glad that it was all off between Kitty and Bruce; for Ben was an idle fellow, and would never make a good husband; and, as to Kitty, he thought her much improved of late, and if it were owing to Gertrude's influence, the more they saw of each other the better.

Mrs. Graham was in despair. "It is all settled," said she to Isabel. "It is no use to contest the point; Mr. Graham is firm as a rock, and as sure as we go to Europe, Emily and Gertrude will go too."

She was almost startled; therefore, by an excess of good-luck, when informed, a few days afterwards, that the couple she had so dreaded to have of the party were to be left behind, at Miss Graham's special request. Emily's scruples with regard to mentioning to her father the little prospect of pleasure the tour was likely to afford her all vanished when she found that Gertrude would be a still greater sufferer from the society to which she would be subjected.

Blind as she was, Emily understood and perceived almost everything that was passing around her. Quick of perception, and with a hearing rendered doubly intense by her want of sight, the events of the summer were, perhaps, more familiar to her than to any other member of the family. She more than suspected the exact state of matters betwixt Mr. Bruce and Gertrude, though the latter had never spoken to her on the subject. She imagined how Kitty was involved in the affair (no very difficult thing to conceive by one who enjoyed the confidence which the simple-hearted girl unconsciously made during her intercourse with her).

As Mrs. Graham's and Isabel's abuse of power became more open, Mrs. Ellis and Mrs. Prime considered the embargo upon free speech in Miss Graham's presence

wholly removed; and any pain which the knowledge of their neglect might have caused her was more than compensated to Emily by the proofs it had called forth of devoted attachment and willing service on the part of her adopted child, as she loved to consider Gertrude.

Calmly and promptly did she resolve to adopt a course which should free Gertrude from her self-sacrificing service. She encountered much opposition from her father; but he had seen, during the previous winter at the South, how Emily's infirmity unfitted her for travelling, especially when deprived of Gertrude's attendant eyes; he now realised how contrary to her tastes and habits were those of his new wife and her nieces; and, unwilling to be convinced of the folly of his sudden choice, and probably of unhappiness from it, he appreciated the wisdom of Emily's proposal, and felt relief in the adoption of a course which would satisfy all parties.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

TRAVEL AND A MYSTERY.

Mrs. Warren's pleasant boarding-house was chosen by Emily for her own and Gertrude's winter home; and one month from the time of Mr. Graham's return from New York his country-house was closed; he, his wife, Isabel, and Kitty went to Havre; Mrs. Ellis went to enjoy a little rest from care with some cousins at the eastward; and Mrs. Prime was established as cook in Mrs. Warren's household.

Although ample arrangements were made by Mr. Graham, and sufficient means provided for the support of both Emily and Gertrude, the latter was anxious to be usefully employed, and, therefore, resumed a portion of her school duties at Mr. W's. Much as Emily loved Gertrude's constant presence, she gladly resigned her for a few hours every day, rejoiced in the spirit which prompted her exertions, and rewarded her with praise. In the undisturbed enjoyment of each other's society, and in their

intercourse with a small, intelligent circle of friends, they passed a season of sweet tranquility. They read, walked, and communed, as in times long past. Together they attended lectures, concerts, and galleries of art.

It was a blissful and an improving winter which they passed together. They lived not for themselves alone; the poor blessed them, the sorrowful came to them for sympathy, and the affection which they inspired in the family circle was boundless. Spring came and passed while there, and they were loth to leave a place where they had been so happy; at last a sudden failure in Emily's health occurred, and Dr. Jeremy's peremptory command caused them to seek the country air.

Added to her anxiety about Emily, Gertrude began to feel much troubled at Willie Sullivan's long silence; no word from him for two or three months. Willie could not have forgotten or meant to neglect her. That was impossible. She tried, however, not to feel disturbed about it, and gave all her care to Emily, who now began indeed to require it.

They went to the sea-side for a few weeks; but the bracing atmosphere brought no strength to the blind girl's feeble frame. She was obliged to give up her daily walks; a continued weariness robbed her step of its elasticity, and her mind became subject to depression, while her nervous temperament became so susceptible that the utmost care was requisite to preserve her from all excitement.

The doctor often came to see his favourite patient; but as she got worse instead of better, he ordered her back to the city, declaring that Mrs. Jeremy's front chamber was as cool and comfortable as the contracted apartments of the crowded boarding-house at Nahant, and he insisted upon both her and Gertrude to take up their quarters for a week or two; and then, if Emily were no better, he hoped to have leisure to start off with them in search of health. Emily thought she was doing very well where she was, and was afraid to be troublesome to Mrs. Jeremy.

"Don't talk about trouble, Emily; you ought to know Mrs. Jeremy better by this time.

Come up to-morrow; I'll meet you at the cars! Good-bye!"

Gertrude followed him. "I see, doctor, you think Emily is not so well."

"No; how should she be? What with the sea roaring on one side, and Mrs. Fellows's babies on the other, it's enough to wear away her strength. I won't have it so! This isn't the place for her, and do you bring her up to my house to-morrow."

"The babies don't usually cry as much as they have to-day," said Gertrude, smiling; "and as to the ocean, Emily loves dearly to hear the waves rolling in."

"Knew she did!" said the doctor. "Shan't do it; bad for her; it makes her sad, without her knowing why. Bring her up to Boston, as I tell you."

It was three weeks after the arrival of his visitors before the popular physician could steal away from his patients to enjoy a few weeks' recreation in travelling. For his own sake he would hardly have thought of attempting so unusual a thing as a journey; and his wife, too, loved home so much better than any other place that she was loth to start for parts unknown; but both were willing to sacrifice their long-indulged habits for the advantage of their young friends.

Emily was decidedly better; and viewed with pleasure the prospect of visiting West Point, Catskill, and Saratoga, even on her own account; and when she reflected upon the probable enjoyment the trip would afford Gertrude, she felt herself endowed with new strength for the undertaking. Gertrude needed change of scene and diversion of mind almost as much as Emily. The excessive heat, and her constant attendance in the invalid's room, had paled the roses in her cheeks, while care and anxiety had weighed upon her mind.

New York was their first destination; but the heat and dust of the city were almost insufferable, and during the day they passed there only Dr. Jeremy ventured out of the hotel except once, when Mrs. Jeremy and Gertrude went in search of dress-caps. But the doctor passed the whole day in the revival of old acquaintances, and some of these warm-hearted friends having presented themselves at the hotel in the evening

to be introduced to Mrs. Jeremy and her companions, their room was enlivened until a late hour by the cheerful conversation of a group of elderly men, who, as they recalled the scenes and incidents of their youthful days, seemed to renew their youthful spirits. The conversation, however, was not of a character to exclude the ladies from participating in as well as enjoying it. Emily listened with delight to a conversation which had such varied charms, and shared with Gertrude the admiration of the doctor's friends, who were all excited to the warmest sympathy for her misfortune.

Upon hearing that Dr. Jeremy's party was going up the Hudson next morning, Dr. Gryseworth, of Philadelphia, who had been a student of our good doctor's, expressed his pleasure to meet them on the boat, and to introduce to Gertrude his two daughters, whom he was to accompany to Saratoga to meet their grandmother.

Gertrude, who slept soundly until wakened by Miss Graham, started up in astonishment on seeing her dressed and standing by the bedside—a most unusual circumstance, as Gertrude's morning kiss was wont to be Emily's first intimation of daylight.

"Six o'clock, Gerty, and the boat starts at seven! The doctor has knocked at our door."

"How soundly I have slept!" exclaimed Gertrude. "I wonder if it's a pleasant day."

"Beautiful!" replied Emily, "but very warm. The sun was shining so brightly that I had to close the blinds on account of the heat."

Gertrude made haste, but was not quite dressed when they were summoned to breakfast. She had trunks to lock, and therefore insisted upon the others preceding her to the breakfast-hall. The company was small, consisting only of two parties besides Dr. Jeremy's, and a few gentlemen, most of them business men. Of those who still lingered at the table when Gerty made her appearance, there was only one whom she particularly observed during the few moments allowed for breakfast.

This was a gentleman who sat at some distance from her, idly balancing his tea-spoon on the edge of his cup. He seemed quite at his leisure, and previous to Gertrude's entrance had won Mrs. Jeremy's animadversions by a slight propensity to make a more critical survey of her party than she found agreeable.

"Do, pray," said she to the doctor, "send the waiter to ask that man to take something himself; I can't bear to have anybody looking at me so when I'm eating!"

"He isn't looking at you, wife; it's Emily that has taken his fancy. Emily, my dear, there's a gentleman, over opposite, who admires you exceedingly."

"Is there?" said Emily, smiling, "I am very much obliged to him. May I venture to return the compliment?"

"Yes. He's a fine-looking fellow, though wife, here, doesn't seem to like him very well."

Gertrude now joined them, and, as she made her morning salutions to the doctor and his wife, and gaily apologised to the former for her tardiness, the fine colour which mantled her countenance, and the deep brilliancy of her eyes, drew affectionate admiration from the kind old couple, and were, perhaps, the cause of the stranger's attention being transferred from the lovely face of Emily to the more youthful and eloquent features of Gertrude. Taking her seat, she soon perceived the notice she was attracting. It embarrassed her, and she was glad to see, in a few minutes, the gentleman rise and depart. As he passed out, she had an opportunity of observing him, which she had not done while he sat opposite to her. He was above the middle height, slender, but finely formed, and of a dignified bearing. His features were rather sharp, but expressive, and even handsome; his dark eyes were most penetrating, while his compressed lips indicated strength of resolution and will.

His hair was peculiar; it was deeply tinged with grey, and in the vicinity of his temples, white. This was strikingly in contrast with the youthful fire of his eye, and the lightness of his step, that instead of seeming the effect of age, it enhanced the

contradictory claims of his otherwise apparent youth and vigour.

"What a queer-looking man," exclaimed Mrs. Jeremy, when he had passed out.

"An elegant-looking man, isn't he?" said Gertrude.

"Elegant?" rejoined Mrs. Jeremy. "What! with that grey head?"

"I think it's beautiful," said Gertrude; "but I wish he didn't look so melancholy; it makes me quite sad to see him."

"How old should you think he was?" asked Dr. Jeremy.

"About fifty," said Mrs. Jeremy.

"About thirty," said Gertrude.

"A wide difference," remarked Emily. "Doctor, you must decide the point."

"Impossible! I wouldn't venture to tell that man's age within ten years, at least. Wife has got him old enough, certainly; perhaps I might see him as low as Gertrude's mark. Age never turned his hair grey!—that is certain."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A NEW ACQUAINTANCE.

To travellers in the United States, a trip from Boston into New York state is an everyday affair, scarce worth calling a journey; but to Dr. Jeremy it was a momentous event, calling the good physician out of a routine of daily professional visits, which, for twenty years, had not been interrupted by a week's absence from home, and plunging him at once into that whirl of hurry, tumult, and excitement, which exists on all our great routes, especially in the summer season.

The doctor was by nature and habit a social being; never shrinking from intercourse with his fellow-men, but seeking and enjoying their companionship. He knew how to adapt himself to the taste of young and old, rich and poor, and was well

acquainted with city life in all its forms. In the art of travelling, however, he was totally unversed.

Thankful were the party when they were safe on the steamboat; and were congratulating themselves and each other, when the doctor called from the other end of the saloon—"Come, come, wife—Gertrude, Emily! what are you staying down in this confined place for? you'll lose the best view;" and, coming toward them, he took Gertrude's arm, and would have hurried her away, leaving Mrs. Jeremy and Emily to follow; but Gertrude would not trust Emily to ascend the cabin-stairs under any guardianship but her own, and Mrs. Jeremy immediately engaged the doctor in an animated discussion as to the advisability of his adopting a straw hat, which the thoughtful wife had brought from home. By the time the question was settled, and Emily, at Gertrude's persuasion, had been induced to change her thin mantilla for a light travelling-cloak, the boat had proceeded some distance, and when our party gained the head of the stairs, and looked about them for seats on deck, not a single vacant bench was to be seen. There was a large number of passengers, nearly all of whom were collected at the stern of the boat. Dr. Jeremy went in search of chairs.

"Don't let us stay here," whispered Mrs. Jeremy to Gertrude and Emily. "Let's go right back before the doctor comes! There are beautiful great rocking-chairs down in the cabin, without a soul to sit in them, and I'm sure we ain't wanted here to make up a company. I hate to stand with all these people staring at us, and crowing to think they've got such nice places; don't you, Emily?" Mrs. Jeremy just then forgot that Emily could not see. But Gertrude never forgot it; and, as she stood with her arm lightly pressed around her friend's waist, to prevent the motion of the boat from throwing her off her balance, they attracted attention; the one so bright, erect, and strong with youth and health, that she seemed a fit protector for the other, who, in her sweet and gentle helplessness, leaned upon her so trustingly.

Here Mrs. Jeremy was interrupted by the salutation of Dr. Gryseworth, who insisted

upon giving up his seat to Mrs. Jeremy; and another gentleman, till now unnoticed by our party, rose, and bowing politely, placed his own chair for Emily, and walked quickly away. It was the stranger whom they had seen at breakfast. Gertrude recognised his keen, dark eye, and his singular hair; and, as she thanked him, and placed Emily in the seat, she coloured under his earnest glance. But Dr. Gryseworth soon claimed her attention for the introduction to his daughters, and all thoughts of the retreating stranger were banished for the present.

The Misses Gryseworth were intelligent-looking girls; the eldest, lately returned from Europe, where she had been travelling with her father, was considered a very elegant and superior person, and Gertrude was charmed with the lady-like cordiality with which they both made her acquaintance, and still more with the sympathising attentions which they paid to Emily. By the time that Dr. Jeremy returned with a chair he found Gertrude and Dr. Gryseworth comfortably accommodated, and was thus enabled to sink at once into his seat, and into that state of easy unconcern which became his pleasant, genial temperament.

Long before the boat reached West Point, where the Jeremys were to land, an excellent understanding subsisted between Gertrude and the Misses Gryseworth. They had been about an hour in each other's society, when Netta Gryseworth, glancing towards another part of the boat, said in an undertone, "Ellen, do invite Mr. Phillips to come back and be introduced to Miss Flint!—see how lonesome the poor man looks."

Gertrude followed the direction of Netta's eye, and saw the stranger of the morning at some distance, slowly pacing up and down, with a serious and distracted air.

"He has not been near us for an hour," said Netta.

"I hope we have not frightened your friend away," said Gertrude.

"Oh, no, indeed!" replied Ellen. "Although Mr. Phillips is but a recent acquaintance, we have found him so independent, and sometimes so whimsical, that I am never

astonished at being suddenly forsaken by him. There are some people, you know, for whom it is always sufficient excuse to say, It is their way. I wish he would condescend to join us again, however; I should like to introduce him to you, Miss Flint."

"You wouldn't like him," said Netta.

"Now, that is not fair, Netta!" said her sister, "to prejudice Miss Flint against my friend. You mustn't let her influence you," said she to Gertrude. "She hasn't known him half as long as I have; and I do not dislike him. My straightforward sister never likes odd people, and I must confess that Mr. Phillips is eccentric; but he interests me all the more on that account, and I am sure he and you would have many ideas and sentiments in common."

"How can you say so, Ellen?" said Netta. "I think they are totally different."

"You must consider Netta's remark complimentary, Miss Flint," said Ellen; "it would not be quite so much so if it had come from me."

"But you wished me to become acquainted with your oddity," said Gertrude. "I suspect you act on the principle that one's misfortunes should be shared by one's friends."

Netta laughed. "Not exactly," said she; "it was compassion for him that moved me. I can't help pitying him when he looks so home-sick, and I thought your society would brighten him up and do him good."

"Ah, Netta!" said her sister, "he has excited your sympathy, I see. A few days more, and I shouldn't be surprised if you went beyond me in your admiration of him. If so, take care, you transparent creature, not to betray your inconsistency." Then she said to Gertrude, "Netta met Mr. Phillips only yesterday and has not seemed very favourably impressed. Father and I were passengers in the same steamer in which he came from Liverpool a few weeks ago. He had an ill turn in the early part of the voyage, and it was in a professional way that father first made his acquaintance. I

was surprised at seeing him on board to-day, for he mentioned no such intention yesterday."

Gertrude suspected that the young lady might herself be the cause of his journey; but she did not say so, and the conversation taking another turn, Mr. Phillips was not again adverted to, though Gertrude observed, just before the boat stopped at West Point, that Dr. Jeremy and Dr. Gryseworth had joined him, and that the trio were engaged in a colloquy which seemed to interest them all. At West Point, Gertrude parted from her new friends, who expressed a wish to meet in Saratoga.

Our travellers passed one night only at West Point. The weather continued hot, and Dr. Jeremy, perceiving that Emily drooped under the oppressive atmosphere, was desirous to reach the summit of Catskill Mountain before the coming Sabbath.

One solitary moonlight evening sufficed to give Gertrude some idea of the beauties of the place. She could not observe it in detail, only as a whole; but, thus presented in all the dreamy loveliness of a summer's night, it left on her mind a vague sentiment of wonder and delight at the surpassing sweetness of what seemed rather a glimpse of Paradise than an actual show of earth, so harmonious was the scene, so still, so peaceful. "Emily, darling," said she, as they stood together in a rustic arbour, commanding the most striking prospect both of the river and the shore, "it looks like you; you ought to live here and be the priestess of such a temple;" and, locking her hand in that of Emily, she poured into her ear the holy and elevated sentiments to which the time and the place gave birth.

At an early hour in the morning they steamed up the river. But West Point was hardly passed before Gertrude's watchful eye detected in Emily's countenance signs of weariness and debility. Sacrificing, without hesitation, the pleasure she was herself deriving from beautiful scenes through which the boat was passing, she proposed that they should seek the cabin, where Miss Graham might rest in greater stillness. But Emily would not listen to the proposal; would not think of depriving

Gertrude of the pleasure she knew she must be experiencing.

"The prospect is all lost upon me now, Emily," said Gertrude. "I see only your tired face. Do go and lie down, if it be only to please me; you hardly slept at all last night."

"Are you talking of going below?" exclaimed Mrs. Jeremy. "I, for one, shall be thankful, too; it's as comfortable again, and we can see all we want to from the cabin windows; can't we, Emily?"

"Should you really prefer it?" inquired Emily.

"Indeed, I should!" said Mrs. Jeremy, with such emphasis that her sincerity could not be doubted.

"Then, if you will promise to stay here, Gertrude," said Emily, "I will go with Mrs. Jeremy."

Gertrude assented to the plan; but insisted upon first accompanying them, to find a vacant berth for Emily, and see her under circumstances which would promise repose. Emily was too weak to endure the noise on deck, and after she had laid down in the quiet saloon, Gertrude stood smoothing back her hair, and watching her pale countenance, until she was accused of violating the agreement, and was at last sent off by the good-natured doctor's lady, who declared herself perfectly well able to take care of Emily.

"You'd better make haste back," she said, "before you lose your seat; and, Gerty, don't let the doctor come near us; he'll be teasing us to go back again, and we shall not." Mrs. Jeremy untied her bonnet-strings, put her feet up in the opposite chair, clapped her hands at Gertrude, and bade her begone.

Gertrude ran off laughing, and a smile was on her face when she reached the staircase. As she came up with her quick and light step, a tall figure moved aside to let her pass. It was Mr. Phillips. He bowed, and Gertrude, returning the salutation, passed on to the place she had left, wondering how he came to be again their

travelling companion. He could not have been on board previously to her going below with Emily.

Gertrude had sat about five minutes, when a shadow passed before her, and looking up, she betrayed a little confusion at again encountering a pair of eyes, whose magnetic gaze bewildered her. She was turning away, when the stranger spoke. "Good morning, young lady! our paths still lie in the same direction, I see. Will you honour me by making use of my guide-book?"

As he spoke he offered her a little book containing a map of the river, and the shores on either side. Gertrude took it, and thanked him. As she unfolded the map he stationed himself a few steps distant, and leaned over the railing, in an apparently absent state of mind; nor did he speak to her again for some minutes. Then, suddenly turning towards her, he said, "You like this very much?"

"Very much," said Gertrude.

"You have never seen anything so beautiful before in your life." He did not seem to question her; he spoke as if he knew.

"It is an old story to you, I suppose," said Gertrude.

"What makes you think so?" asked he, smiling.

Gertrude was disconcerted by his look, and still more by his smile; it changed his whole face so—it made him look so handsome, and yet so melancholy. She blushed and could not reply; he saved her the trouble. "That is hardly a fair question, is it? You probably think you have as much reason for your opinion as I had for mine. You are wrong, however; I never was here before; but I am too old a traveller to carry my enthusiasm in my eyes—as you do," added he, after a moment's pause, during which he looked her full in the face. Then seeming to perceive the embarrassment which his scrutiny of her features caused, he turned away, and a shadow passed over his fine countenance, lending it for a moment an expression of mingled bitterness and pathos, which served to disarm Gertrude's confusion.

Presently, taking a vacant chair next hers, he directed his attention to a beautiful country residence on their right, spoke of its former owner, whom he had met in a foreign land, and related some interesting anecdotes concerning a journey which they had taken together. This introduced other topics, chiefly connected with wanderings in countries almost unknown; and so rich and varied was the stranger's conversation, so graphic were his descriptions, so exuberant his imagination, and so powerful his command of words and his gift of expressing his thoughts, that his listener sat entranced with delight.

When Dr. Jeremy came in search of his young charge, conversation between her and the stranger had assumed so much ease and freedom that the doctor opened his eyes in astonishment, shrugged his shoulders, and exclaimed, "This is pretty well, I declare!"

Gertrude did not see the doctor approach, but looked up at the sound of his voice. Conscious of the surprise it must be to find her talking so familiarly with a stranger, she coloured slightly; but observing that her companion only smiled, she felt rather amused than embarrassed; and she began to feel confidence in her fellow-traveller, who rose, shook hands with Dr. Jeremy, to whom he had, the previous day, been introduced, and said, with perfect composure, "Will you have the kindness, sir, to present me to this lady? We have already had some conversation together, but do not yet know by what name we may address each other."

Dr. Jeremy having performed the ceremony of introduction, Mr. Phillips bowed gracefully, and looked at Gertrude in such a benignant, fatherly way, that she hesitated not to take his offered hand. He detained hers a moment while he said, "Do not be afraid of me when we meet again;" and then walked away, and paced slowly up and down the deck until passengers for Catskill were summoned to dinner, when he, Dr. Jeremy, and Gertrude went below. The doctor tried to rally Gertrude about her grey-headed beau, declaring that he was yet young and handsome, and that she

could have his hair dyed any colour she pleased. But he could not succeed in annoying her in that way, for her interest in him, which she could not deny, was quite independent of his personal appearance.

The bustle, however, of dinner, and going on shore at Catskill, banished from the doctor's head all thought of everything except the safety of himself, his ladies, and their baggage.

Emily, whose nervous system was somewhat disordered, clung tremblingly to Gertrude; and Gertrude found herself, she knew not how, leaning on the arm of Mr. Phillips, to whose silent exertions they were both indebted for their safety in disembarking. Mrs. Jeremy was counting up the trunks, while her husband was loudly denouncing the steamboat, its conductors, and the whole hurrying, skurrying Yankee nation.

Two stage-coaches were waiting at the wharf to take passengers up the mountain, and before Dr. Jeremy had turned his back upon the river, Emily and Gertrude were placed in one of them by Mr. Phillips, who, without speaking, took this office upon himself, and then went to inform the doctor of their whereabouts, and the doctor and his wife soon joined them.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE ROCK OF AGES.

Before they had gained the road leading to the Mountain House, they became conscious of the vast difference between the temperature of the river and that of the inland country, and, in being suddenly deprived of the refreshing breeze they had enjoyed on board the boat, they fully realised the extreme heat of the weather. For the first few miles Gertrude's care was required to shield Emily and herself from the rays of the burning sun; and it was a great relief when they reached the

beautifully-shaded road which led up the side of the mountain. The atmosphere being clear, the gradually widening prospect was beautiful, and Gertrude's delight was such that the restraint imposed by stage-coach decorum was almost insupportable. When, therefore, the ascent became so laborious that the gentlemen alighted to relieve the weary horses, Gertrude gladly accepted Dr. Jeremy's proposal that she should accompany him on a walk of a mile or two.

Gertrude was an excellent walker, and she and the active doctor soon left the coaches far behind. At a sudden turn in the road they stopped to view the scene below, and stood enjoying the stillness and beauty of the spot, when they were startled by hearing a voice, saying, "A fine landscape, certainly!"

It came from Mr. Phillips, seated upon a moss-grown rock, against which Gertrude was leaning. His attitude was easy and careless, his broad-brimmed straw hat lay on the ground, and his snow-besprinkled hair was tossed back from his high and expanded forehead. He immediately joined Dr. Jeremy and Gertrude.

"You have got the start of us, sir," said the former.

"Yes; I have walked from the village—my practice always when the roads are such that no time can be gained by riding."

As he spoke, he placed in Gertrude's hand, without looking at her, or seeming conscious what he was doing, a bouquet of rich laurel blossoms. She would have thanked him, but his absent manner was such that it afforded her no opportunity, especially as he went on talking with the doctor, as if she had not been present.

All three resumed their walk. Mr. Phillips and Dr. Jeremy conversed in an animated manner, and Gertrude, content to be a listener, soon perceived that she was not the only person to whom the stranger had power to render himself agreeable. Dr. Jeremy engaged him upon a variety of subjects, upon all of which he appeared equally well informed; and Gertrude smiled to see her old friend rub his hands together—his mode of expressing satisfaction.

Gertrude thought their new acquaintance must be a botanist by profession, so versed was he in everything relating to that science. Again, she was sure that geology must have been with him an absorbed study, so intimate seemed his acquaintance with mother earth; and both of these impressions were in turn dispelled when he talked of the ocean like a sailor, of the counting-house like a merchant, of Paris like a man of fashion and the world. In the meantime she walked beside him, silent but not unnoticed; for, as they approached a rough and steep ascent, he offered his arm, and expressed a fear lest she should become fatigued. Dr. Jeremy declared his belief that Gerty could outwalk them both; and, thus satisfied, Mr. Phillips resumed the broken thread of their discourse, into which Gertrude was drawn almost unawares.

Mr. Phillips no longer seemed in Gertrude's eyes a stranger—he was a mystery, but not a forbidding one. She longed to learn the history of a life which many an incident of his own narrating proved to have been made up of strange and mingled experience; especially did her sympathetic nature desire to fathom the cause of that deep-seated melancholy which shadowed and darkened his noble countenance, and made his very smile a sorrowful thing. Dr. Jeremy, who shared her curiosity, asked a few questions, in hopes to obtain some clue to his new friend's history; but in vain. Mr. Phillips' lips were sealed on the subject.

The doctor now felt very weary, and seating themselves by the roadside, they awaited the arrival of the coach. There had been a short silence, when the doctor, looking at Gertrude, remarked, "There will be no church for us to-morrow, Gerty."

"No church," exclaimed Gerty, gazing about her with a look of reverence; "how can you say so?"

Mr. Phillips smiled, and said in a peculiar tone, "There is no Sunday here, Miss Flint; it doesn't come up so high."

He spoke lightly—too lightly, Gertrude thought—and she replied with some seriousness and much sweetness, "I have often rejoiced that the Sabbath has been

sent down into the lower earth; the higher we go the nearer we come, I trust, to the eternal Sabbath."

Mr. Phillips bit his lip, and turned away without replying. There was an expression about his mouth which Gertrude did not like; but she could not find it in her heart to reproach him for the slight sneer which his manner, rather than his look, implied; for as he gazed a moment or two into vacancy there was in his absent countenance such a look of sorrow that she could only pity and wonder. The coaches now came up, and, as he placed her in her former seat, he resumed his wonted serene and kind expression, and she felt convinced that it was only doing justice to his frank and open face to believe that nothing was hid behind it that would not do honour to the man.

An hour brought them to the Mountain House, and to their joy they were shown to some of the most excellent rooms the hotel afforded. As Gertrude stood at the window of the chamber allotted to herself and Emily, and heard the loud murmurs of some of her fellow-travellers who were denied any tolerable accommodation, she could not but be astonished at Dr. Jeremy's unusual good fortune. Emily, being greatly fatigued with the toilsome journey, had supper brought to her own room, and Gertrude partaking of it with her, neither of them sought other society that night, but at an early hour went to rest. The last thing that Gertrude heard before falling asleep was the voice of Dr. Jeremy saying, as he passed their door, "Take care, Gerty, and be up in time to see the sun rise."

But she was not up in time, nor was the doctor; neither of them had calculated upon the sun being such an early riser; and though Gertrude sprang up almost before her eyes were open, a flood of daylight was pouring in at the window, and a scene met her gaze which banished regret at having overslept herself, since nothing, she thought, could be more glorious than that which now lay outspread before her.

Far out to the distant horizon nothing was to be seen but a sea of snowy clouds,

which wholly overshadowed the lower earth and hid it from view. Vast, solid, and of the most perfect whiteness, they stretched on every side, forming, as they lay in thick masses, between which not a crevice was discernible, an unbroken curtain, dividing the heavens from the earth. The foliage of the oaks, the pines, and the maples, which had found root in this lofty region, was rich in varied hues, and tame and fearless birds of various note were singing in the branches. Gertrude gave one long look, then hastened to dress herself and go out upon the platform.

She was soon joined by Dr. and Mrs. Jeremy, the former full of life, and dragging forward his reluctant, sleepy partner, whose countenance proclaimed how unwillingly she had forgone her morning nap. The doctor rubbed his hands as they joined Gertrude. "Very fine, this, Gerty! A touch beyond anything I had calculated upon," Gertrude turned upon him her beaming eyes, but did not speak.

The doctor stepped to the edge of the flat rock upon which they stood, placed his hands beneath his coat tails, and indulged in a soliloquy, made up of short exclamations and interjectional phrases, expressive of his approbation.

"Why, this looks queer, doesn't it?" said Mrs. Jeremy, rubbing her eyes, and gazing about her; "but I daresay it would be just so an hour or two hence. I don't see what the doctor would make me get up so early for." Then she darted forward, exclaiming, "Dr. Jeremy, for mercy's sake, don't stand so near the edge of that precipice! Why, are you crazy, man? You frighten me to death! You'll fall over and break your neck!"

Finding the doctor deaf to her entreaties, Mrs. Jeremy grew so disturbed by his dangerous position that, looking most imploringly at Gertrude, she begged her to get the doctor away, for the poor man was so venturesome he would surely be killed.

"Suppose we explore that little path at the right of the house," suggested Gertrude; "it looks attractive."

"So it does," said Mrs. Jeremy; "beautiful little shady path. Come, doctor, Gerty and

I are going to walk up here—come!"

The doctor looked in the direction in which she pointed.

"Ah!" said he, "that is the path the man at the office spoke about; it leads up to the pine gardens. We'll climb up, by all means, and see what sort of a place it is."

Gertrude led the way, all walking in single file, for the path was a mere foot-track. The ascent was very steep, and they had not proceeded far before Mrs. Jeremy, panting with heat and fatigue, stopped short, and declared her inability to reach the top; she would not have come if she had known what a hard hill she would have to climb. Encouraged and assisted by her husband and Gertrude, she was induced to make a further attempt; and they had gone on some distance, when Gertrude, who was some steps in advance, heard Mrs. Jeremy give a slight scream. She looked back; the doctor was laughing heartily, but his wife, who was the picture of consternation, was trying to pass him and retrace her steps down the hill.

"What is the matter?" asked Gertrude.

"Matter!" cried Mrs. Jeremy; "why, this hill is covered with rattlesnakes; and here we are all going up to be bitten to death!"

"No such thing, Gerty!" said the doctor, still laughing. "I only told her there had been one killed here this summer, and now she's making it an excuse for turning back."

"I don't care!" said the good-natured lady, half laughing herself, in spite of her fears; "if there's been one, there may be another; and I won't stay a minute longer! I thought it was a bad enough place before, and now I am going down faster than I came up."

Finding her determined, the doctor hastened to accompany her, calling to Gertrude and assuring her there was no danger, and begging her wait for him at the top of the hill, where he would join her after he left his wife in safety at the hotel. Gertrude, therefore, went on alone. For the first few yards she looked about her, and thought of

rattlesnakes; but the path was so well worn that she felt sure it must be often trod, and was probably safe; and the beauty of the place engrossed all her attention. After active climbing, she reached the highest point of ground, and found herself once more on the elevated platform, from which she could look forth upon the unbroken sea of clouds.

She seated herself at the foot of an immense pine-tree, removed her bonnet, for she was warm from recent exercise; and she inhaled the refreshing mountain breeze. She had sat thus but a moment when a slight rustling noise startled her; she remembered the rattlesnakes, and was springing to her feet; but hearing a low sound, as of some one breathing, turned her eyes in the direction from which it came, and saw, only a few yards from her, the figure of a man stretched upon the ground, apparently asleep. She went towards it with a careful step, and before she could see the face, the large straw hat and the long, blanched, wavy hair betrayed the identity of the individual. Mr. Phillips was, or appeared to be, sleeping; his head was pillowed upon his arm, his eyes were closed, and his attitude denoted perfect repose. Gertrude stood still and looked at him. As she did so, his countenance suddenly changed; the peaceful expression gave place to the same unhappy look which had at first excited her sympathy. His lips moved, and in his dreams he spoke, or rather shouted, "No! no! no!" each time that he repeated the word pronouncing it with more emphasis; then wildly throwing one arm above his head he let it fall heavily upon the ground, and, the excitement subsiding from his face, he uttered the simply words, "Oh, dear!" much as a grieved and tired child might do as he leans his head upon his mother's knee.

