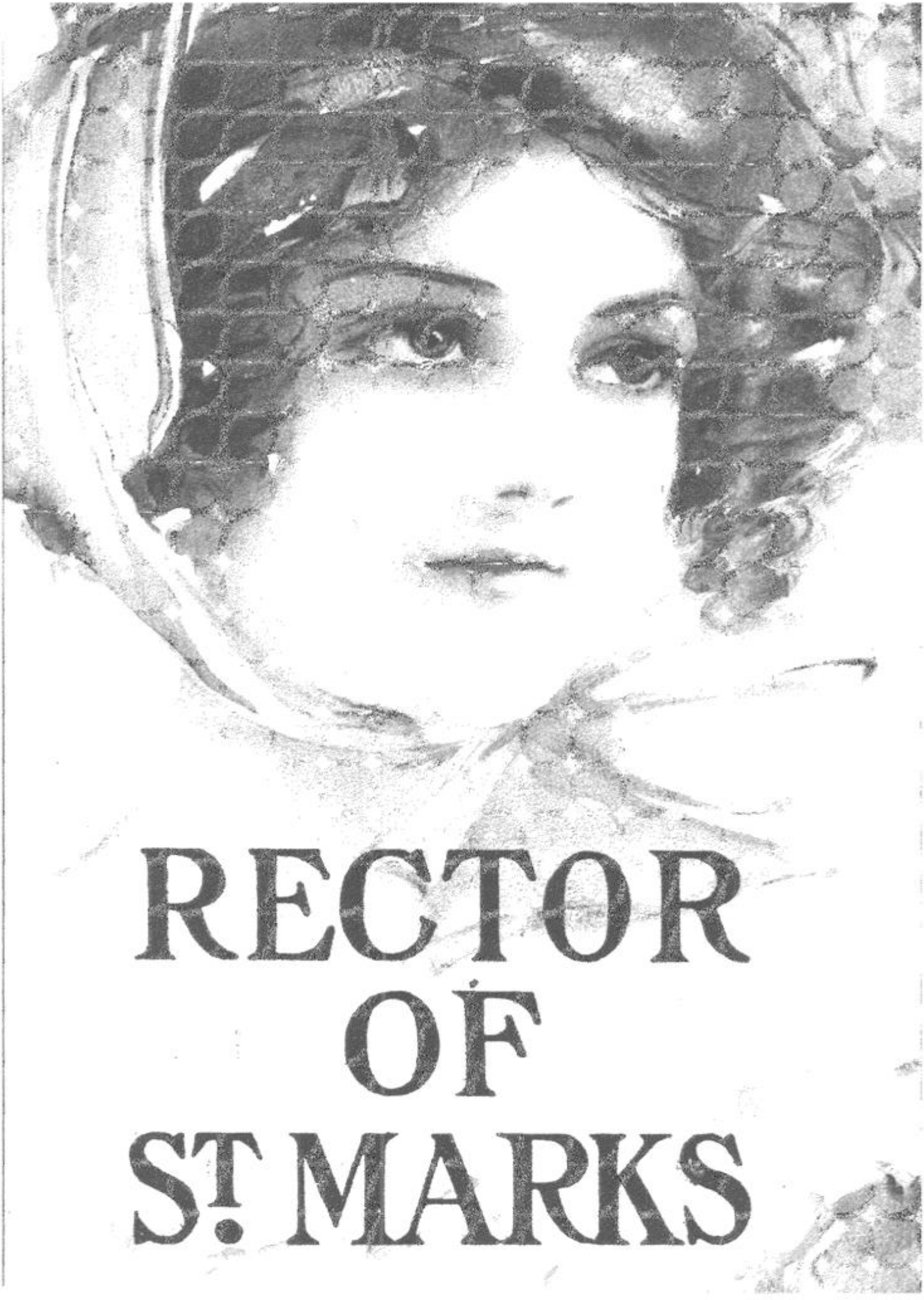
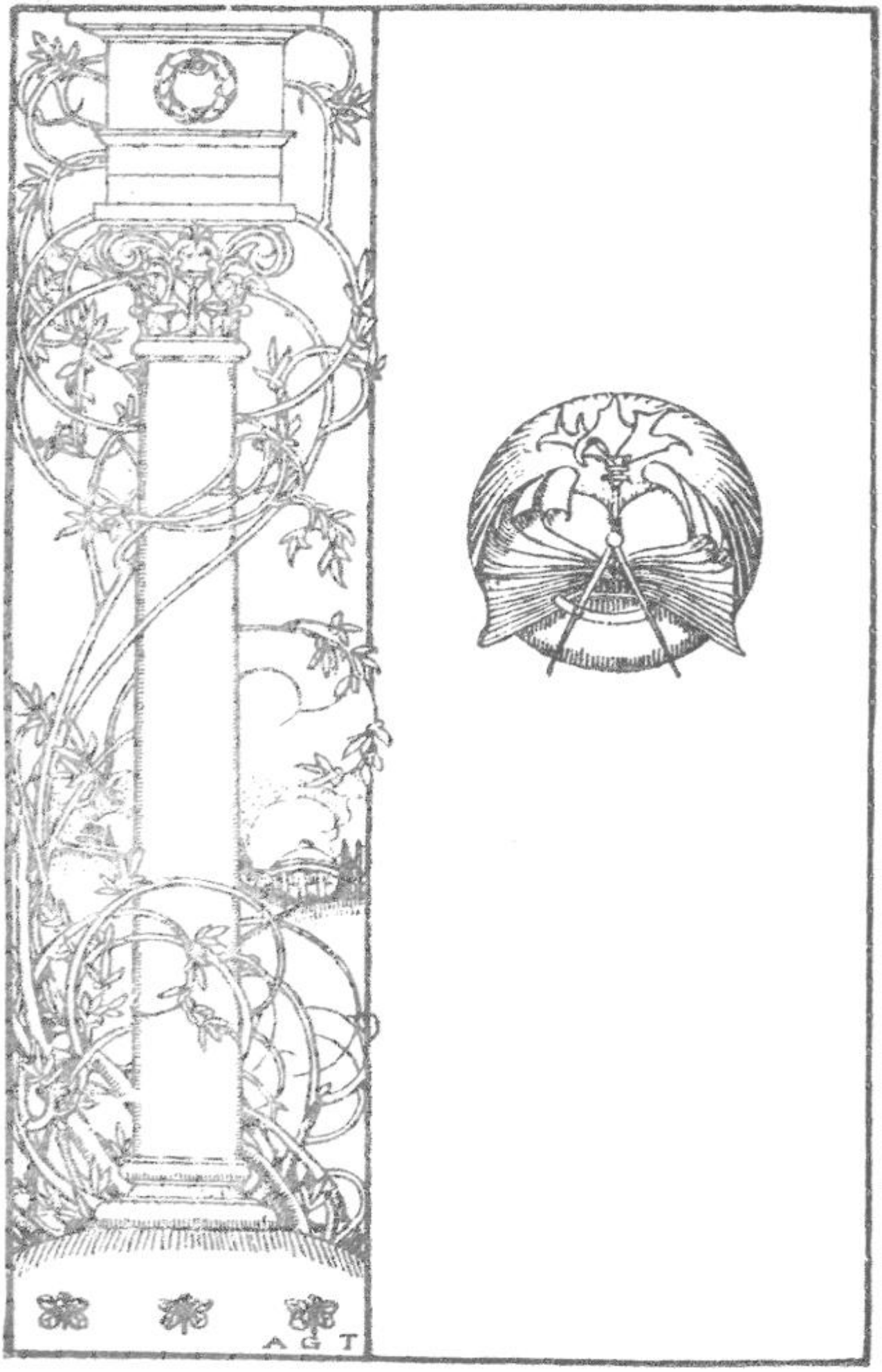


RECTOR OF ST. MARKS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THE

RECTOR OF ST. MARK'S

BY

MRS. MARY J. HOLMES

AUTHOR OF "DORA DEANE," "MAGGIE MILLER," "LENA RIVERS" "THE ENGLISH ORPHAN," ETC.

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THE RECTOR OF ST. MARK'S.

CHAPTER I.

FRIDAY AFTERNOON.

THE Sunday sermon was finished, and the young rector of St. Mark's turned gladly from his study-table to the pleasant south window where the June roses were peeping in, and abandoned himself for a few moments to the feeling of relief he always experienced when his week's work was done. To say that no secular thoughts had intruded themselves upon the rector's mind, as he planned and wrote that sermon, would not be true; for, though morbidly conscientious on many points and earnestly striving to be a faithful shepherd of the souls committed to his care, Arthur Leighton possessed the natural desire that those who listened to him should not only think well of what he taught but also of the form in which the teaching was presented. When he became a clergyman he did not cease to be a man, with all a man's capacity to love and to be

loved, and so, though he fought and prayed against it, he had seldom brought a sermon to the people of St. Mark's in which there was not a thought of Anna Ruthven's soft, brown eyes, and the way they would look at him across the heads of the congregation. Anna led the village choir, and the rector was painfully conscious that far too much of earth was mingled with his devotional feelings during the moments when, the singing over, he walked from his armchair to the pulpit and heard the rustle of the crimson curtain in the organ loft as it was drawn back, disclosing to view the five heads of which Anna's was the center. It was very wrong, he knew, and to-day he had prayed earnestly for pardon, when, after choosing his text, "Simon, Simon, lovest thou me?" instead of plunging at once into his subject, he had, without a thought of what he was doing, idly written upon a scrap of paper lying near, "Anna, Anna, lovest thou me, more than these?" the these, referring to the wealthy Thornton Hastings, his old classmate in college, who was going to Saratoga this very summer, for the purpose of meeting Anna Ruthven and deciding if she would do to become Mrs. Thornton Hastings, and mistress of the house on Madison Square. With a bitter groan at the enormity of his sin, and a fervent prayer for forgiveness, the rector had torn the slips of paper in shreds and given himself so completely to his work that his sermon was done a full hour earlier than

usual, and he was free to indulge in reveries of Anna for as long a time as he pleased.

"I wonder if Mrs. Meredith has come," he thought, as, with his feet upon the window-sill, he sat looking across the meadow-land to where the chimneys and gable roof of Captain Humphreys' house was visible, for Captain Humphreys was Anna Ruthven's grandfather, and it was there she had lived since she was three years old.

As if thoughts of Mrs. Meredith reminded him of something else, the rector took from the drawer of his writing table a letter received the previous day, and, opening to the second page, read again as follows:

"Are you going anywhere this summer? Of course not, for so long as there is an unbaptized child, or a bed-ridden old woman in the parish, you must stay at home, even if you do grow as rusty as did Professor Cobden's coat before we boys made him a present of a new one. I say, Arthur, there was a capital fellow spoiled when you took to the ministry, with your splendid talents, and rare gift for making people like and believe in you.

"Now, I suppose you will reply that for this denial of self you look for your reward in heaven, and I suppose you are right; but as I have no reason to think I have any stock in that region, I go in for a good time here, and this summer I take it at Saratoga, where I expect to meet one of your

lambs. I hear you have in your flock forty in all, their ages varying from fifteen to fifty. But this particular lamb, Miss Anna Ruthven, is, I fancy, the fairest of them all, and as I used to make you my father confessor in the days when I was rusticated out in Winsted, and fell so desperately in love with the six Miss Larkins, each old enough to be my mother, so now I confide to you the programme as marked out by Mrs. Julia Meredith, the general who brings the lovely Anna into the field.

"We, that is, Mrs. Meredith and myself, are on the best of terms. I lunch with her, dine with her, lounge in her parlors, drive her to the park, take her to the operas, concerts and plays, and compliment her good looks, which are wonderfully well preserved for a woman of forty-five. I am twenty-six, you know, and so no one ever associates us together in any kind of gossip. She is the very quintessence of fashion, and I am one of the danglers whose own light is made brighter by the reflection of her rays. Do you see the point? Well, then, in return for my attentions, she takes a very sisterly interest in my future wife, and has adroitly managed to let me know of her niece, a certain Anna Ruthven, who, inasmuch as I am tired of city belles, will undoubtedly suit my fancy, said Anna being very fresh, very artless, and very beautiful withal. She is also niece to Mrs. Meredith, whose only brother married very far beneath him, when he took to wife the daughter of a certain old-fash-

ioned Captain Humphreys, a pillar, no doubt, in your church. This young Ruthven was drowned, or hung, or something, and the sister considers it as another proof of his wife's lack of refinement and discretion that at her death, which happened when Anna was three years old, she left her child to the charge of her own parents, Captain Humphreys and spouse, rather than to Mrs. Meredith's care, and that, too, in the very face of the lady's having stood as sponsor for the infant, an act which you will acknowledge was very unnatural and ungrateful in Mrs. Ruthven, to say the least of it.

"You see I am telling you all this, just as if you did not know Miss Anna's antecedents even better than myself, but possibly you do not know that, having arrived at a suitable age, she is this summer to be introduced into society at Saratoga, while I am expected to fall in love with her at once and make her Mrs. Hastings before another winter. Now, in your straightforward way of putting things, don't imagine that Mrs. Meredith has deliberately told me all this, for she has not, but I understand her perfectly, and know exactly what she expects me to do. Whether I do or not depends partly upon how I like Miss Anna, partly upon how she likes me, and partly upon yourself.

"Now, Arthur, you know, I was always famous for presentiments or fancies, as you termed them, and the latest of these is that you like Anna Ruth-

ven. Do you? Tell me, honor bright, and by the memory of the many scrapes you got me out of, and the many more you kept me from getting into, I will treat Miss Anna as gingerly and brotherly as if she was already your wife. I like her picture, which I have seen, and believe I shall like the girl, but if you say that by looking at her with longing eyes I shall be guilty of breaking some one of the ten commandments—I don't know which—why, then, hands off at once. That's fair, and will prove to you that, although not a parson like yourself, there is still a spark of honor, if not of goodness, in the breast of

"Yours truly,

"THORNTON HASTINGS.

"If you were here this afternoon, I'd take you to drive after a pair of bays which are to sweep the stakes at Saratoga this summer, and I'd treat you to a finer cigar than often finds its way to Hanover. Shall I send you out a box, or would your people pull down the church about the ears of a minister wicked enough to smoke? Again adieu. "T. H."

There was a half-amused smile on the face of the rector as he finished the letter, so like its thoughtless, lighthearted writer, and wondered what the Widow Rider, across the way, would say of a clergyman who smoked cigars and rode after a racehorse with such a gay scapegrace as Thornton Has-

tings. Then the amused look passed away, and was succeeded by a shadow of pain as the rector remembered the real import of Thornton's letter, and felt that he had no right to say, "I have a claim on Anna Ruthven; you must not interfere." For he had no claim on her, though half his parishioners, and many outside his parish, had long ago given her to him, and said that she was worthy; while he had loved her, as only natures like his can love, since that week before Christmas, when their hands had met with a strange, tremulous flutter, as together they fastened the wreaths of evergreen upon the wall, he holding them up and she driving the refractory tacks, which would keep falling in spite of her, so that his hand went often from the carpet or basin to hers, and once accidentally closed almost entirely over the little, soft, white thing, which felt so warm to his touch.

How prettily Anna had looked to him during those memorable days, so much prettier than the other young girls of his flock, whose hair was tumbled ere the day's work was done, and whose dresses were soiled and disordered; while here was always so tidy and neat and the braids of her chestnut hair were always so smooth and bright. How well, too, he remembered that brief ten minutes, when, in the dusky twilight which had crept so early into the church, he stood alone with her, and talked, he did not know of what, only that he heard her voice replying to him, and saw the changeful color on

her cheek as she looked modestly in his face. That was a week of delicious happiness, and the rector had lived it over many times, wondering if, when the next Christmas came, it would find him any nearer to Anna Ruthven than the last had left him.

"It must," he suddenly exclaimed. "The matter shall be settled before she leaves Hanover with this Mrs. Meredith. My claim is superior to Thornton's, and he shall not take her from me. I'll write what I lack the courage to tell her, and to-morrow I will call and deliver it myself."

An hour later, and there was lying in the rector's desk a letter in which he had told Anna Ruthven how much he loved her, and had asked her to be his wife. Something whispered that she would not refuse him, and with this hope to buoy him up, his two miles walk that warm afternoon was neither long nor tiresome, and the old lady, by whose bedside he had read and prayed, was surprised to hear him as he left her door whistling an old love-tune which she, too, had known and sung fifty years before.

CHAPTER II.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON.

MRS. JULIA MEREDITH had arrived, and the brown farmhouse was in a state of unusual excitement; not that Captain Humphreys or his good wife, Aunt Ruth, respected very highly the great lady who had so seldom honored them with her presence, and who always tried so hard to impress them with a sense of her superiority and the mighty favor she conferred upon them by occasionally condescending to bring her aristocratic presence into their quiet, plain household, and turn it topsy-turvy. Still, she was Anna's aunt, and then, too, it was a distinction which Aunt Ruth rather enjoyed, that of having a fashionable city woman for her guest, and so she submitted with a good grace to the breaking in upon all her customs, and uttered no word of complaint when the breakfast table waited till eight, and sometimes nine o'clock, and the freshest eggs were taken from the nest, and the cream all skimmed from the pans to gratify the lady who came down very charming and pretty in her handsome cambric wrapper, with rosebuds in her hair. She had arrived the previous night, and while the rector was penning his letter she was holding Anna's hand in hers, and, running her eye rapidly over her

face and form, was making an inventory of her charms and calculating their value.

A very graceful figure, neither too short nor too tall. This she gets from the Ruthvens. Splendid eyes and magnificent hair, when Valencia has once taken it in hand. Complexion a little too brilliant, but a few weeks of dissipation will cure that. Fine teeth, and features tolerably regular, except that the mouth is too wide, and the forehead too low, which defects she takes from the Humphreys Small feet and rather pretty hands, except that they seem to have grown wide since I saw her before. Can it be these horrid people have set her to milking the cows?

This was what Mrs. Meredith thought that first evening after her arrival at the farmhouse, and she had not materially changed her mind when the next afternoon she went with Anna down to the Glen, for which she affected a great fondness, because she thought it was romantic and girlish to do so, and she was far being past the period when women cease caring for youth and its appurtenances. She had criticised Anna's taste in dress —had said that the belt she selected did not harmonize with the color of the muslin she wore, and suggested that a frill of lace about the neck would be softer and more becoming than the stiff white linen collar.

"But in the country it does not matter," she said. "Wait till I get you to New York, under

Madam Blank's supervision, and then we shall see a transformation such as will astonish the humble Hanoverians."

This was up in Anna's room, and when the Glen was reached Mrs. Meredith continued the conversation, telling Anna of her plans for taking her first to New York, where she was to pass through a reformatory process with regard to dress. Then they were going to Saratoga, where she expected her niece to reign supreme, both as a beauty and a belle.

"Whatever I have left at my death I shall leave to you," she said; "consequently you will pass as an heiress expectant, and with all these aids I confidently expect you to make a brilliant match before the winter season closes, if, indeed, you do not before you leave Saratoga."

"Oh, aunt," Anna exclaimed, her brown eyes flashing with unwonted brilliancy, and the rich color mantling her cheek. "You surely are not taking me to Saratoga on such a shameful errand as that?"

"Shameful errand as what?" Mrs. Meredith asked, looking quickly up, while Anna replied:

"Trying to find a husband. I cannot go if you are, much as I have anticipated it. I should despise and hate myself forever. No, aunt, I cannot go."

"Nonsense, child. You don't know what you are saying," Mrs. Meredith retorted, feeling intui-

tively that she must change her tactics and keep her real intentions concealed if she would lead her niece into the snare laid for her.

Cunningly and carefully for the next half hour she talked, telling Anna that she was not to be thrust upon the notice of any one—that she herself had no patience with those intriguing mammas who push their bold daughters forward, but that as a good marriage was the *ultima thule* of a woman's hopes, it was but natural that she, as Anna's aunt, should wish to see her well settled in life, and settled, too, near herself, where they could see each other every day.

"Of course, there is no one in Hanover whom you, as a Ruthven, would stoop to marry," she said, fixing her eyes inquiringly upon Anna, who was pulling to pieces the wild flowers she had gathered, and thinking of that twilight hour when she had talked with their young clergyman as she never talked before. Of the many times, too, when they had met in the cottages of the poor, and he had walked slowly home with her, lingering by the gate, as if loth to say good-by, she thought, and the life she had lived since he first came to Hanover, and she learned to blush when she met the glance of his eye, looked fairer far than the life her aunt had marked out as the proper one for a Ruthven.

"You have not told me yet. Is there any one in Hanover whom you think worthy of you?"

Mrs. Meredith asked, just as a footstep was heard, and the rector of St. Mark's came round the rock where they were sitting.

He had called at the farmhouse, bringing the letter, and with it a book of poetry, of which Anna had asked the loan.

Taking advantage of her guest's absence, Grandma Humphreys had gone to a neighbor's after a recipe for making a certain kind of cake of which Mrs. Meredith was very fond, and only Esther, the servant, and Valencia, the smart waiting maid, without whom Mrs. Meredith never traveled, were left in charge.

"Down in the Glen with Mrs. Meredith. Will you be pleased to wait while I call them?" Esther said, in reply to the rector's inquiries for Miss Ruthven.

"No, I will find them myself," Mr. Leighton rejoined. Then, as he thought how impossible it would be to give the letter to Anna in the presence of her aunt, he slipped it into the book which he bade Esther take to Miss Ruthven's room.

Knowing how honest and faithful Esther was, the rector felt that he could trust her without fear for the safety of his letter, sought the Glen, where the tell-tale blushes which burned on Anna's cheek at sight of him more than compensated for the coolness with which Mrs. Meredith greeted him. She, too, had detected Anna's embarrassment, and when

the stranger was presented to her as "Mr. Leighton, our clergyman," the secret was out.

"Why is it that since the beginning of time g ·ls have run wild after young ministers?" was her mental comment, as she bowed to Mr. Leighton, and then quietly inspected his *personnel.*

There was nothing about Arthur Leighton's appearance with which she could find fault. He was even finer looking than Thornton Hastings, her *beau ideal* of a man, and as he stood a moment by Anna's side, looking down upon her, the woman of the world acknowledged to herself that they were a well-assorted pair, and as across the chasm of twenty years there came back to her an episode in her life, when, on just such a day as this, she had answered "no" to one as young and worthy as Arthur Leighton, while all the time the heart was clinging to him, she softened for a moment, and by the memory of the weary years passed with the rich old man whose name she bore, she was tempted to leave alone the couple standing there before her, and looking into each other's eyes with a look which she could not mistake. But when she remembered that Arthur was only a poor clergyman, and thought of that house on Madison Square which Thornton Hastings owned, the softened mood was changed, and Arthur Leighton's chance with her was gone.

Awhile they talked together in the Glen, and then walked back to the farmhouse, where the rec-

tor bade them good evening, after casually saying to Anna:

"I have brought the book you spoke of when I was here last. You will find it in your room, where I asked Esther to take it."

That Mr. Leighton should bring her niece a book did not seem strange at all, but that he should be so very thoughtful as to tell Esther to take it to her room struck her as rather odd, and as the practiced war-horse scents the battle from afar, so Mrs. Meredith at once suspected something wrong, and felt a curiosity to know what the book could be.

It was lying on Anna's table as she reached the door on her way to her own room, and, pausing for a moment, she entered the chamber, took it in her hands, read the title page, and then opened it to where the letter lay.

"Miss Anna Ruthven," she said. "He writes a fair hand;" and then, as the thought, which at first was scarce a thought, kept growing in her mind, she turned it over, and found that, owing to some defect, it had become unsealed and the lid of the envelope lay temptingly open before her. "I would never break a seal," she said, "but surely, as her protector and almost mother, I may read what this minister has written to my niece."

She read what he had written, while a scowl of disapprobation marred the smoothness of her brow.

"It is as I feared. Once let her see this, and

Thornton Hastings may woo in vain. But it shall not be. It is my duty as the sister of her dead father, to interfere and not let her throw herself away."

Perhaps Mrs. Meredith really felt that she was doing her duty. At all events, she did not give herself much time to reason upon the matter, for, startled by a slight movement in the room directly opposite, the door of which was ajar, she thrust the letter into her pocket and turned to see—Valencia, standing with her back to her, and arranging her hair in a mirror which hung upon the wall.

"She could not have seen me; and, even if she did, she would not suspect the truth," was the guilty woman's thought, as, with the stolen missive in her pocket, she went down to the parlor and tried, by petting Anna more than her wont, to still the voice of conscience which clamored loudly of the wrong, and urged a restoration of the letter to the place whence it was taken.

But the golden moment fled, and when, later in the evening, Anna went up to her chamber and opened the book which the rector had brought, she never suspected how near she had been to the great happiness she had sometimes dared to hope for, or dreamed how fervently Arthur Leighton prayed that night that, if it were possible, God would grant the boon he craved above all others—the priceless gift of Anna Ruthven's love.

CHAPTER III.

SUNDAY.

THERE was an unnatural flush on the rector's face, and his lips were very white when he came before his people that Sunday morning, for he felt that he was approaching the crisis of his fate; that he had only to look across the row of heads up to where Anna sat, and he should know the truth. Such thoughts savored far too much of the world which he had renounced, he knew, and he had striven to banish them from his mind; but they were there still, and would be there until he had glanced once at Anna, occupying her accustomed seat, and quietly turning to the chant she was so soon to sing: "Oh, come, let us sing unto the Lord; let us heartily rejoice in the strength of His salvation." The words echoed through the house, filling it with rare melody, for Anna was in perfect tone that morning, and the rector, listening to her with hands folded upon his prayer-book, felt that she could not thus "heartily rejoice," meaning all the while to darken his whole life, as she surely would if she told him "no." He was looking at her now, and she met his eyes at last, but quickly dropped her own, while he was sure that the roses burned a little brighter on her cheek, and

that her voice trembled just enough to give him hope, and help him in his fierce struggle to cast her from his mind and think only of the solemn services in which he was engaging. He could not guess that the proud woman who had sailed so majestically into church, and followed so reverently every prescribed form, bowing in the creed far lower than ever bow was made before in Hanover, had played him false and was the dark shadow in his path.

That day was a trying one for Arthur, for, just as the chant was ended and the psalter was beginning, a handsome carriage dashed up to the door, and, had he been wholly blind, he would have known, by the sudden sound of turning heads and the suppressed hush which ensued, that a perfect hailstorm of dignity was entering St. Mark's.

It was the Hethertons, from Prospect Hill, whose arrival in town had been so long expected. Mrs. Hetherton, who, more years ago than she cared to remember, was born in Hanover, but who had lived most of her life either in Paris, New York or New Orleans and who this year had decided to fit up her father's old place, and honor it with her presence for a few weeks at least; also, Fanny Hetherton, a brilliant brunette, into whose intensely black eyes no one could long look, they were so bright, so piercing, and seemed so thoroughly to read one's inmost thoughts; also, Colonel Hetherton, who had served in the Mexican

war, and, retiring on the glory of having once led a forlorn hope, now obtained his living by acting as attendant on his fashionable wife and daughter; also, young Dr. Simon Bellamy who, while obedient to the flashing of Miss Fanny's black eyes, still found stolen opportunities for glancing at the fifth and last remaining member of the party, filing up the aisle to the large, square pew, where old Judge Howard used to sit, and which was still owned by his daughter. Mrs. Hetherton liked being late at church, and so, notwithstanding that the Colonel had worked himself into a tempest of excitement, had tied and untied her bonnet-strings half a dozen times, changed her rich basquine for a thread lace mantilla, and then, just as the bell from St. Mark's gave forth its last note, and her husband's impatience was oozing out in sundry little oaths, sworn under his breath, she produced and fitted on her fat, white hands a new pair of Alexander's, keeping herself as cool, and quiet, and ladylike as if outside upon the graveled walk there was no wrathful husband threatening to drive off and leave her, if she did not "quit her cussed vanity, and come along."

Such was the Hetherton party, and they created quite as great a sensation as Mrs. Hetherton could desire, first upon the commoners, the people nearest the door, who rented the cheaper pews; then upon those farther up the aisle, and then upon Mrs. Meredith, who, attracted by the rustling of heavy

silk and aristocratic perfume emanating from Mrs. Hetherton's handkerchief, slightly turned her head at first, and, as the party swept by, stopped her reading entirely and involuntarily started forward, while a smile of pleasure flitted across her face as Fanny's black, saucy eyes took her, with others, within their range of vision, and Fanny's black head nodded a quick nod of recognition. The Hethertons and Mrs. Meredith were evidently friends, and in her wonder at seeing them there, in stupid Hanover, the great lady forgot for a while to read, but kept her eyes upon them all, especially upon the fifth and last mentioned member of the party, the graceful little blonde, whose eyes might have caught their hue from the deep blue of the summer sky, and whose long, silken curls fell in a golden shower beneath the fanciful French hat. She was a beautiful young creature, and even Anna Ruthven leaned forward to look at her as she shook out her airy muslin and dropped into her seat. For a moment the little coquettish head bowed reverently, but at the first sound of the rector's voice it lifted itself up quickly, and Anna saw the bright color which rushed into her cheeks and the eager joy which danced in the blue eyes, fixed so earnestly upon the rector, who, at sight of her, started suddenly and paused an instant in his reading. Who was she, and what was she to Arthur Leighton? Anna asked herself, while, by the fierce pang which shot through her heart, as

she watched the stranger and the clergyman, she knew that she loved the rector of St. Mark's, even if she doubted it before.

Anna was not an ill-tempered girl, but the sight of those gay city people annoyed her, and when, as she sang the Jubilate Deo, she saw the soft blue orbs of the blonde and the coal-black eyes of the brunette, turning wonderingly toward her, she was conscious of returning their glance with as much of scorn as it was possible for her to show. Anna tried to ask forgiveness for that feeling in the prayers which followed; but, when the services were over, and she saw a little figure in blue and white flitting up the aisle to where Arthur, still in his robes, stood waiting for her, an expression upon his face which she could not define, she felt that she had prayed in vain; and, with a bitterness she had never before experienced, she watched the meeting between them, growing more and more bitter as she saw the upturned face, the wreathing of the rosebud lips into the sweetest of smiles, and the tiny white hand, which Arthur took and held while he spoke words she would have given much to hear.

"Why do I care? It's nothing to me," she thought, and, with a proud step, she was leaving the church, when her aunt, who was shaking hands with the Hethertons, signed for her to join her.

The blonde was now coming down the aisle with Mr. Leighton, and joined the group just as Anna

was introduced as "My niece, Miss Anna Ruthven."

"Oh, you are the Anna of whom I have heard so much from Ada Fuller. You were at school together in Troy," Miss Fanny said, her searching eyes taking in every point as if she were deciding how far her new acquaintance was entitled to the praise she had heard bestowed upon her.

"I know Miss Fuller—yes;" and Anna bowed haughtily, turning next to the blonde, Miss Lucy Harcourt, who was telling Colonel Hetherton how she had met Mr. Leighton first among the Alps, and afterwards traveled with him until the party returned to Paris, where he left them for America.

"I was never so surprised in my life as I was to find him here. Why, it actually took my breath for a moment," she went on, "and I greatly fear that, instead of listening to his sermon, I have been roaming amid that Alpine scenery and basking again in the soft moonlight of Venice. I heard you singing, though," she said, when Anna was presented to her, "and it helped to keep up the illusion—it was so like the music heard from a gondola that night when Mr. Leighton and myself made a voyage through the streets of Venice. Oh, it was so beautiful," and the blue eyes turned to Mr. Leighton for confirmation of what the lips had uttered.

"Which was beautiful?—Miss Ruthven's singing or that moonlight night in Venice?" young

Bellamy asked, smiling down upon the little lady who still held Anna's hand, and who laughingly replied:

"Both, of course, though the singing is just now freshest in my memory. I like it so much. You must have had splendid teachers," and she turned again to Anna, whose face was suffused with blushes as she met the rector's eyes, for to his suggestions and criticisms and teachings she owed much of that cultivation which had so pleased and surprised the stranger.

"Oh, yes, I see it was Arthur. He tried to train me once, and told me I had a squeak in my voice. Don't you remember?—those frightfully rainy days in Rome?" Miss Harcourt said, the Arthur dropping from her lips as readily as if they had always been accustomed to speak it.

She was a talkative, coquettish little lady, but there was something about her so genuine and cordial, that Anna felt the ice thawing around her heart, and even returned the pressure of the snowy fingers which had twined themselves around her, as Lucy rattled on until the whole party left the church. It had been decided that Mrs. Meredith should call at Prospect Hill as early as Tuesday, at least; and, still holding Anna's hand Miss Harcourt whispered to her the pleasure it would be to see her again.

"I know I am going to like you. I can tell directly I can see a person—can't I Arthur?"

and, kissing her hand to Mrs. Meredith, Anna, and the rector, too, she sprang into the carriage, and was whirled rapidly away.

"Who is she?" Anna asked, and Mr. Leighton replied:

"She is an orphan niece of Colonel Hetherton's, and a great heiress, I believe, though I never paid much attention to the absurd stories told concerning her wealth."

"You met in Europe?" Mrs. Meredith said, and he replied:

"Yes, she has been quite an invalid, and has spent four years abroad, where I accidentally met her. It was a very pleasant party, and I was induced to join it, though I was with them in all not more than four months."

He told this very rapidly, and an acute observer would have seen that he did not care particularly to talk of Lucy Harcourt, with Anna for an auditor. She was walking very demurely at his side, pondering in her mind the circumstances which could have brought the rector and Lucy Harcourt into such familiar relations as to warrant her calling him Arthur and appear so delighted to see him.

"Can it be there was anything between them?" she thought, and her heart began to harden against the innocent Lucy, at that very moment chatting so pleasantly of her and of Arthur, too, replying to Mrs. Hetherton, who suggested that Mr. Leighton would be more appropriate for a clergyman.

"I shall say Arthur, for he told me I might that time we were in Rome. I could not like him as well if I called him Mr. Leighton. Isn't he splendid, though, in his gown, and wasn't his sermon grand?"

"What was the text?" asked Dr. Bellamy, mischievously, and, with a toss of her golden curls and a merry twinkle of her eyes, Lucy replied, "Simon, Simon, lovest thou me?"

Quick as a flash of lightning the hot blood mounted to the doctor's face, while Fanny cast upon him a searching glance as if she would read him through. Fanny Hetherton would have given much to know the answer which Dr. Simon Bellamy mentally gave to that question, put by one whom he had known but little more than three months. It was not fair for Lucy to steal away all Fanny's beaux, as she surely had been doing ever since her feet touched the soil of the New World, and truth to tell, Fanny had borne it very well, until young Dr. Bellamy showed signs of desertion. Then the spirit of resistance was roused, and she watched her lover narrowly, gnashing her teeth sometimes when she saw his ill-concealed admiration for her sprightly little cousin, who could say and do with perfect impunity so many things which in another would have been improper to the last degree. She was a tolerably correct reader of human nature, and, from the moment she witnessed the meeting between Lucy and the rector of St.

Marks, she took courage, for she readily guessed the channel in which her cousin's preference ran. The rector, however, she could not read so well; but few men she knew could withstand the fascinations of her cousin, backed as they were, by the glamour of half a million; and, though her mother, and, possibly, her father, too, would be shocked at the *mésalliance* and throw obstacles in the way, she was capable of removing them all, and she would do it, too, sooner than lose the only man she had ever cared for. These were Fanny's thoughts as she rode home from church that Sunday afternoon, and, by the time Prospect Hill was reached, Lucy Harcourt could not have desired a more powerful ally than she possessed in the person of her resolute, strong-willed cousin.

CHAPTER IV.

BLUE MONDAY.

It was to all intents and purposes "blue Monday" with the rector of St. Mark's, for, aside from the weariness and exhaustion which always followed his two services on Sunday, and his care of the Sunday school, there was a feeling of disquiet and depression, occasioned partly by that *rencontre*

with pretty Lucy Harcourt, and partly by the uncertainty as to what Anna's answer might be. He had seen the look of displeasure on her face as she stood watching him and Lucy, and though to many this would have given hope, it only added to his nervous fears lest his suit should be denied. He was sorry that Lucy Harcourt was in the neighborhood, and sorrier still for her tenacious memory, which had evidently treasured up every incident which he could wish forgotten. With Anna Ruthven absorbing every thought and feeling of his heart, it was not pleasant to remember what had been a genuine flirtation between himself and the sparkling belle he had met among the Alps.

It was nothing but a flirtation, he knew, for in his inmost soul he absolved himself from ever having had a thought of matrimony connected with Lucy Harcourt. He had admired her greatly and loved to wander with her amid the Alpine scenery, listening to her wild bursts of enthusiasm, and watching the kindling light in her blue eyes, and the color coming to her thin, pale cheeks, as she gazed upon some scene of grandeur, nestling close to him as for protection, when the path was fraught with peril.

Afterwards, in Venice, beneath the influence of those glorious moonlight nights, he had been conscious of a deeper feeling which, had he tarried longer at the siren's side, might have ripened into love. But he left her in time to escape what he

felt would have been a most unfortunate affair for him, for, sweet and beautiful as she was, Lucy was not the wife for a clergyman to choose. She was not like Anna Ruthven, whom both young and old had said was so suitable for him.

