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CLINTON FORREST:

OR,

THE POWER OF KINDNESS:

A STORY FOR THE HOME CIRCLE.

BY

MISS MINNIE S. DAVIS.



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BENTON SMITH, AGENT,
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P R E F A C E .

ENCOURAGED by the kindly welcome which greeted "Marion Lester," and in compliance with the wishes of her friends, the author here presents an earlier work,—the first continuous effort of her pen. She has reviewed it with care; and, though conscious that it is still imperfect, she hopes it may not prove wholly unacceptable.

Though the author gathered the materials for her story only in the realms of imagination, she believes there is nothing in it untrue to nature. Doubtless many will be able to point out the living counterparts of some of the characters here portrayed.

Dear reader, are you seeking a "sensation novel," gorgeously colored, with intricate plot and startling denouement?—then lay this little book aside; it is not for you. But if you wish

to find truth guiding the hand of fancy,—if you love a simple, home story, developing such characters as would bless and beautify that spot where all the holiest affections of the heart are centred,—perchance you may find pleasure in perusing these pages.

MINNIE S. DAVIS.

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CHAPTER I.

CHILDISH CHARACTER.

“WHAT a naughty thing Clint Forrest is! He is the worst boy in school. Just hear how wickedly he talks.”

“O, Dora! I am sure he is not as bad as those great boys who vex him so. Everybody tries to plague poor Clint!”

“But just see, Mina; he is kicking John Carter with all his might; he is mad enough to tear him in pieces. He has got a dreadful temper,—you can’t dispute that?”

“I know he acts very badly; but he has n’t any father or mother to teach him. I almost cry when I think that he has nobody to love him. The boys always blame him for everything; and I don’t believe he’d hurt any one if they did n’t provoke him to it.”

“Perhaps he would n’t, Mina. I did n’t think anything about his having no father and mother. . Poor Clint!”

The group of quarrelsome boys, which the children were passing, now dispersed, and they soon forgot them. The little maidens were on their way to school, and not a wild flower on the roadside escaped their eager grasp; for they must all be presented as a love-token to their teacher. A childish though beautiful friendship existed between the little ones,

which had never been marred by the least difference or coldness. They had been together daily from infancy, and no sisters ever loved each other better.

Dora May lived with her widowed mother in the pretty cottage close to Dr. Clement's fine mansion. She was the love and pride of that mother's heart. And well she might be, for the gay, spirited Dora won all hearts by her sweet vivacity of manner. Though six months older than Elmina Clement, she appeared more than that younger. Her tiny figure seemed quite babyish beside Elmina's elegant form. Her beautiful hazel eye beamed with a happy light. One could not look upon her sunny face without a thrill of pleasure. The little friends usually acted in concert; but Elmina's was the guiding spirit. Elmina possessed a maturity of mind, a precocity of intellect, rarely found in a child of seven years. So unconscious was she of this, that it did not destroy the childishness so beautiful in childhood. Though she was caressed and petted much, she was not spoiled; that the judicious care of her mother had prevented.

Very happily did they ramble on their way. Dora had given Mina all her flowers, that there might be one large bouquet. Elmina accepted them, saying she would tell Miss Morris that Dora had gathered half of them.

Just then a boy, about nine years old, came running by them. "There is Clint," said Dora; "wonder if he has got over his passion?"

The boy heard what she said, and turned back spitefully.

"You wonder if Clint has got over his passion, do you? I am never going to get over it. I shall keep in a passion all the time. Everybody hates me, and I'm sure I hate everybody."

“O, Clint, you ought not to say that! It is very wrong,” said Mina.

“It is very wrong!” he repeated, mockingly. “O, don’t I wish I was a little lady, and had long, black curls! How smart I should feel, wearing my pink muslin frock and white apron, and telling folks that didn’t care about anything or anybody, that they were very wrong!”

“Do go away, you disagreeable boy!” cried Dora.

“You are vastly mistaken if you think I’ll go at your order, miss.” Clint observed that Elmina carried her flowers very carefully, and snatched them from her, throwing them upon the ground, and treading them into the damp earth. She stood for a moment silent with astonishment, then burst into tears. “O, you want your flowers, do you, you dear little cry-baby? Here, take ’em an’ welcome.” So saying, he gathered up the soiled and broken flowers, with a handful of mud, and threw them upon her neat dress.

“Clint Forrest, you are the worst boy in the world! I don’t wonder everybody hates you,” cried the indignant Dora.

“Don’t think you’ve told me any news, for I knew it all before.” With a loud laugh he turned towards the school-house. O, what a laugh for a child like him! It told of a heart barren of all the sweet affections which love and kindness foster. It told fearfully of the neglect of that young immortal. Child as he was, his heart was incrusting with bitterness and distrust. But down deep in that little heart were springs capable of vibrating to the purest and holiest emotions. Of their existence the boy himself was ignorant. They had never been sought for.

This last rude act seemed very cruel and uncalled for to Elmina, when she felt so much kindness towards

him, and had expressed it so warmly. The sensitive child sobbed convulsively, while Dora vented her feelings in the use of all the angry expletives she could command.

“What is the matter, sis?” cried a pleasant voice, and Elmina’s brother Frank put his arm kindly about the little girl. “What is it, dear Mina?” he repeated. “You don’t often cry like this. What has happened, darling?” She could not speak, though she strove to suppress her sobbing.

Dora told the story with flashing eyes, and in so spirited a manner, that Frank supposed it much worse than it really was. He was as much displeased as Dora could wish him to be. He soothed his little sister with true brotherly kindness, and, when the school-bell rung, her tears were wiped away, and she was trying to smile. “Don’t go into school now, with your red eyes, Mina. You and Dora go down to the brook and bathe your face. Wait till you are smiling and cheerful, and I will excuse you to the teacher.” As soon as the little girls were out of hearing, he muttered to himself, “The young scamp! to think of his hurting *my* sister! I suppose he’ll vex sweet little Dora next. Miss Morris shall know it; and I hope she’ll punish him severely. I’d like to train him for one week!”

The two children passed down a narrow path, leading behind the school-house, to the place where a rivulet babbled over shining pebbles and glistening sand. The banks were high on both sides, except where a large shelving rock rose a few rods from the water. A spreading willow shaded the spot. In summer it was a very inviting place, both for its coolness and rude beauty. This was Dora’s and Elmina’s favorite retreat. Here they brought their toys and books, and played many happy hours. Sometimes

Frank came and read stories to them, or brought his hook and line and caught the tiny fishes that sported in the water. They were so happy here, and loved the place so well, that Frank had christened it "Happy Nook." The other school children did not often molest them in their Happy Nook; for most of them preferred rude and noisy games to the quiet amusements that delighted our little friends.

To this pretty spot the children now turned their steps. After Elmina had bathed her heated brow and swollen eyes in the cool water, they seated themselves upon the rock, their arms thrown lovingly about each other. "I thought I should try to love that rude Clint Forrest," said Dora; "but I don't want to love him now; he has so abused you, dear Mina."

"I shall love him just as much as ever," replied Elmina. "I was not angry with him, only very sorry."

"I should n't think you would care much about him, after he has mocked you, and called you proud, and spoiled your flowers, and all that. If Frank tells Miss Morris, he'll get whipped for it. Don't you recollect that, when he pushed Lizzie French down yesterday, and made her cut her lip, she said she'd whip him the very next time he quarrelled with anybody, or hurt any one?"

"So she did, Dora. O, I hope Frank has n't told her! I don't want Clint to be whipped; for he did n't hurt me any. Come, let us hurry, Dora, so that we can tell her that, if Frank has told her about it."

Dora's sympathies were aroused, and the two children hastened to the school-room. When they entered, they instantly perceived they were too late to save the little urchin from his threatened punishment. He had already been chastised, and stood

before his teacher with a stubborn and determined expression on his face. His eyes were filled with the tears which he was too proud to let fall.

"I hope you understand me now, Clinton," said Miss Morris, in a cold, stern voice. "Take your seat, and remember this day's lesson."

The boy took his seat, muttering, "I wish I had hurt her! I wish I'd half killed her!"

Miss Morris turned, and saw the children standing near, with flushed and excited faces. She placed her hand caressingly upon Elmina's head, and asked, in a kind voice, if Clint had hurt her much. Elmina did not reply to the question, but raised her eyes with a reproachful look to her teacher's face, and said, "Did you punish Clinton because he vexed me?"

"Yes, my dear. I was very sorry to be obliged to do so; but it is my duty to try to prevent his bad treatment of the scholars. Don't feel so grieved about it, Mina." She stooped, and would have kissed the rosy, pouting lips, but the child prevented it by turning quickly away. She took her seat, hid her face in her apron, and wept. Miss Morris was much surprised, and tried to comfort her, but she shook her curly head very determinedly, and sobbed more bitterly.

Clint peered at her through his tangled hair, and wondered. He could not understand Mina's feelings; still he thought that he would rather be punished again than see her crying for him. He sat remarkably still all the afternoon, wondering how it happened that a beautiful little girl, with so many nice clothes and such a number of kind friends, could care enough about him to cry because he was hurt; and one, too, whom he had treated so very unkindly.

"Where is that dear, little Mina?" cried one of the large girls, at recess. No one could tell; not

even Dora. "What a tender-hearted child she is! I wanted to put my arms about her and kiss her, when she was crying as though her heart would break."

"Did you notice," said another, "how proudly she came out of the school-house? Then, what a look she gave Miss Morris! It told, better than she could have expressed in words, her indignation. I did n't know, before, that she had so much spirit."

"For my part," chimed in Jane Kent, "I think she is a silly thing to make such a fuss about that beggar-boy. I believe she made it more than half just for the sake of the impression."

"Why, Jane!" said the first speaker, "we all know Elmina too well to believe a word of it. I should think Clinton Forrest would be ashamed ever to look at her again. I wonder where the little one has hid herself?"

They could not find the runaway, and they gave up the search, concluding that she had gone home. She did not make her appearance at school again that afternoon, and Dora went home sad and lonely without her.

CHAPTER II.

HOME INFLUENCE.

A perfect woman, nobly planned,
To warn, to comfort, and command ;
And yet a spirit still and bright,
With something of an angel light.

WORDSWORTH.

THE beautiful Connecticut winds its silvery course through the green plains of Oakville, — a charming rural village. The emerald hills rise majestically towards heaven, throwing their cool shadows across the shining waters. How the heart of nature's worshipper revels in the grand scenery which the Inimitable Artist has pencilled along the banks of our own beloved Connecticut ! A writer from the far-famed West has called New England a noble "panorama," which she should like to visit on a pleasure excursion ; but thought a home in the fertile and luxuriant West far preferable. Not so. Earth has no purer, sweeter homes, than the thousands nestling in the green bosom of New England. Earth has no nobler, wiser men, no gentler, truer women, than those who are the dwellers in these homes.

One of these homes — a model home — a "miniature heaven on earth," we will introduce to the reader. The finest and most tasteful residence in Oakville is the property of Dr. Clement, — a generous, public-spirited man, and a skilful physician. He is emphat-

ically the man of the place. His wealth and station in society render him influential, while his generosity and affable manners make him popular. The poor do not envy, nor the rich rival him. He is alike the friend of the high and lowly. His wife and two children, Frank and Elmina, are the treasures which God has lent and enshrined within his heart and home.

The wife and mother is the guiding-star of this happy family. What sunshine is to day, what health is to life, what religion is to man, is she to every member of the household. "A perfect woman, nobly planned." We think she must have been formed after Wordsworth's beautiful ideal. She possesses a delicate and pleasing person, a refined and cultivated intellect, and a heart where the religion of love dwells as in a fitting temple. Her husband loves her almost idolatrously, and her children reverentially.

One beautiful evening, Mrs. Clement sat by her open window, watching the gentle falling of the curtain which twilight spreads before the glory of retreating day. Early September had added a softening charm to nature, which had seemed almost too beautiful before. The birds were softly chanting their "good-night songs," and the fragrance of many flowers was wafted to her on the wings of the zephyr. She had

"Looked and listened, till the spell
Of music and of beauty fell
So radiant on her heart,"

that her senses seemed lost in a sweet revery. A glad laugh and the sound of childish voices aroused her. A happy smile danced 'neath the lids of her eyes as she called, in her gentle, motherly voice,

"Mina, bid Dora 'good-night' and come in to mamma, for the dew is falling."

A moment more, and Elmina skipped into the room, followed by Frank, who seated himself by the table, and commenced studying his lessons for the morrow. Elmina drew her little chair to her mother's side, and laid her head in her lap, looking up into her face with smiling eyes.

Mrs. Clement parted the damp curls from her daughter's brow, saying, "Is my little girl sorry when night comes, and she must leave her play and come in and stay with her mother?"

"O, no, mamma! I love Dora dearly, and papa and Frank ever so much; but you, mamma, I love better than everybody else! It seems so nice to lay my head in your lap when I am tired. O, mamma!" she added, raising her head eagerly, with the sudden thought, "tell me some more about the angels and heaven. I wish I was an angel myself, when I hear you talk about them."

"I have told you all I know, my love. You must recollect that I have never seen an angel; they live with God in heaven."

"Then, mamma, please tell me about Jesus, who slept in a manger, and how the angels sung when he was born. When you tell me about that, I feel as though I should always be good."

The pleased mother related, as she had many times before, the story of the birth of our Saviour. She interspersed it with judicious remarks calculated to impress the plastic mind of her eager listener with the value and beauty of religion. Child as Elmina was, her greatest desire was to become good. Her mother she deemed perfect; and, as was most natural, she looked upon her as her model and example. Mrs. Clement knew this, and with earnest solicitude she strove thus early to implant in the mind of her child a love for that only perfect example and pattern—our

Saviour. She felt that her delicate and sensitive child could never withstand the trials and temptations of this life without His holy arm to lean upon. Though she was anxious that her beloved children should attain to intellectual greatness, she considered that insignificant when compared to a character adorned with the Christian graces.

Mina listened to her mother's words with great seriousness. After she had ceased speaking, she sat silent and thoughtful for some time. Mrs. Clement, thinking proper to divert her mind to some lighter and more trifling subject, inquired if they had had a pleasant school that day.

The question seemed to confuse Mina; for she blushed, and fixed her eyes upon her mother's with a troubled expression.

Mrs. Clement looked at her with surprise, and asked if she had not been a good girl.

The reply was in a low voice. "No, mamma, I'm afraid that I have not been very good."

"How have you been naughty, my dear? I hope you was not so at school."

"Why, mamma, I looked cross at my teacher, and would not let her kiss me."

"Looked cross at your teacher, Mina! How came you to be so disrespectful? Tell me all about it."

"I could n't love her any! She whipped poor Clinton Forrest when he did n't deserve it. Was n't it too bad, mamma? He did not hurt me at all; he only spoiled my flowers." Her eyes were sparkling with tears. She forgot her own misconduct in her childish indignation against her teacher.

"You seem to think that I know part of the story. You will have to tell me what Clinton did, before I can understand it."

“Let me tell you about it, mother,” said Frank, who had been listening to the conversation. “Mina seems to think it was a dreadful affair; though it was n’t much, after all.” He then explained to his mother his meeting the little girls, and Elmina’s grief and Dora’s anger. “Then,” he continued, “I was very angry too, and told Miss Morris, and she punished him, as she had been threatening to do for a long time. I’m very sorry I did, though, since Mina takes it so to heart.”

“I scolded at Frank, too, when we came home, because he told the teacher,” said Elmina. “I know he did it because he loves me so, and don’t want me to be treated badly.”

“O, never mind that, sis!” said Frank, good-humoredly. “I should n’t know how to appreciate your sweetness, if you were not a little cross sometimes.”

“I do not wonder that you were grieved, Mina,” said Mrs. Clement. “But I am sorry that you should treat your teacher and brother unkindly. I am glad, though, that it is nothing worse. I feared, by your looks, that you had done something very wrong.”

“O, mamma, that is not all!” Elmina turned her blushing and tearful face away from her mother’s anxious gaze. “When I went out at recess —”

“When you went out at recess!” interrupted Frank. “O, mother, I wish you could have seen her! She went out like a queen, with her head thrown back so proudly! Then she gave Miss Morris such a look—it would have annihilated a common person in a minute! I never knew that Mina had so much temper before. She did n’t come into school again all the afternoon. Where did you hide yourself, sis?”

“I ran down to Happy Nook as quick as I could, so that Dora or anybody else couldn't see me. I did n't mean to stay only a minute, but I felt so bad thinking about poor Clint, that I could n't go back. I knew it was naughty to stay, but I could n't bear to see Clint, for fear he would hate me.”

Mrs. Clement listened with mingled emotions of pleasure and pain. She was grateful to know that her daughter was so tender to the poor and oppressed, but grieved that she should manifest so rebellious a spirit towards her teacher. It was something very new in Mina, and she was surprised as well as grieved. Elmina argued, from her mother's silence, that she was very much displeased with her, and she hid her face in the folds of her dress, and sobbed.

“Don't cry, my love,” said Mrs. Clement. “I think your teacher will forgive you, if you tell her you are sorry. I am willing to believe that you did not mean to do very wrong; that you were so sorry for Clint that you forgot yourself.”

“You are such a good mother not to say I was a bad girl!” said Elmina, gratefully. “I did n't mean to be naughty to Miss Morris. I want to be good, so everybody will love me.”

“Try very hard to be good, my dear child, and ask God to help you every day.”

“I will, mamma; but I wish I was as good as you. I would never ask to be any better.”

“My darling, there is a perfect example — Jesus Christ. If you take him for your guide, you may become much better and wiser than your mother.”

“Better than you, mamma! How can that be? I thought you were always good.”

“O, no, Mina; I am often wrong, and need to ask forgiveness of God. But let us talk about your teacher. You said you did not love her. You must

recollect that she is older and wiser than you. She punishes Clinton because she wishes to make him a good boy."

"O, I do love my teacher, though I thought I didn't then. But she don't love Clint, I'm sure. She never says a word to him, only to tell him what to do, or scold him when he is naughty."

"Of course she don't love him!" cried Frank.

"But she loves me, Frank," said Elmina. "She kisses me, and calls me her little darling. And Dora she calls her fairy. Why should n't she love poor Clint?"

"Why, Mina, if she did n't love you and Dora, I should think she had n't any heart! It is quite another thing to love that ugly Clint Forrest."

"You shan't call him ugly! I say he is handsome."

"Handsome! — what an idea of beauty!" — and Frank laughed immoderately. "Why, he is always as ragged and dirty as any heathen need be. His head forever looks like an oven-broom! Then he has such an ugly scowl that I can't bear to look at him."