Gertrude was deeply touched. She forgot that he was a stranger; she only saw a sufferer. An insect lit upon his fair, open forehead; she leaned over him, brushed it away, and, as she did so, one of her tears fell upon his cheek. He awoke, and looked full in the face of the embarrassed girl, who started, and would have hastened away; but, leaning on his elbow, he caught her hand and detained her. He gazed at her a

moment without speaking; then said, in a grave voice, "My child, did you shed that tear for me?"

She did not reply, except by her eyes, which were still glistening with the dew of sympathy.

"I believe you did," said he, "and from my heart I bless you! But never again weep for a stranger. You will have woes enough of your own if you live to be my age."

"If I had not had sorrows," said Gertrude, "I should not know how to feel for others; if I had not often wept for myself I should not weep now for you."

"But you are happy?"

"Yes."

"Some find it easy to forget the past."

"I have not forgotten it."

"Children's griefs are trifles, and you are still scarce more than a child."

"I never was a child," said Gertrude.

"Strange girl!" soliloquised her companion. "Will you sit down and talk with me a few minutes?"

Gertrude hesitated.

"Do not refuse; I am an old man, and very harmless. Take a seat here under this tree, and tell me what you think of the prospect."

Gertrude smiled inwardly at the idea of his being such an old man, and calling her a child; but, old or young, she had it not in her heart to fear him, or refuse his request. She sat down, and he seated himself beside her, but did not speak of the prospect, or of anything, for a moment or two; then turning to her abruptly, he said, "So you never were unhappy in your life?"

"Never?" exclaimed Gertrude. "Oh, yes; often."

"But never long?"

"Yes, I can remember whole years when happiness was a thing I had never even dreamed of."

"But comfort came at last. What do you think of those to whom it never comes?"

"I know enough of sorrow to pity and wish to help them."

"What can you do for them?"

"Hope for them—pray for them!" said Gertrude, with a voice full of feeling.

"What if they be past hope—beyond the influence of prayer?"

"There are no such," said Gertrude, with decision.

"Do you see," said Mr. Phillips, "this curtain of thick clouds, now overshadowing the world? Even so many a heart is weighed down and overshadowed by thick and impenetrable darkness."

"But the light shines brightly above the clouds," said Gertrude.

"Above! well, that may be; but what avails it to those who see it not?"

"It is sometimes a weary and toilsome road that leads to the mountain-top; but the pilgrim is well repaid for the trouble which brings him above the clouds," replied Gertrude, with enthusiasm.

"Few ever find the road that leads so high," responded her melancholy companion; "and those who do cannot live long in so elevated an atmosphere. They must come down from their height, and again dwell among the common herd; again mingle in the warfare with the mean, the base, and the cruel."

"But they have seen the glory; they know that the light is ever burning on high, and will have faith to believe it will pierce the gloom at last. See, see," said she, her eyes glowing with the fervour with which she spoke—"even now the heaviest clouds are parting; the sun will soon light up the valley!"

She pointed as she spoke to a wide fissure which was gradually disclosing itself, as

the hitherto solid mass of clouds separated on either side, and then turned to the stranger to see if he observed the change; but, with the same smile upon his unmoved countenance, he was watching, not the display of nature in the distance, but that close at his side. He was gazing with intense interest upon the young and ardent worshipper of the beautiful and the true; and, in studying her features and observing the play of her countenance, he seemed so wholly absorbed that Gertrude—believing he was not listening to her words, but had fallen into one of his absent moods—ceased speaking, rather abruptly, and was turning away, when he said——

"Go on, happy child! Teach me, if you can, to see the world tinged with the rosy colouring it wears for you; teach me to love and pity as you do that miserable thing called man. I warn you that you have a difficult task, but you seem to be very hopeful."

"Do you hate the world?" asked Gertrude, with straightforward simplicity.

"Almost," was Mr. Phillips' answer.

"I did once," said Gertrude, musingly.

"And will again, perhaps."

"No, that would be impossible; it has been a good foster mother to its orphan child, and now I love it dearly."

"Have they been kind to you?" asked he, with eagerness. "Have heartless strangers deserved the love you seem to feel for them?"

"Heartless strangers!" exclaimed Gertrude, the tears rushing to her eyes. "Oh, sir, I wish you could have known my Uncle True, and Emily, dear, blind Emily! you would think better of the world for their sakes."

"Tell me about them," said he, and he looked fixedly down into the precipice which yawned at his feet.

"There is not much to tell, only that one was old and poor, and the other wholly blind; and yet they made everything rich, and bright, and beautiful to me—a poor, desolate, injured child."

"Injured! Then you acknowledge that you had previously met with wrong and injustice?"

"I!" exclaimed Gertrude; "my earliest recollections are only of want, suffering, and much unkindness."

"And these friends took pity on you?"

"Yes. One became an earthly father to me, and the other taught me where to find a heavenly one."

"And ever since then you have been free and light as air, without a wish or care in the world."

"No, indeed, I did not say so—I do not mean so," said Gertrude. "I have had to part from Uncle True, and to give up other dear friends, some for years and some forever; I have had many trials, many lonely, solitary hours, and even now am oppressed by more than one subject of anxiety and dread."

"How, then, so cheerful and happy?" asked Mr. Phillips.

Gertrude had risen, for she saw Dr. Jeremy approaching. She smiled at Mr. Phillips' question; and after looking into the deep valley beneath her, gave him a look of holy faith, and said, in a low but fervent tone, "I see the gulf yawning beneath me, but I lean upon the Rock of Ages."

Gertrude had spoken truly when she said that more than one anxiety and dread oppressed her; for, mingled with a fear lest the time was fast approaching when Emily would be taken from her, she had of late been grieved by the thought that Willie Sullivan, towards whom her heart yearned with more than a sister's love, was forgetting the friend of his childhood, or ceasing to regard her with the love of

former years. It was now some months since she had received a letter from India; the last was short, and written in a haste which Willie apologised for on the score of business duties; and Gertrude was compelled unwillingly to admit the chilling presentiment that, now that his mother and grandfather were no more, the ties which bound the exile to his native home were sensibly weakened.

Nothing would have induced her to hint, even to Emily, a suspicion of neglect on Willie's part; nothing would have shocked her more than hearing such neglect imputed to him by another; and still, in the depths of her heart, she sometimes mused with wonder upon his long silence, and his strange diminution of intercourse between herself and him. During several weeks, in which she had received no tidings, she had still continued to write as usual, and felt sure that such reminders must have reached him by every mail. What, then, but illness or indifference could excuse his never replying to her faithfully-despatched missives?

Dr. Jeremy's approach was the signal for hearty congratulations between himself and Mr. Phillips; the doctor began to converse in his animated manner, spoke with hearty delight of the beauty and peacefulness of that bright Sabbath morning in the mountains; and Mr. Phillips, compelled to exert himself and conceal the gloom which weighed upon his mind, talked with an ease, and even playfulness, which astonished Gertrude, who walked back to the house wondering at this strange and inconsistent man. She did not see him at breakfast, and at dinner he sat at some distance from Dr. Jeremy's party, and merely gave a graceful salutation to Gertrude as she left the dining-hall.

The Jeremys stayed two days longer at the Mountain House; the invigorating air benefited Emily, who appeared stronger than she had done for weeks past, and was able to take many a little stroll in the neighborhood of the house. Gertrude was never weary of the glorious prospect; and an excursion which she and the doctor made on foot to the cleft in the heart of the mountain, where a narrow stream leaps a distance

of two hundred feet into the valley below, furnished the theme for many a descriptive reverie, of which Emily reaped a part of the enjoyment. They saw no more of their new acquaintance, who had disappeared. Dr. Jeremy inquired of their host concerning him, and learned that he left at an early hour on Monday, and took up a pedestrian course down the mountain. The doctor was disappointed, for he liked Mr. Phillips much, and had flattered himself, from some particular inquiries he had made concerning their proposed route, that he had an idea of attaching himself to their party.

"Never mind, Gertie," said he, "I daresay we shall come across him yet some time when we least expect it."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE INVISIBLE CHARM.

From Catskill Dr. Jeremy proceeded directly to Saratoga. The place was crowded with visitors, for the season was at its height, and the improvident travellers having neglected to secure rooms, they had no right to expect any accommodation.

"Where do you propose stopping?" inquired an acquaintance of the doctor's, whom they met in the cars.

"At Congress Hall," was the reply. "It will be a quiet place for us old folks, and more agreeable than any other house to Miss Graham, who is an invalid."

"You are expected, I conclude?"

"Expected?—No; who should be expecting us?"

"Your landlord. If you have not engaged rooms you will fare badly, for every hotel is crowded."

"We must take our chance then," said the doctor, with indifference; but arriving at his destination, he found his friend's words were true.

"I don't know what we are going to do," said he, as he joined the ladies; "they say every house is full; and, if so, we'd better take the next train of cars and be off, for we can't sleep in the street."

"Carriage, sir?" shouted a cabman, a few steps distant, and beckoning to the doctor, while another tapped his shoulder, and made a similar suggestion.

"Carriage!" repeated the doctor, angrily. "What for? where would you carry us, for mercy's sake? There isn't a garret to be had in your town, for love or money."

"Well, sir," said the last petitioner, "the houses are pretty full just now, to be sure, but may be you can get colonised out."

"Colonised out!" said the doctor, in a tone of vexation. "That's what I think we are already; what I want is to get in somewhere. Where do you usually drive your coach?"

"To Congress Hall."

"Drive up, then, and let us get in; and, mind, if they don't take us at Congress Hall, we shall expect you to keep us until we find accommodation."

Mrs. Jeremy, Emily, and Gertrude were assisted into a small omnibus. The doctor took a seat on the outside, and, the moment the vehicle stopped, hastened to the landlord. There was not a vacant corner in the house. Wishing to accommodate him, the office-keeper said that he might be able before night to furnish him with one room in a house in the next street.

"One room! in the next street!" cried the doctor. "Ah, that's being colonised out, is it? Well, sir, it won't do for me; I must have a place to put my ladies in at once. Why, in conscience, don't you have hotels enough for your visitors?"

"It is the height of the season, sir, and——"

"Why, Dr. Jeremy!" exclaimed the youthful voice of Netta Gryseworth, who was passing through the hall with her grandmother. "How do you do, sir? Are Miss

Graham and Miss Flint with you? Have you come to stay?"

Before the doctor could answer her questions and pay his respects to Madam Gryseworth, a venerable old lady whom he had known for thirty years, the landlord of the hotel accosted him. "Dr. Jeremy?" said he. "Excuse me, I did not know you. Dr. Jeremy, of Boston?"

"The same," said the doctor, bowing.

"Ah, we are all right, then. Your rooms are reserved, and will be made ready in a few minutes; they were vacated two days ago, and have not been occupied since."

"What is all this?" exclaimed the honest doctor. "I engaged no rooms."

"A friend did it for you, then, sir; a fortunate circumstance, especially as you have ladies with you. Saratoga is very crowded at this season; there were seven thousand strangers in the town yesterday."

The doctor thanked his unknown friend, and summoned the ladies to enjoy their good fortune.

"Why, now, ain't we lucky?" said Mrs. Jeremy, as she glanced around the comfortable room allotted to herself, and then she took a survey of Emily's and Gertrude's apartment.

The doctor, having attended to the baggage, approached the door and heard his wife's last remark, and entering with his finger on his lip, exclaimed, in a low voice, "Hush! hush! don't say too much about it! We are profiting by a glorious mistake on the part of our good landlord. These rooms were engaged for somebody, that's certain, but not for us. However, they can't do no more than turn us out when the right folks come, and until then we have a prospect of very good lodgings."

But if they were not the right folks, the right folks never came, and, in the course of a week, our party not only ceased to be conscious of their precarious footing in the house, but obtained a favourable exchange for Emily to a bed-room upon the first

floor, which opened directly into the drawing-room, and saved her from passing up and down the often crowded staircases.

It was nearly tea-time on the day of their arrival, and Emily and Gertrude had just completed their toilet, when there was a light rap upon their door. Gertrude opened it, and admitted Ellen Gryseworth, who, while she saluted her with southern warmth of manner, hesitated, saying, "I am afraid you will think me an intruder, but Netta told me you had arrived, and hearing from the chamber-maid that you had the next room to mine, I could not forbear stopping a moment as I passed to tell you how very glad I am to see you again."

Gertrude and Emily expressed their pleasure at the meeting, urged her to come in and remain until the gong sounded for tea. She accepted the invitation, and, taking a seat upon the nearest trunk, inquired concerning their travels and Emily's health since they parted at West Point.

Among other adventures, Gertrude mentioned their having again encountered Mr. Phillips. "Indeed!" said Miss Gryseworth; "he seems to be an ubiquitous individual. He was in Saratoga a day or two ago, and sat opposite to me at our dinner-table, but I have not seen him since. Did you become acquainted with him, Miss Graham?"

"I am sorry to say I did not," replied Emily; then, looking smilingly at Gertrude, she added, "Gerty was so anxious for an opportunity to introduce me that I was quite grieved for her disappointment."

"Then you liked him?" Miss Gryseworth asked Gertrude, and speaking with great earnestness. "I knew you would."

"He interested me much," replied Gertrude. "He is very agreeable, very peculiar, and to me rather incomprehensible."

"Non-committal, I see," said Miss Gryseworth, archly. "I hope you will have a chance to make up your mind; it is more than I can do, I confess, for every time I am in his company I recognise some new trait of character. He got so angry at one of the

waiters the day he dined with us in New York, that I was frightened. But I believe my fears were groundless, for he is too much of a gentleman to bandy words with an inferior, and though his eyes flashed like coals of fire, he kept his temper from blazing forth. I will do him the justice to say that this great indignation did not spring from any neglect he had himself received, but from the man's inattention to two dowdy-looking women from the country, who had never thought of seeing him, and therefore got nothing to eat until everybody else had finished, and looked all the time as disappointed as if they were just out of the State Prison."

"Too bad!" exclaimed Gertrude, energetically. "I don't wonder Mr. Phillips felt provoked with the mercenary fellow. I like him for that."

"It was too bad," said Miss Gryseworth; "I couldn't help pitying them myself. One of them—a young girl, fresh from the churn, who had worn her best white gown on purpose to make a figure in the city—was near weeping."

"I hope such instances of neglect are not very common," said Gertrude. "I am afraid, if they are, Emily and I shall be on the crying list, for Dr. Jeremy will not fee the waiters beforehand; he says it is a mean thing, and he will not command attention in that way."

"Oh, you need have no such fear," said Miss Gryseworth. "Persons accustomed to hotel life can always command attention, especially in so well-regulated an establishment as this. Grandmamma shares the doctor's views with regard to bargaining for it beforehand, but no one ever sees her neglected here."

Another light tap at the door, and this time it was Netta Gryseworth who entered, exclaiming, "I hear Ellen's voice, so I must come in. I am provoked," added she, as she kissed Emily's hand, and shook Gertrude's with a freedom which seemed to spring from girlish hoydenism and high-bred independence of manner, "to think that while I have been watching about the drawing-room doors for this last half-hour, so as to see you the first minute you came in, Ellen has been sitting here on a trunk, as

sociable as all the world, enjoying your society, and telling you every bit of the news."

"Not every bit, Netta," said Ellen; "I have left several choice little morsels for you."

"Have you told Miss Flint about the Foxes and the Coxes that were here yesterday?—Has she, Miss Flint?"

"Not a word about them," said Gertrude.

"Nor about the fright we had on board the steamboat?"

"No."

"Nor about Mr. Phillips being here?"

"Oh, yes, she told us that."

"Ah, she did!" exclaimed Netta, with an arch look which called up her sister's blushes. "And did she tell you how he occupied this room, and how we heard him through the thin partition pacing up and down all night, and how it kept me from sleeping, and gave me a terrible headache all the next day?"

"No, she did not tell me that," said Gertrude.

"You don't either of you walk all night, do you?" asked Netta.

"Not often."

"Oh, how thankful we ought to be to have you for neighbours!" replied Netta. "If that horrible man had stayed here and kept up that measured tread, there would have been a suicide either in this room or ours before many nights."

"Do you think he was ill?" asked Gertrude.

"No, indeed," said Ellen; "it was nothing very remarkable—not for him, at least—all his habits are peculiar; but it kept Netta awake an hour or two, and made her fidgety."

"An hour or two, Ellen!" cried Netta. "It was the whole night."

"My dear sister," said Ellen, "you don't know what a whole night is."

A little sisterly discussion might have ensued about the length of Mr. Phillips' walk and Netta's consequent wakefulness, but, fortunately, the gong sounded for tea.

Saratoga is a queer place. One sees congregated there, at the height of the season, delegates from every part of the world. Fashion's ladder is transplanted thither, and all its rounds are filled. Beauty, wealth, pride, and folly are well represented; also wit, genius, and learning. Idleness reigns supreme, and no one, not even the most active and industrious citizens of our working land, dares, in this her legitimate province, to dispute her temporary sway. Every rank of society, every profession, and almost every trade, meet each other on an easy and friendly footing. The acknowledged belle, the bearer of an aristocratic name, the owner of a well-filled purse, the renowned scholar, artist, or poet, have all a conspicuous sphere to shine in.

It was a new experience to Gertrude, and although in the Congress Hall she saw only the reflection of Saratoga gaiety, and heard only the echo of its distant hum, there was enough of novelty and excitement to entertain and surprise one who was a novice in fashionable life. In the circle of high-bred, polished, literary, and talented persons whom Madam Gryseworth drew about her, and into which Dr. Jeremy's party were admitted, Gertrude found much that was congenial to her cultivated taste, and she soon was appreciated as she deserved. Madam Gryseworth was a lady of the old school—one who had all her life been accustomed to the best society, and who continued, in spite of her advanced years, to enjoy and to adorn it. For the first day or two Mrs. Jeremy stood much in awe of her, and could not feel quite at ease in her presence; but this feeling wore off, and the stout little doctor's lady soon became confiding and chatty towards the august dame.

One evening, when the Jeremys had been a week at Saratoga, as Emily and Gertrude were leaving the tea-table, they were joined by Netta Gryseworth, who, linking her

arm in Gertrude's, exclaimed, in her usual gay manner, "Gertrude, I shall quarrel with you soon!"

"Indeed!" said Gertrude; "on what grounds?"

"Jealousy."

Gertrude blushed slightly.

"Oh, you needn't turn so red; it is not on account of any grey-headed gentleman staring at you all dinner-time from the other end of the table. No; I'm indifferent on that score. Ellen and you may disagree about Mr. Phillips' attentions, but I'm jealous of those of another person."

"I hope Gertrude isn't interfering with your happiness in any way," said Emily, smiling.

"She is, though," replied Netta. "My happiness, my pride, my comfort; she is undermining them all. She would not dare to so conduct herself, Miss Graham, if you could see her behaviour."

"Tell me all about it," said Emily, coaxingly, "and I will promise to interest myself for you."

"I doubt that," answered Netta; "I am not sure but you are a coadjutor with her. However, I will state my grievance. Do you not see how entirely she engrosses the attention of an important personage? Are you not aware that Peter has ceased to have eyes for anyone else? For my own part, I can get nothing to eat or drink until Miss Flint is served, and I'm determined to ask papa to change our seats at the table. It isn't that I care about my food; but I feel insulted—my pride is essentially wounded. A few days ago I was a great favourite with Peter, and all my pet dishes were sure to be placed in front of me; but now the tune is changed, and this very evening I saw him pass Gertrude the blackberries, which the creature knows I delight in, while he pushed a dish of blues towards me in a contemptuous manner, which seemed to imply, 'Blueberries are good enough for you, miss!'"

"I have noticed that the waiters are very attentive to us," said Emily; "do you suppose Gertrude has been secretly bribing them?"

"She says not," replied Netta. "Didn't you tell me so yesterday, Gertrude, when I was drawing a similar comparison between their devotion to you and to our party? Didn't you tell me that neither the doctor nor any of you ever gave Peter anything?"

"Certainly," answered Gertrude; "his attentions are all voluntary; but I attribute them entirely to Emily's influence and his desire to serve her."

"It is no such thing," said Netta; "it's sorcery, I'm sure of it; you've been practising the black art, Gertrude, and I'll warn Peter this very day."

They now went to the corner of the drawing-room where the old ladies of Gryseworth and Jeremy were sitting upon a sofa, engaged in earnest conversation, while Ellen, who had just returned from a drive with her father, stood talking with him and a Mr. Petrancourt, who had just arrived from New York.

The ladies on the sofa made room for Emily, and Netta and Gertrude seated themselves. Madame Gryseworth was annoyed by a group of children on the other side of the room, who by their shouts interrupted her remarks, and prevented her understanding those of her neighbour. Gertrude's attention was attracted by them to such a degree that she did not hear half of the sallies of wit and nonsense which Netta continued to pour forth.

"Do go and play with those children, Gertrude," said Netta at last; "I know you're longing to go."

"I'm longing to stop their play!" said Gertrude.

Some half-dozen gaily-dressed children had collected around a strange little new-comer, whom they were subjecting to every species of persecution. Her clothes, though of rich materials, were mostly untidily arranged, and soiled by travelling. Her little black silk frock (for the child was clad in mourning) was quite outgrown, being much shorter than some of her other garments, and her whole appearance

denoted great neglect. Gertrude saw the little girl standing in their midst, looking wildly about her, as if to escape; but this the children prevented, and continued to ply her with questions, each of which called forth their derisive shouts, which made her cry. Whether the scene reminded Gertrude of some of her own experiences, or merely touched the chord of sympathy for the injured, she could not keep her eyes from the little party; and just as Netta was upon one of her favourite topics—namely, Mr. Phillips and his unaccountable conduct—she sprang from her seat, exclaiming, "They shan't torment that child so!" and hastily crossed the room.

Netta burst into a hearty laugh at Gertrude's excited manner of starting on her benevolent errand; and this, together with her so hastily crossing the large and crowded room, drew the inquiries of all the circle whom she had left, and during her absence she became the subject of discussion and remark.

"What is the matter, Netta?" asked Madame Gryseworth. "Where has Gertrude gone?"

"To offer herself as a champion, grandmamma, for that little rowdy-dowdy looking child."

"Is she the one who has been making all this noise?"

"No, indeed; but I believe she is the cause of it."

"It isn't every girl," said Ellen, "who could cross a room like this so gracefully as Gertrude can."

"She has a remarkably good figure," said Madame Gryseworth, "and knows how to walk."

"She is a very well-formed girl," remarked Dr. Gryseworth, "but the true secret of her looking so completely the lady lies in her having uncommon dignity of character, being wholly unconscious of observation and independent of the wish to attract it. She dresses well, too; Ellen, I wish you would imitate Miss Flint's style of dress; nothing could be in better taste."

"Or a greater saving to your purse, papa," whispered Netta. "Gertrude dresses very simply."

"Miss Flint's style of dress would not become Miss Gryseworth," said Mrs. Petrancourt, who approached in time to hear the doctor's remark. "Your daughter, sir, is a noble, showy-looking girl, and can carry off a great deal of dress."

"So can a milliner's doll, Mrs. Petrancourt. However, I suppose, in a certain sense, you are right. The two girls are not sufficiently alike to resemble each other, if their dresses were matched with Chinese exactness."

"Resemble each other! You surely would not wish to see your beautiful daughter the counterpart of one who has not half her attractions."

"Are you much acquainted with Miss Flint?"

"Not at all; but Netta pointed her out to me at the tea-table as being a particular friend."

"Then you must excuse me, ma'am, if I remark that it is impossible you should have any idea of her attractions, as they do not lie on the surface."

"You confess, then, that you do not think her handsome, sir?"

"To tell you the truth, I never thought anything about it. Ask Petrancourt; he is an acknowledged judge;" and the doctor bowed in a flattering manner to the lady who had been the belle of the season at the time her husband paid his addresses to her.

"I will, when I can get a chance; but he is standing too near the blind lady—Miss Flint's aunt, is she not?"

"Particular friend; not her aunt."

This conversation had been carried on in a low voice, that Emily might not hear it. Others, however, were either more careless or more indifferent to her presence; for Madam Gryseworth began to speak of Gertrude without restraint, and she was at this moment saying, "One must see her under peculiar circumstances to be struck with

her beauty at once; for instance, as I did yesterday, when she had just returned from riding, and her face was in a glow from exercise and excitement; or as she looks when animated by her intense interest in some glowing and eloquent speaker, or when her feelings are suddenly touched and the tears start into her eyes, and her whole soul shines out through them!"

"Why, grandmamma," cries Netta, "you are really eloquent!"

"So is Gertrude, at such times as those I speak of. Oh, she is a girl after my own heart!"

"She must be a very agreeable young lady, from your account," said Mr. Petrancourt. "We must know her."

"You will not find her of the same stamp as most of the agreeable young ladies whom you meet in gay circles. I must tell you what Horace Willard said of her. He is an accomplished man and a scholar—his opinion is worth something. He had been staying a fortnight at the United States Hotel, and used to call occasionally to see us. The day he left he came to me and said—'Where is Miss Flint? I must have one more refreshing conversation with her before I go. It is a perfect rest to be in that young lady's society, for she never seems to be making the least effort to talk with me, or to expect any attempt on my part; she is one of a few girls who never speak unless they have something to say.' How she has contrived to quiet those children!"

Mr. Petrancourt followed the direction of Madame Gryseworth's eyes. "Is that the young lady you were speaking of?" asked he. "The one with great dark eyes, and such a splendid head of hair? I have been noticing her for some time."

"Yes, that is she, talking to the little girl in black."

"Madame Gryseworth," said Dr. Jeremy, through the long, open window, and stepping inside as he spoke, "I see you appreciate our Gerty; I did not say too much in praise of her good sense, did I?"

"Not half enough, doctor; she is a very bright girl, and a very good one, I believe."

"Good!" exclaimed the doctor; "I didn't know that goodness counted in these places; but if goodness is worth speaking of, I should like to tell you a little of what I know of that girl;" and, without going closely into particulars, he commenced dilating enthusiastically upon Gertrude's noble and disinterested conduct under trying circumstances, and had recounted, in a touching manner, her devotion to one old paralytic—to another infirm and ill-tempered old man and his slowly-declining daughter—and would have proceeded to speak of her recent self-sacrificing labours in Emily's service; but Miss Graham touched his arm, spoke in a low voice, and interrupted him.

He stopped abruptly. "Emily, my dear," said he, "I beg your pardon; I didn't know you were here; but what you say is very true. Gertrude is a private character, and I have no right to bring her before the public. I am an old fool, certainly; but there, we are all friends." And he looked around the circle a little anxiously, casting a slightly suspicious glance at the Petrancourts, and finally rested his gaze upon a figure behind Ellen Gryseworth. The latter turned, not having been previously aware that any stranger was near, and, to her surprise, found herself face to face with Mr. Phillips! "Good evening, sir," said she, on recognising him; but he did not seem to hear her. Madam Gryseworth, who had never seen him before, looked up inquiringly.

"Mr. Phillips," said Ellen, "shall I make you acquainted with Mrs. Gryseworth, my——" But before she could complete the introduction he had darted through the window, and was walking across the piazza with hasty strides.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A SURPRISE.

Later in the evening, when Gertrude, having resigned her little charge to the nurse

who came to seek her, had again joined her party, the attention of every one assembled in the drawing-room was attracted by the entrance of a beautiful and showily-dressed young lady, attended by two or three gentlemen. After glancing round the room for the person whom she came to seek, she advanced towards Mrs. Petrancourt, who rose to receive her young visitor. Unexpected as the meeting was to Gertrude, she recognized Isabel Clinton, who passed both her and Emily without observing them, and, there being no vacant chair near at hand, seated herself with Mrs. Petrancourt on a couch a little farther up the room, and entered into earnest conversation; nor did she change her position or look in the direction of Dr. Jeremy's party until she was taking leave. She would have passed them then without noticing their presence, but hearing Dr. Gryseworth address Miss Flint by name, she half turned, caught Gertrude's eye, spoke a careless "How do you do?" with that indifference with which one salutes a very slight acquaintance, cast a look back at Emily, surveyed with an impertinent air of curiosity the rest of the circle to which they belonged, and unceremoniously walked off, whispering to her companions some satirical comments upon the place and the company.

"Oh, what a beauty!" exclaimed Netta to Mrs. Petrancourt. "Who is she?"

Mrs. Petrancourt related what she knew of Miss Clinton, told how she had travelled with her in Switzerland, and met her in Paris, where she was universally admired; then, turning to Gertrude, she remarked, "You are acquainted with her, I see, Miss Flint." Gertrude replied that she knew her before she went abroad, but had seen nothing of her since her return.

"She has just arrived," said Mrs. Petrancourt; "she came with her father in the last steamer, and has been in Saratoga but a day or two. She is making a great sensation at the 'United States,' and has troops of beaux."

"Most of whom are probably aware," remarked Mr. Petrancourt, "that she will have plenty of money one of these days."

Emily's attention was by this time attracted. She had been conversing with Ellen Gryseworth, but now turned to ask Gertrude if they were speaking of Isabel Clinton.

"Yes," said Dr. Jeremy, "and if she were not the rudest girl in the world, my dear, you would not have remained so long in ignorance of her having been here."

Emily forbore to make any comment. Gertrude was silent also; but she burned inwardly, as she always did, at any slights being offered to the gentle Emily.

Gertrude and Dr. Jeremy were always among the earliest morning visitors at the spring. The doctor enjoyed drinking the water at this hour; and, as Gertrude was fond of walking before breakfast, he made it a point that she should accompany him, partake of the beverage of which he was so fond, and afterwards join him in brisk pedestrian exercise till near breakfast time.

On the morning succeeding the evening of which we have been speaking, they had presented themselves at the spring. Gertrude had gratified the doctor, and made a martyr of herself by imbibing a tumblerful of water which she found very unpalatable; and he having quaffed his seventh glass, they had both proceeded some distance on one more walk around the grounds when he suddenly missed his cane, and believing that he had left it at the spring, declared his intention to return and look for it.

Gertrude would have gone back also, but, as there might be some difficulty in recovering it, he insisted upon her continuing her walk in the direction of the circular railway, promising to come round the other way and meet her. She had proceeded some little distance, and was walking thoughtfully along, when, at an abrupt winding in the path, she observed a couple approaching her—a young lady leaning on the arm of a gentleman. A straw hat partly concealed the face of the latter, but in the former she recognised Bella Clinton. It was evident that Bella saw Gertrude, and knew her, but did not mean to acknowledge her acquaintance; for, after the first glance, she kept her eyes obstinately fixed either upon her companion

or the ground. This conduct did not disturb Gertrude in the least; Bella could not feel more indifferent about the acquaintance than she did; but being thus saved the necessity of awaiting and returning any salutation from that quarter, she naturally bestows her passing glance upon the gentleman who accompanied Miss Clinton. He looked up at the same instant, fixed his full grey eyes upon her, with that careless look with which one stranger regards another, then, turning as carelessly away, made some slight remark to his companion.

They pass on. They have gone some steps—but Gertrude stands fixed to the spot. She feels a great throbbing at her heart. She knows that look, that voice, as well as if she had seen and heard them yesterday. Could Gertrude forget Willie Sullivan? But he has forgotten her. Shall she run after him and stop him, and catch both his hands in hers, and compel him to see, and know, and speak to her? She started one step forward in the direction he had taken, then suddenly paused and hesitated. A crowd of emotions choked, blinded, suffocated her, and while she wrestled with them, and they with her, he turned the corner and passed out of sight. She covered her face with her hands and leaned against a tree.

It was Willie. There was no doubt of that; but not her Willie—the boy Willie. It was true time had added but little to his height or breadth of figure, for he was a well-grown youth when he went away. But six years of Eastern life, including no small amount of travel, care, exposure, and suffering, had done the work that time would ordinarily have accomplished. The winning attractiveness of the boy had but given place to equal, if not superior, qualities in the man, who was still very handsome, and gifted with that natural grace and ease of deportment which win universal commendation. The broad, open forehead, the lines of mild but firm decision about the mouth, the frank, fearless manner, were as marked as ever, and were alone sufficient to betray his identity to one upon whose memory these and all his other characteristics were indelibly stamped; and Gertrude needed not the sound of his well-known voice, that too fell upon her ear, to proclaim to her beating heart

that Willie Sullivan had met her face to face, had passed on, and that she was left alone, unrecognised, unknown, unthought of, and uncared for!

For a time this bitter thought, "He does not know me," was present to her mind; it engrossed her entire imagination, and sent a thrill of surprise and agony through her whole frame. She did not stop to reflect upon the fact that she was but a child when she parted from him, and that the change in her appearance must be immense. The one painful idea, that she was forgotten and lost to the dear friend of her childhood, obliterated every other recollection. Other feelings, too, soon crowded into her mind. Why was Willie here, and with Isabel Clinton leaning on his arm? How came he on this side the ocean? and why had he not immediately sought herself, the earliest and, as she had supposed, almost the only friend, to welcome him back to his native land? Why had he not written and warned her of his coming? How should she account for his strange silence, and the still stranger circumstance of his hurrying at once to the haunts of fashion, without once visiting the city of his birth and the sister of his adoption?

But among all her visions there had been none which approached the reality of this painful experience that had suddenly plunged her into sorrow. Her darkest dreams had never pictured a meeting so chilling; her most fearful forebodings had never prefigured anything so heart-rending as this seemingly annihilation of all the sweet and cherished relations that had subsisted between herself and the long-absent wanderer. No wonder, then, that she forgot the place, the time, everything but her own overwhelming grief; and that, as she stood leaning against the old tree, her chest heaved with sobs too deep for utterance, and great tears trickled from her eyes and between the little taper fingers that vainly sought to hide her disturbed countenance.