"And just because she is suitable, I may not win her, perhaps," he thought, as he paced up and down his library, wondering when she would answer his letter, and wondering next how he could persuade Lucy Harcourt that between the young theological student, sailing in a gondola through the streets of Venice, and the rector of St. Mark's, there was a vast difference; that while the former might be Arthur with perfect propriety, the latter should be Mr. Leighton, in Anna's presence, at least.

And yet the rector of St. Mark's was conscious of a pleasurable emotion, even now, as he recalled the time when she had, at his own request, first called him Arthur, her bird-like voice hesitating just a little, and her soft eyes looking coyly up to him, as she said:

"I am afraid that Arthur is hardly the name by which to call a clergyman."

"I am not in orders yet, so let me be Arthur to you. I love to hear you call me so, and you to me shall be Lucy," was his reply.

A mutual clasp of hands had sealed the compact, and that was the nearest to love-making of anything which had passed between them, if we

except the time when he had said good-by, and wiped away a tear which came unbidden to her eye as she told him how lonely she would be without him.

Hers was a nature as transparent as glass, and the young man, who for days had paced the ship's deck so moodily, was fighting back the thoughts which had whispered that in his intercourse with her he had not been all guiltless, and that if in her girlish heart there was a feeling for him stronger than that of friendship he had helped to give it life.

Time and absence and Anna Ruthven had obliterated all such thoughts till now, when Lucy herself had brought them back again with her winsome ways, and her evident intention to begin just where they had left off.

"Let Anna tell me yes, and I will at once proclaim our engagement, which will relieve me from all embarrassments in that quarter," the clergyman was thinking, just as his housekeeper came up, bringing him two notes—one in a strange handwriting, and the other in the graceful, running hand which he recognized as Lucy Harcourt's.

This he opened first, reading as follows:

Prospect Hill, June—.

"MR. LEIGHTON: Dear Sir—Cousin Fanny is to have a picnic down in the west woods to-morrow afternoon, and she requests the pleasure of your

presence. Mrs. Meredith and Miss Ruthven are to be invited. Do come.

"Yours truly, "LUCY."

Yes, he would go, and if Anna's answer had not come before, he would ask her for it. There would be plenty of opportunities down in those deep woods. On the whole, it would be pleasanter to hear the answer from her own lips, and see the blushes on her cheeks when he tried to look into her eyes.

The imaginative rector could almost see those eyes, and feel the touch of her hand as he took the other note—the one which Mrs. Meredith had shut herself in her bedroom to write, and sent slyly by Valencia, who was to tell no one where she had been.

A gleam of intelligence shot from Valencia's eyes as she took the note and carried it safely to the parsonage, never yielding to the temptation to read it, just as she had read the one abstracted from the book, returning it when read to her mistress's pocket, where she had found it while the family were at church.

Mrs. Meredith's note was as follows:

"MY DEAR MR. LEIGHTON: It is my niece's wish that I answer the letter you were so kind as to inclose in the book left for her last Saturday. She desires me to say that, though she has a very

great regard for you as her clergyman and friend, she cannot be your wife, and she regrets exceedingly if she has in any way led you to construe the interest she has always manifested in you into a deeper feeling.

"She begs me to say that it gives her great pain to refuse one so noble and good as she knows you to be, and she only does it because she cannot find in her heart the love without which no marriage can be happy.

"She is really very wretched about it, because she fears she may lose your friendship, and, as a proof that she has not, she asks that the subject may never in any way, be alluded to again; that when you meet it may be exactly as heretofore, without a word or sign on your part that ever you offered her the highest honor a man can offer a woman.

"And sure I am, my dear Mr. Leighton, that you will accede to her wishes. I am very sorry it has occurred, sorry for you both, and especially sorry for you; but, believe me, you will get over it in time and come to see that my niece is not a proper person to be a clergyman's wife.

"Come and see us as usual. You will find Anna appearing very natural.

"Yours cordially and sincerely,

"JULIE MEREDITH."

This was the letter which the cruel woman had

written, and it dropped from the rector's nerveless fingers as, with a groan, he bent his head upon the back of a chair, and tried to realize the magnitude of the blow which had fallen so suddenly upon him. Not till now did he realize how, amid all his doubts, he had still been sure of winning her, and the shock was terrible.

He had staked his all on Anna, and lost all; the world, which before had been so bright, looked very dreary now, while he felt that he could never again come before his people weighed down with so great a load of pain and humiliation: for it touched the young man's pride that, not content to refuse him, Anna had chosen another than herself as the medium through which her refusal must be conveyed to him. He did not fancy Mrs. Meredith. He would rather she did not possess his secret, and it hurt him cruelly to know that she did.

It was a bitter hour for the clergyman, for, strong and clear as was his faith in God, who doeth all things well, he lost sight of it for a time, and poor weak human nature cried:

"It's more than I can bear."

But as the mother does not forget her child, even though she passes from her sight, so God had not forgotten, and the darkness broke at last—the lips could pray again for strength to bear and faith to do all that God might require.

"Though He slay me I will trust Him," came like a ray of sunlight into the rector's mind, and

ere the day was over he could say with a full heart, "Thy will be done."

He was very pale, and his lip quivered occasionally as he thought of all he had lost, while a blinding headache, induced by strong excitement, drove him nearly wild with pain. He had been subject to headaches all his life, but he had never suffered as he was suffering now but once, and that was on a rainy day in Rome, when, boasting of her mesmeric power, Lucy had stood by him, and passed her dimpled hands soothingly across his throbbing temples.

Those little hands, how soft and cool they were —but they had not thrilled him as the touch of Anna's did when they hung the Christmas wreaths and she wore that bunch of scarlet berries in her hair.

That time seemed very far away, farther even than Rome and the moonlight nights of Venice. He did not like to think of it, for the bright hopes which were budding then were blighted now and dead; and, with a moan, he laid his aching head upon his pillow and tried to forget all he had ever hoped or longed for in the future.

"She will marry Thornton Hastings. He is a more eligible match than a poor clergyman," he said, and then, as he remembered Thornton's letter, and that his man Thomas would be coming soon to ask if there were letters to be taken to the office, he arose, and, going to the study table, wrote hastily:

"DEAR THORNE: I am suffering from one of those horrid headaches which used to make me as weak as a helpless woman, but I will write just enough to say that I have no claim on Anna Ruthven, and you are free to press your suit as urgently as you please. She is a noble girl, worthy even to be Mrs. Thornton Hastings, and if I cannot have her, I would rather give her to you than any one I know. Only don't ask me to perform the ceremony.

"There, I've let the secret out; but no matter, I have always confided in you, and so I may as well confess that I have offered myself and been refused. Yours truly,

"ARTHUR LEIGHTON."

The rector felt better after that letter was written. He had told his grievance to some one, and it seemed to have lightened half.

"Thorne is a good fellow," he said, as he directed the letter. "A little fast, it's true, but a splendid fellow, after all. He will sympathize with me in his way, and I would rather give Anna to him than any other living man."

Arthur was serious in what he said, for, wholly unlike as they were, there was between him and Thornton Hastings one of those strong, peculiar friendships which sometimes exist between two men, but rarely between two women, of so widely different temperaments. They had roomed to-

gether four years in college, and countless were the difficulties from which the sober Arthur had extricated the luckless Thorne, while many a time the rather slender means of Arthur had been increased in a way so delicate that expostulation was next to impossible.

Arthur was better off now in worldly goods, for, by the death of an uncle, he had come in possession of a few thousand dollars, which enabled him to travel in Europe for a year, and left a surplus, from which he had fed the poor and needy with not sparing hand.

St. Mark's was his first parish, and, though he could have chosen one nearer to New York, where the society was more congenial to his taste, he had accepted what God offered to him, and been very happy there, especially since Anna Ruthven came home from Troy and made such havoc with his heart. He did not believe he should ever be quite so happy again, but he would try to do his work, and take thankfully whatever of good might come to him.

This was his final decision, and when at last he laid him down to rest, the wound, though deep and sore, and bleeding yet, was not quite as hard to bear as it had been earlier in the day, when it was fresh and raw, and faith and hope seemed swept away.

CHAPTER V.

TUESDAY.

THAT open grassy spot in the dense shadow of the west woods was just the place for a picnic, and it looked very bright and pleasant that warm June afternoon, with the rustic table so fancifully arranged, the camp stools scattered over the lawn, and the bouquets of flowers depending from the trees.

Fanny Hetherton had given it her whole care, aided and abetted by Dr. Bellamy, what time he could spare from Lucy, who, imbued with a mortal fear of insects, seemed this day to gather scores of bugs and worms upon her dress and hair, screaming with every worm and bringing the doctor obediently to her aid.

"I'd stay at home, I think, if I was silly enough to be afraid of a harmless caterpillar like that," Fanny had said, as with her own hands she took from Lucy's curls and threw away a thousand-legged thing, the very sight of which made poor Lucy shiver but did not send her to the house.

She was too much interested and too eagerly expectant of what the afternoon would bring, and so she perched herself upon the fence where nothing but ants could molest her, and finished the bou

quets which Fanny hung upon the trees until the lower limbs seemed one mass of blossoms and the air was filled with the sweet perfume.

Lucy was bewitchingly beautiful that afternoon in her dress of white, her curls tied up with a blue ribbon, and her fair arms bare nearly to the shoulders. Fanny, whose arms were neither plump nor white, had expostulated with her cousin upon this style of dress, suggesting that one as delicate as she could not fail to take a heavy cold when the dews began to fall, but Lucy would not listen. Arthur Leighton had told her once that he liked her with bare arms, and bare they should be. She was bending every energy to please and captivate him, and a cold was of no consequence provided she succeeded. So, like some little fairy, she danced and flitted about, making fearful havoc with Dr. Bellamy's wits and greatly vexing Fanny, who hailed with delight the arrival of Mrs. Meredith and Anna. The latter was very pretty and very becomingly attired in a light airy dress of blue, finished at the throat and wrists with an edge of soft, fine lace. She, too, had thought of Arthur in the making of her toilet, and it was for him that the white rosebuds were placed in her heavy braids of hair and fastened on her belt. She was very sorry that she had allowed herself to be vexed with Lucy Harcourt for her familiarity with Mr. Leighton, very hopeful that he had not observed it, and very certain now of his preference for her-

self. She would be very gracious that afternoon, she thought, and not one bit jealous of Lucy, though she called him Arthur a hundred times.

Thus it was in the most amiable of moods that Anna appeared upon the lawn, where she was warmly welcomed by Lucy, who, seizing both her hands, led her away to see the arrangements, chatting gayly all the time, and casting rapid glances up the lane, as if in quest of some one.

"I'm so glad you've come. I've thought of you so much. Do you know it seems to me there must be some bond of sympathy between us, or I should not like you so well at once? I drove by the rectory early this morning—the dearest little place, with such a lovely garden. Arthur was working in it, and I made him give me some roses. See, I have one in my curls. Then, when he brought them to the carriage, I kept him there while I asked numberless questions about you, and heard from him just how good you are, and how you help him in the Sunday-school and everywhere, visiting the poor, picking up ragged children and doing things I never thought of doing; but I am not going to be so useless any longer, and the next time you visit some of the very miserablest I want you to take me with you. Do you ever meet Arthur there? Oh, here he comes," and with a bound, Lucy darted away from Anna toward the spot where the rector stood receiving Mrs. and Miss Hetherton's greeting.

As Lucy had said, she had driven by the rectory, with no earthly object but the hope of seeing the rector, and had hurt him cruelly with her questionings of Anna, and annoyed him a little with her anxious inquiries as to the cause of his pallid face and sunken eyes; but she was so bewitchingly pretty, and so thoroughly kind withal, that he could not be annoyed long, and he felt better for having seen her bright, coquettish face, and listened to her childish prattle. It was a great trial for him to attend the picnic that afternoon, but he met it bravely, and schooled himself to appear as if there were no such things in the world as aching hearts and cruel disappointments. His face was very pale, but his recent headache would account for that, and he acted his part successfully, shivering a little, it is true, when Anna expressed her sorrow that he should suffer so often from these attacks, and suggested that he take a short vacation and go with them to Saratoga.

"I should so much like to have you," she said, and her clear, honest eyes looked him straight in the face, as she asked why he could not.

"What does she mean?" the rector thought. "Is she trying to tantalize me? I expected her to be natural, as her aunt laid great stress on that, but she need not overdo the matter by showing me how little she cares for having hurt me so."

Then, as a flash of pride came to his aid, he thought, "I will at least be even with her. She

shall not have the satisfaction of guessing how much I suffer," and as Lucy then called to him from the opposite side of the lawn, he asked Anna to accompany him thither, just as he would have done a week before. Once that afternoon he found himself alone with her in a quiet part of the woods, where the long branches of a great oak came nearly to the ground, and formed a little bower which looked so inviting that Anna sat down upon the gnarled roots of the tree, and, tossing her hat upon the grass, exclaimed, "How nice and pleasant it is here. Come, sit down, too, while I tell you about my class in Sunday-school, and that poor Mrs. Hobbs across the mill stream. You won't forget her, will you? I told her you would visit her the oftener when I was gone. Do you know she cried because I was going? It made me feel so badly that I doubted if it was right for me to go," and, pulling down a handful of the oak leaves above her head, Anna began weaving together a chaplet, while the rector stood watching her with a puzzled expression upon his face. She did not act as if she ever could have dictated that letter, but he had no suspicion of the truth and answered rather coldly, "I did not suppose you cared how much we might miss you at home."

Something in his tone made Anna look up into his face, and her eyes immediately filled with tears, for she knew that in some way she had displeased him.

"Then you mistake me," she replied, the tears still glittering on her long eyelashes, and her fingers trembling among the oaken leaves. "I do care whether I am missed or not."

"Missed by whom?" the rector asked, and Anna impetuously replied, "Missed by the parish poor, and by you, too, Mr. Leighton. You don't know how often I shall think of you, or how sorry I am that——"

She did not finish the sentence, for the rector had leaped madly at the conclusion, and was down in the grass at her side with both her hands in his.

"Anna, oh Anna," he began so pleadingly, "have you repented of your decision? Tell me that you have and it will make me so happy. I have been so wretched ever since."

She thought he meant her decision about going to Saratoga, and she replied: "I have not repented, Mr. Leighton. Aunt Meredith thinks it best, and so do I, though I am sorry for you, if you really do care so much."

Anna was talking blindly, her thoughts upon one subject, while the rector's were upon another, and matters were getting somewhat mixed when, "Arthur, Arthur, where are you?" came ringing through the woods and Lucy Harcourt appeared, telling them that the refreshments were ready.

"We are only waiting for you two, wondering where you had gone, but never dreaming that you had stolen away to make love," she said, playfully,

adding more earnestly as she saw the traces of agitation visible in Anna's face, "and I do believe you were. If so, I beg pardon for my intrusion."

"She spoke a little sharply and glanced inquiringly at Mr. Leighton; who, feeling that he had you came, and so, I am sure, is Miss Anna. "I am ready to join you at the table. Come, Anna, they are waiting," and he offered his arm to the bewildered girl, who replied, "Not just now, please. Leave me for a moment. I won't be long."

Very curiously Lucy looked at Anna and then at Mr. Leighton, who, fully appreciating the feelings of the latter, said, by way of explanation: "You see, she has not quite finished that chaplet, which, I suspect, is intended for you. I think we had better leave her," and, drawing Lucy's hand under his own, he walked away, leaving Anna more stunned and pained than she had ever been before. Surely if love had ever spoken in tone and voice and manner, it had spoken when Mr. Leighton was kneeling on the grass, holding her hands in his. "Anna, oh, Anna!" How she had thrilled at the sound of those words and waited for what might follow next. Why had his manner changed so suddenly, and why had he been so glad to be interrupted? Had he really no intention of making love to her, and if he had, why did he rouse her hopes so suddenly and then cruelly dash them to the ground? Was it that he loved Lucy best, and that the sight of her froze the words upon his lips?

"Let him take her, then. He is welcome, for all of me," she thought; and then, as a keen pang of shame and disappointment swept over her, she laid her head for a moment upon the grass and wept bitterly. "He must have seen what I expected and I care most for that," she sobbed, resolving henceforth to guard herself at every point and do all that lay in her power to further Lucy's interests. "He will thus see how little I really care," she thought, and, lifting up her head, she tore in fragments the wreath she had been making, but which she could not now place on the head of her rival.

Mr. Leighton was flirting terribly with her when she joined the party assembled around the table, and he never once looked at Anna, though he saw that her plate was well supplied with the best of everything, and when at one draught she drained her glass of ice-water, he quietly placed another within her reach, standing a little before her and trying evidently to shield her from too critical observation. There were two at least who were glad when the picnic was over, and various were the private opinions of the company with regard to the entertainment. Dr. Bellamy, who had been repeatedly foiled in his attempts to be especially attentive to Lucy Harcourt, pronounced the whole thing "a bore." Fanny, who had been highly displeased with the doctor's deportment, came to the conclusion that the enjoyment did not compensate

for all the trouble, and while the rector thought he had never spent a more thoroughly wretched day, and Anna would have given worlds if she had stayed at home, Lucy declared that never in her life had she had so perfectly delightful a time, always excepting, of course, "that moonlight sail in Venice."

CHAPTER VI.

WEDNESDAY.

THERE was a heavy shower the night succeeding the picnic and the morning following was as balmy and bright as June mornings are wont to be after a fall of rain. They were always early risers at the farmhouse, but this morning Anna, who had slept but little, arose earlier than usual and, leaning from the window to inhale the bracing air and gather a bunch of roses fresh with the glittering raindrops, she felt her spirits grow lighter and wondered at her discomposure of the previous day. Particularly was she grieved that she should have harbored a feeling of bitterness toward Lucy Harcourt, who was not to blame for having won the love she had been foolish enough to covet.

"He knew her first," she said, "and if he has since been pleased with me, the sight of her has

won him back to his allegiance, and it is right. She is a pretty creature, but strangely unsuited, I fear, to be his wife," and then, as she remembered Lucy's wish to go with her when next she visited the poor, she said:

"I will take her to see the Widow Hobbs. That will give her some idea of the duties which will devolve upon her as a rector's wife. I can go directly there from Prospect Hill, where, I suppose, I must call with Aunt Meredith."

Anna made herself believe that in doing this she was acting only from a magnanimous desire to fit Lucy for her work, if, indeed, she was to be Arthur's wife—that in taking the mantle from her own shoulders, and wrapping it around her rival, she was doing a most amiable deed, when down in her inmost heart, where the tempter had put it, there was an unrecognized wish to see how the little dainty girl would shrink from the miserable abode, and recoil from the touch of the little, dirty hands which were sure to be laid upon her dress if the children were at home, and she waited a little impatiently to start on her errand of mercy.

It was four o'clock when, with her aunt, she arrived at Colonel Hetherton's and found the family assembled upon the broad piazza, the doctor dutifully holding the skein of worsted from which Miss Fanny was crocheting, and Lucy playing with a kitten, whose movements were scarcely more

graceful than her own, as she sprang up and ran to welcome Anna.

"Oh, yes, I am delighted to go with you. Pray let us start at once," she exclaimed, when, after a few moments of conversation, Anna told where she was going.

Lucy was very gayly dressed, enough so for a party, Anna thought, smiling to herself as she imagined the startling effect the white muslin and bright plaid ribbons would have upon the inmates of the shanty where they were going. There was a remonstrance from Mrs. Hetherton against her niece's walking so far, and Mrs. Meredith suggested that they should ride, but to this Lucy objected. She meant to take Anna's place among the poor when she was gone, she said, and how was she ever to do it if she could not walk such a little way as that? Anna, too, was averse to riding and she felt a kind of grim satisfaction when, after a time, the little figure, which at first had skipped along ahead with all the airiness of a bird, began to lag, and even pant for breath, as the way grew steeper and the path more stony and rough. Anna's evil spirit was in the ascendant that afternoon, steeling her heart against Lucy's doleful exclamations, as one after another her delicate slippers were torn, and the sharp thistles, of which the path was full, penetrated to her soft flesh. Straight and unbending as a young Indian, Anna walked on, shutting her ears against the sighs of weariness which

reached them from time to time. But when there came a half sobbing cry of actual pain, she stopped suddenly and turned towards Lucy, whose breath came gaspingly, and whose cheeks were almost purple with the exertion she had made.

"I cannot go any farther until I rest," she said, sinking down, exhausted, upon a large flat rock beneath a walnut tree.

Touched with pity at the sight of the heated face, from which the sweat was dripping, Anna too sat down beside her, and, laying her curly head in her lap, smoothed the golden hair, hating herself cordially, as Lucy said:

"You've walked so fast I could not keep up. You do not know, perhaps, how weak I am, and how little it takes to tire me. They say my heart is diseased, and an unusual excitement might kill me."

"No, oh, no!" Anna answered with a shudder, as she thought of what might have been the result of her rashness, and then she smoothed the wet hair, which, dried by the warm sunbeams, coiled itself up in golden masses, which her fingers softly threaded.

"I did not know until that time in Venice, when Arthur talked to me so good, trying to make me feel that it was not hard to die, even if I was so young and the world so full of beauty," Lucy went on, her voice sounding very low and her bright shoulder-knots of ribbon trembling with the

rapid beating of her heart. "When he was talking to me I could almost be willing to die, but the moment he was gone the doubts and fears came back, and death was terrible again. I was always better with Arthur. Everybody is, and I think your seeing so much of him is one reason why you are so good."

"No, no, I am not good," and Anna's hands pressed hard upon the girlish head lying in her lap. "I am wicked beyond what you can guess. I led you this rough way when I might have chosen a smooth, though longer, road, and walked so fast on purpose to worry you."

"To worry me. Why should you wish to do that?" and, lifting up her head, Lucy looked wonderingly at the conscience-stricken Anna, who could not confess to the jealousy, but who, in all other respects, answered truthfully, "I think an evil spirit possessed me for a time, and I wanted to show you that it was not so nice to visit the poor as you seemed to think; but I am sorry, oh, so sorry, and you'll forgive me, won't you?"

A loving kiss was pressed upon her lips and a warm cheek was laid against her own, as Lucy said, "Of course, I'll forgive you, though I do not quite understand why you should wish to discourage me or tease me either, when I liked you so much from the first moment I heard your voice and saw you in the choir. You don't dislike me, do you?"

"No, oh, no. I love you very dearly," Anna replied, her tears falling like rain upon the slight form she hugged so passionately to her, and which she would willingly have borne in her arms the remainder of their way, as a kind of penance for her past misdeeds; but Lucy was much better, she said, and so the two, between whom there was now a bond of love which nothing could sever, went on together to the low, dismal house where the Widow Hobbs lived.

The gate was off the hinges, and Lucy's muslin was torn upon a nail as she passed through, while the long fringe of her fleecy shawl was caught in the tall tufts of thistle growing by the path. In a muddy pool of water a few rods from the house a flock of ducks were swimming, pelted occasionally by the group of dirty, ragged children playing on the grass, and who at sight of the strangers and the basket Anna carried, sprang up like a flock of pigeons and came trooping towards her. It was not the sweet, pastoral scene which Lucy had pictured to herself, with Arthur for the background, and her ardor was greatly dampened even before the threshold was crossed, and she stood in the low, close room where the sick woman lay, her large eyes unnaturally bright, and turned wistfully upon them as she entered. There were ashes upon the hearth and ashes upon the floor, a hair-brush upon the table and an empty plate upon the chair, with swarms of flies sipping the few drops of molasses

and feeding upon the crumbs of bread left there by the elfish-looking child now in the bed beside its mother. There was nothing but poverty—squalid, disgusting poverty—visible everywhere, and Lucy grew sick and faint at the, to her, unusual sight.

"They have not lived here long. We only found them three weeks ago; they will look better by and by," Anna whispered, feeling that some apology was necessary for the destitution and filth visible everywhere.

Daintily removing the plate to the table, and carefully tucking up her skirts, Lucy sat down upon the wooden chair and looked dubiously on while Anna made the sick woman more tidy in appearance, and then fed her from the basket of provisions which Grandma Humphreys had sent.

"I never could do that," Lucy thought, as, shoving off the little dirty hand fingering her shoulder-knots she watched Anna washing the poor woman's face, bending over her pillow as unhesitatingly as if it had been covered with ruffled linen like those at Prospect Hill, instead of the coarse, soiled rag which hardly deserved the name of pillow-case. "No, I never could do that," and the possible life with Arthur which the maiden had more than once imagined began to look very dreary, when, suddenly, a shadow darkened the door, and Lucy knew before she turned her head that the rector was standing at her back, the blood tingling through her veins with a delicious feeling; as, laying both

hands upon her shoulders, and bending over her so that she felt his breath upon her brow he said:

"What, my Lady Lucy here? I hardly expected to find two ministering angels, though I was almost sure of one," and his fine eyes rested on Anna with a strange, wistful look of tenderness, which neither she nor Lucy saw.

"Then you knew she was coming," Lucy said, an uneasy thought flashing across her mind as she remembered the picnic, and the scene she had stumbled upon.

But Arthur's reply, "I did not know she was coming, I only knew it was like her," reassured her for a time, making her resolve to emulate the virtues which Arthur seemed to prize so highly. What a difference his presence made in that wretched room! She did not mind the poverty now, or care if her dress was stained with the molasses left in the chair, and the inquisitive child with tattered gown and bare brown legs was welcome to examine and admire the bright plaid ribbons as much as she chose.

Lucy had no thought for anything but Arthur, and the subdued expression of his face as, kneeling by the sick woman's bedside, he said the prayers she had hungered for more than for the contents of Anna's basket, now being purloined by the children crouched upon the hearth and fighting over the last bit of gingerbread.

"Hush-sh, little one," and Lucy's white, jeweled

hand rested on the head of the principal belligerent, who, awed by the beauty of her face and the authoritative tone of her voice, kept quiet till the prayer was over and Arthur had risen from his knees.

"Thank you, Lucy; I think I must constitute you my deaconess when Miss Ruthven is gone. Your very presence has a subduing effect upon the little savages. I never knew them so quiet before for a long time," Arthur said to Lucy in a low tone, which, low as it was, reached Anna's ear, but brought no pang of jealousy, or a sharp regret for what she felt was lost forever.

She was giving Lucy to Arthur Leighton, resolving that by every means in her power she would further her rival's cause, and the hot tears which dropped so fast upon Mrs. Hobbs' pillow while Arthur said the prayer was but the baptism of that vow, and not, as Lucy thought, because she felt so sorry for the suffering woman to whom she had brought so much comfort.

"God bless you wherever you go," she said, "and if there is any great good which you desire, may He bring it to pass."

"He never will—no, never," was the sad response in Anna's heart, as she joined the clergyman and Lucy outside the door, the former pointing to the ruined slippers and asking how she ever expected to walk home in such dilapidated things.

"I shall certainly have to carry you," he said,

"or your blistered feet will ever more be thrust forward as a reason why you cannot be my deaconess."

He seemed to be in unusual spirits that afternoon, and the party went gaily on, Anna keeping a watchful care over Lucy, picking out the smoothest places and passing her arm around her slender waist as they were going up a hill.

"I think it would be better if you both leaned on me," the rector said, offering each an arm, and apologizing for not having thought to do so before.

"I do not need it, thank you, but Miss Harcourt does. I fear she is very tired," said Anna, pointing to Lucy's face, which was so white and ghastly; so like the face seen once before in Venice, that, without another word, Arthur took the tired girl in his strong arms and carried her safely to the summit of the hill.

"Please put me down; I can walk now," Lucy pleaded; but Arthur felt the rapid beatings of her heart, and kept her in his arms until they reached Prospect Hill, where Mrs. Meredith was anxiously awaiting their return, her brow clouding with distrust when she saw Mr. Leighton, for she was constantly fearing lest her guilty secret should be exposed.

"I'll leave Hanover this very week, and so remove her from danger," she thought as she arose to say good-night.

"Just wait a minute, please. There's something I want to say to Miss Ruthven," Lucy cried, and, leading Anna to her own room, she knelt down by her side, and, looking up in her face, began—"There's one question I wish to ask, and you must answer me truly. It is rude and inquisitive, perhaps, but tell me—has Arthur—ever—ever—"

Anna guessed at what was coming, and, with a gasping sob which Lucy thought a long-drawn breath, she kissed the pretty parted lips, and answered:

"No, darling, Arthur never did, and never will, but some time he will ask you to be his wife. I can see it coming so plain."

Poor Anna! Her heart gave one great throb as she said this, and then lay like a dead weight in her bosom, while with sparkling eyes and blushing cheeks, Lucy exclaimed:

"I am so glad—so glad. I have only known you since Sunday, but you seem like an old friend; and so, you won't mind me telling you that ever since I first met Arthur among the Alps I have lived in a kind of ideal world of which he was the center. I am an orphan, you know, and an heiress, too. There is half a million, they say; and Uncle Hetherton has charge of it. Now, will you believe me when I say that I would give every dollar of this for Arthur's love if I could not have it without."

"I do believe you," Anna replied, inexpressibly

glad that the gathering darkness hid her white face from view as the child-like, unsuspecting girl went on. "The world, I know, would say that a poor clergyman was not a good match for me, but I do not care for that. Cousin Fanny favors it, I am sure, and Uncle Hetherton would not oppose me when he saw I was in earnest. Once the world, which is a very meddlesome thing, picked out Thornton Hastings, of New York, for me; but my! he was too proud and lofty even to talk to me much, and I would not speak to him after I heard of his saying that 'I was a pretty little plaything, but far too frivolous for a sensible man to make his wife.' Oh, wasn't I angry, though, and don't I hope that when he gets a wife she will be exactly such a frivolous thing as I am."

Even through the darkness Anna could see the blue eyes flash and the delicate nostrils dilate as Lucy gave vent to her wrath against the luckless Thornton Hastings.

"You will meet him at Saratoga. He is always there in the summer, but don't you speak to him, the hateful. He'll be calling you frivolous next."

An amused smile flitted across Anna's face as she asked: "But won't you, too, be at Saratoga? I supposed you were all going there."

"*Cela dépend,*" Lucy replied. "I would so much rather stay here. The dressing and dancing and flirting tire me so, and then, you know what Arthur said about taking me for his deaconess in your place."

There was a call just then from the hall below. Mrs. Meredith was getting impatient of the delay, and, with a good-by kiss, Anna went down the stairs and out upon the piazza, where her aunt was waiting. Mr. Leighton had accepted Fanny's invitation to stay to tea, and he handed the ladies to their carriage, lingering a moment while he said his parting words, for he was going out of town to-morrow, and when he returned Anna would be gone.

"You will think of us sometimes," he said, still holding Anna's hand. "St. Mark's will be lonely without you. God bless you and bring you safely back."

There was a warm pressure of the hand, a lifting of Arthur's hat, and then the carriage moved away; but Anna, looking back, saw Arthur standing by Lucy's side, fastening a rosebud in her hair, and at that sight the gleam of hope, which for an instant had crept into her heart, passed away with a sigh.

CHAPTER VII.

AT NEWPORT.

Moved by a strange impulse, Thornton Hastings took himself and his fast bays to Newport, instead of Saratoga, and thither, the first week in

August, came Mrs. Meredith, with eight large trunks, her niece and her niece's wardrobe, which had cost the pretty sum of eighteen hundred dollars.

Mrs. Meredith was not naturally lavish of her money except where her own interests were concerned, as they were in Anna's case. Conscious of having come between her niece and the man she loved, she determined that in the procuring of a substitute for this man, no advantages which dress could afford should be lacking. Besides, Thornton Hastings was a perfect connoisseur in everything pertaining to a lady's toilet, and it was with him and his preference before her mind that Mrs. Meredith opened her purse so widely and bought so extensively. There were sun hats and round hats, and hats *à la cavalier*—there were bonnets and veils, and dresses and shawls of every color and kind, with the lesser matters of sashes and gloves and slippers and fans, the whole making an array such as Anna had never seen before, and from which she at first shrank back appalled and dismayed. But she was not now quite so much of a novice as when she first reached New York the Saturday following the picnic at Prospect Hill. She had passed successfully and safely through the hands of mantua-makers, milliners and hairdressers since then. She had laid aside every article brought from home. She wore her hair in puffs and waterfalls, and her dresses in the latest mode.

She had seen the fashionable world as represented at Saratoga, and, sickening at the sight, had gladly acquiesced in her aunt's proposal to go on to Newport, where the air was purer and the hotels not so densely packed. She had been called a beauty and a belle, but her heart was longing for the leafy woods and fresh green fields of Hanover; and Newport, she fancied, would be more like the country than sultry, crowded Saratoga, and never since leaving home had she looked so bright and pretty as the evening after her arrival at the Ocean House, when invigorated by the bath she had taken in the morning, and gladdened by sight of the glorious sea and the soothing tones it murmured in her ear, she came down to the parlor clad in simple white, with only a bunch of violets in her hair, and no other ornament than the handsome pearls her aunt had given to her. Standing at the open window, with the drapery of the lace curtain sweeping gracefully behind her, she did not look much like the Anna who led the choir in Hanover and visited the Widow Hobbs, nor yet much like the picture which Thornton Hastings had formed of the girl who he knew was there for his inspection. He had been absent the entire day, and had not seen Mrs. Meredith, when she arrived early in the morning, but he found her card in his room, and a strange smile curled his lip as he said:

"And so I have not escaped her."

Thornton Hastings had proved a most treacher-

ous knight and overthrown his general's plans entirely. Arthur's letter had affected him strangely, for he readily guessed how deeply wounded his sensitive friend had been by Anna Ruthven's refusal, while added to this was a fear lest Anna had been influenced by a thought of him and what might possibly result from an acquaintance. Thornton Hastings had been flattered and angled for until he had grown somewhat vain, and it did not strike him as at all improbable that the unsophisticated Anna should have designs upon him.

"But I won't give her a chance," he said, when he finished Arthur's letter. "I thought once I might like her, but I shan't, and I'll be revenged on her for refusing the best man that ever breathed. I'll go to Newport instead of Saratoga, and so be clear of the entire Meredith clique, the Hethertons, the little Harcourt, and all."

This, then, was the secret of his being there at the Ocean House. He was keeping away from Anna Ruthven, who never had heard of him but once, and that from Lucy Harcourt. After that scene in the Glen, where Anna had exclaimed against intriguing mothers and their bold, shameless daughters, Mrs. Meredith had been too wise a maneuverer to mention Thornton Hastings, so that Anna was wholly ignorant of his presence at Newport, and looked up in unfeigned surprise at the tall, elegant man whom her aunt presented as Mr. Hastings. With all Thornton's affected indiffer-

ence, there was still a curiosity to see the girl who could say "no" to Arthur Leighton, and he had not waited long after receiving Mrs. Meredith's card before going down to find her.

"That's the girl, I'll lay a wager," he thought of a high-colored, showily-dressed hoyden, who was whirling around the room with Ned Peters, from Boston, and whose corn-colored dress swept against his boots as he entered the parlor.

How, then, was he disappointed in the apparition Mrs. Meredith presented as "my niece," the modest, self-possessed young girl, whose cheeks grew not a whit redder, and whose pulse did not quicken at the sight of him, though a gleam of something like curiosity shone in the brown eyes which scanned him so quietly. She was thinking of Lucy, and her injunction "not to speak to the hateful if she saw him;" but she did speak to him, and Mrs. Meredith fanned herself complacently as she saw how fast they became acquainted.

"You do not dance," Mr. Hastings said, as she declined an invitation from Ned Peters, whom she had met at Saratoga. "I am glad, for now you will, perhaps, walk with me outside upon the piazza. You won't take cold, I think," and he glanced thoughtfully at the white neck and shoulders gleaming beneath the gauzy muslin.

Mrs. Meredith was in rhapsodies and sat a full hour with the tiresome dowagers around her, while up and down the broad piazza Thornton Hastings

walked with Anna, talking to her as he seldom talked to women, and feeling greatly surprised to find that what he said was fully appreciated and understood. That he was pleased with her he could not deny himself, as he sat alone in his room that night, feeling more and more how keenly Arthur Leighton must have felt at her refusal.

"But why did she refuse him?" he wished he knew, and ere he slept he had resolved to study Anna Ruthven closely, and ascertain, if possible, the motive which prompted her to discard a man like Arthur Leighton.

The next day brought the Hetherton party, all but Lucy Harcourt, who, Fanny laughingly said, was just now suffering from clergyman on the brain, and, as a certain cure for the disease, had turned my Lady Bountiful, and was playing the pretty patroness to all Mr. Leighton's parishioners, especially a Widow Hobbs, whom she had actually taken to ride in the carriage, and to whose ragged children she had sent a bundle of cast-off party dresses; and the tears ran down Fanny's cheeks as she described the appearance of the elder Hobbs, who came to church with a soiled pink silk skirt, her black, tattered petticoat hanging down below and one of Lucy's opera hoods upon her head.

"And the clergyman on the brain? Does he appreciate the situation? I have an interest there. He is an old friend of mine," Thornton Hastings asked.