"Frank!" said Elmina, reproachfully, "you know Clint has no mother to keep him neat. His hair would be real curly if it was combed; and his eyes are beautiful. Did you ever notice them, Frank, when he was good-natured? You would say they were handsome, if you did."

"Well, to please you, sis, I'll say he's a beauty; but you can't make me say he is n't a bad boy. Everybody says he is bad."

"That is it. Poor Clint!" said Mrs. Clement. "Everybody says he is a bad boy, and I'm afraid there are but few that try to love him and make him better."

"No, mamma," said Mina. "There is n't anybody

that loves him. He said to-day that he hated everybody, and everybody hated him. I'm sure I could n't be good at all, if I did not have a kind mother to show me how."

"I think Clinton never has had a fair chance," said Mrs. Clement. "He was always pushed about, and called wicked, before he knew what the word meant. I hope, dear Frank, that you will treat him kindly. If you are so disposed, you may be the means of doing him much good."

"I believe you are right, mother," said Frank. "Clint has been neglected and abused. I'll try to help him to be good. I'm afraid, as Mina says, that Miss Morris does not try to get his love. I should think Mrs. Kent would dress him better, and take some pains with him."

"We will not think of Mrs. Kent's duty, my son, but try to fulfil our own faithfully."

Elmina was rejoiced that she had succeeded in enlisting the sympathies of her mother and Frank in behalf of poor Clint. With a happy heart she bade her brother "good-night," and followed her mother to her bed-chamber. Mrs. Clement conversed a few minutes with her little girl, then listened to her evening prayer, and, with a kiss and a blessing, left her to her peaceful slumbers. When she returned to the parlor, a lady, sitting in the chair she had left, rose, and Mrs. Clement greeted her visitor with quiet politeness.

"I thought I would run in just a minute," said the visitor, as she reseated herself, "and see if it would n't cheer me up a little. I have been so nervous all day, that I could hardly contain myself."

"What is the cause of your nervousness, Mrs. Kent? Are you not well?"

"O, yes, I'm well enough; but Bill keeps me

worrying about him half the time. He goes into the water so much, that I am afraid he will have the cramp and get drowned. All I say to him don't do any good. To-day he went off a-hunting with half a dozen wild fellows. He does n't know anything about a gun, and I've felt so anxious about him that I have n't enjoyed myself in the least to-day."

"I don't wonder you are anxious; but is his father willing to have him go?"

"O, Mr. Kent always lets him do as he pleases. He thinks everything Bill says and does is right. He has spoiled him, that is sure! Now he is so old I can't make him mind. I don't know what will become of him!"

"So old you can't make him mind!" said Mrs. Clement, in surprise. "Why, he is n't more than thirteen, is he?"

"No; just the age of your Frank. He has grown strangely wilful of late. I am completely discouraged. The other day I told him I wished he would spend his evenings at home, as Frank does. He replied that 'he did n't want to be tied to his mother's apron-string.' Then he went and got one of his father's cigars (he knows I hate to have him smoke), and went off puffing like any man! But I can't help being proud of him," continued the weak mother, "he is so bold and manly!"

Mrs. Clement thought that she should never be proud of such manliness in her boy, but wisely kept the thought to herself.

It were scarce possible to find a character more opposite to Mrs. Clement's than that of Mrs. Kent, who was coarse and unrefined in manners, and passionate, yet weak and irresolute. Her children she loved foolishly, for she spoiled them with indulgence, and then comforted herself by throwing all the blame

upon her husband. Of course they neither loved nor feared her, and in consequence her maternal anxieties were often excited by their misconduct.

"I don't understand," said Mrs. Kent, "how you manage to keep Frank with you so much. Why, my children never think of sitting down in the house with me for half an hour. They would think it was a dreadful thing, if I should make them."

"It requires no great exertions on my part," replied Mrs. Clement, smiling. "Frank may answer for himself if it is unpleasant for him."

Mrs. Kent never received such a glance from her son as that which now warmed Mrs. Clement's heart. With an affectionate smile, and a beaming eye, Frank exclaimed, "I am never so happy as when near my dear mother!"

Mrs. Kent's eyes filled, and a pang shot through her heart, as she contrasted him with her own wayward and ungrateful son. But she never thought of reproaching herself for the difference, — she only wondered it was so.

"I think you are a remarkable person, Mrs. Clement. Everybody seems to yield to your wishes, as though they were happier for so doing. Ann is continually praising you up, and says she would not leave you for another mistress, for all the world. She says, too, that you spend a great deal of time in talking to Mina about religious things, and telling her Bible stories. That seems to me to be all nonsense! I never talk to my children about such things; they'll find 'em out themselves as they grow older."

"I cannot agree with you there, Mrs. Kent. I think our children should very early be taught the difference between right and wrong, and then they will be more apt to choose the right."

"Of course, Mrs. Clement, I teach mine that. I

tell them it is dreadful wicked to lie and steal, and I should certainly whip them if I ever knew of their doing so. But I mean there 's no use in talking to children about religion and goodness half the time. It makes them too sober."

"I thought you approved of religious instruction for children, as you send yours to the Sunday-school," said Mrs. Clement.

"O, la! I send them because everybody else does, not because I 'm so particular about their going. Pray, what good would going to Sunday-school, or all the good instructions in the world, do Clint Forrest?"

Mrs. Clement had been desirous of speaking of Clinton to Mrs. Kent. It was a delicate subject, and she knew not how to approach it, fearing to offend her neighbor, and thus do more harm than good. She said, gently, "I am not sure but that it might improve him. You don't believe he is wholly bad, do you?"

"Yes, indeed I do, Mrs. Clement! I've wasted all the breath I ever shall in talking to him and telling him how he ought to do. I do verily believe he 's the worst child in the world!" She grew eloquent, as she often did, when talking of Clint's wickedness. "He is the great trial of my life. I said last winter, that he should not stay with us; that I would not try to do anything with him. But Mr. Kent has taken him in hand lately, and has got him a little broken under. He don't dare to show out his ugliness as he used to."

Mrs. Clement saw with pain how impossible it was to awaken right feelings in Mrs. Kent's heart, and with great tact turned the subject; still thinking in her own mind of ways and means of befriending poor, friendless Clinton.

CHAPTER III.

THE POWER OF KINDNESS.

MISS MORRIS sat at the table, in her pleasant school-room, writing letters. It was a quiet and convenient place for study, and she often brought her books or writing thither. The morning was bright and fair; and the gentle breezes dallied with the maps upon the walls, or stole softly through the room, sighing, as if mourning for the sweet presence of the little throng that daily gathered there. A light step arrested her attention, and, looking up, she beheld Mina by her side, with a peace-offering of flowers.

“Here are some flowers for you, Miss Morris.”

“Thank you, Mina; they are very sweet. I hope my darling will not deny me a kiss this morning?”

Elmina clasped her arms around her teacher's neck, and presented her cherry mouth for a kiss. “Mamma thinks I was very wrong yesterday, and says I should ask you to forgive me. I am very sorry indeed, dear teacher.”

“It is easy for me to forgive you, little Mina, as you never were naughty before, and now ask pardon so sweetly.” And she sealed the forgiveness with another kiss. “There, I hear Dora's voice; run out and play till I ring the bell, for I wish to finish my letter.” She thought Mina had gone, and turned to her writing. A moment after, she was started with the sound of a sigh, and, turning her head, she per-

ceived the child still standing by her side, and regarding her very wistfully.

“What is it you wish to say, little one?”

Her beautiful eyes deepened with expression and feeling, as she met the lady's gaze; and, with a voice pleadingly, touchingly earnest, she said, “You will love poor Clint?” Then, as if fearful she had offended, she glided quickly away.

“*You will love poor Clint?*” Like new, strange music, did these words fall on the heart of little Clinton; for he heard them. He had followed Elmina as she entered the school-room, and, hidden behind the door, heard all that passed. “Could any one love him, a ragged, dirty, wicked boy? Could the beautiful Elmina, the pet and idol of the village, love him?” The thought of a thing so joyful, but strange, brought a gush of tears from his eyes. O, blessed tears!—the first ever brought from that long-sealed fountain of tenderness and feeling. They bedewed the wild flowers which he held in his hand, and made them holy things.

These selfsame flowers Mina found upon her desk when the school commenced. As she took them up, wonderingly, she glanced at Clinton, and immediately knew, by his looks, that he had placed them there. Their language was, “that Clint was very sorry for his unkindness.” At least she read it so; and with a glad smile she held them up to him significantly, nodding her thanks.

Clinton had watched her eagerly; and when he saw that she understood him, and prized the flowers, he hid his face with his book, for another gush of tears flooded his eyes.

“*You will love poor Clint?*” Reprovingly, reproachfully, did the words and tone come to the ear of Miss Morris. They wakened her to a keen sense

of her error in her management of the wayward boy. They pointed out one path in which she had not tried to lead him, — the path of love. The duties of the day she performed mechanically, for she was absent-minded and thoughtful; questioning her own conduct, “talking with her past hours.” “Had she performed all her duty towards the poor orphan boy? She had not!” Earnestly, oft prayerfully, as she had striven to be worthy of her high calling, she was conscious that she had sadly failed in the first, great duty of obtaining the love of all her charges.

Miss Morris was not heartless. She had only fallen into the common error of considering Clinton as being incapable of yielding to the influence of kindness, and naturally had adopted a course of severity. O, sad it was for her, but sadder still for the much-wronged boy!

She blessed in her heart the angel-child who had unconsciously taught her her duty. She spoke kindly to Clinton, and strove to win him to her side with love; but it was too late! The school term closed in three weeks, and it would have taken a much longer time to turn his ill-will to confidence and love.

A few months later, and she was a happy bride, loving and beloved. But never did she cease to regret the golden opportunity she had lost, of blessing a poor, friendless child with her own love and kindness.

About ten years before the opening of our story, a young man, by the name of Forrest, and his delicate, pensive bride, came and settled in Oakville. He engaged a neat tenement, and lived very happily, though frugally, with his sweet wife. It was evident that they depended upon his daily earnings, for he labored constantly, and with a right good will. They

were from a distance, and strangers to all the villagers.

Those whose pleasure it was to visit them in their simple home spoke of the tender and beautiful love that existed between the young couple. The memory of some sorrow seemed to give a look of quiet sadness to her pale, pensive countenance, which the husband seemed ever striving to remove by increasing affection and tenderness. Perhaps he, in a measure, succeeded, for she grew more cheerful, and they appeared happy as poor mortals can be.

This pleasing state of things was not to last long. The spoiler entered their Eden. Death knocked at the portal, and went not away alone! Mr. Forrest was violently seized with a fever, and in a few short days his lifeless body was laid beneath the green turf.

The first outbreak of grief on the part of the young widow was overwhelming and terrible. But this soon subsided into a cold and stony apathy, that was even more distressing than her passionate sorrow. Her neighbors tried to arouse her by talking of her friends, and asking where they should send to find them. Her only reply was a mournful shake of the head, or a quivering sigh. They knew that they must soon lay her by her husband, for already the death-angel was hovering near. After her fatherless babe was born, the dazzling brilliancy of her eye, with its expression of agony, told that she was fully conscious of her desolate and bereaved condition. She would lay for hours, regarding the tiny being by her side with a mournful tenderness that was indescribably touching. Good old Mrs. Wilkins, who took the care of Mrs. Forrest upon herself, did all in her power to restore her to life and health. But human aid was vain; the poor lady was hourly passing away, — ever with her

eyes upon her babe, — ever with that pleading expression of love!

The sun was setting; and Mrs. Wilkins feared her patient would never see it rise again. She was exceedingly anxious to learn of the relatives of the mother, that she might know where to send the babe, and with great delicacy she approached the subject.

“What shall we call your baby, Mrs. Forrest?” she said to the dying woman.

“He must have his father’s name, Clinton Edward Forrest; it is all I can give him, poor thing!” was the low answer.

“Mrs. Forrest,” said the nurse again, “do you not feel that God has called you; that you will soon meet your dear husband?”

A faint, sweet smile parted the wan lips of the sufferer, as she raised her fading eyes heavenward. “She’s most there, sure!” thought the old lady, as she wiped her tearful eyes. But she must be aroused from this torpor, else it would be too late ever to gain the so much desired information.

“Dear lady, you would not leave your babe alone in the world? Have you not strength to tell me where I may find his father’s friends?”

The words seemed to call her from the borders of the grave. With a look of sudden anguish she murmured, “O, no, no! but Clinton was an orphan — alone —”

“But your friends, dear lady, tell me of them,” said Mrs. Wilkins, bending low to catch the broken and almost inaudible answer.

“Yes, send him to them; they will care — brothers will love my child —” A spasm shook her frail form, and her eyes closed heavily. After a moment, seemingly of suspended life, the eyes opened with a

quick gleam of intelligence. As she moved her hand feebly towards her babe, she murmured, "*Poor Clint* —" The fair hand dropped cold and lifeless upon her breast; the lids closed over those eyes never to open again; the pulsation of that burdened heart had ceased forever!

Mrs. Wilkins bent over the clay in speechless grief. The mournful death of the young creature before her had shocked her kind heart; and she was filled with apprehensions for the fate of the little orphan.

The proceeds of the simple furniture, when sold, barely covered the expenses of the sickness and death of the young couple; there was nothing left for the little one. Everybody was full of wonder and curiosity concerning the strange silence of Mrs. Forrest in regard to her friends. Even death could not repress slanderous tales, or evil and suspicious whisperings. But what should be done with the baby? Ah, there were many to ask, but none to answer, the question! Mrs. Wilkins would gladly have taken him to her heart, and cherished him as her own, but she was poor and dependent herself.

What should be done with the baby? Alas! there was not one heart, not one home open to receive it. It was carried to the poor-house. Sad fate it was for the tender germ of humanity!

The matron of the house was a busy, bustling woman, with a host of duties on her hands. She fed the baby when she did not forget it, and washed and dressed it when she had time. Sickly, and always pining for the want of proper care and nourishment, it was a peevish and fretful babe. The matron declared she despised the pale, cross thing, and every one in the establishment echoed the sentiment. There were no loving arms to fold around the little one; no

tender breast to pillow his weary head; no careful eyes to watch his infant steps; no kind voice to win his heart to love and goodness!

When he became old enough to play out of doors he grew robust and strong. At the age of three years he was a sturdy little fellow, whose striking characteristics were an obstinate spirit, and a passionate temper. Neglect and unkindness had not made him timid or fearful. All the evil passions of his nature were daily brought into active exercise, while good and noble emotions were never awakened. At school he early distinguished himself for wilful disobedience and impudence, and soon earned the reputation of being the worst boy in school. He looked upon all the scholars as his enemies; and, consequently, he was insolent and quarrelsome. A year before the commencement of our tale he was placed in the family of Mr. Kent, who was to receive pay for his board until he arrived at the age of eleven years.

Mr. Kent promised to give him the shoemaker's trade, and set him up in business, if he did well and was a good boy. People thought he was perfectly safe in making this conditional promise, as there was small prospect of Clint's ever becoming remarkably good. Clinton was little better off in his new home, though, being under stricter government, some of his evil habits were restrained. Had Mrs. Kent tried to gain his love she would easily have succeeded, for his heart was nearly bursting with the desire for affection. A kind word, a little forbearance on her part, would have soon secured respectful and grateful obedience. But she was ignorant of her duty to the orphan, and never addressed a word to him, except to command or reprove.

Reader, do you know a child like Clinton, — wayward, full of childish errors, yet needing, more than

all things else, sympathy and love? Do you know of a fatherless and motherless one, whom fortune seems ever to frown upon? Is there near you a little, throbbing, aching heart, growing cold and hard for a want of kindly counsel? O, speak tenderly to him! A word may help him, a sentence may save him!

CHAPTER IV.

THE ORPHAN'S THANKSGIVING.

THANKSGIVING-DAY had arrived—that time-honored New England festival—that “feast of good things”—that reünion of kindred and loving hearts—that home jubilee. What a busy, bustling, happy time! How the children hasten to join the “old folks at home!” How the brothers and sisters, uncles and aunts, and cousins, gather around the festive board in the dear old farm-house! Hard, indeed, it is for those whom fortune denies the privilege of visiting “the loved ones at home” on this the glad day of the year. What joyful greetings—what hearty hand-shakings—what laughter—what telling of news—what a destruction of edibles—O, what a host of pleasures crowd into this Thanksgiving-day!

Thanksgiving-day! The “dew of feeling” moistens the eye, as the memory of happy thanksgivings presses upon the heart. Perhaps the light of a beautiful eye is quenched in night; perchance a beloved voice is hushed in death. There are vacant seats at the table, there are desolate hearth-stones, and there are broken links in the chain of love. Perhaps the mourning heart says, in its sorrow, “There are no more thanksgivings for me. I will go down to the grave sorrowing for the loved and lost.”

Christian, count thy blessings, if thou canst. There are other aching hearts, other lacerated bosoms than

thine. Go, "visit the widow and fatherless in their affliction;" go, "speak comfort to the sorrowing," and thy life shall be one long Thanksgiving.

There was much running hither and thither in Mr. Kent's household on this Thanksgiving morning. Extra preparations had been made on this occasion; for a score of relatives were expected to celebrate the day with them. Mrs. Kent's ample store-room was filled to overflowing with every variety of baked meats, rich pies and cakes, with innumerable nameless dainties. Mrs. Kent was here, and there, and everywhere, arranging this or that, and directing Betty, who was dressing the great turkey. Miss Jane was fretting for fear her dress, which was still at the mantua-maker's, would not be completed in time for her to dress for dinner. Master Bill was ordering every one, and strutting about, full of importance.

For once, Clint forgot to be either cross or unhappy. Everybody was so cheerful and busy, that he was glad to be cheerful and busy too. He willingly went, for the third time that morning, to inquire if Jane's dress was finished. It was just completed, and the mantua-maker was carefully wrapping it in paper. Jane received it with delight, and hastened away to array herself in it.

"Here, Clint, you lazy dog, take my boots and black 'em!" cried Bill.

Clint had gone to work with a right good will, when Jane returned to display herself to the admiring eyes of Betty.

"O my! Miss Jane, you look fit for a queen," cried Betty, to the great satisfaction of the vain girl. Jane was really looking finely. Her beautiful dark hair was arranged very tastefully, and the new dress, which was of blue thibet, richly embroidered, set off her delicate complexion to advantage.

"Do you think so, Betty?" said Jane, with sparkling eyes. "I wonder if cousin Fred will call me handsome, as he did last Thanksgiving, when we were at grandpa's?"

"I dare say he will," said Betty. "But you must n't stay in this dirty kitchen, or you will spoil your fine dress."