She was startled from her position by the sound of a footstep. Hastily starting forward, without looking in the direction from which it came, and throwing her veil

so as to hide her face, she wiped away her fast-flowing tears and hastened on, to avoid being observed by any of the numerous strangers who frequented the grounds at this hour.

Half-blinded, however, by the thick folds of the veil, and her sight rendered dim by the tears which filled her eyes, she was scarcely conscious of the unsteady course she was pursuing, when suddenly a loud, whizzing noise close to her ears frightened and confused her so that she knew not which way to turn; at the same instant an arm was suddenly flung round her waist, she was forcibly lifted from her feet as if she had been a little child, and found herself detained and supported by the same strong arm, while just in front of her a little hand-car, containing two persons, was whirling by at full speed. One step more and she would have reached the track of the miniature railway, and been exposed to fatal injury from the rapidly-moving vehicle. Flinging back her veil, she perceived her fortunate escape; and being released from the firm grasp of her rescuer, she turned upon him a half-confused, half-grateful face.

Mr. Phillips—for it was he—looked upon her in the most tender and pitying manner. "Poor child!" said he soothingly, at the same time drawing her arm through his, "you were very much frightened. Here, sit down upon this bench," and he would have drawn her towards a seat, but she shook her head and signified by a movement her wish to proceed towards the hotel. She could not speak; the kindness of his look and voice only served to increase her trouble and rob her of the power to articulate. So he walked on in silence, supporting her with the greatest care and bestowing upon her many an anxious glance. At last making a great effort to recover her calmness, she partially succeeded—so much so that he ventured to speak again, and asked, "Did I frighten you?"

"You!" replied she, in a low and somewhat unsteady voice. "Oh no! you are very kind."

"I am sorry you are so disturbed," said he; "those little cars are troublesome things; I wish they'd put a stop to them."

"The car!" said Gertrude, in an absent way; "oh, yes, I forgot."

"You are a little nervous, I fear; can't you get Dr. Jeremy to prescribe for you?"

"The doctor! He went back for his cane, I believe."

Mr. Phillips saw that she was bewildered. He forbore any conversation, and they continued their walk to the hotel in silence. Just before leaving her he said, in a tone of the deepest interest, as he held her hand for a moment at parting, "Can I do anything for you? Can I help you?"

Gertrude looked up at him. She saw that he understood that she was unhappy, not nervous. Her eyes thanked him as they glistened behind a shower of tears. "No, no," gasped she, "but you are very good;" and she hastened into the house, leaving him gazing at the door, as if she was still in sight and he were watching her.

Gertrude's first thought was how she might best conceal all her fears, and especially from Miss Graham any knowledge of her grief. That she would receive sympathy from Emily there could be no doubt; but as she loved her benefactress, did she shrink from any disclosure which was calculated to lessen Willie Sullivan in the estimation of one in whose opinion she was anxious that he should sustain the high place to which her own praises had exalted him. The chief knowledge that Emily had of Willie was derived from Gertrude, and with a mingled feeling of tenderness for him and pride on her own account did the latter dread to disclose the fact that he had returned, and that she had met him at Saratoga, and that he had passed her carelessly by.

It was very hard for her to appear as usual and elude the vigilance of Emily, who was keenly alive to every sensation experienced by Gertrude.

Gertrude's love for Willie was undying, and she could not think that he would attach himself to one so worldly, vain, and selfish as Isabel Clinton. True, she was the

daughter of Willie's early and generous employer, now the senior partner in the mercantile house to which he belonged, and would be expected to pay her every polite attention; but still Gertrude could not but feel a greater sense of estrangement, a chilling presentiment of sorrow, from seeing him thus familiarly associated with one who had treated her with scorn.

She had to summon all her self-command, and endeavour to behave with serenity and composure. Gertrude compelled herself to enter the room where Emily was awaiting her, bid her a cheerful "good morning," and assist in her toilet. Her face bore indications of recent tears, but that Emily could not see, and by breakfast-time even they were effectually removed.

New trials too awaited her, for Dr. Jeremy, according to his promise, after recovering his cane, went to meet her as agreed upon, and, finding her false to her appointment, was full of inquiries as to the path she had taken. The truth was, that when Gertrude heard Mr. Phillips approaching in the direction she should have taken, she, in her eagerness to avoid meeting any one, took the contrary path to that she had been pursuing, and, after he joined her, retraced her steps to the hotel the same way she had come, consequently eluding the search of the doctor. But before she could plead any excuse Netta Gryseworth came up, full of pleasantry and fun, and leaning over Gertrude's shoulder, said, in a whisper loud enough to be heard by all the little circle, who were being delayed on their way to breakfast by the doctor's demand for an explanation, "Gertrude, my dear, such affecting partings ought to be private; I wonder you allow them to take place directly at the door-step."

This remark did not lessen Gertrude's discomfiture, which became extreme on Dr. Jeremy's taking Netta by the arm and insisting upon knowing her meaning, declaring that he always had suspicions of Gertrude, and wanted to know with whom she had been walking.

"Oh, a certain tall young beau of hers, who stood gazing after her when she left him,

until I began to fear the cruel creature had turned him into stone. What did you do to him, Gertrude?"

"Nothing," replied Gertrude. "He saved me from being thrown down by the little rail-car, and afterwards walked home with me." Gertrude answered seriously; she could have laughed and joked with Netta at any other time, but now her heart was too heavy. The doctor did not perceive her agitation, and pushed the matter further.

"Quite romantic! imminent danger! providential rescue! tête-à-tête walk home, carefully avoiding the old doctor, who might prove an interruption!—I understand!" Poor Gertrude, blushing and distressed, tried to offer some explanation and stammered out, with a faltering voice, that she did not notice—she didn't remember.

At breakfast she could not conceal her want of appetite, and was glad when Emily went with her to their own room, where, after relating her escape from accident, and Mr. Phillips' agency in that escape, she was permitted by her apparently satisfied hearer to sit down and read to her in a book lent them by that gentleman, to whom, however, no opportunity had yet occurred of introducing Emily.

The whole morning passed away, and nothing was heard from Willie. Every time a servant passed, Gertrude was on the tiptoe of expectation; and when she heard a tap at the door she trembled so that she could hardly lift the latch. But there was no summons to the parlour, and by noon the excitement had brought a deep flush into her face, and she had a severe headache. Conscious, however, of the wrong construction put upon her conduct if she absented herself from the dinner-table, she made the effort to dress with as much care as usual; and, as she passed up the hall to her seat, it was not strange that, though suffering herself, the rich glow that mantled her cheeks, and the brilliancy which excitement had given to her dark eyes, attracted the notice of others besides Mr. Phillips.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE STRICKEN DEER.

When Gertrude went to her room after dinner, which she did as soon as she had seen Emily comfortably established in the drawing-room in conversation with Madam Gryseworth, she found there a beautiful bouquet of the choicest flowers, which the chamber-maid said she had been commissioned to deliver to herself. She rightly imagined the source from whence they came, divined the motives of kindness which had prompted the donor of so acceptable a gift, and felt that, if she must accept pity from any quarter, Mr. Phillips was one from whom she could more easily bear to receive it than from any other.

Notwithstanding Netta's intimations, she did not suspect that any other motives than those of kindness had prompted the offering of the beautiful flowers. Nor had she reason to do so; Mr. Phillips' manner towards her was rather fatherly than lover-like, and though she began to regard him as a valuable friend, that was the only light in which she had ever thought of him or believed that he ever regarded her. She placed the flowers in water, returned to the parlour, and constrained herself to talk on indifferent subjects until the breaking up of the circle—part to ride, part to take a drive, and the rest a nap. Among these last was Gertrude, who made her headache as an excuse to Emily for this unwonted indulgence.

In the evening she had an urgent invitation to accompany Dr. Gryseworth, his daughters, and the Petrancourts to a concert at the United States Hotel. This she declined. She felt that she could not undergo another such encounter as that of the morning—she should be sure to betray herself; and now that the whole day had passed and Willie had made no attempt to see her, she felt that she would not, for the world, put herself in his way and run the risk of being recognised by him in a crowded concert-room.

Thus the parlour, being half deserted, was very quiet—a great relief to Gertrude's aching head and troubled mind. Later in the evening an elderly man, a clergyman,

had been introduced to Emily, and was talking with her; Madam Gryseworth and Dr. Jeremy were entertaining each other, Mrs. Jeremy was nodding, and Gertrude, believing that she should not be missed, was gliding out of the room to sit in the moonlight when she met Mr. Phillips in the hall.

"What are you here all alone for?" asked he. "Why didn't you go to the concert?"

"I have a headache."

"I saw you had at dinner. Is it no better?"

"No. I believe not."

"Come and walk with me on the piazza a little while. It will do you good."

She went; and he talked very entertainingly to her, told her a great many amusing anecdotes, succeeded in making her smile, and even laugh, and seemed pleased at having done so. He related many amusing things he had seen and heard since he had been staying at Saratoga in the character of a spectator, and ended by asking her if she didn't think it was a heartless show.

Gertrude asked his meaning.

"Don't you think it is ridiculous in so many thousand people coming here to enjoy themselves?"

"I don't know," answered Gertrude; "but it has not seemed so to me. I think it's an excellent thing for those who do enjoy themselves."

"And how many do?"

"The greater part, I suppose."

"Pshaw! no they don't. More than half go away miserable, and nearly all the rest dissatisfied."

"Do you think so? Now, I thought the charm of the place was seeing so many happy faces; they have nearly all looked happy to me."

"Oh, that's all on the surface; and, if you'll notice, those who look happy one day are

wretched enough the next. Yours was one of the happy faces yesterday, but it isn't to-day, my poor child."

Then, perceiving that his remark caused the hand which rested on his arm to tremble, while the eyes which had been raised to his suddenly fell and hid themselves under their long lashes, he said, "However, we will trust soon to see it as bright as ever. But they should not have brought you here. Catskill Mountain was a fitter place for your lively imagination and reflecting mind."

"Oh!" exclaimed Gertrude, imagining that Mr. Phillips suspected her to be smarting under some neglect, feeling of wounded pride, or, perhaps, serious injury, "you speak harshly; all are not selfish, all are not unkind."

"Ah! you are young, and full of faith. Trust whom you can, and as long as you can. I trust no one."

"No one! Are there none, then, in the whole world whom you love and confide in?"

"Scarcely; certainly not more than one. Whom should I trust?"

"The good, the pure, the truly great."

"And who are they? How shall we distinguish them? I tell you, my young friend, that in my experience—and it has been rich, ay, very rich"—and he set his teeth and spoke with bitterness—"the so-called good, the honourable, the upright man, has proved but the varnished hypocrite, the highly finished and polished sinner. Yes," continued he, his voice growing deeper, his manner more excited, "I can think of one, a respectable man, a church-member, whose injustice and cruelty made my life what it has been—a desert, a blank, or worse than that; and I can think of another, an old, rough, intemperate sailor, over whose head a day never passed that he did not take the name of his God in vain, yet had at the bottom of his heart a drop of such pure, unsullied essence of virtue as could not be distilled from the souls of ten thousand of your polished rogues. Which, then, shall I trust—the good religious men, or the low, profane, and abject ones?"

"Trust in goodness, wherever it be found," answered Gertrude; "but oh, trust all rather than none."

"Your world, your religion, draws a closer line. You are a good child, and full of hope and charity," said Mr. Phillips, pressing her arm closely to his side. "I will try and have faith in you. But see! our friends have returned from the concert."

Alboni had excelled herself; and they were so sorry Gertrude did not go. "But, perhaps," whispered Netta, "you have enjoyed yourself more at home." But Gertrude, as she stood leaning unconcernedly upon Mr. Phillips' arm, looked so innocent of confusion or embarrassment, that her manner refuted Netta's suspicions.

"Miss Clinton was there," continued Netta, "and looked beautiful. She had a crowd of gentlemen about her; but didn't you notice (and she turned to Mrs. Petrancourt) that one met with such marked favour that I wonder the rest were not discouraged. I mean that tall, handsome young man who waited upon her into the hall and went out soon after. She devoted herself to him while he stayed."

"The same one, was it not," asked Ellen, "who towards the close of the concert came in and stood leaning against the wall for some minutes?"

"Yes," answered Netta; "but he only waited for Alboni to finish singing, and then approaching Miss Clinton, whispered in her ear. After that she got up, left her seat, and they both went off, rather to the mortification of the other gentlemen."

"Oh, it is not strange, under the circumstances," said Mr. Petrancourt, "that Miss Clinton should prefer a walk with Mr. Sullivan to the best music in the world."

"Why?" asked Netta. "Is he very agreeable? Is he supposed to be the favoured one?"

"I should think there was no doubt of it," answered Mr. Petrancourt. "I believe it is generally thought to be an engagement. He was in Paris with them during the spring, and they all came home in the same steamer. Everybody knows it is the wish of Mr. Clinton's heart, and Miss Isabel makes no secret of her preference."

"Oh, certainly," interposed Mrs. Pentracourt; "it is an understood thing."

What became of Gertrude all this time? Could she, who for six years had nursed the fond idea that to Willie she was, and should still continue to be, all in all—could she stand patiently by and hear him thus disposed of and given to another? She did do it; not consciously, however, for her head swam round, and she would have fallen but for the firm support of Mr. Phillips, who held her arm so tightly that, though he felt, the rest could not see how she trembled. Fortunately, too, none but he saw her blanched face; and, as she stood in the shadow, he alone was watching the strained and eager eyes, the parted and rigid lips, the death-like pallor of her countenance.

Standing there with her heart beating, and almost believing herself in a horrid dream, she listened, heard, and comprehended every word. She could not, however, have spoken or moved for her life, and in an instant more accident might have betrayed her excited condition. But Mr. Phillips acted, spoke, and moved for her, and she was spared an exposure from which her sensitive spirit would have shrunk.

"Mr. Sullivan!" said he. "Ah! a fine fellow; I know him. Miss Gertrude, I must tell you an anecdote about that young man;" and moving forward in the direction in which they had been walking when they met the party from the concert, he related that he and Mr. Sullivan were, a few years previous, travelling across an Arabian desert, when the latter proved of signal service in saving him from a sudden attack by a wandering tribe of Bedouins. He stopped in his narration and perceived that all danger of observation was passed, and without ceremony placed her in an arm-chair just by. "Sit here," said he, "while I bring you a glass of water." He wrapped her mantle tightly about her and walked quickly away. Oh, how Gertrude thanked him in her heart for thus considerately leaving her and giving her time to recover herself! It was the most judicious thing he could have done, and the kindest. He saw that she would not faint, and knew that left alone she would soon rally her powers.

When here returned she was perfectly calm. She tasted the water, but he did not urge

her to drink it; he knew she did not require it. "I have kept you out too long," said he; "come, you had better go in now."

She rose; he put her arm once more through his, guided her feeble steps to a window which opened into her and Emily's room; and then, pausing a moment, said in a meaning tone, at the same time enforcing his words by the fixed glance of his piercing eye, "You exhort me, Miss Gertrude, to have faith in everybody; but I bid you, all inexperienced as you are, to beware lest you believe too much. Where you have good foundation for confidence, abide by it, if you can, firmly, but trust nothing which you have not fairly tested, and rest assured that the idle gossip of a place like this is utterly unworthy of credit. Good night." What an utter revulsion of feeling these words occasioned Gertrude! They came to her with all the force of a prophecy, and struck deep into her heart.

During their long and regular correspondence no letter had come from Willie that did not breathe a devoted affection for Gertrude—an exclusive affection, in which there could be no rivalship. All his thoughts of home and future happy days were inseparably associated with her; and although Mrs. Sullivan, with that instinctive reserve which was one of her characteristics, never broached the subject to Gertrude, her whole treatment of the latter sufficiently evinced that to her mind the event of her future union with her son was a thing certain. The bold declaration on Willie's part, conveyed in the letter received by Gertrude soon after his mother's death, that his hopes, his prayers, his labours were now all for her, was not a more convincing proof of the tender light in which he regarded her than all their previous intercourse had been. Should Gertrude, then, distrust him? Should she at once set aside all past evidences of his worth, and give ready credence to his prompt desertion of his early friend? No! she resolved to banish the unworthy thought; to cherish still the firm belief that some explanation would shortly offer itself which would yet satisfy her aching heart.

Gertrude continued during the remainder of the evening in an elevated frame of mind, and she was able to go back to the drawing-room for Emily, say good night to her friends with a cheerful voice, and before midnight she sought her pillow and went quietly to sleep. But this calmness of mind, however, was the result of strong excitement, and therefore could not last. The next morning she yielded to depressed spirits, and the effort which she made to rise, dress, and go to breakfast was almost mechanical. She excused herself from her customary walk with the doctor, for to that she felt unequal. Her first wish was to leave Saratoga; she longed to go home, to be in a quiet place, where so many eyes would not be upon her; and when the doctor came in with the letters which had arrived by the early mail, she looked at them so eagerly that he observed it, and said, smilingly, "None for you, Gerty; but one for Emily, which is the next best thing, I suppose."

To Gertrude this was the very best thing, for it was a long-expected letter from Mr. Graham, who had arrived at New York, and desired them to join him there the following day. Gertrude could hardly conceal her satisfaction, and Emily, delighted at the prospect of so soon meeting her father, was eager to prepare for leaving.

They retired to their own room, and Gertrude's time until dinner was occupied in packing. During the whole of the previous day she had been anxiously hoping that Willie would make his appearance at their hotel; now she dreaded such an event. To meet him in so public a manner, too, as must here be inevitable, would be insupportable; she would prefer to be in Boston when he should first recognize her; and, if she tormented herself yesterday with the fear that he would not come, the dread that he might do so was a still greater cause of distress to her to-day.

She was therefore relieved when, after dinner, Mr. Phillips proposed to drive to the lake. Dr. Gryseworth and one of his daughters had agreed to take seats in a carriage he had provided, and he hoped she would not refuse to occupy the fourth.

At the lake Dr. Gryseworth and his daughter Ellen had been persuaded by a party

whom they had met there to engage in bowling. Mr. Phillips and Gertrude declined taking part, and stood looking on. As they sat thus, surveying the beautiful sheet of water, a couple approached and took up a position near them. Mr. Phillips was screened from their observation by the trunk of a tree, and Gertrude sufficiently so to be unnoticed, yet the paleness of her face as they drew near indicated that she saw and recognized William Sullivan and Isabel Clinton. The words which they spoke fell distinctly upon her ear. "Shall I then be so much missed?" asked Isabel, looking earnestly into the face of her companion, who, with a serious air, was gazing out upon the water.

"Missed!" replied he, turning towards her and speaking in a slightly reproachful voice; "how can it be otherwise? Who can supply your place?"

"But it will be only two days."

"A short time under ordinary circumstances," said Willie, "but an eternity——" He here checked himself and made a sudden motion to proceed on their walk. Isabel followed him, saying, "But you will wait here until my return?"

He turned to reply, and this time the reproachful look of his features was visible to Gertrude as he said, with earnestness, "Certainly; can you doubt it?" The strange, fixed, unnatural expression of Gertrude's countenance as she listened to this conversation, to her so deeply fraught with meaning, was fearful to witness.

"Gertrude!" exclaimed Mr. Phillips, after watching her for a moment; "Gertrude, for Heaven's sake do not look so! Speak, Gertrude! What is the matter?"

But she did not turn her eyes, did not move a feature of that stony face; she evidently did not hear him. He took her hand. It was cold as marble. His face now wore an appearance of distress almost equal to her own; great tears rolled down his cheeks. Once he stretched forth his arms as if he would gladly clasp her to his bosom and soothe her like a little child, but he repressed the emotion. "Gertrude," said he, leaning forward and fixing his eyes full upon hers, "what have these people done to

you? Why do you care for them? If that young man has injured you—the rascal!—he shall answer for it;" and he sprung to his feet. The words and the action brought Gertrude to herself. "No, no!" said she, "he is not that. I am better now. Do not speak of it; don't tell," and she looked anxiously in the direction of the bowling-alley. "I am a great deal better;" and to his astonishment—for the fearful, rigid look upon her face had frightened him—she rose with composure and proposed going home.

He accompanied her silently, and before they were half-way up the hill, where they had left the carriage, they were overtaken by the rest of their party, driving toward Saratoga. During the whole drive and the evening which followed Gertrude preserved this same unnatural composure. Once or twice before they reached the hotel Dr. Gryseworth asked her if she felt ill. The very tones of her voice were constrained—so much so that Emily asked, "What is the matter, my dear child?"

But she declared herself quite well, and went through all the duties of the evening, bidding farewell to many of her friends, and arranged with the Gryseworths to see them in the morning.

Emily was the more troubled of the two, for she could not be deceived, and reflected back, in her whole demeanour, the better concealed sufferings of Gertrude. Gertrude neither knew at the time, nor could afterwards recall, one-half the occurrences of that evening. She never could understand what it was that sustained her and enabled her, half unconsciously, to perform her part in them. How she so successfully concealed her misery she never could comprehend or explain.

That Willie was faithless to his first love she could not doubt; and with this conviction she realised that the stay of her life had fallen. Uncle True and Mrs. Sullivan were both her benefactors, and Emily was still a dear and steadfast friend; but all of these had been more or less dependent upon Gertrude, and although she could ever repose in the assurance of their love, two had, long before they passed

away, come to lean wholly upon her youthful arm; and the other trusted to her to guide her uncertain steps, but those steps were tending downwards to the grave. Upon whom, then, should Gertrude lean? To whom could she with confidence turn for counsel, protection, support, and love? To whom but Willie? And Willie had given his heart to another—and Gertrude would soon be left alone! No wonder, then, that she wept as the broken-hearted weep, wept until the fountain of her tears was dry, and she felt herself sick, faint, and exhausted. And then she thought she heard voices, as in her childhood, whispering, "Gerty!—Gerty!—poor little Gerty!" She sank upon her knees, her uplifted face, her clasped hands, the sweet resignation of her countenance gave evidence that in her prayer to God her soul held deep communion with its Maker, and once more her spirit was uttering the simple words, "Here am I, Lord!"

Oh, blessed religion, which can sustain the heart in such an hour as this! Oh, blessed faith and trust which, when earthly support fails us, and our strongest earthly stay proves but a rope of sand, lifts the soul above all other need, and clasps it to the bosom of its God!

And now a gentle hand is laid upon her head. She turns and sees Emily, whom she believed to be asleep, but from whom anxiety and the sobs of Gertrude banished slumber, is standing by her side.

"Gertrude," said she, "are you in trouble, and did you seek to hide it from me? Do not turn from me, Gertrude!" and, throwing her arms around her, she drew her head close to her bosom, and whispered, "Tell me all, my darling! What is the matter with my poor child?"

And Gertrude unburdened her heart to Emily, disclosing to her the only secret she had ever kept from her; and Emily wept as she listened, and when Gertrude had finished she pressed her again and again to her heart, exclaiming with an excitement which Gertrude had never before witnessed in the usually placid blind girl, "Strange,

strange, that you, too, should be thus doomed! Oh, Gertrude, my darling, we may well weep together; but still, believe me, your sorrow is less bitter than mine!"

And then in the darkness of that midnight hour was Gertrude's confidence rewarded by the revelation of that tale of grief and woe which twenty years before had blighted Emily's youth, and which was still vivid to her recollection casting over her life a dark shadow, of which her blindness was but a single feature.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

A TALE OF SORROW.

"I was younger than you, Gertrude," said she, "when my trial came, and hardly the same person in any respect that I have been since you first knew me. My mother died when I was too young to retain any recollection of her; but my father soon married again, and in that step-parent I found a love and care which fully compensated my loss. I can recall her now as she looked towards the latter part of her life—a tall, delicate, feeble woman, with a very sweet face. She was a widow when my father married her, and had one son, who became my sole companion, the partner of all my youthful pleasures. You told me, many years ago, that I could not imagine how much you loved Willie, and I then had nearly confided to you my early history, and to convince you that my own experience taught me how to understand such a love; but I checked myself, for you were too young then to know so sad a story as mine. How dear my young playmate became to me no words can express. The office which each filled, the influence which each of us exerted upon the other, created mutual dependence; for though his was the leading spirit, the strong and determined will, and I was ever submissive to a rule which to my easily influenced nature was never irksome, there was one respect in which my bold young protector and ruler ever looked to me for aid. It was to act as mediator between him and my father; for while the boy was almost an idol to his mother, he was ever treated with

coldness and distrust by my father, who never appreciated his noble qualities, but seemed always to regard him with dislike.

"That my father's sternness towards her son was distressing to our mother I doubt not; for I remember the anxiety with which she strove to conceal his faults and the frequent occasions on which she instructed me to propitiate the parent, who, for my sake, would often forgive the boy, whose adventurous disposition was continually bringing him into collision with one of whose severity, when displeased, you can judge. My step-mother had been poor in her widowhood, and her child having inherited nothing which he could call his own, was wholly dependent upon my father's bounty. This was a stinging cause of mortification to the pride of which even as a boy he had an unusual share; and often have I seen him irritated at the reception of favours which he well understood were far from being awarded by a paternal hand.

"While our mother was spared to us we lived in comparative harmony, but when I was sixteen years old she suddenly died. Well do I remember the last night of her life, her calling me to her bedside and saying, 'Emily, my dying prayer is that you will be a guardian angel to my boy!' God forgive me," ejaculated the tearful blind girl, "if I have been faithless in the trust!

"He of whom I am telling you was then about eighteen. He had lately become a clerk in my father's employ against his will, for he desired a collegiate education; but my father was determined, and at his mother's and my persuasion he was induced to submit. My step-mother's death knit the tie between her son and myself more closely than ever. He continued an inmate of our house, and we passed a deal of time in the enjoyment of each other's society; for my father was much from home, and when there, retired to his library, leaving us to entertain each other. I was then a school-girl, fond of books, and an excellent student. How often, when you have spoken of the help Willie was in your studies, have I been reminded of the time

when I received similar encouragement and aid from my youthful friend, who was ever ready to exert hand and brain in my behalf! But we were not invariably happy. Often did my father's face wear a frown which I dreaded to see; while the disturbed and occasionally angry countenance of his step-son denoted that some storm had occurred, probably at the counting-house, of which I had no knowledge, except from its after effects. My office of mediator, too, was suspended from the fact that the censure arose concerning some supposed mismanagement of business matters by the young and inexperienced clerk. Matters went on thus for six months, when it became evident that my father had either been influenced by insinuations from some foreign quarter, or had himself conceived a new idea. He is honest and straightforward in his purposes, whatever they may be, and incapable of carrying out any species of artifice. We saw that he was resolved to put a check upon the freedom of intercourse which had subsisted between the two youthful inmates of the house, to forward which purpose he introduced in the position of housekeeper Mrs. Ellis, who has continued with us ever since. The almost constant presence of this stranger, and the interference of my father with his step-son's familiar intimacy with me, indicated his intention to destroy the closeness of our friendship.

"It is true, I lent myself unhesitatingly to a species of petty deception to elude the vigilance which would have kept us apart. My father, however, saw more of our man[oe]uvring than we were aware of, and imagined far more than ever in reality existed. He watched us carefully, and, contrary to his usual course of proceeding, forbore for a time any interference. I have since been led to think that he designed to wean us from each other in a less unnatural manner than that which he had at first attempted, by taking the earliest opportunity to transfer his step-son to a situation connected with his own mercantile establishment in a foreign country, or a distant part of our own; and forbore, until his plans were ripe, to distress me by giving way to the feelings of displeasure which were burning within him—for he was, and had ever been, as kind and indulgent towards his undeserving child as was consistent

with a due maintenance to his authority.

"Before such a course could be carried out, however, circumstances occurred, and suspicions became aroused, which destroyed one of their victims, and plunged the other——"

Here Emily's voice failed her. She laid her head upon Gertrude's shoulder and sobbed bitterly.

"Do not try to tell me the rest, dear Emily," said Gertrude. "It is enough for me to know that you are so unhappy. Do not distress yourself by dwelling, for my sake, upon past sorrows."

"Past!" replied Emily, recovering her voice and wiping away her tears. "No, they are never past. Nor am I unhappy, Gertrude. It is but rarely that my peace is shaken; nor would I now allow my weak nerves to be unstrung by imparting to another the secrets of that never-to-be-forgotten time of trial, were it not that, since you know so well how harmoniously and sweetly my life is passing on to its great and eternal awakening, I desire to prove to my darling child the power of that heavenly faith which has turned my darkness into marvellous light, and made afflictions such as mine the blessed harbingers of ever-during joy.

"I was suddenly taken ill with a fever. Mrs. Ellis, whom I had always treated with coldness, and often with disdain, nursed me by night and day with a care and devotion which I did not expect, and under her nursing, and the skilful treatment of Dr. Jeremy, I began to recover. One day, when I was able to be up and dressed for several hours at a time, I went for change of air and scene into my father's library, and there lay half reclining upon the sofa. Mrs. Ellis had gone to attend to household duties, but before she left me she placed within my reach a small table, upon which were arranged various phials, glasses, etc., and other things which I might require before her return. It was in an evening in June, and I lay watching the approach of sunset from an opposite window. I was oppressed, with a sad sense of loneliness, for

during the past six weeks I had enjoyed no society but that of my nurse and periodical visits from my father; and felt, therefore, no common pleasure when my most congenial but now nearly forbidden associate entered the room. He had not seen me since my illness, and after this protracted and painful separation our meeting was tender and affectionate. He had, with all the fire of a hot and ungoverned temper, a woman's depth of feeling, warmth of heart, and sympathising sweetness of manner. Well do I remember the expression of his noble face, the manly tones of his voice, as, seated beside me on the wide couch, he bathed the temples of my aching head with eau-de-cologne, which he took from the table near by, at the same time expressing again and again his joy at once more seeing me.

"How long we had sat thus I cannot tell, but the twilight was deepening in the room when we were suddenly interrupted by my father, who entered abruptly, came towards us with hasty steps, but stopping short when within a yard or two, confronted his step-son with such a look of angry contempt as I had never before seen upon his face. The latter rose and stood before him with a glance of proud defiance, and then ensued a scene which I have neither the wish nor power to describe.

"It is sufficient to say that in the double accusation which my excited parent now brought against the object of his wrath, he urged the fact of his seeking by mean, base, and contemptible artifice to win the affections, and with them the expected fortune, of his only child as a secondary and pardonable crime compared with his deeper, darker, and just but detected guilt of forgery—forgery of a large amount, and upon his benefactor's name.

"To this day, so far as I know," said Emily, with feeling, "that charge remains uncontradicted; but I did not then, I do not now, and I never can believe it. Whatever were his faults—and his impetuous temper betrayed him into many—of this dark crime—though I have not even his own word of attestation—I dare pronounce him

innocent.

"You cannot wonder, Gertrude, that in my feeble condition I was hardly capable of realising at the time, far less of retaining, any distinct recollection of the circumstances that followed my father's words. A few dim pictures, however, the last my poor eyes ever beheld, are still engraved upon my memory and visible to my imagination. My father stood with his back to the light, and from the first moment of his entering the room I never saw his face again; but the countenance of the object of his accusation, illumined as it was by the last rays of the golden sunset, stands ever in the foreground of my recollection. His head was thrown proudly back; conscious innocence proclaimed itself in his clear, calm eye, which shrunk not from the closest scrutiny; his hand was clenched, as if he were vainly striving to repress the passion which proclaimed itself in the compressed lips, the set teeth, the deep and angry indignation which overspread his face. He did not speak—apparently he could not command voice to do so; but my father continued to upbraid him in language cutting and severe, though I remember not a word of it. It was fearful to watch the working of the young man's face, while he stood there listening to taunts and enduring reproaches which were believed by him who uttered them to be just and merited, but which wrought the youth to a degree of frenzy which it was terrible to witness. Suddenly he took one step forward, slowly lifted the clenched hand which had hitherto hung at his side. I know not whether he might then have intended to call Heaven to witness his innocence of the crime, or whether he might have designed to strike my father; for I sprang from my seat prepared to rush between them, and implore them for my sake, to desist; but my strength failed me, and, with a shriek, I sunk back in a fainting fit.

"Oh, the horror of my awakening! How shall I find words to tell it?—and yet I must! Listen, Gertrude. He—the poor, ruined boy—sprung to help me; and, maddened by injustice, he knew not what he did. Heaven is my witness, I never blamed him; and if, in my agony, I uttered words that seemed like a reproach, it was because I was

too frantic, and knew not what I said!"

"What!" exclaimed Gertrude, "he did not——"

"No, no! he did not—he did not put out my eyes!" exclaimed Emily; "it was an accident. He reached forward for the eau-de-cologne, which he had just had in his hand. There were several bottles, and in his haste he seized one containing a powerful acid which Mrs. Ellis had found occasion to use in my sick-room. It had a heavy glass stopper—and he—his hand being unsteady, and he spilt it all——"

"On your eyes?" shrieked Gertrude.

Emily bowed her head.

"Oh, poor Emily!" cried Gertrude, "and wretched, wretched young man!"

"Wretched indeed!" ejaculated Emily. "Bestow all your pity on him, Gertrude, for his was the harder fate of the two."

"Oh, Emily! how intense must have been the pain you endured! How could you suffer so, and live?"

"Do you mean the pain from my eyes? That was severe indeed, but the mental agony was worse!"

"What became of him?" said Gertrude.