He had been an amused listener to Fanny's gay badinage, laughing merrily at the idea of Lucy's taking old women out to air and clothing her children in party dresses. His opinion of Lucy, as she had said, was that she was a pretty, but frivolous, plaything, and it showed upon his face as he asked the question he did, watching Anna furtively as Fanny replied:

"Oh, yes, he is certainly smitten, and I must say I never saw Lucy so thoroughly in earnest. Why, she really seems to enjoy traveling all over Christendom to find the hovels and huts, though she is mortally afraid of the smallpox, and always carries with her a bit of chloride of lime as a disinfecting agent. I am sure she ought to win the parson. And so you know him, do you?"

"Yes; we were in college together, and I esteem him so highly that, had I a sister, there is no man living to whom I would so readily give her as to him."

He was looking now at Anna, whose face was very pale, and who pressed a rose she held so tightly that the sharp thorns pierced her flesh, and a drop of blood stained the whiteness of her hand.

"See, you have hurt yourself," Mr. Hastings said. "Come to the water pitcher and wash the stain away."

She went with him mechanically, and let him hold her hand in his while he wiped off the blood with his own handkerchief, treating her with a

tenderness for which he could hardly account himself. He pitied her, he said, suspecting that she had repented of her rashness, and because he pitied her he asked her to ride with him that day after the fast bays, of which he had written to Arthur. Many admiring eyes were cast after them as they drove away, and Mrs. Hetherton whispered softly to Mrs. Meredith:

"A match in progress, I see. You have done well for your charming niece."

And yet matrimony, as concerned himself, was very far from Thornton Hastings' thoughts that afternoon, when, because he saw that it pleased Anna to have him do so, he talked to her of Arthur, hoping in his unselfish heart that what he said in his praise might influence her to reconsider her decision and give him a different answer. This was the second day of Thornton Hastings' acquaintance with Anna Ruthven, but as the days went on, bringing the usual routine of life at Newport, the drives, the rides, the pleasant piazza talks, and the quiet moonlight rambles, when Anna was always his companion, Thornton Hastings came to feel an unwillingness to surrender, even to Arthur Leighton, the beautiful girl who pleased him better than any one he had known.

Mrs. Meredith's plans were working well, and so, though the autumn days had come, and one after another the devotees of fashion were dropping off, she lingered on, and Thornton Hastings

still rode and walked with Anna Ruthven, until there came a night when they wandered farther than usual from the hotel, and sat down together on a height of land which overlooked the placid waters, where the moonlight lay softly sleeping. It was a most lovely night, and for a while they listened in silence to the music of the sea, then talked of the breaking up which came in a few days when the hotel was to be closed, and wondered if next year they would come again to the old haunts and find them unchanged.

There was witchery in the hour, and Thornton felt its spell, speaking out at last, and asking Anna if she would be his wife. He would shield her so tenderly, he said, protecting her from every care, and making her as happy as love and money could make her. Then he told her of his home in the far-off city, which needed only her presence to make it a paradise, and then he waited for her answer, watching anxiously the limp white hands, which, when he first began to talk, had fallen so helplessly upon her lap, and then had crept up to her face, which was turned away from him, so that he could not see its expression, or guess at the struggle going on in Anna's mind. She was not wholly surprised, for she could not mistake the nature of the interest which, for the last two weeks, Thornton Hastings had manifested in her. But, now that the moment had come, it seemed to her that she never had expected it, and she sat silent for a time, dreading so

much to speak the words which she knew would inflict pain on one whom she respected so highly but whom she could not marry.

"Don't you like me, Anna?" Thornton asked at last, his voice very low and tender, as he bent over her and tried to take her hand.

"Yes, very much," she answered, and, emboldened by her reply, Thornton lifted up her head, and was about to kiss her forehead, when she started away from him, exclaiming:

"No, Mr. Hastings. You must not do that. I cannot be your wife. It hurts me to tell you so, for I believe you are sincere in your proposal; but it can never be. Forgive me, and let us both forget this wretched summer."

"It has not been wretched to me. It has been a very happy summer, since I knew you, at least," Mr. Hastings said, and then he asked again that she should reconsider her decision. He could not take it as her final one. He had loved her too much, had thought too much of making her his own to give her up so easily, he said, urging so many reasons why she should think again, that Anna said to him, at last:

"If you would rather have it so, I will wait a month, but you must not hope that my answer will be different from what it is to-night. I want your friendship, though, the same as if this had never happened. I like you, Mr. Hastings, because you have been kind to me, and made my stay in New-

port so much pleasanter than I thought it could be. You have not talked to me like other men. You have treated me as if I, at least, had common sense. I thank you for that; and I like you because——"

She did not finish the sentence, for she could not say "because you are Arthur's friend." That would have betrayed the miserable secret tugging at her heart, and prompting her to refuse Thornton Hastings, who had also thought of Arthur Leighton, wondering if it were thus that she rejected him, and if in the background there was another love standing between her and the two men to win whom many a woman would almost have given her right hand. To say that Thornton was not a little piqued at her refusal would be false. He had not expected it, accustomed, as he was, to adulation; but he tried to put that feeling down, and his manner was even more kind and considerate than ever as he walked slowly back to the hotel, where Mrs. Meredith was waiting for them, her practised eye detecting at once that something was amiss. Thornton Hastings knew Mrs. Meredith thoroughly, and, wishing to shield Anna from her displeasure, he preferred stating the facts himself to having them wrung from the pale, agitated girl who, bidding him good night, went quickly to her room; so, when she was gone, and he stood for a moment alone with Mrs. Meredith, he said:

"I have proposed to your niece, but she cannot answer me now. She wishes for a month's proba-

tion, which I have granted, and I ask that she shall not be persecuted about the matter. I wish for an unbiassed answer."

He bowed politely, and walked away, while Mrs. Meredith almost trod on air as she climbed the three flights of stairs and sought her niece's chamber. Over the interview which ensued that night we pass silently, and come to the next morning, when Anna sat alone on the piazza at the rear of the hotel, watching the playful gambols of some children on the grass, and wondering if she ever could conscientiously say "yes" to Thornton Hastings' suit. He was coming toward her now, lifting his hat politely, and asking what she would give for news from home.

"I found this on my table," he said, holding up a dainty little missive, on the corner of which was written "In haste," as if its contents were of the utmost importance. "The boy must have made a mistake, or else he thought it well enough to begin at once bringing your letters to me," he continued, with a smile, as he handed Anna the letter from Lucy Harcourt. "I have one too, from Arthur which I will read while you are devouring yours, and then, perhaps, you will take a little ride. The September air is very bracing this morning," he said, walking away to the far end of the piazza, while Anna broke the seal of the envelope, hesitating a moment ere taking the letter from it, and trembling as if she guessed what it might contain.

There was a quivering of the eyelids, a paling of the lips as she glanced at the first few lines, then with a low, moaning cry, "No, no, oh, no, not that," she fell upon her face.

To lift her in his arms and carry her to her room was the work of an instant, and then, leaving her to Mrs. Meredith's care, Thornton Hastings went back to finish Arthur's letter, which might or might not throw light upon the fainting fit.

"Dear Thornton," Arthur wrote, "you will be surprised, no doubt, to hear that your old college chum is at last engaged—positively engaged—but not to one of the fifty lambs about whom you once jocosely wrote. The shepherd has wandered from his flock, and is about to take into his bosom a little, stray ewe-lamb—Lucy Harcourt by name—"

"The deuce he is," was Thornton's ejaculation, and then he read on.

"She is an acquaintance of yours, I believe, so I need not describe her, except to say that she is somewhat changed from the gay butterfly of fashion she used to be, and in time will make as demure a little Quakeress as one could wish to see. She visits constantly among my poor, who love her almost as well as they once loved Anna Ruthven.

"Don't ask me, Thorne, in your blunt, straightforward manner if I have so soon forgotten Anna. That is a matter with which you've nothing to do. Let it suffice that I am engaged to another, and mean to make a kind and faithful husband to her.

Lucy would have suited you better, perhaps, than she does me; that is, the world would think so, but the world does not always know, and if I am satisfied, surely it ought to be. Yours truly,

"A. LEIGHTON."

"Engaged to Lucy Harcourt? I never could have believed it. He's right in saying that she is far more suitable for me than him," Thornton exclaimed, dashing aside the letter and feeling conscious of a pang as he remembered the bright, airy little beauty in whom he had once been strongly interested, even if he did call her frivolous and ridicule her childish ways.

She was frivolous, too much so, by far, to be a clergyman's wife, and for a full half hour Thornton paced up and down the room, meditating on Arthur's choice and wondering how upon earth it ever happened.

CHAPTER VIII.

HOW IT HAPPENED.

LUCY had insisted that she did not care to go to Saratoga. She preferred remaining in Hanover, where it was cool and quiet, and where she would not have to dress three times a day and dance every

night till twelve. She was beginning to find that there was something to live for besides consulting one's own pleasure, and she meant to do good the rest of her life, she said, assuming such a sober nun-like air, that no one who saw her could fail to laugh, it was so at variance with her entire nature.

But Lucy was in earnest; Hanover had a greater attraction for her than all the watering-places in the world, and she meant to stay there, feeling very grateful when Fanny threw her influence on her side, and so turned the scale in her favor. Fanny was glad to leave her dangerous cousin at home, especially after Dr. Bellamy decided to join their party at Saratoga, and, as she carried great weight with both her parents, it was finally decided to let Lucy remain at Prospect Hill in peace, and so one morning in July she saw the family depart to their summer gayeties without a single feeling of regret that she was not of their number. She had too much on her hands to spend her time in regretting anything. There was the parish school to visit, and a class of children to hear—children who were no longer ragged, for Lucy's money had been poured out like water, till even Arthur had remonstrated with her and read her a long lecture on the subject of misplaced charity. Then, there was Widow Hobbs, waiting for the jelly Lucy had promised, and for the chapter which Lucy read to her, sitting where she could watch the road and see just who turned the corner, her voice always sound-

ing a little more serious and good when the footsteps belonged to Arthur Leighton, and her eyes, always glancing at the bit of cracked mirror on the wall, to see that her dress and hair and ribbons were right before Arthur came in.

It was a very pretty sight to see her there and hear her as she read to the poor woman, whose surroundings she had so greatly improved, and Arthur always smiled gratefully upon her, and then walked back with her to Prospect Hill, where he sometimes lingered while she played or talked to him, or brought the luscious fruits with which the garden abounded.

This was Lucy's life, the one she preferred to Saratoga, and they left her to enjoy it, somewhat to Arthur's discomfiture, for much as he valued her society, he would a little rather she had gone when the Hethertons went, for he could not be insensible to the remarks which were being made by the curious villagers, who watched this new flirtation, as they called it, and wondered if their minister had forgotten Anna Ruthven. He had not forgotten Anna, and many a time was her loved name upon his lips and a thought of her in his heart, while he never returned from an interview with Lucy that he did not contrast the two and sigh for the olden time, when Anna was his co-worker instead of pretty Lucy Harcourt. And yet there was about the latter a powerful fascination, which he found it hard to resist. It rested him just to look at her,

she was so fresh, so bright, so beautiful, and then she flattered his self-love by the unbounded deference she paid to his opinions, studying all his tastes and bringing her own will into perfect subjection to his, until she scarcely could be said to have a thought or feeling which was not a reflection of his own. And so the flirtation, which at first had been a one-sided affair, began to assume a more serious form; the rector went oftener to Prospect Hill, while the carriage from Prospect Hill stood daily at the gate of the rectory, and people said it was a settled thing, or ought to be, gossiping about it until old Captain Humphreys, Anna's grandfather, conceived it his duty as senior warden of St. Mark's, to talk with the young rector and know "what his intentions were."

"You have none?" he said, fixing his mild eyes reproachfully upon his clergyman, who winced a little beneath the gaze. "Then if you have no intentions, my advice to you is, that you quit it and let the gal alone, or you'll ruin her, if she ain't sp'ilt already, as some of the women folks say she is. It don't do no gal any good to have a chap, and specially a minister, gallyvantin' after her, as I must say you've been after this one for the last few weeks. She's a pretty little creature, and I don't blame you for liking her. It makes my old blood stir faster when she comes purring around me with her soft ways and winsome face, and so I don't wonder at you; but when you say you've no inten-

tions, I blame you greatly. You orter have—excuse my plainness. I'm an old man who likes my minister, and don't want him to go wrong, and then I feel for her, left alone by all her folks—more's the shame to them, and more's the harm for you to tangle up her affections, as you are doing, if you are not in earnest; and I speak for her just as I should want some one to speak for Anna."

The old man's voice trembled a little here, for it had been a wish of his that Anna should occupy the rectory, and he had at first felt a little resentment against the gay young creature who seemed to have supplanted her; but he was over that now, and in all honesty of heart he spoke both for Lucy's interest and that of his clergyman. And Arthur listened to him respectfully, feeling, when he was gone, that he merited the rebuke, that he had not been guiltless in the matter, that if he did not mean to marry Lucy Harcourt he must let her alone.

And he would, he said; he would not go to Prospect Hill again for two whole weeks, nor visit at the cottages where he was sure to find her. He would keep himself at home; and he did, shutting himself up among his books, and not even making a pastoral call on Lucy when he heard that she was sick. And so Lucy came to him, looking dangerously charming in her green riding-habit—with the scarlet feather sweeping from her hat. Very prettily she pouted, too, chiding him for his neg-

lect, and asking why he had not been to see her, nor anybody. There was the Widow Hobbs, and Mrs. Briggs and those miserable Donelsons—he had not been near them for a fortnight. What was the reason? she asked, beating her foot upon the carpet, and tapping the end of her riding whip upon the sermon he was writing.

"Are you displeased with me, Arthur?" she continued, her eyes filling with tears as she saw the grave expression on his face. "Have I done anything wrong? I am so sorry if I have."

Her voice had in it the grieved tones of a little child, and her eyes were very bright, with the tears, quivering on her long silken lashes. Leaning back in his chair, with his hands clasped behind his head, a position he always assumed when puzzled and perplexed, the rector looked at her a moment before he spoke. He could not define to himself the nature of the interest he took in Lucy Harcourt. He admired her greatly, and the self-denials and generous exertions she had made to be of use to him since Anna went away had touched a tender chord and made her seem very near to him.

Habit with him was everything, and the past two weeks' isolation had shown him how necessary she had become to him. She did not satisfy his higher wants as Anna Ruthven had done. No one could ever do that, but she amused, and soothed, and rested him, and made his duties lighter by taking half of them upon herself. That she was more

attached to him than he could wish, he greatly feared, for, since Captain Humphreys' visit, he had seen matters differently from what he saw them before, and had unsparingly questioned himself as to how far he would be answerable for her future weal or woe.

"Guilty, verily, I am guilty, in leading her on, if I meant nothing by it, he had written against himself, pausing in his sermon to write it just as Lucy came in, appealing so prettily to him to know why he had neglected her so long. She was very beautiful this morning, and Arthur felt his heart beat rapidly at he looked at her, and thought most any man who had never known Anna Ruthven would be glad to gather that bright creature in his own arms and know she was his own. One long, long sigh to the memory of all he had hoped for once—one bitter pang as he remembered Anna and that twilight hour in the church and then he made a mad plunge in the dark and said:

"Lucy, do you know people are beginning to talk about my seeing you so much?"

"Well, let them talk. Who cares?" Lucy replied, with a good deal of asperity of manner for her, for that very morning the old housekeeper at Prospect Hill had ventured to remonstrate with her for "running after the parson." "Pray, where is the wrong? What harm can come of it?" and she tossed her head pettishly.

"None, perhaps," Arthur replied, "if one could

keep his affections under control. But if either of us should learn to love the other very much, and the love was not reciprocated, harm would surely come of that. At least, that was the view Captain Humphreys took of the matter when he was speaking to me about it."

There were red spots on Lucy's face, but her lips were very white, and the buttons on her riding dress rose and fell rapidly with the beating of her heart as she looked steadily at Arthur. Was he going to send him from her, send her back to the insipid life she had lived before she knew him? It was too terrible to believe, and the great tears rolled slowly down her cheeks. Then, as a flash of pride came to her aid, she dashed them away, and said haughtily:

"And so, for fear I shall fall in love with you, and be ruined, perhaps, you are sacrificing both comfort and freedom, shutting yourself up here among your books and studies to the neglect of other duties? But it need be so no longer. The necessity for it, if it existed once, certainly does not now. I will not be in your way. Forgive me that I ever have been."

Lucy's voice began to tremble as she gathered up her riding-habit and turned to find her gauntlets. One of them had dropped upon the floor, between the table and the rector, and as she stooped to reach it her curls almost swept the young man's lap.

"Let me get it for you," he said, hastily pushing

back his chair, and awkwardly entangling his foot in her dress, so that when she rose she stumbled backward, and would have fallen but for the arm he quickly passed around her.

Something in the touch of that quivering form completed the work of temptation, and he held it for an instant while she said to him:

"Please, let me go, sir!"

"No, Lucy, I can't let you go; I want you to stay with me."

Instantly the drooping head was uplifted, and Lucy's eyes looked into his with such a wistful, pleading, wondering look, that Arthur saw, or thought he saw, his duty plain, and, gently touching his lips to the brow glistening so white within their reach, he continued:

"There is a way to stop the gossip and make it right for me to see you. Promise to be my wife, and not even Captain Humphreys will say aught against it."

Arthur's voice trembled a little now, for the mention of Captain Humphreys had brought a thought of Anna, whose brown eyes seemed for an instant to look reproachfully upon that wooing. But Arthur had gone too far to retract—he had committed himself, and now he had only to wait for Lucy's answer.

There was no deception about her. Hers was a nature as clear as crystal, and, with a gush of glad tears, she promised to be the rector's wife, hiding

her face in his bosom, and telling him brokenly how unworthy she was, how foolish and how unsuited to the place, but promising to do the best she could do not to bring him into disgrace on account of her shortcomings.

"With the acknowledgment that you love me, I can do anything," she said, and her white hand crept slowly into the cold, clammy one which lay so listlessly in Arthur's lap.

He was already repenting, for he felt that it was sin to take that warm, trusting, loving heart in exchange for the half-lifeless one he should render in return, the heart where scarcely a pulse of joy was beating, even though he held his promised wife, and she as fair and beautiful as ever promised wife could be.

"I can make her happy, and I will," he thought, pressing the warm fingers which quivered to his touch.

But he did not kiss her again. He could not, for the brown eyes which still seemed looking at him as if asking what he did. There was a strange spell about those phantom eyes, and they made him say to Lucy, who was now sitting demurely at his side:

"I could not clear my conscience if I did not confess that you are not the first woman whom I have asked to be my wife."

There was a sudden start, and Lucy's face was as pale as ashes, while her hand went quickly to her

side, where the heart beats were so visible, warning Arthur to be careful how he startled her, so when she asked:

"Who was it, and why did you not marry her? Did you love her very much?" he answered indifferently:

"I would rather not tell you who it was, as that might be a breach of confidence. She did not care to be my wife, and so that dream was over and I was left for you."

He did not say how much he loved her, but Lucy forgot the omission and asked:

"Was she young and pretty?"

"Young and pretty both, but not as beautiful as you." Arthur replied, his fingers softly parting back the golden curls from the face looking so trustingly into his.

And in that he answered truly. He had seen no face as beautiful of its kind as Lucy's was, and he was glad that he could tell her so. He knew how it would please her, and partly make amends for the tender words which he could not speak for the phantom eyes haunting him so strangely. And Lucy, who took all things for granted, was more than content, only she wondered that he did not kiss her again, and wished she knew the girl who had come so near being in her place. But she respected his wishes too much to ask, after what he had said, and she tried to make herself glad that he had been so frank with her, and not left his

other love affair to the chance of her discovering it afterwards at a time when it might be painful to her.

"I wish I had something to confess," she thought, but from the scores of her flirtations, and even offers, for she had not lacked for them, she could not find one where her own feelings had been enlisted in ever so slight a degree, until she remembered Thornton Hastings, who for one whole week had paid her such attentions as made her drive round on purpose to look at the house on Madison Square where the future Mrs. Hastings was to live. But his coolness afterwards, and his comments on her frivolity had terribly angered her, making her think she hated him, as she had said to Anna. Now, however, as she remembered the drive and the house, she nestled closer to Arthur, and told him all about it, fingering the buttons on his dressing-gown as she told it, and never dreaming of the pang she was inflicting as Arthur thought how mysterious were God's ways, and wondered that he had not reversed the matter, and given Lucy to Thornton Hastings rather than to him, who did not half deserve her.

"I know now I never cared a bit for Thornton Hastings, though I might if he had not been so mean as to call me frivolous," Lucy said, as she arose to go; then suddenly turning to the rector, she added: "I shall never ask you who your first

love was, but I would like to know if you have quite forgotten her."

"Have you forgotten Thornton Hastings?" Arthur asked, laughingly, and Lucy replied, "Of course not; one never forgets, but I don't care a pin for him now, and, did I tell you Fanny writes that rumor says he will marry Anna Ruthven?"

"Yes, no, I did not know—I am not surprised," and Arthur stooped to pick up a book lying on the floor, thus hiding his face from Lucy, who, woman-like, was glad to report a piece of gossip, and continued: "She is a great belle, Fanny says—dressed beautifully and in perfect taste, besides talking as if she knew something, and this pleases Mr. Hastings, who takes her out to ride and drive, and all this after I warned her against him, and told her just what he said of me. I am surprised at her."

Lucy was drawing on her gauntlets, and Arthur was waiting to see her out, but she still lingered on the threshold, and at last said to him, "I wonder you never fell in love with Anna yourself. I am sure if I were you I should prefer her to me. She knows something and I do not, but I am going to study. There are piles of books in the library at Prospect Hill, and you shall see what a famous student I will become. If I get puzzled, will you help me?"

"Yes, willingly," Arthur replied, wishing that she would go before she indulged in any more spec-

ulations as to why he did not love Anna Ruthven.

But Lucy was not done yet, and Arthur felt as if the earth were giving way beneath his feet when, as he lifted her into the saddle and took her hand at parting, she said, "Now, remember, I am not going to be jealous of that other love. There is only one person who could make me so, and that is Anna Ruthven; but I know it was not she, for that night we all came from Mrs. Hobbs' and she went with me up-stairs, I asked her honestly if you had ever offered yourself to her, and she told me you had not. I think you showed a lack of taste, but I am glad it was not Anna."

Lucy was far down the road ere Arthur recovered from the shock her last words had given him. What did it mean, and why had Anna said he never proposed? Was there some mistake, and he the victim of it? There was a blinding mist before the young man's eyes as he returned to his study, and went over again, with all the incidents of Anna's refusal, even to the reading of the letter which he already knew by heart. Then, as the thought came over him that possibly Mrs. Meredith played him false in some way, he groaned aloud, and the great sweat drops fell upon the table where he leaned his head. But this could not be, he reasoned. Lucy was mistaken. She had not heard aright. Somebody, surely, was mistaken, or he had committed a fatal error.

"But I must abide by it," he said, lifting up his

pallid face. "God forbid the wrong I have done in asking Lucy to be my wife when my heart belonged to Anna. God help me to forget the one and love the other as I ought. She is a lovely little girl, trusting me so wholly that I can make her happy, and I will; but Anna! oh, Anna!"

It was a despairing cry, such as a newly-engaged man should never have sent after another than his affianced bride. Arthur thought so, too, fighting back his first love with an iron will, and, after that first hour of anguish, burying it so far from sight that he went that night to Captain Humphreys and told of his engagement; then called upon his bride-elect, trying so hard to be satisfied that, when, at a late hour, he returned to the rectory, he was more than content; and, by way of fortifying himself still further, wrote the letter which Thornton Hastings read at Newport.

And that was how it happened.

CHAPTER IX.

ANNA.

THROUGH the rich curtains which shaded the windows of a room looking out on Fifth Avenue, the late October sun was shining, and as its red light played among the flowers on the carpet a pale

young girl sat watching it, and thinking of the Hanover hills, now decked in their autumnal glory, and of the ivy on St. Mark's, growing so bright and beautiful beneath the autumnal frosts. Anna had been very sick since that morning in September when she sat on the piazza at the Ocean House and read Lucy Harcourt's letter. The faint was a precursor of fever, the physician said, when summoned to her aid, and in a tremor of fear and distress Mrs. Meredith had had her at once removed to New York, and that was the last Anna remembered.

From the moment her aching head had touched the soft pillows in Aunt Meredith's house all consciousness had fled, and for weeks she had hovered so near to death that the telegraph wires bore daily messages to Hanover, where the aged couple who had cared for her since her childhood wept, and prayed, and watched for tidings from their darling. They could not go to her, for Grandpa Humphreys had broken his leg, and his wife could not leave him, so they waited with what patience they could for the daily bulletins which Mrs. Meredith sent, appreciating their anxiety, and feeling glad withal of anything which kept them from New York.

"She had best be prayed for in church," the old man had said, and so Sunday after Sunday Arthur read the prayer for the sick, his voice trembling as it had never trembled before, and a keener

sorrow in his heart than he had ever known when saying the solemn words. Heretofore the persons prayed for had been comparative strangers, people in whom he felt only the interest a pastor feels in all his flock, but now it was Anna, whose case he took to God, and he always smothered a sob during the moment he waited for the fervent response the congregation made, the "Amen" which came from the pew where Lucy sat sounding louder and heartier than all the rest, and having in it a sound of the tears which fell so fast on Lucy's book as she asked that Anna might not die. Oh, how he longed to go to her, but this he could not do, and so he had sent Lucy, who bent so tenderly above the sick girl, whispering loving words in her ear, and dropping kisses upon the lips which uttered no response, save once, when Lucy said:

"Do you remember Arthur?"

Then they murmured faintly:

"Yes; Arthur, I remember him, and the Christmas song, and the gathering in the church; but that was long ago. There's much happened since then."

"And I am to marry Arthur," Lucy had said again, but this time there was no sign that she was understood, and that afternoon she went back to Hanover loaded with testaments for the children of St. Mark's, and new books for the Sunday-school, and, accompanied by Valencia, who, having had a serious difference with her mistress, Mrs. Mere-

dith, offered her services to Lucy, and was at once accepted.

That was near the middle of October; now it was towards the last, and Anna was so much better that she sat up for an hour or more, and listened with some degree of interest to what Mrs. Meredith told her of the days when she lay so unconscious of all that was passing around her, never even heeding the kindly voice of Thornton Hastings, who, more than once, had stood by her pillow with his hand on her feverish brow, and whose thoughtfulness was visible in the choice bouquets he sent each day, with notes of anxious inquiry when he did not come himself.

Anna had not seen him yet since her convalescence. She would rather not see any one until strong enough to talk, she said; and so Thornton waited patiently for the interview she had promised him when she was stronger, but every day he sent her fruit and flowers, and books of prints which he thought would interest her, and which always made her cheeks grow hot and her heart beat regretfully, for she thought of the answer she must give him when he came, and she shrank from wounding him.

"He is too good, too noble to have an unwilling wife," she said, but that did not make it the less hard to tell him so, and when at last she was well enough to see him, she waited his coming nervously, starting when she heard his step, and trem-

bling like a leaf as he drew near her chair. It was a very thin, wasted hand which he took in his, holding it for a moment between his own, and then laying it gently back upon her lap.

He had come for the answer to a question put six weeks before, and Anna gave it to him.

Kindly, considerately, but decidedly, she told him she could not be his wife, simply because she did not love him as he ought to be loved.

"It is nothing personal," she said, working nervously at the heavy fringe of her shawl. "I respect you more than any man I ever knew, but one, and had I met you years ago before—before——"

"I understand you," Thornton said, coming to her aid. "You have tried to love me, but cannot, because your affections are given to another."

Anna bowed her head in silence. Then after a moment she continued:

"You must forgive me, Mr. Hastings, for not telling you this at once. I did not know then but I could love you—at least I meant to try, for you see, this other one——"

The fingers got terribly tangled in the fringe as Anna gasped for breath, and went on:

"He does not know, and never will; that is, he never cared for me, nor guessed how foolish I was to give him my love unsought."

"Then it is not Arthur Leighton, and that is the reason you refused him, too?" Mr. Hastings said, involuntarily, and Anna looked quickly up, her

cheeks growing paler than they were before, as she replied:

"I don't know what you mean. I never refused Mr. Leighton—never."

"You never refused Mr. Leighton?" Thornton exclaimed, forgetting all discretion in his surprise at this flat contradiction. "I have Arthur's word for it, written to me last June, while Mrs. Meredith was there, I think."

"He surely could not have meant it, because it never occurred. Once, I was foolish enough to think he was going to, but he did not. There is some great mistake," Anna found strength to say, and then she lay back in her easy-chair panting for breath, her brain all in a whirl as she thought of the possibility that she was once so near the greatest happiness she had ever desired, and which was now lost to her forever.

He brought her smelling salts, he gave her ice-water to drink, and then, kneeling beside her, he fanned her gently, while he said: "There surely is a mistake, and, I fear, a great wrong, too, somewhere. Were all your servants trusty? Was there no one who would withhold a letter if he had written? Were you always at home when he called?" Thornton questioned her rapidly, for there was a suspicion in his mind as to the real culprit; but he would not hint it to Anna unless she suggested it herself. And this she was not likely to do. Mrs. Meredith had been too kind to her during the past

summer, and especially during her illness, to allow of such a thought concerning her, and, in a maze of perplexity, she replied to his inquiries: "We keep but one servant, Esther, and she, I know, is trusty. Besides, who could have refused him for me? Grandfather would not, I know, because—because——"

She hesitated a little and her cheeks blushed scarlet, as she added: "I sometimes thought he wished it to be."

If Thornton had previously a doubt as to the other man who stood between himself and Anna, that doubt was now removed, and laying aside all thoughts of self, he exclaimed: "I tell you there is a great wrong somewhere. Arthur never told an untruth; he thought that you refused him; he thinks so still, and I shall never rest till I have solved the mystery. I will write to him to-day."

For an instant there swept over Anna a feeling of unutterable joy as she thought of what the end might be; then, as she remembered Lucy, her heart seemed to stop its beating, and, with a moan, she stretched her hand toward Thornton, who had risen as if to leave her.

"No, no; you must not interfere," she said. "It is too late, too late. Don't you remember Lucy? Don't you know she is to be his wife? Lucy must not be sacrificed for me. I can bear it the best."

She knew she had betrayed her secret and she

tried to take it back, but Thornton interrupted her with, "Never mind now, Anna; I guessed it all before, and it hurts my pride less to know that it is Arthur whom you prefer to me; I do not blame you for it."

He smoothed her hair pityingly, while he stood over her for a moment, wondering what his duty was. Anna had told him plainly what it was. He must leave Arthur and Lucy alone. She insisted upon having it so, and he promised her at least that he would not interfere; then, taking her hand, he pressed it a moment between his own and went out from her presence. In the hall below he met with Mrs. Meredith, who he knew was waiting anxiously to hear the result of that long interview.

"Your niece will never be my wife, and I am satisfied to have it so," he said; then, as he saw the lowering of her brow, he continued: "I have long suspected that she loved another, and my suspicions are confirmed, though there's something I cannot understand," and fixing his eyes searchingly upon Mrs. Meredith, he told her what Arthur had written and of Anna's denial of the same. "Somebody played her false," he said, rather enjoying the look of terror and shame which crept into the haughty woman's eyes, as she tried to appear natural and express her own surprise at what she heard.

"I was right in my conjecture," Thornton thought, as he took his leave of Mrs. Meredith

who could not face Anna then, but paced restlessly up and down her spacious rooms, wondering how much Thornton had suspected and what the end would be.

She had sinned for naught. Anna had upset all her cherished plans, and, could she have gone back for a few months and done her work again, she would have left the letter lying where she found it. But that could not be now. She must reap as she had sown, and resolving finally to hope for the best and abide the result, she went up to Anna, who having no suspicion of her, hurt her ten times more cruelly by the perfect faith with which she confided the story to her than bitter reproaches would have done.

"I know you wanted me to marry Mr. Hastings," Anna said, "and I would if I could have done so conscientiously, but I could not; for, I may now confess it to you, I did love Arthur so much, and once I hoped that he loved me."

The cold hard woman, who had brought this grief upon her niece, could only answer that it did not matter.

She was not very sorry, although she had wished her to marry Mr. Hastings, but she must not fret about that, or about anything. She would be better by and by, and forget that she ever cared for Arthur Leighton.

"At least," and she spoke entreatingly now, 'you will not demean yourself to let him know of

the mistake. It would scarcely be womanly, and he may have gotten over it. Present circumstances would seem to prove as much."

Mrs. Meredith felt that her secret was comparatively safe, and, with her spirits lightened, she kissed her niece lovingly and told her of a trip to Europe which she had in view, promising that if she went Anna should go with her and so not be at home when the marriage of Arthur and Lucy took place.

It was appointed for the 15th of January, that being the day when Lucy came of age, and the very afternoon succeeding Anna's interview with Mr. Hastings the little lady came down to New York to direct her bridal trousseau making in the city.

She was brimming over with happiness, and her face was a perfect gleam of sunshine when she came next day to Anna's room, and, throwing off her wrappings, plunged at once into the subject uppermost in her thoughts, telling first how she and Arthur had quarreled.

"Not quarreled as Uncle and Aunt Hetherton and lots of people do, but differed so seriously that I cried, and had to give up, too," she said. "I wanted you for bridesmaid, and, do you think, he objected! Not objected to you, but to bridesmaids generally, and he carried his point, so that unless Fanny is married at the same time, as, perhaps, she will be, we are just to stand up stiff and straight alone, except as you'll all be round me in

the aisle. You'll be well by that time, and I want you very near to me," Lucy said, squeezing fondly the icy hand whose coldness made her start and exclaim:

"Why, Anna, how cold you are, and how pale you are looking! You have been so sick, and I am well. It don't seem quite right, does it? And Arthur, too, is looking thin and worn—so thin that I have coaxed him to raise whiskers to cover the hollows in his cheeks. He looks a heap better now, though he was always handsome. I do so wonder that you two never fell in love, and I tell him so most every time I see him."

It was terrible to Anna to sit and hear all this, and the room grew dark as she listened; but she forced back her pain, and, stroking the curly head almost resting in her lap, said kindly:

"You love him very much, don't you, darling; so much that it would be hard to give him up?"

"Yes; oh, yes. I could not give him up now, except to God. I trust I could do that, though once I could not, I am sure," and, nestling closer to Anna, Lucy whispered to her of the new-born hope that she was better than she used to be, that daily interviews with Arthur had not been without their effect, and now, she trusted, she tried to do right, from a higher motive than just the pleasing of him.

"God bless you, darling," was Anna's response, as she clasped the hand of the young girl who was

now far more worthy to be Arthur's wife than once she had been.

If Anna ever had a thought of telling Arthur, it would have been put aside by that interview with Lucy. She could not harm that pure, loving, trusting girl, and she sent her from her with a kiss and blessing, praying silently that she might never know a shadow of the pain which she was suffering.

CHAPTER X.

MRS. MEREDITH HAS A CONSCIENCE.

She had one, years before, but, since the summer day when she sent from her the white-faced man whose heart she had broken, it had been hardening over with a stony crust which nothing, it seemed, could break. And yet there were times when she was softened and wished that much which she had done might be blotted out from the great book in which she believed.

There was many a misdeed recorded there against her, she knew, and occasionally there stole over her a strange disquietude as to how she could confront them when they all came up against her.

Usually, she could cast such thoughts aside by a drive down gay Broadway, or, at most, a call at Stewart's; but the sight of Anna's white face and

the knowing what made it so white was a constant reproach, and conscience gradually wakened from its torpor enough to whisper of the only restitution in her power—that of confession to Arthur.

But from this she shrank nervously. She could not humble herself thus to any one, and she would not either. Then came the fear lest by another than herself her guilt should come to light. What if Thornton Hastings should find her out? She was half afraid he suspected her now, and that gave her the keenest pang of all, for she respected Thornton highly, and it would cost her much to lose his good opinion.

She had lost him for her niece, but she could not spare him from herself, and so, in sad perplexity, which wore upon her visibly, the autumn days went on until at last she sat one morning in her dressing-room and read in a foreign paper:

"Died, at Strasburgh, August 31st, Edward Coleman, aged 46."

That was all; but the paper dropped from the trembling hands, and the proud woman of the world bowed her head upon the cold marble of the table and wept aloud. She was not Mrs. Meredith now. She was Julia Ruthven again, and she stood with Edward Coleman out in the grassy orchard, where the apple-blossoms were dropping from the trees and the air was full of insects' hum and the song of matin birds. She was the wealthy Mrs. Meredith now, and he was dead in Strasburgh.

True to her he had been to the last, for he had never married, and those who had met him abroad had brought back the same report of "a white-haired man, old before his time, with a tired, sad look upon his face." That look she had written there, and she wept on as she recalled the past and murmured softly:

"Poor Edward! I loved you all the while, but I sold myself for gold, and it turned your brown locks snowy-white, poor darling!" and her hands moved up and down the folds of her cashmere robe, as if it were the brown locks they were smoothing just as they used to do. Then came a thought of Anna, whose face wore much the look which Edward's did when he went slowly from the orchard and left her there alone, with the apple-blossoms dropping on her head and the wild bees' hum in her ear.