As Jane swept by Clinton, she brushed his arm so rudely that a quantity of blacking, in the brush which he held in his hand, was spattered upon the skirt of her beloved dress. Though it was an accident, and she the only one to blame, she fell into a violent rage with Clint.

"You envious, hateful boy! you have spoiled my beautiful dress. I know you did it on purpose; you could n't bear to see me looking so well, so you blacked my dress."

Clint was really sorry for the mischief he had done, but he would n't say so; and continued his work very quietly. His apparent indifference exasperated her so much the more, and she cried, passionately, "You deserve to be half killed, Clint Forrest! Don't care, do you? I should black your face for you!"

"What is the matter, Jane?" said Mrs. Kent, advancing into the room.

"Just look at my dress, mother," said Jane, half crying. "Clint threw some blacking on it. He could n't be satisfied with blacking Bill's boots, so he must black my dress."

"Is that true?" said Mrs. Kent, angrily.

"Yes, indeed, it is, ma'm," said Betty, who always joined with the rest in the cry against Clinton. "I saw him do it myself."

"You wicked boy!" cried Mrs. Kent, seizing him by the arm, and shaking him violently. "I'll see if

I can't teach you better than that! If I did n't expect my company every minute, I'd get a stick and whip you till you could n't stand! But you an't going unpunished. You shan't have one mouthful of Thanksgiving dinner. Betty, you see that he has nothing but brown bread and milk."

Betty promised obedience, and Mrs. Kent turned to examine more particularly the injury her daughter's dress had sustained.

"It is n't quite spoiled, after all, Jane. It can be easily repaired; for the spot is close to the seam. You can wear your silk apron, and that will hide it to-day."

The mother and daughter went away to smooth their ruffled tempers before the arrival of their expected guests. Clinton looked after them with a heart swelling, almost bursting with anger. He clinched his fist, and set his teeth tightly together, in a sort of suppressed fury. He would have flown after them, and torn them in pieces, so terrible was his passion. His mind could not remain long in this state, and his wrath quickly subsided. He thought of the delicious feast which he had been anticipating; he thought of the expected company. He had fancied that he should enjoy seeing the children play, and perhaps, as they did n't know how bad he was, they would ask him to join their games. He sobbed with grief as he thought that all his enjoyment for the day was spoiled. He had incurred the displeasure of Mrs. Kent, and he knew the consequences by sad experience.

Soon he heard laughter and gay greetings in the parlor, and he knew that the visitors had arrived. "Why have n't I any friends?" thought he. "Why is there no one glad to see me? O, I know Thanksgiving-days were not made for such boys as me; for I've nothing in the world to be thankful for!"

When dinner was nearly ready, he crept into the hall, close to the dining-room door. The tinkling of glasses, the rattling of cups, and the clatter of knives and forks, were tantalizing to the poor hungry boy. A flurry of snow was whitening the ground; the outer door was open, and the chilly wind swept through the hall, making him shiver with cold. Still he remained there, listening, as if in fascination, to the conversation of the happy company gathering in the dining-room. There was a momentary hush, and he heard a manly voice craving the blessing of God before they partook of his bounty. A scornful smile played over Clint's features as he said to himself, "O, yes, they can sit down to their grand dinner, and ask God to bless them, while they don't care if Clint starves!"

After a short time the parlor-door opened, and a little boy, elegantly dressed, came and stood upon the door-step. He held out his fat, dimpled hand, and laughed a happy laugh, to see the snow-flakes melt upon it. Clint watched him eagerly, and wished that he was as beautiful and happy. Presently a lady appeared, and said, in a sweet voice, "Willie, dear, I'm afraid you will take cold if you stand at the door. You had better come in with mamma." She took his hand gently, and looked into his laughing face with an expression of pride and love.

This little scene affected Clinton strangely. He felt more keenly than before his desolate condition, and he began to weep. He feared some one would hear him, and he rushed out of the house, scarcely knowing what he did

Dr. Clement's family were gathered in the cheerful parlor. The glowing grate and sperm candles filled the room with a brilliant light; the curtains were

drawn down early, that, as Frank said, it might seem like a real winter evening. Mrs. May and her little Dora were their only guests; for they had no relatives near who could come to keep Thanksgiving with them.

The elder people were conversing cheerfully together, and the little folks were seated at a table, playing a game of "Dr. Busby," with lively interest. Altogether it was just such a cheerful, happy group as you doubtless have often helped to form.

Ann came in to ask if they would have tea in the dining-room, or whether it should be brought into the parlor.

"O, bring it in here, if you please, Ann!" cried Elmina; "it is so bright and pleasant here that we should like it much."

"Yes, let's have it in here," said Frank. "It will be much pleasanter."

Dr. Clement laughed as he bade Ann do as the children desired. When she came in again to spread the crumb-cloth, she said, "Clint Forrest is in the kitchen, looking as though he had cried himself half to death, and shivering and shaking like the ague. I've no idea that Mrs. Kent has given him a mouthful of Thanksgiving dinner."

"I don't believe she has, either," said Frank. "It would be just like her not to."

"Hush, Frank," said his mother; "you are speaking ill of another, and of a lady too."

"I don't think I was any too harsh, mother; but I will not speak so again if you think it wrong."

"I am unwilling to think so badly of any one," said Mrs. Clinton. "You know we should not judge others."

"Dora and I may go out and speak to Clint, may we not, mamma?" said Mina.

"Certainly, my love; and, if he is unhappy, try to make him feel better."

They found Clint crouching over the kitchen fire. His hair hung wildly about his face, and his eyes were swollen and distended with crying.

"Why, Clint," said Mina, "how woful you look! What is the matter?"

Clint turned his red eyes upon her, without saying a word.

"You should look happy to-day, Clint, for it is Thanksgiving-day," said Dora.

"What's Thanksgiving-day to me, I'd like to know?" said Clint, moodily. "I should think you'd know that I have n't anything to be thankful for."

"Not anything, Clint? An't you thankful that you are alive and well?"

"No, not that! I wish I was dead, I do!"

The little girls were shocked. "I'm very sorry for you," said Mina, tearfully. "Dora and I have been as happy as birds all day, playing, and laughing, and singing."

"And I have been crying, and freezing, and starving, all day," said Clint, bitterly.

"Starving!" cried Mina and Dora, with grief and terror. "Starving, Clint!"

"Don't be frightened, girls," said Clint. "I an't dead yet, for I had some supper last night."

"But have n't you had anything to eat to-day?" asked Dora, in great anxiety.

"No. I forgot to eat any breakfast, I was so busy doing errands; and Mrs. Kent said that, to punish me, I should n't have anything but brown bread and milk for my dinner. I would n't eat that, when they had such a nice dinner, if I starved!"

"Neither would I, Clint, if I were you," said Dora. "I would n't live with such a mean woman."

“O dear, I can't help myself!” said Clint, resuming his moody look and tone.

“I will run and ask my mother to come out here,” said Mina. “I know she will give you some supper.”

Mrs. Clement soon appeared, and arranged, with her own hand, a tempting supper for Clint. But the poor boy was too sick and unhappy to eat. His long stay out of doors, together with crying, made him feel quite ill. He pushed the plate away, and sobbed out that “he was too sick to eat; that his head ached dreadfully.”

“I do not doubt it, poor boy,” said Mrs. Clement, “for it feels very hot to my hand.” She gently bathed the aching head, and smoothed his tangled hair; meanwhile, talking so soothingly and kindly, that his sad heart was filled with gratitude.

Dr. Clement said the boy would be ill with a fever unless he was doctored. He led him home, and bade Betty bathe his feet in warm water, and make him drink plentifully of ginger-tea. Betty was naturally kind-hearted, and, conscience telling her that Clint had been used too hardly, she obeyed the doctor's orders to the very letter.

CHAPTER V.

SCHOOL SCENES.

— “ may prove,
Though some may wonder at his weakness,
The power that lurks in simple love,
The might of meekness ! ”

GENTLE, sunny, smiling spring had changed the frowns of winter into tears, which April poured upon the earth, bringing to life the sleeping flowers, to adorn the robe of her sister May. The children clapped their hands and shouted; the birds trilled their glad notes in ecstasy; the cascades and waterfalls bounded and dashed along, as if mad with delight; the waving trees whispered to each other of their happiness, and all nature laughed in the sunny spring-time !

The old red school-house, which had been closed for two months, was now opened, and troops of happy school children were hastening to make it echo again to the hum of their voices, and brighten in the light of their smiles.

Elmina and Dora started early, that they might have time to go to “Happy Nook.” They were rejoiced to find that spring had not forgotten to visit it before them; they thought the brook was wider than ever before, the grass greener, and the little star-flowers that hid themselves at the foot of the rock were fairer and brighter.

Something splashing in the water started them, and they saw Clinton Forrest lying on the bank close to the brook. He smiled, and showed them his pockets full of pebbles.

"What are you going to do with them, Clinton?" asked Mina.

"O, I'm going to roll them round the school-house, to plague the 'school-marm.' Won't it be fun?"

"What do you want to plague her for, Clint? You don't know but Miss Lee will be very kind."

"But she won't be kind to me, — teachers never are; they always hate me, and I like to plague 'em. And I am growing large," he continued, stretching himself to his full height. "I won't be whipped by a woman many times more! O, I shall have glorious times this summer! I shall tease the teacher till she'll wish she had never come to Oakville."

Elmina looked at him sadly. "Clinton, had n't you rather be a good boy, and try to please your teacher? Perhaps Miss Lee wants to love all her scholars, and she will feel sad to have you so naughty."

"It is of no use for me to try to be good, I'm so wicked. They all say that I am the worst boy in school."

"Yes, there is use in it!" cried Elmina. "Do try, Clint, just to please me. Be a good boy all summer, and we all shall love you. I don't think you are the worst boy — do try and be the best."

Her words produced some effect on him, and he began to drop the pebbles one by one upon the grass. "But I am so ragged and dirty, Elmina; I believe that is half what makes me so bad."

"You need n't be dirty," said Dora; "you can wash your hands and face in the brook."

“So I can. I never thought of that.” So saying, he threw the last stone into the water, and, kneeling on the bank, thoroughly washed himself. Mina took a comb from her pocket and smoothed his glossy black hair.

“O, Clint, you look quite handsome!” cried Dora, gleefully.

“Yes, indeed, you do,” said Mina. “You may have this little comb for your own, and then you can always keep your hair smooth. Now you are going to be a real good boy, an’t you, Clint?”

“I’ll try, dear, sweet, little Mina; but it won’t do much good.”

“There goes the nine o’clock bell,” said Dora. “How late we have stayed! Come, Clint, you go with us.”

As the three children came up the bank behind the school-house, Mr. Kent, who was passing by, cried out, “Ah, Clint! I’ve caught you. Trying to be tardy the first day, are you? It is past school-time, you lazy boy. Come along, and I’ll give you an introduction to the teacher. She needs a little warning about such a precious fellow as you.”

Mr. Kent took him by the arm, and pulled him into the house. “Here, Miss Lee,” he said, addressing a beautiful young lady who stood near the door, “here is Clinton Forrest. He is a promising youth, I tell you. He needs a flogging twice a day, to keep him within bounds. I will uphold you in governing him; so you need n’t spare the rod.”

“I will do the best I can for your son, sir.”

“He is no son of mine, I’d have you understand, miss. He has no relations ’round here; and we have concluded that he is a relative of the Evil One. He’s a trial, believe me. I thought it might save you some trouble if I warned you.”

Dora and Elmina threw after the retreating form of Mr. Kent most indignant glances. After such an introduction as that, they feared Clint would fulfil all his pleasant prophecies. They watched the countenance of Miss Lee, who, with a look of pity, placed her white hand on Clint's finely-shaped head.

"I think the gentleman said your name is Clinton. That is a pretty name; and I am fond of pleasant names."

Clint was looking hard upon the ground. The cheerful light, which a few minutes before brightened his face, was now darkened, and the happy feeling in his heart was changed to resentment. Miss Lee saw how it was, and endeavored to remove these feelings.

"I hope you are a good scholar, Clinton; for, if you are not one already, I know by the form of your head that you can learn readily. Look up, my boy, and see if you don't agree with me, in thinking we shall be excellent friends."

Clint threw a sidelong glance at her, and hastened to his seat, while she turned with a winning smile to the other scholars. He eagerly studied the personal appearance of Miss Lee. The survey was very satisfactory to him, for he pronounced her, in his own mind, an angel; there instantly sprung up in his heart a reverence that he had never felt for any one before.

Josephine Lee was well worthy the love and admiration which she inspired in the hearts of her pupils. Her beautiful brown eye expressed the kindest emotions. Her face was one of rare loveliness, whose greatest charm was a mingled expression of intellect and sweetness.

She had not lightly or carelessly assumed the holy and responsible duties of a teacher; an earnestness, a depth of purpose expressed itself in every word and

motion. She would not labor alone in the priceless mines of intellect, but would strive to mould aright the moral natures, the affections of her pupils. Every look, every word of hers might influence some unformed character, and her hourly endeavor was that this influence might be pure and good.

Josephine was shocked at the unkind words of Mr. Kent, in introducing Clinton to her. She trembled at the thought of the responsibility resting upon her in the care of such a boy. This she resolved, however, that, as severity had hitherto failed to improve him, she would try the potency of love and kindness. There was something about the countenance of the boy that drew her irresistibly towards him. Once, when she observed him regarding her with a pleading look, a strange and sudden feeling brought the pearl-drop to her eye. From that moment she loved the little, friendless boy, and, with all the energy of her enthusiastic nature, she sought to lead him to the "green pastures" and beside the "living waters."

Clinton remembered what his teacher said about his capacity for learning, and he devoted himself incessantly to study the whole day. Those who had heard him boast of the fun he was going to have in vexing the teacher, laughed at him, and tried to get him into a quarrel at recess. "O, Clint is terrible good all at once!" said Jane Kent. "Miss Lee flattered him up a little; but you wait a day or two, and see if he don't commence his old pranks."

"If I were you, Jane," said Frank Clement, "I would encourage him to be good, instead of laughing at him."

"Wonder if Frank Clement has n't taken sides against us?" cried Bill Kent.

"If he has, we will pitch battle on him, instead

of Clint. He'll like that famously," shouted John Carter.

The two boys set up a derisive laugh, in which a few others joined. But the majority of them waited for Frank's reply; for he was a great favorite with them.

"Boys," said Frank, taking off his hat, and stepping upon a log, like a "stump-orator," "boys, you know, and I know, that Clint Forrest has always been abused! He could n't have been a decent boy if he had tried. I see our teacher thinks she can make something of him, and I am going to help her. Sister Mina and Dora May are already his friends, and I count myself one from this minute. And I'll say this for you, boys, that he who tries to hinder him from becoming better and more respected, is meaner than I ever wish to be!"

The tide of favor turned in behalf of Clinton. It was amazing to see how the scholars patronized him, and protected him from the assaults of the "enemy," as they styled the few who would not respond to Frank's speech. When Clinton continued to go to school with clean hands and face, and smooth hair, and still continued to be studious and obedient, the older and more thoughtful ones felt reproaches of conscience that they had not been kinder to him before. He was like one in a happy dream, and, very unlike his former self, gentle and submissive.

The winning kindness of Miss Lee, together with the good-will of his playfellows, acted like a charm upon Clinton. For weeks there was no better boy in school. But he lacked principle, and the influence of former good habits, to keep him in the right way. He gradually flagged in his study; grew indolent, and often grieved his gentle teacher by his misconduct. Josephine was partly prepared for this reac-

tion. Young and inexperienced as she was, she understood human nature too well to think the heart, rendered cold and distrustful by long neglect and cruelty, could so easily be imbued with love and confidence. Habits of indolence and disobedience are hard to overcome, and Clinton had little to encourage him in well-doing.

O, how earnestly did that youthful teacher strive to lead her wayward pupil into higher and brighter paths! Clinton loved the sweet girl who was so gentle and patient with him; but he did not understand her, he could not appreciate her. Sometimes he made feeble efforts to regain her good opinion; but he was drawn backward by the power of his whole previous life.

One Monday morning, William and Jane Kent, and Clinton, were absent from school. Upon inquiry, Miss Lee found that William and Jane had gone to the city to spend a week. "But where is Clinton?" she asked of a bright-eyed boy near her.

"O, I guess Clint is going to try his old fashion of playing truant!"

The little Yankee was right; for Clint was not seen in school that week.

Saturday night, when the last busy little form had passed gayly over the threshold, when the last sweet "good-night" had been said, Josephine sat alone in the hushed school-room. A pile of copy-books were before her; but these arranged, and her week's work would be done. As she reviewed the week, the voice of conscience was sweet and approving; and her heart was tuned to happy and pleasing emotions. While bending dreamily over her task, a harsh voice jarred on the harmony of her feelings.

"Here, Miss Lee, I've brought you the rogue!" cried Mr. Kent, as he rudely dragged Clinton Forrest

into her presence. "Why, he has been playing truant for a week, and I did not find it out till to-night. Don't you look at me so, you young rascal!" he continued, angrily shaking the scowling boy. "I've given him one good flogging, miss, and now I've brought him here for you to punish; and I hope you will do your duty by him."

"I shall endeavor to do my duty, sir," was the firm, but gentle reply.

After answering a few inquiries about his family, the angry man went away, leaving Josephine and the young culprit alone.

Stubborn resolution spoke loudly in the attitude of the boy, whose head was thrown proudly back, while he eyed Josephine with a defiant air. Though he had suffered for his misconduct, he was nothing softened. Josephine looked upon him more sorrowfully than reproachfully. He could not bear that look, and dropped his head suddenly. One fair hand was laid 'mid his dark locks, while the other clasped gently his unresisting hand. As yet, no word had been spoken; but the whole appearance of the boy was changed. Josephine's resolution was taken. This should be the golden moment that should fill that child-heart with true penitence and new-born resolutions.

"Clinton, sit down by me, I want to talk with you a while."

The child wonderingly obeyed.

"I am going to tell you a true story about myself. Clinton. Not long ago I lived with a kind father and mother, and two dear brothers. We were very happy, till one sad day my oldest brother went away, and I have never heard from him since. Then my dear father and mother died, and Charlie and I were left alone. O, how I loved little Charlie! He was a dear little fellow, just about your size, with black

eyes and curly hair. The first few days of school, when you were a good boy, I thought you were like him. But the good God loved him better than I, and took him, too, to heaven. O, Clint, I was so sad and lonely, then !”

She ceased speaking, and wept silently. Clinton forgot everything but his interest in the story, and leaned his head upon her shoulder.