"I cannot give you an exact account of what followed. I was in no state to know anything of my father's treatment of his step-son. He banished him from his sight and knowledge for ever; and it is easy to believe it was with no added gentleness, since he had now, besides the other crimes imputed to him, been the cause of his daughter's blindness."

"And did you never hear from him again?"

"Yes. Through the good doctor—who alone knew all the circumstances—I learned that he had sailed for South America; and in the hope of once more communicating with the poor exile, and assuring him of my continued love, I rallied from the

sickness, fever, and blindness into which I had fallen; the doctor had even a thought of restoring sight to my eyes. Several months passed, and my kind friend, who was persevering in his inquiries, having learned the residence and address of the ill-fated youth, I was commencing, through the aid of Mrs. Ellis (whom pity had now won to my service), a letter of love, and an entreaty for his return, when a fatal seal was put to all my earthly hopes. He died in a foreign land, alone, unnursed, and uncared for; he died of that southern disease which takes the stranger for its victim; and I, on hearing the news of it, sunk back into a more pitiable malady; and—and alas, for the encouragement of the good doctor had held out of my gradual restoration to sight!—I wept all his hopes away!"

Emily paused. Gertrude put her arms around her, and they clung closely to each other; grief and sorrow made their union dearer than ever.

"I was then, Gertrude," continued Emily, "a child of the world, eager for worldly pleasures, and ignorant of any other. For a time, therefore, I dwelt in utter darkness—the darkness of despair. I began, too, again to feel my bodily strength restored, and to look forward to a useless and miserable life. You can form no idea of the utter wretchedness in which my days were passed.

"But at last a dawn came to my dark night. It came in the shape of a minister of Christ, our own dear Mr. Arnold, who opened the eyes of my understanding, lit the lamp of religion in my now softened soul, taught me the way to peace, and led my feeble steps into that blessed rest which even on earth remaineth to the people of God.

"In the eyes of the world I am still the unfortunate blind girl; cut off from every enjoyment; but so great is the awakening I have experienced that to me it is far otherwise, and I am ready to exclaim, like him who in old time experienced his Saviour's healing power, 'Once I was blind, but now I see!'"

Gertrude half forgot her own troubles while listening to Emily's sad story; and when

the latter laid her hand upon her head, and prayed that she too might be fitted for a patient endurance of trial, and be made stronger and better thereby, she felt her heart penetrated with that deep love and trust which seldom come to us except in the hour of sorrow, and prove that it is through suffering only we are made perfect.

CHAPTER XL.

THE HOUR OF PERIL.

As Mr. Graham had expressed in his letter the intention of being at the steamboat wharf in New York to meet his daughter and Gertrude on their arrival, Dr. Jeremy thought it unnecessary to accompany his charges further than Albany, where he could see them safely on their way, and then proceed to Boston with his wife over the Western Railroad.

"Good-bye, Gerty," said the doctor, as he bade them farewell on the deck of one of the Hudson river-boats. "I'm afraid you've lost your heart in Saratoga; you don't look quite so bright as you did when we first arrived there. It can't have strayed far, however, I think, in such a place as that; so be sure and find it before I see you in Boston."

It wanted a few minutes only of the time for the boat to start, when a gay group of fashionables appeared talking and laughing. Among them was Miss Clinton, whose companions were making her the object of a great deal of wit and pleasantry, by which, although she feigned to be teased, her smiling face gave evidence that she felt flattered and pleased. At length the significant gesture of some of the party, and a half-smothered hush-h! indicated the approach of some one, and presently William Sullivan, with a travelling-bag in his hand, a heavy shawl thrown over one arm, and his grave face, as if he had not recovered from the chagrin of the previous evening, appeared, passed Gertrude, whose veil was drawn over her face, and joined Isabel,

placing his burden on a chair which stood near.

Just then the violent ringing of the bell gave notice to all but the passengers to quit the boat, and he was compelled to make haste to depart. As he did so he drew a step nearer Gertrude, a step further from her whom he was addressing, and the former distinguished the words: "Then, if you will do your best to return on Thursday I will try not to be impatient in the meantime."

A moment more and the boat was on its way; just then a tall figure, who reached the landing just as she started, had, to the horror of the spectators, daringly leaped the gap that already divided her from the shore; after which he sought the gentlemen's saloon, threw himself upon a couch, drew a book from his pocket, and commenced reading.

As soon as the boat was fairly under weigh and quiet prevailed in the neighbourhood, Emily spoke softly to Gertrude, and said——

"Didn't I just now hear Isabel Clinton's voice?"

"She is here," replied Gertrude, "on the opposite side of the deck, but sitting with her back towards us."

"Didn't she see us?"

"I believe she did," answered Gertrude. "She stood looking this way while her party were arranging their seats."

"Perhaps she is going to New York to meet Mrs. Graham."

"Very possible," replied Gertrude. "I didn't think of it before."

"Who was the gentleman who spoke to her just before the boat started?"

"Willie," was the tremulous response.

Emily pressed Gertrude's hand and was silent. She, too, had overheard his farewell remark, and felt its significance. Several hours passed, and they had proceeded some distance down the river; for the motion of the boat was rapid—too rapid, as it

seemed to Gertrude, for safety. She observed several circumstances, which excited so much alarm, that, effectually aroused from her train of reflection, she had leisure only to take into view her own and Emily's situation, and its probable consequence.

Several times, since they left Albany, had the boat passed and repassed another of similar size, with living freight, and bound in the same direction. Occasionally, during their headlong course, the contiguity of the two boats excited serious alarm. They were racing, and racing desperately. Some few, regardless of danger, watched with pleased eagerness the mad career of rival ambition; but by far the majority of the company, who had reason and sense, looked on in indignation and fear. The usual stopping places on the river were either recklessly passed by, or only paused at, while, with indecent haste, passengers were shuffled backwards and forwards at the risk of life and limb, their baggage (or somebody's else) unceremoniously flung after them, the panting, snorting engine in the meantime bellowing with rage at the check thus unwillingly imposed upon its freedom.

Gertrude sat with her hand locked in Emily's, anxiously watching every indication of terror, and endeavouring to judge from the countenances and words of her most intelligent-looking fellow-travellers the actual degree of their insecurity. Emily, rendered through her acute hearing, conscious of the prevailing alarm, was calm, though very pale, and from time to time questioned Gertrude concerning the vicinity of the other boat, a collision with which was the principal cause of fear.

At length their boat for a few moments distanced its competitor; the assurance of perfect safety was impressively asserted; anxiety began to be relieved, and most of the passengers gained their wonted composure. Emily looked pallid, and, as Gertrude fancied, a little faint. "Let us go below, Emily," she said; "it appears now to be very quiet and safe."

Gertrude opened her travelling-basket, which contained their luncheon. It consisted merely of such dry morsels as had been hastily collected and put up at their hotel, in

Albany, by Dr. Jeremy's direction. Gertrude was hesitating which she could recommend to Emily, when a waiter appeared, bearing a tray of refreshments, which he placed upon the table.

"This is not for us," said Gertrude. "You have made a mistake."

"No mistake," replied the man. "Orders was for de blind lady and hansum young miss. I only 'beys orders. Anything furder, miss?"

Gertrude dismissed the man with the assurance that they wanted nothing more, and then, turning to Emily, asked, with an attempt at cheerfulness, what they should do with this Aladdin-like repast.

"Eat it, my dear, if you can," said Emily; "it is no doubt meant for us."

"But to whom are we indebted for it?"

"To my blindness and your beauty, I suppose," said Emily, smiling. "Perhaps the chief steward, or master of ceremonies, took pity on our inability to come to dinner, and so sent the dinner to us."

The sable waiter, when he came to remove the dishes, really looked sad to see how little they had eaten. Gertrude drew out her purse, and after bestowing a fee upon the man, inquired whom she should pay for the meal.

"Pay, miss!" said the man, grinning. "Bless my stars! de gentleman pays for all!"

"Who? What gentleman?" asked Gertrude, in surprise.

But before he could reply another waiter appeared and beckoned to his fellow-waiter, who snatched up his tray and trotted off, leaving Gertrude and Emily to wonder who the gentleman might be.

"What time is it?" asked she, on awaking.

"Nearly a quarter past three," replied Gertrude, glancing at her watch (a beautiful gift from a class of her former pupils).

Emily started up. "We can't be far from New York," said she; "where are we now?"

"I think we must be near the Palisades;" said Gertrude; "stay here, I will go and see." She passed across the saloon, and was ascending the staircase, when she was alarmed by a rushing sound, mingled with hurried steps. She kept on, however, and had gained the head of the stairway, when a man rushed past gasping for breath, and shrieking, "Fire! fire!" A scene of dismay and confusion ensued too terrible for description. Shrieks rose upon the air, groans and cries of despair burst from hearts that were breaking with fear for others, or maddened at the certainty of their own destruction. Those who had never prayed before poured out their souls in the fervent ejaculation, "Oh, my God!"

Gertrude gazed around upon every side. Towards the centre of the boat, where the machinery, heated to the last degree, had fired the vessel, a huge volume of flame was visible, darting out its fiery fangs, and causing the stoutest hearts to shrink and crouch in horror. She gave but one glance; then bounded down the stairs to save Emily. But she was arrested at the very onset. One step only had she taken when she was encircled by two powerful arms, and a movement made to rush with her upon deck: while a familiar voice gasped forth, "Gertrude, my child! my own darling! Be quiet—be quiet!—I will save you!"

She was struggling madly. "No, no!" shouted she; "Emily! Emily! Let me die! but I must find Emily!"

"Where is she?" asked Mr. Phillips; for it was he.

"There, there," pointed Gertrude—"in the cabin. Let me go! let me go!"

He cast one look around him; then said, in a firm tone, "Be calm, my child! I can save you both; follow me closely!"

With a leap he cleared the staircase, and rushed into the cabin. In the furthest corner knelt Emily, her hands clasped, and her face like that of an angel.

Gertrude and Mr. Phillips were by her side in an instant. He stooped to lift her in his arms, Gertrude at the same time exclaiming, "Come, Emily, come! He will save us!"

But Emily resisted. "Leave me, Gertrude—leave me, and save yourselves! Oh!" said she, imploringly, "leave me, and save my child." But ere the words had left her lips she was borne half way across the saloon; Gertrude followed closely.

"If we can cross to the bows of the boat we are safe!" said Mr. Phillips, in a husky voice.

To do so, however, proved impossible. The centre of the boat was now one sheet of flame. "Good heavens!" exclaimed he, "we are too late! we must go back!"

With much difficulty they regained the saloon. The boat, as soon as the fire was discovered, had been turned towards the shore, struck upon the rocks, and parted in the middle. Her bows were brought near to the land, near enough to almost ensure the safety of such persons as were at the top part of the vessel. But, alas for those near the stern!

Mr. Phillips' first thought was to beat down a window-sash, spring upon the guards, and drag Emily and Gertrude after him. Some ropes hung upon the guards; he seized one and made it fast to the boat; then turned to Gertrude, who stood firm by his side. "Gertrude," said he, "I shall swim to the shore with Emily. If the fire comes too near, cling to the guards; as a last chance hold on to the rope. Keep your veil flying; I shall return."

"No, no!" cried Emily. "Gertrude, go first."

"Hush, Emily!" exclaimed Gertrude; "we shall both be saved."

"Cling to my shoulder in the water, Emily," said Mr. Phillips, utterly regardless of her protestations. He took her once more in his arms; there was a splash, and they were gone. At the same instant Gertrude was seized from behind. She turned and found herself grasped by Isabel Clinton, who, kneeling upon the platform, and frantic with terror, was clinging so closely to her as utterly to disable them both; she shrieked out, "Oh, Gertrude! Gertrude! save me!" But Gertrude thus imprisoned, she was powerless to do anything for her own or Isabel's salvation. She looked forth in

the direction Mr. Phillips had taken, and, to her joy, she saw him returning. He had deposited Emily on board a boat, and was now approaching to claim another burden. A volume of flame swept so near the spot where the two alarmed girls were stationed that Gertrude felt the scorching heat, and both were almost suffocated with smoke. An heroic resolution was now displayed by Gertrude. One of them could be saved; for Mr. Phillips was within a few rods of the wreck. It should be Isabel! She had called on her for protection, and it should not be denied! Moreover, Willie loved Isabel. Willie would weep for her loss, and that must not be. He would not weep for Gertrude—at least, not much; and, if one must die, it should be she. "Isabel," said she—"Isabel, do you hear me? Stand up on your feet; do as I tell you, and you shall be saved. Do you hear me, Isabel?"

She heard, shuddered; but did not move. Gertrude stooped down, and wrenching apart the hands which were convulsively clenched, said sternly, "Isabel, if you do as I tell you, you will be on shore in five minutes, safe and well; but if you stay there we shall both be burned to death. For mercy's sake, get up quickly, and listen to me!" Isabel rose, fixed her eyes upon Gertrude's calm, steadfast face, and said, "What must I do? I will try."

"Do you see that person swimming this way?"

"Yes."

"He will come to this spot. Hold fast to that piece of rope, and I will let you gradually down to the water. But, stay!"—and, snatching the deep blue veil from her own head she tied it round the neck and flung it over the fair hair of Isabel. Mr. Phillips was within a rod or two. "Now, Isabel, now!" exclaimed Gertrude, "or you will be too late!" Isabel took the rope, but shrunk back, appalled at the sight of the water. One more hot burst of fire gave her renewed courage to brave a mere seeming danger; and aided by Gertrude, who helped her over the guards, she allowed herself to be let down to the water's edge. Mr. Phillips was just in time to receive her, for

she was so utterly exhausted that she could not have clung long to the rope. Gertrude had no opportunity to follow them with her eye; her own situation was now all-engrossing. The flames had reached her. She could hardly breathe. She could hesitate no longer. She seized the piece of rope, and grasping it with all nor might, leaped over the side of the vessel. How long her strength would have enabled her thus to cling—how long the guards, as yet unapproached by the fire, would have continued a sure support for the cable—there was no opportunity to test; for, just as her feet touched the cold surface of the water, the huge wheel, which was but a little distance from where she hung, gave one sudden revolution, sounding like a death-dirge through the water, which came foaming and dashing up against the boat, and, as it swept away again, bore with it the light form of Gertrude!

CHAPTER XLI.

SUSPENSE.

Let us now revisit the country seat of Mr. Graham. The old gentleman, wearied with travels and society not congenial to his years, is pacing up and down his garden walks; his countenance denoting plainly enough how glad he is to find himself once more in his cherished homestead. It is supposed that such satisfaction arose from the circumstance that the repose of his household is rendered complete by the absence of its excitable mistress, whom he has left in New York. This was like the good old times.

Emily and Gertrude, too, are closely associated with those good old times; and it adds greatly to the delusion of his fancy to dwell upon the certainty that they are both in the house, and that he shall see them both at dinner. Yes, Gertrude is there, as well as the rest, saved—she hardly knew how—from a watery grave that almost engulfed her, and established once more in the peaceful and endeared spot, now the dearest to her on earth.

When, with some difficulty, restored to consciousness, she was informed that she had been picked up by some humane persons who had pushed a boat from the shore to rescue the sufferers; that she was clinging to the chair, which she had probably grasped when washed away by the sudden rushing of the water, and that her situation was such that, a moment more, and it would have been impossible to save her from the flames, close to which she was drifting. But of all this she had herself no recollection. From the moment when she committed her light weight to the frail tenure of the rope until she opened her eyes in a quiet spot, and saw Emily leaning anxiously over the bed upon which she lay, all had been a blank to her senses. A few hours from the time of the terrible catastrophe brought Mr. Graham to the scene, and the next day restored all three in safety to the old mansion-house in D——. This venerable habitation, and its adjoining grounds, wore nearly the same aspect as when they met the admiring eyes of Gerty on the first visit that she made Miss Graham in her early childhood—that long-expected and keenly-enjoyed visit, which proved a lasting topic for her young mind to dwell upon.

The old house had a look of contentment and repose. The hall door stood wide open. Mr. Graham's arm-chair was in its usual place; Gertrude's birds, of which Mrs. Ellis had taken excellent care, were hopping about on the slender perches of the great Indian cage which hung on the wide piazza. The old house-dog lay stretched in the sun. Plenty of flowers graced the parlour, and all was very comfortable. Mr. Graham thought so as he came up the steps, patted the dog, whistled to the birds, sat down in the arm-chair, and took the morning paper from the hand of the neat housemaid. The dear old place was the dear old place still.

Mr. Graham has been having new experiences; and he is, in many respects, a changed man. Emily is sitting in her own room. She is paler than ever, and her face has an anxious expression. Every time the door opens she starts, trembles, a sudden flush overspreads her face, and twice during the morning she has suddenly burst into tears. Every exertion, even that of dressing, seems a labour to her; she cannot listen

to Gertrude's reading, but will constantly interrupt her to ask questions concerning the burning boat, her own and others' rescue, and every circumstance connected with the late terrible scene of agony and death. Her nervous system is shattered, and Gertrude looks at her and weeps.

Gertrude withdrew, but returned in an hour to help her to dress for dinner—a ceremony which Miss Graham would never omit, her chief desire seeming to be to maintain the appearance of health and happiness in the presence of her father. Gertrude retired to her own room, leaving Emily to bow her head upon her hands, and utter a few hysterical sobs. Gertrude is followed by Mrs. Ellis, who seats herself, and in her exciting style adds to the poor girl's fear and distress by stating the dreadful effect the recollection of that shocking accident is having upon poor Emily. "She's completely upset, and if she don't begin to mend in a day or two there's no knowing what the consequences may be. Emily is feeble, and not fit to travel; I wish she had stayed at home."

Gertrude is again interrupted. The housemaid brought her a letter! With a trembling hand she receives it, fearing to look at the writing or post-mark. Her first thought is of Willie; but before she could indulge either a hope or a fear on that score the illusion is dispelled, for, though the post-mark is New York, and he might be there, the handwriting is wholly strange. She breaks the seal, and reads:—

"My darling Gertrude,—My much-loved child—for such you indeed are, though a father's agony of fear and despair alone wrung from me the words that claimed you. It was no madness that, in the dark hour of danger, compelled me to clasp you to my heart, and call you mine. A dozen times before had I been seized by the same emotion, and as often had it been subdued and smothered. And even now I would crush the promptings of nature, and depart and weep my poor life away alone; but the voice within me has spoken once, and cannot again be silenced. Had I seen you happy, gay, and light-hearted, I would not have asked to share your joy, far less

would I have cast a shadow on your path; but you are sad and troubled, my poor child, and your grief unites the tie between us closer than that of kindred, and makes you a thousand times my daughter; for I am a wretched, weary man, and know how to feel for others' woe.

"You have a kind and a gentle heart, my child. You have wept once for the stranger's sorrows—will you now refuse to pity, if you cannot love, the solitary parent, who, with a breaking heart and a trembling hand, writes the ill-fated word that dooms him, perhaps, to the hatred and contempt of the only being on earth with whom he can claim the fellowship of a natural tie? Twice before have I striven to utter it, and, laying down my pen, have shrunk from the cruel task. But, hard as it is to speak, I find it harder to still the beating of my restless heart; therefore, listen to me, though it may be for the last time. Is there one being on earth whom you shudder to think of? Is there one associated only in your mind with deeds of darkness and of shame? Is there one name which you have from your childhood learned to abhor and hate; and, in proportion as you love your best friend, have you been taught to shrink from and despise her worst enemy? It cannot be otherwise. Ah! I tremble to think how my child will recoil from her father when she learns the secret, so long preserved, so sorrowfully revealed, that he is

"Phillip Amory!"

As Gertrude finished reading this strange and unintelligible letter her countenance expressed complete bewilderment—her eyes glistened with tears, her face was flushed with excitement; but she was evidently at a total loss to account for the meaning of the stranger's words. She sat for an instant wildly gazing into vacancy; then, springing suddenly up, with the letter grasped in one hand, ran to Emily's room, to read the wonderful contents, and ask her opinion of their hidden meaning. She stopped, however, when her hand was on the door-lock. Emily was already ill—it would not do to distress or even disturb her; and, retreating to her own room,

Gertrude sat down to re-peruse the singular letter.

That Mr. Phillips and the letter-writer were identical she at once perceived. It was no slight impression that his exclamation and conduct during the time of their imminent danger on board the boat had left upon the mind of Gertrude. During the three days that succeeded the accident the words, "My child! my own darling!" had been continually ringing in her ears, and haunting her imagination. Now the blissful idea would flash upon her, that the noble, disinterested stranger, who had risked his life in her own and Emily's cause, might indeed be her father; and every fibre of her being had thrilled at the thought, while her head grew dizzy and confused with the strong sensation of hope that almost overwhelmed her brain.

Her first inquiries, on recovering consciousness, had been for the preserver of Emily and Isabel, but he had disappeared; no trace of him could be obtained, and Mr. Graham arriving and hurrying them from the neighbourhood, she had been compelled to abandon the hope of seeing him again. The same motives which induced her not to consult Emily concerning the mysterious epistle had hitherto prevented her from imparting the secret of Mr. Phillips' inexplicable language and manner; but she had dwelt upon them none the less.

The first perusal of the letter served only to excite and alarm her. But as she sat for an hour gazing upon the page, which she read and re-read until it was blistered with the varying expression of her face denoted the emotions that, one after another, possessed her; and which at last, snatching a sheet of paper, she committed to writing with a feverish rapidity that betrayed how she staggered beneath the weight of contending hopes and gloomy fears.

"My dear, dear Father,—If I may dare to believe that you are so, and if not that, my best of friends—how shall I write to you, and what shall I say, since all your words are a mystery? Father! blessed word. Oh, that my noble friend were indeed my father! Yet tell me, tell me, how can this be? Alas! I feel a sad presentiment that the

bright dream is all an illusion, an error. I never before remember to have heard the name of Phillip Amory. My sweet, pure, and gentle Emily has taught me to love all the world; and hatred and contempt are foreign to her nature, and, I trust, to my own. Moreover, she has not an enemy in the wide world, never had, or could have. One might as well war with an angel of heaven as with a creature so holy and lovely as she.

"Nor bid me think of yourself as a man of sin and crime. It cannot be. It would be wronging a noble nature to believe it, and I say again it cannot be. Gladly would I trust myself to repose on the bosom of such a parent; gladly would I hail the sweet duty of consoling the sorrows of one so self-sacrificing, so kind, so generous; whose life has been so freely offered for me, and for others whose existence was dearer to me than my own. When you took me in your arms and called me your child, your darling child, I fancied that the excitement of that dreadful scene had for the moment disturbed your mind and brain so far as to invest me with a false identity—perhaps confound my image with that of some loved and absent one. I now believe that it was no sudden madness, but rather that I have been all along mistaken for another, whose glad office it may perhaps be to cheer a father's saddened life, while I remain unrecognized, unsought—the fatherless, motherless one, I am accustomed to consider myself. If you have lost a daughter, God grant she may be restored to you, to love you as I would do, were I so blessed as to be that daughter! And I—consider me not a stranger; let me be your child in heart; let me love, pray, and weep for you; let me pour out my soul in thankfulness for the kind care and sympathy you have already given me. And yet, though I disclaim it all, and dare not, yes, dare not, dwell for a moment on the thought that you are otherwise than deceived in believing me your child, my heart leaps up in spite of me, and I tremble and almost cease to breathe as there flashes upon me the possibility, the blissful God-given hopes! No, no! I will not think of it, lest I could not bear to have it crushed! Oh, what am I writing? I know not. I cannot endure the suspense long; write quickly, or come to

me, my father—for I will call you so once, though perhaps never again.

"Gertrude."

Mr. Phillips—or rather Mr. Amory, for we shall call him by his true name—had neglected to mention his address. Gertrude did not observe this circumstance until she was preparing to direct her letter. She for a moment experienced a severe pang in the thought that her communication would never reach him. But she was reassured on examining the post-mark, which was evidently New York, to which she addressed her missive; and then, unwilling to trust it to other hands, tied on her bonnet, caught up a veil with which to conceal her agitated face, deposited the letter herself in the village post-office.

Gertrude's case was a peculiarly trying one. She had been already, for a week past, struggling in suspense which agitated her almost beyond endurance; and now a new cause of mystery had arisen, involving an almost equal amount of self-questioning and torture. It seemed almost beyond the power of so sensitive, and so inexperienced a girl to rally such self-command as would enable her to control her emotions, disguise them from observation, and compel herself to endure alone and in silence this cruel destiny. But she did do it, and bravely too.

CHAPTER XLII.

TIES—NOT OF EARTH.

In a private room of one of those first-class hotels in which New York city abounds, Phillip Amory sat alone. It was evening, the curtains were drawn, the gas-lamps burning brightly and giving a cheerful glow to the room, the comfortable appearance of which contrasted strongly with the pale countenance and desponding attitude of its solitary inmate, who leaned upon a table in the centre of the apartment. He had thus sat for nearly an hour without once moving or looking up. Suddenly he started

up, straightened his commanding figure to its full height, and slowly paced the room. A slight knock at the door arrested his steps; a look of annoyance overspread his countenance; he again flung himself into his chair, and, in reply to the servant's announcing, "A gentleman, sir," was preparing to say, "I cannot be interrupted"—but it was too late; the visitor had advanced within the door, which the waiter quietly closed and repeated.

The new-comer—a young man—stepped quickly and eagerly forward, but checked himself, abashed at the coldness of the reception by his host.

"Excuse me, Mr. Phillips," said William Sullivan, for it was he; "I fear my visit is an intrusion."

"Do not speak of it," replied Mr. Amory. "I beg you to be seated;" politely handing a chair.

Willie availed himself of the offered seat no further than to lean lightly upon it with one hand, while he still remained standing. "You have changed, sir," continued he, "since I last saw you."

"Changed! Yes, I am," said the other, absently.

"Your health, I fear, is not——"

"My health is excellent," said Mr. Amory, interrupting his remark. "It is a long time, sir, since we met. I have not yet forgotten the debt I owe you for your timely interference between me and Ali, that Arab traitor, with his rascally army of Bedouin rogues."

"Do not name it, sir," said Willie. "Our meeting was fortunate; but the benefit was as mutual as the danger to which we were alike exposed."

"I cannot think so. You seemed to have a most excellent understanding with your own party of guides and attendants, Arabs though they were."

"True; I have had some experience in Eastern travel, and know how to manage those

inflammable spirits of the desert. But at the time I joined you, I was myself entering the neighbourhood of hostile tribes, and might soon have found our party overawed but for having joined forces with yourself."

"You set but a modest value upon your conciliatory powers, young man. To you, who are so well acquainted with the facts in the case, I can hardly claim the merit of frankness for the acknowledgment that it was only my own hot temper and stubborn will which exposed us both to the imminent danger which you were fortunately able to avert. No, no! I must once more express my gratitude for your invaluable aid."

"You are making my visit, sir," said Willie, smiling, "the very reverse of what it was intended to be. I did not come here this evening to receive but to render thanks."

"For what, sir?" asked Mr. Amory, abruptly, almost roughly. "You owe me nothing."

"The friends of Isabella Clinton, sir, owe you a debt of gratitude which it will be impossible for them ever to repay."

"You are mistaken, Mr. Sullivan; I have done nothing which places that young lady's friends under a particle of obligation to me."

"Did you not save her life?"

"Yes; but nothing was further from my intention."

Willie smiled. "It could have been no accident, I think, which led you to risk your own life to rescue a fellow-passenger."

"It was no accident which led to Miss Clinton's safety from destruction. I am convinced of that. But you must not thank me; it is due to another than myself that she does not now sleep in death."

"May I ask to whom you refer?"

"I refer to a dear and noble girl, to whom I swam in that burning wreck to save. Her veil had been agreed upon as a signal between us. That veil, carefully thrown over

the head of Miss Clinton, whom I found clinging to the spot assigned to—to her whom I was seeking, deceived me, and I bore in safety to the shore the burden which I had ignorantly seized from the gaping waters, leaving my own darling, who had offered her life as a sacrifice to——"

"Oh, not to die!" exclaimed Willie.

"No; to be saved by a miracle. Go thank her for Miss Clinton's life."

"I thank God," said Willie, with fervour, "that the horrors of such scenes of destruction are half redeemed by heroism like that."

The stern countenance of Mr. Amory softened as he listened to the young man's enthusiastic outburst of admiration at Gertrude's noble self-devotion.

"Who is she? Where is she?" continued Willie.

"Ask me not!" replied Mr. Amory, with a gesture of impatience; "I cannot tell you if I would. I have not seen her since that ill-fated day."

His manner seemed to intimate an unwillingness to enter into further explanation regarding Isabel's rescue, and Willie, perceiving it, stood for a moment silent and irresolute. Then advancing nearer, he said, "Though you so utterly disclaim, Mr. Phillips, any participation in Miss Clinton's escape, I feel that my errand would be but imperfectly fulfilled if I should fail to deliver the message which I bring to one who was the final means if not the original cause of her safety. Mr. Clinton, the young lady's father, desired me to tell you that, in saving the life of his only surviving child, the last of seven, all of whom but herself had an early death, you have prolonged his life, and rendered him grateful to that degree which words on his part are powerless to express; but that, as long as his feeble life is spared, he shall never cease to bless your name and pray to heaven for its choicest gifts upon you and those who dwell next your heart."

There was a slight moisture in the penetrating eye of Mr. Amory, but a courteous smile upon his lip, as he said, "All this from Mr. Clinton! Very gentlemanly, and

equally sincere, I doubt not; but you surely do not mean to thank me wholly in his name, my young friend. Have you nothing to say for your own sake?"

Willie looked surprised, but replied, unhesitatingly, "Certainly, sir; as one of a large circle of acquaintances and friends whom Miss Clinton honours with her regard, my admiration and gratitude for your disinterested exertions are unbounded; and not only on her account, but on that of whom you nobly rescued from a most terrible death."

"Am I to understand that you speak only as a friend of humanity, and that you felt no personal interest in any of my fellow-passengers?"

"I was unacquainted with nearly all of them. Miss Clinton was the only one I had known for any greater length of time than during two or three days of Saratoga intercourse; but I should have mourned her death, since I was in the habit of meeting her familiarly in her childhood, have lately been continually in her society, and am aware that her father, my respected partner, an old and invaluable friend, who is now much enfeebled in health, could hardly have survived so severe a shock as the loss of an only child, whom he idolises."

"You speak very coolly, Mr. Sullivan. Are you aware that the prevailing belief gives you credit for feeling more than a mere friendly interest in Miss Clinton?" The dilating of Willie's eyes, as he fixed them inquiringly upon Mr. Amory—the half-scrutinising expression of his face, as he seated himself in the chair, were sufficient evidence of the effect of the question unexpectedly put to him. "Sir," said he, "I either misunderstood you, or the prevailing belief is a most mistaken one."

"Then you never before heard of your own engagement."

"Never, I assure you. Is it possible that so idle a report has obtained an extensive circulation among Miss Clinton's friends!"

"Sufficiently extensive for me, a mere spectator of Saratoga life, to hear it whispered from ear to ear, as a fact worthy of credit."

"I am surprised and vexed at what you tell me," said Willie. "Nonsensical and false as such a rumour is, it will, if it should reach Miss Clinton, be a source of annoyance to her; and on that account, I regret the circumstances which have probably given rise to it."

"Do you refer to considerations of delicacy on the lady's part, or have you the modesty to believe that her pride would be wounded by having her name thus coupled with that of her father's junior partner, a young man hitherto unknown to fashionable circles? But, excuse me; perhaps I am stepping on dangerous ground."

"By no means, sir; you wrong me if you believe my pride to be of such a nature. But I have not only reference to both the motives you name, but to many others, when I assert my opinion of the resentment Miss Clinton would probably cherish if your remarks should reach her ears."

"Mr. Sullivan," said Mr. Amory, "are you sure you are not standing in your own light? Are you aware that undue modesty with false notions of refinement has oft prevented many a man's good fortune, and is likely to interfere with your own?"

"How so, sir? You speak in riddles, and I am ignorant of your meaning."

"Handsome young fellows, like you, can often command any amount of property for the asking; but many such chances rarely occur to one individual; and the world will laugh at you if you waste so fair an opportunity as you now have."

"Opportunity for what? You surely do not mean to advise me——"

"I do, though. I am older than you are, and I know something of the world. A fortune is not made in a day, nor is money to be despised. Mr. Clinton's life is almost worn out in toiling after that wealth which will soon be the inheritance of his daughter. She is young, beautiful, and the pride of that high circle in which she moves. Both father and daughter smile upon you; you need not look disconcerted—I speak as between friends, and you know the truth of that which strangers have observed, and which I have frequently heard mentioned as beyond doubt. Why do you hesitate!"

"Mr. Phillips," said Willie, with embarrassment, "the comments of mere casual acquaintances, such as most of those with whom Miss Clinton associated in Saratoga, are not to be depended upon. The relations in which I stand towards Mr. Clinton have been such as to draw me into constant intercourse with himself and his daughter. He is almost without relatives, has scarcely any trustworthy friend at command, and therefore appears to the world more favourably disposed towards me than would be found to be the case should I aspire to his daughter's hand. The lady, too, has so many admirers, that it would be vanity in me to believe——"

"Pooh, pooh!" exclaimed Mr. Phillips, "tell that, Sullivan, to a greater novice, a more unsophisticated individual, than I am! It is very becoming in you to say so; but a few reminders will hardly harm a youth who has such a low opinion of his own merits. Pray, who was the gentleman for whose society Miss Clinton was, a few nights since, so ready to forego the music of Alboni, the crowded hall, and the smiles of a train of adorers?"