"I can at least do right in that respect," she said; "I can undo the past to some extent and lessen the load of sin rolling upon my shoulders. I will write to Arthur Leighton. I surely need tell no one else; not yet, at least, lest he has outlived his love for Anna. I can trust to his discretion and to his honor, too. He will not betray me unless it is necessary, and then only to Anna. Edward would bid me do it if he could speak. He was somewhat like Arthur Leighton."

And so, with the dead man in Strasburgh before her eyes, Mrs. Meredith nerved herself to write to

Arthur Leighton, confessing the fraud imposed upon him, imploring his forgiveness and begging him to spare her as much as possible.

"I know from Anna's own lips how much she has always loved you," she wrote in conclusion; "but she does not know of the stolen letter, and I leave you to make such use of the knowledge as you shall think proper."

She did not put in a single plea for the poor, little Lucy, dancing so gayly over the mine just ready to explode. She was purely selfish still, with all her qualms of conscience, and thought only of Anna, whom she would make happy at another's sacrifice. So she never hinted that it was possible for Arthur to keep his word pledged to Lucy Harcourt, and, as she finished her letter and placed it in an envelope with the one which Arthur had sent to Anna, her thoughts leaped forward to the wedding she would give her niece—a wedding not quite like that she had designed for Mrs. Thornton Hastings, but a quiet, elegant affair, just suited to a clergyman who was marrying a Ruthven.

CHAPTER XI.

THE LETTER RECEIVED.

ARTHUR had been spending the evening at Prospect Hill. The Hethertons had returned and would remain till after the fifteenth, and since they had come the rector found it even pleasanter calling there than it had been before, with only his bride-elect to entertain him. Sure of Dr. Bellamy, Fanny had laid aside her sharpness, and was exceedingly witty and brilliant, while, now that it was settled, the colonel was too thoroughly a gentleman to be otherwise than gracious to his future nephew; and Mrs. Hetherton was always polite and lady-like, so that the rector looked forward with a good deal of interest to the evenings he usually gave to Lucy, who, though satisfied to have him in her sight, still preferred the olden time, when she had him all to herself and was not disquieted with the fear that she did not know enough for him, as she often was when she heard him talking with Fanny and her uncle of things she did not understand.

This evening, however, the family were away and she received him alone, trying so hard to come up to his capacity, talking so intelligibly of books she had been reading and looking so lovely in her

winter crimson dress, besides being so sweetly affectionate and confiding, that for once since his engagement Arthur was more than content and returned her modest caresses with a warmth he had not felt before. He did love her, he said to himself, or, at least, he was learning to love her very much; and when at last he took his leave, and she went with him to the door, there was an unwonted tenderness in his manner as he pushed her gently back, for the first snow of the season was falling and the large flakes dropped upon her golden hair, from which he brushed them carefully away.

"I cannot let my darling take cold," he said, and Lucy felt a strange thrill of joy, for never before had he called her his darling, and sometimes she had thought that the love she received was not as great as the love she gave.

But she did not think so now, and in an ecstasy of joy she stood in the deep recess of the bay window, watching him as he went away through the moonlight and the feathery cloud of snow, wondering why, when she was so happy, there could cling to her a haunted presentiment that she and Arthur would never meet again just as they had parted.

Arthur, on the contrary, was troubled with no such presentiment. Of Anna he hardly thought, or, if he did, the vision was obscured by the fair picture he had seen standing in the door, with the snowflakes resting in her hair like pearls in a golden coronet. And Arthur thanked his God that

he was beginning at last to feel right—that the solemn vows that he was so soon to utter would be more than a mockery.

It was Arthur's work to teach others how dark and mysterious are the ways of Providence, but he had not himself half learned that lesson in all its strange reality; but the lesson was coming on apace; each stride of his swift-footed beast brought him nearer to the great shock waiting for him upon the study table, where Thomas, his man, had put it.

He saw it the first thing on entering the room, but he did not take it up until the snow was brushed from his garments and he had warmed himself by the cheerful fire blazing on the hearth. Then, sitting in his easy-chair, and moving the lamp nearer to him, he took Mrs. Meredith's letter and broke the seal, starting as if a serpent had stung him when, in the note inclosed, he recognized his own handwriting, the same he had sent to Anna when his heart was so full of hope as the brown stalks now beating against his windows with a dismal sound were full of fragrant blossoms. Both had died since then—the roses and his hopes—And Arthur almost wished that he, too, were dead when he read Mrs. Meredith's letter and saw the gulf his feet were treading. Like the waves of the sea, his love for Anna came rolling back upon him, augmented and intensified by all that he had suffered, and by the terrible conviction tha

it could not be, although, alas! "it might have been."

He repeated the words over and over again, as stupified with pain, he sat gazing at vacancy, thinking how true was the couplet—

> "Of all sad words of tongue and pen,
> The saddest are these, it might have been."

He could not even pray at once, his brain was so confused, but when, at last, the white, quivering lips could move, and the poor aching heart could pray, he only whispered, "God help me to do right," and by that prayer he knew that for a single instant there had crept across his mind the possibility of sacrificing Lucy, who loved and trusted him so much. But only for an instant. He could not cast her from him, though to take her now, knowing what he did, were almost death itself.

"But God can help me to bear it," he cried; then, falling upon his knees, with his face bowed to the floor, the Rector of St. Mark's prayed as he had never prayed before—first for himself, whose need was greatest, and then for Lucy, that she might never know what making her happy had cost him, and then for Anna, whose name he could not speak. "That other one," he called her, and his heart kept swelling in his throat and preventing his utterance, so that the words he would say never reached his lips.

But God heard them just the same, and knew

his child was asking that Anna might forget him, if to remember him was pain; that she might learn to love another far worthier than he had ever been.

He did not think of Mrs. Meredith; he had no feeling of resentment then; he was too wholly crushed to care how his ruin had been brought about, and, long after the wood fire on the hearth had turned to cold, gray ashes, he knelt upon the floor and battled with his grief, and when the morning broke it found him still in the cheerless room where he had passed the entire night and from which he went forth strengthened, as he hoped, to do what he believed to be his duty. This was on Saturday, and on the Sunday following there was no service at St. Mark's. The rector was sick, the sexton said; "hard sick, too, he had heard," and the Hetherton carriage, with Lucy in it, drove swiftly to the rectory, where the quiet and solitude awed and frightened Lucy as she entered the house and asked the housekeeper how Mr. Leighton was.

"It is very sudden," she said. "He was perfectly well when he left me on Friday night. Please tell him I am here."

The housekeeper shook her head. Her master's orders were that no one but the doctor should be admitted, she said, repeating what Arthur had told her in anticipation of just such an infliction as this.

But Lucy was not to be denied. Arthur wa

hers, his sickness was hers, his suffering was hers, and see him she would.

"He surely did not mean me when he asked that no one should be admitted. Tell him it is I; it is Lucy," she said with an air of authority, which, in one so small, so pretty and so child-like, only amused Mrs. Brown, who departed with the message, while Lucy sat down with her feet upon the stove and looked around the sitting-room, thinking that it was smaller and poorer than the one at Prospect Hill, and how she would remodel it when she was mistress there.

"He says you can come," was the word Mrs. Brown brought back, and, with a gleam of triumph in her eye and a toss of the head, which said, "I told you so," Lucy went softly into the darkened room and shut the door behind her.

Arthur had half expected this and had nerved himself to meet it, but the cold sweat stood on his face and his heart throbbed painfully as Lucy bent over him and Lucy's tears fell on his face while she took his feverish hands in hers and murmured softly, "Poor, dear Arthur, I am so sorry for you, and if I could I'd bear the pain so willingly."

He knew she would; she was just as loving and unselfish as that, and he wound his arms around her and drew her down close to him while he whispered, "My poor, little Lucy; I don't deserve this from you."

She did not know what he meant, and she only

answered him with kisses, while her little hands moved caressingly across his forehead just as they had done years ago in Rome, when she soothed the pain away. There certainly was a mesmeric influence emanating from those hands, and Arthur felt its power, growing very quiet and at last falling away to sleep, while the soft passes went on, and Lucy held her breath lest she would waken him.

"She was a famous nurse," the physician said when he came, constituting her his coadjutor and making her tread wild with joy and importance when he gave his patient's medicine into her hands.

"It was hardly proper for her niece to stay," Mrs. Hetherton thought, but Lucy was one who could trample down proprieties, and it was finally arranged that Fanny should stay with her. So, while Fanny went to bed and slept, Lucy sat all night in the sick room with Mrs. Brown, and when the next morning came she was looking very pale and languid, but very beautiful withal. At least, such was the mental compliment paid her by Thornton Hastings, who was passing through Hanover and had stopped over one train to see his old college friend and, perhaps, tell him what he began to feel it was his duty to tell him in spite of his promise to Anna. She was nearly well now and had driven with him twice to the park, but he could not be insensible to what she suffered, or how she shrank from having the projected wedding dis-

cussed, and, in his intense pity for her, he had half resolved to break his word and tell Arthur what he knew. But he changed his mind when he had been in Hanover a few hours and watched the little fairy who, like some ministering angel, glided about the sick room, showing herself every whit a woman, and making him repent that he had ever called her frivolous or silly. She was not either, he said, and, with a magnanimity for which he thought himself entitled to a good deal of praise, he even felt that it was very possible for Arthur to love the gentle little girl who smoothed his pillows so tenderly and whose fingers threaded so lovingly the damp, brown locks when she thought he, Thornton, was not looking on. She was very coy of him and very distant towards him, too, for she had not forgotten his sin, and she treated him at first with a reserve for which he could not account. But, as the days went on, and Arthur grew so sick that his parishioners began to tremble for their young minister's life, and to think it perfectly right for Lucy to stay with him, even if she was assisted in her labor of love by the stranger from New York, the reserve disappeared and on the most perfect terms of amity she and Thornton Hastings watched together by Arthur's side. Thornton Hastings learned more lessons than one in that sick room where Arthur's faith in God triumphed over the terrors of the grave, which, at one time, seemed so near, while the timid Lucy, whom he

had only known as a gay butterfly of fashion, dared before him to pray that God would spare her promised husband or give her grace to say, "Thy will be done."

Thornton could hardly say that he was skeptical before, but any doubts he might have had touching the great fundamental truths on which a true religion rests were gone forever, and he left Hanover a changed man in more respects than one.

Arthur did not die, and on the Sunday preceding the week when the usual Christmas decorations were to commence he came again before his people, his face very pale and worn, and wearing upon it a look which told of a new baptism, an added amount of faith which had helped to lift him above the fleeting cares of this present life. And yet there was much of earth clinging to him still, and it made itself felt in the rapid beating of his heart when he glanced towards the square pew where Lucy knelt and knew that she was giving thanks for him restored again.

Once, in the earlier stages of his convalescence, he had almost betrayed his secret by asking her which she would rather do—bury him from her sight, feeling that he loved her to the last, or give him to another, now that she knew he would recover. There was a frightened look in Lucy's eyes as she replied: "I would ten thousand times rather see you dead, and know that, even in death, you were my own, than to lose you that other way.

Oh, Arthur, you have no thought of leaving me now?"

"No, darling, I have not. I am yours always," he said, feeling that the compact was sealed forever and that God blessed the sealing.

He had written to Mrs. Meredith, granting her his forgiveness and asking that, if Anna did not already know of the deception, she might never be enlightened. And Mrs. Meredith had answered that Anna had only heard a rumor that an offer had been made her, but that she regarded it as a mistake, and was fast recovering both her health and spirits. Mrs. Meredith did not add her surprise at Arthur's generosity in adhering to his engagement, nor hint that, now her attack of conscience was so safely over, she was glad he did so, having hope yet of that house on Madison Square; but Arthur guessed at it and dismissed her from his mind just as he tried to dismiss every unpleasant thought, waiting with a trusting heart for whatever the future might bring.

CHAPTER XII.

VALENCIA.

VERY extensive preparations were making at Prospect Hill for the double wedding to occur on the 15th. After much debate and consultation,

Fanny had decided to take the doctor then; and thus she, too, shared largely in the general interest and excitement which pervaded everything.

Both brides elect seemed very happy, but in a very different way; for, while Fanny was quiet and undemonstrative, Lucy seemed wild with joy, and danced gayly about the house—now in the kitchen, where the cake was making; now in the chamber where the plain sewing was done, and then flitting to her own room in quest of Valencia, who was sent on divers errands, the little lady thinking that, now the time was so near, it would be proper for her to remain indoors and not show herself in public quite as freely as she had been in the habit of doing.

So she remained at home, while they missed her in the back streets and bylanes, the Widow Hobbs, who was still an invalid, pining for a sight of her bright face, and only half compensated for its absence by the charities which Valencia brought; the smart waiting-maid putting on innumerable airs and making Mrs. Hobbs feel keenly how greatly she thought herself demeaned by coming to such a heathenish place as that.

The Hanoverians, too, missed her in the street, but for this they made ample amends by discussing the doings at Prospect Hill and commenting upon the bridal trousseau which was sent up from New York the very week before Christmas, thus affording a most fruitful theme for conversation

for the women and girls engaged in trimming the church.

There were dresses of every conceivable fabric, they said, but none were quite so grand as the wedding-dress itself—the heavy white silk which could "stand alone," and trailed "a full half-yard behind."

It was also whispered round that, not content with seeing the effect of her bridal robes as they lay upon the bed, Miss Lucy Harcourt had actually tried them on—wreath, veil and all—and stood before the glass until Miss Fanny had laughed at her for being so vain and foolish, and said she was a pretty specimen for a sober clergyman's wife.

For all this gossip the villagers were indebted mostly to Miss Valencia Le Barre, who, ever since her arrival at Prospect Hill, had been growing somewhat disenchanted with the young mistress she had expected to rule even more completely than she had ruled Mrs. Meredith. But in this she was mistaken, and it did not improve her never very amiable temper to find that she could not with safety appropriate more than half her mistress' handkerchiefs, collars, cuffs, and gloves, to say nothing of perfumery, and pomades, and, as this was a new state of things with Valencia, she chafed at the administration under which she had so willingly put herself, and told things of her mistress which no sensible servant would ever have reported. And Lucy gave her plenty to tell.

Frank and outspoken as a child, she acted as she felt, and did try on the bridal dress, screaming with pleased delight when Valencia fastened the veil and let its fleecy folds fall gracefully around her.

"I wonder what Arthur will think. I do so wish he was here," she had said, ordering a hand-glass brought that she might see herself from behind and know just how much her dress did trail, and how it looked beneath the costly veil.

She was very beautiful in her bridal robes, and she kept them on till Fanny began to chide her for her vanity, and, even then, she lingered before the mirror, as if loath to take them off.

"I don't believe in presentiments," she said to Fanny; "but, do you know, it seems to me just as if I should never wear this again," and she smoothed thoughtfully the folds of the heavy silk she had just laid upon the bed. "I don't know what can happen to prevent it, unless Arthur should die. He was so pale last Sunday and seemed so weak that I shuddered every time I looked at him. I mean to drive round there this afternoon," she continued. "I suppose it is too cold for him to venture as far as here, and he has no carriage, either."

She went to the parsonage that afternoon, and the women in the church saw her as she drove by, the gorgeous colors of her carriage blanket flashing in the wintry sunshine just as the diamonds flashed upon the hand she waved gayly towards them.

There was a little too much of the lady patroness about her quite to suit the plain Hanoverians, especially those who were neither high enough or low enough to be honored with her notice, and they returned to their wreathmaking and gossip, wondering under their breath if it would not, on the whole, have been just as well if their clergyman had married Anna Ruthven instead of this fine city girl with her Parisian manners.

A gleam of intelligence shot from the gray eyes of Valencia, who was in a most unreasonable mood.

"She did not like to stain her hands with the nasty hemlock more than some other folks," she had said, when, after the trying on of the bridal dress, Lucy had remonstrated with her for some duty neglected, and then bidden her to go to the church and help if she were needed.

"I must certainly dismiss you," Lucy had said, wondering how Mrs. Meredith had borne so long with the insolent girl, who went unwillingly to the church, where she was at work when the carriage drove by.

She had thought many times of the letter she had read, and, more than once, when particularly angry, it had been upon her lips to tell her mistress that she was not the first whom Mr. Leighton had asked to be his wife, if, indeed, she was his choice at all; but there was something in Lucy's manner which held her back; besides which, she

was, perhaps, unwilling to confess to her own meanness in reading the stolen letter.

"I could tell them something if I would," she thought, as she bent over the hemlock boughs and listened to the remarks; but, for that time, she kept the secret and worked on moodily, while the unsuspecting Lucy went her way and was soon alighting at the rectory gate.

Arthur saw her as she came up the walk and went to meet her.

He was looking very pale and miserable, and his clothes hung loosely upon him; but he welcomed her kindly leading her in to the fire, and trying to believe that he was glad to see her sitting there with her little high-heeled boots upon the fender and the bright hues of her Balmoral just showing beneath her dress of blue merino.

She went all over the house, as she usually did, suggesting alterations and improvements, and greatly confusing good Mrs. Brown, who trudged obediently after her, wondering what she and her master were ever to do with that gay-plumaged bird, whose ways were so unlike their own.

"You must drive with me to the church," she said at last to Arthur. "Fresh air will do you good, and you stay moped up too much. I wanted you to-day at Prospect Hill, for this morning's express from New York brought——"

She stood up on tiptoe to whisper the great news to him, but his pulses did not quicken in the least,

even when she told him how charming was the bridal dress. He was standing before the mirror and, glancing at himself, he said, half laughingly, half sadly:

"I am a pitiful-looking bridegroom to go with all that finery: I should not think you would want me, Lucy."

"But I do," she answered, holding his hand and leading him to the carriage, which took him to the church.

He had not intended going there as long as there was an excuse for staying away, and he felt himself grow sick and faint when he stood amid the Christmas decorations and remembered the last year when he and Anna had fastened the wreaths upon the wall.

They were trimming the church very elaborately in honor of him and his bride, and white artificial flowers, so natural that they could not be detected, were mingled with scarlet leaves and placed among the mass of green. The effect was very fine and Arthur tried to praise it, but his face belied his words; and, after he was gone, the disappointed girls declared that he acted more like a man about to be hung than one so soon to be married.

It was very late that night when Lucy summoned Valencia to comb out her long, thick curls, and Valencia was tired, and cross, and sleepy, handling the brush so awkwardly and snarling her mistress's hair so often that Lucy expostulated with her

sharply, and this awoke the slumbering demon, which, bursting into full life, could no longer be restrained; and, in amazement, which kept her silent, Lucy listened while Valencia taunted her "with standing in Anna Ruthven's shoes," and told her all she knew of the letter stolen by Mrs. Meredith, and the one she carried to Arthur. But Valencia's anger quickly cooled, and she trembled with fear when she saw how deathly white her mistress grew at first and heard the loud beating of her heart, which seemed trying to burst from its prison and fall bleeding at the feet of the poor, wretched girl, around whose lips the white foam gathered as she motioned Valencia to stop and whispered:

"I am dying!"

She was not dying, but the fainting fit which ensued was longer and more like death than that which had come upon Anna when she heard that Arthur was lost. Twice they thought her heart had ceased to beat, and, in an agony of remorse, Valencia hung over her, accusing herself as her murderer, but giving no other explanation to those around her than: "I was combing her hair when the white froth spirted all over her wrapper, and she said that she was dying."

And that was all the family knew of the strange attack, which lasted till the dawn of the day, and left upon Lucy's face a look as if years and years

of anguish had passed over her young head and left its footprints behind.

Early in the morning she asked to see Valencia alone, and the repentant girl went to her prepared to take back all she had said and declare the whole a lie. But Lucy wrung the truth from her, and she repeated the story again so clearly that Lucy had no longer a doubt that Anna was preferred to herself, and sending Valencia away, she moaned piteously:

"Oh, what shall I do? What is my duty?"

The part which hurt her most of all was the terrible certainty that Arthur did not love her as he loved Anna Ruthven. She saw it now just as it was; how, in an unguarded moment, he had offered himself to save her good name from gossip, and how, ever since, his life had been a constant struggle to do his duty by her.

"Poor Arthur," she sobbed, "yours has been a hard lot trying to act the love you did not feel; but it shall be so no longer. Lucy will set you free."

This was her final decision, but she did not reach it till a day and a night had passed, during which she lay with her white face turned to the wall, saying she wanted nothing except to be left alone.

"When I can, I'll tell you," she had said to Fanny and her aunt, when they insisted upon knowing the cause of her distress. "When I can I'll tell you. Leave me alone till then."

So they ceased to worry her, but Fanny sat constantly in the room watching the motionless figure, which took whatever she offered, but otherwise gave no sign of life until the morning of the second day, when it turned slowly towards her, the livid lips quivering piteously and making an atempt to smile as they said:

"Fanny, I can tell you now; I have made up my mind."

Fanny's black eyes were dim with the truest tears she had ever shed when Lucy's story was ended, and her voice was very low as she asked:

"And do you mean to give him up at this late hour?"

"Yes, I mean to give him up. I have been over the entire ground many times, even to the deep humiliation of what people will say, and I have come each time to the same conclusion. It is right that Arthur should be released and I shall release him."

"And you—what will you do?" Fanny asked, gazing in wonder and awe at the young girl, who answered:

"I do not know; I have not thought. I guess God will take care of that."

He would, indeed, take care of that just as he took care of her, inclining the Hetherton family to be so kind and tender towards her, and keeping Arthur from the house during the time when the

Christmas decorations were completed and the Christmas festival was held.

Many were the inquiries made for her, and many the thanks and wishes for her speedy restoration sent her by those whom she had so bountifully remembered.

Thornton Hastings, too, who had come to town and was present at the church on Christmas-eve, asked for her with almost as much interest as Arthur, although the latter had hoped she was not seriously ill and expressed a regret that she was not there, saying he should call on her on the morrow after the morning service.

"Oh, I cannot see him here. I must tell him there, at the rectory, in the very room where he asked Anna and me both to be his wife," Lucy said when Fanny reported Arthur's message. "I am able to go there and I must. It will be fine sleighing to-morrow. See, the snow is falling now," and pushing back the curtain, Lucy looked dreamily out upon the fast whitening ground, sighing, as she remembered the night when the first snowflakes fell and she stood watching them with Arthur at her side.

Fanny did not oppose her cousin, and, with a kiss upon the blue-veined forehead, she went to her own room, leaving Lucy to think over for the hundredth time what she would say to Arthur.

CHAPTER XIII.

CHRISTMAS DAY.

THE worshippers at St. Mark's on Christmas morning heard the music of the bells as the Hetherton sleigh passed by, but none of them knew whither it was bound, or the scene which awaited the rector, when, his services over, he started towards home.

Lucy had kept her word, and, just as Mrs. Brown was looking at the clock to see if it was time to put her fowls to bake, she heard the hall-door open softly and almost dropped her dripping-pan in her surprise at the sight of Lucy Harcourt, with her white face and great sunken blue eyes, which looked so mournfully at her as Lucy said:

"I want to go to Arthur's room—the library, I mean."

"Why, child, what is the matter? I heard you was sick, but did not s'pose 'twas anything like this. You are paler than a ghost," Mrs. Brown exclaimed as she tried to unfasten Lucy's hood and cloak and lead her to the fire.

But Lucy was not cold, she said. She would rather go at once to Arthur's room. Mrs. Brown made no objection, though she wondered if the girl was crazy as she went back to her fowls and Christ-

mas pudding, leaving Lucy to find her way alone to Arthur's study, which looked so like its owner, with his dressing-gown across the lounge, just where he had thrown it, his slippers under the table and his arm-chair standing near the table, where he sat when he asked Lucy to be his wife, and where she now sat down, panting for breath and gazing dreamily around with the look of a frightened bird when seeking for some avenue of escape from an appalling danger. There was no escape, and, with a moan, she laid her head upon the table and prayed that Arthur might come quickly while she had sense and strength to tell him. She heard his step at last, and rose up to meet him, smiling a little at his sudden start when he saw her there.

"It's only I," she said, shedding back the clustering curls from her pallid face, and grasping the chair to steady herself and keep from falling. "I am not here to frighten you. I've come to do you good—to set you free. Oh, Arthur, you do not know how terribly you have been wronged, and I did not know it, either, till a few days ago. She never received your letter—Anna never did. If she had she would have answered yes, and have been in my place now; but she is going to be there. I give you up to Anna. I'm here to tell you so. But oh, Arthur, it hurts—it hurts."

He knew it hurt by the agonizing expression of her face, but he could not go near her for a moment, so overwhelming was his surprise at what he saw

and heard. But, when the first shock to them both was past, and he could listen to her more rational account of what she knew and what she was there to do, he refused to listen. He would not be free. He would keep his word, he said. Matters had gone too far to be suddenly ended. He held her to his promise and she must be his wife.

"Can you tell me truly that you love me more than Anna?" Lucy asked, a ray of hope dawning for an instant upon her heart, but fading into utter darkness as Arthur hesitated to answer.

He did love Anna best, though never had Lucy been so near supplanting even her as at that moment, when she stood before him and told him he was free. There was something in the magnitude of her generosity which touched a tender chord and made her dearer to him than she had ever been.

"I can make you very happy," he said at last, and Lucy replied:

"Yes, but yourself — how with yourself? Would you be happy, too? No, Arthur, you would not, and neither should I, knowing all I do. It is best that we should part, though it almost breaks my heart, for I have loved you so much."

She stopped for breath, and Arthur was wondering what he could say to persuade her, when a cheery whistle sounded near and Thornton Hastings appeared in the door. He had gone to the office after church, and not knowing that anyone

but Arthur was in the library, had come there at once.

"I beg your pardon," he said when he saw Lucy, and he was hurrying away, but Lucy called him back, feeling that in him she should find a powerful ally to aid her in her task.

Appealing to him as Arthur's friend, she repeated the story rapidly, and then went on:

"Tell him it is best—he must not argue against me, for I feel myself giving way through my great love for him, and it is not right. Tell him so Mr. Hastings—plead my cause for me—say what a true woman ought to say, for, believe me, I am in earnest in giving him to Anna."

There was a ghastly hue upon her face, and her features looked pinched and rigid, but the terrible heart-beats were not there. God, in his great mercy, kept them back, else she had surely died under that strong excitement. Thornton thought she was fainting, and, going hastily to her side, passed his arm around her and put her in the chair; then, standing protectingly by her, he said just what first came into his mind to say. It was a delicate matter in which to interfere, and he handled it carefully, telling frankly of what had passed between himself and Anna, and giving it as his opinion that she loved Arthur to-day just as well as before she left Hanover.

"Then, if that is so and Arthur loves her, as I know he does, it is surely right for them to marry,

and they must," Lucy exclaimed, vehemently, while Thornton laid his hand pityingly upon her head and said:

"And only you be sacrificed?"

There was something wondrously tender in the tone of Thornton's voice, and Lucy glanced quickly up at him, while her blue eyes filled with the first tears she had shed since she came into that room.

"I am willing—I am ready—I have made up my mind and I shall never revoke it," she answered, while Arthur again put in a feeble remonstrance.

But Thornton was on Lucy's side. He did with cooler judgment what she could not, and when, at last, the interview was ended, there was no ring on Lucy's forefinger, for Arthur held it in his hand and their engagement was at an end.

Stunned with what he had passed through, Arthur stood motionless, while Thornton drew Lucy's cloak about her shoulders, fastened her fur himself, tied on her satin hood, taking such care of her as a mother would take of a suffering child.

"It is hardly safe to send her home alone," he thought, as he looked into her face and saw how weak she was. "As a friend of both, I ought to accompany her."

She was, indeed, very weak, so weak that she could scarcely stand, and Thornton took her in his arms and carried her to the sleigh; then springing in beside her he made her lean her tired head upon

his shoulder as they drove to Prospect Hill. She did not seem frivolous to him now, but rather the noblest type of womanhood he had ever met. Few could do what she had done, and there was much of warmth and fervor in the clasp of his hand as he bade her good-by and went back to the rectory, thinking how deceived he had been in Lucy Harcourt.

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Great was the consternation and surprise in Hanover when it was known that there was to be but one bride at Prospect Hill on the night of the fifteenth, and various were the surmises as to the cause of the sudden change; but, strive as they might, the good people of the village could not get at the truth, for Valencia held her peace, while the Hethertons were far too proud to admit of being questioned, and Thornton Hastings stood a bulwark of defence between the people and their clergyman, adroitly managing to have the pulpit at St. Mark's supplied for a few weeks while he took Arthur away, saying that his health required the change.

"You have done nobly, darling," Fanny Hetherton had said to Lucy when she received her from Thornton's hands and heard that all was over; then, leading her half-fainting cousin to her own cheerful room, she made her lie down while she told

of the plan she had formed when first she heard what Lucy's intentions were.

"I wrote to the doctor, asking if he would take a trip to Europe, so that you could go with us, for I know you would not wish to stay here. To-day I have his answer, saying he will go, and what is better yet, father and mother are going, too."

"Oh, I am so glad, so glad. I could not stay here now," Lucy replied, sobbing herself to sleep, while Fanny sat by and watched, wondering at the strength which had upheld her weak little cousin in the struggle she had been through, and, now that it was over and the doctor safe from temptation, feeling that it was just as well; for, after all, it was a *mésalliance* for an heiress like her cousin to marry a poor clergyman.

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There was a very quiet wedding at Prospect Hill on the night of the fifteenth, but neither Lucy nor Arthur were there. He lay sick again at the St. Denis in New York and she was alone in her chamber, fighting back her tears and praying that, now the worst was over, she might be withheld from looking back and wishing the work undone. She went with the bridal party to New York, where she tarried for a few days, seeing no one but Anna, for whom she sent at once. The interview had lasted more than an hour, and Anna's eyes were swollen with passionate weeping when at last it ended, but

Lucy's face, though white as snow, was very calm and quiet, wearing a peaceful, placid look, which made it like the face of an angel. Two weeks later and the steamer bore her away across the water, where she hoped to outlive the storm which had beaten so piteously upon her. Thornton Hastings and Anna went with her on board the ship, and for their sakes she tried to appear natural, succeeding so well that it was a very pleasant picture which Thornton cherished in his mind of a frail little figure standing upon the deck, holding its waterproof together with one hand and with the other waving a smiling adieu to Anna and himself.

More than a year after, Thornton Hastings followed that figure across the sea, finding it in beautiful Venice, sailing again through the moon-lit streets and listening to the music which came so oft from the passing gondolas. It had recovered its former roundness and the face was even more beautiful than it had been before, for the light frivolity was all gone and there was reigning in its stead a peaceful, subdued expression which made Lucy Harcourt very fair to look upon. At least, so thought Thornton Hastings, and he lingered at her side, feeling glad that she had given no outward token of agitation when he said to her:

"There was a wedding at St. Mark's, in Hanover, just before I left; can you guess who the happy couple were?"

"Yes—Arthur and Anna. She wrote me they

were to be married on Christmas Eve. I am so glad it has come round at last."

Then she questioned him of the bridal, of Arthur, and even of Anna's dress, her manner evincing that the old wound had healed and nothing but a scar remained to tell where it had been. And so the days went on beneath the sunny Italian skies, until one glorious night, when Thornton spoke his mind, alluding to the time when each loved another, expressing himself as glad that, in his case, the matter had ended as it did, and then asking Lucy if she could conscientiously be his wife.

"What, you marry a frivolous plaything like me?" Lucy asked, her woman's pride flashing up once more, but this time playfully, as Thornton knew by the joyous light in her eye.

She told him what she meant and how she had hated him for it, and then they laughed together; but Thornton's kiss smothered the laugh on Lucy's lips, for he guessed what her answer was, and that this, his second wooing, was more successful than his first.

"Married, in Rome, on Thursday, April 10th, Thornton Hastings, Esq., of New York City, to Miss Lucy Harcourt, also of New York, and niece of Colonel James Hetherton."

Anna was out in the rectory garden bending over a bed of hyacinths when Arthur brought her the paper and pointed to the notice.

"Oh, I am so glad—so glad—so glad!" she exclaimed, emphasizing each successive "glad" a little more and setting down her foot, as if to give it force. "I have never dared to be quite as happy with you as I might," she continued, leaning lovingly against her husband, "for there was always a thought of Lucy and what a fearful price she paid for our happiness. But now it is all as it should be; and, Arthur, am I very vain in thinking that she is better suited to Thornton Hastings than I ever was, and that I do better as your wife than Lucy would have done?"

A kiss was Arthur's only answer, but Anna was satisfied, and there rested upon her face a look of perfect content as all that warm spring afternoon she worked in her pleasant garden, thinking of the newly-married pair in Rome, and glancing occasionally at the open window of the library, where Arthur was busy with his sermon, his pen moving all the faster for the knowing that Anna was just within his call—that by turning his head he could see her dear face, and that by-and-by when his work was done she would come in to him, and with her loving words and winsome ways, make him forget how tired he was, and thank heaven again for the great gift bestowed when it gave him Anna Ruthven.

THE END.

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AUNT HENRIETTA'S MISTAKE.

BY FRANCES HENSHAW BADEN.

"Before thy soul, at this deep lottery,
Draw forth her prize ordained by destiny,
Know that there's no recanting a first choice;
Choose then discreetly."

"Heigh-ho! This is Valentine's day. Oh, how I would like to get a valentine! Did you ever get one, aunty?" said little Etta Mayfield.

"Yes, many of them. But not when I was a child. In my day children were children. You get a valentine! I'm e'en a'most struck dumb with astonishment to hear you think of such things. Go, get your doll-baby, or your sampler, and look on that. Saints of Mercy! It seems only yesterday you were a baby in long clothes," answered Miss Henrietta Mayfield, a spinster of uncertain age; but the folks in the village, who always knew everything, declared she had not owned to a day over thirty-five for the last ten years. This, if true, was quite excusable, for Miss Henrietta's little toilette glass reflected a bright, pleasant, and remarkably youthful face.

"I'm almost seventeen, aunty, and I'm tired of being treated like a child," said Etta, with a pout of her rosy lips.

"Ten years to come will be plenty time enough for you to think of such things. A valentine, indeed! I'd like

to know who is to send one to you, or to any one else. There are only three unmarried men in our village; which of them would you like for your valentine; Jake Spikes, the blind fiddler; Bill Bowen, the deaf mail-boy, or Squire Sloughman? If the squire sends a valentine, I rather guess it will be to me. Oh, I forgot! There's the handsome stranger that boarded last summer with Miss Plimpkins. I noticed him at church Sunday Come down to make a little visit and bring Miss Plimpkins a nice present ag'in, I guess. He is mighty grateful to her for taking such good care of him while he was sick. A uncommon handsome man. But 'taint a bit likely he'll think of a baby like you. He is a man old enough to know better—near forty, likely. He was monstrous polite to me; always finding the hymns, and passing his book to me. And I noticed Sunday he looked amazing pleasing at me. Land! it's ten o'clock. You'd better run over to the office and get the paper. No, I'll go myself. I want to stop in the store, to get some yarn and a little tea."

Miss Henrietta hurried off, and little Etta pouted on and murmured something about:

"People must have been dreadful slow and dull in aunty's young days," and then her thoughts wandered to that same handsome stranger.

She, too, had seen him in church on Sunday, and knew well how the rosy blush mantled her fair face when she saw the pleasant smile she had hoped was for her. But she might have known better, she thought; such a splendid man would never think of her. She would be sure to die an old maid, all on account of that dark-eyed stranger.

"Has Bill got in with the mail?" asked Miss Mayfield.

"Yes, miss; here's your paper what Bill brought, and

here is a letter or valentine what Bill didn't bring. It's from the village," said the little old postmaster, with a merry laugh.

Yes, no mistaking, it was a valentine, directed in a fine manly hand to Miss Henrietta Mayfield. "From Squire Sloughman," thought Miss Henrietta. "He has spoken, or rather written his hopes at last." But, no, that was not his handwriting.

Miss Mayfield stepped out on the porch, carefully opened the envelope, and glanced hurriedly over the contents, and then at the signature—Arthur Linton.

"Well, well, who would have thought?" said she; "that is the name of the handsome stranger! Just to think of his really taking a liking to me. Stop! maybe he is a sharper from town, who has heard of my having a little property, and that's what he's after. I'll read his valentine over again:

Do not think me presumptuous, dear maid, in having dared to write you. No longer can I resist the continued pleadings of my heart. I have loved you ever since your sweet blue eyes, beaming with their pure, loving light, met my gaze. I have seized the opportunity offered by St. Valentine's day to speak and learn my fate. I will call this evening and hear from your dear lips, if I shall be permited to try and teach your heart to love,

ARTHUR LINTON.