“When I came to Oakville,” she resumed, “I was a stranger ; but I soon found friends among my scholars. There was one that reminded me of my little brother that died ; and my heart went out to him in love. People told me that he was n’t a good boy ; that he would return my love in bad conduct ; but I did n’t believe it. When I learned that he, too, was a lonely orphan, I loved him all the more. I said to myself that I would have him for my brother ; and every morning have I prayed God to bless him. Clinton, do you know who that little boy is ?”

The child bowed his head.

“How do you think my love and kindness have been returned ?”

Clinton did not heed the question ; but asked, in a trembling voice, “Did you really think I might be your brother ? Is it true that you prayed for me ?”

“Do you not believe my word, Clinton ?”

“Yes, O, yes — but if I had only known it ! — if I could have known it !” And he burst into a passion of tears. There was a depth of anguish, of self-reproach, in the tones, that thrilled Josephine’s heart.

“If I had known that you loved me so, I would have been so good ! I would have done anything for you. But I’ve been very bad, and still you prayed for me — O, dear !”

He wept so bitterly that Josephine was much affected. She had not thought to touch his heart so deeply. She

soothed him with kindness, and then told him of his good Father in heaven; of His infinite love. She tried to impress upon his mind good resolutions. She showed him that the reward of obedience is happiness, and that of disobedience is misery.

“ Nobody ever told me that, before, Miss Lee. Mrs. Kent told me that God hated such a wicked boy as I. She said ’t would do no good for me to go to meeting or Sunday-school, for I was so bad. But, if God is really my Father, I will try to be good; if he loves me, I will be good ! ”

“ Then,” said Josephine, joyfully, “ I shall not be sorry that I have borne with your faults. I shall be proud to call you brother ! ”

Clinton sprang to his feet. Newly awakened confidence and hope shone brightly on his tearful face. He caught her hand and covered it with kisses. “ Dear Miss Lee,” he cried, “ you shan’t say again that I returned your love in bad conduct. You shall yet be proud of me ! ”

Such is the influence of love ! O, how many children, poor and friendless, are treading the downward path, and there is no hand stretched forth to save !

“ The heart *must*
Leap kindly back to kindness.”

CHAPTER VI.

PLANS FOR CLINTON'S IMPROVEMENT.

“The bud that cold winds nip at first,
A happier lot may know ;
In warmer airs to life may burst,
In brighter sunshine glow.”

“GOOD-EVENING, dear Josephine; I am truly happy to see you,” said Mrs. Clement, affectionately embracing her young friend. There was a sincerity in her tones, which made her youthful guest perfectly at home, and sent a glow of grateful feeling to the heart. Kindred spirits are quick to recognize each other. Noble and pure minds are attracted with instinctive confidence. The most elevated friendships are not always the result of long and continued intercourse, or similarity of age and circumstances. It is the affinity of mind and heart that links two souls with an invisible, yet ever-strengthening chain. Mrs. Clement had already learned to love Josephine Lee almost as a young and guileless sister. The beautiful earnestness with which she performed her new and arduous duties, the united gentleness and energy of her character, won the love and admiration of Mrs. Clement. Josephine, on her part, fully appreciated the worth of the regard of such a woman, and returned her friendship with an enthusiastic, reverential affection, which was truly characteristic. Josephine confided the story of her life to Mrs.

Clement, and was rewarded with that sympathy which is so grateful to a heart made sensitive by the breath of affliction. Now she had come to her friend for encouragement and advice. It was just after her affecting interview with Clinton Forrest, and she desired the influence of Mrs. Clement in forwarding her plans for his improvement.

Perhaps a few words here, in reference to Josephine's previous life, may not be out of place. Three years had passed since her elder brother ran away to sea. He had been a wayward boy, causing his friends much grief, and this last act broke the father's heart. Mr. Lee's health had been declining for some time, and he now sank rapidly into the arms of death. Mrs. Lee soon followed him to that unseen shore, and Josephine and little Charlie were left alone. The little boy languished with some hidden disease, and, after months of patient watching by his bedside, the weeping sister laid him beside his sleeping parents.

Poor Josephine! it seemed as though her young heart would break. There were kind friends to wipe away her tears, and speak sweet words of sympathy; but he whose manly arm should have been her support was far away, an erring wanderer.

But our young friend was not one to sit down and brood over her sorrows; and, when the first storm of grief had subsided, she resolved to procure a situation as teacher. The family with whom she then resided begged her to stay with them, for they loved her, and would gladly have called her their daughter. Though she thanked them with a grateful heart, the independence of her spirit would not allow her to accept the proffered kindness.

When Josephine Lee went to Oakville, the tendrils of her heart were bleeding and torn, but ready to twine again round new and worthy objects. The

affection that she craved was almost spontaneously yielded her by all who came within the sphere of her influence. She seemed to possess a magical power over the hearts of her pupils; and when the parents of those children looked upon her face, eloquent with purity and truth, they felt that they had trusted them to a gentle and virtuous guide.

Elmina observed the unusual warmth of her mother's greeting; for, though she was uniformly kind and polite to all, the child felt that there was a bond of respect and affection between her beloved mother and dear teacher. She sprang forward with a joyful face, exclaiming, "O, mamma, I am glad you love our darling, Josie Lee so much!"

The two ladies exchanged expressive glances, and then Josie bent down and caressed the lovely Mina. There were tears in her eyes, of mingled pleasure and pain; for the warmth of her welcome, and the loving tones of Mina, brought vividly to her mind the dear faces of her "loved and lost."

"Why do you cry, dear teacher?" said the child. "An't you glad I love you so much?"

"Yes, darling, your love is very precious to me. It made me think how my brother Charlie loved his sister Josie."

"O, tell me about that little Charlie, please, Miss Lee!"

"I will tell you about him some time, Mina, but to-night I wish to talk with your mamma about poor Clinton Forest."

"O yes, do talk about Clint!" said Elmina, "for I know you will say kind words about him." She placed her cricket between her mother and Josephine, and folded her hands demurely to listen to the conversation.

Josephine modestly and briefly related the story of

her interview with Clinton in the school-room. His evident contrition gave her hope that she might succeed in her plan of making him better and happier. Mrs. Clement listened with pleasure and admiration.

"That was nobly done, my dear Josie. I see you understand something of human nature. If there is anything that will make him better, it is love and kindness. The poor boy has received but little of either, I fear."

"It is evident he has not," said Josephine; "for he appeared really overcome by my expressions of affection and confidence. I have great hopes of him yet, for I am satisfied that his natural gifts of mind and heart are truly superior."

"I agree with you perfectly," said Mrs. Clement; "he is not a vicious-looking boy. He often comes in here of an errand, and I have seen his young face radiant with gratitude, and his eyes full of tears, at just a kindly word from me. My little Mina, here, has always been his champion, and one reason why she loves you so very dearly is because of your patience with Clinton."

"I am glad you approve of my course with him, Mrs. Clement. I have felt anxious and discouraged, so many have told me that I was altogether wrong in hoping to reform him by persuasion. I find that he has never received any religious instruction. Do you not think that, if he should go regularly to meeting and Sunday-school, it might have a good effect? I should be glad to receive him into my class in the Sabbath-school."

"Indeed, Josephine, I think it very important that he should go to the Sunday-school. But there is one difficulty; Mrs. Kent will, I fear, oppose his going; and you know it will be useless for us to plan anything without her coöperation."

"Can you not persuade her, Mrs. Clement?" said Josephine. "Do represent the case to her in such a light that she will at least give a passive consent. My heart is set upon having him for a Sabbath-school scholar."

"I will try," said Mrs. Clement, smiling at her earnestness. "I will try to soften her heart. I may get a 'passive consent,' as you say; but I am sure it will take more genius than I possess to enlist her heart on our side. Frank has several suits of clothes which he has outgrown, and I dare say that I could dress Clint nicely. I will call upon Mrs. Kent tomorrow, and do the best I can for the boy. I feel a presentiment that he will yet do credit to your teaching, Josie."

"I felt confident that you would be interested in my plans, Mrs. Clement. You have made me very happy. I had begun to fear that I was too inexperienced for a teacher."

"My dear Josie," said Mrs. Clement, with a look of affection, "an earnest, loving heart like yours can do wonders, even with your little experience. I feel reproved for my own thoughtlessness and inactivity by your eagerness to do some good."

"You feel reproved by my conduct!" cried Josephine. "You, whom everybody looks up to with admiration and respect!" — Mina interrupted her by exclaiming, "O mamma, there is good, old Mr. Wilkins coming up the garden walk, with brother Frank! I'm going to run out and meet her."

Through an open window, Mrs. Clement and Josephine saw an old lady toiling up the path, while Frank ran on before, and then helped her up the steps with rare gallantry. Mrs. Clement went forward and kindly helped her guest to an easy-chair;

for, between her late exertions and the glad caresses of Elmina, she seemed quite out of breath.

“I do declare, *Miss Clement*’ your Frank is a perfect little gentleman, — a perfect gentleman! Why, his father, whom everybody calls the very pink of politeness, could n’t have waited upon me better!” said the old lady, panting.

“I am glad that Frank knows how to profit by his father’s good example,” said Mrs. Clement, smiling sweetly upon the boy, who, after bowing to Josephine, had seated himself quietly on the sofa. Mrs. Wilkins was now relieved of her bonnet and parasol, and Josephine was presented to her.

“Bless me! if this isn’t the school-marm I’ve hearn so much about. How do you do, dear?” said Mrs. Wilkins, shaking, in true Yankee style, the hand which Josie winningly placed in hers. “My grandchildren love you dearly; and I don’t wonder, neither,” she added, looking admiringly upon the maiden’s expressive countenance.

Josephine replied that she was well, and was glad to know that she had gained the affections of her pupils.

“And how do you like your school, dear? You get along well, I hope?”

Josephine liked her school much, and generally got along very happily. Mrs. Wilkins expressed her satisfaction, and turned to Mrs. Clement, saying, “When I get all out of sorts, I come over here, and somehow or other, *Miss Clement*, your sweet ways set me all right; and I go home feelin’ good to everybody; and that’s why I come to-night.”

“Why, Mrs. Wilkins, you are so cheerful always, that I thought it took something serious to irritate you.”

“It is something serious, in my opinion,” said the

old lady, with great energy. "You know I always had a great deal of feelin' for that fatherless and motherless little fellow at Mr. Kent's. I've always said he 'd be a first-rate boy if he was treated half-decent. Well, this afternoon, I saw Mr. Kent drag him into the barn, — the barn, you know, is close to our house, — and he was swearin' and scoldin' dreadfully. Then he gave him such an awful whippin' ! I could hear the blows where I sat as plain as day. After a little spell Jane come in. She's been away for a week, and just got back. I asked her what great thing Clint had been doing. She laughed, — I just about hate that girl, — and said that ' Clint had been playin' truant, and her father had given him one good whippin', and she guessed he'd have another ; for he had carried him to Miss Lee, and she had looked quite angry, and said she should do her duty by him.' I dare say he deserved punishment ; but 't would n't do any good to half-kill the child. I wanted to shake the girl for laughin' so spitefully ; and when she went away I should have boiled over if I had n't known that John's wife is always against the boy. So I caught up my bonnet, and came away as fast as I could."

Mrs. Wilkins paused for breath. Her face was burning with indignation, and her eyes glistening. Mina innocently handed her a fan. "Thank you, dear," she said, accepting it. "Wish 't would fan away all my heat."

"I am very sorry that Mr. Kent is so hard with the boy," said Mrs. Clement ; "he will be entirely spoiled if there is n't a different course adopted with him."

"That he will," said Mrs. Wilkins, nodding her head decidedly. "I venture he'd be a wonderful sight better if he had some one to love him, and treat

him like a human creature. Don't think I mean to fault you," she continued, turning to Josephine, with a half-apologetical, half-scrutinizing glance. "Don't think I mean to fault you, my dear young lady. I've hearn how kind you have been to him, and my heart blest you for it. I can't blame you for gettin' a little out of patience at last; for I suppose he does act dreadful tryin' sometimes; but 'tan't the best way, my dear, it an't the best way!"

Josephine felt slightly confused, and hardly knew how to reply to the old lady. Mrs. Clement came to her relief. "You are mistaken, Mrs. Wilkins; you don't know Miss Lee. Josie, let me tell her all about it." Josephine assented. Mrs. Clement repeated what the young girl had told her, of her conversation with Clinton in the school-room, and the manner in which it affected him. Mrs. Wilkins listened with delight.

"Bless your dear heart!" she cried, wiping her eyes. "And you made him cry only with such kind, lovin' words! Did he promise to be good and obedient?"

"He told me that I should yet be proud of him," said Josephine. "When I commenced talking with him, he looked stubborn and wilful enough to bear anything without crying; but when he went away, his whole appearance was changed. His face was radiant with joy and hope. I have strong hopes that he will become as worthy of our love as he now is of our compassion."

"Yes, I know he will," said Mrs. Wilkins; "and it will all be through your goodness. Who'd think a young thing like you would be so sensible and patient too? P'raps you'd like to know why I am so interested in the boy? Well, I was with his poor mother when she died. Poor thing! it makes me sad

to think how she died, without a single friend to leave her baby with! She seemed stupid all the time, and I could n't find out anything about her folks; so little Clint had to go to the poor-house. 'T was kinder mysterious how they were so far from all their folks; and some people said ill-natured things about 'em; but I'd never believe a word of it." Josephine had heard the story several times; was very glad to have the sympathy of others in her endeavors for the child's improvement, and hoped Mrs. Wilkins would speak a kind word for him whenever she had occasion. Indeed she would, — the kind old lady, — and never cease to remember his young teacher's gentleness and patience.

"I will tell you something to encourage you, Miss Lee," said Frank, who had been listening to the conversation with great interest. "I never heard of Clint's telling a falsehood; and I have more than once known when he easily might have saved himself from punishment if he had lied a little."

"Indeed, that is very encouraging," said Josephine; "yet, I hardly understand why he should have such regard for truth when he has had no religious instruction."

"I don't think it can properly be called regard for truth," said Mrs. Clement, "as he doubtless has no knowledge of its value or importance. It must be an inborn spirit of integrity, a native pride, which keeps him above the vice of deception. It argues well for our hopes; and now it seems that most of his faults result from his ungovernable temper; and, Josie, if we can get him into the Sunday-school, you may be able to cure him of that."

"Mother," said Frank, "have n't I some clothes that would fit him? I have pocket-money enough to

buy him a Bible, if you are willing. I am sure he'd like going to Sunday-school."

"I am perfectly willing that you should buy a Bible for Clint. I had thought about the clothes before you came in; and to-morrow I am going to see Mrs. Kent about this matter, and coax her to agree to all our plans."

"I don't envy you your job," said Mrs. Wilkins, rising to go; "though I'm sure I wish you the best of luck." With many caresses for little Mina, and kindly expressions for all, the good old lady took her departure. In a few moments Josephine bade her friends good-night, and returned to her pleasant boarding-place. Elmina then sprung into her mother's arms, and hid her tearful face in her bosom.

"What is it?" said Mrs. Clement, in surprise, parting the curls from her brow. "What is the matter?"

"O, I don't know what makes me cry when I am go glad! Clint will be a good boy, and everybody will love him, and he will be so happy!"

The mother drew the sweet child closer to her bosom, and breathed over her a blessing and a prayer.

The next Sabbath Clinton went to meeting and to the Sunday-school. His friends were much pleased with the earnest, serious attention which he paid to the services. Indeed, there was much in the discourses of the minister that Clinton could understand, much that filled him with joy. His heart beat high in unison with the stirring anthem; and he felt, as he had never dreamed of before, that God was his Father, and Christ his Saviour. The minister said so; the Bible which he held in his clasped hands told him so, and the sublime hymn, that seemed to bear his soul to the very gate of heaven, told of his Father

and Saviour. When the minister rose to pronounce the benediction, Clint's eyes were filled with tears of sacred joy, and his young head bowed in deepest reverence. The blessing, in its richest, purest sense, seemed to fall on that one child-heart. Probably there was no one in that worshipping assembly who felt the Divine presence as did Clinton Forrest.

Do not call this all romance. Say not that the heart of childhood is incapable of such holy, such sublime aspirations; that mature and cultivated minds only can feel to such a degree the Divine inspiration. Many have felt all this, and more, in early childhood, ere they could tell what it was that filled the heart with bliss too deep for utterance; ere they knew why their eyes overflowed, or could define the strange yearning that set the infant spirit fluttering, struggling for freedom.

From that hour Clinton loved the service of the sanctuary, and summer's heat or winter's storms could not keep him from the house of the Lord. His soul expanded, and the good seed was planted in a fruitful soil. There sprung up in his heart a self-respect, which was the foundation of the elevated and manly character which he afterwards acquired. The world was more beautiful to him; a sort of radiance rested on the whole face of nature that he could not account for. Ah, happy child! the light was in thine own heart, flowing in silver streams from the fount of Love!

CHAPTER VII.

FORESHADOWINGS.

FIVE years have passed since we first introduced the reader to Oakville. Since then it has increased considerably in size and importance. A new street has been laid out, and a number of fine residences erected. A new church stands conspicuously on a little eminence, while higher up, commanding a fine view of many miles, is a neat building, from whose small cupola daily peals a clear-toned bell, calling the young students to the house of learning. You readily recognize it as the new academy building; and a very tasteful and convenient one it is. The villagers are justly proud of their fine school-house and flourishing school. Mr. Hastings, a good and learned man, is the principal, and Josephine Lee the preceptress. It was a very pleasant arrangement for Josephine; and her pupils, who left the common school for the academy, rejoiced in it greatly.

Clinton Forrest, the once mischievous, neglected, misused boy, is now a favorite in the school, and one of its brightest ornaments. Those who once talked of his disreputable parentage, and called him the worst boy in town, now proudly point him out to strangers as a promising youth. He has won the favor of all by his obliging, gentlemanly conduct; and his fine talents command universal respect.

His mind unfolded so rapidly under the judicious

guidance of Josephine, that at eleven years he was much noticed by visitors for his remarkable scholarship. About this time Mr. Kent proposed to take him from school, and set him to work at his trade. Dr. Clement secretly arranged with Mr. Kent to have him attend school a year longer. Clinton's heart swelled with gratitude at this unexpected favor; and he bent his mind more assiduously than ever to his studies. At the close of the year he commenced working in the shoemaker's shop. The occupation was extremely distasteful to him, and he inwardly chafed at his irksome duties. But he was too grateful to his friends, for their many favors, to manifest any dissatisfaction; and he labored industriously all the day, and spent every evening with his beloved books.