Willie said, "I remember!—That, then, was one of the causes of suspicion. I was then a messenger merely, to summon Miss Isabel to the bedside of her father, by whom I had been watching for hours, and who, on awakening from a lethargic sleep, which alarmed the physician, eagerly inquired for his daughter, that I did not hesitate to interrupt the pleasure of the evening and call her to the post of duty in the cottage occupied by Mr. Clinton, at the extremity of the grounds, to which I accompanied her by moonlight."

Mr. Amory laughed, cast upon Willie that look of benignity which became his fine countenance, and exclaimed, "So much for watering-place gossip! I must forbear speaking of any further evidences of a tender interest manifested by either of you. But believe, dear Sullivan, that though the young lady's heart be still, like her fortune, in the united keeping of herself and her father, there is nothing easier than for you to win and claim them both. You possess business talent indispensable to the

elder party; if, with your handsome face, figure, and accomplishments, you cannot render yourself equally so to the younger, there is no one to blame but yourself."

Willie laughed. "If I had that object in view, I know of no one to whom I would so soon come for encouragement as to you, sir; but the flattering prospect you hold out is quite wasted upon me."

Mr. Amory said, "I cannot believe you will be so foolish as to neglect the opportunity of taking that stand in life to which your education and qualities entitle you. Your father was a respectable clergyman; you profited by every advantage in your youth, and have done yourself such credit in India as would enable you, with plenty of capital at command, to take the lead in a few years among mercantile men. A man just returned from a long residence abroad is thought to be an easy prey to the charms of the first of his fair countrywomen into whose society he may be thrown; and it can scarcely be wondered at, if you are subdued by such winning attractions as are rarely to be met with in this land of beautiful women. Nor can it be possible that you have for six years toiled beneath an Indian sun without learning to appreciate the looked-for but happy termination of your toils, whose crowning blessing will be the possession of your beautiful bride."

"Mr. Phillips," said Willie, speaking with decision and energy, which proved how heart-felt were the words he uttered, "I have not spent many of the best years of my life toiling beneath a burning sun, and in exile from all that I held most dear, without being sustained by high hopes, aims, and aspirations. But you misjudge me greatly if you believe that the ambition that has spurred me on can find its gratification in those rewards which you have so vividly presented to my imagination. No, sir! believe me, I aspire to something higher yet, and should think my best efforts wasted if my hopes tended not to a still more glorious good."

"And to what quarter do you look for the fulfilment of such prospects?" asked Mr. Amory.

"Not to the gay circles of fashion," replied Willie, "nor yet to that moneyed aristocracy which awards to each man his position in life. I do not depreciate an honourable standing in the eyes of my fellow-men; I am not blind to the advantages of wealth, or to the claims of grace and beauty; but these were not the things for which I left my home, and it is not to claim them that I have returned. Young as I am, I have seen enough of trial to believe that the only blessings worth striving for are something more enduring, more satisfying, than precarious wealth or fleeting smiles."

"To what, then, I ask, do you look forward?"

"To a home, and that not so much for myself as for another, with whom I hope to share it. A year since"—and Willie's lip trembled, his voice faltered—"there were others, besides that dear one whose image now fills my heart, whom I had fondly hoped, and should have rejoiced, to see reaping the fruits of my exertions. But we were not permitted to meet again; and now—but pardon me, sir; I would not trouble you with my private affairs."

"Go on," said Mr. Amory; "I deserve some confidence in return for the disinterested advice I have been giving you. Speak to me as to an old friend; I am much interested in what you say."

"It is long since I have spoken freely of myself," said Willie, "but frankness is natural to me, and, since you profess a desire to learn something of my aim in life, I know of no motive I have for reserve or concealment. But my position, sir, even as a child, was singular; and excuse me if I briefly refer to it. I could not have been more than twelve or fourteen years of age when I began to realise the necessity which rested upon me. My widowed mother and her aged father were the only relatives I knew. One was feeble, delicate, and unequal to active exertion; the other was old and poor, being wholly dependent upon a small salary for officiating as sexton of a neighbouring church. Yet in spite of these circumstances they maintained me for

several years in comfort and decency, and gave me an excellent education.

"At an age when kites and marbles are so engrossing, I had an earnest desire to relieve my mother and grandfather of a part of their care and labour; and I obtained a situation, in which I was well treated and well paid, and which I retained until the death of my excellent master. Then, for a time, I felt bitterly the want of employment, and became despondent; a state of mind which was fostered by constant association with my desponding grandfather, who, having met with great disappointment in life, encouraged me not, but was ever hinting at the probability of my failing in every scheme for advancement.

"I have since thought his doubtings answered a good purpose; for nothing so urged me on to efforts as the desire to prove the mistaken nature of his gloomy predictions, and few things have given me more satisfaction than the assurances I have received during the past few years that he came at last to a full conviction that my prosperity was established, and that one of his ill-fated family was destined to escape the trials of poverty.

"My mother was a quiet, gentle woman, small in person, with great simplicity, and some reserve of manner. She loved me like her own soul; she taught me everything I know of goodness; there is no sacrifice I would not have made for her happiness. I would have died to save her life; but we shall never meet again in this world, and I—I—am learning to be resigned.

"For these two, and one other, whom I shall speak of presently, I was ready to go away, and strive, and suffer, and be patient. The opportunity came and I embraced it. And soon one great object of my ambition was won; I was able to earn a competency for myself and for them. And I began to look forward to a day when my long looked-for return should render our happiness complete. I little thought then that the sad tidings of my grandfather's death were on their way, and the news of my mother's slow but sure decline so soon to follow. But they are both gone; and I

should now be so solitary as almost to long to follow them but for one other, whose love will bind me to earth so long as she is spared."

"And she?" exclaimed Mr. Amory, with an eagerness which Willie, engrossed with his own thoughts, did not observe.

"Is a young girl," continued Willie, "without family, wealth, or beauty; but with a spirit so elevated as to make her great—a heart so noble as to make her rich—a soul so pure as to make her beautiful."

Mr. Amory's fixed attention, his evident waiting to hear more, emboldened Willie to add: "There lived in the same house which my grandfather occupied an old man, a city lamplighter. He was poorer even than we were, but there never was a better or a kinder-hearted person in the world. One evening, when engaged in his round of duty, he picked up and brought home a little ragged child, whom a cruel woman had thrust into the street to perish with cold, or die a more lingering death in the almshouse; for nothing but such devoted care as she received from my mother and Uncle True (so we always called our old friend) could have saved the half-starved creature from the consequences of long exposure and ill-treatment. Through their unwearied watching and efforts she was spared, to repay in after years more than all the love bestowed upon her. She was then miserably thin, and plain in her appearance, besides being possessed of a violent temper, which she had never been taught to restrain, and a stubbornness which resulted from her having long lived in opposition to all the world.

"All this, however, did not repel Uncle True, under whose loving influence new virtues and capacities soon began to manifest themselves. In the atmosphere of love in which she now lived she soon became a changed being; and when, in addition to the example and precepts taught her at home, a divine light was shed upon her life by one who, herself sitting in darkness, casts a halo forth from her own spirit to illumine those of all who are blessed with her presence, she became, what she has

ever since been, a being to love and to trust for a lifetime. For myself, there were no bounds to the affection I soon came to cherish for the little girl, to whom I was first attracted by compassion merely.

"We were constantly together; we had no thoughts, no studies, no pleasures, sorrows, or interests that were not shared. I was her teacher, her protector, the partner of all her childish amusements; and she was by turns an advising and sympathising friend. In this latter character she was indispensable to me, for she had a hopeful nature, and a buoyancy of spirit which imparted itself to me. I well remember when my kind employer died, and I was plunged in grief and despair, the confidence and energy with which she, then very young, inspired me. The relation between her and Uncle True was beautiful. Boy as I was I could not but view with admiration the old man's devoted love for the adopted darling of his latter years (his birdie, as he always called her), and the grateful affection which she bore him in return.

"During the first few years she was wholly dependent upon him, and seemed only a fond, affectionate child; but a time came at last when the case was reversed, and the old man, stricken with disease, became infirm and helpless. It was then that the beauty of her woman's nature shone forth triumphant; and, oh! how gently, child as she was, she guided his steps as he descended to the grave. Often have I gone to his room at midnight, fearing lest he might be in need of care which she in her youth and inexperience would be unable to render; and never shall I forget the little figure seated calmly by his bedside, at an hour when many of her years would be shrinking from fears conjured up by the night and the darkness, with a lamp dimly burning on a table before her, and she herself, with his hand in hers, sweetly soothing his wakefulness by her loving words, or with her eyes bent upon her little Bible, reading to him holy lessons. But all her care could not prolong his life; and just before I went to India he died, blessing God for the peace imparted to him through his gentle nurse.

"It was my task to soothe our little Gerty's sorrows, and do what I could to comfort her, an office which, before I left the country, I was rejoiced to transfer to the willing hands of the excellent blind lady who had long befriended both her and Uncle True. Before I went away, I solemnly committed to Gerty, who had in one instance proved herself both willing and able, the care of my mother and grandfather. She promised to be faithful to her trust; and nobly was that promise kept. In spite of the unkindness and deep displeasure of Mr. Graham (the blind lady's father), upon whose bounty she had for a long time been dependent, she devoted herself heart and hand to the fulfilment of duties which in her eyes were sacred and holy. In spite of suffering, labour, watching, and privation, she voluntarily forsook ease and pleasure, and spent day and night in the patient service of friends whom she loved with a greater love than a daughter's, for it was that of a saint."

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE EXAMINATION.

"Certainly," said Mr. Amory, "I can well understand that a man of a generous spirit could hardly fail to cherish a deep and lasting gratitude for one who devoted herself so disinterestedly to a toilsome attendance upon the last hours of beloved friends, to whose wants he himself was prevented from ministering; and the warmth with which you eulogise this girl does you credit, Sullivan. She must be a young person of great excellence to have fulfilled so well a promise of such remote date that it would probably have been ignored by a less disinterested friend.

"I can hardly believe that a young man who has had the ambition to mark out, and the energy to pursue, such a course on the road to fortune as you have thus far successfully followed, can have made a serious resolve to unite himself and his prospects with an insignificant little playmate, of unacknowledged birth, without beauty or fortune, unless there is already an engagement, by which he is bound, or

he allows himself to be drawn on to matrimony by the belief that the highest compliment he can pay (namely, the offer of himself) will alone cancel the immense obligations under which he labours. May I ask if you are already shackled by promises?"

"I am not," replied Willie.

"Then listen a moment. My motives are friendly when I beg you not to act rashly in a matter which will affect the happiness of your own life; and to hear, with patience, too, if you can, the few words which I have to say on the subject. You must mistake, my young friend, if you believe that the happiness of Gerty, as you call her—a very ugly name—can be insured, any more than your own, by an ill-assorted union, of which you will both find cause to repent. You have not seen her for six years, think then of all that has happened in the meantime, and beware of acting with precipitation. You have all this time been living abroad in active life, growing in knowledge of the world, and its various phases of society. In India you witnessed a mode of life wholly different from that which prevails with us, or in European cities; but the independence, both of character and manner, which you there acquired fitted you admirably for the polished sphere of Parisian life, to which you were so suddenly introduced, and in which you met with such marked success.

"Notwithstanding the privilege you enjoy of being presented in polite circles as the friend of a man so well known and so much respected as Mr. Clinton, you cannot have been insensible to the marked attentions bestowed upon you by American residents abroad, or unaware of the advantage you enjoyed, on your return home, from having been known as the object of such favour. Though I did not meet you in Paris, I was there at the same time, and became acquainted with facts which you would have too much modesty to acknowledge. It is also evident that your pride must have been flattered by the favourable reception you have met, both abroad and at home, especially from the young and beautiful women who have honoured you

with their smiles, and among whom she whose name the crowd already associates with your own stands preeminent.

"When I think of all this, and of those pecuniary hopes you may indulge, and imagine you flinging all these aside to chivalrously throw yourself at the feet of your mother's little nurse, I find it impossible to keep silent and avoid reminding you of the disappointment that must ensue on finding yourself at once and for ever shut out from participation in pleasures which have been within your reach and voluntarily discarded. You must remember that much of the consideration which is paid to a young bachelor of growing prospects ceases to be awarded to him after marriage, and is never extended to his bride, unless she be chosen from the select circles to which he aspires. This unportioned orphan with whom you propose to share your fate—this little patient school-mistress——"

"I did not tell you she had ever been a teacher!" exclaimed Willie, stopping short in his walk up and down the room—"I did not tell you anything of the sort! How did you know it?"

Mr. Amory, who had thus betrayed more knowledge than he had been supposed to possess, hesitated a moment, but quickly recovering himself answered, with apparent frankness, "To tell the truth, Sullivan, I have seen the girl in company with an old doctor."

"Dr. Jeremy?" asked Willie, quickly.

"The same."

"When did you see her? How did it happen?"

"I happened to see the old gentleman in the course of my travels, and this Gertrude Flint was with him. He told me a few facts concerning her; nothing to her disadvantage, however; in warning you against a misalliance, I speak only in general terms."

Willie looked at Mr. Amory wondering, and was anxious to learn further particulars.

Mr. Amory went on without giving him a chance to speak.

"This Gerty, Sullivan, will be a dead weight upon your hands—a constant drawback to all your efforts to attain fashionable society, in which she cannot be fitted to shine. You yourself pronounce her to be without wealth or beauty; of her family you know nothing, and have certainly little reason to expect that, if discovered, it would do her any credit. I believe, then, that I only speak from the dictates of common sense when I bid you beware how you make, in the disposal of yourself, such an unequal bargain."

"I am willing to believe, sir," said Willie, "that the arguments you have adduced upon a question most important to my welfare are based upon calm reasoning and a disinterested desire to promote my prosperity. I confess you are the last man, judging from our short acquaintance, from whom I should have expected such advice, for I had believed you so indifferent to the applause of the world that they would weigh but little with you in forming estimates for the guidance of others. Still, though your suggestions have failed to change my sentiments or intentions, I thank you for the sincerity and earnestness with which you have sought to mould my judgment by your own, and will reply to your arguments with such frankness as will, I think, persuade you that, so far from following the impulses of a blind enthusiasm, to plunge with haste into a course of action hereafter to be deplored, I am actuated by feelings which reason approves, and which have already stood the test of experience.

"You speak truly when you impute to me a natural taste for good society; a taste which poverty, and the retirement in which my boyhood was passed, gave me little opportunity to manifest, but which had some influence in determining my aims and ambition in life. The fine houses, equipages, and clothes of the rich had less charm for my fancy than the ease, refinement, and elegance of manner which distinguished some few of their owners who came under my observation; and, much as I desired

the attainment of wealth for the sake of intrinsic advantages, and the means it would afford of contributing to the happiness of others, it would have seemed to me divested of its value should it fail to secure to its possessor a free admittance to the polite and polished circle upon which I looked with admiring eyes.

"I needed not, therefore, the social deprivations I experienced in India to prepare me to enter with eager zest into the excitement and pleasures of Parisian life, to which, through the kindness of Mr. Clinton, I obtained, as it seems you are aware, a free and immediate introduction.

"It is true I was summoned thither at a time when my spirits had been for months struggling with depression, caused by sad news from home, and had not, therefore, the least disposition to avail myself of Mr. Clinton's politeness; but the feebleness of his health, and his inability to enjoy the gaieties of the place, compelled me to offer myself as an escort to his daughter, who, fond of society, accepted my services, thus drawing me into the very whirl and vortex of fashionable life, in which I soon found much to flatter, bewilder, and intoxicate. I could not be insensible to the privileges so unexpectedly accorded to me, nor could my vanity be wholly proof against the assaults made upon it. Nor was my manliness of character alone at stake. But the soundness of principle and simplicity of habit implanted in me from childhood, and hitherto preserved intact, soon found themselves at stake. I had withstood every kind of gross temptation, but my new associates now presented it to me in that subtle form which often proves a snare. The wine-cup could never have enticed me to the disgusting scenes of drunken revelry; but held in the hands of the polished gentlemen, who had, but a moment before, been the recipients of popular favour and women's smiles, it sparkled with a richer lustre, and its bitter dregs were forgotten. The professed gamester would vainly have sought me for an accomplice; but I was not equally on my guard against the danger which awaited me from other unexpected quarters; for how could I believe that my friends, Mr. Clinton's friends, the ornaments of the sphere in which they moved, would unfairly win my money,

and lead me to ruin? I wonder as I look back upon my residence in Paris that I did not fall a victim to one of the snares that were on every side spread for my destruction, and into which my social disposition and unsophisticated nature rendered me prone to fall. Nothing but the recollection of my pure-minded and watchful mother, whose recent death had recalled to my mind her warning counsels—deemed by me, at the time, unnecessary; but now, springing up and arming themselves with a solemn meaning—nothing but the consciousness of her gentle spirit, ever hovering around my path, saddened by my conflicts, rejoicing in my triumphs, could ever have given me courage and perseverance to resist, and finally escape, the pitfalls into which my unwary steps would have plunged me. Had I approached the outskirts of fashionable life, and been compelled to linger with longing eyes at the threshold; I might even now be loitering there, a deceived spectator of joys which it was not permitted to me to enter and share; or, having gained a partial entrance, be eagerly employed, in pushing my way onward.

"But admitted at once into the arcana of a sphere I was eager to penetrate, my eyes were soon opened to the vain and worthless nature of the bauble Fashion. Not that I did not meet within its courts the wit, talent, and refinement which I had hoped to find there, or that these were invariably accompanied by less attractive qualities. No; I truly believe there is no class which cannot boast of its heroes and heroines, and that there are, within the walks of fashionable life, men and women who would grace a wilderness. Nor do I despise forms and ceremonies which are becoming in themselves, and conducive to elegance and good breeding. As long as one class is distinguished by education and refined manners, and another is marked by ignorance and vulgarity, there must be a dividing line between the two, which neither perhaps would desire to overstep."

"You are young," said Mr. Amory, "to be such a philosopher. Many a man has turned away with disgust from an aristocracy into which he could himself gain no admittance; but few renounce it voluntarily."

"Few, perhaps," replied Willie, "few young men have had to penetrate its secrets. I may say without treachery, since I speak in general terms only, that I have seen more ignorance, more ill-breeding, meanness, and immorality in the so-called aristocracy of our country than I should have believed it possible would be tolerated there. I have known instances in which the most accomplished gentleman, or the most beautiful lady, of a gay circle has given evidence of want of information on the most common topics. I have seen elegant evening assemblies disgraced by the greatest rudeness and incivility. I have seen the lavish expenditure of to-day atoned for by a despicable parsimony on the morrow; and I have seen a want of principle exhibited by both sexes, which proves that a high position is no security against such contamination of the soul as unfits it for an exalted place hereafter."

"I have witnessed no less myself," said Mr. Amory; "but my experiences have not been like those of other men, and my sight has been sharpened by circumstances. I am still astonished that you should have been awake to these facts."

"I was not at first," answered Willie. "It was only gradually that I recovered from the blinding effect which the glitter and show of Fashion imposed upon my perceptions. My suspicions of its falsehood and vanities were based upon instances of selfishness, folly, and cold-heartedness which came to my knowledge. I could relate thousands of mean deceits, contemptible rivalries, and neglect of sacred duties which came under my immediate observation.

"Especially was I astonished at the effect of an uninterrupted pursuit of pleasure upon the sensibilities, the tempers, and the domestic affections of women. Though bearing within my heart an image of female goodness and purity, this sweet remembrance might possibly have been driven from its throne and supplanted by one of the lovely faces which at first bewildered me by their beauty, had these last been the index to souls of equal perfection. There may be noble and excellent women moving in the highest walks of life whose beauty and grace are less

admirable than their own high natures; but among those with whom I became familiarly acquainted there was not one who could in the least compare with her who was continually present to my memory, who is still, and ever must be, a model to her sex.

"Gertrude Flint was the standard by which each in my mind was measured. How could I help contrasting the folly, the worldliness, and the cold-heartedness around me with the cultivated mind, the self-sacrificing and affectionate disposition of one who possesses every quality that can adorn life? You failed to convince me that Gertrude can in any way be a drawback to the man who shall be so fortunate as to call her his. For my own part, I desire no better, no more truly aristocratic position in life than that to which she is so well entitled, and to which she would be one of the brightest ornaments—the aristocracy of true refinement, knowledge, grace, and beauty. You talk to me of wealth. Gertrude has no money in her purse, but her soul is the pure gold, tried in the furnace of sorrow and affliction, and thence come forth bright and unalloyed. You speak of family and an honourable birth. She has no family, and her birth is shrouded in mystery; but the blood that courses in her veins would never disgrace the race from which she sprung, and every throb of her unselfish heart allies her to all that is noble.

"You are eloquent upon the subject of beauty. When I parted from Gertrude, she was, in all but character, a mere child, being only thirteen years of age. Though much altered and improved since the time when she first came among us, I scarcely think she could have been said to possess much of what the world calls beauty. It was a matter of which I seldom thought or cared; and had I been less indifferent on the subject, she was so dear to me that I should have been unable to form an impartial judgment of her claims in this respect.

"I well remember, however, the indignation I once felt at hearing a fellow-clerk, who had met her in one of our walks, sneeringly contrast her personal appearance

with that of our employer's handsome daughter, Miss Clinton; and the proportionate rapture with which I listened to the excellent teacher, Miss Brown, when, being present at a school examination, I overheard her commenting to a lady upon Gertrude's wonderful promise in person as well as in mind. Whether the first part of this promise has been fulfilled I have no means of judging; but as I recall her dignified and graceful little figure, her large, intelligent, sparkling eyes, the glow of feeling that lit up her countenance, and the peaceful, almost majestic expression which purity of soul imparted to her yet childish features, she stands forth to my remembrance the embodiment of all that I hold most dear.

"Six years may have outwardly changed her much; but they cannot have robbed her of what I prize the most. She has charms over which time can have no power, a grace that is a gift of Heaven, a beauty that is eternal. Could I ask for more? Do not believe, then, that my fidelity to my early playmate is an emotion of gratitude merely. It is true I owe her much—far more than I can ever repay; but the honest warmth of my affection for the noble girl springs from the truest love of a purity of character and singleness of heart which I had never seen equalled.

"What is there in the foolish walks of Fashion, the glitter of wealth, the homage of an idle crowd, that could so elevate my spirit and inspire my exertions as the thought of a peaceful, happy home, blessed by a presiding spirit so formed for confidence, love, and a communion that time can never dissolve and eternity will but render more secure and unbroken?"

"And she whom you love so well—are you sure——" asked Mr. Phillips, speaking with a visible effort, and faltering ere he had completed his sentence.

"No," answered Willie, anticipating the question. "I know what you would ask. I am not sure. I have no reason to indulge the hopes I have been dwelling upon so fondly; but I do not regret having spoken with such candour; for, should she grieve my heart by her coldness, I should still be proud to have loved her. Until this time, since I

gained my native land, I have been shackled with duties which, sacred as they were, have chafed a spirit longing for freedom to follow its own impulses. In this visit to you, sir, I have fulfilled the last obligation imposed upon me by my excellent friend, and to-morrow I shall be at liberty to go where my duty alone prevented me from at once hastening."

He offered his hand to Mr. Amory, who grasped it with a cordiality very different from the feeble greeting he had given him on his entrance, "Good-bye," said he, "You carry with you my best wishes for a success which you seem to have so much at heart; but some day or other I feel sure you will be reminded of all I have said to you this evening."

"Strange man!" thought Willie, as he walked towards his hotel. "How warmly he shook my hand at parting! and how affectionately he bade me farewell, notwithstanding the cold reception he gave me, and the pertinacity with which I rejected his opinions and repelled his advice!"

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE LONG LOOKED-FOR RETURNED.

"Miss Gertrude," said Mrs. Prime, opening the parlour-door, putting her head cautiously in, looking round, and then advancing with a stealthy pace—"my! how busy you are! Lor's sakes alive, if you an't rippin' up them great curtains of Mrs. Graham's for the wash! I wouldn't be botherin' with 'em, Miss Gertrude; she won't be here this fortnight, and Mrs. Ellis will have time enough."

"Oh, I have nothing else to do, Mrs. Prime; it's no trouble." Then, looking up pleasantly at the old cook, she added, "It seems very cosy for us all to be at home—doesn't it?"

"It seems beautiful!" answered Mrs. Prime; "and I can't help thinking how nice it

would be if we could all live on jist as we are now, without no more intrusions."

Gertrude smiled and said, "Everything looks as it used to in old times, when I first came here. I was quite a child then," continued she, with a sigh.

"Gracious me! What are you now?" said Mrs. Prime. "For mercy's sake, Miss Gertrude, don't you begin to think about growin' old. There's nothin' like feelin' young to keep young. There's Miss Patty Pace, now——"

"I have been meaning to ask after her," exclaimed Gertrude; "is she alive and well yet?"

"She!" replied Mrs. Prime; "Lor', she won't never die! Old women like her, that feel themselves young gals, allers live for ever; but the baker's boy that fetched the loaves this mornin' brought an arrant from her, and she wants to see you the first chance; but I wouldn't hurry either about goin' there or anywhere, Miss Gertrude, till I got rested; for you an't well, you look so kind o' tired out."

"Did she wish to see me?" asked Gertrude. "Poor old thing! I'll go and see her this very afternoon; and you needn't feel anxious about me, Mrs. Prime—I am quite well."

Gertrude went. She found Miss Patty nearly bent double with rheumatism, dressed with less than her usual care, and crouching over a miserable fire. She was in tolerable spirits, and hailed Gertrude's entrance by a cordial greeting. Innumerable were the questions she put to Gertrude regarding her own personal experiences during the past year.

"So you have not yet chosen a companion," said she, after Gertrude had responded to all her queries. "That is a circumstance to be regretted. Not," continued she, with a little smirk, "that it is ever too late in life for one to meditate the conjugal tie, which is often assumed with advantage by persons of fifty or more; and certainly you, who are still in the bloom of your days, need not despair of a youthful swain. Existence is twofold when it is shared with a congenial partner; and I had hoped that before now,

Miss Gertrude, both you and myself would have formed such an alliance; for the protection of the matrimonial union is one of its greatest advantages."

"I hope you have not suffered from the want of it," said Gertrude.

"I have, Miss Gertrude, suffered incalculably. But the keenest pangs have been the sensibilities; yes, the sensibilities—the finest part of our nature, and that which will least bear wounding."

"I am sorry to hear that you have been thus grieved," said Gertrude. "I should have supposed that, living alone, you might have been spared this trial."

"Oh, Miss Gertrude!" exclaimed the old lady, lifting up both hands, and speaking in a pitiable tone—"Oh, that I had the wings of a dove, wherewith to fly away from my kindred! I fondly thought to have distanced them, but during the past year they have discovered my retreat, and I cannot elude their vigilance. Hardly can I recover from the shock of one visitation—made for the sole purpose of taking an inventory of my possessions and measuring the length of my days—before the vultures are again seen hovering round my dwelling. But," exclaimed she, raising her voice and chuckling as she spoke, "they shall fall into their own snare; for I will dupe every one of them yet!"

"I was not aware that you had any relations," said Gertrude; "and it seems they are such only in name."

"Name!" said Miss Pace, emphatically. "I am glad at the thought that they are not honoured with a cognomen which not one of them is worthy to bear. No, they pass by a different name—a name as plebeian as their own coarse souls. Three of them stand to each other in a fraternal relation, yet they are alike hateful to me. One, a contemptible coxcomb, comes here to overawe me with his presence, which he conceives to be imposing; calls me aunt—aunt; thus testifying by his speech to a consanguinity which he blindly fancies makes him nearer akin to my property!" The old lady almost shrieked the last word. "And the other two are beggars! always

were—always will be; let 'em be—I'm glad of it!"

"You hear me, Miss Gertrude; you are a young lady of quick comprehension, and I will avail myself of your contiguity, which, although you deny the charge, may shortly be interrupted by some eager lover, to request at your hands a favour, such as I little thought once I should ever feel compelled to seek. I sent for you to write (Miss Patty whispered) the last will and testament of Miss Patty Pace."

The poor woman's trembling voice evinced a deep compassion for herself, which Gertrude could not help sharing; and she expressed a willingness to comply with her wishes as far as was in her power, at the same time declaring her utter ignorance of all the forms of law.

To Gertrude's astonishment, Miss Patty announced a perfect acquaintance with all the legal knowledge which the case demanded; and in so complete a manner did she dictate the words of the important instrument that, being afterwards properly witnessed, signed, and sealed, it was found in a few months—at which time Miss Patty died—free from imperfection and flaw, and proved a satisfactory direction for the disposal of the inheritance.

It may be as well to state here, however, that he who was pronounced sole heir to the valuable property never availed himself of the bequest, otherwise than to make a careful bestowal of it among her relatives. The solo inheritor of her estate was William Sullivan, the knight of the rosy countenance, who with chivalrous spirit captivated Miss Patty's virgin heart, and gained her lasting favour. But that chivalrous spirit accepted not a reward so disproportioned to the slight service he had rendered the old lady.

Gertrude found it no easy task to gather and transfix in writing the exact idea which the old woman's rambling dictation was intended to convey; and it was two or three hours before the manuscript was completed.

The sky was overcast, and a drizzling rain began to fall, as she walked home; but the

distance was not great, and the only damage she sustained was a slight dampness to her garments. Emily perceived it, and said, "Your dress is quite wet, you must sit by the parlour fire. I shall not go down until tea-time, but father is there, and will be glad of your company; he has been alone all the afternoon."

Gertrude found Mr. Graham sitting in front of a pleasant wood fire, half-dozing, half-reading. She took a book and a low chair and joined him. But to avoid the heat she went to the sofa. Soon there was a ring at the front door bell. The housemaid, who was passing by the door, opened it, and immediately ushered in a visitor. It was Willie!

Gertrude rose, but trembling from head to foot, so that she dared not trust herself to take a step forward. Willie advanced to the centre of the room, looked at Gertrude, bowed, hesitated, and said, "Miss Flint!—is she here?" The colour rushed into Gertrude's face. She attempted to speak, but failed. It was not necessary. The blush was enough. Willie recognised her, and starting forward, eagerly seized her hand.

"Gerty! is it possible?"

The perfect naturalness and ease of his manner, the warmth with which he took and retained her hand, reassured the agitated girl. The spell seemed partially removed. For a moment he became in her eyes the Willie of old, her dear friend and playmate, and she found voice to exclaim, "Oh, Willie, you have come at last! I am so glad to see you!" The sound of their voices disturbed Mr. Graham, who had fallen into a nap. He turned round in his easy chair, then rose. Willie dropped Gertrude's hand and stepped towards him. "Mr. Sullivan," said Gertrude, with a feeble attempt at a suitable introduction.

They shook hands, and then all three sat down.

And now all Gertrude's embarrassment returned. It is often the case that when the best of friends meet after a long separation they salute or embrace each other, and then, notwithstanding the weight of matter pressing on the mind of each—sufficient,

perhaps, to furnish subjects of conversation for weeks to come—nothing of importance presents itself at once, and a pause ensues, which is finally filled up by some trivial question concerning the journey of the newly-arrived party. She had seen Willie before; she was aware of his arrival; knew even the steamer in which he had come; but was anxious to conceal from him this knowledge. She could not tell him, since he seemed so ignorant of the fact himself, that they had met before; and she was at an utter loss what to do or say under the circumstances. Her embarrassment soon communicated itself to Willie; and Mr. Graham's presence, which was a restraint to both, made matters worse. Willie, however, first broke the momentary silence.

"I should hardly have known you, Gertrude. I did not know you. How——"

"How did you come?" asked Mr. Graham, abruptly, apparently unconscious that he was interrupting Willie's remark.

"In the Europa," replied Willie. "She got into New York about a week ago."

"Out here, I mean," said Mr. Graham, rather stiffly. "Did you come out in the coach?"

"Oh, excuse me, sir," replied Willie; "I misunderstood you. No, I drove out from Boston in a chaise."

"Did anyone take your horse?"

"I fastened him in front of the house."

Willie glanced out of the window (it was now nearly dusk) to see that the animal was still there. Mr. Graham settled himself in his easy chair and looked into the fire. "You are changed, too," said Gertrude, in reply to Willie's unfinished comment. Then, fearing he might feel hurt at what he must know to be true in more ways than one, the colour which had retreated mounted once more to her cheeks. But he did not seem to feel hurt, but replied, "Yes, an Eastern climate makes great changes; but I think I can hardly have altered more than you have. Why, only think, Gerty, you

were a child when I went away! I suppose I must have known I should find you a young lady, but I begin to think I never fully realised it."

"When did you leave Calcutta?"

"The latter part of February. I passed the spring months in Paris."

"You did not write," said Gertrude in a faltering voice.

"No, I was expecting to come across by every steamer, and wanted to surprise you."

Gertrude looked confused, but replied, "I was disappointed about the letters; but I am very glad to see you again, Willie."

"You can't be so glad as I am," said he, lowering his voice and looking at her with great tenderness. "You seem more and more like yourself to me every minute that I see you. I begin to think, however, that I ought to have written and told you I was coming."

Gertrude smiled. Willie's manner was so unchanged, his words so affectionate, that it seemed unkind to doubt his friendliness, although to his undivided love she felt she could have no claim. "No," said she, "I like surprises. Don't you remember, I always did?"

"Remember? Certainly," replied he; "I have never forgotten anything that you liked."

Just at this moment Gertrude's birds, whose cage hung in the window at which Willie sat, commenced a little twittering noise which they always made just at night. He looked up. "Your birds," said Gertrude; "the birds you sent me."