"Well, truly that is beautiful language. It is a long day since anybody talked of my blue eyes. They were blue once, and I suppose are so still. Well, he writes as if he meant it. I'll see him, and give him a little bit of encouragement. Perhaps that seeing some one else after me will make the squire speak out. For six years he has been following me. For what? He has never said. I like Squire Sloughman—(his name should be Slowman). I'll try and hasten him on with all the heart I've got left. The most of it went to the bottom of the cruel ocean with

my poor sailor-boy. Ah! if it had not been for his sad end, I would not now be caring for any man, save my poor Willie. But it is a lonesome life I am living—and it's kind of natural for a woman to think kindly of some man; and the squire is a real good fellow, and, to save me, I can't help wishing he would speak, and be done with it.

"This valentine may be for my good luck, after all." Miss Henrietta's thoughts were swift now, planning for the future; her feet kept pace with them, and before she knew it, she was at her own door.

"Why, aunty, how handsome you do look! your cheeks are as rosy as our apples," said Etta.

"Is that such a rarity, you should make so much of it?" answered Miss Henrietta.

"No, indeed, aunty. I only hope I may ever be as good looking as you are always. Did you get your yarn and tea?"

"Land! if I hain't forgot them! You see, child, the wind is blowing rather fresh, and I was anxious to get back," she answered her niece; but said to herself, "Henrietta Mayfield, I am ashamed on you to let any man drive your senses away."

"Never mind, Ettie; you can go over and spend the afternoon with Jessie Jones, and then get the things for me," she continued, glad of an excuse to get Etta away.

Miss Henrietta was very particular with her toilet that afternoon, and truly the result was encouraging. She was satisfied that she was handsome still.

It was near dark when she saw the handsome stranger coming up the garden walk.

"Did Miss Henrietta Mayfield receive a letter from me to-day?" he asked.

"Yes, sir; walk in," answered Miss Henrietta, who, although quite flurried, managed to appear quite cool.

"This, perhaps, may seem very precipitate in me, and I have feared perhaps you might not look with any favor on my suit. Do, dear lady, ease my fears. Can I hope that in time I may win the heart I am so anxious to secure?"

"Ahem—well, I cannot tell, sure. You know, sir, we have to know a person before we can love him. But I must confess I do feel very favorably inclined towards you."

"Bless you, my dear friend; I may call you so now, until I claim a nearer, dearer title. If you are now kindly disposed, I feel sure of ultimate success. I feared the difference in our ages might be an objection."

"No, no; I do not see why it need. It is well to have a little advantage on one side or the other. But, my dear friend, should you fail to secure the affection, you will not think unkindly of your friend."

"No; only let me have a few weeks, with your continued favor, and I ask no more. Many, many thanks," and, seizing her hand, he pressed it to his lips.

"Will you not now allow me to see my fair Henrietta?" he asked.

"Oh, I have been a little flurried, and did forget it was quite dark. I'll light the lamp in a minute."

Etta's sweet voice was now heard humming a song in the next room. She had returned from her visit, and as Miss Henrietta succeeded in lighting the lamp, her bright face peeped in the door, and she said:

"Aunty, Squire Sloughman is coming up the walk."

"Bless her sweet face! There is my Henrietta now!" exclaimed the visitor, and before the shade was adjusted on the lamp, she was alone. The handsome stranger was in the next room with—Etta!

A little scream, an exclamation of surprise from Etta, followed by the deep, manly voice of Mr. Linton, saying:

"Dearest Henrietta, I have your aunt's permission to win you, if I can."

"Henrietta! Little baby Etta! Sure enough, that was her name, too. What an idiot she had been!" thought Henrietta, the elder. "Oh! she hoped she had not exposed her mistake! Maybe he had not understood her!"

But Squire Sloughman was waiting for some one to admit him, and she had no more time to think over the recent conversation, or to determine whether or not Mr. Linton was aware of her blunder.

Squire Sloughman was cordially welcomed, and after being seated a while, observed:

"You have got a visitor, I see," pointing to the stranger's hat lying on the table beside him.

"Yes, Etta's got company. The stranger that boarded at Miss Plimpkins' last summer. He sent Etta a valentine, and has now come himself," returned Miss Henrietta.

"A valentine! what for?"

"To ask her to have him, surely. And I suppose he'll be taking her off to town to live, pretty soon."

"And you, what will you do? It will be awful lonely here for you," said the squire.

"Oh! he's coming out now," thought Miss Henrietta. And she gave him a better chance by her reply:

"Well, I don't know that anybody cares for that. I guess no one will run away with me."

But she was disappointed; it came not, what she hoped for, just then. Yet the Squire seemed very uneasy. At length he said:

"I got a valentine myself, to-day."

"You! What sort of a one? Comic, funny, or real in earnest?" asked Miss Henrietta.

"Oh! there is nothing funny about it—not a bit of laugh; all cry."

"Land! a crying valentine."

"Yes, a baby."

"Squire Sloughman!" said Miss Henrietta, with severe dignity.

"Yes, my dear, Miss Henrietta; I'll tell you all about it. You remember my niece, who treated me so shamefully by running away and marrying. Well, poor girl, she died a few days ago, and left her baby for me, begging I would do for her little girl as kindly as I did by its mother."

"Shall you keep it?" asked Miss Henrietta.

"I can't tell; that will depend on some one else. I may have to send it off to the poorhouse!"

"I'll take it myself first," said his listener.

"Not so, my dear, without you take me, too. Hey, what say you, now? I tell you, I've a notion to be kind and good to this little one; but a man must have some one to help him do right. Now, it depends on you to help me be a better or a worse man. I've been thinking of you for a half-dozen years past, but I thought your whole heart was in little Etta, and maybe you wouldn't take me, and I did not like to deal with uncertainties. Now, Etta's provided for with a valentine, I'm here offering myself and my valentine to you. Say yes or no; I'm in a hurry now."

"Pity but you had been so years ago," thought Miss Henrietta; but she said:

"Squire Sloughman, I think it the duty of every Christian to do all the good she can. So, for that cause, and charity toward the helpless little infant, I consent to—become——"

"Mrs. Sloughwoman—man, I mean," said the delighted Squire, springing up and imprinting a kiss on Miss Henrietta's lips.

"Sloughwoman, indeed! I'll not be slow in letting you know I think you are very hasty in your demonstrations. Wait until I give you leave," said the happy spinster.

"I have waited long enough. And now, my dear, do you hurry on to do your Christian duty; remembering particularly the helpless little infant needing your care," said the Squire, a little mischievously.

Miss Henrietta never knew whether her mistake had been discovered. She did not try to find out.

In a short time there was a double wedding in the village. The brides, Aunt Henrietta and little Etta, equally sharing the admiration of the guests.

Mrs. Sloughman admitted to herself, after all, it was the valentine that brought the squire out. And she is often heard to say that she had fully proved the truth of the old saying, "It's an ill wind that blows nobody good."

FALSE AND TRUE LOVE.

BY FRANCES HENSHAW BADER.

"Though round her playful lips should glitter
Heat lightnings of a girlish scorn,
Harmless they are, for nothing bitter
In that dear heart was ever born;
That merry heart that cannot lie
Within its warm nest quietly,
But ever from the full dark eye
Is looking kindly night and morn."

"My son, I do not believe Valeria Fairleigh has ever a serious thought; nothing beyond the present enjoyment, or deeper than the devising of a becoming attire for some approaching dance or festive occasion. Believe me, she is not the girl for a minister's wife. You have chosen as your vocation the work of God; in this you should be sustained by your wife: one who would enter into your labor with energy of mind and body. She should have a heart to sympathize not only with her husband, but his charge. I tell you, David, a man's success and popularity in his ministry depends very much on the woman that he has chosen to be his helpmate. Had your mother been other than she is, I truly think I should have sunk under the many trials during the years of my work."

"But, father, if report speaks truly, my mother was not a very sedate maiden. I have heard many a tale of her

wild days. Pardon me, but I do not think you are judging Miss Fairleigh with your usual benevolence and charity. I know she is a very gay, fun-loving girl, but I believe she has a warm, true heart. I have never known her to do a heartless action, or turn a cold ear on any needing her sympathy."

"Lovers are prone to see only the good and beautiful," replied his father. "Of course, my son, I do not wish or expect to decide this matter for you; only to influence you, for your happiness. Will you promise me this much—do not commit yourself until you have seen more of Valeria and in some degree test her worth. How is it that a man of such deep thought, hard study, and so earnest and devoted to his work, should place his affections on one so very dissimilar? It is very strange to me, particularly as in the same house is her cousin, Miss Bland—just the woman for you. A well-cultivated, thoroughly-disciplined mind, with great energy and industry. You know well, of charities her name is always among the first; ready with time and money to help in good works. Why could you not have loved her? Why did your heart wander from the right?"

"Oh, father! you ask why the heart wanders! I know too truly love cannot be tutored; but will drag away the heart—often against our better judgment, and wander with it where it will—sometimes dropping on the bosom of a calmly gliding river; again amid the turbulent waves of a dark and stormy sea. Heaven grant that this last may not be the fate of mine. The true reason, however, that I became attached to Miss Fairleigh I think is this: I was so accustomed to, so tired of, dignified, sedate and 'well-disciplined' young ladies, who always put on church behavior and talk only of church matters when the minister is near, that when I met her she was so different such a bright, merry child of nature, I was charmed!

Yes, I may say, refreshed, rested. After the many sad and trying duties of our calling, father, we need some one like Vallie Fairleigh to call forth a reaction of the mind. But you shall have the promise. I will not advance a step further until I know her better."

A few days after this conversation David Carlton was sitting in his study, when his father entered, saying:

"David, I have a letter from home, hastening my return. So I shall have to cut my visit a little short. I would go away much happier, if my mind was relieved about Miss Fairleigh. I wish I could think her worthy of the position you would place her in. I have noticed you much since our conversation on that subject, and I am sure you are much attached to her. I have an idea to put her to a test, not only concerning her better feelings, but to prove the amount of influence you have over her.

"Listen: This evening is appointed for the meeting to raise funds and make arrangements relative to sending out a missionary to the ——— Indians. There has (you tell me) been but little interest awakened among your people on this subject. Now, if you can induce the young folks to take hold of this, it will be all right. This is also the evening of Monsieur Costello's grand masquerade and the opera of 'Maritana.' I called on Mrs. Fairleigh about an hour ago. The ladies were discussing these amusements. Miss Bland is very anxious to see that particular opera, and was trying to persuade Valeria to go with her. Mrs. Fairleigh positively forbade the ball; so when I left the arrangement was, Miss Bland, Mrs. Fairleigh and the gentlemen were going to enjoy the music, and Valeria is to remain home; but I very much fear this she will not do. Now, David, go and ask her to accompany you—urge her; tell her how much good her influence might exert, and so on. If she

consents, I have not another word to say about your loving, wooing and marrying her, if you can. Should she not consent, then ask Miss Bland. I know how anxious she is to see "Maritana." Now, try if she will resign this pleasure for the sake of doing good. Of course, you must not let her know you have previously asked her cousin. Will you do it? It can do no harm, and may be productive of much good."

"Yes, father, I will put her to the test. But I will not promise that the issue shall decide my future course. I shall be grieved and mortified if she does not consent, but not without hope. I know she is good, and we will find it yet."

An hour more found David Carlton awaiting in the drawing-room the coming of Valeria.

Fortune favored him thus far.

"Miss Bland and Miss Fairleigh were out, but would be back soon. Miss Valeria was in," answered the servant to his inquiry, "If the ladies were home?"

In a few moments she came in smiling brightly, and saying:

"I am really glad to see you again, Mr. Carlton, for mamma and Julia said I had quite horrified you with my nonsense the last evening you were here. Indeed, you must excuse me, but I cannot possibly don dignity and reserve. Jule can do enough of that for both, and I think it is far better to laugh than be sighing."

"Indeed, I have never seen anything to disapprove of. I could not expect or wish to see the young and happy either affecting, or really possessing, the gravity of maturer years. My absence has no connection whatever with the events of that evening. I have been devoting my spare time to my father. This is his last evening with me. I came round to ask a favor of you. We are very anxious to get up some interest for the mission to

———, and father thinks if the young folks of the church would aid us, it would be all right. Will you go with us?" answered David. A look of deep regret, the first he had ever seen, was in the eyes of Valeria, when she answered:

"You will have to excuse me, I have an engagement for the evening. I am really sorry, I would like to oblige you." Then, breaking into a merry laugh, she said:

"Jule will go—ask her. She dotes on missions—both foreign and home, and all sorts of charity meetings. She has money, too; I've spent every cent of mine this month already, besides all I could borrow. Yes, ask her; I know she will, and give, too. I should be sure to go to sleep or get to plotting some sort of mischief against my nearest neighbor. I could do you no good, Mr. Carlton."

"Valeria! Excuse me, Miss Fairleigh—will you be serious and listen to me one moment?"

He urged, but in vain. Not even when his voice sank to low, soft tones and, with pleading eyes, he whispered: "Go for my sake," would she consent.

"At least tell me where you are going?" he asked.

"I am going to——. No, I dare not tell. Ma and Jule would not approve, and even dear, good papa might censure, if he knew it. Here they come! Julia, Mr. Carlton is waiting to see you."

"Well, David, you have failed! Your countenance is very expressive."

"Even so, sir—Miss Fairleigh not only declined, but I greatly fear she is going to the ball against her parents' wishes. If this be so, I must try to conquer this love. The girl who sets at naught the will of her kind, loving parents—acting secretly against their wishes—would not, I am sure, prove a good wife."

"Well spoken, my son. How about Miss Bland?"

"Of course she is going. We are to call for her."

"A good girl—resigning pleasure to duty. A rare good girl."

"Apparently, so, sir; but, indeed, I am impressed with the idea that there is something hidden about her. She does not seem natural," replied David.

Father and son had just arrived at Mr. Fairleigh's when the door opened to admit a middle-aged, poorly-clad woman. Showing them into the drawing-room, the servant closed the door. Very soon after seating themselves they heard the voice of Miss Bland in a very excited tone.

"My brother! How dare you ask me of him?"

"I dare for my child's sake. She is ill—perhaps dying."

"What is that to him or me? I told you and her I would have nothing more to do with either, since her name became so shamefully connected with my brother's. Will you be kind enough to relieve me of your presence?"

"My daughter is as pure as you. Her child, and your brother's is suffering from want. Will you pay me, at least, for our last work—the dress you have on?"

"How much?" was asked, in a sharp, quick voice.

"Five dollars."

"Outrageous! No, I will not pay that. Here are three dollars. Go, and never let me hear of you again."

"Julia Bland, I wish the world knew you as I do. You will grind to the earth your sister-woman, and give liberally where it will be known and said, 'How charitable—how good!' I say how hard-hearted—how deceitful!" said the woman, in bitter tones.

"Go!" came forth, in a voice quivering with rage.

Soon the hall door told the departure of the unwelcome guest.

Looks of amazement, beyond description, passed between the reverend gentlemen.

At length the younger one said:

"She does not know of our arrival. I will go into the hall and touch the bell."

"Oh! excuse me, sir. I th.. ht Miss Bland was in the drawing-room. I will tell her now," said the servant.

Could this gentle, dignified woman be the same whose harsh, hard tones were still lingering in their ears?

Impossible! thought the elder man. Surely he must be in a dreadful, dreadful dream. Not so David; he clearly understood it all, and felt truly thankful that the blundering servant had enabled him to get this "peep behind the scenes."

The meeting was over, and they were just leaving the church, when:

"Please, sir, tell me where I can find the preacher or doctor—and I've forgot which—maybe both. They frightened me so when they hurried me off!" said a boy, running up to them.

"Here, my lad—what is it?"

"Mr. Preacher, please come with me. There is a young woman very ill—maybe dying. They sent me for somebody, and I can't remember; but please run, sir!"

"I will go. Excuse me, Miss Bland; father will take charge of you."

And he followed, with hasty steps, the running boy.

"Here, sir—this is the house. Go in, sir, please!"

"Now, my lad, run over to Dr. Lenord's office—he is in—and ask him to come. So, one or the other of us will be the right one."

David Carlton entered, treading noiselessly along the passage, until he had reached a door slightly open. Glancing in to be sure he was right, he beheld lying—

apparently almost dying—a young woman. Beside the bed, kneeling with upraised head and clasped hands, was a strangely familiar form. Then came forth a sweet voice, pleading to the throne of Mercy for the sufferer. He gazed spellbound for a moment. Then slowly and softly he retraced his steps to the door. Then he almost flew along the streets until he reached Mr. Fairleigh's, just as his father and Miss Bland were ascending the steps. Seizing the former very unceremoniously, he said:

"Come, father, with me quickly—you are wanted."

In a few moments more, before the boy had returned with the physician, they stood again at the door of the sickroom. David whispered:

"Look there! listen!"

"Be still, Mary, dear! Do not worry. I shall not judge you wrongfully. How dare I? We are all so sinful. That you are suffering and in need is all the knowledge I want."

"Oh, where is William? Why does he not come? Why not speak and acknowledge his wife and child? Now that I am dying, he might! Oh, where is he? Why will not God send him to me?" moaned the sick girl.

"God is love, Mary. He does not willingly afflict or chastise us. Try to say, 'Thy will be done!'

"But, dear, do not be so desponding. I know you are very sick; but I think it more your mind than bodily illness. Try to bear up. Pray God to spare you for your baby's sake," softly said the comforter.

"Father, you go in and see if you can help her. I will await you outside," whispered David.

A slight knock at the door aroused the kneeling girl, who approached and said:

"Come in, doctor! Why, Mr. Carlton—I was expect-

ing the doctor. This poor girl is very sick; she fainted a while ago. I was very much alarmed and sent a boy for a physician. She is somewhat better now. Come in; you may soothe her mind, and possibly do more good than the medical man."

"Miss Fairleigh? Is it possible I find you here? I thought you were at the masquerade."

"Heaven bless her, sir," said a woman, arising from a seat beside the sufferer, whom Mr. Carlton recognized as the woman he had seen enter Mr. Fairleigh's a few hours before. "But for her care, we should have suffered beyond endurance. She has comforted mind and body. Yes, when evil tongues whispered of shame! her pure heart did not fear, or shrink from us. When employers and friends deserted and condemned, she stayed and consoled."

"Hush! She has fainted again. Oh! why does not the doctor come?" said Valeria.

"Thank Heaven! Here he is now."

Mr. Carlton approached the physician (an old acquaintance), and explained to him as well as he could the trouble. The kind-hearted doctor raised the poor, thin hand, felt the feeble pulse, and, turning, answered the anxious, inquiring looks bent on him:

"It is only a swoon; yet she is very weak. However, I think we will bring her round all right in a little while."

"Indeed, she is an honest girl, doctor, although appearances are against her now," said the mother. "Her husband left her before she was taken ill, to remain a short time with his sick uncle. Mr. Bland was fearful of offending his aged relative, and so kept his marriage concealed. She had a few letters when he first left, but, for near two months, not a word have we heard. I fear,

he is ill. She has grown dreadfully depressed since the birth of her babe. The suspicion resting on her is killing her."

The suffering girl was showing signs of returning consciousness. Then a quick step was heard in the entry. She started up and cried out:

"Willie is come! Thank God!" and sank back, almost lifeless.

William Bland, for truly it was so, rushed forward and dropped on his knees beside the bed, saying:

"How is this? Why have you not answered my letters? Doctor, save her!"

Advancing, the doctor raised her head gently and gave her a little wine, saying:

"Speak to her, reassure her; that is all she needs now."

"Listen, Mary love, dear wife, and mother!" he whispered, in astonishment, as Valeria held before him the little sleeping babe, while a flush of paternal pride passed over his fine face. "There is no more need of silence; I am free and proud to claim you, darling. Uncle knows all, and bids me bring you to him. He was very ill. I nursed him and his life was spared. The fatigue, and more than all the worry of mind about you, brought on a severe nervous fever. I have been very ill. Julia knew it. Did you not hear? In my ravings I told all. Uncle has changed much since his recovery. He is no longer ambitious, except for my happiness, and is now waiting to welcome you."

The wonderful medicine had been administered, and already the happy effects were apparent.

With her hand clasped in her husband's she was slumbering peacefully, while a smile of sweet content lingered on the pale face.

The doctor soon bade adieu, saying:

"I see I shall not be needed any longer. She will very soon be strong again."

"Miss Fairleigh, I am awaiting your pleasure. Are you to return to your home to-night?" asked Mr. Carlton.

"Oh, yes. Bridget promised to come for me, but I must get back before mamma and Julia; yet I forget there is no further need of concealment; I am so very glad! I will be over in the morning. Good-night."

"God bless you, Vallie! you have been a ministering angel to my loved ones. You can tell Julia I have returned and am with my wife. I fear my sister has acted very wickedly in this matter. I have written many times and received no answer. Some one, for whom they were not intended, got those letters. Perhaps I judge her harshly. Good-night," said William Bland.

Vallie, accompanied by Mr. Carlton, was soon on her way home. They had gone but a short distance when they were joined by David.

"Why, Mr. Carlton! how strange to meet you, when I was just thinking of you, and on the eve of asking your father to tell you I was not at the ball this evening. I was so sorry I could not explain when you asked me. Your father will tell you all, I know. You thought me very wicked and willful," said Vallie.

David clasped the little hand held out to greet him, and whispered:

"With your permission I will come to-morrow, and tell you what I did think and do still."

Bidding her good-night at her father's door, David lingered a moment, to catch the low answer to his repeated question, "Shall I come?"

Fervently thanking God for the happy termination of

the evening, he hastened to overtake his father—and said:

"Well, father?"

"Well, David! Very well. Go ahead, David, win her, if you can! She is a rare, good girl."

"Which one, sir?"

"Come, come! David, I am completely bewildered by this evening's discoveries. Do not bear too hard on me, for falling into a common error—mistaking the apparent for the real. This night has proved a test far more thorough than I imagined it possibly could. You may safely abide by the issue and never fear the stormy sea," answered his father.

A few months more and Vallie Fairleigh's merry voice and sweet smile resounds through, and brightens the minister's home.

David Carlton stands to-day among the best-loved and most popular of the clergy. Attributable most likely to his "wife's influence" (his father says). I well know she has soothed many an aching heart, cheered the long, weary hours of the sickroom, won the young from the path of evil, and now numberless prayers are ascending and begging God's blessing on the "minister's wife."

IN THE HOSPITAL.

BY FRANCES HENSHAW BADEN.

In the autumn of 1862 my time was constantly employed in the various hospitals of Washington. At this period of our struggle the Sanitary Commission was in its infancy, and all attentions of the kind ladies were joyfully received by surgeons and nurses, as well as by our noble, suffering boys. Immediately after the wounded from the second battle of Bull Run were assigned to the different wards in the various hospitals, I was going my rounds in the "Douglas," and after bestowing the wines, jellies, custards and books to my old friends, I began to look up the new patients.

"Sister," I said to the kind Sister of Mercy, whose sweet, patient and motherly face was bending over a soldier to speak her words of comfort, "are there any Massachusetts boys in the new arrivals?"

"No, dear; I think not, in this ward." Then she bent lower to catch the whisper from her patient, and he pointed to the card at the head of his little bed. She looked, and answered again: "Oh, yes, here is one: Paul Ashton, 16th Mass., Co. B."

I approached the bed, and saw one of the noblest faces I had ever beheld, but not that of a Northern boy, I thought; so proud and dark—no, a true Southern face.

"You from Massachusetts?" I exclaimed.

A wan smile played around his pale lips for a moment. He saw my surprise, and answered:

"No, from Mississippi; but in that regiment," pointing again to the little card.

Here was a mystery, and one I could not solve just then. He was too weak to converse, but I made up my mind to devote myself to Paul Ashton from that time until he was convalescent, or, if God's will, relieved from his sufferings. After sitting by his side until the attendant came to dress his wounds, I bade him good-night, and promised to see him in the morning.

On my way out I met Dr. B. God bless him! for his kindness to our boys. No woman ever was more gentle and patient. "Doctor," I exclaimed, as he was hurrying by, "stop and tell me, how is Ashton wounded? Is he very ill? Will he die?"

"Ah, Mrs. H., three questions in one breath. Yes, he is very ill. Three wounds in the right side and shoulder. which are draining his life away. I fear he must die. Is he one of your boys? Do all you can for him."

"May I?" I replied.

"Yes, my dear madam; and try to keep up his spirits. I give you leave. Tell Sister L. He is a noble fellow —I am deeply interested in him."

The next day found me much earlier than usual at the hospital. To my great pleasure I found that Ashton had rested well, and was much easier than any one expected he would be. He smiled and put out his hand when I approached his bed, and motioned me to be seated. After talking to him a few moments I found him looking at me very intently, and soon he said:

"Are you from the Bay State?"

I replied: "Oh, no, I am a Southern woman. I am from Virginia."

"I thought you did not look or speak like a Northern

or Eastern lady. Then, why are you interested in our boys? Are you with us in feeling? Can you be a Union lady?"

"Yes, my boy, I am with you hand and heart. I cannot fight, but I can feed, comfort and cheer you. Yes, I am a Southern woman and a slaveholder. Now, I see you open your eyes with wonder; but, believe me, there are many like me, true, loyal woman in the South; but my particular interest in our regiments is, my father is a native of Boston; but I love all our brave boys just the same."

A look of much interest was in his face, which I was so glad to see, being so different from the total apathy of the day before.

"You are the first lady from Virginia that I have met who was not very bitter against us Yankees—it is really amusing to be called so, to a Mississippi man. Do you not feel a sympathy for the South? Your interest is with them. You against your State and I mine—we certainly are kindred spirits," he smilingly said. "We think and feel alike. It is not politics but religion my mother always taught me. Love God first and best, then my country, and I have followed her precepts, at a very great sacrifice, too. Sometimes in my dreams I see her looking approvingly and blessing me."

"Your mother, where is she?"

He pointed up, and said:

"Father, mother, both gone, I hope and trust to heaven. I am alone—yes, yes, all alone now."

I would not let him talk any more, and finding out from the attendant what he most relished, I promised to see him the next day.

I saw him almost every day for a fortnight. He grew no worse, but very little, if any, better. On one occasion Dr. B. said:

"I do not know what to make of Ashton. He ought to improve much faster. My dear madam, set your woman's wits at work; perhaps we may find a cure."

"I have been thinking I would try to gain his confidence. I know he has a hidden sorrow. I must, for his sake, probe the wound; but I fancy it is in his heart."

During my next visit I said:

"I wish you would tell me something of your life; how you came to enter the army; and, indeed, all you will of your Southern home."

His face flushed, and he replied:

"No, I cannot. Why should you want to know——"

Then he stopped, hesitated and said:

"I beg your pardon. You have been so kind to me; it is due I should comply; but not now; to-morrow; I must have time to consider and compose my mind. To-morrow, please God, if I am living, I will tell you; and you will see that I have a severer wound than good Dr. B. knows of—one he cannot use his skillful hand upon."

"Well, thank you—I would rather wait until to-morrow. I am anxious to get home early this afternoon."

On reaching his cot the next day, I saw Ashton was calm, but very pale. I said:

"Do not exert yourself this morning. I can wait."

"No; sit nearer and I will tell you all."

I give it to you, dear reader, as he gave it to me:

"I told you I was by birth a Mississippian. My mother was from Boston, the daughter of a wealthy merchant, who, failing in his business, soon fell in ill health and died, leaving his wife and two daughters almost entirely destitute. Mother, the youngest, was always very fragile, and, having been reared in luxury, was poorly calculated for a life of trial and poverty. However, she was urged by a wealthy Southern planter to return with him to his home, and take the position of governess to his

little daughters, her friends all approving of this offer, knowing that a Southern climate would improve her health; so she became the inmate of Colonel Ashton's family, and soon was beloved by the father and mother, as well as her pupils. I have heard that neither the colonel nor his wife could bear her out of their sight. She had been with them nearly a year, when the young son and heir, Edgar Ashton, returned from his college. He soon followed the rest, and was deeply in love with the governess. My mother was very beautiful, possessing so much gentleness, with such a merry disposition, that I have heard them say that grandfather used to call her his Sunshine. The negroes said that she had a charm to make all she looked upon love her. But when the son, their pride, declared his intention of making May Everett his wife, it was met with a decided objection by both parents. Impossible! marry a Northern teacher; he, the son of Colonel Ashton—the heir of Ashton manor! preposterous! My mother then prepared to bid adieu to them and return to her home, never for a moment listening to the repeated petitions of her lover to marry him. She would not go into a family where she was not welcome. Her high-toned principles won for her additional love and respect. And when the hour of parting came, the old colonel opened his arms, and drew her to his heart, and exclaimed:

" 'Wife, we cannot give her up. Welcome your daughter.'

"My mother, however, went home; but with the understanding that she would return in a few weeks—as the wife of their son.

"In two months she was again with them; and never a happier household! In the second year of their marriage I was sent to them. My grandparents made almost an idol of me, and from grandfather I used to

hear of his father's adventures in the Revolution. He inspired me with a devotion to his country which was fostered by my mother. When I was sixteen, my father was thrown from his horse and brought home to us insensible, and lived with us but a few hours. My mother's health, naturally very delicate, sank under this great affliction. She lived only a year afterward, and I was left to comfort my grandparents, now quite advanced in years. They would not hear of my going away again to school, and engaged a private tutor—a young gentleman, a graduate of Yale. I had been under Mr. Huntington's instructions four years when the country began to be convulsed with the whispers of secession—one State after another passing that miserable ordinance—my grandfather said:

"'Paul, my boy, if Mississippi goes out, I shall go, too—not only out of the Union, but out of this world of sorrow and trouble. I cannot live. I have felt my tie to earth loosening very fast since your grandmother left me, and I feel I cannot live any longer if my State shall be classed with traitors.'

"I have failed to tell you grandmother died in my eighteenth year. Mr. Huntington, feeling sure of what was coming, left us for his home in Medford, never for one moment expressing to us any views on the subject now engrossing all minds; and, when parting with him, I whispered, 'If it comes, I am for my country! Look for me North within a few weeks.' It did come, as you know; and when one of my aunts—now both married—ran laughingly in, with a blue cockade pinned on her shoulders, exclaiming:

"'Father, we are out!'

"She stopped in horror, and looked upon the calm, cold face. But the spirit had fled. We know not if he had

heard or not, but I trust he had passed to perfect peace before his heart had been so sorely tried.

Next to our plantation was the estate of one of the oldest, wealthiest, and proudest families of the State. The daughter and I had grown up together, and I loved her more than all and everything else on earth. Her brother and I were very intimate—both having no brother, we were everything to each other. He had mounted the Palmetto badge, and was all for war. My mind was no longer wavering, since my grandfather's death. I was going up North, and, after a short visit to my mother's sister—the wife of a very influential and patriotic man in Boston—I would offer myself to my government. Now, you will know my sorrow.

"I had expected to meet opposition, entreaties, reproaches, and everything of that sort. So, preparing myself as well as I could, I rode over to bid my idol good-by.

"I met Harry first, and telling him I was going North, to leave fortune, friends and everything for my country.

"'What, Paul, desert your State in her hour of need? Never! You, a Southern man? Your interests, your honor, are with us.'

"Much passed between us; when he, laughingly, said:

"'Go in and see sister; she will talk you out of this whim.'

"I cannot tell you how she first coaxed, then argued, then chided me with not loving her, and then came—oh, such contempt! You have no idea of the trial to me. She talked as only a Southern girl talks—so proud, so unyielding. And when I said:

"'Let us part at least friends. Say God bless me, for the sake of the past!'

"'No,' she said, 'no friend. With a traitor to his State, or a coward—no, I will never say God bless you!

and never do you take my name on your lips from this day. I would die of shame to have it known that I was ever loved by an Arnold! Go! leave me; and if you raise your arm against the South, I hope you may not live to feel the shame which will follow you.'

"I met Harry again on the lawn, and he exclaimed:

"'Good-by, Paul. Give us your hand. You are honest, and will sacrifice everything, I see; but you are all wrong. God bless you!'

"And he threw his arms round me, and so I left them.

"I cannot tell you how I suffered. It seems as if I have lived a century since then. Did I not know the unbounded pride of a Southern girl, I should doubt her ever loving me. I have never mentioned her name since that day, and never shall. Now, my friend, you see I have little to live for. Soon after my arrival in Boston the Sixteenth was forming. I enlisted, to the horror of my aunt, as a private. My friend would have procured me a commission, but I preferred to go in the ranks and work my way up if I lived, and here is my commission, received after you left yesterday. I brought my colonel off the field, and was wounded when I went to get him. It is a first lieutenant's; but I fear I shall never wear my straps."

"Yes, you will. You are getting better slowly, but surely; and, my friend, you must cheer up—believe 'He doeth all things well'—have faith—live for your country. I feel that all will be well with you yet. 'Hope on, hope ever.'"

I went and saw Dr. B.; told him it was as I had thought.

I gave him an idea of the trouble and left.

I had become so much interested in Ashton that I had almost ceased my visits to the other hospitals, except an occasional one to the "Armory Square," where I had a

few friends. I thought I would go over and make a visit there this afternoon.

I went into ward C, and, after seeing how well my boys were getting on, I inquired after the lady nurse, Mrs. A., a widow lady, to whom I had become much attached for her devotion to the soldiers.

"She has gone home to recruit her health; has been away ten days; she left the day after you were here last," replied one of the boys. "But we have, just think, in her place a lady from the South—Miss or Mrs., indeed I do not know which, for I have never heard her spoken of other than Emma Mason. But here she comes."

I had time to look at her for several moments before she came to the patient I was sitting by. She might be seventeen or twenty-seven, I could not tell. She was dressed in the deepest black—her hair drawn tightly back from her face, and almost entirely covered by a black net. Her complexion was a clear olive, but so very pale. Every feature was very beautiful, but her greatest attraction was her large, dark blue eyes, shaded by long black lashes. She came up smiling sweetly on the wounded boy, and said:

"You are looking quite bright, Willie; you have a friend, I see, with you."

I was then introduced to Emma Mason. When she smiled she looked very young. I thought her as beautiful a girl as I had ever seen; but in a few seconds the smile passed off, and there came a look of sorrow—a yearning, eager gaze—which made her look very much older. I went round with her to visit the different patients, telling her of my great interest in the soldiers, and trying to win her confidence. I was very anxious to know something of her history, but I could gain nothing;

and, giving it up in despair, I bade her good-evening, and was leaving the ward when she called me and said:

"Will you be kind enough to notice among the soldiers you may meet from Boston, and if you find this name let me know immediately?"

I took the card and read, "Paul Ashton, 16th Mass. Vol." I started, and was about telling her where he was, when I was stopped by seeing the deathly pallor of her face.

She said, scarcely above a whisper:

"Is he living?"

I said I was only about to tell her I felt sure I could hear of him, as I knew many of that regiment. I felt that I must not tell her then. I must find out more of her first.

She looked disappointed, and said:

"I heard that regiment was in the last battle. Have you seen any since that time? I am deeply interested in that soldier; he was my only brother's most intimate friend."

I told her I should go the next day, probably, to the "Douglas," and if I had any tidings I would let her know. And so I left her, anxious to be alone, to think over and plan about this new development in Ashton's history. Who was she? Could she be his lost love? Impossible! This nurse in a Union hospital! No, never! She must be down in her Southern home. What should I do? Go tell Ashton? No, that would not do yet. So I worried about it, and at last I decided I would sleep on it, and my mind would be clearer for action in the morning.

I could not divert my mind from the idea that it must be the girl whose name I had never heard.

Next morning my mind was made up. I went over to

see Ashton; found him in poorer spirits than ever. I sat down and tried to cheer him up. He said:

"I feel more miserable this morning than ever in my life before. I have a furlough for thirty days, but I do not care to take it. I am as well here as anywhere.'

I said: "I have often found that the darkest hours are many times followed by the brighest. Cheer up. I feel as if you would have some comfort before long, and see! Why, here you have a bouquet with so many 'heart's-eases' in it. Heaven grant it may be a token of coming ease and happiness. Who gave these to you? It is rarely we see them at this season."

"Sister L. gave them to me; they came from the green-house."

I told him I should see him again that afternoon, and taking my leave, went over to see the nurse at the armory. She came quickly forward to see me, and said:

"Have you any news——"

"I have heard of him; he was in the battle and very severely wounded, but living when my friend last heard of him."

"When was that? Where is he?" she exclaimed, hurriedly. "You know more, I can see; please tell me."

I answered her:

"I will tell you all, but I must beg of you a little confidence in return. I saw him myself, and helped to nurse him—was very much interested in him; he was terribly ill and is now very, very weak—his recovery doubtful. He has told me much of his past life. Now, will you not tell me what he is to you, for I see you are deeply moved?"

"Did he tell you anything of the girl who drove him off without a kind word—heaping upon him reproaches and wounding his noble heart to the core? If he did, it was I. Oh, how I have suffered since! Even when I

accused him of cowardice and treachery, in my heart I was proud of him. Oh! tell me where he is, that I may go to him. I have been looking for him every moment since the battle. Take me, please?"

"He *is* at the 'Douglas,' but very sick; I saw him not two hours ago. I fear any sudden shock, even of joy. You are never absent from his mind: he has never mentioned your name, but he has told me much. Now, tell me, will you not, how it is you are here? And then we must devise a plan to take you to him without too great a shock."