When the academy was established, and he saw all his young companions enjoying its advantages, he wept in secret that he was debarred from sharing the privilege. Jane Kent, who was in truth a fine scholar, had always felt jealous of Clinton's good scholarship, and did not conceal her pleasure when he left school. One day she boasted of her superior opportunities, and twitted him of his poverty. She thought to depress and discourage him; but her words had the contrary effect, for they woke to still quicker life his tireless ambition. He resolved that Jane should not pass by him, and late at night and at early morn he toiled over history and mathematics. Frank Clement, his most intimate friend, often helped him puzzle out the more difficult problems, and repeated the explanations which he received from his master. And when Frank failed to lighten the dark places, he carried his algebra to Miss Lee, who was glad to assist her dear "young brother," as she still called him.

This constant labor, both manual and mental, wore upon him, and he grew thin and pale. Dr. Clement observed this change in his young favorite, and, when he discovered the cause, declared that he should spend another year at school. He represented the case to several liberal-minded men, and so enlisted their sympathies, that the means were soon placed in Clinton's hands for a year's schooling and clothing. It was arranged that he should remain at Mr. Kent's, and work enough to pay for his board. The boy could scarcely realize that this piece of good fortune was his; it seemed too good to be true. But when Elmina Clement congratulated him, with tears in her eyes, he felt like one waking from a pleasant dream, and finding it a reality. There was nothing to hinder his progress now, and he soon rose to a high rank in school.

It was at the close of the winter term (the last of Clinton's year), and there had been a most brilliant examination. The evening of the same day a pleasant party were gathered in Dr. Clement's parlor. Frank, Clinton, and Dora May, sat near the glowing grate, talking over the occurrences of the day; and Elmina sat reclining on a lounge at a little distance. Elmina looked wearied, and there was a listless, almost sorrowful, expression on her countenance.

Time had improved the outward appearance of our friends, and added grace and beauty to their still forming characters. Frank was a young man of eighteen, and fully fitted for college. He had a pleasing person, and possessed a very cheerful, happy disposition. Clint's jetty locks were thrown back from his white forehead, and his dark eyes sparkled with more than their wonted lustre; his whole face beamed with joy, and an almost triumphant smile played round his mouth. Who could recognize, in this noble-looking

lad, the ugly, miserable Clint Forrest of other days? Dora was "fairly Dora" still, and her voice was as clear, and her laugh as joyous, as in early childhood. Elmina's beautiful dark eyes had grown deeper and darker; and there was an earnest, womanly expression on her face, rarely seen in a girl of twelve years. Now her eyes were glistening with unshed tears, and a sigh seemed struggling for expression.

Mrs. Clement's health had been declining for several months, and she now was seriously ill. Though Elmina had strong expectations of winning a prize, she forgot everything but anxiety for her beloved mother, and hovered around her pillow like a ministering angel. She had spent the long day by her bedside, and was wearied and depressed, while the others were excited and joyous. She forgot her listlessness and sorrow when Frank told her that his essay had won the prize, and placed it in her hands, — a beautifully bound volume of poems. She had no time to admire it, before Clinton held up to her a glittering medal, exclaiming, "I've won the gold medal, Mina; I've won the medal!"

"Dear Frank, dear Clint, I am delighted!" said Elmina, examining the beautiful prizes. "I am proud enough to have two such brothers; an't you, Dora?"

"Indeed I am!" said Dora. "How I wish you could have been with us to-day! It has been the best examination we ever had; everything went off just right. I was perfectly happy, only when I was afraid that Clinton would lose the medal. I was almost afraid that Jane Kent or Willie Hastings would do better than he; but he beat 'em all, and got the prize!"

"I was frightened myself," said Clint, "when I blundered so strangely over that problem. I think

I should have done better though, if Jane had n't frustrated me so."

"I know you would," said Frank. "That malicious Jane bothered you more than you think for. I saw that she was jealous and angry because you explained your first test-problem so well. I was suspicious of her, so I kept my eyes on her. She commenced her work too near yours on the board, and then purposely run her figures in among yours; then she pretended to be so sorry that she had troubled you, and made your letters over again, but altered the numbers before them. I wondered you did n't see what she was about, and stop her. Then, when you were forming the last equation, as quick as thought she crossed a minus sign, making it plus; and when you looked bewildered because it was wrong, she smiled so maliciously, I was so vexed I could hardly keep my seat!"

Clint's color rose as he exclaimed, "I am sure I never thought of her being quite so mean as that! She is certainly the most unprincipled girl in school; she was n't willing to have a fair trial, but wanted to discomfort me, so I should lose the medal. She would have succeeded, I'm sure, if that stranger gentleman had n't come to me, and asked leave for me to try again, 'as the young lady by my side had disturbed me considerably.' I was so mortified, that I should have done everything wrong after that, had it not been for his kindness."

"Yes, that gentleman took a great fancy to you," said Frank. "I saw that he noticed you when your class was first called; perhaps because you are the smallest and youngest in the class. And, when you explained your first test-problem, he looked very much pleased and interested. I think he saw Jane's ma-

nœuvring ; and she thought so too, for she looked very red when he went towards her."

"He was very kind, I think," said Elmina. "What is his name?"

"Evans, I believe," said Frank ; "and you can't guess who he is, Mina. You recollect our old school-teacher, Miss Willis, don't you? Well, he's her husband, and she is with him. She looks just as she used to. I knew her the minute I saw her."

"So did I," said Dera. "She went round, and spoke to her old scholars, and shook hands with us all, and seemed very glad to meet us. She inquired for you, Elmina, and said she recollected you as one of the loveliest, sweetest children in the school."

"Yes, she shook hands with all but me," said Clinton. "A minute after, I saw her whispering with her husband, and then she came back to me, and seemed much pleased to see me. She said I had altered so much that she did n't know me. She complimented me on my fine recitations ; but I did n't care about her compliments !" Clint's lip curled, and a shadow darkened his brow. "I never should have deserved anything but blows, if she had always been my teacher !"

"Clinton," said Elmina, gently, "don't you think she meant to do right? You won't think unkindly of her, will you?"

"No, dear Mina, I'm sure I ought not," said Clint, his bright smile returning again ; "for I am quite sure she treated me as well as I did her. I did n't deserve Josie Lee's kindness, and your father's generosity."

"O, yes you did ! At any rate, you deserve it now, or my father would n't think so much of you. Do you know what he told me this afternoon? He said that, as Mr. Kent is going to Europe to hunt up

that fortune, and does n't want you any longer, he intends to ask you to stay with us, and go to school till you find something to do that you like better than shoemaking."

"That's just like Dr. Clement!" cried Dora; "he always tries to make everybody so happy."

"He has been like a father to me," said Clinton. "He is too kind; I can never repay him."

"Pshaw!" said Frank; "don't talk about that. You'll be like a son to him while you stay with us, and a good brother to Mina and me."

"But your mother, — will she be pleased with the arrangement?"

"Can you doubt it?" said Frank, a little reproachfully. "My father is good, but my mother is goodness itself."

"It is a nice plan," said Dora, "and will please all, I know. If Mr. Kent is really heir to that great English estate, he will want no shoemaker boys; so you can learn to do something that you like better."

They were in high spirits, and chatted faster than ever, — all but Elmina; for the mention of her mother had brought the shadows again to her countenance, and she leaned back on the lounge, and covered her eyes with her hand. "Dear Mina, are you sick?" said Dora, observing her.

"I'm very well, I thank you."

"We forgot," said Frank, "that she has enjoyed none of the pleasure which makes us so lively to-night; and she has lost the prize, too, which she hoped to gain. It is unkind in us to remind her of her disappointment so often."

"No, no, Frank, it is not that. I was thinking of poor mamma."

"Of mother!" said Frank, anxiously. "Is she worse?"

Elmina's lip quivered, and her eyes filled with tears. "I don't know, Frank, but I fear she is very ill."

They looked from one to another with sorrowful faces. A sudden and melancholy thought had come to them; and an earnest prayer went up from each heart that she might be spared. Just then Josie Lee entered the room, with the freedom of a privileged friend. She nodded "Good-e'en" to the little circle by the fire, but embraced Elmina, and inquired for her mother. "She seemed comfortable when I left her an hour ago," said Elmina; "but I fear she is very sick."

"Let us go to her," said Josephine. "I have come to take care of her to-night."

"She will be glad to see you, for she asked for her friend Josie this morning."

Together they ascended the softly carpeted stairs, and entered the sick chamber. The doctor was sitting by the bedside, holding the thin hand of his wife. The expression of his face, as it turned towards Josephine, caused her heart to beat quickly and painfully; it was full of woe, almost despair. He was glad to see her; and, when he found that she would stay, he said he would take the opportunity to visit a patient who needed his attention. Mrs. Clement smiled, and held Josie's hand to her lips. There was a deep crimson spot on each cheek, and her eyes were large and brilliant. Elmina, in her simplicity, thought it was in token of returning health, and kissed her mother's brow tenderly, whispering, "You are better, mamma; your eyes are bright and your cheeks rosy." The invalid smiled again, and attempted to speak, but was prevented by a paroxysm of coughing, which shook her weak frame terribly.

Then she lay back on her pillow, completely

exhausted. Elmina saw that she was deadly pale, and there was a look upon her face which she had never seen before. Something seemed to whisper to her that the hope with which she had just comforted herself was delusive; and a strange, vague feeling of terror took possession of her heart, and she burst into tears. Josie caressed her, but could say nothing, for her own emotion choked her utterance.

For a time the sobbing of Elmina was the only sound in the apartment; at length, Mrs. Clement spoke in faint accents: "Mina, my darling one, I must speak to you while I have strength, and thank you for your kind and loving attentions. You have ever been an obedient child and a great blessing to your mother; this knowledge will be a comfort to you when I am gone."

"O, mother, mother!" sobbed Elmina, "don't talk of leaving us — of dying. I will tend you so gently, and do everything for you, if you will only get well. You must not, shall not die!" She laid her head on the pillow beside her mother's, and clung to her convulsively. For a moment the mother wept with her child, and Josephine's tears fell fast. But the sick one was calm immediately, and spoke again, as her wasted hand toyed with Mina's disordered hair: "My child, it would be pleasant for me to live longer in this beautiful world, for the sake of those I love; but heaven is so much more beautiful, that I am willing to go. When I first knew that I must die, O, my child, the thought was dreadful for me! I thought I could not be parted from my husband and children. But heaven seemed to grow nearer and nearer each day, and at last a sweet peace came into my heart, and I now am ready to go when the Saviour calls." She paused, her eyes were raised upward, and a beautiful, holy light overspread her countenance. It

was the brightening of the spirit in anticipation of a glorious freedom.

Elmina raised her head, and looked upon her with wonder and awe; she was hushed and subdued as if in heavenly presence.

“Mina, comfort your father; be a true, loving sister to Frank. Remember all my teachings, and be good. O, my own darling, strive ever to be good! If you are ever doubtful as to your duty, think of me as your guardian-angel, and act as you believe I would have you.”

These words, though spoken slowly and faintly, engraved themselves on Mina's heart in fadeless characters. “I can say no more now, my Elmina, for I am weary. Kiss me, love.”

She received the kiss, and then seemed to pass immediately into a tranquil slumber. Elmina sat motionless, musing on her mother's words. She tried to comfort herself by thinking that her mother might be mistaken; that God would yet spare her precious life. A half-hour passed, and Mrs. Clement still slept as calmly as a babe; but Josie perceived that a change was taking place, and anxiously wished for the doctor's presence. He came soon, accompanied by Frank. There were tears on Frank's cheek. He went directly to the bedside, and looked tenderly upon the sleeper. Elmina saw that her father grew very pale as he glanced towards the bed, and then turned quickly round; she saw his hand trembled so that he scarce could hold his watch, which he drew forth to note the time, and when he looked at her he groaned aloud.

She knew it now, — her mother would die! A mountain weight fell upon her heart, and she felt a strained, choking sensation in her throat; a horrible nightmare seemed to inthrall her senses, and she

feared she should shriek. "I can't stay here," she thought; "I can scarcely breathe!" She hurried from the room, down the stairs, and out into the open air.

The keen March wind swept wildly around the house, throwing the light snow upon her dress and hair. She heeded it not, but hurried on till she reached a little arbor, which in summer-time was her mother's favorite seat. She sank upon the floor, and wept in all the abandonment of sudden and terrible sorrow. It was her first grief, and that — O, God! — how terrible for her childish heart! Will the light ever shine again upon her head, — will joy ever tune her heart again to his tripping measure? It seems not so to her now; it seems as though the weight will never be lifted from her breast; as though her heart will never cease its painful throbbings. But, thank God, — his angels will come and lighten the burden; His peace will soothe her wounded spirit. In time she will be able to think calmly of this night. But how often, in her bereaved girlhood and early womanhood, will she yearn for that mother's love! How often will her pillow receive her scalding tears, and the still night only hear her spirit's wail for mother, mother!

Other sorrows may come to her; other afflictions may prostrate her spirit, and chill the life-blood in her heart; but never can she weep again as she is weeping now. These are the first tears welling up from that deep fountain in the soul over which the angel of sorrow keeps guard, and unseals only when Jehovah commands.

CHAPTER VIII

BEREAVEMENT.

“ 'T is a time
For memory and tears.”

WE draw a veil over the closing scene, which is too sacred for stranger eyes to gaze upon. The sun rose in all his wonted splendor, and in the deep blue floated light fleecy clouds, rivalling in whiteness the newly-fallen snow upon the earth. But she, who ever greeted the morning in gratitude and praise, had, in the still watches of the night, sought that better land whose light is the glory of God.

The beloved wife and mother slept in the arms of death! Mute was the loving breast that had throbbed so purely and tenderly; voiceless the lips which never opened but in blessing; and shaded were the beaming eyes, for the spirit once speaking through them had fled forever.

Dr. Clement had loved his companion with all the strength of his manly heart; and he revered as well as loved her, for her exalted character commanded his deepest respect and confidence. His heart was wrung with the anguish of parting, and he felt that his house was desolate; yet, even then, heaven-born hope whispered words of consolation, and he heard 'mid the tempest of his grief. Then he sorrowed most for his children; and they, unselfish even in that fear-

fully trying hour, endeavored to hide their tears, that they might comfort him. He saw and appreciated their generous efforts at self-control, and thanked God for his children.

But he was destined to receive another blow, which nearly robbed him of his fortitude. The tidings came of the death of his only and dearly loved brother. He read the sad missive, placed it in the hands of Frank, and, without a word, retired to his chamber. Only the pitying eye of his heavenly Father witnessed his renewed anguish, or the struggles of his spirit for resignation and composure. And when, after a lapse of several hours, he came forth, pale and very grave, 'tis true, but with a serene aspect, those who knew how he had loved and sorrowed, wondered whence that calmness came.

Poor Elmina! her heart was almost broken, and, when her father was not by, she wept and mourned incessantly.

She lay upon the bed in her own chamber, and wished, in her rebellious sorrow, that she might never rise again — that she might die, and be with her precious mother. She had been alone for a little time, when Josephine Lee entered the room with quiet footsteps; she raised her head and pillowed it upon her breast, and pressed a kiss upon her burning brow.

“O, Josie, how can I live without my mother?” cried Elmina, with another burst of agonizing tears.

“Poor, dear child!” murmured Josephine, softly stroking her aching head.

“O, I want my mother, my dear, dear mother!” sobbed Elmina.

“She is in heaven,” said Josephine, tenderly and solemnly, “with God and the angels. She is an angel now. Would you call her back to earth?”

Her words penetrated Elmina's heart, and she said more calmly, "No, I would not call her back, but I wish I might die, too."

"Mina, don't you remember your angel mother said that you must comfort your father? Are you not glad to live for his sake?"

"My dear, dear father!" cried Elmina, with still streaming tears; "O, how I wish that I could comfort him!"

"You can — you will, I am sure," said Josephine, caressing the stricken child. "Calm yourself, and listen to me. Do you know, my love, that God designs afflictions for our good? It can hardly seem to you that it is better for you to lose your mother's kind care; but God knows best. You will have many trials now, that you would never have known had she lived; and it is by trial that the spirit is made strong, and fitted for heaven. I am sure, Mina, that you will be patient and resigned; and your dear mother will look down from heaven and bless you."

Elmina grew composed as she listened. "I will try to do as *she* would have me," she said, with a tremulous voice. Josephine continued to talk to her so wisely and soothingly, that some of the noble strength of her own character seemed imparted to the young girl. From that hour she was at heart a woman, though in years a child. Bravely did her spirit rise above her selfish sorrow, and she was indeed a comfort to her father. Though mourning still, she repined not; and a sweet cheerfulness became habitual to her. Yet, alone at night, she often struggled fearfully with her grief; but the morning ever brought peace.

CHAPTER IX.

“NEW-COMERS.”

THREE weeks after the death of Mrs. Clement the doctor received a letter from the widow of his brother. It was evidently written in a state of great despondency, and a sort of whining, complaining tone ran through the whole of the epistle. The doctor was in too great affliction himself to criticize anything coming from one similarly bereaved. He knew that his sister-in-law must be penniless, as his brother had met with losses and died poor; and when he learned that she was coming on from the West with her son, he wrote her a very brotherly letter, bidding her welcome to his house as long as she chose to stay. He proposed that she should keep his house for him, and promised to educate her boy as his own son. She accepted his kind offer with many protestations of gratitude, and promised to be with them by the last of April.

When this arrangement was made known to Ann she felt some inward dissatisfaction, but was too sensible to express it. She had always been a kind and willing girl, and now proved herself a capable woman. She had been so long in the family that they considered her as a friend, and she felt a lively interest in all that concerned them. She rejoiced when Clinton Forrest became a member of the family, and

took pleasure in performing any little service for him ; but these "new-comers," as she called them, would make a great deal of trouble. She, unconsciously, was prejudiced against a person she had never seen, and knew nothing of. But Elmina's generous heart was filled with sympathy, and she made many arrangements for their comfort and pleasure. A large and pleasant chamber was allotted to her aunt ; and a neat little bedroom, at the end of the hall, was fitted up for her cousin.

Elmina thought less of her sorrow when engaged in her active plans for the comfort of her expected friends, and was almost light-hearted when the day of their arrival came. She had formed a very pleasant idea of her aunt, and fancied that she might, in some instances, supply the place of her dear mother. She thought of her as a gentle woman, with earnest, affectionate ways, and her heart was ready to lavish upon her its wealth of love.