"Are they all alive and well?" asked he.

"Yes, all of them."

"You have been a kind mistress to the little things. They are very tender."

"I am very fond of them."

"You take such care of those you love, dear Gerty, that you are sure to preserve their

lives as long as may be." His tone still more than his words betrayed the deep meaning with which he spoke. Gertrude was silent.

"Is Miss Graham well?" asked Willie.

Gertrude related, in reply, that her nerves had been recently much disturbed by the terrible experiences through which she had passed; and this led to the subject of the recent disaster, at which Gertrude forebore to mention her having been herself present. Willie spoke with feeling of the sad catastrophe, and with severity of the reckless carelessness which had been the cause of it; and said that he had valued friends on board the boat, but was unaware that Miss Graham, whom he loved for Gertrude's sake, was among them.

Conversation between Gertrude and Willie had by this time assumed something of their former familiarity. He had taken a seat near her on the sofa, that they might talk unrestrainedly; for although Mr. Graham might have dropped asleep again, yet it was not easy to forget his presence. There were many subjects on which it would have seemed natural for them to speak, had not Gertrude avoided them. The causes of Willie's sudden return, his probable stay, his future plans in life, and his reasons for having postponed his visit until he had been in the country more than a week—all these were inquiries which curiosity would have suggested; but to Gertrude they all lay under embargo. She neither felt prepared to receive nor willing to force the confidence on matters which must be influenced by his engagement with Miss Clinton, and therefore preserved silence on these topics. And Willie, deeply grieved at this strange want of sympathy on her part, forebore to thrust upon her notice these seemingly neglected circumstances.

They talked of Calcutta life, of Parisian novelties, of Gertrude's school-keeping, and many other things, but not a word of matters nearest to the hearts of both. At length a servant announced tea. Mr. Graham rose and stood with his back to the fire. Willie rose also and prepared to take leave. Mr. Graham, with frigid civility, invited him to

remain, and Gertrude urged him to do so; but he declined with such decision that the latter understood that he felt the neglect with which Mr. Graham had treated him and his visit. In addition to the fact that the old gentleman disliked young men as a class, and that Willie had intruded upon the privacy in which he was indulging, there was the bitter recollection that Gertrude had once forsaken himself and Emily (for so he in his own mind styled her conscientious choice between conflicting duties) for the very family of which their visitor was the only remaining member—a recollection which did not tend to conciliate the prejudiced man.

Gertrude accompanied Willie to the door. The rain had ceased, but the wind whistled across the piazza. It was growing cold. Willie buttoned his coat, and promised to see Gertrude on the following day.

"You have no overcoat," said she; "the night is chilly, and you are accustomed to a hot climate. You had better take this shawl;" and she took from the hat-tree a heavy Scotch plaid. He thanked her and threw it over his arm; then, taking both her hands in his, looked her steadily in the face for a moment, as if he would fain have spoken. But, seeing that she shrank from his affectionate gaze, he dropped her hands and, with a troubled expression, bade her good-night.

Gertrude stood with the handle of the door in her hand until she heard the sounds of the horse's hoofs as he drove down the road; then retired to her own room. Well as she had borne up during the longed-for yet much-dreaded meeting, calmly as she had sustained her part, her courage all forsook her now, and in looking forward to days, weeks, and months of frequent intercourse, she felt that the most trying part of the struggle was yet to come.

Had Willie changed to her? No; he had come back as he went—generous, manly, and affectionate. He had manifested the same unaffected warmth of feeling, the same thoughtful tenderness, he had ever shown. In short, he was the Willie she had thought of, dreamed of, imagined, and loved. There was a light tap at her door.

Thinking it a summons to the tea-table, she said, "Jane, I do not wish for any supper."

"It isn't that," said the girl; "but I have brought you a letter." Gertrude sprang up and opened the door.

"A little boy handed it to me and then ran off," said the girl, placing a large package in her hand. "He told me to give it to you straight away."

"Bring me a light," said Gertrude.

The girl went for a lamp, while Gertrude wondered what a package so large could contain. She thought no letter could so soon arrive from Mr. Amory. While she was wondering, Jane brought a lamp, by the light of which she detected his handwriting; and, breaking the seal, she drew from the envelope several closely-written pages, whose contents she perused with the greatest eagerness and excitement.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE FATHER'S STORY.

"My Daughter,—My loving, kind-hearted girl. Now that your own words encourage me with the assurance that my first fear was unfounded—now that I can appeal to you as to an impartial witness, I will disclose the story of my life; and, while I prove to you your parentage, will hope that my unprejudiced child at least will believe, love, and trust her father, in spite of a world's injustice.

"I will conceal nothing. I will plunge at once into those disclosures which I most dread to utter, and trust to after explanation to palliate the darkness of my tale.

"Mr. Graham is my step-father, and my blessed mother, long since dead, was, in all but the tie of nature, a true mother to Emily. Thus allied to those whom you love best, I am parted from them by a heavy curse; for, not only was mine the ill-fated hand (oh, hate me not yet, Gertrude!) which locked poor Emily up in darkness, but I

stand accused in the eyes of my fellow-men of another crime, deep, dark, and disgraceful. And yet, though living under a ban, wandering up and down the world a doomed and broken-hearted man, I am innocent as a child of all intentional wrong, as you will learn, if you can trust to the truth of the tale I am about to tell.

"Nature gave and education fostered in me a rebellious spirit. I was the idol of my invalid mother, who, though she loved me with a love for which I bless her memory, had not the energy to subdue the passionate and wilful nature of her boy. But I was neither cruelly nor viciously disposed; and though my sway at home and among my school-fellows was alike indisputable, I made many friends, and not a single enemy. But a sudden check was at length put to my freedom. My mother married, and I soon came to feel bitterly the check which her husband, Mr. Graham, was likely to impose upon my boyish independence. Had he treated me with kindness, had he won my affections (which he might easily have done, for my sensitive and impassioned nature disposed me to every tender and grateful emotion), great would have been his influence in moulding my yet unformed character.

"But his behaviour towards me was that of chilling coldness and reserve. He repelled with scorn the first advance on my part which led me, at my mother's instigation, to address him by the paternal title—an offence of which I never again was guilty. And yet, while he seemed to ignore the relationship, he assumed its authority, thus wounding my pride and exciting opposition to his commands.

"Two things strengthened my dislike for my overbearing step-father. One was the consciousness of my dependence upon his bounty; the other a hint, which I received through a domestic, that Mr. Graham's dislike to me had its origin in an old enmity between himself and my own father—an honourable and high-minded man, whom it was ever my greatest pride to be told that I resembled.

"Great as was the warfare in my heart, power rested with Mr. Graham; for I was yet but a child, and necessarily subject to government—nor could I be deaf to my

mother's entreaties that, for her sake, I would learn submission. It was only, therefore, when I had been most unjustly thwarted that I broke into direct rebellion; and even then there were influences ever at work to preserve outward harmony in our household. Thus years passed on, and though I did not love Mr. Graham more, the force of habit, the interest afforded by my studies, and increasing self-control, rendered my life less obnoxious to me than it had once been.

"I had one great compensation for my trials—the love I cherished for Emily, who responded to it with equal warmth on her part. It was not because she stood between me and her father, a mediator and a friend; nor because she submitted to my dictation and aided me in all my plans; it was because our natures were made for each other, and, as they grew and expanded, were bound together by ties which a rude hand only could rend asunder. This tenderness and depth of affection became the life of my life.

"At length my mother died. I was at that time, sorely against my will, employed in Mr. Graham's counting-house, and an inmate of his family. And now, without excuse, my step-father began a course of policy as unwise as it was cruel; and so irritating to my pride, and so torturing to my feelings, that it angered me almost to frenzy. He tried to rob me of the only thing that sweetened and blest my existence—the love of Emily. I will not here recount the motives I imputed to him, nor the means he employed. But they were such as to change my former dislike into bitter hatred and opposition.

"Instead of submitting to his tyrannical interference, I sought Emily's society on all occasions, and persuaded the gentle girl to lend herself to my schemes for thwarting her father's purposes. I did not speak to her of love; I did not seek to bind her to me by promises; I hinted not at marriage; a sense of honour forbade it. But, with a boyish independence, which I fear was the height of imprudence, I sought every occasion, even in her father's presence, to maintain that constant familiarity of

intercourse which had been the growth of circumstances, and could not, without force, be restrained.

"At length Emily was taken ill, and for six weeks I was debarred her presence. When sufficiently recovered to leave her room, I sought and at last obtained an opportunity to see her. We had been together in the library more than an hour when Mr. Graham suddenly entered, and came towards us with a face whose severity I shall not soon forget. I did not heed an interruption, for the probable consequences of which I believed myself prepared. But I was little prepared for the attack actually made upon me.

"That he would accuse me of disobedience to wishes which he had hinted in every possible way, and even intimate more plainly his resolve to place barriers between Emily and myself, I fully expected, and was ready with my replies; but when he burst forth with a torrent of ungentlemanly abuse—when he imputed to me mean and selfish motives, which had never occurred to my mind—I was struck dumb with surprise and anger.

"Then, in the presence of the pure-minded girl whom I worshipped, he charged me with a horrid crime—the crime of forgery—asserting my guilt as recently discovered, but positive and undoubted. My spirit had raged before—now it was on fire. I lifted my hand and clenched my fist. What I would have done I know not. Whether I should have found words to assert my innocence, and refute a charge utterly false—or whether, my voice failing me from passion, I should have swept Mr. Graham from my path, perhaps felled him to the floor, while I strode away to rally my calmness in the open air—I cannot now conjecture; for a wild shriek from Emily recalled me to myself, and, turning, I saw her fall fainting upon the sofa.

"Forgetting everything but the apparently dying condition into which the horror of the scene had thrown her I sprang forward to her relief. There was a table beside her and some bottles upon it. I hastily snatched what I believed to be a simple

restorative, and in my agitation emptied the contents of the phial in her face. I know not what the exact character of the mixture could have been; but its matters not—its effect was too awfully evident. The fatal deed was done—and mine was the hand that did it!

"Brought suddenly to consciousness by the intolerable torture that succeeded, the poor girl sprang screaming from the sofa, flung her arms wildly above her head, rushed in a frantic manner through the room, and crouched in a corner. I followed in an agony scarce less than her own; but she repelled me with her hands, uttering piercing shrieks. Mr. Graham, who for an instant had looked like one paralysed by the scene, now rushed forward like a madman. Instead of aiding me in my efforts to lift poor Emily from the floor, and so far from compassionating my situation, which was only less pitiable than hers, he, with a fierceness redoubled at my being the sole cause of the disaster, attacked me with a storm of cruel reproaches, declaring that I had killed his child. With words like these, which are still ringing in my ears, he drove me from the room and the house; a repulsion which I, overpowered by contrition and remorse, had neither the wish nor the strength to resist.

"Oh! the terrible night and day that succeeded! I wandered out into the country, spent the whole night walking beneath the open sky, endeavouring to collect my thoughts and compose my mind, and still morning found me with a fevered pulse and excited brain. With the returning light, however, I began to realise the necessity of forming some future plan of action.

"Emily's sad situation, and my intense anxiety to learn the worst effects of the fatal accident, urged me to hasten with the earliest morning, either openly or by stealth, to Mr. Graham's house. Everything also which I possessed—all my money, the residue of my last quarter's allowance, my clothing, and a few valuable gifts from my mother—were in the chamber which I had occupied. There seemed to be no other course left for me than to return thither, and I retracted my steps to the city,

determined, if it were necessary in order to gain the desired particulars concerning Emily, to meet her father face to face. But as I drew near the house I hesitated and dared not proceed. Mr. Graham had exhausted upon me every angry word, had threatened even deeds of violence should I again cross his threshold; and I feared to trust my own fiery spirit to a collision in which I might be led on to an open resistance of the man whom I had already sufficiently injured. In the terrible work I had but yesterday done—a work of whose fatal effect I had even then a gloomy foreshadowing—I had blighted the existence of his worshipped child, and drawn a dark pall over his dearest hopes. It was enough. I would not for worlds be guilty of the sin of lifting my hand against the man who, unjust as he had been towards an innocent youth, had met a retaliation far too severe.

"Still, I knew his wrath to be unmitigated, was well aware of his power to excite my hot nature to frenzy, and resolved to beware how I crossed his path. Meet him I must, to refute the false charges he had brought against me; but not within the walls of his dwelling, the home of his suffering daughter. In the counting-house, where the crime of forgery was said to have been committed, and in the presence of my fellow-clerks, I would publicly deny the deed, and dare him to its proof. But first I must either see or hear from Emily before I met the father at all. I must learn the exact nature and extent of the wrong I had done him in the person of his child. For this, however, I must wait until, under cover of the next night's darkness, I could enter the house unperceived.

"So I wandered about all day in torment, without having food or rest, the thought of my poor, darling, tortured Emily ever present to my wretched thoughts. The hours seemed interminable. I remember that day of suspense as if it had been a whole year of misery. But night came at last, cloudy, and the air thickened with a heavy fog which, as I approached the street where Mr. Graham lived, concealed the house until I was opposite to it. I shuddered at the sight of the physician's chaise standing before the door; for I knew that Dr. Jeremy had closed his visits to Emily more than a week

previously, and must have been summoned to attend her since the accident. Thinking it probable that Mr. Graham was in the house, I forbore to enter, but stood concealed by the mist, and watching my opportunity.

"Once or twice Mrs. Ellis, the housekeeper, passed up and down the staircase, as I could distinctly see through the sidelights of the door, and Dr. Jeremy descended, followed by Mr. Graham. The doctor would have passed hastily out, but Mr. Graham detained him, to question him regarding his patient, as I judged from the anxiety depicted on my step-father's countenance. The doctor's back was towards me, and I could only judge of his replies by the effect they produced on the questioner, whose haggard appearance became more distressed at every syllable that fell from the honest and truthful lips of the medical man, whose words were oracles to all who knew his skill.

"I needed, therefore, no further testimony to force the conviction that Emily's fate was sealed; and as I looked with pity upon the afflicted parent, and shudderingly thought of my agency in the work of destruction, I felt that the unhappy father could not curse me more bitterly than I cursed myself. Deeply, however, as I mourned, and have never ceased to repent, my share in the exciting of that storm wherein the poor girl had been so cruelly shipwrecked, I could not forget the part that Mr. Graham had borne in the transaction, or forgive the wicked injustice and insults which had so unmanned me as to render my hand a fit instrument only of ruin; and as, after the doctor's departure, I watched my step-father walk away, and saw by a street-lamp that the look of pain had passed from his face, giving place to his usual composed and arrogant expression, and, understood by the loud and measured manner in which he struck his cane upon the pavement, that he was far from sharing my humble, penitent mood, I ceased to waste upon him a compassion which he seemed so little to require or deserve; and, pitying myself only, I looked upon his stern face with a soul which cherished for him no other sentiment than that of unmitigated hatred. Do not shrink from me, Gertrude, as you read this frank confession of my passionate

and deeply stirred nature. You know not, perhaps, what it is to hate; but have you ever been tried as I was?

"As Mr. Graham turned the corner of the street, I approached his house, drew forth a pass-key of my own, by means of which I opened the door, and went in. It was perfectly quiet, and no person was to be seen in any of the lower rooms. I passed noiselessly upstairs, and entered a little chamber at the head of the passage which communicated with Emily's room. I waited here a long time, hearing no sound and seeing no one. But fearing that Mr. Graham would shortly return, I determined to ascend to my own room, collect my money and a few articles of value, and then make my way to the kitchen, and gain what news I could of Emily from Mrs. Prime, the cook, a kind-hearted woman, who would, I felt sure, befriend me.

"The first part of my object was accomplished; and I had descended the back staircase to gain Mrs. Prime's premises, when I suddenly met Mrs. Ellis coming from the kitchen, with a bowl of gruel in her hand. She was acquainted with all the particulars of the accident, and had been a witness to my expulsion from the house. She stopped short on seeing me, gave a slight scream, dropped the bowl of gruel, and prepared to make her escape, as if from a wild beast, which I doubt not that I resembled; since wretchedness, fasting, suffering, and desperation must all have been depicted in my features. I placed myself in her path, and compelled her to stop and listen to me. But before my eager questions could find utterance, an outburst from her confirmed my worst fears.

"'Let me go!' she exclaimed. 'You villain! you will be putting my eyes out next!'

'Where is Emily?' I cried. 'Let me see her!'

"'See her!' replied she. 'You horrid wretch! No! she has suffered enough from you. She is satisfied herself now.'

'What do you mean?' shouted I, shaking the housekeeper violently by the shoulder, for her words seared my very soul, and I was frantic.

"'I mean that Emily will never see anybody again; and if she had a thousand eyes, you are the last person upon whom she would wish to look!'

"'Does Emily hate me, too?' burst from me then, in the form of a soliloquy rather than a question. The reply was ready, however. 'Hate you? Yes—more than that; she cannot find words bad enough for you! She mutters, even in her pain, 'Cruel!—wicked!' She shudders at the sound of your name; and we are all forbidden to speak it in her presence.' I waited to hear no more, but rushed out of the house. That moment was the crisis of my life. The thunderbolt had fallen upon and crushed me. My hopes, my happiness, my fortune, my good name, had gone before; but one solitary light had, until now, glimmered in the darkness. It was Emily's love. I had trusted in that—that only. It had passed away, and with it my youth, my faith, my hope of heaven.

"From that moment I ceased to be myself. Then fell upon me the cloud in which I have ever since been shrouded, and under which you have seen and known me. In that instant the blight had come, under the gnawing influence of which my happy laugh changed to the bitter smile; my frank and pleasant speech to tones of ill-concealed irony and sarcasm; my hair became prematurely grey, my features sharp and severe; my fellow-men, to whom I hoped to prove some day a benefactor, were henceforth the armed hosts of antagonists, with whom I would wage endless war—and the God whom I had worshipped—whom I had believed in, as a just and faithful friend and avenger—who was He?—where was He?—and why did He not right my cause? What direful and premeditated deed of darkness had I been guilty of that He should thus desert me? Alas!—I lost my faith in Heaven!

"I know not what direction I took on leaving Mr. Graham's house. I have no recollection of any of the streets through which I passed, though doubtless they were all familiar; but I paused not until, having reached the end of a wharf, I found myself gazing down into the deep water, longing to take one mad leap and lose myself in

everlasting oblivion! But for this final blow, beneath which my manhood had fallen, I would have cherished my life, at least until I could vindicate its fair fame; I would never have left a blackened memory for men to dwell upon and for Emily to weep over. But now what cared I for my fellow-men! And Emily!—she had ceased to love, and would not mourn; and I longed for the grave. There are moments in human life when a word, a look, or a thought, may weigh down the balance in the scales of fate and decide a destiny.

"So it was with me. I was incapable of forming any plan for myself; but accident, as it were, decided for me. I was startled from the apathy into which I had fallen by the sudden splashing of oars in the water beneath, and in a moment a little boat was moored to a pier within a rod of the spot where I stood. I also heard footsteps on the wharf, and, turning, saw by the light of the moon, which was just appearing from behind a heavy cloud, a stout seafaring man, with a heavy pea-jacket under one arm and an old-fashioned carpet-bag in his left hand. He had a ruddy, good-humoured face, and as he was about to pass me and leap into the boat, where two sailors, with their oars dipped and ready for motion, were awaiting him, he slapped me on the shoulder, and exclaimed, 'Well, my fine fellow, will you ship with us?' I answered as readily in the affirmative; and, with one look in my face, and a glance at my dress, which seemed to assure him of my station in life and probable ability to make compensation for the passage, he said, in a laughing tone, 'In with you, then!'

"To his astonishment—for he had scarcely believed me in earnest—I sprang into the boat, and in a few moments was on board of a fine bark, bound I knew not whither. The vessel's destination was Rio Janeiro—a fact which I did not learn till we had been two or three days at sea, and to which I felt wholly indifferent. There was one other passenger beside myself—the captain's daughter, Lucy Grey, whom during the first week I scarcely noticed, but who appeared to be as much at home, whether in the cabin or on deck, as if she had passed her whole life at sea. I might have made the entire passage without giving another thought to this young girl—half child, half

woman—had not my strange behaviour led her so to conduct herself which surprised and finally interested me. My wild and excited countenance, my constant restlessness, avoidance of food, and indifference to everything about me, excited her wonder and sympathy. She believed me partially deranged, and treated me accordingly. She would take a seat on deck directly opposite mine, look in my face, either ignorant or regardless of my observing her, and then walk away with a heavy sigh. Occasionally she would offer me some little delicacy, begging that I would eat; and as, touched by her kindness, I took food more readily from her hand than any other, these little attentions became at last habitual. As my manners grew calmer and I settled into a melancholy which, though equally deep, was less fearful than the feverish torment under which I had laboured, she became reserved, and when I began to appear somewhat like my fellow-men, went regularly to the table, and, instead of pacing the deck all night, spent a part of it quietly in my state-room, Lucy absented herself wholly from that part of the vessel where I passed the greater portion of the day, and I seldom exchanged a word with her, unless I purposely sought her society.

"The stormy weather drove me to the cabin, where she usually sat on the transom reading or watching the troubled waves; and, as the voyage was long, we were thrown much in each other's way, especially as Captain Grey, who had invited me to ship with him, and who seemed to take an interest in my welfare, good-naturedly encouraged an intercourse by which he probably hoped I might be won from a state of melancholy that seemed to grieve the jolly ship-master almost as much as it did his kind-hearted, sensitive child.

"Lucy's shyness, therefore, wore gradually away, and before our tedious passage was completed I ceased to be a restraint upon her. She talked freely with me; for while I maintained a rigid silence concerning my own past experiences, of which I could scarcely endure to think, she exerted herself freely for my entertainment, and related with simple frankness almost every circumstance of her past life. Sometimes

I listened attentively; sometimes, absorbed in my own painful reflections, I would be deaf to her voice and forgetful of her presence. Then I often observed that she had suddenly ceased speaking, and, starting from my reverie and looking quickly up, would find her eyes fixed upon me so reproachfully that, rallying my self-command, I would try to appear, and sometimes became, seriously interested in the artless narratives of my little entertainer. She told me that until she was fourteen years old she lived with her mother in a little cottage on Cape Cod, their home being only occasionally enlivened by the return of her father from his long absences at sea. They would visit the city where his vessel lay, pass a few weeks in great enjoyment, and then return to mourn the departure of the cheerful sea-captain, and patiently count the weeks and months until his return. She told me how her mother died; how bitterly she mourned her loss, and how her father wept when he came home and heard the news; how she had lived on shipboard ever since; and how sad and lonely she felt in time of storms when she sat alone in the cabin listening to the roar of the winds and waves.

"Tears would come into her eyes when she spoke of these things, and I would look upon her with pity as one whom sorrow made my sister. Trial, however, had not robbed her of an elastic, buoyant spirit; and when, after the completion of some eloquent tale of early grief, the captain would approach unseen and surprise her by a sudden joke or sly piece of mischief, thus provoking her to retaliate, she was always ready for a war of wits, a laughing frolic, or even a game of romps. Her tears dried up, her merry voice and playful words would delight her father, and the cabin would ring with peals of laughter; while I, shrinking from a mirth sadly at variance with my own happiness, and the sound so discordant to my sensitive nerves, would retire to brood over miseries for which it was hopeless to expect sympathy which could not be shared, and with which I must dwell alone.

"Such a misanthrope had my misfortunes made me that the sportive raillery between the captain and his merry daughter, and the musical laugh with which she would

respond to the witticisms of two old sailors, grated upon my ears like something scarce less than personal injuries; nor could I have believed it possible that one so little able as Lucy to comprehend the depth of my sufferings could feel any sincere compassion for them had I not once or twice been touched to see how her innocent mirth would give place to sudden sadness of countenance if she chanced to encounter my woe-begone face, rendered doubly gloomy when contrasted with the gaiety of herself and of her companions.

"But I must not linger too long upon the details of our life on shipboard. I must forbear giving account of a terrific gale that we encountered, during which, for two days and a night, poor Lucy was half frantic with fear; while I, careless of outward discomforts and indifferent to personal danger, was afforded an opportunity to requite her kindness by such protection and encouragement as I was able to render.

"Captain Grey died. We were within a week's sail of our destination when he was taken ill, and three days before we were safely anchored in the harbour of Rio he breathed his last. I shared with Lucy the office of ministering to the suffering man, closed his eyes at last, and carried the fainting girl in my arms to another part of the vessel. With kind words and persuasions I restored her to her senses; and then, as the full consciousness of her desolation rushed upon her, she sunk at once into a state of hopeless despondency painful to witness. Captain Grey had made no provision for his daughter. Well might the poor girl lament her sad fate! for she was without a relative in the world, penniless, and approaching a strange shore, which afforded no refuge to the orphan. We buried her father in the sea; and that sad office fulfilled, I sought Lucy and endeavoured to arouse her to a sense of her situation and advise with her concerning the future; for we were now so near our port that in a few hours we might be compelled to leave the vessel and seek quarters in the city. She listened to me without replying. I hinted at the necessity of my leaving her, and begged to know if she had any plans for the future. She answered me only by a burst of tears. I begged her not to weep.

"And then, with many sobs, and interrupting herself by frequent exclamations of vehement sorrow, she threw herself upon my compassion, and, with child-like artlessness, entreated me not to leave her or, as she termed it, to desert her. She reminded me that she was alone in the world; that the moment she stepped foot on shore she should be in a land of strangers; and, appealing to my mercy, besought me not to leave her to die alone.

"What could I do? I had nothing on earth to live for. We were both alike orphaned and desolate. There was but one point of difference. I could work and protect her; she could do neither for herself. It would be something for me to live for; and for her, though but a refuge of poverty and want, it was better than the exposure and suffering that must otherwise await her. I told her how little I had to offer; that my heart even was crushed and broken; but that I was ready to labour in her behalf, to guard her from danger, to pity, and perhaps in time learn to love her. The unsophisticated girl had never thought of marriage; she had sought the protection of a friend, not a husband; but I explained to her that the latter tie only would obviate the necessity of our parting; and, in the humility of sorrow, she finally accepted my unflattering offer.

"The only confidant to our sudden engagement, the only witness of the marriage, which within a few hours ensued, was an old, weather-beaten sailor, who had known and loved Lucy from her childhood—Ben Grant. He accompanied us on shore and to the church. He followed us to the humble lodgings with which we contrived for the present to be contented, and devoted himself to Lucy with self-sacrificing, but in one instance, alas! (as you will soon learn), with mistaken and fatal zeal.

"After much difficulty, I obtained employment from a man in whom I accidentally recognized an old and valued friend of my father. He had been in Rio several years, and was actively engaged in trade, and willingly employed me as a clerk, occasionally despatching me from home to transact business at a distance. My duties

being regular and profitable, we were soon raised above want, and I was enabled to place my young wife in a situation of comfort.

"The sweetness of her disposition, the cheerfulness with which she endured privation, the earnestness with which she strove to make me happy, were not without effect. I perseveringly rallied from my gloom; I succeeded in banishing the frown from my brow; and the premature wrinkles, which her hand would softly sweep away, finally ceased to return. The few months that I passed with your mother, Gertrude, form a sweet episode in the memory of my stormy life. I came to love her much—not as I loved Emily;—that could not be expected—but, as the solitary flower that bloomed on the grave of all my early hopes, she cast a fragrance round my path; and her child is not more dear to me, because a part of myself, than as the memento of the cherished blossom snatched hastily from my hand and rudely crushed.

"About two months after your birth, my child, and before your eyes had ever learned to brighten at the sight of your father, who was necessarily much from home, the business in which I was engaged called me in the capacity of an agent to a station some distance from Rio. I had been absent nearly a month, and had written regularly to Lucy, informing her of all my movements (though I suspect the letters never reached her), when the neighbourhood in which I was stationed became infected with a fatal malaria. For the sake of my family I took every measure to ward off contagion, but failed. I was seized with fever, and lay for weeks near death. I was cruelly neglected during my illness; for I had no friends near me, and my slender purse held out little inducement for mercenary service; but my sufferings and forebodings on account of Lucy and yourself were far greater than any which I endured from my bodily torments, although the latter were great. I had all sorts of imaginary fears; but nothing, alas! which could compare with the reality that awaited me when, after my dreadful illness, I made my way, destitute, ragged, and emaciated, back to Rio. I sought my former home. It was deserted, and I was warned

to flee from its vicinity, as the fearful disease of fever had nearly depopulated that and the neighbouring streets. I made every inquiry, but could obtain no intelligence of my wife and child. I hastened to the charnel-house where, during the raging of the pestilence, the unrecognized dead were exposed; but among the disfigured remains it was impossible to distinguish friends from strangers. I lingered about the city for weeks in hopes to gain some information concerning Lucy; but could find no one who had ever heard of her. All day I wandered about the streets and on the wharves—the latter being places which Ben Grant (in whose faithful charge I had left your mother and yourself) was in the habit of frequenting—but not a syllable could I learn of any persons that answered my description.

"My first thought had been that they would naturally seek my employer, to learn, if possible, the cause of my prolonged absence; and on finding my home empty I had hastened in search of him. But he too had, within a recent period, fallen a victim to the prevailing distemper. His place of business was closed and the establishment broken up. I continued my inquiries until hope died within me. I was told that scarce an inmate of the fatal neighbourhood where I had left my family had escaped; and convinced, finally, that my fate was still pursuing me with an unmitigated wrath, of which this last blow was but a single expression, that I might have foreseen and expected, I madly agreed to work my passage in the first vessel which promised me an escape from scenes so fraught with harrowing recollections.

"And now commenced a course of wretched wandering. With varied ends in view, following strongly contrasted employments, and with fluctuating fortune, I have travelled over the world. My feet have trodden almost every land. I have sailed on every sea and breathed the air of every clime. I am familiar with the city and the wilderness, the civilized man and the savage. I have learned the sad lesson that peace is nowhere, and friendship, for the most part, but a name.

"Once during my wanderings I visited the home of my boyhood. Unseen and

unknown I trod a familiar ground and gazed on familiar, though time-worn faces. I stood at the window of Mr. Graham's library; saw the contented, happy countenance of Emily—happy in her blindness and her forgetfulness of the past. A young girl sat near the fire endeavouring to read by its flickering light. I knew not then what gave such a charm to her thoughtful features, nor why my eyes dwelt upon them with a rare pleasure; for there was no voice to proclaim to the father's heart that he looked on the face of his child. I am not sure that the strong impulse which prompted me then to enter, acknowledge my identity, and beg Emily to speak to me a word of forgiveness, might not have prevailed over the dread of her displeasure; but Mr. Graham at the moment appeared, cold and implacable as ever; I gazed an instant, then fled from the house.

"Although in the various labours which I was compelled to undertake to earn a decent maintenance, I had more than once met with such success as to give me temporary independence, and to enable me to indulge in expensive travelling, I had never amassed a fortune; indeed, I had not cared to do so, since I had no use for money, except to employ it in the gratification of my immediate wants. Accident, however, at last thrust upon me a wealth which I could scarcely be said to have sought.

"After a year spent in the wilderness of the west, amid adventures the relation of which now would seem to you almost incredible, I gradually continued my retreat across the country, and after encountering innumerable hardships, which had no other object than the indulgence of my vagrant habits, I found myself in that land which has recently been termed the land of promise, but which has proved to many a greedy emigrant a land of deceit. For me, however, who sought it not, it showered gold. I was among the earliest discoverers of its treasure-vaults—one of the most successful, though the least laborious, of the seekers after gain. Nor was it merely, or indeed chiefly, at the mines that fortune favoured me. With the first results of my labours I purchased an immense tract of land, little dreaming at the time that those

desert acres were destined to become the streets and squares of a great and prosperous city. So that without effort, almost without my own knowledge, I achieved the greatness which springs from untold wealth. But this was not all. The blessed accident which led me to this golden land was the means of disclosing a pearl of price—a treasure in comparison with which California and all its mines shrink, to my mind, into insignificance. You know how the war-cry went forth to all lands, and men of every name and nation brought their arms to the field of fortune. Famine came next, with disease and death in its train; and many a man, hurrying on to reap the golden harvest, fell by the wayside, without once seeing the waving of the yellow grain.

"Half scorning the greedy rabble, I could not refuse in this, my time of prosperity, to minister to the wants of such as fell in the way; and now for once my humanity found its own reward. A miserable, ragged, half-starved, and apparently dying man crept to the door of my tent and asked in a feeble voice for charity. I did not refuse to admit him into my narrow domicile and to relieve his sufferings. He was the victim of want rather than disease, and, his hunger appeased, the savage brutality of his coarse nature soon manifested itself in the dogged indifference with which he received a stranger's bounty and the gross ingratitude with which he abused my hospitality. A few days served to restore him to his strength; and then, anxious to dismiss my visitor, whose conduct had already excited suspicions of his good faith, I gave him warning that he must depart; at the same time placing in his hand a sufficient amount of gold to insure his support until he could reach the mines which were his professed destination.

"He appeared dissatisfied, and begged permission to remain until the next morning, as the night was near, and he had no shelter provided. To this I made no objection, little imagining how base a serpent I was harbouring. At midnight I was awakened from my light and easily-disturbed sleep to find my lodger busily engaged in rifling my property and preparing to take an unceremonious leave of my dwelling. Nor did

his villainy end here. Upon my seizing and charging him with the theft, he snatched a weapon and attempted the life of his benefactor. But I was prepared to ward off the stroke, and succeeded in a few moments in subduing my desperate antagonist. He now crouched at my feet in such abject submission as might be expected from so vile a knave. Well might he tremble with fear; for the Lynch-law was then in full force for criminals like him. I should probably have handed the traitor over to his fate; but, ere I had time to do so, he held out to my cupidity a bribe so tempting that I forgot the deservings of my knavish guest in the eagerness with which I bartered his freedom as the price of its possession.