She said:

"These black robes are for my brother. He bade me do what I could for the suffering and wounded on both sides, and find Paul. I will give you a letter I received written by him a few days previous to his death. After you have read it you will then understand better why I am here."

And leaving the ward for a few moments she returned and handed me the letter. The writing plainly told that the writer was very weak. I give it to you, my dear reader, every word; I could not do justice by relating in my own style:

SISTER—I am wounded, and must die. I have felt it for several days. The doctor and the kind boys try to cheer me up, but I've been growing weaker daily. The suffering in my breast is terrible. I had a Minnie ball pass through my left lung. I have been very much frightened about dying, and wanted to live; but last night I had a dream which has produced a great change. Now I feel sure I shall die, and am content. I am with the Union boys; they are very kind. The one next me fanned me and rubbed my side until I fell asleep last night, and slept better than I have since I've been wounded. Now, darling sister, here is my dream: I thought I had been fighting, and having been wounded, was carried off the field and was laid under a large tree; after being there a little while I felt some one clasp my hand; looking up, I found Paul. He also had been wounded.

He handed me his canteen, and while drinking I seemed to get quite easy. There seemed to be a great mist all over us; I could see nothing for a little while. Again I heard my name called, and looking up, found the mist had cleared away, and our great-grandfather (whom I knew well, from the old portrait, which we used to be so proud of, father telling us he was one of the signers of the "Declaration") was standing before me, but he did not look smiling like the face of the picture; but, oh! so sad and stern. In his hand he had a beautiful wreath of ivy, which he, stooping, placed on the brow of Paul, saying, "Live, boy—your country wants you;" and stretching forth his hand, he drew me to a stand near him on which stood our old family Bible, ink and pen. He opened to the births, and putting his finger on my name, he raised the pen and marked a heavy black line over the H, and was proceeding, when his hand was caught by our old nurse, Mammy Chloe, who has been dead years, you know, who pointed over toward the west of us, and there stood a large shining cross with these words over it, "Unless ye forgive men their trespasses, how can your Heavenly Father forgive you?" And coming up to me, put forth her hand and beckoned me to follow her. Then the old gentleman spoke and said, "Your blood will blot out your disgrace;" and turning the leaf, he pointed to the "Deaths," and I read, "On the 28th of September, 1862, Harry Clay Mason, aged 21;" and then I woke up. This is the 20th; I think I shall live until that day Now I bid you go carry mother to somewhere North, to Paul's friends; they will be kind to her and try to comfort her, and go you and devote yourself to the suffering soldiers, and find Paul, if possible; he will live, I know; tell him how I loved him, yet, and honored him, although I thought him wrong. Tell him good-by. And to mother, try to soften this blow as much as possible. Tell her I am happy now. I think God will pardon me for my sins, for His Son's sake. There is a boy from my regiment expecting to be parolled, and he has promised to deliver this to you. Good-by. God bless you, darling Lovingly, HARRY.

Fairfax, Va.

I was much affected. After a few moments I said: "How long did he live?"

"He lived, seemingly growing much better, until the afternoon of the twenty-eighth. He was then taken with

hemorrhage and so passed away." And pushing her hair back from her temples, she said:

"These came the night I got that letter." And I saw the numberless white hairs gleaming amid her raven locks. I said:

"Come, we will go to him. I think you had better write a little note to him; you know best what to say, but do not tell him you are here just yet, but something to set his heart at peace; and I will tell him it was given me by a Southerner I found in the hospital."

"Yes," she said; "you are very thoughtful, that is just the thing."

And she went into the ante-room, and soon came out, and giving me the note, said:

"You know all; read it."

And I read: "Paul, forgive and love me again. I shall try to come to you soon."

So we proceeded to the "Douglas," and I went in, found Dr. B., told him and asked if we might venture in. He thought better to break it gently at first, and promising to stay near in case of being needed, laughingly said to Miss Mason:

"Now, if I was a doctor of divinity, I should be wishing to be sent for."

Leaving her in his charge, I went in.

"Back so soon?" Ashton said. "How bright and cheerful you look!"

I sat down and said, "Yes, I have some pleasant news; I have a letter for you; I met with a Southerner who knew a friend of yours, who gave me this for you. It may be from your aunt, and you may hear from your lady love, possibly."

He caught the letter, tore off the envelope, and read. I was frightened—he never spoke a word or moved. Then, "Thank God!" burst forth in heart-felt tones.

I saw he was all right. I said:

"You must now commence to think of her coming and being with you, for it is some time since that person left the South, and you may look for her any time. I was told that the family were intimate with Mr. Davis, and they were to have a 'pass' North to find 'the son.' I then told him I had wanted to prepare him, for she was really at Washington, and I had met her—she had given me the note for him. He seemed to divine all, and said:

"Bring her to me. I am strong and well now."

I sent the attendant to Dr. B.'s room, and in a few moments she was beside him.

"Forgiven!" she murmured; and, bending, pressed her lips to his pale forehead, and taking his hand, she sat on the cot beside him. There was little said, but

"Eyes looked love to eyes that spake again."

So they remained until the sun went down and it was getting quite dark, when Dr. B. came in and said:

"Ah, Ashton, you have a more skillful physician than I. She has done more for you in five minutes than I have for as many weeks. I guess you will take that furlough and commission now, Lieutenant Ashton."

He took Dr. B.'s hand, and said:

"Under God, doctor, by your skillful hand and great kindness, with the attentions of the good friends here, I have been kept alive for this day."

Emma Mason bade him good-night, saying she must go over to her boys again, and get her discharge from the surgeon in charge.

In three days Ashton bade adieu to his friends in the "Douglas," and with Miss Mason, Dr. B. and myself, he got into the carriage waiting, directing the driver to stop at the residence of the Rev. Dr. Smith. There they were united, and received our heart-felt congratulations, and

proceeded to the cars, which soon bore them to their friends North.

A few days ago a servant came to my room, bringing a card.

I read: "Paul Ashton and wife."

I almost flew down to them. They were on their way South to settle up their property and provide for the old servants who remained there. Paul had returned to the army and remained until the close of the war, having reached the rank of colonel. He is looking very well. He has been offered a commission in the regular service, but his wife says his country had him when he was needed, but she must have him now. They are taking with them the remains of poor Harry, to place beside his father in their Southern home. His mother is now quite resigned, and says she is only waiting God's will to meet her friends above.

EARNEST AND TRUE.

BY FRANCES HENSHAW BADEN.

But still our place is kept and it will not wait;
Ready for us to fill it soon or late,
No star is ever lost we once have seen,
We always MAY be, what we MIGHT have been.

"You have never loved me, Constance, or you could not thus calmly bid me go, without one word of hope for the future. Only say that I may some day call you mine, and I will win a name that you will not blush to bear."

"Would to Heaven I could, Ernest; but I can see no hope of my father's relenting. You heard how determined he was never to consent to my union with any one save Gerald. You say I have never loved you! Believing this, it will not be so hard for you to leave me. It is useless prolonging this interview! Every moment brings an increase of agony, making it harder to part. Bid me good-by, say God bless me, and go quickly, if you have any mercy for me."

"Listen just for a moment more! Oh, my darling, forgive my hasty word; but, Constance, if your love was as devoted and single as mine you would not thus resign one who loves you only of all the world; no one shares my heart with you. I know you love me, but not as I would be loved, or you would leave father and mother and cling to me. What right has your father, or any

other father, to blast his child's happiness? Heed him not, love, but come with me. I will never let you feel a single regret. I will love you more than all their love combined. Nay, do not turn aside—you must hear me. Think what you are doing! wrecking my happiness, casting me forth, without hope, to drag out a miserable, useless existence. I may be cursed with long life. Constance, darling, come with me! With your parents it will only be a short grief—disappointed ambition—and, at the most, only the thwarting of their proud hopes. They will soon get over it; but even if they should not, in all human probability they have not the length of days to suffer that we have. Bid me hope!"

"Ernest, Heaven only knows what a severe trial this is to me. Yet your words only strengthen me in my duty. It is true, as you say, my parents are old. Can I grieve and wring their careworn hearts? No, no! What recompense can a child make her parents for all their unselfish love, and constant watching over, and providing for, from the first feeble baby days, to the time when they could, if willing, return all this, by simple duty; obedience to their will. Think, Ernest, how, in my days of illness, my mother watched over and soothed me. The long, sleepless nights spent over my cradle—praying God to spare her child—for what? to prove an ungrateful one! Oh, no! I could look for no blessing on our union if I should be deaf to the pleading of my parents, and heedless of God's own command.

"Perhaps some time hence they may think differently. Then, if you have not sought and won another, we may be happy. One thing you may rest assured of, I shall never wed Gerald Moreton, or any other. I obeyed my father in resigning you, but cannot perjure myself by taking the marriage vows, even at their command. Do not leave me in anger, Ernest. Let your last look be of

kindness and forgiveness for the sorrow I cause you. Now, a long look into your eyes, to engrave them forever on my eart. Good-by—God bless you, Ernest."

She held out her arms, and was clasped in a long, last embrace. Breaking away, she was soon lost to view among the deep shadows of the garden.

"And this is the end! This is woman's love! Mere filial duty, I should say. Well, well, a final adieu to all thought of love. In future I devote myself to ambition, wedded only to my profession, in hope that in this I shall not meet with another such reward."

Constance Lyle was the only child of wealthy parents. Ever since her infancy her father had cherished the hope of uniting her with his ward, Gerald Moreton, the son of a very dear friend. Gerald was left an orphan before he had reached his tenth year. When Mr. Moreton, on his deathbed, placed his son under the care of his old friend, he intimated his desire that some time in the future, the little Constance (scarcely then four years old) should bear the name of Moreton. To this Mr. Lyle readily agreed. The little Gerald was truly a noble boy, and he was much attached to him, years before having lost a son of the same age; this child of his dearest friend had, in some degree, served to fill the aching void. Again, Gerald's prospects were very brilliant; but, to do Mr. Lyle justice, more than all this was the desire to please his friend, to make some amends for the past. In years gone by these two men had been rivals for the love of Constance's mother.

Moreton was a high-minded, noble fellow, and when he became sure that young Lyle was the favored one, not a thought of ill-feeling entered his heart against his friend; but going to him, with his usual candor and generosity, he said:

"I shall go away for a while. It will be rather too

much for me to bear witnessing your happiness, just yet. I shall get over it in time, though. Heaven bless you, dear friend, and grant you happiness and prosperity. No one will pray for your welfare more sincerely than myself. Bid her good-by for me. After a while I'll be back, to stand god-father to some of your little ones, perhaps."

He remained away three years; and then returned home, bringing with him a fair, fragile little creature, who remained with him scarce two years; leaving the little Gerald to comfort and console the bereaved man, and be a loving reminder of the gentle little dove, who had loved him so dearly, and then winged her flight above, to watch over and pray for the coming of her loved ones.

So it was that Mr. Lyle would look with no favor, or even patience, on any suitor. Even when Constance herself pleaded for Ernest Ellwood, telling him she could never love Gerald other than as a brother; and if he would not give her to the one she loved, that she would remain with them, but would never wed where she could not love.

Still he remained firm in his determination to give her to his friend's son or no one.

Years passed by—but she continued as firm and determined in her resolve as her father in his.

Gerald, like his father, was a noble fellow. He loved Constance, but when he found his love was a source of grief to her, he began to set himself to work to devise means of rendering her path in life rather more pleasant. She did not murmur at her self-sacrifice; this she considered her duty; but the constant and continual entreaties for the marriage wore upon her, and made her life almost miserable.

Gerald told Mr. Lyle he must beg to resign all pretensions to Constance; that upon examining his heart, he

found out that it was as a sister he loved her, and was not willing to render her unhappy by making her his wife. If his father were living he would not wish it. That he thought a promise, made to the dead, had much better be broken, than kept by making the living miserable.

So, to carry out his views, he left home for a summer trip. After being absent three months, he wrote to Constance that he had decided to remain a while longer; and at the end of another month came a letter to Mr. Lyle, saying that he was about to be married—desiring certain business arrangements to be made—and ending by the remark, that he knew this marriage would not meet with the cordial approval of his kind guardian, and for this he was truly sorry; but was more than compensated for this by the knowledge that he had the best wishes of his dear sister, Constance, and begged Mr. Lyle to try and render her happy, in return for her unhappiness during the last ten years.

This was a dreadful blow to Mr. Lyle, and he declared that if Ernest Ellwood had not crossed their path that his dearest hopes would not have been thwarted. Not for a moment did he relent.

Constance had heard nothing from Ernest since she parted from him, except once, about five years after. She picked up a Western paper, and saw his name mentioned as one of the rising men of —— State—an extract from a political speech made by him—and finally the prediction of a brilliant career for this young man, whose talents and eloquence were placing him before the people, who, even now, in so young a man, recognized a master-spirit; and in all probability very shortly he would speak for his adopted State in the halls of the national Capitol.

This slip was cut out and treasured by her—and once when her father was grumbling and predicting bad luck

to his evil genius, as he called him, she brought forth and displayed, with a grateful heart, this notice to prove she had not loved unworthily.

Her father listened with interest to the extract from the speech and the comments relative to the speaker. He had been considerable of a politician, and as Ernest was of the same party as himself, he felt really glad of his brilliant prospects.

"In all probability he is married long ago, and has almost, if not quite, forgotten you, Constance. At any rate, you see your sending him off did no hurt. Men are sensible; they don't die of love. Something more formidable, in the way of disease, must attack to carry them off, or affect their minds, either. Yes, yes, child, be sure he has transferred his affections long ago," remarked the father.

"I cannot tell, father. Perhaps it is so; you can judge of man's constancy better than I. If I judged him, it would be by my own heart, then I should be sure he is not married. I think that when alone, and freed from the care and toil of business, or, at rest from his studies, that his mind wanders back to the girl of his love. No! no! he has not forgotten me."

One after another of the joyous new years rushed into the world, passing on to maturity, growing older, and finally passing out, leaving the gentle, submissive girl, as they had found her, devoting herself to her father.

Now disease had settled on Mr. Lyle. For years he had been an invalid, nervous, fretful and impatient. No one but Constance could suit him. Not even his wife. Her gentle hand, only, could soothe his suffering. Her soft, loving tones alone would quiet his paroxysm of nervousness.

Time passed on, and Death entered the home of Constance, not to disturb the long-suffering father, but tak-

ing the apparently healthy mother. Swiftly, quietly, and without suffering, she passed from her slumbers to the home of her Maker.

This was a terrible trial for the poor girl. She almost sank under it; but in a little while she rose above her own sorrows. Bowing with submission to the will of God, she now felt why it was her young hopes had been blasted. Before, all was dark; now, she saw plainly. She alone was left to cheer and solace the stricken father. No longer a single regret lingered in her heart. All was well. A holy calm broke over her, and she became almost happy, blessed with an approving conscience.

Suffering at last softened the stern nature of Mr. Lyle, and opened his eyes to the value of his child. He knew her devotion, her patient, untiring attendance on him, and he felt what a blessed boon she had been to him, and how illy he had merited so much loving kindness!

On one occasion he said:

"My daughter, I do not deserve such a blessing as you are to me. I have been very harsh and relentless, and caused you much sorrow; would that I could call back the past, and act differently. Heaven only knows how grieved I am for my mistaken views and actions."

Going up, and putting her arms around him, she replied:

"Do not worry about the past, father dear, nor about your daughter. Believe me, I am happy with you; and have no regrets. I would not be absent from you during your suffering, even to be with him."

"Where is Ernest? Do you love him still?" he asked.

"I only know (through the papers) that he has been elected to Congress. About my still loving him, depends entirely on whether I have the right to do so; he may have given that to another," she replied, and called to her beautiful lips a sweet smile, to try to convince him,

more than her words would, that she was content, whate'er her lot should be.

It is a few weeks after the meeting of Congress. All Washington is on the *qui vive* about the passage of the ——— Bill, and the appeal to be made in its favor by the new member from ———.

Constance Lyle stands before her mirror. More than usual care has she bestowed on her toilet.

We will play eavesdropper, dear reader, just for once, and peep over her shoulder, to view the changes time has made. No longer the fresh, brilliant beauty of her youthful days. Constant confinement in the sickroom, care, and anxiety have faded the roses that used to bloom on her cheeks; but to us she is more charming, this pale beauty, with her gentle dignity, and sweet, patient look, than the bright, merry girl of years ago.

There is something about her which makes us think we would like ever to be near her, side by side, to pass on life's pathway, feeling sure her beauty would never wane, but wax purer and brighter as she neared her journey's end. Listen! She says:

"How strange my birthday should be the one for his speech! This day I shall see him for the first time for fifteen years. Yes, I am thirty-three to-day, and this is the anniversary of our parting!"

Leaving her room she is soon by her father's side.

"I'll have to go early, father, dear. It will be very crowded, and Gerald is waiting. His wife is going to stay with you during my absence."

"How well you look, my daughter! Why, really, you are getting young again!"

"This is my birthday, father. I am a maiden of no particular age to the public, but I whisper in your ear privately," she joyously said; and, suiting the action to

the word, bent down, whispered, kissed him, and was gone.

"How time flies! But she is still very beautiful. Heaven grant my prayers may be answered. She deserves to be happy; and when I am gone she will be very lonely, and then feel keenly my harsh treatment," he murmured.

Wearily passed the hours until he heard her light step on the stairs. She came in. He thought there seemed a shadow on her face, but she came forward, and said, pleasantly:

"Well, father, you are likely to keep your daughter. I heard Ernest. I had not expected too much; he was grandly eloquent. He has altered in his looks; he seems much older, and is quite gray; mental work and hard study, he says."

"Then you saw him, and spoke to him! What do you mean by saying I shall keep you? Is he mar——"

"Yes," she replied, before he had finished his question. "He introduced me to his daughter, a little miss of about twelve; so you were right when you said that men were too sensible to suffer for or from love. He must have married in two years after he left us. Gerald left little Constance and me in the library, and went and brought him to see us. We were with him only a very short time, when he was sent for. He excused himself, and bade us good-day. Now, father, I will remove my wrappings, and order dinner."

Day after day passed on, and Constance had schooled herself to think of Ernest only as a happy husband and father. She did not blame him for taking a companion. He was away from all kindred and friends, and she had given him no hope to induce him to wait through all these years for her.

One day, just a week after their meeting at Congress,

she was sitting reading to her father, when a servant entered, and handed a card. She read, Ernest Ellwood!

Paler for a few moments, and tightly pressed were the sweet lips. She did not rise from her seat, until she had communed with her heart. Now, she thought, I must call up all my fortitude and self-control, and prove to Ernest, to my father, and, more than all, to myself, that my heart is not troubled!

"Father," she said, "Ernest is below. He is waiting, probably, to inquire after you. I told him you had long been an invalid. Will you see him?"

"I would rather not, darling, unless you wish it. Go down a while, and if he must come up, let me know first."

Slowly she descended the steps, passed through the long hall, and entered the drawing-room, advancing with quiet dignity to welcome the distinguished representative.

He listened a moment to her words, so calm and cold; then, clasping her in his arms, he drew her down beside him, and said:

"Oh, my darling! thank Heaven, I find you still Constance Lyle!"

She tried to draw herself away from his side, but his arms held her tightly, and his hand clasped hers. His eyes were gazing so earnestly and lovingly in hers, as in by-gone days. She tried to speak, but he said:

"Nay, my beautiful love, you must not move or speak until you have heard me through, and then I shall await your verdict. I know you think it so strange that I have not been to you before. I have been the victim of a miserable mistake. The day I entered this city I walked past here to catch a glimpse of you, perhaps. As I neared the door, I beheld seated on the steps that pretty little girl that I afterward saw with you. I stopped, spoke to her, and asked her name. Constance, she told me, and her father's, Gerald. Oh, my love, the long years of sus-

pense were ended to me then! I cannot tell you how dark the world seemed to me then. I struggled on, however, with my sorrows. Then I met you. Your being with Gerald and having the little one with you only too truly proved that my conjecture was right. I saw you, as I believed, the happy wife of Gerald, and knew no difference until this morning. When I met him then, he stopped and urged me to come and see him. I asked after his wife, and remarked that time had changed her but very little, when, to my amazement, he said he did not know I had ever met Mrs. Moreton. Then came the explanation. I parted with the noble fellow only a few moments ago, and here I am now. Tell me, love, that all my waiting—never wandering from my love for you for an hour, has not been in vain. Speak, love!"

"Ernest Ellwood, what mean you by speaking to me thus? Allow me to rise. Your mind is certainly very much affected. Nothing but insanity can excuse this language to me. I will order the carriage to convey you home to your wife and daughter."

"My wife—oh, yes, now I know. Gerald told me. We have all been very busy blundering. My darling, I have no wife or daughter. Louise is only mine by adoption. Her father was my dearest friend. This little one was placed in my arms, an orphan, when only three years old—and she knew no parent but myself. Can I go to your father, love?"

She no longer tried to release herself from his arms. Lower and lower drooped the beautiful head until it was pillowed on his breast. He felt her heart throbbing against his own, and almost bursting with its fulness of joy. He was answered—rewarded for all the years of waiting.

At length she raised her head. In her eyes he saw all the love of years beaming there.

"At last, my Ernest," she said. "I must go to father first and prepare him to see you."

Springing lightly up the stairs, she entered the room and stood beside her father's armchair.

He saw her beaming look, and said:

"What is it, Constance? What has brought this great joy to you? You look so happy."

"Father, we have all been under a great mistake. Ernest has never been married. That was his adopted daughter. He is waiting to see you; may I bring him up?"

"Yes, yes. Thank God! my prayers are answered."

In a few moments she stands before him, with her hand clasped in Ernest's.

"Here I am again, Mr. Lyle, as in years gone by, pleading for your blessing on our love. May I have her now, after all these years of waiting?"

"Ernest Moreton, I am profoundly thankful to Heaven for sparing me to see this day. Welcome back to your home and old friends, and welcome to the hand of my daughter. Take her; she has been a loving, patient, dutiful child. She has brightened and cheered my path for a long, weary time, and now I resign this blessing to you, and beg your forgiveness for these long years, lost to both, which might have been passed happily together."

"Not resign, but only share with me, this blessing; she shall never leave you, sir," replied Ernest.

"Father, do not speak of years lost; they have not been. Ernest would not have gone away, and devoted himself to study, if we had been united then; just think then what his adopted State would have lost! and I have been cheering you—think what you would have lost without your little Constance! Nay, there is nothing lost; all is gain, and simply by keeping God's command, 'Honor thy father and thy mother.'"

"Let me come in to rejoice with you all, and make my speech," exclaimed the noble Gerald, grasping the hand of each. "I say that they are worthy of each other. He by his earnest, unwavering love for his lady fair, and earnest, untiring endeavors to serve his State—who has now won the respect and confidence of his countrymen—he alone is worthy of the woman ever constant to her early love, yet never faltering in her chosen path of filial duty."

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WHY HE WAS MERCIFUL.

BY FRANCES HENSHAW BADEN.

Who made the heart, 'tis He alone
  Decidedly can try us;
He knows each chord—its various tone;
  Each spring—its various bias;
Then at the balance let's be mute—
  We never can adjust it;
What's done, we partly may compute—
  We know not what's resisted.—ROBERT BURNS.

"How is it, my old friend, that you are so very lenient to these young thieves? Your sentence was very unexpected. Every one thought you would, at least, send them to the State's prison for three or four years. The young rascals were amazed themselves. The House of Correction for six months has not much terror for them. Do you know that it has become a common saying among the members of the bar that our venerated and respected judge has a strong sympathy—in a word, a fellow-feeling—for all young thieves! I think you will have to commit a few of those gentlemen for contempt."

"I do not wonder, at all, Mr. Archer, at any, indeed, every one, thinking and saying as much," said Mrs. Morley, the wife of the judge, just entering the room in time to hear the concluding part of Mr. Archer's remarks. "Only a few months ago the judge could not possibly help sen-

tencing a boy to the State's prison; but, before the time for entry came, he succeeded in getting his pardon; and, more than this, he has brought him here, into his own home-circle, with the idea of reforming him."

"My dear wife, have you any cause, so far, to think I shall fail? Has not the boy proved grateful and worthy?" asked the judge, in a mild, though very sad, voice.

"Yes, yes; but how you can have any patience with such characters, I cannot imagine," answered his wife.

"Sit still, Archer, if you have no engagement; I am going to tell my wife a little story, which will probably explain my charity toward those unfortunate youths that you have spoken of; and, indeed, all such. You, as my oldest and most valued friend, shall share the hearing, if you wish."

"Many thanks for the privilege, with my deep appreciation for your kindness in thinking of me thus," returned Mr. Archer, warmly, at the same time resuming his seat.

"The story I have to tell you came under my immediate observation. I was quite well acquainted with the principal character.

"Very many years ago, and not far distant from this city, lived an orphan boy, scarce fifteen years of age—bereaved, at one cruel blow, by a prevailing epidemic, of both parents, and left to the care of an uncle (his father's brother), a hard, cruel man.

"A few hundred dollars, quite sufficient, however, to support and continue the boy's studies, for a few years, was left in the hands of the uncle. But of this there was no proof—no will or last testament was left.

"Death came so swiftly there was little time for aught save an appealing look from son to brother, and the pleading voice murmured:

"'Be a father to my boy. Oh! deal justly, kindly towards him!'

"In a very few days the sensitive mind of the poor boy too truly perceived that he was not a welcome inmate. Before a month had passed he was withdrawn from school; his love of study was discouraged; in fact, made a source of ridicule; and his time so completely taken up with hard work on the farm, there was no chance for aught else.

"On one occasion George (we will call him) ventured a remonstrance with his uncle—alluding to the money in his possession to be used for George's education and support. Judge of his amazement and indignation when the bad man denied having one dollar in trust for him, and ended by calling him a pauper, and saying he would have to work for his bread.

"The future, there, was very plain to George; a life of ignorance—nothing higher than a mere farm drudge. His mind was determined against that. Privation, suffering, death, even, were preferable. The next day found him a fugitive from injustice and dishonesty—a lonely traveler on the path of life. Seeking Fortune, to find and be treated by that whimsical goddess with good or ill. To be smiled or frowned upon, to be mounted upon the triumphing waves, rising higher and higher, until he had reached the pinnacle of Fame, or drifted about, sinking lower and lower in the dark waters, at last reaching the pool of Dishonesty, Despair, Death!

"Ah! who could tell which fate would be his?

"Oh, how I can sympathize with all such! looking back on my own pathway to manhood; remembering the dangers, temptations and numberless snares that youths have to encounter. In fact, to pass through a fiery furnace! And how very few are they, that come forth, unscarred, and purified!

"Remembering this, I exclaim, 'How was I saved?' And then my heart, almost bursting with gratitude, forces the words to my lips—by God's mercy alone!

"Taking with him a few favorite books—a change of linen—he bade adieu to the home so laden with bitter memories.

"A day's weary travel brought him to the city of L——. Here, for many days, until the autumn came on, he managed to subsist—doing little chores, carrying a carpet-bag or bundle—earning enough to sustain life merely, and sleeping in the depot or market-house.

"At length the cold days and colder nights came on; work was very hard to find, and our poor boy's fortitude was severely tried.

"The day of his trial, his direst temptation, came! For twenty-four hours he had not tasted food. A cold, bleak night was fast approaching. One after another of his books had gone to get a piece of bread. Now nothing was left but starvation or—the boy dare hardly breathe it to himself—or dishonesty!

"He must have food somehow. Loitering about the depot, watching a chance to earn a few pennies, he saw a gentleman alight from a carriage, take out his pocket-book, pay the driver, and return it, as he supposed, to his pocket.

"It was almost dark, yet the eager eye of the hungry boy saw what had escaped the driver's.

"There, in that gutter, lay the surety against suffering for that and many coming nights.

"He was about to rush forward and secure the prize—the lost pocketbook—but caution whispered, 'Be sharp! you may be seen.' And then, with the cunning and slyness of an old thief—thus suddenly taught by keen suffering—he sauntered along, crossing the gutter, stumbled and fell; then put out his hand, covered and secured his

treasure, slowly arose, and feigning a slight lameness, he retraced his steps towards the depot, entered the waiting-room, which he felt sure would be unoccupied at that hour. Getting behind the warm stove and close to the dim lamp, he opened the pocketbook—gold! notes! tens, twenties! over a hundred dollars met his gaze! When had he seen so much? His—all his! Had he not found it? Possibly he might have overtaken the owner and restored it, but what was the use of throwing away good luck! But already Conscience was at work. Turning over the notes he found a little silken bag. Opening it, he drew forth a miniature painting of a beautiful little girl, and on the back was written:

"'Our darling! three years old to-day.'

"It was a lovely, angelic face. The boy was fascinated, spellbound by it. Long he gazed. He grew very uneasy. His bosom heaved convulsively. There were signs of violent emotion, and then burst forth the words:

"'I have not stolen it. Who says so? I found it!'

"Again he looks almost wildly at the picture; then whispers hoarsely:

"'She says, "Thou shalt not steal!" Can this be stealing? No—no, it is not. It is luck. I am growing nervous from long fasting. Oh, Heavens, how hungry I am! Bread, bread! I must have bread or die!'

"Taking out a few small coins, he closed the pocketbook, putting the little miniature in his bosom; then walked as swiftly as his failing strength would allow; reached, and was about to enter, an eating-house. At the door, he hesitated; and, drawing forth the little picture, looked again at the baby-face. Now, to his eye, she has grown older; and the face is so sad, with such an appealing look, which speaks to his inmost heart.

"The blue eyes were no longer the laughing ones of

childhood; but, oh! yes, it was really so—his mother's lovely, sad face was before him! The same sweet, quivering lips, which seemed whispering so earnestly:

"'Thou shalt not steal!'"

"Thrusting the picture back to its hiding-place, he sank exhausted from violent emotion and extreme weakness down on the stone steps.

"Oh, the terrible struggle that was going on in that young breast!

"The tearing pangs of hunger, the sharp stinging thrusts of conscience were warring for the victory. Oh, those who have never known the pangs of hunger can but poorly imagine that fearful struggle. At last, thank God! Conscience triumphed. Honesty was victor.

"Bursting into tears, he murmured:

"'God forgive, and have mercy! Mother—little angel-girl smile on me!'

"He returned the coin to the book, and clasping it tightly, replaced it in his pocket.

"'I will not touch one cent; and in the morning, if I live so long, I will find some means to restore it to the owner—all but the little picture—that angel-child has saved me, and I must keep her to watch over me in the future.'

"Slowly he arose, and was proceeding along the street, thinking he could at least return and sleep in the depot, when a loud noise attracted his attention.

"A horse came dashing furiously along the street, drawing after him a buggy in which was crouching a lady almost lifeless with terror. Thoughts as swift as lightning flashed through his mind; he might save her—what though he was trampled to death. Then he surely would be relieved from suffering!

"Summoning up all his little strength—then wonderfully increased by excitement and manly courage—he

rushed forward, faced the frightened little animal, seized the reins, and was dragged some distance, still holding firmly on—sustaining no injury save a few bruises—until he succeeded in checking the wild flight. He saw his advantage; then, with a kind voice, he spoke to the horse, patting and rubbing his head and neck, until he became quite gentle. George knew the poor fellow was not vicious but frightened at something he had seen or heard.

"In a few moments he was joined by a crowd—among whom came a gentleman limping and wearing a look of great anxiety.

"George knew his thoughts, and said:

"'The lady is not at all hurt, sir, only frightened.'

"Several had seen the boy's action, and the owner of the horse soon understood all about it. Many were his words of grateful acknowledgment, and warmly shaking the boy's hand, he pushed into it a half-eagle.

"Looking at this a moment, again tempted by hunger, he hesitated—then exclaimed:

"'No, thank you, sir, I cannot take it. I am amply rewarded by having succeeded in helping the lady.'

"'Oh, do let us do something to prove our thanks. You look so weary, and indeed, almost sick. Tell us how can we serve you,' said the lady, who had not spoken until then.

"These kind words brought tears to the boy's eyes; he tried to speak, but his voice failed.

"'There, my boy,' said the gentleman, 'it is growing very cold. We live only a short way from here. I shall lead my horse, and you must follow on. Supper is waiting for us; and after we have been refreshed by a cup of hot coffee and something substantial, I shall insist on being allowed to prove my thankfulness in some way or other.'

"This kindness, George had neither the strength nor the will to refuse.

"Following on, he soon reached with them, the house of Dr. Perry. Such a supper the famished boy had not seen since his parents' death, and he did full justice to it.

"The doctor's delicate kindness and cordial manner so won the boy, that during the evening he told him his whole story, of his hard struggles and dreadful temptation, and ended by producing the pocketbook, and asking the doctor's advice as to the manner of restoring it.

"His kind friend suggested that there might be some clew to be found inside as to whom it belonged.

"Opening it, George carefully examined every part, and sure enough, found a card with the probable name and address of the owner.

" 'Now, my boy, it is too late to-night, but in the morning you can go find the place, inquire for the lady, and then ask "if her husband left last night in the train for ———." If he did, then you may know you have found the right person. Now about yourself, your future. What are your ideas?'

" 'Oh! sir, if I could only earn enough to support me and get into the City Academy, I should be the happiest boy alive. But it is so hard to get a permit. I know I am quite far enough advanced to be able to keep up with the boys. I could live on bread alone to be able to acquire knowledge,' said the boy, with great earnestness.

" 'I am thankful, my young friend, I can now find a way to serve you. I am one of the directors of that institution. You shall be entered, and obtain all the advantages it offers.

" 'I see you are a proud boy and must feel that you are earning your living. Come here to me every morning before, and after school has closed in the afternoons. I

wish you to take care of my office, and keep my things in perfect order for me. What say you to this, and then getting your meals with us?'

"Oh! what joy was in that hitherto sorrowful heart.

"Words could not express it; but clasping the doctor's hands, he pressed them to his heart, and pointed upward.

"His friend knew how grateful he was, and how very happy he had made him.

"Oh! had not God heard his prayer and speedily answered it. Mercy! how freely, how bountifully, it was bestowed on him.

"At last the words burst from his lips: 'Oh, God! I thank Thee.'

"Early the following morn the pocketbook was restored; everything save the miniature. This he kept, yet all the while feeling keenly that he was guilty of a theft. Yet in this he did not feel that God was offended. And often as he gazed at his little 'guardian angel,' as he called her, he would say, smilingly:

"She does not look reproachfully or seem to say, 'Thou shalt not steal me.'

"His mind was determined on the purpose to work every spare moment, night and day, denying himself in every way, until he had secured money sufficient to get the picture copied, and then return the original.

"Months passed on, prosperity smiled on him. His best friend, the doctor, had full confidence in him. His teachers encouraged and approved. All was well.

"His miserable lodgings were before long resigned for a comfortable room in the happy home of Dr. Perry, who insisted on this arrangement, saying:

"'George, your services fully repay me. My little son loves you dearly, and has wonderfully improved in his studies, since he has been under your charge. We want you with us as much as possible.'

"Now, only one thing troubled him. The stolen picture.

"At length he accomplished what once seemed an almost impossible thing. The picture was copied and paid for; and George started to return the original, the one that had rested in his bosom so long. How he loved it!

"It was a great sacrifice for him to give up that, and retain the copy. However, he was somewhat compensated by the result of his errand.

"'Twas the fifth birthday of the little girl, and well he knew it. Ascending the steps of her father's house, he rang the bell, which was soon answered by a servant, and behind him came a bevy of little girls, the foremost being the original of his picture, his little 'guardian angel.'

"'More presents for me?" she asked, as he handed the precious parcel into her tiny hands, extended for it.

"'No, little one, for your father! Will you tell me your name?' he asked.

"'Oh, yes! My name is——'"

"What was it?" eagerly asked Mrs. Morely.

"Why are you so anxious? I'll punish you a little for interrupting me, by not telling you," answered the judge, playfully.

"Well, well, no matter; only go on," answered his wife, showing plainly how deeply she was interested in his story.

"The little one held her hand, saying:

"'I am five years old to-day. Shake hands with me, Mr. ——I do not know your name. Every one shakes hands and kisses me to-day.'

"The youth clasped the dear little hand (held forth with the sweet innocence of childhood and combined with a dignity well worthy of a maid of twenty), and pressed on it a pure kiss, at the same time breathing

to himself the vow that, with God's blessing and help, to win such a position that should enable him to seek and know this child in her home. To try and make himself worthy of her; to win her love, and in years to come to have her as his 'guardian angel' through life.

"Often he would get a glimpse of her at the window or the door, this giving him encouragement to work on.

"Another year he was taken as assistant in the primary department of the academy, this giving him a small income.

"In two more years he had graduated with the highest honors.

"His mind had been determined in favor of the law. His most ardent wish to get in the office and read with the father of 'his little love,' then a very distinguished lawyer.

"This desire he made known to Dr. Perry, who readily encouraged it, saying:

"'I have no doubt, George, that you can succeed, backed by such letters as we can give you. This gentleman is very kind and courteous, and I think has no one with him at present. If I am not very much mistaken, after you have seen and talked with him a short time, it will be all right.'