With the evening stage came Mrs. James Clement and her son. The doctor's welcome was cordial, but he could not say much, for the many painful emotions stirring in his heart. Elmina affectionately embraced her aunt and cousin, and assisted Ann in carrying away their outer garments. She felt almost a ludicrous sensation of disappointment as her fancy-picture of her aunt fell to the ground. Mrs. James Clement was a tall, masculine-looking woman, with a restless, wandering eye, and an ill-favored mouth. She spoke in a whining voice, which was meant to be very sweet and plaintive. Observing that her brother-in-law was struggling with emotion, she spoke in a still more whining tone, and put her handkerchief to her eyes.

"O, dear, O, dear!" she murmured, "it is so dreadful to have our friends taken from us! I shall

never see another happy day, I know I never shall;" and she rocked back and forth despairingly. There was something in her manner very discordant with the doctor's feelings; something that painfully jarred his wounded spirit. But he saw that she needed sympathy; and he was not the man to withhold kind and encouraging words.

"You are wearied with your long journey, sister Jane, and things look darker and more gloomy to you than they really are. You will be more cheerful by and by. Here I have a comfortable home, and it is yours as long as you please; and we will do all that we can to make you and your son happy."

"I presume I shall appear more cheerful, for I have great command of my feelings; but I know there's no more pleasure in this world for me."

"O, don't say that! You have a son, who, if he is a studious, obedient boy, will be a great source of comfort to you. If he is well and happy, you will certainly have cause to rejoice. I dare say James will be a very pleasant addition to our circle of young folks; he is just the age of Clinton Forrest, who is at present one of our family."

The comfort promised in her son seemed to tranquillize the afflicted lady, and she removed the kerchief from her face to look fondly upon her boy. James appeared awkward and ill at ease. Frank and Clinton, observing this, invited him to go to their own room, where he might feel more at home; and, with a sort of sullen bashfulness, he allowed them to lead him away. Now Mrs. James Clement talked volubly of all the mishaps and discomforts of her journey; of her own anxiety and weariness, and of poor Jimmy's headache; of the meanness of the landlords, and the carelessness of the railroad agents. She gave, in fact, a minute description of her travels from

beginning to end. The doctor listened with commendable patience and good-humor while Mina was filled with innocent wonder and compassion.

At an early hour the lady signified her desire to retire, and Mina lighted a small lamp and prepared to accompany her. Mrs. Clement looked at her, and intimated that she had expected the maid would attend her.

“Ann is very busy,” was the reply. “I shall take pleasure in doing anything you wish.”

“Very well, child, you may take my carpet-bag and shawl, — that’s all I shall want.”

Elmina showed her aunt into a large and pleasant chamber, furnished in a generous and tasteful manner. A bright wood-fire blazed in a handsome open stove, and at an inviting distance stood a nice stuffed rocking-chair; the snowy curtains reached to the bright wool carpet; a mahogany table was covered with richly-bound books, and a nice dressing-table stood in its proper place; while the bed, with its inviting softness, seemed to woo the weary traveller to balmy slumbers. For a moment she looked gratified, and then, with an expression of discontent shading her features, she sank into the rocking-chair. Elmina asked her if she would have anything. Yes, she would like some water, for her head ached badly.

“There is water here on the stand,” said Elmina; “shall I give you some?”

“No, child, I won’t have any now;” and she leaned her head dolefully on her hand. Elmina looked at her anxiously. Presently she said, “Won’t you take something warm? Papa has a nice cordial, which, I think, will make you feel better.”

“I don’t know but I would take a little,” was the reply, “if you will bring it to me; though I never take medicine.”

Elmina went away with light steps, and soon returned with the cordial. Her aunt tasted it, but did not find it agreeable, and desired her to place it upon the table.

“Is this the room your mother used to have for hers?”

“No, ma'am; mamma's room is opposite this,” said Elmina.

“Your father occupies that room, I dare say,” continued her aunt.

“No; father sleeps in the bedroom leading from the parlor.”

“Ah! I should like to see your mother's room; perhaps I should like it better than this.”

“I think this room is a pretty one,” said Elmina, who was really disappointed that her aunt had expressed no satisfaction in anything which she had arranged for her comfort.

“O, yes, this room is well enough; but I want you to show me the other one.”

The young girl hesitated. After her mother's death everything had been arranged in the apartment just as the dear departed liked best to have it. It had been then shut up, and no one had entered it since, save the bereaved husband, and he only to weep and pray. Elmina hesitated; she could not bear to intrude upon the sacred place; but she feared to offend her aunt, and, with trembling steps, led the way.

“O, what a beautiful room!” cried Mrs. Clement, the minute the door was opened. “O, what a pretty room! I'm sure this carpet is much handsomer than the one in the other room. Give me the light, child; I must look at this little workstand, it is so curious. What a nice bookcase! Did all these books belong to your mother?”

“Yes; most of them were presents from father.”

“And these shells I suppose he got for her. What a nice room! I’m sure it is much pleasanter than mine!”

“No; most people think the other the pleasantest chamber, for it overlooks the river. Mother liked this best because she could see her flower-garden from the window.”

“I don’t care anything about the river, but I like a garden very much. As I like this room so much the best, I suppose no one will care if I occupy it instead of the other.”

Elmina had been standing on the threshold during the foregoing colloquy. She had replied to every impertinent inquiry in a gentle, almost timid, manner; but now the indignant blood dyed her cheek, and she stepped forward into the apartment. “Aunt Jane,” she said, slowly and distinctly, “aunt Jane, this chamber was my mother’s, and everything in it is sacred. She used to sit here much of the time, and father would come up here and talk with her when he was not too busy. It is my father’s desire that no one should occupy this room until I am old enough to have it for my own.”

Mrs. James Clement looked at her niece in surprise, and with a vague idea that she had committed a slight impropriety. “O, well, I don’t care about it, child; but it must be that your father loved her very much, or he would n’t be so superstitious.”

“Yes, indeed he did,” Elmina said; but her overwrought feelings would bear no more control, and she burst into a passion of tears. Her aunt, who seemed struck with a sudden awe or superstitious fear, stepped quickly into the hall, and the weeping girl closed the door with a gentle, reverent touch.

Elmina placed the lamp on her aunt’s dressing-

table, and wished her "Good-night," in a tremulous voice. There was an appealing, pleading expression on her countenance as she turned away. A true woman would have understood that mute appeal, and would have taken the motherless girl in her arms; she would have caressed her tenderly, and kissed away her tears; she would have whispered loving words, and breathed an earnest prayer above her beautiful head. But Mrs. Clement understood not the meaning of that tearful glance, and replied "Good-night" in a cold and indifferent manner. Elmina stood in the hall and struggled with her tears. She could not define her emotions; but wounded feeling, and a sense of disappointment, swelled in her heaving breast. She had looked forward to the coming of her aunt with an unconscious hope that she would fill, in some degree, the aching void in her heart. She had nursed sweet fancies concerning her, till the germs of affection were engendered, ready to expand luxuriantly at the first demonstration of love. But chilled and wounded was the upspringing affection, and it fell back upon a heart yet quivering with the woe the death-angel had planted there. O, how wild was the yearning for her mother then! It required all her self-command to suppress a cry of anguish.

O, it would have been a privilege could she have wept until that burning pain was dissolved in tears! But tears are telltales, and she thought of her father sitting sadly alone; so they were sent back to their fountain. A moment longer she struggled with herself, and then, with composed features, she entered the parlor. The doctor was sitting at the table, leaning his head upon his hand; a look of settled melancholy overspread his face, and his eyes were bent on the carpet with a vacant, dreamy gaze. He appeared

unconscious of Elmina's presence until she laid her hand upon his arm, and whispered, tenderly, “Dear father !”

Then he drew her towards him, and kissed her, but absently, as though his mind was far away.

“Father,” — and her voice was sweet and cheerful as though no painful feelings had ever thrilled the chords of her being, — “shan't I sing and play to to you? You never ask me to now-a-days.”

“Certainly, my dear; I should like much to have you.”

He did not alter his position when Elmina seated herself at the piano. She did not stop to consider that quick, loud music would jar painfully upon the sensitive mind of her listener, or that tender, plaintive strains would augment his melancholy; but with an instinctive sense of propriety, which was with Elmina a peculiar gift, she chose a graceful, airy ballad. Her voice was clear and musical, and she sung with her whole heart. When she finished the piece, he changed his seat to one near the piano, and begged for another song with a tone of interest. She sung on, till her smothered anguish seemed wafted away on the wings of her own song.

After a time she ceased playing, and commenced a cheerful conversation. No one who had looked upon her unruffled brow and subdued smile, would have dreamed that an hour before that sweet face was convulsed with agony; or of the struggle which had taken place in her young heart.

Her generous efforts at self-command were not unrewarded; for her cheerful voice and smile quite charmed away the shadows from her father's brow, and he called her his “sweet comforter.”

Suddenly he said, “Mina, do you know that you are very like your mother?”

She left the music-stool to sit upon his knee, and laid her face on his shoulder to hide the tears—half of pleasure, half of pain—which his words had started. “I am glad you think me like her, father; I hope I shall grow more like her every day.”

“I hope so, darling!”

He held her tightly to his breast. In the silence that followed, each knew what was in the other's mind,—mournful, tender thoughts of the loved one who had sought a purer home. There was a holy hush in their hearts, for each felt that the spirit of the dear one was with them, breathing comfort on their wounded spirits. In that embrace the hearts of the father and child were woven closer together in holier, tenderer ties. Such moments are blessed to the mourning heart, where Christian faith and hope have made their altar; they bring a sweet peace,—such peace as the Saviour left his disciples,—“the peace that passeth understanding.”

The clock was on the stroke of ten, and Elmina made a movement to retire, when her father gently detained her. “Wait a moment, Mina. I have a favor to ask; won't you sing ‘When shall we all meet again,’ for me?”

The hymn had been a great favorite of her mother's, and she had heard her sing it many times in her sweet, mellow tones; it was blended with her mother's name. She feared she could not sing it, for there was a sudden swelling in her throat, and her lips quivered. Her father observed her agitation; “I was wrong,” he said, “to ask you; you need not try.”

“Yes, I will try.” With her face turned a little away from his, she sang. Her voice was wavering and weak at first, but she gained strength and composure as she proceeded, and was enabled to sing the last verse with surpassing sweetness. There were

tears in the doctor's eyes as she finished. “ Bless you, darling ! ” he whispered, pressing his lips to her brow, “ bless you ! it seems as though *her* spirit were singing through your voice.”

“ It seemed so to me,” said Mina, softly ; “ for I had no strength when I commenced.”

Again her father kissed that pure brow ; again he breathed a blessing upon her beautiful head, and then Elmina sought her pillow.

O, lovely were the dreams which mingled with her rest that night ! Sweet dreams of that land where the pastures are ever green, and the living waters flow in silver streams. A band of angels kept holy vigils above her pillow, and she slept as only the pure in heart can sleep.

CHAPTER X.

CHANGES.

THE shadow, which the coming of the death-angel had left upon the household, seemed to take a sadder and more melancholy tinge as the weeks passed by. Not that the affections of one for the other, which their mutual affliction had caused to flow in tenderer channels, were chilled or turned aside; but a sort of restraint, growing daily more manifest, destroyed the charm of the family circle. The new members did not seem to take their places easily or naturally, though Elmina tried with all her tact and skill to adjust everything pleasantly. "The very atmosphere was changed," as Ann expressed it. There was something wrong about the house, one could easily perceive, for the girl went about her duties with a clouded brow and inelastic step. Ann never allowed an opportunity to pass of pouring all her vexations and troubles into Elmina's ear, and no soothing words, on the part of the latter, could soften her one whit towards the objects of her displeasure. "That woman," as she designated Mrs. James Clement, "is the most unreasonable creature in existence, and so ignorant, too; always doing things differently from what the dear mistress did. And as for James, he was ten times the trouble that Master Frank and Clinton were."

Elmina heard this harangue daily, in addition to

her personal trials, and it was little wonder that the shadows settled upon her expressive face, and chased the sunshine from her heart. But she ever had a smile for her father, and it was her greatest anxiety that her aunt should be gracious and in good humor against his return. It was this anxiety for her father's happiness which often checked a petulant reply or an angry burst of tears; for her temper was not yet proof against the unequalled insolence of her aunt's conduct. Not that Mrs. Clement was intentionally cruel in her treatment of Mina, but she was incapable of appreciating her delicate and highly-toned mind; and, by her coarseness and inconsiderate selfishness, made the life of the young girl almost insupportable.

She never called Elmina by her name, always addressing her as "child;" and the young girl would study her face and form in the glass, to discover if she were really so very childish in appearance. She pondered on the strangeness of this address until she shrunk from the word "child," in her aunt's mouth, as from an epithet of reproach.

Often did Frank and Clinton, with Mina and Dora, ramble over the green hills and through the quiet meadows. These were delightful seasons to our little band of friendly hearts, and served to knit in closer links the circle which friendship had long ago woven around them. At first James accompanied them, but he soon wearied of their quiet ways, and left them for more congenial spirits among the rude boys in the village. They were not much sorry when he did not go with them, for he always seemed one too many; but if by chance Josie Lee joined them in their walks, their joy was complete.

O, bright days of youth, when sorrow makes but lighter traces on the heart! O, golden summer days,

whose perfect beauty is like a revelation of heaven to the children of men!

Youth and summer are kindred spirits. Mature man, with the cares and duties of life, can never feel the inspiration of nature, as the untrammelled youth. The wild, strange beauty of the woods, even the outgushing of the birds, makes no impress upon the spirit of him who counts loss and gain, or is striving for the gold that perisheth. Who has not, in his "heart of hearts," though long years may have cast their shadows over him, a memory, even as a sweet dream, of a time when he felt the embrace of summer, as that of an angel from the upper spheres; a time when the voices of nature wove with the throbbings of his heart a melody, now exultant, now low and sweet as the echo of a heavenly song? 'T is then that the soul, trembling with its depth of bliss, hopes and dreams of immortality.

But we are digressing. Mrs. Clement early conceived a strong dislike of Clinton. Perhaps the surprise and reproach which she read in his speaking eye once when she was angrily lecturing Elmina, made her feel uncomfortable in his presence, and gave birth to her dislike; but jealousy was the principal cause of her antipathy. Clinton was at that time receiving the same favors which were lavished upon her son; and she realized that he occupied a place in the hearts of the doctor and his children which James might aspire to in vain. He was a fine scholar; he was respected and beloved; and all these circumstances, in contrast with her own less-favored son, but nourished her hatred and jealousy. Clinton was not ignorant of her feelings towards him, and avoided her as much as possible. James, who was in every respect his mother's own son, was also jealous of Clinton. Clint was continually rising in school, and received the

commendations of his teachers, while James remained in the same low place he had at first taken in his classes, and was often reprimanded for his idleness and inattention. Clint was a favorite with all the boys, who thought no game was complete unless he joined them; and James was daily left in the background, gnawing his nails and sulkily looking at his unlearned lessons. Instead of emulating Clinton's virtues, James hated him for being a better boy, a better scholar, and a greater favorite, than himself. He nursed his jealousy till it embittered his heart, and made him miserable. The master sometimes injudiciously compared the conduct of one with the other, and thus increased his hatred. He often taunted Clinton with his dependence upon his uncle, and called him pauper and beggar-boy. Clint bore all his coarse jests with the utmost good-humor, for a sense of superiority and noble pride raised him above anger towards one for whom he had neither love nor respect.

One bright afternoon Frank sat upon the piazza, reading, when James came and threw himself on the platform by his side. Frank perceived by his movements that he was in bad-humor; but this so frequently occurred that it excited no alarm, and he read on, apparently unconscious of his presence. James moved uneasily about, evidently wishing to attract his cousin's attention; but, failing in this, he at length exclaimed, as though he could no longer contain himself, "I hate Clint Forrest! actually hate him! and I don't believe he's so mighty good either, as everybody seems to think he is."

"What now?" cried Frank, laying down his book. "What terrible thing has Clint been doing?"

"Doing? why, he's always doing something to make me mad. Just now he refused to let me copy those ugly equations out of his note-book; he said

he'd explain 'em to me; but I did n't want any of his explanations if he was so cross he would n't lend me his book; it would have saved me three hours' work if he had. Now, I shall miss to-morrow again, and the master 'll scold."

"I should think he'd be ashamed," said Frank, gravely; "of course, he did it only to get you down in the class, and because he was afraid of cheating Mr. Hastings by showing you your lessons. I don't wonder you hate him!"

"And then," said James, not perceiving the irony in Frank's voice, "it makes me all out of patience to hear him praised all the time, while I am scolded till I am sick of my life."

"I think it is too bad," rejoined Frank. "Clint ought to miss his lessons now and then, and get himself into a scrape every little while, just to be even with you."

James looked up into his cousin's face, and saw the roguery lurking round his mouth, and twinkling in his eyes. An angry flush mounted his forehead, and he leaned back against one of the vine-wreathed pillars in silence. After a momentary pause, Frank spoke again. "Now, in sober earnest, cousin James, I think you are a foolish boy to be so jealous of Clint. I advise you to follow his example, and you will find yourself a better favorite very soon."

"I shall not follow his example, Mr. Frank, for your advice! I don't see anything so mighty good about him, for all everybody praises him up to the skies; he tries to make folks think he's wonderfully good-tempered, but it is all hypocrisy. Yesterday he was awful mad at what one of the boys said; his eyes flashed like sparks of fire, and his face was hot enough to light a candle; he went towards him a step or two, and then turned round and went away as fast as

he could. I suppose he thought we should give him the credit of being good-natured; but I understood him too well for that."

"Clint's got a hot temper, I know; but he is trying to govern it, and it is much to his credit. He is a noble boy, and scorns a mean action, and I tell you again that you had better try and be more like him, instead of telling how much you hate him."

"I tell you," cried Clement, "I shall never take a beggar-boy for my pattern. Because you happen to be a little older than I, you think you are privileged to lecture me as much as you please!"

"O, don't be angry, Jimmy! I was only giving you a little well-meant advice. And I tell you truly that, if you scold so much about Clint, you'll lose what few friends you have; for there never was a more universal favorite than Clinton Forrest."

"Clinton Forrest," repeated James, sneeringly. "I don't see what right a pauper, a beggar-boy, has to such a fine name. I suppose some foolish old woman gave it to him because he had none of his own."

"You mistake, sir!" cried Frank, with rising temper; "you mistake, — it was his father's name, and his by the best of right. And now I want you to understand, James Clement, that he is my dearest friend, and I will not hear him called beggar-boy by any one; the words are very displeasing to me, and I desire you never to use them again in my presence."

"Indeed!" sneered James; "and so I must choose my words when addressing your honor! I certainly shall not choose my friends as you do, who prefer a beggar-boy to your own cousin."