"He freely emptied his pockets at my bidding, and restored to me the gold, for the loss of which I never should have repined. As the base metal rolled at my feet, there glittered among the coins a jewel as truly mine as any of the rest, but which, as it met my sight, filled me with greater surprise than if it had been a new-fallen star.

"It was a ring of peculiar design and workmanship, which had once been the property of my father, and after his death had been worn by my mother until the time of her marriage with Mr. Graham, when it was transferred to myself. I had ever prized it as a precious heirloom, and it was one of the few valuables which I took with me when I fled from my step-father's house. This ring, with a watch and some other trinkets, had been left in the possession of Lucy when I parted with her at Rio, and the sight of it once more seemed to me like a voice from the grave. I eagerly sought to learn from my prisoner the source whence it had been obtained, but he maintained an obstinate silence. It was now my turn to plead; and at length the promise of instant permission to depart, 'unwhipped by justice,' at the conclusion of his tale, wrung from him a secret fraught to me with vital interest.

"This man was Stephen Grant, the son of my old friend Ben. He had heard from his father's lips the story of your mother's misfortunes; and the circumstance of a violent quarrel which arose between Ben and his vixen wife at the young stranger's

introduction to their household impressed the tale upon his recollection. From his account it appeared that my long-continued absence from Lucy, during the time of my illness, was construed by her honest but distrustful counsellor and friend into cruel desertion. The poor girl, to whom my early life was all a mystery which she had never shared, and to whom much of my character and conduct was inexplicable, began soon to feel convinced of the correctness of the old sailor's suspicions and fears. She had already applied to my employer for information concerning me; but he, who had heard of the pestilence to which I was exposed, and fully believed me to be among the dead, forbore to distress her by a communication of his belief, and replied to her questionings with an obscurity which served to give new force to her hitherto uncertain surmises. She positively refused, however, to leave our home; and, clinging to the hope of my final return thither, remained where I had left her until the terrible fever began its ravages. Her small stock of money was by this time consumed; her strength both of mind and body gave way; and Ben, becoming every day more confident that the simple-hearted Lucy had been betrayed and forsaken, persuaded her at last to sell her furniture, and with the sum thus raised flee the infected country before it should be too late. She sailed for Boston in the same vessel in which Ben shipped before the mast; and on reaching that port her humble protector took her to the only home he had to offer.

"There your mother's sad fate found a mournful termination; and you, her infant child, were left to the mercy of the cruel woman who, but for consciousness of guilt and her fear of its betrayal, would doubtless have thrust you at once from the miserable shelter her dwelling afforded. This guilt consisted in a foul robbery committed by Nan and her infamous son upon your innocent mother, now rendered, through her feebleness, an easy prey to their rapacity. The fruits of this vile theft, however, were not participated in by Nan, whose promising son so far exceeded her in duplicity and craft that, having obtained possession of the jewels for the alleged purpose of bartering them away, he reserved such as he thought proper, and

appropriated to his own use the proceeds of the remainder.

"The antique ring which I now hold in my possession, the priceless relic of a mournful tragedy, would have shared the fate of the rest but for its apparent worthlessness. To the luckless Stephen, however, it proved at last a temporary salvation from the felon's doom which must finally await that hardened sinner; and to me—ah! to me—it remains to be proved whether the knowledge of the secrets to which it has been the key will bless my future life or darken it with a heavier curse! Notwithstanding the information thus gained, and the exciting idea to which it gave rise, that my child might be still living and finally restored to me, I could not yet feel any security that these daring hopes were not destined to be crushed in their infancy, and that my newly-found treasure might not again elude my eager search. To my inquiries concerning you, Gertrude, Stephen, who had no longer any motives for concealing the truth, declared his inability to acquaint me with any particulars of a later period than the time of your residence with Trueman Flint. He knew that the lamplighter had taken you to his home, and was accidentally made aware, a few months later, of your continuance in that place of refuge from the old man's being such a fool as to call upon his mother and voluntarily make compensation for the injury done to her windows in your outburst of childish revenge.

"I could learn nothing more; but it was enough to inspire all my energies to recover my child. I hastened to Boston, had no difficulty in tracing your benefactor, and, though he had been long dead, found many a truthful witness to his well-known virtues. Nor, when I asked for his adopted child, did I find her forgotten in the quarter of the city where she had passed her childhood. More than one grateful voice was ready to respond to my questioning, and to proclaim the cause they had to remember the girl who, having experienced the trials of poverty, made it both her duty and her pleasure of prosperity to administer to the wants of a neighbourhood whose sufferings she had aforetime both witnessed and shared. But, alas! to complete the sum of sad vicissitudes with which my unhappy destiny was already

crowded, at the moment when I was assured of my daughter's safety, and my ears were greeted with the sweet praises that accompanied the mention of her name, there fell upon me like a thunderbolt the startling words, 'She is now the adopted child of sweet Emily Graham, the blind girl.'

"Oh, strange coincidence! Oh, righteous retribution! which, at the very moment when I was picturing to myself the consummation of my cherished hopes, crushed me once more beneath the iron hand of a destiny that would not be cheated of its victim! My child, my only child, bound by the gratitude and love of years to one in whose face I scarcely dared to look, lest my soul should be withered by the expression of condemnation which the consciousness of my presence would inspire!

"The seas and lands which had hitherto divided us seemed not, to my tortured fancy, so insurmountable a barrier between myself and my long-lost daughter as the dreadful reflection that the only earthly being whose love I had hoped in time to win had been reared from her infancy in a household where my name was a thing abhorred.

"Stung to the quick by the harrowing thought that all my prayers, entreaties, and explanations could never undo her early impressions, and that all my labours and all my love could never call forth other than a cold and formal recognition of my claims, I half resolved to leave my child in ignorance of her birth and never seek to look upon her face, rather than subject her to the terrible necessity of choosing between the friend whom she loved and the father from whose crimes she had learned to shrink with horror and dread. After struggling long with contending emotions, I resolved to make one effort to see and recognize you, Gertrude, and at the same time guard myself from discovery. I trusted to the change which time had wrought in my appearance to conceal me effectually from all eyes but those which had known me intimately, and therefore approached Mr. Graham's house without the slightest fear of betrayal. I found it empty and apparently deserted.

"I now directed my steps to the well-remembered counting-house, and here learned from the clerk that the whole household, including yourself, had been passing the winter in Paris, and were at present at a German watering-place. Without further inquiry I took the steamer to Liverpool, thence hastened to Baden-Baden—a trifling excursion in the eyes of a traveller of my experience. Without risking myself in the presence of my step-father, I took an early opportunity to obtain an introduction to Mrs. Graham, and, thanks to her unreserved conversation, learned that Emily and yourself were left in Boston, and were under the care of Dr. Jeremy.

"On my return voyage, immediately undertaken, I made the acquaintance of Dr. Gryseworth and his daughter—an acquaintance which proved of great value in facilitating my intercourse with yourself. Once more arrived in Boston, Dr. Jeremy's house looked as if closed for the season. A man making some repairs about the door-step informed me that the family were absent from town. He was not aware of the direction they had taken, but the servants were at home and might acquaint me with their route. Upon this I boldly rung the door-bell. It was answered by Mrs. Ellis, who nearly twenty years ago had cruelly sounded in my ears the death-knell of all my hopes in life. I saw that my incognito was secure, as she met my piercing glance without shrinking or taking flight, as I fully expected she would do at sight of the ghost of my former self.

"She replied to my queries as coolly as she had done during the day to some dozen of the doctor's disappointed patients—telling me that he had left that morning for New York, and would not be back for two or three weeks. Nothing could have been more favourable to my wishes than the chance thus afforded of overtaking your party and, as a travelling companion, introducing myself gradually to your notice.

"You know how this purpose was effected; how, now in the rear, and now in advance, I nevertheless maintained a constant proximity to your footsteps. To add to the comfort of yourself and Emily, to learn your plans, forestall your wishes, secure

to your use the best of rooms, and bribe to your service the most devoted of attendants—I spared neither pains, trouble, nor expense. For much of the freedom with which I approached you and made myself an occasional member of your circle, I was indebted to Emily's blindness; for I could not doubt that otherwise time and its changes would fail to conceal from her my identity, and I should meet with a premature recognition. Nor until the final act of the drama, when death stared us all in the face, and concealment became impossible, did I once trust my voice to her hearing.

"How closely, during those few weeks, I watched and weighed your every word and action, seeking even to read your thoughts in your face, none can tell whose acuteness is not sharpened and vivified by motives so all-engrossing as mine; and who can measure the anguish of the fond father who day by day learned to worship his child with a more absorbing idolatry, and yet dared not clasp her to his heart?

"Especially when I saw you the victim of grief and trouble did I long to assert a claim to your confidence; and more than once my self-control would have given way but for the dread inspired by the gentle Emily—gentle to all but me. I could not brook the thought that with my confession I should cease to be the trusted friend and become the abhorred parent. I preferred to maintain my distant and unacknowledged guardianship of my child rather than that she should behold in me the dreaded tyrant who might tear her from the home from which he himself had been driven.

"And so I kept silent; and sometimes present to your sight, but still oftener hid from view, I hovered around your path until that dreadful day, which you will long remember, when, everything forgotten but the safety of yourself and Emily, my heart spoke out and betrayed my secret. And now you know all—my follies, misfortunes, sufferings, and sins!

"Can you love me, Gertrude? It is all I ask. I seek not to steal you from your present home—to rob poor Emily of a child whom she values perhaps as much as I. The

only balm my wounded spirit seeks is the simple, guileless confession that you will at least try to love your father.

"I have no hope in this world, and none, alas! beyond, but in yourself. Could you feel my heart now beating against its prison bars, you would realize, as I do, that unless soothed it will burst ere long. Will you soothe it by your pity, my sweet, my darling child? Will you bless it by your love? If so, come, clasp your arms around me, and whisper to me words of peace. Within sight of your window, in the old summer-house at the end of the garden, with straining ear, I wait listening for your footsteps."

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE REUNION.

As Gertrude's eyes, after greedily devouring the manuscript, fell upon its closing words she sprang to her feet, and the next instant she has run down the staircase, run out of the hall door, and approached the summer-house from the opposite entrance to that at which Mr. Amory, with folded arms and a fixed countenance, is watching for her coming.

So noiseless is her light step, that before he is conscious of her presence, she has thrown herself upon his bosom and, her whole frame trembling with the vehemence of long-suppressed agitation, burst into a torrent of passionate tears, interrupted only by frequent sobs, so deep and so exhausting that her father, with his arms folded around her, and clasping her so closely to his heart that she feels its irregular beating, endeavours to still the tempest of her grief, whispering softly, as to an infant, "Hush! hush, my child! you frighten me!"

And, gradually soothed by his gentle caresses, her excitement subsides, and she is able to lift her face to his and smile upon him through her tears. They stand thus for

many minutes in a silence that speaks far more than words. Wrapped in the folds of his heavy cloak to preserve her from the evening air, and still encircled in his strong embrace, Gertrude feels that their union of spirit is not less complete; while the long-banished man, who for years has never felt the sweet influence of a kindly smile, glows with a melting tenderness which hardening solitude has not the power to subdue. At length Mr. Amory, lifting his daughter's face and gazing into her glistening eyes, while he gently strokes the disordered hair from her forehead, asks, in an accent of touching appeal, "You will love me, then?"

"Oh, I do! I do!" exclaimed Gertrude, sealing his lips with kisses. His hitherto unmoved countenance relaxes at this fervent assurance. He bows his head upon her shoulder, and the strong man weeps. Her self-possession all restored, at seeing him thus overcome, Gertrude places her hand in his, and startles him from his position by the firm and decided tone with which she whispers, "Come!"

"Whither?" exclaims he, looking up in surprise.

"To Emily."

With a half shudder and a mournful shake of the head, he retreats instead of advancing in the direction in which she would lead him—"I cannot."

"But she waits for you; she, too, weeps and longs and prays for your coming."

"Emily!—you know not what you are saying!"

"Indeed, my father; it is you who are deceived. Emily does not hate you; she never did. She believed you dead long ago; but your voice, though heard but once, has half robbed her of her reason so entirely does she love you still. Come, and she will tell you, better than I can, what a wretched mistake has made martyrs of you both."

Emily, who had heard the voice of Willie Sullivan, as he bade Gertrude farewell on the door-step, and rightly conjectured that it was he, forbore making any inquiries for the absent girl at the tea-table, and thinking it probable that she preferred to remain undisturbed, retired to the sitting-room at the conclusion of the meal, where

(as Mr. Graham sought the library) she remained alone for more than an hour.

The refined taste which always made Emily's dress an index to the soft purity of her character was never more strikingly developed than when she wore, as on the present occasion, a flowing robe of white cashmere, fastened at the waist with a silken girdle, and with full drapery sleeves, whose lining and border of snowy silk could only have been rivalled by the delicate hand and wrist which had escaped from beneath their folds, and somewhat nervously played with the crimson fringe of a shawl, worn in the chilly dining-room, and thrown carelessly over the arm of the sofa. Supporting herself upon her elbow, she sat with her head bent forward, and apparently deep in thought. Once Mrs. Prime opened the door, looked around the room in search of the housekeeper, and, not finding her, retreated, saying to herself, "Law! dear sakes alive! I wish she only had eyes now, to see how like a picter she looks!"

A low, quick bark from the house-dog attracted her attention, and steps were heard crossing the piazza. Before they had gained the door, Emily was standing upright, straining her ear to catch the sound of every footfall; and, when Gertrude and Mr. Amory entered, she looked more like a statue than a living figure, as with clasped hands, parted lips, and one foot slightly advanced, she silently awaited their approach. One glance at Emily's face, another at that of her agitated father, and Gertrude was gone. She saw the completeness of their mutual recognition, and with instinctive delicacy, forbore to mar by her presence the sacredness of so holy an interview. As the door closed upon her retreating figure, Emily parted her clasped hands, stretched them forth into the dim vacancy, and murmured, "Philip!"

He seized them between both of his, and with one step forward, fell upon his knees. As he did so, the half-fainting Emily dropped upon the seat. Mr. Amory bowed his head upon the hands which, still held tightly between his own, now rested on her lap, and, hiding his face upon her slender fingers, tremblingly uttered her name.

"The grave has given up its dead!" exclaimed Emily. "My God, I thank thee!" and she flung her arms around his neck, rested her head upon his bosom, and whispered, in a voice half choked with emotion, "Philip!—dear, dear Philip! am I dreaming, or have you come back again?"

She and Philip had loved each other in their childhood; before that childhood was passed they had parted; and as children they met again. During the lapse of many years she had lived among the cherished memories of the past, she had been safe from worldly contagion, and had retained all the guileless simplicity of girlhood—all the freshness of her spring-time; and Philip, who had never willingly bound himself by any ties save those imposed upon him by necessity, felt his boyhood come rushing upon him, as, with Emily's soft hand resting on his head, she blessed Heaven for his safe return. She could not see how time had silvered his hair and sobered and shaded the face that she loved.

And to him, as he beheld the face he had half dreaded to encounter beaming with the holy light of sympathy and love, the blind girl's countenance seemed encircled with a halo not of earth. And, therefore, this union had in it less of earth than heaven. Not until, seated beside each other, with their hands still fondly clasped, Philip had heard from Emily's lips the history of her hopes, her fears, her prayers, and her despair; and she, while listening to the sad incidents of his life, had dropped upon the hand she held many a kiss and tear of sympathy, did either fully realise the mercy so long delayed, so fully accorded now, which promised even on earth to crown their days.

Emily wept at the tale of Lucy's trials and her early death, and when she learned that it was hers and Philip's child whom she had taken to her heart, and fostered with the truest affection, she sent up her silent praise that it had been allotted to her apparently bereaved and darkened destiny to fulfil so blessed a mission. "If I could love her more, dear Philip," said she, while the tears trickled down her cheeks, "I would do so, for your sake, and that of her sweet, innocent, suffering mother."

"And you forgive me, then, Emily?" said Philip, as both having finished their sad recitals of the past, they gave themselves up to the sweet reflection of their present joy.

"Forgive? Oh, Philip! what have I to forgive?"

"The deed that locked you in prison darkness," he mournfully replied.

"Philip!" exclaimed Emily, "could you for one moment believe that I attributed that to you?—that I blamed you, for an instant?"

"Not willingly, I am sure, dear Emily. But, oh, you have forgotten that in your time of anguish, not only the obtruding thought but the lip that gave utterance to it, proclaimed how you refused to forgive the cruel hand that wrought you so much woe!"

"You cruel, Philip! Never did I so abuse and wrong you. If my unfilial heart sinfully railed against the cruel injustice of my father, it was never guilty of such treachery towards you."

"That fiendish woman lied, then, when she told me that you shuddered at my very name?"

"If I shuddered, Philip, it was because I recoiled at the thought of the wrong you had sustained; and oh, believe me, if she gave you any other assurance than of my continued love, it was because she laboured under a sad error."

"Good heavens!" ejaculated Philip; "how wickedly have I been deceived!"

"Not wickedly," replied Emily. "Mrs. Ellis was in that instance the victim of circumstances. She was a stranger among us, and believed you other than you were; but, had you seen her a few weeks later, sobbing over her share in the unhappy transaction which drove you to desperation, and as we then supposed to death, you would have felt that we had misjudged her, and that she carried a heart of flesh beneath a stony disguise. The bitterness of her grief was united with remorse at the

recollection of her own harshness. Let us forget the sad events of the past, and trust that the loving hand which has thus far shaped our course has but afflicted us in mercy."

"In mercy!" exclaimed Philip. "What mercy does my past experience give evidence of, or your life of everlasting darkness? Can you believe it a loving hand which made me the ill-fated instrument, and you the life-long sufferer, from one of the dreariest misfortunes that can afflict humanity?"

"Speak not of my blindness as a misfortune," answered Emily; "I have long ceased to think it such. It is only through the darkness of the night that we discern the lights of heaven, and only when shut out from earth that we enter the gates of Paradise. With eyes to see the wonderful working of nature and nature's God, I nevertheless closed them to the evidences of Almighty love that were around me on every side. While enjoying the beautiful gifts that were showered on my pathway, I forgot to praise the Giver; but, with an ungrateful heart, walked sinfully on, little dreaming of the deceitful snares which entangle the footsteps of youth. And therefore did he, who is ever over us for good, arrest with fatherly hand the child who was wandering from the road that leads to peace; and, though the discipline of his chastening rod was sudden and severe, mercy tempered justice. From the tomb of my buried joys sprang hopes that will bloom in immortality. From the clouds and the darkness broke forth a glorious light. Then grieve not, dear Philip, over the fate that is far from sad; but rejoice with me in the thought of that blessed and not far distant awakening, when, with restored and beautiful vision, I shall stand before God's throne, in full view of that glorious Presence, from which, but for the guiding light which has burst upon my spirit through the veil of earthly darkness, I might have been eternally shut out."

As Emily finished speaking, and Philip, gazing with awe upon the rapt expression of her soul-illumined face, beheld the triumph of an immortal mind, and pondered on

the might, the majesty, and power of the influence wrought by simple piety, the door of the room opened abruptly and Mr. Graham entered.

The sound of the well-known footstep disturbed the soaring thoughts of both, and the flush of excitement which had mounted into Emily's cheeks subsided into more than her wonted paleness as Philip, rising slowly from her side, stood face to face with her father.

Mr. Graham approached with the scrutinizing air of one called upon to greet a visitor who, though an apparent stranger, may possibly have claims to recognition, and glanced at his daughter as if hoping she would relieve the awkwardness by an introduction. But the agitated Emily maintained perfect silence, and every feature of Philip's countenance remained immovable as Mr. Graham slowly came forward.

He had advanced within one step of the spot where Philip stood waiting to receive him, when, struck by the stern look and attitude of the latter, he stopped short, gazed one moment into the eagle eyes of his step-son, then staggered, grasped at the mantel-piece, and would have fallen, but Philip, starting forward, helped him to his arm-chair. And yet no word was spoken. At length Mr. Graham, who, having fallen into the seat, sat still gazing into the face of Mr. Amory, ejaculated in a tone of wondering excitement, "Philip Amory! Oh, my God!"

"Yes, father," exclaimed Emily, suddenly rising and grasping her father's arm; "it is Philip; he whom we have so long believed among the dead, restored to us in health and safety!"

Mr. Graham rose from his chair and, leaning heavily on Emily's shoulder, again approached Mr. Amory, who, with folded arms, stood fixed as marble. His step tottered with a feebleness never before observable in the sturdy frame of the old man, and the hand which he extended to Philip was marked by an unusual tremulousness. But Philip did not offer to receive the proffered hand, or reply by word to the rejected salutation.

Mr. Graham turned towards Emily and, forgetting that this neglect was shut from her sight, exclaimed half-bitterly, half-sadly, "I cannot blame him! God knows I wronged the boy!"

"Wronged him!" cried Philip, in a voice almost fearful. "Yes, wronged him, indeed! Blighted his life, crushed his youth, half broke his heart, and wholly blighted his reputation!"

"No," exclaimed Mr. Graham, who had quailed beneath these accusations, until he reached the final one; "not that, Philip!—not that! I never harmed you there; I discovered my error before I had doomed you to infamy in the eyes of one of your fellow-men."

"You acknowledge, then, the error?"

"I do, I do! I imputed to you the deed which proved to have been accomplished through the agency of my most confidential clerk. I learned the truth almost immediately; but too late, alas! to recall you. Then came the news of your death, and I felt that the injury had been irreparable. But it was not strange, Philip; you must allow that. Archer had been in my employment more than twenty years. I believed him trustworthy."

"No! oh, no!" replied Philip. "It was nothing strange that, a crime committed, you should have readily ascribed it to me. You thought me capable only of evil."

"I was unjust, Philip," answered Mr. Graham, with an attempt to rally his dignity; "but I had some cause."

"Perhaps so," responded Philip; "I am willing to grant that."

"Let us shake hands upon it, then," said Mr. Graham, "and endeavour to forget the past."

Philip acceded to this request, though there was but little warmth in the manner of his compliance. Mr. Graham looked relieved from a burden which had been

oppressing his conscience for years, and, subsiding into his arm-chair, begged the particulars of Philip's experience during the last twenty years.

The outline of the story was soon told, Mr. Graham listening to it with attention, and inquiring into its particulars with an interest which proved that, during a lengthened period of regret and remorse, his feelings had sensibly softened towards the step-son, with every memory of whom there had come to his heart a pang of self-reproach.

Mr. Amory was unable to afford any satisfactory explanation of the report of his own death which had been confidently affirmed by Dr. Jeremy's correspondent at Rio. Upon a comparison of dates, however, it seemed probable that the doctor's agent had obtained this information from Philip's employer, who had every reason to believe that the young man had perished of the prevailing infection.

To Philip himself it was almost an equal matter of wonder that his friends should ever have obtained knowledge of his flight and destination. But this was easily accounted for, since the vessel in which he had embarked returned directly to Boston, and there were among her crew and officers those who could reply to the inquiries which the benevolent doctor had set on foot some months before, accompanied by the offer of a liberal reward.

Notwithstanding the many romantic incidents which were unfolding themselves, none seemed to produce so great an impression upon Mr. Graham's mind as the singular circumstance that the child who had been reared under his roof, and endeared herself to him, in spite of some clashing of interests and opinions, should prove to be Philip's daughter. As he left the room at the conclusion of the tale, and sought the solitude of his library, he muttered to himself, "Singular coincidence! Very singular! Very!"

Hardly had he departed before another door was timidly opened, and Gertrude looked cautiously in. Her father went quickly towards her, and, passing his arm

around her waist, drew her towards Emily, and clasped them both in a long and silent embrace.

"Philip," exclaimed Emily, "can you doubt the mercy which has spared us for such a meeting?"

"Oh, Emily!" replied he, "I am deeply grateful. Teach me how and where to bestow my tribute of praise."

On the hour of sweet communion which succeeded we forbear to dwell—the silent rapture of Emily, the passionately-expressed joy of Philip, or the trusting, loving glances which Gertrude cast upon both. It was nearly midnight when Mr. Amory rose to depart. Emily, who had not thought of his leaving the spot which she hoped he would now consider his home, entreated him to remain; and Gertrude, with her eyes, joined in the eager petition. But he persisted in his resolution with firmness and seriousness.

"Philip," said Emily, laying her hand upon his arm, "you have not yet forgiven my father." She had divined his thoughts. He shrank under her reproachful tones, and made no answer.

"But you will, dear Philip—you will," continued she, in a pleading voice.

He hesitated, then glanced at her once more, and replied, "I will, dearest Emily, I will—in time."

When he had gone, Gertrude lingered a moment at the door, to watch his retreating figure, just visible in the light of the waning moon, then returned to the parlour, and saying, "Oh, what a day this has been!" but checked herself, at the sight of Emily, who, kneeling by the sofa with clasped hands, and with her white garments sweeping the floor, looked the very impersonation of purity and prayer. Throwing one arm around her neck, Gertrude knelt on the floor beside her, and together they sent up to the throne of God the incense of thanksgiving and praise!

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE RECOMPENSE.

When Uncle True died, Mr. Cooper buried his old friend in the ancient graveyard which adjoined the church where he had long officiated as sexton. But long before the time-worn building gave place to a modern structure the hallowed remains of Uncle True had found a quieter resting-place—even a beautiful piece of undulating woodland in the neighbourhood of Mr. Graham's country residence, which had been consecrated as a rural cemetery; and in the loveliest nook of this beautiful spot the ashes of the good old lamplighter found their final repose.

This lot of land, which had been purchased by Willie's liberality, selected by Gertrude, and by her made fragrant with summer rose and winter ivy, now enclosed also the forms of Mr. Cooper and Mrs. Sullivan; and over these three graves Gertrude had planted many a flower and watered it with her tears. Especially did she view it as a sacred duty and privilege to mark the anniversary of the death of each by a tribute of fresh garlands; and, with this pious purpose in view, she left Mr. Graham's house one beautiful afternoon about a week after the events narrated in the previous chapter.

She carried on her arm a basket, containing her offering of flowers; and, as she had a long walk before her, started at a rapid pace. Let us follow her, and briefly pursue the train of thought which accompanied her on her way. She had left her father with Emily. She would not ask him to join her in her walk, though he had once expressed a desire to visit the grave of Uncle True, for he and Emily were talking together so contentedly, it would have been a pity to disturb them; and Gertrude's reflections were engrossed by the thought of their tranquil happiness. She thought of herself, too, as associated with them both; of the deep and long-tried love of Emily, and of the fond outpourings of affection daily and hourly lavished upon her by her

newly-found parent, and felt that she could scarcely repay their kindness by the devotion of a lifetime.

She tried to banish the remembrance of Willie's faithlessness and desertion. But the painful recollection presented itself continually, notwithstanding her utmost efforts to repress it; and at last, ceasing the struggle, she gave herself up for the time to a deep and saddening reverie. She had received two visits from Willie since the first; but the second meeting had been in its character very similar, and on the succeeding occasion the constraint had increased instead of diminishing. Several times Willie had made an effort to speak and act with the freedom of former days; but a sudden blush, or sign of confusion and distress, on Gertrude's part, deterred him from any further attempt to put to flight the reserve which subsisted in their intercourse. Again, Gertrude, who had resolved, previous to his last visit, to meet him with frankness, smiled upon him affectionately at his coming, and offered her hand with such sisterly freedom, that he was emboldened to take and retain in his grasp, and was on the point of unburdening his mind of some weighty secret, when she turned abruptly away, took up some trivial piece of work, and while she seemed absorbed in it, addressed to him an unimportant question—a course of conduct which disconcerted him for the remainder of his stay.

As Gertrude pondered the distressing results of every visit, she half hoped he would discontinue them, believing that their feelings would be less wounded by a total separation than by interviews which must leave on the mind of each a still greater sense of estrangement.

Strange, she had not yet acquainted him with the event so interesting to herself—the discovery of her dearly-loved father. Once she tried to speak of it, but was so overcome at the idea of imparting to the confidant of her childhood an experience of which she could scarcely yet think without emotion, that she paused in the attempt, fearing that, should she on any topic give way to her sensibilities, she should lose all

restraint over her feelings and lay open her whole heart to Willie.

But one thing distressed her more than all others. In his first attempt to throw off all disguise, Willie had more than intimated to her his own unhappiness; and ere she could find an opportunity to change the subject and repel a confidence for which she still felt herself unprepared, he had spoken mournfully over his future prospects in life.

The only construction which Gertrude could give to this confession was that it had reference to his engagement with Isabel, and it gave rise to the suspicion that, infatuated by her beauty, he had impulsively bound himself to one who could never make him happy. The little scenes to which she herself had been a witness corroborated this idea, as, on both occasions of her seeing the lovers and overhearing their words, some cause of vexation seemed to exist on Willie's part. "He loves her," thought Gertrude, "and is also bound to her in honour; but he sees already the want of harmony in their natures. Poor Willie! It is impossible he should ever be happy with Isabel."

And Gertrude's sympathising heart mourned not more deeply over her own griefs than over the disappointment that Willie must be experiencing, if he had ever hoped to find peace in a union with so overbearing, ill-humoured, and unreasonable a girl.

Wholly occupied with these and similar musings, she walked on with a quickness she was scarcely herself aware of, and soon gained the shelter of the heavy pines which bordered the entrance to the cemetery. Here she paused to enjoy the refreshing breeze that played beneath the branches; and, passing through the gateway, entered a carriage-road at the right, and proceeded slowly up the ascent. The place, always quiet and peaceful, seemed unusually still and secluded, and save the occasional carol of a bird, there was no sound to disturb the perfect silence and repose. As Gertrude gazed upon the familiar beauties of those sacred grounds which had been her frequent resort during several years—as she walked between beds of

flowers, inhaled the fragrant and balmy air, and felt the solemn appeal, the spiritual breathings, that haunted the holy place—every motion that was not in harmony with the scene gradually took its flight, and she experienced only that sensation of sweet and half-joyful melancholy which was awakened by the thought of the happy dead.

After a while she left the broad road and turned into a little bypath, and then again to a narrower foot-track, and gained the shady and retired spot which had recommended itself to her choice. It was situated on the slope of a little hill; a huge rock protected it on one side from the observation of the passer-by, and a fine old oak overshadowed it upon the other. The iron enclosure, of simple workmanship, was nearly overgrown by the green ivy, which had been planted there by Gertrude's hand, and the moss-grown rock was festooned by its tendrils. Upon a jutting stone beside the grave of Uncle True Gertrude seated herself, and after a few moments of contemplation sighed heavily, emptied her flowers upon the grass, and commenced weaving a graceful chaplet, which, when completed, she placed upon the grave at her feet. With the remainder of the blossoms she strewed the other mounds; and then, drawing forth a pair of gardening gloves and a little trowel, she employed herself for nearly an hour among the flowers and vines with which she had embowered the spot. Her work finished, she again placed herself at the foot of the old rock, removed her gloves, pushed back from her forehead the braids of her hair, and appeared to be resting from her labours.

It was seven years that day since Uncle True died, but Gertrude had not forgotten the kind old man. As she gazed upon the grassy mound that covered him, and scene after scene rose up before her in which that earliest friend and herself had whiled away the happy hours, there came, to embitter the cherished remembrance, the recollection of that third and seldom absent one who completed the memory of their fireside joys; and Gertrude, while yielding to the inward reflection, unconsciously exclaimed aloud, "Oh, Uncle True! you and I are not parted yet; but Willie is not of us!"

"Oh, Gertrude," said a reproachful voice close at her side, "is Willie to blame for that?" She started, turned, saw the object of her thoughts with his mild sad eye fixed inquiringly upon her, and, without replying to his question, buried her face in her hands.

He threw himself upon the ground at her feet, and, as on the occasion of their first childish interview, gently lifted her bowed head from the hands upon which it had fallen, and compelled her to look him in the face, saying at the same time in the most imploring accents, "Tell me, Gerty, in pity tell me, why I am excluded from your sympathy?" But still she made no answer, except by the tears that coursed down her cheeks.

"You make me miserable," continued he. "What have I done that you have so shut me out of your affection? Why do you look so coldly upon me—and even shrink from my sight?" added he, as Gertrude, unable to endure his searching look, turned her eyes in another direction and strove to free her hands from his grasp.

"I am not cold—I do not mean to be," said she, her voice half-choked with emotion.

"Oh, Gertrude," replied he, relinquishing her hands and turning away, "I see you have ceased to love me. I trembled when I first beheld you, so lovely, so beautiful, and so beloved by all, and feared lest some fortunate rival had stolen your heart from its boyish keeper. But even then I did not deem that you would refuse me, at least, a brother's claim to your affection."

"I will not," exclaimed Gertrude eagerly. "Oh, Willie, you must not be angry with me! Let me be your sister!"

He smiled a most mournful smile, and said, "I was right, then; you feared lest I should claim too much, and discouraged my presumption by awarding me nothing. Be it so. Perhaps your prudence was for the best; but, oh Gertrude, it has made me heartbroken."

"Willie!" exclaimed Gertrude, with excitement, "do you know how strangely you are

speaking?"