"And so it proved. In a few days more George was studying under the same roof with the child of all his dearest, highest aspirations, daily seeing and speaking to her.

"Very soon the little maid of eight years became very fond of him.

"George rose rapidly in the respect and esteem of his instructor, and in a few months a deep and sincere attachment existed between them. Subsequently our young friend entered the Bar, and was looked upon as a man of fine promise; his career upward was steady, and

finally, after eight or ten years' practice, he was among the best of his day.

"All these years of toil and study were for laurels to lay at the feet of the one who had so unconsciously saved him and encouraged him 'onward.' Nothing now prevented the fruition of all his hopes. A little while longer, and the living, breathing, speaking guardian angel was all his own—blessing his heart and house, filling his very soul with the purest love, the most profound gratitude to God, by whose infinite mercy he was thus almost miraculously saved. And to prove his gratitude and thankfulness, he has endeavored constantly to win the erring from sin, to encourage and sustain the penitent, to try and soften the hardened heart, and finally, as much as possible, to ameliorate the suffering and punishment of the guilty and condemned, truly knowing how very many are tempted as much and more than the hero of my story, without the interposition of such a special Providence."

The judge had finished. Mrs. Morely arose, and, passing her arm around her husband, pressed her lips to his, earnestly and with deep emotion, saying:

"I long since recognized the noble, suffering boy of your story. My husband, forgive my having ever questioned your actions or motives. In the future I will try to prove my worthiness of your love by aiding you in all your works of mercy."

"My old friend, and of all the most respected and honored, if it were possible your story would increase my veneration," said Mr. Archer, grasping and pressing the judge's hand.

"I would to Heaven there were more like you. If so, the temptations and snares which surround the path of youth would be less terrible and frequent—in a word, our whole community a little nearer, as God would have us be."

MEMORABLE THANKSGIVING DAYS.

BY FRANCES HENSHAW BADEN.

Shadow and shine is life, little Annie, flower and thorn.
—TENNYSON.

"Draw near me, William; I have so much I want to say, and now I feel too truly how rapidly I am drifting away. When I close my eyes I see so many happy, familiar faces, just a little way above, in the clouds. They are beckoning me away. Tell me, what day is this?"

"Thanksgiving, dear. But, pray, do not talk so. You are not going to leave me yet, Mary. You will be, you are better," said her husband, bending sorrowfully over her.

"Yes, I will be well, soon. I shall not see to-morrow's sun. Promise me, my husband, to try and make our boy feel as little as possible his loss. Be to him what I have been. He is a strange, shy child, and reminds me much of my own childhood. You scarcely know him, you have been so completely absorbed in your business all the time. Be with him, have him more with you. There is no need now of your being such a slave to business. You are prospering, you will be rich. Oh! do not let your heart become so encased in gold as to render it inaccessible to all higher, better feelings. In years to come another will occupy my place, but, oh!

William, do not let those new ties come between you and your first-born. Give me your hand, and with it the pledge to make his welfare your first thought.

"Thank you, dear! you have lifted a great weight from my heart. The only doubt is cleared away. Here put our wedding ring on your finger! How tight it fits. It will be a constant reminder of your pledge. Now bring Willie to me."

She gradually faded away during the afternoon, murmuring constantly words of love and hope, the last intelligible being, "Love each other for my sake."

As the Thanksgiving sun went down the spirit of the gentle, long-suffering Mary Archer joined the waiting ones above.

William Archer truly loved his young wife, and sincerely mourned her loss. Much of his time was spent with his son in trying to comfort and divert the attention of the sorrowing boy from his great loss.

Willie grew to love very dearly his father, hitherto almost a stranger to him.

Mary's words were soon verified. Riches grew rapidly around him, and in less than two years he had filled her vacant place by another.

With what an acute ear, jealous eye and aching heart he listened for every word of endearment, watched every action of love that his father bestowed on his new wife. Willie was not a boy to win the heart of a stranger. Retiring, silent and sad, but possessing a brave, grateful heart, he had to be known to be loved. The new mother did not care to take the trouble to win the love of her husband's child.

Years rolled on. Bright, cheerful, happy boys and beautiful, loving girls grew round the father's heart, claiming and winning his love, until poor Willie was almost forgotten, or only remembered when in sight,

and then always compared so unfavorably with the merry ones around him.

On one occasion some temporary ailment caused the father's hand to become very much swollen, until the little wedding ring became very tight and pained his finger much. His wife suggested its being filed off. While debating on the necessity of so doing, there came memories of the past. The long-forgotten pledge, the reminder of which was making him feel it so keenly then. How had he fulfilled that promise?

He would not have the ring removed. The swelling gradually passed away. And William Archer determined to make amends for his past neglect by future care and attention to his motherless boy.

But these good intentions were put to a speedy flight by an unfortunate accident which occurred that afternoon.

Constant difficulties and childish quarrels arose between the little ones, Willie always being the erring one, both with the mother and nurses. If a child fell and was hurt, "Willie did it." In a word, the poor boy was the "scapegoat."

The children were playing in the large ground surrounding their future elegant home. Willie was just twelve years old then. The nurse was attending the younger ones. A little way from the house was a large pond with a rustic bridge. Mr. Archer had frequently warned the nurse of the danger in allowing the children to play about there. Little Eddie, a merry, willful boy of six years, disregarding all Willie's entreaties to come away, would amuse himself by "riding horseback," as he called it, on the railing of the frail bridge, and tossing up his arms with a shout of defiance and laughter, he lost his balance and fell into the water, quite deep enough to drown a much larger boy.

A scream from the little ones brought the nurse to a knowledge of the truth.

"Eddie's in the water! Eddie's drowned."

In a moment Willie's jacket was off, and he plunged in, and, before the terrified nurse could collect her thoughts, brought out and placed the insensible boy on the grass before her.

Catching up the child, she rushed to the house, and, placing him in his mother's arms, declared, to screen her own negligence, that:

"Willie had pushed his brother in the pond."

Willie, following on with the other children, entered the house, his young heart proudly glowing with the knowledge of having done a good, brave action, and saying to himself:

"Now, this will surely please papa and make Eddie's mother love me a little."

Poor boy! He was met by stern eyes and harsh, upbraiding words, which for a moment quite bewildered him.

"You have killed your brother! You cruel, unnatural child," cried the mother.

"Out of my sight, boy," said his father, in low, threatening tones.

"Oh, father! what do you mean? Let me tell you how it was."

"Begone, sir!" and the enraged man gave poor Willie a blow which sent him reeling into the hall.

Staggering up to his room, and throwing himself on the bed, he wailed forth, in heart-rending tones:

"Oh, mother, mother! I wish I was with you! Others can die, why not I? No one loves me! Oh, I wish I were dead!"

Tired and exhausted by the exertions in the water,

he soon fell asleep, and remained so until the sun was just rising next morning.

All his sorrow, all the injustice of the night before came rushing back to his mind.

Hastily dressing himself, and then taking from his desk paper and pen, he wrote:

You have told me to get out of your sight, father. I shall. You will never see me again. You need not search for me. I am going to try and find my mother. When Eddie is better, you will hear the truth, and feel your injustice to WILLIE.

Folding this, and leaving it on his table, he stole down and made his way into town, not quite determined what to do. His first thought was to seek the river, and in its quiet waters end his sorrows. Oh! why would not death come to him?

How quiet the city was! Usually so many were stirring about at that hour. No market wagons or bread carts about. Oh, now he remembered, it was Thanksgiving Day.

On he walked, and then came in sight of the church where his mother used to go, and then memories of all her holy teachings. Should he find her if he attempted self-destruction?

What could he do? He could not live on! Surely God would forgive him!

Then he thought he would go once more into that church, and then—Heaven only knows what next. Waiting in the park until church time, he retraced his steps and reached the door just as the beautiful hymn, "Come, ye disconsolate," rose into the air.

Going in while the words

"Here bring your wounded hearts"

filled his ear, he crept up into the gallery and seated himself near the choir.

He grew somewhat calm, and his mind was, for the time, diverted from his sorrows by the sight of a little girl seated beside one of the singers—her mother, he thought.

The happy, beaming face of the little one interested him very much.

The services over, he followed close behind her, endeavoring to get another look at her, wondering if she was ever sad! And, standing at the church door as she was about to enter a carriage waiting, in which a lady and gentleman were already seated, he thought:

"Oh, what kind, loving parents she must have to make her look so joyous!" His face wore a very sad expression. The little girl turned, caught the sorrowful look bent on her, then stepped suddenly back, went up to our Willie, and said, with the winning grace and perfect simplicity of a child of six:

"Here, little boy, you look so sad, I am very sorry for you. Take my flowers."

What angel-spirit, prompted by the will of its Divine Master, was it that whispered to the little child to go comfort the sorrowing boy, and with her kind sympathy and sweet offering to draw him back from the dreadful precipice on which he stood, and lift him from darkness and despair? His mother's, perchance. A bright light shone in the boy's eye. His face was losing its despairing expression. The flowers were speaking to his heart, whispering of Trust, Faith, Hope! Yes, he must live on, brave all sorrows, trample down difficulties, and with God's blessing try to live to be a good and useful man.

"Why, Minnie! what do you mean? Why did you give those beautiful flowers to that strange boy? I never saw such a child as you are!"

"Mamma, I gave them to him because he looked so sad, just as if he had not a happy home, or loving papa

and mamma like I have. I felt so sorry for him, and I wanted to tell him so. I'm sure he hasn't got any mother, or he woud not look so."

"Never mind, Laura, my dear. Do not worry about Minnie. She is all right. Let her act from the dictates of her kind, innocent heart," returned the little one's father.

"Oh, yes! let her alone, and in years to come she will from the dictates of her kind heart, be giving herself away to some motherless, fameless and moneyless young man, I fear!" said the worldly and far-seeing mother.

"But not senseless man, I'll warrant you," was the laughing reply.

* * * * * * * *

"Why, William, my dear boy, why can you not be satisfied to remain here with me? Why do you wish to go away? 'Idle life!' 'Making a living and do some good!' Humph, sir! you need not be idle. Read to me; ride with me. As for your living, sir, I made that for you before you were born; and now I intend you shall enjoy it. Now, my boy, my son in all my heart's dearest affections, stay with me. Wait until the old man is gone; then you will have time enough to be useful to others."

"Mr. Lincoln—uncle, father!—yes, more than father—your wish must be mine. Did you not, fifteen years ago, take in a poor, wretched, friendless, homeless boy—bless him with your care and protection, educate, fulfill all his brightest hopes by giving him a profession, which will not only make him independent, but enable him to help and comfort others. Let me prove my gratitude in any way."

"Come, come, do not talk of gratitude. Oh, my boy, if you only knew what deep joy it has afforded me, having you here. I will tell you now, William, why it was I so readily opened my heart and home to the little wan-

derer I found that Thanksgiving afternoon so long ago. When I first looked into your eyes there was a strange, familiar expression about them that aroused my interest. Upon questioning you I found that the son of the only woman I had ever loved was before me! My heart yearned to help you; otherwise I should have relieved you from present want, and then informed your father of your whereabouts. Yes, my boy, the love I bore your mother was never transferred to another woman. Your father and myself were her suitors at the same time. He proved the fortunate one. Having you with me all these years has been a great solace; and now say no more about gratitude. Just love me, and stay with me."

And Uncle Lincoln added, humorously:

"Perhaps I may be doing some good by preventing some harm. I'll keep you from practicing and experimenting on some poor creature. Oh, you young doctors are always very anxious to make a beginning. 'Pon my word, I have quite forgotten to open my little Minnie's letter. Coming here to see her uncle, and will be with us to-morrow. I'm glad, very glad. Well, it is rather strange that the two I love best in the world should not know each other. It has happened that you have been off at college or attending lectures each time she has been here. Guard well your heart, boy. Every one loves her, and she no one better than her parents and old uncle. Much to her mother's regret, she has refused the finest offers in town. She does not care a mote for the title of 'old maid' with which her mother often threatens her. She is twenty-one, and has never been in love, she says."

"I think I am quite safe, sir. I am not at all susceptible, and it is not likely that a young lady of her position in society and of such beauty will cast a thought on me."

The next day the old gentleman had the pleasure of in-

troducing those he loved so well; and, to his infinite delight, saw his darling Minnie had certainly made a desired impression on his young *protégé*.

"Here he is, Minnie! the boy who stole half my heart away from you. I do not know how you will settle it with him, unless you take his in pay."

Often during the evening Uncle Lincoln noticed Will's gaze lingering on his niece, and there was a softer light than usual in his fine eyes; but, to his great regret, his boy did not appear to his usual advantage. He was very silent, and his mind seemed absent—far away.

And so it truly was. In the lovely girl before him William Archer beheld the joyous child who, on that dark day, spoke so kindly and saved him from—he dreaded to think what!

Uncle Lincoln rubbed his hands and chuckled merrily to himself. Everything was working to his entire satisfaction. These two impenetrable hearts were growing wonderfully congenial, he thought.

A few days before Minnie's visit was concluded, William brought out and placed in her hands a bunch of withered flowers; told his story of how, long years ago, her sweet sympathy had cheered his desolate heart and made him feel that there was still love in the world, then so dark to him; that her kind action had awakened in his almost paralyzed mind better thoughts, and let him know the only way to gain peace and happiness, and, finally, meet his mother, was in living on—putting his trust and faith in God's goodness and mercy!

And then he told his love and gained hers; and, with her dear hand clasped in his, stood waiting Uncle Lincoln's blessing!

"Minnie might do very much better," said the aspiring mamma; "but it was Uncle Lincoln's wish."

So the next Thanksgiving was to be the wedding day.

* * * * * * * *

In a luxuriously-furnished apartment, surrounded by everything that contributes to make life pleasant, sat an old man.

Every now and then he would raise his bowed head from the clasped hands, gaze anxiously around the room, and then, with a deep sigh, relapse again into his attitude of grief and despair. At last he speaks:

"Thanksgiving night again, and, for the first time in fifteen years, she has failed to hover round me, and I have not heard the sighing voice inquire: 'Where is my boy? How did you keep your promised word?' Oh! perhaps the mother has found her child. He may be with her now. Oh! I would give everything—my poor, miserable life—to recall that terrible day's injustice. My brave, noble boy! and how were you repaid? Oh! I have suffered terribly for all my neglect and wrong of my motherless boy! All gone from me, all the healthy, beautiful children; all taken away! We were not worthy of those precious gifts. God took them to himself. Now, what comfort do all these riches bring me? Nothing! nothing! and my poor, childless wife! How bitterly she has repented her wrong!

"Oh, Willie! Willie, my boy! Where are you now?"

"Here, father, here! kneeling, and waiting for your love and blessing."

"Am I dreaming? Oh! cruel dreams! I shall awaken, as often before, and find how false you are!"

"No, it's no dream, father! Give me your hand. Now, you feel your erring boy is back beside you, praying your forgiveness for all these years of silence—causing you so much sorrow!"

The old man was clasped to his son's bosom. Long he

held him thus, while a sob of joy burst from the father's thankful heart.

"Father, speak to my wife; you have another child now. She it was who brought me back to you this blessed day. This, the anniversary of my mother's death! also of the day of my greatest peril, is now the happiest of my life—my wedding day, and restoration to my father's heart!

"Where is my stepmother? I would see and try to comfort her. Oh! let this day be one of perfect reconciliation. Let us make it a thanksgiving from the inmost heart."

And now may we all, who have aught of ill dwelling in our hearts, go and be of kindly feeling one toward the other again. Let not the coming Thanksgiving's sun go down on our wrath. Let it not be merely a thanksgiving in words—a day of feasting—but a heart's feasting on peace and good will.

THE END.

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THE IRISH REFUGEE.

The only son of his mother, and she was a widow.—LUKE vii. 12.

Long years shall see thee roaming
A sad and weary way,
Like traveler tired at gloaming
Of a sultry summer day.
But soon a home will greet thee,
Though low its portals be,
And ready kinsmen meet thee,
And peace that will not flee.—PERCIVAL.

It was a lovely morning, that last Saturday in July, 1849. The sun had not yet risen when our family party, consisting of Aunt and Uncle Clive, Cousin Christine and myself, took seats at an early breakfast-table. A capacious carriage, well packed with presents for country cousins, stood at the door, ready to convey us to Virginia, to spend the month of August. We, a merry set of grown-up children, were too delighted with our prospective pleasure to eat anything, and so we soon left the table and put on our bonnets and hats, preparatory to a start. We entered the carriage.

"Now, then, are we all ready?" asked Uncle Clive.

"Yes," replied aunt.

"Has nothing been forgotten?"

"No—but stay! Where is Cousin Peggy's cap, Chrissy?"

"There—pinned up in that paper to the roof of the carriage. Don't hit your head against it, uncle."

"Clive, where did you put the basket of bread and butter and cold chicken?"

"There—in the bottom of the carriage. Be careful, now, my dear, or you will get your feet into it."

"No, I shan't. But hadn't you better put the bandbox with Martha's bonnet inside here?"

"Indeed, mother," interposed Miss Chrissy, "there is no room for it; for Cousin Peggy's bundle is on one side and the keg of crackers on the other; my feet are resting on the caddy of tea, and the loaf of sugar and paper of coffee are in my lap!"

"There! let's get along," said Uncle Clive, impatiently. "I declare, the sun is already half an hour high, and a ride of forty-five or fifty miles before us. We shall not reach Willow Glade before ten o'clock to-night."

"Yes, and about nine o'clock we shall be going down Bloody Run Hill, and I never can go through the piece of woods between that and Gibbet Hill after dark without horror."

"Ever since the peddler was murdered."

"Yes, ever since the peddler was murdered, and before, too."

Uncle Clive now jumped into his seat, and, taking the reins, we set off at a pretty brisk rate.

"Clive, don't that horse look a little vicious? See how he pricks up his ears!"

"Pooh! Nonsense! He's as safe a horse as ever drew."

"What o'clock is it, now?"

"Humph! half-past five. I think the next time we wish to get off at sunrise, we had better arrange to start at midnight; then, perhaps, we may succeed."

Turning the corner of the street at this moment the sudden sight of the river, and the wood on the opposite bank, glimmering and glistening in the light of the morning sun, elicited a simultaneous burst of admiration from our travelers. Then the prospective pleasures of the rural visit were discussed, the family and friendly reunions, the dinner parties, the fish feasts upon the river's banks, the oyster excursions and crab expeditions; and in such pleasant anticipations the cheerful hours of that delightful forenoon slipped away; and when, at last, the heat of the sun grew oppressive, and our sharpened appetites reminded us of the dinner-basket, we began to cast around for a cool, dry and shady spot on which to rest and refresh ourselves. The road here was wide and passed through a thick forest. A few more turns of the wheels brought us to a narrow footpath, diverging from the main road into the forest on the left-hand side.

"Let's get out here, Clive, and follow this path; I know it. It leads to a fine spring, with an acre or two of cleared land about it, on which there was once a dwelling."

This was agreed upon, and we all alighted and took the path through the wood. We had not gone many yards ere a scene of woodland beauty opened to our view. It presented an area of about four acres of open land in the midst of the forest. From the opposite side a little rivulet took its rise, and ran tinkling and splashing, in its pebbly bed, through the centre of this open glade, until its music was lost in the distance in the forest. But the most interesting object in sight was a ruined cottage. It was very small. It could not have contained more than two rooms. In front there had once been a door, with a window on each side; but now both door and windows were gone.

The solitary chimney had fallen down, and the stones of which it had been built lay scattered around. A peach tree grew at the side of the cottage, and its branches, heavy with the luscious fruit, drooped upon the low roof. A grapevine grew in front, and its graceful tendrils twined in and out through the sashless windows and the broken door. A bird of prey was perched upon the house, and, as we approached, with a fearful scream it took its flight.

"Be careful, Christine, where you step; your foot is on a grave!"

With a start and a sudden pallor, Christine looked down upon the fragment of a gravestone. Stooping and putting aside the long grass and weeds, she read: "The only child of his mother, and she a widow."

"Whose grave could this have been, mother? The

upper part of the stone, which should bear the name, is gone. Oh, how sad this ruined cot, and this lonely grave! I suppose, mother, here, in the heart of the forest, in this small cottage, lived the widow and her only child. The child died, as we may see, and she—oh! was the boon of death granted to her at the same moment? But, who were they, mother? As your early life was passed in this part of the country, you surely can tell us."

Aunt Clive, who had been gazing sadly and silently on the scene since giving the warning to Christine, said:

"Yes, I can tell you the story. But here comes your father, looking very tired and hungry; and, as it is a very sad tale, we will defer it until we have dined."

We spread our repast upon the grass, and, seating ourselves upon the fragments of the broken chimney, soon became engrossed in the discussion of cold chicken, ham and bread. As soon as we had dispatched them and repacked our basket, and while we were waiting for the horses to feed and rest, Aunt Clive told us the following tale of real life:

THE IRISH EMIGRANTS.

A short time previous to the breaking out of the Rebellion in Ireland a family of distinction came from that country to America and purchased and settled upon a handsome estate near the then flourishing village of Richmond. Their family name was Delany. With them came a Dr. Dulan, a clergyman of the established church. Through the influence of the Delanys, Dr. Dulan was

preferred to the rectorship of the newly established parish of All Saints, and subsequently to the president's chair of the new collegiate school of Newton Hall. This prosperity enabled him to send for his son and daughter, and settle with them in a comfortable home near the scene of his labors.

It was about the fifth year of his residence in Virginia that the rebellion in Ireland broke out, and foremost among the patriots was young Robert Dulan, a brother of the doctor. All know how that desperate and fatal effort terminated. Soon after the martyrdom of the noble Emmet, young Dulan was arrested, tried, condemned, and followed his admired leader to the scaffold, leaving his heart-broken young wife and infant boy in extreme penury and destitution. As soon as she recovered from the first stunning shock of her bereavement, she wrote to her brother-in-law, soliciting protection for herself and child. To this the doctor, who, to great austerity of manners, united an excellent heart, replied by inviting his brother's widow to come to Virginia, and inclosing the amount of money required to supply the means. As soon as the old gentleman had done that he began to prepare for her reception. Knowing that two families seldom get on well beneath the same roof, and with a delicate consideration for the peculiar nature of her trials, he wished to give her a home of her own. Selecting this spot for the beauty and seclusion of its position, as well as for its proximity to his own residence, he built this cottage, inclosed it by a neat paling, and planted fruit

trees. It was a very cheerful, pretty place, this neat, new cottage, painted white, with green window shutters; the white curtains; the honeysuckle and white jessamine, trained to grow over and shade the windows; the white paling, tipped with green; the clean gravel walk that led up to the door, the borders of which were skirted with white and with red roses; the clusters of tulips, lilies and hyacinths—all contributed to make the wilderness "blossom as the rose;" and every day the kind-hearted man sought to add some new attraction to the scene.

One evening the doctor had been over to the cottage, superintending the arrangement of some furniture. On his return home, a servant brought a packet of letters and papers. Glancing over one of them, he said:

"Elizabeth, my daughter."

A prim young lady, in a high-necked dress, and a close-fitting black net cap, looked up from her work and answered in a low, formal voice:

"My father."

"Your aunt and cousin have at length arrived at the port of Baltimore. They came over in the *Walter Raleigh*. I wish you to be in readiness to accompany me to-morrow when I go to bring them down."

"My father, yes," were the only words that escaped the formal and frozen girl.

A week after this conversation the still life of the beautiful cottage was enlivened. A lovely boy played before the door, while a pale mother watched him from within. That pale mother was not yet thirty years of

age, yet her cheeks were sunken, her eyes dim, and her hair streaked with silver. Truly, the face was breaking fast, but the heart was breaking faster. But the boy! Oh, he was a noble child! Tall for his age (he was but five years old), his dark hair, parted over a high, broad forehead, fell in sable curls upon his shoulders; his large black eyes, now keen and piercing as the young eagle's, now soft and melting as the dove's. His dark eyes wore their softest shade as he stole to his mother's side, and, twining his little arms around her neck, drew her face down to his, saying, with a kiss: "Willie is so sorry?"

"For what should Willie be sorry?" said the mother, tenderly caressing him.

"Because mamma is sad. Does she want Willie to do anything?"

"No, sweet boy, she wants nothing done that Willie can do."

"If mamma's head aches, Willie will hold it."

"Her head does not ache."

"If mamma wants Willie to stop teasing her and go to bed, he will go."

"You are not teasing me, dear Willie, and it is rather too early for you to go to bed."

The widow strove to chase the gloom from her brow, that she might not darken by its shadow the bright sunshine of her child's early life, and with an effort at cheerfulness she exclaimed: "Now go, Willie, and get the pretty book Cousin Elizabeth gave you, and see if you can read the stories in it."

Willie ran off to obey with cheerful alacrity.

The doctor was not able to do more for his sister-in-law than to give her the cottage and supply her with the necessaries of life; and to do this, he cheerfully curtailed the expenses of his own household. It was delightful to see the affectionate gratitude of the widow and child toward their benefactor. And that angel child, I wish I could do justice to his filial devotion. He seemed, at that early age, to feel as though he only lived to love and bless his mother. To be constantly at her side, to wait upon her, even to study her wants and anticipate her wishes, seemed to be the greatest joy of the little creature.

"Willie, why don't you eat your cake?" asked his uncle one day, when Willie had been sent over to the doctor's on an errand, and had been treated to a large slice of plumcake by his Cousin Elizabeth.

Willie silently began to nibble his cake, but with evident reluctance.

"Why, you do not seem to like it! Is it not good?"

"Yes, sir, thank you."

"Why don't you eat it, then?"

"My father," said Elizabeth.

"Well, Miss Dulan?"

"I think that Willie always carries every piece of cake he gets to his mother."

"But why not always prevent that by sending her a piece yourself?"

"Because, my dear father, I think it may be wrong to

restrain the amiable spirit of self-denial evinced by the child."

"Then you are mistaken, Miss Dulan; and recollect that it is very irreverent in a young lady to express an opinion at variance with the spirit of what her father has just said."

Elizabeth meekly and in silence went to the pantry and cut a piece of cake, which she carefully wrapped up and gave to Willie for his mother. Willie received it with an humble and deprecatory look, as if he felt the whole responsibility and weight of the reproof that had fallen upon his cousin.

One Christmas eve, when Willie was above seven years old, the widow and her son were sitting by the cottage hearth. The closed shutters, drawn curtains, clean hearth and bright fire threw an air of great comfort over the room. Mrs. Dulan sat at her little work-table, setting the finishing stitches in a fine linen shirt, the last of a dozen that she had been making for the doctor.

The snowstorm that had been raging all day long had subsided, though occasionally the light and drifted snow would be blown up from the ground by a gust of wind against the windows of the house. "Poor boy," said the widow, looking at her son, "you look tired and sleepy; go to bed, Willie."

"Oh! dear mamma, I am not tired, and I could not sleep at all while you are up alone and at work. Please let me stay up—but I will go to bed if you say so," added he, submissively.

"Come and kiss me, darling. Yes, Willie, you may stay up as long as you like. I will go to bed myself," added she, mentally, "so as not to keep the poor boy up."

"Well, Willie, I will tell you a story, darling, which will amuse you, while I sew."

Just at this moment the sound of carriage wheels, followed immediately by a jump from the box, and a smart rap at the door, caused the widow to start hastily from her seat. The door was opened, and Jake, the big black coachman of the old doctor, made his appearance, a heavy cloak and a large muffling hood hanging over his arm.

"Marm," said he, "it has clarred off beautiful, and massa has sent the carriage arter you, and he says how he would have sent it afore, but how the roads was blocked up with snowdrifts. Me and Pontius Pilate, and Massa John, has been all the arternoon a clarring it away, and I thinks, marm, if you don't come to-night, how the road will be as bad as ever to-morrow morning, with this wind a-blowing about the snow. Miss Lizzy has sent this hood of hern, and massa has sent this big cloth cloak of hizzen, so that you needn't ketch cold."

Mrs. Dulan did not immediately reply, but looked at Willie, and seemed to reflect:

Jake added:

"I hopes you'll come, marm, for massa and Miss Lizzy and Massa John has quite set their heads on having you with them to spend Christmas, and Massa John told me to tell you how he had bagged a fine passel of water-

fowl and wild turkeys, and I myself has made a trap for Massa Willie to catch snowbirds."

"Yes, we will go," said Mrs. Dulan. "Do me the favor, Jacob, to pour a pitcher of water on that fire, while I tie on Willie's cloak and mittens."

In twenty minutes more, Willie was seated on his uncle's knees, by his bright fireside, and his mother sat conversing with John and Elizabeth, and a few neighbors whom the inclemency of the weather had not deterred from dropping in to spend Christmas eve. The old housekeeper stood at the buffet, cutting up seedcake, and pouring out elder wine, which was soon passed round to the company.

That Christmas was a gorgeous morning. The sun arose and lit up into flashing splendor the icy glories of the landscape. From every roof and eave, from every bough and bush, dropped millions of blazing jewels. Earth wore a gorgeous bridal dress, bedecked with diamonds. Within the doctor's house everything was comfortable as you could wish. A rousing fire of hickory wood roared upon the hearth, an abundant breakfast of coffee, tea, buckwheat cakes, muffins, eggs, wild fowls, oysters, etc., etc., smoked upon the board. The family were all gathered in the breakfast-room. The doctor was serving out eggnog from a capacious bowl upon the sideboard.

"Cousin Elizabeth," said little Willie, taking her hand and leading her away to the sofa, "what do ladies love?"

"What do ladies love? Why, Willie, what a queer question."

"Yes, but tell me what do ladies love?"

"Why, their papas, of course, and their brothers, and their relations; it would not be decorous to love any one else," said the prim maiden.

"Oh, you don't know what I mean; I mean what do ladies love to have? You know boys like to have kites and marbles, and traps to catch snowbirds, and picture books, and half-pence and such things. Now what do ladies love to have?"

"Oh, now I understand you. Why, we like to have a good assortment of crewels and floss to work tapestry with, and a quantity of bright-colored silk to embroider with, and——"

"Oh, that's what you like, Cousin Elizabeth; but mamma doesn't work samplers," said the boy, with a dash of pettish contempt in his tone. "Uncle has given me a bright new shilling for a Christmas gift, to do what I please with, and I want to get something with it for poor, dear mamma."

"La! child, you can get nothing of any account with a shilling."

"Can't I?" said he, and his little face fell for an instant, but soon lighting up, he exclaimed: "Oh, ho! Cousin Elizabeth, I am brighter than you are, this time. A silver thimble is a very little thing, and can be bought with a shilling, I am sure; so I will buy one for mamma.

Poor mamma has an old brass one now, which cankers her finger."

"Here, Willie," said Elizabeth, "I have not paid you my Christmas gift, and you caught me, you know; take this shilling, and now run and ask your uncle to take you to the village with him when he goes, and then you can buy your thimble. You have enough to get one now."

Willie thanked his cousin with a hearty embrace, and ran off to do as she advised him. The family now sat down to breakfast, after which they all went to church, where the doctor performed divine service. A large party of friends and neighbors returned with them to dinner, and the remainder of the day was spent in hilarity and innocent enjoyment.

The next day the thimble was purchased, as agreed upon, and little Willie kept it a profound secret from his mother, until the first evening on which they found themselves at home, in their little parlor, when the candle was lit, and the little stand drawn to the fire, the workbox opened, and the old brass thimble put on. Then little Willie, glowing with blissful excitement, put his hand in his pocket to find his present. It was not there. He searched the other pocket, then his cap, then shook his cloak and looked about the carpet. Alarmed now, he opened the door and was going out, when his mother called to him.

"What is the matter, Willie? Where are you going? What have you lost?"

"Nothing much, mother; I am only going out a minute," and he closed the door, and began an almost hopeless search by the moonlight for his lost treasure. Up and down the walk he searched without finding it. He opened the gate, and peeping and peering about, wandered up the road, until his little feet and limbs got wet in the soft snow, and his hands became benumbed; when, feeling convinced that it was lost, he sat down and burst into a passionate fit of weeping. Let no one feel surprise or contempt at this. In this little affair of the thimble there had been disinterested love, self-sacrifice, anticipated joy, disappointment and despair, though all expended on a cheap thimble. Yet, Willie was but seven years old, and "thought as a child, felt as a child, understood as a child." I am a grown-up child now. and have had many troubles, but the most acute sorrow I ever felt was the death of my pet pigeon, when I was seven years old.

It was long before the storm in his little bosom subsided, but when at last it did, he turned to go home; he would not go before, lest he might grieve his mother with the sight of his tears. At last, weary and half-frozen, he opened the cottage gate and met his mother coming to look for him, and she, who always spoke most gently to him, and for whose dear sake she was suffering, now by a sad chance, and out of her fright and vexation, sharply rebuked him and hurried him off to bed. "If dear mamma had known, she would not have scolded me so, though," was his last thought as he sank

into a feverish sleep. The next morning when Mrs. Dulan arose, the heavy breathing, and bright flush upon the cheek of her boy, caught her attention, and roused her fears for his health. As she gazed, a sharp expression of pain contracted his features and he awoke. Feebly stretching out his arms to embrace her, he said:

"Oh, mamma, Willie is so sick, and his breast hurts so bad."

The child had caught the pleurisy.

It was late at night before medical assistance could be procured from a distant village. In the meantime the child's illness had fearfully progressed; and when at last the physician arrived, and examined him, he could give no hopes of his recovery. Language cannot depict the anguish of the mother as she bent over the couch of her suffering boy, and, if a grain could have increased the burden of her grief, it would have been felt in the memory of the few words of harsh rebuke when he had returned half-frozen and heavy-hearted from his fruitless search after the thimble, for the kind Elizabeth had arrived and explained the incident of the night.

* * * * * * * *

It was midnight of the ninth day. Willie had lain in a stupor for a whole day and night previous. His mother stood by his bed; she neither spoke nor wept, but her face wore the expression of acute suffering. Her eyes were strained with an earnest, anxious, agonized gaze upon the deathly countenance of the boy. Old Dr. Dulan entered the room at this moment, and looking down at

the child, and taking his thin, cold hand in his own, felt his pulse, and turning to the wretched mother, who had fixed her anxious gaze imploringly upon him, he said:

"Hannah, my dear sister—— But, oh, God! I cannot deceive you," and abruptly left the room.

"Elizabeth," said he to his daughter, who was sitting by the parlor fire, "go into the next room and remain with your aunt, and if anything occurs summon me at once; and, John, saddle my horse quickly, and ride over to Mrs. Caply and tell her to come over here."

Mrs. Caply was the layer-out of the dead for the neighborhood.

How tediously wore that dreary night away in the sickroom, where the insensible child was watched by his mother and her friend! The flickering taper, which both forgot to snuff, would fitfully flare up and reveal the watchers, the bed, and the prostrate form of the pale, stiff, motionless boy, with his eyes flared back with a fixed and horrid stare. In the parlor, a party equally silent and gloomy kept their vigil. Dr. Dulan, his son and the old woman, whose fearful errand made her very presence a horror, formed the group. The old woman at last, weary at holding her tongue so long, broke silence by saying: "I always thought that child would never be raised, sir—he was so smart and clever, and so dutiful to his ma. He was too good for this world, sir. How long has he been sick, sir?"

"Little more than a week; but I beg you will be silent, lest you disturb them in the next room."

"Yes, sir, certainly. Sick people ought to be kept quiet, though perhaps that don't much matter when they are dying. Well, poor little fellow; he was a pretty child, and will look lovely in his shroud and cap, and——"

"Hush!" exclaimed John Dulan, in a tone so stern that the woman was constrained to be silent.

Daylight was now peeping in at the windows. The doctor arose, put out the candles, opened the shutters, stirred the fire, and went into the next room. The widow was sitting in the same place, holding one of the boy's hands between her own, her head bowed down upon it. The doctor looked at the child; his eyes were now closed, as if in sleep. He laid his hand upon his brow, and bending down, intently gazed upon him. The child opened his eyes slowly. Passing quickly round the bed, the doctor laid his hand upon the recumbent head and said: "Look up, Hannah, your child is restored." With an ecstatic expression of gratitude and joy, the mother started to her feet, and gazed upon her boy.

"Kiss me, mamma," said Willie, opening his gentle eyes, in which beamed a quiet look of recognition and love. The mother kissed her child repeatedly and fervently, while exclamations of profound gratitude to Heaven escaped her. The doctor went to the window, and threw open the shutters. The rising sun poured its light into the room, and lit it up with splendor.

I must transport you now, in imagination, over a few years of time and a few miles of country, and take you into a splendid drawing-room, in the handsome court-

house of the Delany's, which, you remember, I described in the first part of this story, situated near the town of Richmond. On a luxurious sofa, in this superb room, reclined a most beautiful woman. Her golden hair divided above a high and classic brow, fell, flashing and glittering, upon her white bosom like sunbeams of snow. Her eyes—but who can describe those glorious eyes of living sapphire? Sapphire! Compare her eloquent eyes to soulless gems? Her eyes! Why, when their serious light was turned upon you, you would feel spellbound, entranced, as by a strain of rich and solemn music, and when their merry glance caught yours, you'd think there could not be a grief or a sin on earth! But the greatest charm in that fascinating countenance was the lips, small, full, red, their habitual expression being that of heavenly serenity and goodness.