"Did I not tell you I would n't hear Clint Forrest spoken of in that manner again?" cried Frank, now really angry. "What constitutes him a beggar-boy?"

Is it because he sits at my father's table, and because my father's money pays for his schooling? If that makes him a beggar-boy, I'd like to know what you call yourself? Where's the difference between you two? I'll tell you the difference; Clint is grateful, and does all in his power to repay my father's kindness, and you are jealous because another enjoys the same favors that you do yourself."

James started up in a towering passion, and confronted his cousin; but Frank's flashing eye and erect figure intimidated the craven-spirited boy, and he turned away whimpering and muttering, "You call me a beggar, do you? Very kind to your poor orphan cousin;" and he passed round the corner of the house with the air of one grieved and offended beyond all endurance. Frank looked after him with mingled feelings of scorn and self-reproach. As his temper cooled, he felt lowered in his own esteem for yielding to passion in a discussion with one so childish and unreasonable. Presently he felt a light touch on his arm, and a sweet, reproachful voice whispered, "O, how could you, Frank!"

"Why, Mina, how you started me!" said he, putting his arm about his sister.

"Did I, Frank?" said Elmina. "I'm sure I did not mean to; but how could you speak such naughty words?"

"Do what? say what? you little mystery."

"Now, don't be so ignorant, Frank, for I was sitting by the window, and heard it all. James thinks you have called him a beggar, and has gone away very angry."

"I said nothing but what he deserved for his impudence."

"That is true," said Elmina, "and I can't blame you for getting angry at his disagreeable sayings;

but don't you see that it will make trouble? He will tell his mother, and she 'll feel insulted, and, may be, will go to father with a complaint. At any rate she will feel as though we were so selfish as to wish herself and James away; and perhaps she 'll be so angry as to really leave us."

"Why, Elmina," said Frank, laughing, "who ever heard you, our hopeful sunbeam, borrowing trouble before? I own I ought not to have said what I did to James; but I don't believe it will hurt him, and though aunt Jane may take a miff, it won't last long, I dare say."

"I did n't mean to borrow trouble," said Elmina, soberly; "for there 's enough of it without borrowing. But, if she should tell papa, you 'd excuse it to her, so that he might not be angry with you, would n't you, Frank?"

"Ah! I see how it is. Mina, you are afraid father will be displeased with me; that is just like you. But don't flatter yourself that I shall ever make any apologies to aunt Jane for anything I've said. I'm too proud for that."

"O, brother!" said Elmina, in a sorrowful tone, "it might save a great deal of trouble if you should only say you were sorry, or something like it."

"Never, Mina, if I were ever so sorry, would I acknowledge it to her. I'd ask James' pardon first!"

"You were not always so proud, brother. I have often seen you with your arms around our mother's neck, telling of some wrong thing you had done; and, only a short time ago I heard you begging Josie Lee's forgiveness for a hasty word you had spoken, as though you thought her opinion was worth a great deal."

"And so it is to me, and to any one who knows

and loves her as I do. I should be a mean, sneaking fellow to wound her feelings, or those of any true woman, and not make all the reparation in my power. I am surprised you don't understand me Elmina; that you don't see the difference, the reason why I could never make apologies to aunt Jane. You feel the reason, though I can't tell you."

"Yes," said she, with a sigh, "I think I understand you."

Elmina felt a sensation of relief when the tea hour arrived, and her father was still absent visiting his patients. It was not their custom to wait long for him, and the family soon gathered round the supper-table, over which aunt Jane presided with a most frigid and haughty manner. She was apparently speechless, never addressing a word to the group of young folks around the board. James looked at Frank, from under his scowling eyebrows, with an angry, menacing glance, and curled his lip insultingly at Clinton.

Clinton, seeing something was wrong, tried to disperse the cloud enveloping them by starting a conversation; but Frank answered only in monosyllables, and Elmina could not answer at all, so sensitive was she to any coldness or discord in their family circle. It was an uncomfortable meal, eaten in silence and haste, for each one was desirous of leaving the chilling atmosphere which chained their tongues and saddened their spirits.

In an hour the doctor returned, and Elmina hastened to the dining-room to pour his tea and chat with him as usual; but her aunt intercepted her in the passage, saying that she would attend upon the doctor. With flushed cheeks the young girl returned to the parlor, where her brother had resumed his book,

and was reading by the fast-fading light. He was unconcerned and indifferent; she, trembling and apprehensive.

That twilight hour seemed interminable to her; she dreaded, yet desired, to have the moments pass. She wondered of what Frank was thinking when he laid his book aside and gazed, dreamily, upon the sweet landscape, over which the evening shadows fell with a softening grace. She felt that his reverie was a pleasant one; so she did not disturb him, but softly drew her ottoman to his side, and sought to dissipate her anxieties by studying his placid face.

She felt the blood flush to her brow when her father came into the room, followed by her aunt, and she bent her head so that she did not see the look of displeasure upon his face.

Dr. Clement was of a generous, forbearing temper, and a frown upon his brow, or reproof from his lips, was of rare occurrence; but he was thoroughly angry now, for Mrs. Clement had talked to him until he was convinced that Frank had treated both herself and son with actual insult.

“Frank, what do I hear?” he said, with an effort at self-command; “what do I hear? Your aunt Jane tells me that you have taunted James of his orphanage and poverty, twitted him of his dependence upon me; even called him ‘beggar’! I am filled with surprise, for this is so unlike what I expected from you, so unlike your generous nature. Perhaps even now you can make some explanation which will palliate your fault. If so, speak, I pray you.”

Frank raised his head with a deprecating glance, and commenced to speak, with the intention of relieving himself from the disgraceful imputation, when one look from his aunt changed his resolution, and he dropped his head in silence.

“Have you nothing to say, no explanation to offer?” repeated the doctor sternly.

“He does not deny it?” cried Mrs. Clement pathetically; “he cannot deny it! O, I little thought, brother, that your children would be jealous of your kindness to me; but it is my fate, — poverty, dependence, and insult! I have borne all my troubles with fortitude; but this—O, this is too much even for me to bear!” and she threw herself tragically upon the sofa, and buried her face in her handkerchief.

Frank’s eyes lighted with a scornful flash, and his lip curled disdainfully, as he replied: “No, madam, I do not deny it! I deny nothing!”

“There, do you hear him!” cried the lady, rising energetically; “he denies nothing; then this is no longer a home for me; — I will not eat the bread of dependence given grudgingly and with insult.” She fell back again upon the sofa with the air of one overwhelmed with grief. The doctor looked at her as if half-bewildered, then turned to his son and said, in a tone of less severity, “There is something in all this that I cannot understand. I have asked an explanation, which you have not chosen to give, and, as you deny nothing, I am constrained to believe that you have been guilty of ungenerous conduct, — of such conduct as I had hoped my son never would confess to. There is but one way in which you can atone for thus wounding the feelings of your aunt, and I trust you have the manliness to make an acknowledgment immediately.”

If Frank had obeyed the first impulse, he would have told him all; for he valued his father’s good opinion highly; but pride and a contempt of his aunt’s ridiculous conduct kept him silent.

The doctor waited a moment, and then left the room. He had not time to leave the hall before

Elmina was by his side, saying, earnestly, "Do not go away in anger, dear father; let me tell you how it was. Frank was not so very much to blame."

"My dear," said the doctor kindly, "you look as anxious and grieved as though it were yourself who had incurred my displeasure, instead of your high-spirited brother."

"Listen to me papa, and I am sure you will forgive Frank." In her earnest, truthful tones did Elmina repeat the conversation which had caused such a breeze in their usually quiet family. Gently excusing her brother, yet speaking kindly of James, she related the story without alteration or coloring. "Thank you, my dear little girl," said her father when she had finished; "you ought to be called our peacemaker. Frank was quite excusable for getting angry with the saucy James; indeed, I wonder at his forbearance. I blame him only for not explaining the affair to me, though I presume I should have been too proud when I was of his age to say much for myself in the presence of a crying woman."

"O, father," cried Elmina, joyfully, "I am so glad you are not angry with him now! Won't you go back and tell him? He must be miserable till you do."

"Yes, Mina, I will go back; and I must tell the news which aunt Jane's doleful story quite put out of my head."

She led her father back in triumph. Her aunt retained her disconsolate position upon the sofa, and Frank sat leaning his head sorrowfully upon his hand. He raised his eyes, humid with tears, to the doctor, as he approached, and exclaimed: "Forgive me, father! my silly pride shall no longer permit you to think me so much worse than I really am. I will tell it all —"

“There’s no need of that, my son; Mina has got the start of you, and led me back to make peace between us.”

Frank looked gratefully upon his sister, and took his father’s hand with a swelling heart. “Aunt Jane will be as glad as any of us when she hears the truth of the story,” said the doctor. “James was so blinded with anger that he exaggerated greatly.”

“What am I to understand by this?” asked Mrs. Clement, rising to a sitting posture, and fixing her piercing black eyes upon her brother-in-law.

“Why, Jane, ’t is nothing but a boyish quarrel which you have afflicted yourself so much about, and has no connection with you.”

“Ah, I see, I understand,” she cried, resorting to her handkerchief again; “you take sides with your son against me, and this is no longer a home for me and mine. O, dear! O, dear! I might have known this would have been the end of it!” She flung herself from the room in violent hysterics.

The remaining party looked at each other in blank surprise. Frank’s keen sense of the ludicrous overcame other sensations, and he burst into a laugh, saying, “It is as good as a play! I wish Clint could have seen her.”

The doctor laughed good-humoredly at this sally, which he did not reprove; Elmina looked sober, — “I am sure she feels very unhappy, and I don’t think we ought to laugh about her.”

“Nor do I, Elmina,” said the doctor; “we should be indulgent to infirmities of temper, as well as those of the body. She will see things more clearly in the morning, and, if we are all kind to her, will, I dare say, be quite reconciled. Now, Frank, I have some important news for you.”

“Yes, father, I am all attention.”

“I have received two letters,—one concerning yourself, and one about Clinton. You recollect Col. Whitney, my old college chum, who was here last summer? Well, he is going to spend two years in Europe, principally engaged in important public business, but intends to spend some time in sight-seeing or ‘pleasure-hunting,’ as he terms it. He needs a secretary, and he does you the honor to say that he knows of no young man whom he should prefer for that office. He makes a most liberal offer, and desires an immediate reply. How does the project please you?”

“I should be delighted to travel, father; but I shall be twenty in two years, and of course could not enter college until after my return, should I accept Col. Whitney’s kind offer. Would it not be a long time to put it off?”

“True; yet I am not certain that it would be wise to reject this fine opportunity. I am not of the opinion of those who think that man in immature years is unfit for receiving benefit from travelling. The mind is fresh and unprejudiced in youth, and receives impressions more readily than at a later period of life. In two years’ travel you might learn what would be of incalculable benefit to you, and undoubtedly would acquire an ease and polish of manner which is very desirable. Indeed, I advise you to accept the colonel’s invitation. I have such confidence in my friend, that I should be happy in trusting you to his guardianship.”

“If you approve, my father, I shall certainly go. I feared you would think it unwise, as my studies are unfinished; but, as you say, I shall be learning a great deal. I dare say I could learn more of the modern languages in travelling than in many years’ study.”

“You would, undoubtedly, Frank; and, if nothing occurs to prevent, you would be ready to enter upon the duties of your profession at twenty-five, which is in better season than I commenced.”

“Then shall not we consider the matter settled? I grow more pleased with the plan as we talk about it. But how soon does the colonel start?”

“In about a month. He will write more particularly concerning it when he learns your decision.”

“Then, pray, write immediately, father, and tell him I accept his proposals, and will endeavor to perform my duties to his satisfaction. Two whole years in Europe! It seems like a dream. I cannot realize it.”

“Realize what?” repeated Clinton, who had overheard the last words as he entered the room.

“Why, Clint, I’m going to Europe with Col. Whitney! — actually going to Europe!”

“Going to Europe?”

“Don’t look so mystified, Clint,” said the doctor, laughing at the surprise depicted upon his face; “it is a fact. Col. Whitney has invited him to accompany him on a tour through Europe, as his secretary, and he has concluded to accept.”

“Accept! of course he’d accept such an offer,” said Clinton. “Why, how do you feel, Frank? I should be crazy with joy had I such a prospect. Why, boy, you don’t act as though you cared anything about it!”

“I am glad, Clint, very glad, though I don’t go into ecstasies, as you would. I can be glad without taking the house-top off with my antics.”

“Of course; but I never can be so cool about anything. I have to act as well as feel.”

“Well, my boy, there’s a chance for your acting;

for I have a second letter, which is as important for you as the first was for Frank."

"For me?" said Clinton; "it is something good, I know, for good things never come singly."

"It is something pretty good, I think," said the doctor, "and you will be right glad, I'm sure. It seems that Mr. Evans took a great fancy to you at the time of the school examination. He told me at that time that he should n't lose sight of you. Well, he and his lady (who, by the way, is an old school teacher of yours) have been travelling through the Canadas ever since they were here, and are intending to visit the principal southern cities this coming autumn, before they return to St. Louis, their place of residence. He writes that if you will go with him and assist him, during the intervals of the journey, in copying business papers, etc., he will pledge himself to place you in a situation, where, with industry and economy, you may make a fortune in the world. Mr. Evans is an influential business man, and would, I doubt not, be able to keep his promise."

"He is very kind," said Clinton, modestly, "to have so good an opinion of me; but I am surprised, sir, that he should take such notice of a poor orphan boy like me."

"All people are liable to their fancies and whims, and it is very plain that this Mr. Evans fancies you. There's nothing very wonderful about it, either, my boy; have you not always been my favorite?"

"O, my kind benefactor!" cried Clinton, with grateful warmth, "do not imagine me so vain as to suppose myself the least deserving of all your favors to me. It was from the fulness of your benevolent heart that you cherished the fatherless boy. And wherever I may go, whatever path I may walk in, your name will be remembered with the tenderest gratitude."

“I understand you, Clinton ; I know all you would say ; your grateful temper magnifies all that I have done for you.’ But we must talk of Mr. Evans’ proposals now.”

“If you, sir, think best, I should be glad to go. Indeed, I think it would be wrong for me to neglect so good an opportunity of gaining my own livelihood.”

“I advise you to go, by all means ; and my blessing go with you,” said the doctor, earnestly. “Mr. Evans writes that he shall be in Oakville next week, and hopes to find you ready to accompany him. Elmina will be your little seamstress, so that you shall be ready in time.”

“Good luck to you, Clinton !” said Frank. “Before I have my first patient you will be a rich merchant, without doubt.”

“Thank you, Dr. Frank,” said Clinton, laughing ; “but I guess your bright prophecy will be a long time in coming to pass. You will come home from Europe a travelled gentleman, and I shall be a poor, plodding clerk.”

The two young friends chatted cheerily of their pleasant prospects, without thinking of the long separation before them, and the doctor went to his study, to answer the two important communications. Presently a quivering sigh startled our two castle-builders, and they both turned, with one impulse, to Elmina, whom they had forgotten. She stood looking mournfully at them, her dark eyes swimming in tears, and her lip trembling. Then they realized that their little band must be broken up ; their loving hearts widely severed.

“O, Frank ! Clinton ! how can I part with both my brothers at once ?” exclaimed Elmina, in a broken voice.

“Sweet sister, how can we leave you ?” they cried together. They encircled her in their arms, they

kissed her wet cheeks, and though each strove, with boyish pride, to drive back their tears, they would come, and fell upon her clustering hair. "And Dora, she will cry, too," said Elmina, remembering her sweet friend.

"One moment ago," said Clinton, "I was full of joy at the thought of going, and now it seems as though I cannot go."

"And I," said Frank, "did not think how long two years is to be from one's home and friends."

Some natures, weak and dependent, when there is a stronger heart to lean upon, grow brave and hopeful in proportion to the waning courage of those around them. Thus with Elmina. When she perceived the painful struggles in the minds of her brothers, she fortified her own heart to cheer and re-assure those she loved.

"How foolish we were," she said, "to imagine that we should always live together in the same pleasant way we have so long! Of course we must be separated some time, and we must have brave hearts now the trial has come. What a glad meeting we shall have some time! Why, my dear brothers, where would be the delightful meetings we hear of, were there no partings?"

"Mina hasn't forgotten her old trick of finding silver in every cloud," said Frank.

"She is always a sunshiny, hopeful spirit," said Clinton. "It is just like herself to conceal her own grief to console us."

"Flatterers!" said Elmina, playfully. "I should scold you, were you not going away so soon. And don't talk of my concealing grief, — as though I shall be completely forlorn when you are away! Not but that I shall miss you sadly," she continued, in a changed voice, "O, so sadly!"

CHAPTER XI.

THE FORTUNES OF CLINTON.

“ How happy is he born and taught, --
That serveth not another's will ;
Whose armor is his honest thought,
And simple truth his utmost skill ! ”

THREE months after the incidents recorded in the previous chapter, Clinton Forrest visited for the second time, the City of Brotherly Love. Not as before did he tread those crowded streets, with a bounding step and a heart throbbing with excitement and eager curiosity, but soberly and thoughtfully ; a feeling of loneliness pressed painfully upon him, for not one of the passing multitude had a thought or word for him.

He entered a fashionable street, and passed along the line of elegant dwelling-houses, meanwhile patiently comparing the names upon the door-plates with the superscription of a letter which he held in his hand. At length he paused before a door on which was engraved, in golden characters, “ Amos Gay ; ” and, after assuring himself that the names upon the letter and door-plate agreed, he ascended the steps and touched the silver bell-knob. His timid call was immediately answered, and, upon his inquiry for the master of the house, he was shown into a richly-furnished apartment. Here was assembled a cheerful group, consisting of an elderly gentleman, a fair, matronly lady, and two lovely young girls. Una-

bashed by the stately elegance of everything about him, or by the haughty stare of the elder young lady, he advanced directly to the gentleman and presented his letter of introduction. Mr. Gay took the letter without a word, and then Clinton might have felt some embarrassment, had not Miss Fannie Gay handed him a seat, with a smile and a few sweet words, which made him quite at ease.

After slowly reading the letter twice through, Mr. Gay arose and took Clinton by the hand, saying, "I am glad to see you, Clinton Forrest. Mrs. Gay, Marian, Fannie, this is Master Clinton Forrest," he continued, introducing him to the ladies. Clinton bowed gracefully, though with heightened color, and Fannie pronounced him, in her own mind, the handsomest boy she had seen in all her life.

"If all that my friend, Mr. Evans, states, is literally true," said Mr. Gay, regarding our young hero with a pleasant smile, "he certainly has done me a favor in introducing to my notice so enterprising and talented a young man. But were you not here in the autumn, with Mr. Evans and his lady?"