"Strangely?" responded Willie, in a half-offended tone. "Is it so strange that I should love you? Have I not for years cherished the remembrance of our past affection, and looked forward to our reunion as my only hope of happiness? Has not this fond expectation inspired my labours, and cheered my toils, and endeared to me my life, in spite of its bereavements? And can you, in the very sight of these cold mounds, beneath which lie buried all else that I held dear on earth, crush and destroy without compassion this solitary but all-engrossing——"

"Willie," interrupted Gertrude, her calmness suddenly restored, and speaking in a kind but serious tone, "is it honourable for you to address me thus? Have you forgotten——"

"No, I have not forgotten," exclaimed he vehemently. "I have not forgotten that I have no right to distress or annoy you, and I will do so no more. But oh, Gerty! my sister Gerty (since all hope of a nearer tie is at an end), blame me not, and wonder not, if I fail at present to perform a brother's part. I cannot stay in this neighbourhood. I cannot be the patient witness of another's happiness. My services, my time, my life, you may command, and in my far-distant home I will never cease to pray that the husband you have chosen, whoever he be, may prove himself worthy of my noble Gertrude, and love her one-half as well as I do!"

"Willie!" said Gertrude, "what madness is this? I am bound by no such tie as you describe; but what shall I think of your treachery to Isabel?"

"To Isabel!" cried Willie, starting up, as if seized with a new idea; "and has that silly rumour reached you too? and did you put faith in the falsehood?"

"Falsehood!" exclaimed Gertrude, lifting her hitherto drooping eyelids and casting upon him, through their wet lashes, a look of earnest scrutiny.

Calmly returning a glance which he had neither avoided nor quailed under, Willie responded unhesitatingly, and with a tone of astonishment not unmingled with

reproach, "Falsehood! Yes. With the knowledge you have both of her and myself, could you doubt its being such for a moment?"

"Oh, Willie!" cried Gertrude, "could I doubt the evidence of my own eyes and ears? Had I trusted to less faithful witnesses, I might have been deceived. Do not attempt to conceal from me the truth, to which my own observation can testify. Treat me with frankness, Willie! Indeed, indeed, I deserve it at your hands!"

"Frankness, Gertrude! it is you only who are mysterious. Could I lay my whole soul bare to your gaze, you would be convinced of its truth, its perfect truth, to its first affection. And as to Isabel Clinton, if it is to her that you have reference, your eyes and your ears have both played you false, if——"

"Oh, Willie! Willie!" exclaimed Gertrude, interrupting him; "have you so soon forgotten your devotion to the belle of Saratoga, your unwillingness to sanction her temporary absence from your sight, the pain which the mere suggestion of the journey caused you, and the fond impatience which threatened to render those few days an eternity?"

"Stop! stop!" cried Willie, a new light breaking in upon him, "and tell me where you learned all this?"

"In the very spot where you spoke and acted. Mr. Graham's parlour did not witness our first meeting. In the public promenade-ground, on the shore of Saratoga lake, and on board the steamboat at Albany, did I both see and recognize you—myself unknown. There, too, did your own words serve to convince me of the truth of that which from other lips I had refused to believe."

"Listen to me, Gertrude," said he, in a fervent and almost solemn tone, "and believe that in sight of my mother's grave, and in the presence of that pure spirit (and he looked reverently upward) who taught me the love of truth, I speak with such sincerity and candour as are fitting for the ears of angels. I do not question the accuracy with which you overheard my expostulations and entreaties on the subject

of Miss Clinton's proposed journey, or the impatience I expressed at parting for her speedy return. I will not pause either to inquire where the object of all my thoughts could have been at the time that, notwithstanding the changes of years, she escaped my eager eyes. Let me first clear myself of the imputation, and then there will be room for all further explanations.

"I did feel pain at Miss Clinton's sudden departure for New York, under a pretext which ought not to have weighed with her for a moment. I did employ every argument to dissuade her from her purpose; and when my eloquence had failed to induce the abandonment of the scheme, I availed myself of every suggestion and motive which possibly might influence her to shorten her absence. Not because the society of the selfish girl was essential, or even conducive, to my happiness—far from it—but because her excellent father, who so worshipped and idolized his only child that he would have thought no sacrifice too great to promote her enjoyment, was at the very time, amid all the discomfort of a crowded watering-place, hovering between life and death, and I was disgusted at the heartlessness which voluntarily left the fondest of parents deprived of all female tending, to the charge of a hired nurse and an unskillful though willing youth like myself. That eternity might, in Miss Clinton's absence, set a seal to the life of her father was a thought which in my indignation I was on the point of uttering, but I checked myself, unwilling to interfere too far in a matter which came not within my rightful province, and perhaps excite unnecessary alarm in Isabel. If selfishness mingled at all in my views, dear Gerty, and made me over-impatient for the return of the daughter to her post of duty, it was that I might be released from almost constant attendance upon my invalid friend, and hasten to her from whom I hoped such warmth of greeting as I was only eager to bestow. Can you wonder, then, that your reception struck cold upon my throbbing heart?"

"But you understand the cause of that coldness now," said Gertrude, looking up at him through a rain of tears, which like a summer sun-shower reflected itself in

rainbow smiles upon her happy countenance. "You know now why I dared not let my heart speak out."

"And this was all, then?" cried Willie; "and you are free, and I may love you still?"

"Free from all bonds, dear Willie, but those which you yourself clasped around me, and which have encircled me from my childhood."

And now, with heart pressed to heart, they pour in each other's ear the tale of mutual affection, planted in infancy, nourished in youth, fostered and strengthened amid separation and absence, and perfected through trial, to bless and sanctify every year of their after life.

"But, Gerty," exclaimed Willie as, confidence restored, they sat side by side conversing freely of the past, "how could you think for an instant that Isabel Clinton would have power to displace you in my regard? I was not guilty of so great an injustice towards you; for even when I believed myself supplanted by another, I fancied that other hero of such shining qualities as could scarcely be surpassed."

"And who could surpass Isabel?" inquired Gerty. "Can you wonder that I trembled for your allegiance when I thought of her beauty, her fashion, her family, and her wealth, and remembered the forcible manner in which all these were presented to your sight and knowledge?"

"But what are all these, Gerty, to one who knows her as we do? Do not a proud eye and a scornful lip destroy the effect of beauty? Can fashion excuse rudeness, or noble birth cover natural deficiencies? And as to money, what did I ever want of that, except to employ it for the happiness of yourself—and them?" and he glanced at the graves of his mother and grandfather.

"Oh, Willie! you are so disinterested."

"Not in this case. Had Isabel possessed the beauty of a Venus and the wisdom of a Minerva, I could not have forgotten how little happiness there could be with one who, while devoting herself to the pursuit of pleasure, had become dead to natural

affections and indifferent to the holiest of duties. Could I see her flee from the bedside of her father to engage in the frivolities and drink in the flatteries of an idle crowd—or, when unwillingly summoned thither, shrink from the toils and watchings imposed by his feebleness—and still imagine that such a woman could bless and adorn a fireside? Could I fail to contrast her unfeeling neglect, ill-concealed petulance, flagrant levity, and irreverence of spirit, with the sweet and loving devotion, the saintly patience, and the deep and fervent piety of my own Gertrude? I should have been false to myself, as well as to you, dearest, if such traits of character as Miss Clinton constantly evinced could have ever weakened my love and admiration for yourself. And now, to see the little playmate whose image I cherished so fondly matured into the lovely and graceful woman, her sweet attractions crowned by so much beauty as to place her beyond recognition, and still her heart as much my own as ever! Oh, Gerty, it is too much happiness! Would that I could impart a share of it to those who loved us both so well!"

And who can say that they did not share it?—that the spirit of Uncle True was not there to witness the completion of his many hopeful prophecies? that the old grandfather was not there to see all his doubts and fears giving place to joyful certainties? and that the soul of the gentle mother whose rapt slumbers had even in life foreshadowed such a meeting, and who, by the lessons she had given her child in his boyhood, the warnings spoken to his later years, and the ministering guidance of her disembodied spirit, had fitted him for the struggle with temptation, sustained him through its trials, and restored him triumphant to the sweet friend of his infancy—who shall say that even now she hovered not over them with parted wings, realising the joy prefigured in that dreamy vision which pictured to her sight the union between the son and the daughter of her love, when the one, shielded by her fond care from every danger and snatched, from the power of temptation, should be restored to the arms of the other who, by a long and patient continuance in well-doing, had earned so full a recompense, so all-sufficient a reward?

CHAPTER XLVIII.

ANCHORS FOR WORLD-TRIED SOULS.

The sunset hour was near when Gertrude and Willie rose to depart. They left the cemetery by a different gateway, and in the opposite direction to that by which Gertrude had entered. Here Willie found the chaise in which he had come, though the horse had contrived to loosen the bridle by which he was fastened, had strayed to the side of the road, eaten as much grass as he wished, and was now sniffing the air, looking up and down the road, and, despairing of his master's return, seemed on the point of taking his departure. He was reclaimed, however, without difficulty, and, as if glad after his long rest to be again in motion, brought them in half-an-hour to Mr. Graham's door.

As soon as they came in sight of the house, Gertrude, familiar with the customary ways of the family, perceived that something unusual was going forward. Lamps were moving about in every direction; the front door stood wide open; there was, what she had never seen before, the blaze of a bright fire discernible through the windows of the best chamber; and as they drew still nearer she observed that the piazza was half covered with trunks.

All these appearances, as she rightly conjectured, betokened the arrival of Mrs. Graham, and possibly of other company. She might perhaps have regretted the ill-timed coming of this bustling lady at the moment when she was eager for a quiet opportunity to present Willie to Emily and her father, and communicate to them her own happiness; but if such a thought presented itself it vanished in a moment. Her joy was too complete to be marred by so trifling a disappointment. "Let us drive up the avenue, Willie," said she, "to the side-door, so that George may see us and take your horse to the stable."

"No," said Willie, as he stopped opposite the front gate; "I can't come in now—there

seems to be a house full of company, and besides I have an appointment in town at eight o'clock, and promised to be punctual;"—he glanced at his watch and added, "it is near that already. I did not think of its being so late; but I shall see you to-morrow morning, may I not?" She looked her assent, and, with a warm grasp of the hand as he helped her from the chaise, and a mutual smile of confidence and love, they separated.

He drove rapidly towards Boston, and she, opening the gate, found herself in the arms of Fanny Bruce, who had been impatiently waiting the departure of Willie to seize her dear Miss Gertrude and, between tears and kisses, pour out her congratulations and thanks for her happy escape from that horrid steamboat—for this was the first time they had met since the accident.

"Has Mrs. Graham come, Fanny?" asked Gertrude, as they walked up to the house together.

"Yes, indeed; Mrs. Graham, and Kitty, and Isabel, and a little girl, and a sick gentleman—Mr. Clinton, I believe; and another gentleman—but he's gone."

"Who has gone?"

"Oh, a tall, dignified-looking man, with black eyes, and a beautiful face, and hair as white as if he were old—and he isn't old either."

"And do you say he has gone?"

"Yes; he didn't come with the rest. He was here when I came, and he went away about an hour ago. I heard him tell Miss Emily that he had agreed to meet a friend in Boston, but perhaps he'd come back this evening. I hope he will, Miss Gertrude; you ought to see him."

They had now reached the house, and through the open door Gertrude could plainly distinguish the loud tones of Mrs. Graham's voice proceeding from the parlour on the right. She was talking to her husband and Emily, and was just saying as Gertrude entered, "Oh, it was the most awful thing I ever heard of in my life! and to think,

Emily, of your being on board, and our Isabel! Poor child! she hasn't got her colour back yet after the fright. And Gertrude Flint, too! By the way, they say Gertrude behaved very well. Where is the child?"

Turning round, she now saw Gertrude, who was just entering the room, and, going towards her, she kissed her with considerable heartiness and sincerity; for Mrs. Graham, though somewhat coarse and blunt, was not without good feelings when the occasion was such as to awaken them.

Gertrude's entrance having served to interrupt the stream of exclamatory remarks in which the excitable lady had been indulging for ten minutes or more, she now bethought herself of the necessity of removing her bonnet and outside garments, a part of which, being loosed from their fastenings, she had been dragging after her about the floor.

"Well!" exclaimed she, "I suppose I had better follow the girls' example and get some of the dust off from me! I'm half buried, I believe! But there, that's better than coming on in the horrid steamboat last night, as my brother Clinton was so crazy as to propose. Where's Bridget? I want her to take up some of my things."

"I will assist you," said Gertrude, taking up a little carpet-bag, throwing a scarf, which had been stretching across the room, over her arm, and then following Mrs. Graham closely, in order to support the heavy travelling-shawl which was hanging half off that lady's shoulders. At the first landing-place, however, she found herself suddenly encircled in Kitty's warm embrace, and, laying down her burdens, gave herself up for a few moments to the hugging and kissing that succeeded.

At the head of the staircase she met Isabel, wrapped in a dressing gown, with a large pitcher in her hand, and a most discontented expression of countenance. She set the pitcher on the floor, however, and saluted Gertrude with a good grace. "I'm glad to see you alive," said she, "though I cannot look at you without shuddering; it reminds me so of that dreadful day when we were in such frightful danger. How lucky we

were to be saved, when there were so many drowned! I've wondered ever since, Gertrude, how you could be so calm; I'm sure I shouldn't have known what to do if you hadn't been there to suggest. But, oh dear! don't let us speak of it; it's a thing I cant' bear to think of!" and with a shudder and shrug of the shoulders, Isabel dismissed the subject and called somewhat pettishly to Kitty—"Kitty, I thought you went to get our pitcher filled!"

Kitty, who, in obedience to a loud call and demand from her aunt, had hastily run to her room with the little travelling-bag which Gertrude had dropped on the staircase, now came back quite out of breath, saying, "I did ring the bell twice. Hasn't anybody come?"

"No!" replied Belle! "and I should like to wash my face and curl my hair before tea, if I could."

"Let me take the pitcher," said Gertrude; "I am going downstairs, and will send Jane up with the water."

"Thank you," said Belle, rather feebly; while Kitty exclaimed, "No, no, Gertrude; I'll go myself."

But it was too late; Gertrude had gone.

Gertrude found Mrs. Ellis full of troubles and perplexities. "Only think," said the astonished housekeeper, "of their coming, five of them, without the least warning in the world; and here I've nothing in the house fit for tea; not a bit of rich cake, not a scrap of cold ham. And of course they're hungry after their long journey, and will want something nice."

"Oh, if they are very hungry, Mrs. Ellis, they can eat dried beef and fresh biscuit and plain cake; and if you will give me the keys I will get out the preserves and the best silver, and see that the table is set properly."

Nothing was a trouble to Gertrude that night. Everything that she touched went right. Jane caught her spirit and became astonishingly active; and when the really

bountiful table was spread, and Mrs. Ellis, after glancing around and seeing that all was as it should be, looked into the beaming eyes and observed the glowing cheek and sunny smile of the happy girl, she exclaimed, in her ignorance, "Good gracious, Gertrude, anybody would think you were over-joyed to see all these folks back again!"

It wanted but a few moments to tea-time, and Gertrude was selecting fresh napkins from a drawer in the china-closet, when Kitty Ray peeped in at the door and finally entered, leading by the hand a little girl neatly dressed in black. Her face was at first full of smiles; but the moment she attempted to speak she burst into tears, and throwing her arms round Gertrude's neck, whispered in her ear, "Oh, Gertrude, I'm so happy! I came to tell you!"

"Happy?" replied Gertrude; "then you mustn't cry."

Upon this Kitty laughed, and then cried again, and then laughed once more, and in the interval explained to Gertrude that she was engaged—had been engaged a week to the best man in the world—and that the child she held by the hand was his orphan niece, and just like a daughter to him. "And only think," continued she, "it's all owing to you."

"To me?" said the astonished Gertrude.

"Yes; because I was so vain and silly, you know, and liked folks that were not worth liking, and didn't care much for anybody's comfort but my own; and, if you hadn't taught me to be something better than that, and set me a good example, which I've tried to follow ever since, he never would have thought of looking at me, much less loving me, and believing I should be a fit mother for little Gracie here," and she looked down affectionately at the child, who was clinging fondly to her. "He is a minister, Gertrude, and very good. Only think of such a childish creature as I am being a minister's wife!" The sympathy which Kitty came to claim was not denied her, and Gertrude, with her own eyes brimming with tears, assured her of her

participation in her joy.

In the meantime little Gracie, who still clung to Kitty with one hand, had gently inserted the other within that of Gertrude, who, looking down upon her for the first time, recognized the child whom she had rescued from persecution in the drawing-room at Saratoga.

Kitty was charmed with the coincidence, and Gertrude, as she remarked the happy transformation which had already been effected in the countenance and dress of the little girl, who had been so sadly in want of female superintendence, felt an added conviction of the wisdom of the young clergyman's choice.

Mr. Graham's cheerful parlour had never looked so cheerful as on that evening. The weather was mild, but a light fire, which had been kindled on Mr. Clinton's account, did not render the room too warm. It had, however, driven the young people into a remote corner, leaving the neighbourhood of the fire-place to Mrs. Graham and Emily, who occupied the sofa, and Mr. Clinton and Mr. Graham, whose arm-chairs were placed on the opposite side.

This arrangement enabled Mr. Graham to converse freely and uninterruptedly with his guest upon some grave topic of interest, while his talkative wife entertained herself and Emily by a recapitulation of her travels and adventures. On a table, at the further extremity of the room, was placed a huge portfolio of beautiful engravings, recently purchased and brought home by Mr. Graham, and representing a series of European views. Gertrude and Kitty were turning them carefully over; and little Gracie, who was sitting in Kitty's lap, and Fanny, who was leaning over Gertrude's shoulder, were listening eagerly to the young ladies' explanations and comments.

Occasionally Isabel, the only restless or unoccupied person present, would lean over the table to glance at the likeness of some familiar spot, and exclaim, "Kitty, there's the shop where I bought my blue silk!" or, "Kitty, there's the waterfall that we visited in company with the Russian officers." And now the door opened, and,

without any announcement, Mr. Amory and William Sullivan entered.

Had either made his appearance singly, he would have been looked upon with astonishment by the majority of the company; but coming together, and with an apparently good understanding existing between them, there was no countenance present which expressed any emotion but that of surprise.

Mr. and Mrs. Graham, however, were too much accustomed to society to betray any further evidence of that sentiment than was contained in a momentary glance, and, rising, received their visitors with due politeness and propriety. The former nodded carelessly to Mr. Amory, whom he had seen in the morning, presented him to Mr. Clinton (without, however, mentioning the existing connection with himself), and was preparing to go through the same ceremony to Mrs. Graham, but was saved the trouble as she had not forgotten the acquaintance formed at Baden-Baden.

Willie's knowledge of the company also spared the necessity of introduction to all but Emily; and that being accidentally omitted, he gave an arch glance at Gertrude, and, taking an offered seat near Isabel, entered into conversation with her, Mr. Amory being in like manner engrossed by Mrs. Graham.

"Miss Gertrude," whispered Fanny, as soon as the interrupted composure of the party was once more restored, and glancing at Willie as she spoke, "that's the gentleman you were out driving with this afternoon. I know it is," continued she, as she observed Gertrude change colour and endeavour to hush her, while she looked anxiously round as if the remark had been overheard; "is it Willie, Gertrude? is it Mr. Sullivan?"

Gertrude became more and more embarrassed, while the mischievous Fanny continued to ply her with such questions; and Isabel, who had jealously noticed that Willie's eyes wandered more than once to the table, turned on her such a scrutinizing look as rendered her confusion distressing.

Accident came to her relief, however. The housemaid, with the evening paper,

endeavoured to open the door, against which her chair was placed, thus giving her an opportunity to rise, receive the paper, and at the same time an unimportant message. While she was thus engaged, Mr. Clinton left his chair with the feeble step of an invalid, crossed the room, addressed a question in a low voice to Willie, and receiving an affirmatory reply, took Isabel by the hand, and approaching Mr. Amory, exclaimed, with deep emotion, "Sir, Mr. Sullivan tells me you are the person who saved the life of my daughter; and here she is to thank you."

Mr. Amory rose and flung his arm over the shoulder and around the waist of Gertrude, who was passing on her way to hand the newspaper to Mr. Graham, and who, not having heard the remark of Mr. Clinton, received the caress with a sweet smile and an upturned face. "Here," said he, "Mr. Clinton, is the person who saved the life of your daughter. It is true that I swam with her to the shore; but it was under the mistaken impression that I was bearing to a place of safety my own darling child, whom I little suspected then of having voluntarily relinquished to another her only apparent chance of rescue."

"Just like you, Gertrude! Just like you!" shouted Kitty and Fanny in a breath, each struggling to obtain a foremost place in the little circle that had gathered round her.

"My own noble Gertrude!" whispered Emily, as, leaning on Mr. Amory's arm, she pressed Gertrude's hand to her lips.

"Oh, Gertrude!" exclaimed Isabel, with tears in her eyes, "I didn't know. I never thought——"

"Your child?" cried Mrs. Graham's loud voice, interrupting Isabel's unfinished exclamation.

"Yes, my child, thank God!" said Mr. Amory, reverently; "restored at last to her unworthy father, and—you have no secrets here, my darling?"—Gertrude shook her head, and glanced at Willie, who now stood at her side "and gladly bestowed by him upon her faithful and far more deserving lover." And he placed her hand in Willie's.

There was a moment's pause. All were impressed with the solemnity of the action. Then Mr. Graham came forward, shook each of the young couple heartily by the hand, and, passing his sleeve hastily across his eyes, sought his customary refuge in the library.

"Gertrude," said Fanny, pulling Gertrude's dress to attract her attention, and speaking in a loud whisper, "are you engaged?—are you engaged to him?"

"Yes," whispered Gertrude, anxious, if possible, to gratify Fanny's curiosity and silence her questioning.

"Oh, I'm so glad! I'm so glad!" shouted Fanny, dancing round the room and flinging up her arms.

"And I'm glad, too!" said Gracie, catching the tone of congratulation, and putting her mouth up to Gertrude for a kiss.

"And I am glad," said Mr. Clinton, placing his hands upon those of Willie and Gertrude, which were still clasped together, "that the noble and self-sacrificing girl, whom I have no words to thank, and no power to repay, has reaped a worthy reward in the love of one of the few men with whom a fond father may venture wholly to trust the happiness of his child."

Exhausted by so much excitement, Mr. Clinton now complained of sudden faintness, and was assisted to his room by Willie, who, after waiting to see him fully restored, returned to receive the blessing of Emily upon his new hopes, and hear with wonder and delight the circumstances which attended the discovery of Gertrude's parentage.

For although it was an appointment to meet Mr. Amory which had summoned him back to Boston, and he had in the course of their interview acquainted him with the happy termination of a lover's doubts, he had not, until the disclosure took place in Mr. Graham's parlour, received in return the slightest hint of the great surprise which awaited him. He had felt a little astonishment at his friend's express desire to join him at once in a visit to Mr. Graham's; but on being informed that he had made the

acquaintance of Mrs. Graham in Germany, he concluded that a desire to renew his intercourse with the family, and possibly a slight curiosity to see the lady of his own choice, were the only motives that had influenced him.

And now, amid retrospections of the past, thanksgiving for the present, and hopes and aspirations for the future, the evening passed rapidly away.

"Come here, Gerty!" said Willie, "come to the window, and see what a beautiful night it is."

It was indeed a glorious night. Snow lay on the ground. The air was intensely cold without, as might be judged from the quick movements of the pedestrians and the brilliant icicles with which everything that had an edge was fringed. The stars were glittering too as they never glitter, except on the most intense of winter nights. The moon was just peeping above an old brown building—the same old corner building which had been visible from the door-step where Willie and Gerty were wont to sit in their childhood, and from behind which they had often watched the coming of the same round moon.

Leaning on Willie's shoulder, Gertrude stood gazing until the full circle was visible in a space of clear and cloudless ether. Neither of them spoke, but their hearts throbbed with the same emotion as they thought of the days that were past.

Just then the gasman came quickly up the street, lit, as by an electric touch, the bright burners that in close ranks lined either side-walk, and in a moment more was out of sight.

Gertrude sighed. "It was no such easy task for poor old Uncle True," said she; "there have been great improvements since his time."

"There have, indeed!" said Willie, glancing round the well-lit, warm, and pleasantly-furnished rooms of his own and Gertrude's home, and resting his eyes at last upon the beloved one by his side, whose beaming face but reflected back his own happiness—"such improvements, Gerty, as we only dreamt of once! I wish the

dear old man could be here and share them!"

A tear started to Gertrude's eye; but, pressing Willie's arm, she pointed reverently upward to a beautiful, bright star just breaking forth from a silvery film which had hitherto half overshadowed it; the star through which Gertrude had ever fancied she could discern the smile of the kind old man.

"Dear Uncle True!" said she; "his lamp still burns brightly in heaven, Willie; and its light is not yet gone out on earth!"

In a beautiful town about thirty miles from Boston, and on the shore of those hill-embosomed ponds which would be immortalized by the poet in a country less rich than ours with such sheets of blue transparent water, there stood a mansion-house of solid though ancient architecture. It had been the property of Philip Amory's paternal grandparents, and the early home and sole inheritance of his father, who so cherished the spot that it was only with great reluctance, and when driven to the act by the spur of poverty, that he was induced to part with the much-valued estate.

To reclaim the venerable homestead, repair and judiciously modernize the house, and fertilize and adorn the grounds, was a favourite scheme with Philip. His ample means now rendered it practicable; he lost no time in putting it into execution, and the spring after he returned from his wanderings saw the work in a fair way to be speedily completed.

In the meantime Gertrude's marriage had taken place; the Grahams had removed to their house in town (which, out of compliment to Isabel, who was passing the winter with her aunt, was more than ever crowded with gay company), and the bustling mistress was already projecting changes in her husband's country-seat.

And Emily, who had parted with her greatest treasure, and found herself in an atmosphere which was little in harmony with her spirit, murmured not; but, contented with her lot, neither dreamed of nor asked for outward change until Philip

came to her one day and, taking her by the hand, said gently—

"This is no home for you, Emily. You are as much alone as I in my solitary farm-house. We loved each other in childhood, our hearts became one youth, and have continued so until now. Why should we be longer parted? Your father will not now oppose our wishes; and will you, dearest, refuse to bless and gladden the lonely life of your grey-haired lover?"

But Emily shook her head, while she answered, with her smile of ineffable sweetness—

"Oh no, Philip! do not speak of it! Think of my frail health and my helplessness."

"Your health, dear Emily, is improving. The roses are already coming back to your cheeks; and for your helplessness, what task can be so sweet to me as teaching you, through my devotion, to forget it! Oh, do not send me away disappointed, Emily! A cruel fate divided us for years; do not by your own act prolong that separation! Believe me, a union with my early love is my brightest, my only hope of happiness!"

And she did not withdraw the hand which he held, but yielded the other also to his fervent clasp.

"My only thought had been, dear Philip," said she, "that ere this I should have been called to my Father's home; and even now I feel many a warning that I cannot be very long for earth; but while I stay, be it longer or shorter, it shall be as you wish. No word of mine shall part hearts so truly one, your home shall be mine."

And when the grass turned green, and the flowers sent up their fragrance, and the birds sang in the branches, and the spring gales blew soft and made a gentle ripple on the water, Emily came to live on the hillside with Philip; and Mrs. Ellis came too to superintend all things, and especially the dairy, which became henceforth her pride. She had long since tearfully implored, and easily obtained, the forgiveness of the much-wronged Philip; and proved, by the humility of her voluntary confession, that she was not without a woman's heart.

Mrs. Prime pleaded hard for the cook's situation at the farm, but Emily kindly expostulated with her, saying—

"We cannot all leave my father, Mrs. Prime. Who would see to his hot toast, and the fire in the library?" and the good old woman saw the matter in the right light and submitted.

And is the long-wandering, much-suffering, and deeply-sorrowing exile happy now? He is; but his peace springs not from his beautiful home, his wide possessions, an honourable repute among his fellow-men, or even the love of the gentle Emily.

All these are blessings that he well knows how to prize; but his world-tried soul has found a deeper anchor yet—a surer refuge from the tempest and the storm; for, through the power of a living faith, he has laid hold on eternal life. The blind girl's prayers are answered; her last, best work is done; she has cast a ray from her blessed spirit into his darkened soul; and should her call to depart soon come, she will leave behind one to follow in her footsteps, fulfil her charities, and do good on earth until such time when he shall be summoned to join her again in heaven.

As they go forth in the summer evening to breathe the balmy air, listen to the winged songster of the grove, and drink in the refreshing influences of a summer sunset, all things speak of a holy peace to the new-born heart of him who has so long been a man of sorrow.

As the sun sinks among gorgeous clouds, as the western light grows dim, and the moon and the stars come forth in their solemn beauty, they utter a lesson to his awakened soul; and the voice of nature around, and the still, small voice within whisper in gentlest, holiest accents—

"The sun shall be no more thy light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee; but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory."

"Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself; for the

Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended."

THE END.

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Louise de la Valliere. By Alexandre Dumas.

Love Me Little, Love Me Long, By Charles Reade.

Lover or Friend? By Rosa N. Carey.

Lucile. By Owen Meredith.

Maid of Sker. By R. D. Blackmore.

Makers of Florence. By Mrs. Oliphant.

Makers of Venice. By Mrs. Oliphant.

Man and Wife. By Wilkie Collins.

Man in the Iron Mask. By Alexandre Dumas.

Marquis of Lossie. By George Macdonald.

Martin Chuzzlewit. By Charles Dickens.

Mary Anerley. By R. D. Blackmore.

Mary St. John. By Rosa N. Carey.

Master of Ballantrae, The. By R. L. Stevenson.

Masterman Ready. By Captain Marryat.

Meditations of Marcus Aurelius. Translated by George Long.

Merle's Crusade. By Rosa N. Carey

Micah Clarke. By A. Conan Doyle.

Michael Strogoff. By Jules Verne.

Middlemarch. By George Eliot.

Midshipman Easy. By Captain Marryat.

Mill on the Floss. By George Eliot.

Milton's Poems. By John Milton.

Mine Own People. By Rudyard Kipling.

Molly Bawn. By "The Duchess."

Monastery, The. By Sir Walter Scott.

Moonstone, The. By Wilkie Collins.

Mosses from an Old Manse. By Nathaniel Hawthorne.

Mysterious Island, The. By Jules Verne.

Natural Law in the Spiritual World. By Henry Drummond.

Nellie's Memories. By Rosa N. Carey.

Newcomes, The. By William M. Thackeray.

Nicholas Nickleby. By Charles Dickens.

Ninety-Three. By Victor Hugo.

No Name. By Wilkie Collins.

Not Like Other Girls. By Rosa N. Carey.

Odyssey, The. Pope's Translation.

Old Curiosity Shop. By Charles Dickens.

Old Mam'selle's Secret. By E. Marlitt.

Old Mortality. By Sir Walter Scott.

Old Myddleton's Money. By Mary Cecil Hay.

Oliver Twist. By Charles Dickens.

Only a Word. By George Ebers.

Only the Governess. By Rosa N. Carey.

On the Heights. By Berthold Auerbach.

Origin of Species. By Charles Darwin.

Other Worlds Than Ours. By Richard Proctor.

Our Bessie By Rosa N. Carey.

Our Mutual Friend. By Charles Dickens.

Pair of Blue Eyes, A. By Thos. Hardy.

Past and Present. By Thomas Carlyle.

Pathfinder, The. By James Fenimore Cooper.

Pendennis. By William M. Thackeray.

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Peveril of the Peak. By Sir Walter Scott.

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Picciola. By X. B. Saintine.

Pickwick Papers. By Charles Dickens.

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Pride and Prejudice. By Jane Austen.

Prime Minister, The. By Anthony Trollope.

Prince of the House of David. By Rev. J. H. Ingraham.

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Professor, The. By Charlotte Bronte.

Prue and I. By George William Curtis.

Queen Hortense. By Louisa Muhlbach.

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Redgauntlet. By Sir Walter Scott.

Red Rover. By James Fenimore Cooper.

Reign of Law. By Duke of Argyle.

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Schopenhauer's Essays. Translated by T. B. Saunders.

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Second Wife, The. By E. Marlitt.

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Self-Help. By Samuel Smiles.

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Springhaven. By R. D. Blackmore.

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Story of an African Farm. By Olive Schreiner.

Story of John G. Paton. Told for Young Folks. By Rev. James Paton.

Strathmore. By "Ouida."

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Surgeon's Daughter, The. By Sir Walter Scott.

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Talisman, The. By Sir Walter Scott.

Tanglewood Tales. By Nathaniel Hawthorne.

Tempest and Sunshine. By Mary J. Holmes.

Tempest Tossed. By Theodore Tilton.

Ten Nights in a Barroom. By T. S. Arthur.

Tennyson's Poems. By Alfred Tennyson.

Ten Years Later. By Alexandre Dumas.

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Tom Brown's School Days. By Thomas Hughes.

Tom Burke of "Ours." By Charles Lever.

Tom Cringle's Log. By Michael Scott.

Tour of the World in Eighty Days, A. By Jules Verne

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Twenty Years After. By Alexandre Dumas.

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Two Years Before the Mast. By R. H. Dana, Jr.

Uarda. By George Ebers.

Uncle Max. By Rosa N. Carey.

Uncle Tom's Cabin. By Harriet Beecher Stowe.

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Unity of Nature. By Duke of Argyle.

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Waverley. By Sir Walter Scott.

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Westward Ho! By Charles Kingsley.

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What's Mine's Mine. By George MacDonald.

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White Company, The. By A. Conan Doyle.

Whittier's Poems. (Early).

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