Bending over the arm of the sofa, his head resting upon his hand, was a young man; his eyes earnestly, anxiously, pleadingly fixed upon the face of his companion, in whose ear, in a full, rich, and passionate tone, he was pouring a tale of love, hopeless almost to despair. The girl listened with a saddened countenance, and turning her large eyes, humid with tears, upon his face, she spoke:

"Richard, I am grieved beyond measure. Oh, cousin, I do not merit your deep and earnest love. I am an ingrate! I do not return it."

"Do you dislike me?"

"Oh, no, no, no, indeed I do not—I esteem and respect you; nay, more, I love you as a brother."

"Then, dear, dearest Alice, since I am honored with your esteem, if not blessed with your love, give me your hand—be my wife—and ultimately perhaps——"

"Horrible!" exclaimed the young girl, leaving the room abruptly.

"What the d—l does that fool mean?" exclaimed Richard Delany, as an angry flush passed over his face. "One would think I had insulted her. Colonel Delany's penniless dependent should receive with more humility, if not with more gratitude, an offer of marriage from his heir. But I see how it is. She loves that beggarly Dulan—that wretched usher. But, death—death to the poverty-stricken wretch, if he presume to cross my path!" and the clenched fists, livid complexion, and grinding teeth gave fearful testimony to the deadly hatred that had sprung up in his bosom.

At this moment Colonel Delany entered the room, and taking a seat, said:

"Richard, I have somewhat to say to you, and I wish you seriously to attend. You know that I am your best, your most disinterested friend, and that your welfare lies nearer to my heart than aught else earthly. Well, I have observed, with much regret, the increased interest you seem to take in your cousin—your passion for her, in fact. These things are easily arrested in the commencement, and they must be arrested. You can do it, and you must do it! I have other views for you. Prom-

ise me, my son, that you will give up all thoughts of Alice."

Richard, who had remained in deep thought during his father's address, now looked up and replied:

"But, my father, Alice is a very beautiful, very amiable, very intellectual——"

"Beggar!"

"Father!"

"Unbend that brow, sir! nor dare to address your parent in that insolent tone! And now, sir, once for all, let us come to the point, and understand each other perfectly. Should you persist in your addresses to Alice, should you finally marry her, not a shilling, not a penny of your father's wealth shall fall on an ungrateful son."

Richard reflected profoundly a moment, and then replied:

"Fear of the loss of wealth would not deter me from any step. But the loss of my father would be an evil, I could never risk to encounter. I will obey you, sir."

"I am not satisfied," thought the old gentleman, as he left his son, after a few more moments of conversation. "I am not satisfied. I will watch them closely, and in the course of the day speak to Alice."

An opportunity soon offered. He found himself alone with Alice, after tea.

"Alice," he commenced, "I wish to make a confidant of you;" and he proceeded to unfold to her, at some length, his ambitious projects for his son, and concluded by giving her to understand, pretty distinctly, that he

wished his son to select a wealthy bride, and that any other one would never be received by him as his daughter.

"I think I understand, although I cannot entirely sympathize with you, my dear uncle," said Alice, in a low, trembling tone. "All this has been said for my edification. That your mind may be perfectly at rest on this subject, I must say what may be deemed presumptuous: I would not, could not marry your son, either with or without your consent, or under any circumstances whatever."

"Alice! my dear Alice! How could you suppose I made any allusion to you? Oh! Alice, Alice!"

And the old man talked himself into a fit of remorse, sure enough. He believed Alice, although he could not believe his son. The old gentleman's uneasiness was not entirely dispelled; for, although Alice might not now love Richard, yet time could make a great change in her sentiments.

Alice Raymond, the orphan niece of Colonel Delany, was the daughter of an officer in the British army. Mr. Raymond was the youngest son of an old, wealthy and haughty family in Dorsetshire, England. At a very early age he married the youngest sister of Colonel Delany. Having nothing but his pay, all the miseries of an improvident marriage fell upon the young couple. The same hour that gave existence to Alice, deprived her of her mother. The facilities to ambition offered by America, and the hope of distracting his grief, induced

Mr. Raymond to dispose of his commission, and embark for the Western World. Another object which, though the last named, was the first in deciding him to cross the Atlantic. This object was to place his little Alice in the arms of her maternal grandmother, the elder Mrs. Delany, then a widow, and a resident under the roof of her son, Colonel Delany. A few weeks after the sailing of the ship in which, with his infant daughter, Mr. Raymond took passage, the smallpox broke out on board and he was one of its earliest victims.

With his dying breath he consigned Alice to the care of the captain of the ship, a kind-hearted man, who undertook to convey the poor babe to her grandmother. On the arrival of the infant at the mansion of Colonel Delany, a new bereavement awaited her. Mrs. Delany, whose health had been declining ever since her settlement in her new home, was fast sinking to the grave. Colonel Delany, however, received the orphan infant with the greatest tenderness. Sixteen years of affectionate care had given him a father's place in the heart of Alice. and a father's influence over her. Within the last year the sunshine of Alice's life had been clouded.

Richard Delany, the only son and heir of Colonel Delany, had been sent to England at the age of fifteen to receive a college education. After remaining eight years abroad, the last year of his absence being spent in making the grand tour, he returned to his adopted country and his father's house. He was soon attracted by the beauty and grace of Alice. I say by her beauty and

grace, because the moral and intellectual worth of the young girl he had not the taste to admire, even had he, at this early period of his acquaintance with her, an opportunity to judge. The attentions of Richard Delany to his cousin were not only extremely distressing to her, but highly displeasing to his father, who had formed, as we have seen, the most ambitious projects for his son. Richard Delany was not far wrong in his conjecture concerning the young usher, who was no other than our old friend William Dulan, little Willie, who had now grown to man's estate, the circumstances of whose introduction to the Delany family I must now proceed to explain.

To pass briefly over the events of William Dulan's childhood and youth. At the age of ten years he entered, as a pupil, the collegiate school over which Dr. Dulan presided, where he remained until his nineteenth year. It had been the wish of William Dulan and his mother that he should take holy orders, and he was about to enter a course of theological study under the direction of his uncle when an event occurred which totally altered the plan of his life. This event was the death of Dr. Dulan, his kind uncle and benefactor. All thoughts of the church had now to be relinquished, and present employment, by which to support his mother, to be sought. * * * It was twelve o'clock at night, about three months after the death of Dr. Dulan. The mother of William, by her hearth, still plied her needle, now the only means of their support. Her son sat by her side, as

of old. He had been engaged some hours in reading to her. At length, throwing down the book, he exclaimed:

"Dearest, dearest mother, lay by that work. It shames my manhood, it breaks my heart, to see you thus coining your very health and life into pence for our support; while I! oh, mother, I feel like a human vampire, preying upon your slender strength!"

The widow looked into the face of her son, saw the distress, the almost agony of his countenance, and, quickly folding up her work, said gently:

"I am not sewing so much from necessity, now, dear William, as because I was not sleepy, being so much interested in your book."

The morning succeeding this little scene, William, as was his wont, arose early, and going into the parlor, made up the fire, hung the kettle on, and was engaged in setting the room in order, when his mother entered, who, observing his occupation, said:

"Ever since your return from school, William, you have anticipated me in this morning labor. You must now give it up, my son—I do not like to see you perform these menial offices."

"No service performed for my mother can be menial," said Willie, giving her a fond smile.

"My darling son!"

After breakfast William took up his hat and went out. It was three hours before he returned. His face was beaming with happiness, as he held an open letter in his hand.

"See, mother, dear, kind Providence has opened a way for us at last."

"What is it, my son?" said the widow, anxiously.

"Mr. Keene, you know, who left this neighborhood about three years ago, went to —— County and established a school, which has succeeded admirably. He is in want of an assistant, and has written to me, offering four hundred dollars a year for my services in his institution."

"And you will have to leave me, William!"

These words escaped the widow, with a deep sigh, and without reflection. She added in an instant, with assumed cheerfulness:

"Yes, of course—so I would have you do."

A month from this conversation William Dulan was established in his new home, in the family of Mr. Keene, the principal of Bay Grove Academy, near Richmond.

The first meeting of William Dulan and Alice Raymond took place under the following circumstances. On the arrival of Richard Delany at home, his father, who kept up the good old customs of his English ancestors, gave a dinner and ball in honor of his son's coming of age. All the gentry of his own and the adjoining counties accepted invitations to attend. Among the guests was William Dulan. He was presented to Miss Raymond, the young hostess of the evening, by Mr. Keene. Young Dulan was at first dazzled by the transcendent beauty of her face, and the airy elegance of her form; then, won by the gentleness of her manners, the elevation

of her mind, and the purity of her heart. One ball in a country neighborhood generally puts people in the humor of the thing, and is frequently followed by many others. It was so in this instance, and William Dulan and Alice Raymond met frequently in scenes of gayety, where neither took an active part in the festivities. A more intimate acquaintance produced a mutual and just estimation of each other's character, and preference soon warmed into love.

From the moment in which the jealous fears of Richard Delany were aroused, he resolved to throw so much coldness and hauteur in his manner toward that young gentleman as should banish him from the house. This, however, did not effect the purpose for which it was designed, and he finally determined to broach the subject to his father. Old Colonel Delany, whose "optics" were so very "keen" to spy out the danger of his son's forming a mésalliance, was stone blind when such a misfortune threatened Alice, liked the young man very much, and could see nothing out of the way in his attentions to his niece, and finally refused to close his doors against him at his son's instance. While this conversation was going on, the summer vacation approached, and William made arrangements to spend them with his mother.

One morning William Dulan sat at his desk. His face was pale, his spirits depressed. He loved Alice, oh! how madly. He could not forego the pleasure of her society; yet how was all this to end? Long years must elapse before, if ever, he could be in a situation to ask the

hand of Alice. With his head bowed upon his hand, he remained lost in thought.

"Mr. Dulan, may our class come up? We know our lessons," said a youthful voice at his elbow.

"Go to your seats, boys," said a rich, melodious, kind voice; "I wish to have a few moments' conversation with Mr. Dulan," and Dr. Keene, the principal, stood by his side.

"My dear Dulan," said he, "you are depressed, but I bring you that which will cheer your spirits. I have decided to give up my school here into your sole charge if you will accept it. I have received, through the influence of some of my political friends, a lucrative and permanent appointment under the government, the nature of which I will explain to you by and by. I think of closing my connection with this school about the end of the next term. What say you? Will you be my successor?"

Dulan started to his feet, seized both the hands of his friend, pressed them fervently, and would have thanked him, but utterance failed. Dr. Keene insisted on his resuming his seat, and then added:

"The income of the school amounts to twelve hundred dollars a year. The schoolhouse, dwelling-house, with its outbuildings and numerous improvements upon the premises, go into the bargain. Yes, Dulan, I have known your secret long," said he, smiling good-humoredly, "and sincerely, though silently, commiserated the difficulties of your position; and I assure you, Dulan, that the greate-

pleasure I felt in receiving my appointment was in the opportunity it gave me of making you and Alice happy. Stop, stop, Dulan, let me talk," laughed Keene, as William opened a battery of gratitude upon him. "It is now near the end of July. I should like to see you installed here on the first of September. The August vacation will give you an opportunity of making all your arrangements. I must now leave you to your labors."

Every boy that asked to go out went out that day. Every boy that said his task got praised, and every boy that missed his lesson got blamed. The day was awfully tedious for all that, but evening came at last, and the school was dismissed. William, after spending an unusually long time in the "outward adorning," hastened with a joy-beaming countenance to the home of his Alice. In the full flow of his joy he was met by a sudden disappointment. The servant who met him at the door informed him that Colonel Delany, Miss Raymond and Mr. Delany had set out for Richmond, with the intention of staying a couple of weeks. Crestfallen, William turned from the door. This was only a momentary disappointment, however, and soon his spirits rose, and he joyfully anticipated the time of the Delany's return. They were to be back in time for the approaching examination and exhibition at Bay Grove Academy; and in preparing his pupils for this event, William Dulan found ample employment for his time and thoughts. I will not weary you with a description of the exhibition. It passed off in that school pretty much as it does in

others. The Delanys, however, had not returned in time to be present, nay, the very last day of William's stay had dawned, yet they had not arrived. William had written to his mother that he would be home on a stated day, and not even for the delight of meeting the mistress of his heart, the period of whose return was now uncertain, would he disappoint her. William was engaged in packing his trunk, when Dr. Keene, again the harbinger of good tidings, entered his room.

"My dear Dulan," said he, "I have come to tell you that the Delanys have arrived. You will have an opportunity of spending your last evening with Alice."

William shuffled his things into his trunk, pressed down the lid, locked it, and, hastily bidding his friend good-evening, took his hat and hurried from the house. Being arrived at Colonel Delany's, he was shown into the drawing-room, and was delighted to find Alice its sole occupant. The undisguised joy with which she received him left scarcely a doubt upon his mind as to the reception of his intended proposals. After a few mutual inquiries respecting health, friends, and so forth, William took her white hand in his, and said, or attempted to say —I know not what—it stuck in his throat—and he remained merely silent, holding the hand of Alice. There is something so extremely difficult about making a premeditated declaration of love. It is much easier when it can be surprised from a man. William knew the moments were very precious. He knew that Colonel Delany or his son might be expected to enter at any moment, and

there would be an end of opportunity for a month or six weeks to come; yet there he sat, holding her hand, the difficulty becoming greater every minute, while the crimson cheek of Alice burned with a deeper blush. At length footsteps approached. William heard them, and becoming alarmed, hastily, hurriedly, but fervently and passionately exclaimed:

"Alice, I love you with my whole heart, mind and strength. I love you as we are commanded only to love God. Dearest Alice, will you become my wife?"

"Miss Raymond," said Richard Delany, entering at this moment, "my father desires your presence instantly in his study on business of the utmost moment to yourself. Mr. Dulan, I hope, will excuse me, as we have but just arrived, and many matters crave my attention. Good-evening, sir," and, bowing haughtily, he attended his cousin from the room. William Dulan arose and took his hat to go.

"Farewell, Mr. Dulan," said Alice, kindly, "if we should not meet again before your departure."

"Farewell, sweet Alice," murmured William Dulan as he left the house.

* * * * * * *

It was a glorious Sabbath morning early in August. The widow's cottage gleamed in the dark bosom of the wood like a gem in the tresses of beauty. Everything wore its brightest aspect. The windows of the little parlor were open, and the songs of birds and the perfume of flowers were wafted through them. But the lit-

tle breakfast-table, with its snowy cloth and its one plate, cup and saucer, looked almost piteous from its solitude. Upon the clean white coverlet of the bed sat the widow's little black bonnet and shawl, prayer-book, and clean pocket handkerchief, folded with its sprig of lavender. It was Communion Sunday, and the widow would not miss going to church on any account. She dispatched her breakfast quickly—poor thing! she had not much appetite. She had sat up half the night previous, awaiting the arrival of William, but he had not come; and a man from the village had informed her that the mail-stage had arrived on the night previous without any passengers. As the stage would not pass again for a week, the widow could not expect to see or hear from her son for that length of time. After putting away her breakfast things, she donned her bonnet and shawl, and, taking her prayer-book, opened the door to go out. What a pleasant sight met her eyes. A neat one-horse carriage, or rather cart, stood at the door—her son was just alighting from it. In another instant he had clasped his mother in his arms.

"Oh! my William! my William! I am so glad to see you," exclaimed the delighted mother, bursting into tears. "Oh, but this is so joyful, so unexpected, dear William! I looked for you, indeed, last night; but, as you did not come, I gave you up, unwillingly enough, for a week. But come in, darling; you've not breakfasted, I know."

"No, dear mother, because I wished to breakfast with you; but let me give something to the horse, first, and

you sit in the door, dear mother—I do not want to lose sight of you a moment, while waiting on Rosinante."

"Never mind, William, old Jake can do that. Here, Jake," said she, as the old servant approached, "take charge of Master William's horse." Then turning to William, she said: "John sends old Jake over every morning to help me."

"Ah! How are Cousins John and Elizabeth?"

"Oh, very hearty. We shall see them this morning at church."

"I did not come in the stage yesterday, mother," said William, as they took their seats at the breakfast table, "because I had purchased this light wagon and horse for you to ride to church in, and I came down in it. I reached the river last night, but could not cross. The old ferryman had gone to bed, and would not rise. Well, after breakfast, dear mother, I shall have the pleasure of driving you to church in your own carriage!" added William, smiling.

"Ah! William, what a blessing you are to me, my dear son; but it must have taken the whole of your quarter's salary to buy this for me?" And she glanced, with pain, at his rusty and threadbare suit of black, and at his napless hat.

"Ah, mother, I was selfish after all, and deserve no credit, for I laid the money out in the way which would give myself the most pleasure. But, see, here is old Jake to tell us the carriage is ready. Come, mother, I will hand you in, and as we go along I will unfold to you

some excellent news, which I am dying to deliver." So saying, he placed his mother carefully in the little carriage, and seating himself beside her drove off, leaving old Jake in charge of the house.

"There is plenty of time, dear mother; so we will drive slowly, that we may talk with more comfort.

William then proceeded to relate, at large, all that had taken place during his residence at Bay Grove—not omitting his love for Alice, of whom he gave a glowing description; nor the bright prospects which the kindness of Dr. Keene opened before him. Then he described the beautiful dwelling which would become vacant on the removal of Dr. Keene's family, which was expected to take place some time during the coming autumn. To this dwelling, he intended to remove his mother, and hoped to bear his bride.

To all this the mother listened with grateful joy. At the church, William Dulan met again his cousins, John and Elizabeth, who expressed their delight at the meeting and insisted that William and his mother should return with them to dinner. This, however, both mother and son declined, as they wished to spend the day at home together.

William Dulan spent a month with his mother, and when the moment arrived that was to terminate his visit, he said to her:

"Now, dear mother, cheer up! This parting is so much better than our last parting. Now, I am going to prepare a beautiful home for you, and when I come at

Christmas, it will be for the purpose of carrying you back with me."

The widow gave her son a beaming look of love.

With a "Heaven be with you, my dearest mother," and "God bless you, my best son," they parted. They parted to meet no more on earth.

Let us now return to the mansion of Colonel Delany, and learn the nature of that "matter of the utmost moment to herself," that had summoned Alice so inopportunely from the side of her lover.

* * * * * * *

On reaching the study of her uncle, Miss Raymond found him in deep consultation with an elderly gentleman in black. Various packets of papers were before him—an open letter was held in his hand. He arose to meet Alice, as she advanced into the room, and taking her hand with grave respect, said:

"Lady Hilden, permit me to congratulate you on your accession to your title and estates."

"Sir! uncle!" exclaimed Alice, gazing at him with the utmost astonishment, scarcely conscious whether she was waking or dreaming.

"Yes, my dear, it is true. Your grandfather—old Lord Hilden—departed this life on the sixth of last March. His only living son survived him but a few weeks, and died without issue, and the title and estates, with a rent-roll of eight thousand pounds per annum, has descended, in right of your father, to yourself!"

"I shall have so much to give to William!" involuntarily exclaimed Alice.

"Madam!" exclaimed Colonel Delany in surprise.

Alice blushed violently at having thought aloud. "Dear sir," said she, "I did not know what I was saying."

"Ah, well, I suppose you are a little startled with this sudden news," said the Colonel, smiling; "but now it is necessary for you to examine with us some of these papers. Ah, I crave your pardon, Mr. Reynard—Lady Hilden, this is Mr. Reynard, late solicitor to your deceased grandfather, the Baron——"

Great was the excitement in the neighborhood when it was noised abroad that Alice Raymond had become a baroness, in her own right, and the possessor of a large estate in England. And when, for the first time since her accession to her new dignities, she appeared at church, in deep mourning, every eye was turned upon her, and she almost sank beneath the gaze of so many people.

In the height of the "nine days' wonder," William Dulan returned, and was greeted by the news from every quarter.

"Oh, Alice—lost! lost! lost to me forever!" exclaimed he, in agony, as he paced, with hurried strides, up and down the floor of his little room. "Oh, my mother, if it were not for thee, I should pray that this wretched heart of mine would soon be stilled in death."

If any human being will look candidly upon the events

of his own life, and the history of his own heart, with a view to examine the causes of suffering, he will be constrained to admit that by far the greater portion of his miseries have originated in misapprehension, and might have been easily prevented or cured by a little calm investigation. It was so with William Dulan, who was at this moment suffering the most acute agony of mind he ever felt in his life, from a misconception, a doubt, which a ten minutes' walk to the house of Coloney Delany, and a ten minutes' talk with Alice, would have dissipated forever.

If Richard Delany was anxious before to wed his cousin for love, he was now half crazy to take that step by which both love and ambition would be gratified to the utmost.

He actually loved her ten times as much as formerly. The "beggar" was beautiful, but the baroness was bewitching! Spurred on, then, he determined to move heaven, earth and the other place, if necessary, to accomplish his object. He beset Lady Hilden with the most earnest prayers, and protestations, and entreaties, reminding her that he loved and wooed her before the dawn of her prosperity, and appealed to her for the distinterestedness of his passion. But all in vain. He even besought his father to use his influence with Alice in his favor. Colonel Delany, his objections being all now removed, urged his niece, by her affection, by her compassion, and, finally, after some delicate hesitation, by her gratitude, to

accept the proffered hand of his son. But Alice was steadfast in her rejection.

"A change had come o'er the spirit of her dream!"

Alas, alas! that a change of fortune should work such a change of spirit! Alice Raymond was now Lady Hilden. Her once holy, loving, meek blue eyes were now splendid with light and joy. Upon cheek and lip, once so delicately blooming, now glanced and glowed a rich, bright crimson. Her once softly falling step had become firm, elastic and stately. "A peeress in my own right," was the thought that sent a spasmodic joy to the heart of Alice. I am sorry she was not more philosophical, more exalted, but I cannot help it, so it was; and if Alice "put on airs," it must not be charged upon her biographer.

Time sped on. A rumor of an approaching marriage between Mr. Richard Delany and Lady Hilden was industriously circulated, and became the general topic of conversation in the neighborhood. To avoid hearing it talked of, William Dulan sedulously kept out of company. He had never seen Alice since she became Lady Hilden. Dr. Keene had removed with his family from Bay Grove, and the principal government and emolument of the school had devolved upon young Dulan. The Christmas holidays were at hand, and he resolved to take advantage of the opportunity offered by them, to remove his mother to Bay Grove. On the last evening of his stay, something in the circumstance brought back forcibly to his mind his last conversation with Alice—that

conversation had also taken place on the eve of a journey; and the association of ideas awakened, together with the belief that he would never again have an opportunity of beholding her, irresistibly impelled him to seek an interview with Alice.

Twilight was fast fading into night. Lady Hilden stood alone, gazing out from the window of her uncle's drawing-room. She had changed again, since we saw her last. There was something of sorrow, or bitterness, in the compressed or quivering lip. Her eye was bright as ever, but it was the brightness of the icicle glancing in the winter sun—it was soon quenched in tears, and as she gazed out upon the gloomy mountain, naked forest, and frozen lake, she murmured: "I used to love summer and day so much; now——" [A servant entered with lights. "Take them away," said Alice. She was obeyed.]—"the dark soul in the dark scene—there is almost repose in that harmony."

"Mr. Dulan," said the servant, reappearing at the door, and Mr. William Dulan followed the announcement.

"You may bring in the light, now," said Alice.

"Will Lady Hilden accept congratulations, offered at so late a period?" said William Dulan, with a respectful bow.

Alice, who had been startled out of her self-possession, replied only by a bow.

"I was about to leave this neighborhood for a short time; but could not do so without calling to bid you

farewell, fearing you might be gone to England before I return." William Dulan's voice was beginning to quiver.

"I have no present intention of going to England."

"No? Such a report is rife in the neighborhood."

"One is not chargeable with the reports of the neighborhood."

Alice said this in a peculiar tone, as she glanced at the sorrow-stricken visage of the young man.

A desultory conversation ensued, after which William Dulan arose to take his leave, which he did in a choking, inaudible voice. As he turned to leave the room, his ghastly face and unsteady step attested, in language not to be misunderstood, the acuteness and intensity of his suffering. Alice did not misunderstand it. She uttered one word, in a low and trembling tone:

"William!"

He was at her side in an instant. A warm blush glowing over her bosom, cheek and brow, her eyes were full of tears, as she raised them to his face, eloquent with all a maiden may not speak.

"Angel! I love! I adore thee!" exclaimed the youth, sinking at her feet.

"Love me, William, only love me, and let us both adore the Being who hath given us to each other."

* * * * * * *

It was a cold night on the shores of the ice-bound Rappahannock. A storm of wind and snow that had been fiercely raging all day long, at length subsided. At a low cabin, which served the threefold purposes of post-

office, ferry-house and tavern, an old gray-haired man was nodding over a smoldering fire. His slumbers were disturbed by the blast of a stage horn and wheels of the coach, which soon stopped before the door.

Two travelers alighted and entered the cabin. The old ferryman arose to receive them.

"Any chance of crossing to-night, Uncle Ben?" inquired the younger traveler.

"He-he! hardly, Mr. William; the river has been closed for a week," chuckling at the thought that he should be saved the trouble of taking the coach across.

"Oh, of course, I did not expect to go on the boat; I was thinking of crossing on the ice."

"I think that would scarcely be safe, Mr. William; the weather has moderated a great deal since nightfall, and I rather think the ice may be weak."

"Pooh! nonsense! fiddle-de-dee!" exclaimed the other traveler, testily; "do you think, old driveler, that a few hours of moderate weather could weaken, effectually, the ice of a river that has been hard frozen for a week? Why, at this moment a coach might be driven across with perfect safety!"

"I shouldn't like to try it, though, sir," said the driver, who entered at this moment.

"The gentleman can try it, if he likes," continued the old man, with a grin, "but I do hopes Mr. Dulan won't."

"Why, the ice will certainly bear a foot-passenger safely across," smiled William Dulan.

"I dare say it may; but, at any rate, I wouldn't try it.

Master William—'specially as it's a long, dark, slushy road between here and the widow's."

"Why, Uncle Ben, do you think I am a young chicken, to be killed by wetting my feet?" asked William, laughing. "Besides, at this very moment, my good mother is waiting for me, and has a blazing fire, a pot of strong coffee, and a bowl of oysters, in readiness. I would not disappoint her, or myself, for a good deal."

"If it were not for this confounded lameness in my feet, I would not stop at this vile hole to-night," said the elder traveler, who was no other than Richard Delany, whom imperative business had called to this part of the country, and who had thus become, very reluctantly, the traveling companion of William Dulan.

"Nobody asked you, sir," exclaimed the old man, who did not seek popularity.

William Dulan, who by this time had resumed his cloak, and received a lighted lantern from the old ferryman, took his way to the river, accompanied by the latter. Arrived at its edge, he turned, shook hands with the old man, and stepped upon the ice. Old Ben remained, with his eyes anxiously strained after the light of the lantern as it was borne across the river. It was already half-way across—suddenly a breaking sound, a fearful shriek, a quenched light, and all was dark and still upon the surface of the ice; but beneath, a young, strong life was battling fiercely with death. Ah! who can tell the horrors of that frightful struggle in the dark, cold, ice-bound prison of the waters?

The old man turned away, aghast with horror, and his eyes fell upon the countenance of Richard Delany, which was now lit up with demoniac joy, as he muttered between his teeth:

"Good, good, good! Alice shall be mine now!"

* * * * * * * *

It was night in the peaceful cottage of the widow. All the little *agremens* her son had pictured were there. A little round-table, covered with a snowy cloth, stood in readiness. An easy-chair was turned with its back to the fire, and on it a dressing-gown, and before it lay a pair of soft, warm slippers. The restless, joyous, anxious mother was reading over, for the twentieth time, her son's last letter, in which he promised to be home, punctually, on that evening. Hours flew on, but he did not come. At length, one o'clock struck, and startled the widow from her meditative posture. "I must go to bed —I must not look pale with watching, to-morrow, and alarm my good son. It is just as it was before—he cannot get across the river to-night. I shall see him early to-morrow." Removing the things from about the fire, and setting the room in the nicest order, the widow retired to bed.

She rose early in the morning, to prepare a good breakfast for her son. "He shall have buckwheat cakes this morning; he is so fond of them," said she, as she busied herself in preparation.

Everything was in readiness, yet William came not. The morning passed on. The mother grew impatient.

"It is certainly high time he was here now," said she; "I will go through the woods, toward the high-road, and see if he is coming," and putting on her bonnet and shawl, she set out. She had just entered the wood when two advancing figures caught her attention. The path was so narrow that they were walking one behind the other.

"Ah! there he is—and John Dulan is with him," exclaimed the mother as they drew near.

The foremost man was indeed John Dulan, who held out his hand as they met.

"Ah! how do you do, John? How do you do? This is so kind of you! But, stand aside—excuse me—I want to see that youth behind you!" and the widow brushed past him, and caught to her bosom—old Ben, the ferryman.

"My gracious! I thought you were my son! Dear me, how absurd!" exclaimed the widow, releasing him.

"Let us go on to the cottage, aunt," said John Dulan, sadly.

"Yes, do. I am looking every minute for William. Oh, you can tell me, Uncle Ben—did he reach the ferry last night?"

"Yes, madam," groaned the old man.

"Why, you alarm me! Why didn't he come home, then?"

"He did try—he did try! I begged him not to—but he would! Oh, dear! oh, dear!"

"Why, what in Heaven's name is the matter? What has happened? Is my son ill?"

"Tell her, Mr. Dulan—tell her! I could not, to save my life!"

The widow turned very pale.

"Where is William? Where is my son? Is he ill? Is he ill?"

"My dearest aunt, do try to compose yourself!" said John Dulan, in a trembling voice.

"Where is my son? Where is he?"

"You cannot see him to-day——"

"Yet he was at the ferry-house last night! Great God! it cannot be!" cried the mother, suddenly growing very pale and faint. "Oh, no! Merciful Providence—such sorrow cannot be in store for me? He is not——"

She could not finish the sentence, but turned a look of agonizing inquiry on John Dulan. He did not speak.

"Answer! answer! answer!" almost screamed the mother.

John Dulan turned away.

"Is my son—is my son—dead?"

"He is in heaven, I trust," sobbed John.

A shriek, the most wild, shrill and unearthly that ever came from the death-throe of a breaking heart, arose upon the air, and echoed through the woods, and the widow sunk, fainting, to the ground. They raised her up—the blood was flowing in torrents from her mouth. They bore her to the house, and laid her on the bed. John

Dulan watched beside her, while the old man hastened to procure assistance.

The life of the widow was despaired of for many weeks. She recovered from one fit of insensibility, only to relapse into another. At length, however, she was pronounced out of danger. But the white hair, silvered within the last few weeks, the strained eyes, contracted brow and shuddering form, marked the presence of a scathing sorrow.

One day, while lying in this state, a traveling carriage drew up before the door, and a young, fair girl, clad in deep mourning, alighted and entered. Elizabeth, who was watching beside her, stooped down and whispered very low:

"The betrothed bride of your son."

The young girl approached the bed, and, taking the hand of the sufferer, exclaimed: "Mother, mother, you are not alone in your sorrow! I have come to live or die by you, as my strength may serve!"

The widow opened her arms and received her in an embrace. They wept. The first blessed tears that had relieved the burdened heart of either were shed together.

Alice never left her. When the widow was sufficiently recovered, they went to England. The best years of the life of Alice were spent in soothing the declining days of William Dulan's mother. The face of Alice was the last object her eyes rested on in life; and the hands of Alice closed them in death.

Alice never married, but spent the remainder of her life in ministering to the suffering poor around her.

I neglected to mention that, during the illness of Mrs. Dulan, the body of her son was found, and interred in this spot, by the request of his mother.

"What becomes of the moral?" you will say.

I have told you a true story. Had I created these beings from imagination, I should also have judged them —punished the bad and rewarded the good. But these people actually lived, moved, and had their being in the real world, and have now gone to render in their account to their Divine Creator and Judge. The case of Good *versus* Evil, comes on in another world, at another tribunal, and, no doubt, will be equitably adjudged.

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As I fear my readers may be dying to know what farther became of our cheery set of travelers, I may, on some future occasion, gratify their laudable desire after knowledge; only informing them at present that we did reach our destination at ten o'clock that night, in safety, although it was very dark when we passed down the dreaded Gibbet Hill and forded the dismal Bloody Run Swamp. That Aunt Peggy's cap was not mashed by Uncle Clive's hat, and that Miss Christine did not put her feet into Cousin Kitty's bandbox, to the demolition of her bonnet; but that both bonnet and cap survived to grace the heads of their respective proprietors. The only mishap that occurred, dear reader, befell your obsequious servitor, who went to bed with a sick headache, caused

really by her acute sympathy with the misfortunes of the hero and heroine of our aunt's story, but which Miss Christine grossly attributed to a hearty supper of oysters and soft crabs, eaten at twelve o'clock at night, which, of course, you and I know, had nothing at all to do with it.

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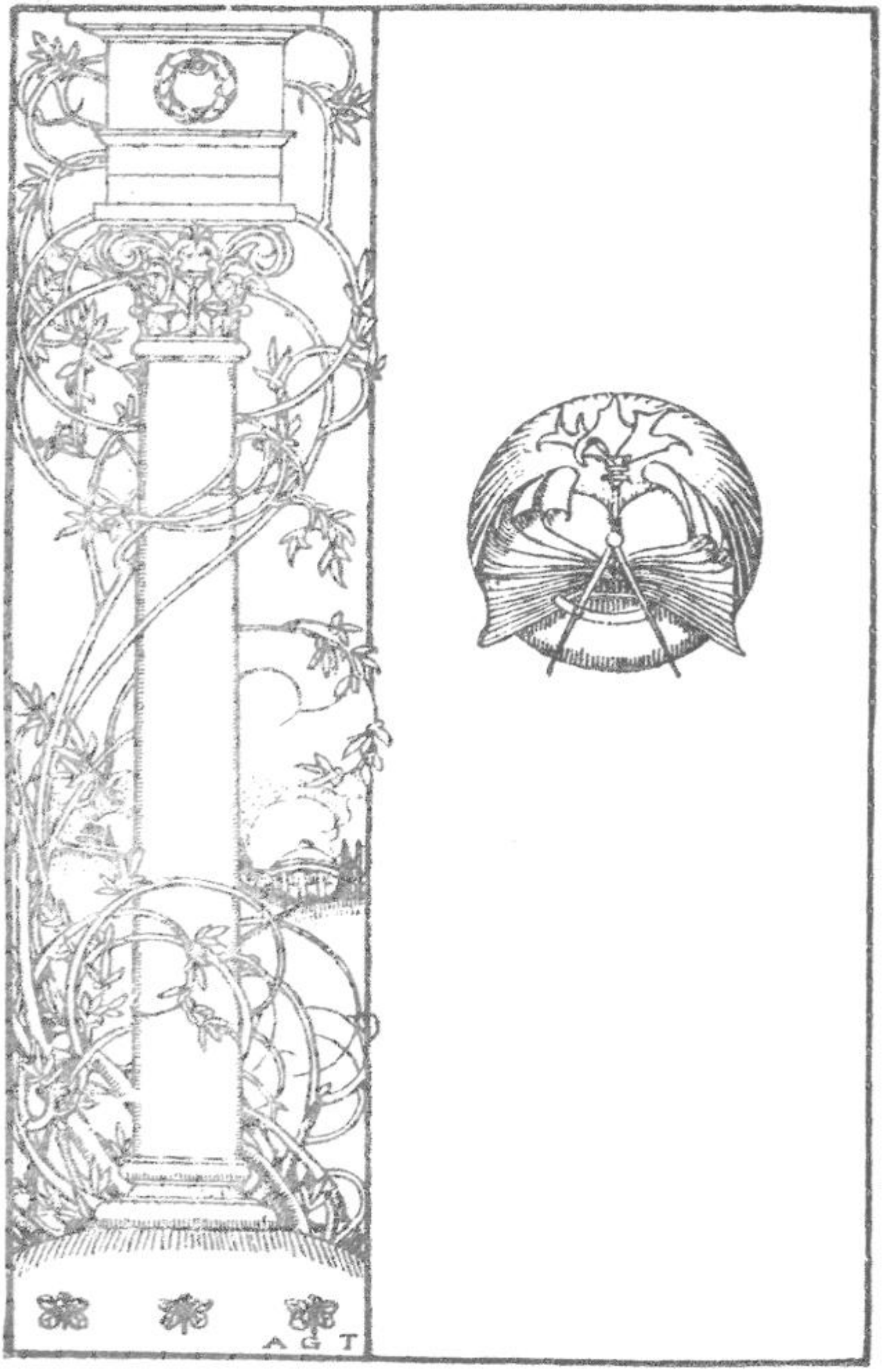
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