Clinton informed him that he had been for three months with Mr. Evans, acting as his secretary.

"So he writes," replied Mr. Gay, referring to the letter; "and that fact is a standing certificate for yourself. I know Evans well as a business man. You have come just in time, for I need another salesman, and, though you are young, I think I will give you a trial. I dare say you will suit admirably. Come into my library, and we will settle all the preliminaries."

While Clinton is closeted with the merchant, we will take the opportunity to relate to the reader the principal events which had conspired to place Clinton in his present novel position.

Mr. and Mrs. Evans were delighted with the lad they had chosen for a travelling companion; indeed, his intelligence and vivacity, with his obliging and gentlemanly manners, made him a very desirable associate. Philadelphia was their first stopping-place, and here they remained three weeks. In this great metropolis, the eager, inquiring mind of Clinton found a boundless source of interest. He labored faithfully to prove to his new friends that the confidence they reposed in him was not unfounded. Though novelty and excitement tempted him sorely, he passed the largest share of each day in copying and revising business papers, casting accounts, writing letters, etc.; all of which he accomplished to the entire satisfaction of his employer.

His first act, upon entering the city, was to write to Elmira, the loved companion of his childhood hours, the dear sister to whom he owed so much. His letter contained a sprightly account of the incidents of his journey, and was replete with brotherly affection. He eagerly waited for a reply, but the days came and went, and still no letter from Elmira. After a fortnight had passed, his impatient spirit could brook no longer delay, and he wrote again, desiring her to address him at Baltimore, where they were intending to pass some little time. But at Baltimore he was doomed to disappointment; for, though he haunted the post-office day after day, there was no missive for him.

Much surprised and wounded at this unexpected neglect, he tried to console himself by forming excuses for Elmira; but he could think of none that seemed plausible. Even if she were sick and unable to write herself, he felt that she should have answered his second earnest and importunate letter through some one else. Under a sudden impulse he com-

menced to write again; but his proud spirit rose, and he tore the sheet in twain. Then he thought of writing to the doctor; but he put the thought quickly away, for, if Elmina valued his friendship so lightly, he could not expect the continued regard of her father.

O, it was a sore trial for the poor boy! He pondered upon it, and each day felt the disappointment and mortification more keenly. By Elmina's unmerited neglect of him he felt as if severed from all the friends who had made the few past years of his life so useful and happy. He concealed the cause of his grief from Mr. and Mrs. Evans; yet they were not unobservant of his abstracted manner and sober countenance. When his appetite forsook him his kind friends became really anxious; and, fearing he had worked too hard for his health, they planned excursions of pleasure, and took every pains to restore him to his former cheerfulness.

Grateful for their kindness, Clinton tried to appear cheerful, and he succeeded so well as to relieve all their anxieties. Now the travellers resumed their journey, with the intention of going to New Orleans as quickly as consistent with comfort. Mr. Evans had decided to pass the winter in New Orleans, as he had two brothers resident there, one of whom was sick with consumption.

Clinton began to reproach himself for giving up his Oakville friends so easily. "I will write to dear Josephine Lee," he thought; "she must be glad to hear from her brother, as she always called me; and Mina possibly had some reason for not writing before, and may now be wishing to know where to direct a letter. I will write a note to her, and inclose it in Josie's letter." No sooner was the resolve formed than acted upon, and then his spirits rose ten degrees, inspired with hope and pleasing expectation. He re-

requested Josephine to address him at a town nearly a week from them in their journey, and where he knew his friends intended to stop a few days to rest. This arrangement, he felt sure, would give sufficient time for a letter to reach him, even if Josephine should be a little dilatory, which seemed to him would not be the case. He was so strong in hope, that, when he arrived at B——, and found no letter waiting for him, he would not acknowledge to himself that he was any disappointed. But hope diminished every day, and when, on the sixth day (the last of his stay in B——), he heard the dreaded words, "Nothing for you," he could not restrain the tears of disappointment which gushed from his eyes; and, when alone in his chamber, he gave unrestrained vent to his grief.

"O, Josephine! Elmina!" he cried to himself in sorrow; "you have been very, very kind to me; too kind; for now I know that all your kind acts were performed through goodness of heart, not friendship or affection. My heart is almost broken! I was wrong to expect that two such lovely and accomplished ladies would correspond with a poor orphan boy like me. I will trouble them no more with my letters; but some time in the years to come they may not be ashamed to own me as a friend. Ah! but Elmina must be changed! Could such a little angel as she was become a proud, scornful woman? No, that could not be! Forgive me, dear Mina, for such a thought. And Josie Lee's last words were so cordial, I thought they were sincere. If such as she grow cold so soon, friendship is little worth to me. O, father, mother, sisters, brothers—there are none for me—none on earth from whom I can claim affection!"

Thus did poor Clint mourn over his slighted friendship; and, indeed, it was a trial of no small magnitude for one situated like him. Josie and Mina had

stepped into his unoccupied affections, and, at their call, many friends had gathered around him; but of all, these two were the dearest.

A resolve grew up in Clinton's mind, strong and deep, that he would never force himself upon the notice of any, merely because they had befriended his unfortunate childhood. His proud spirit forbade another attempt to gain the attention of his former friends in Oakville. "I will bid a long 'good-by' to Oakville," was his mental exclamation; "but when I am a man," — and his head rose, while a half-exultant smile gleamed through the falling tears, — "when I am a man, I will return, and then they shall not be ashamed to take me by the hand; for, God helping me, I will earn an honorable name among men. Though Josie Lee may forget the poor boy to whom she was so kind, I will never forget her good instructions." Thus did Clinton, in the midst of his sorrow, form high resolves for action; and the sequel will show to the reader how well he acted upon them.

Mr. Evans was greatly shocked, upon arriving at New Orleans, to see the ravages disease had made upon his invalid brother. Towards spring the sick man revived, and his physician declared that a trans-Atlantic voyage would be beneficial, and expressed a conviction that he might live several months in salubrious and sunny Italy. Mr. Evans felt it his duty to accompany his brother, and with the kind offices of affection smooth his decline to the grave. It was soon arranged that they should go in March, and Mrs. Evans was to go with them. Mr. Evans felt anxiety and regret on Clinton's account. He had promised to place him in a lucrative situation under his own supervision; but, after the sudden turn affairs had taken, that would be impracticable. Clinton begged

him to feel no anxiety for him, and said that if he would procure him a clerkship in some mercantile house, he would be satisfied. Mr. Evans felt confident he could do that, and, after considering the matter a little time, concluded to send him to his old friend, Mr. Amos Gay, a wealthy merchant of Philadelphia.

Clinton bade an affectionate and regretful adieu to his friends. He stood gazing upon the ship which bore them away, until the white sails faded to a speck in the distance, and then turned away with an indescribable feeling of loneliness.

At parting, Mr. Evans placed a letter in his hand, saying, "Give this to Mr. Gay, and believe me, dear boy, I feel assured it will secure you the attention and respect of that gentleman. Serve him as industriously and faithfully as you have me, and I have no fears for you. Good-by, and may God bless you!"

Saddened and somewhat bewildered by the changing events of the past weeks, yet undiscouraged, our young friend turned towards Philadelphia. The reader is already acquainted with the manner of his reception by Mr. Gay. The merchant was greatly prepossessed in favor of the frank, handsome boy, and readily engaged him for a month on trial.

Now behold Clint Forrest in a new and untried position, yet one very congenial with his tastes and capacities. He studied to gain the approval of his employer, and succeeded beyond his highest hopes. He boarded in Mr. Gay's family, and sat at the same table. Miss Marion Gay remonstrated with her father upon the impropriety of treating a mere clerk with such respect; but the old gentleman was determined it should be so, out of regard for Mr. Evans, and the young lady was obliged to acquiesce. Clint was not long in winning the affection of the whole family.

Mr. Gay pronounced him a jewel of a clerk; the lady of the mansion thought him the most gentlemanly lad of her acquaintance; Fannie loved dearly to laugh and chat with him; and even Marion acknowledged that he was a very pleasant addition to the family circle.

Clinton possessed a ready tact and a peculiarly pleasing manner, which made him a most successful salesman. It was not long before it was acknowledged by all in the establishment that he was the quickest and most clever clerk among them. 'In fact, he created quite an interest in the hearts of the buyers of silks and ribbons. (Clint had grown rapidly of late, and appeared older than he really was.) The old ladies were charmed with his respectful attention to them; the middle-aged praised his polite and genteel manners, and the young girls thought him so handsome and witty: each and all were desirous of being waited upon by the black-eyed little clerk.

At the end of a month Mr. Gay engaged him for a year at a liberal salary. When Clint modestly expressed his surprise at his generosity, his kind patron assured him that, if he were always as faithful, the indebtedness would all be on his own part. Though Mr. Gay was a worthy man, he was somewhat irritable, and often very angry at the merest trifle; but Clinton was avowedly his favorite, and every accident or short-coming on his part was overlooked with the utmost good nature. Clinton was in a dangerous position for one of his susceptible age; but without being at all elated by the smiles and praises lavished upon him, he performed his duties quietly and humbly. We have spoken of him as being proud-spirited, yet it was not that kind of pride which is stimulated by flattery or preferment, but the principle belonging peculiarly to noble, self-reliant

minds. It was this very pride which lifted him above all feelings of vanity. There was one who looked upon our successful hero with an envious eye. A young man named Jackson, who had been connected with the house from a boy, — first as errand-boy, then gradually rising to more important places till he had become one of the first clerks, — became extremely jealous of him. He had secretly looked for still greater preferment, and, through the agency of the junior partner, his uncle, he had flattered himself that, at a future period, his name would be added to the firm. Jackson considered Clinton as his rival, and, when he saw how he was beloved by Mr. Gay, he wickedly determined to injure him in the opinion of their employer.

Though Clinton possessed the happy faculty of making the patrons of the store pleased with himself, and with the articles he vended, he was too conscientious to take advantage of the unsuspecting or ignorant. Jackson, ever ready to find fault with him, scornfully called him "Honest Clint," and took every occasion to deride his punctilious regard for truth. He would often hint to Mr. Sands, his uncle, that their wonderful little clerk was not such a genius after all, for he missed many a good bargain.

"You are more nice than wise," Mr. Sands would say to Clint. "This silly whim of yours will spoil you after all, and it is too bad when you have such a fine faculty. There comes a country woman; now display your genius; you can sell her anything you please at your own price."

But Clinton was not to be flattered or frightened away from the high standard which his native integrity declared was right. He was obstinate, so Mr. Sands said, and he complained to his elder partner, who, laughingly, declared that honesty was so rare a

a fault it was quite a novelty, and that Clint should have his own way.

Jackson was in despair, and vented his jealousy by invidious fault-finding. "You were a fool," he said to Clinton one day, "to sell that lawn for three shillings. The old woman thought it so fine that she would have taken it at four shillings."

"I presume so," said Clinton; "but she paid all it was worth, and only ten minutes ago I sold some off the same piece to the rich Miss Morton for three shillings. What reason can you give for making so much difference between the two?"

"Of course, if you had asked Miss Morton more than that, she would have laughed in your face, but that old woman would have thought it all right."

"I should not have thought it right to cheat a poor old lady in that way!" cried Clinton, indignantly.

"Hallo, boy! don't be so waxy," said Jackson, insultingly. "No such thing as cheating about it. She would n't have been obliged to take it unless she chose. So, where's the harm?"

"I shan't stop to reason the matter with you, but while I stay here I shall not play with my conscience to please any one."

"While you stay here!" repeated Jackson, with emphasis; "that's well put in; for, mark my word, young sir, though you are up now, there's a chance for you to come down."

Saying these malicious words, the young man turned away, and Clinton forgot his vexation in the pleasure of measuring off a yard of ribboz, and a half-minute's chat with sweet Fanny Gay.

Lovely spring had stepped aside for queenly summer, and summer was now about to yield her sceptre to the glowing autumn. The time had passed profit-

ably and pleasantly with Clinton; and, in spite of his envious companion, he was steadily growing in the affections and respect of all around him. But there was a cloud in his horizon; yet he was happily unconscious of the rising storm.

Late one afternoon several large bales of costly goods were received, and there was much running and confusion in getting them arranged for evening sale. On opening a package of rich silks, they were discovered to be considerably damaged. Mr. Sands was much vexed at this circumstance; for the silks were of a new style, and he had hoped to make quick sale of them. He stood musingly a few moments, and then said to his nephew, "We can dispose of these if we only take the right way. The store will be thronged to-night; and we must make the best of it. Clint Forrest can, if he is not too wilful, dispose of every damaged piece; he is such a favorite with the ladies that none would mistrust the possibility of his palming off bad silk upon them."

"La, uncle," replied Jackson, "you can't coax 'honest Clint' to carry on any such game, he's such a mighty pious chap!"

"I shan't coax him, but order!" said Mr. Sands, impatiently. "You go call him to me, and I'll give him his directions."

On a settee, at a little distance from the scene of this colloquy, sat a gentleman apparently engrossed in reading; but a close observer could have seen, from the keen glances which he now and then threw over his paper, that he understood the state of affairs, and was interested in the result. He was of a portly figure, and possessed a countenance strikingly intelligent. His broad white brow overshadowed a pair of eyes of the clearest, darkest blue. There was a pleasant light in them when he smiled; but, when

fixed earnestly upon one, they seemed capable of reading the inmost thought. The timid or guilty would have shrunk abashed from a glance of those keen, searching eyes. His mouth was large, but the snowy teeth, and the benevolent, genial smile which hovered round it, relieved it of all unpleasantness. He appeared easy and self-possessed, and was evidently a leisurely gentleman. When Clinton appeared, saying that he was ready to receive Mr. Sands' instructions, the gentleman's face lighted up with a new interest, and, though the conversation was carried on in an under tone, he looked as if he understood it all by intuition.

"I want you to take your station here, Clinton," said Mr. Sands. "Arrange everything in the most favorable position, and make it your business to sell these silks. Sell every piece to-night, if possible!"

"But these silks are all more or less injured, sir."

"Some of the pieces are not quite perfect, I know," replied the merchant, a little uneasily; "but that's nothing to you; your duty is to sell them."

There was a flush on Clinton's brow as he said, deprecatingly, "Will you be so kind, sir, as to let me work somewhere else? I think Mr. Jackson would succeed better in selling the silk than I should."

"There is no one who could succeed better than you, if you only use your wits to the best advantage; so don't make any excuses, but do just as I tell you."

"But, sir," pleaded the boy.

"No 'but sirs' to me!" shouted Mr. Sands, entirely thrown off his guard; "obey me!" The clerks looked up from their writing at the outbreak, to see the subject of this imperative command; and some of the customers turned round in surprise. Blushing and mortified, Clinton passed behind the counter, and commenced arranging the multitudinous

articles with which it was strewed. Mr. Sands looked at him sternly for a moment, then said, in a low voice, as he turned away, "As you value your position in this house, Clinton Forrest, you will obey my directions."

Clinton continued his work with burning cheeks and downcast eyes. His mind was in such a tumult that his actions were confused, and he stood bewildered at his own awkwardness. Though Jackson was busy, he watched him with one eye, and chuckled over his discomfort. The gentleman on the settee threw down his paper and leaned carelessly back with half-closed eyes, yet he could see Clinton's face, and, from its expressive features, read the workings of his soul.

When the lamps were lighted Clint drew a suppressed sigh, and clasped his hands convulsively, as if that moment his fate was sealed. The keen eyes watching him opened suddenly, and their possessor started as if he had a mind to leave his seat; but, after a momentary hesitation, he leaned back again in the same dreamy attitude as before.

A little girl now asked for some gingham, and Clinton, blessing her in his heart that it was not silk she desired, waited upon her politely. A lady called for satin, another for delaine, cambric, &c., &c. The ladies were very obliging, for they seemed to demand everything but silk. He began to breathe more freely, when an elderly lady, with a stately air, approached. A nervous fear possessed him that she would ask for silk, — yes, he knew she would want silk! Though the lady spoke quietly, he fancied her tone startlingly loud as she said, "I wish to look at your nice silks."

The dreaded moment had come! With a great effort at self-control, he displayed the shining fabrics, and, with composure that surprised himself, com-

mented upon their richness of style and coloring. The fair purchaser turned over pattern after pattern with a dissatisfied air. "Have you no other greens than these?" she asked.

"That piece under your hand is very beautiful madam."

"Very true; but I want something darker. There is a piece which I think will be just the thing," she added, pointing to a pile of dark patterns upon a shelf.

With a feeling of infinite relief, he threw down a piece of dark green, which he knew to be of excellent quality. The lady pronounced it to be "just the thing," and bargained for the whole of it.

Then two young ladies wished to look at black silk. With a trembling hand, Clinton displayed the article in demand. The piece which appeared to please them best, though fine and glossy, was so much injured as to be nearly worthless. He tried to turn their attention to some other pattern, but they seemed quite set upon that one.

The girls were dressed in deep mourning; and, though genteel in appearance, it was evident they were far from being wealthy. The tones of their voices, as they conversed softly with each other, were sad and touching. There was something very interesting about them.

"I am afraid we can't afford it, sister," said one, gently.

"I know it is high," said the other; "but it appears to be an excellent piece, and you know 'tis always economy to purchase a good article."

Clinton drew back respectfully while they discussed the question. Presently the elder one, turning a pale, sad countenance towards him, desired him to measure off two dress patterns.

The gentleman on the settee leaned breathlessly

forward, while Clinton, ignorant of the keen scrutiny to which he was subject, hesitatingly balanced the yard-stick in his hand. "Young ladies," said Clinton, with sudden resolution, "I am sure that silk would not suit you. I cannot deceive you; the most of it is badly damaged. I will show you some which I know is perfect, and, though it is better in quality, you shall have it at the same price." So saying, he took from the shelf a piece of excellent quality, which had been on hand several weeks. The ladies expressed themselves satisfied, and, thanking him for his candor, departed with their purchase.

Jackson, who had watched Clinton exultingly, now went to Mr. Sands, and told him that Clinton had lost half a dozen good chances for disposing of the injured silk; that he was selling old silk instead of the new, and telling everybody that the goods were damaged.

Glowing with passion, Mr. Sands called the boy aside. "You are an impudent, audacious fellow!" he cried. "You have most insultingly disregarded my commands! I wish Mr. Gay were here. I think this would open his eyes a little."

"I, too, wish he were here," said Clinton, calmly. "I am certain he would stand my friend in this instance."

"This is intolerable!" exclaimed the merchant, with an assumption of insulted dignity. "In Mr. Gay's absence, you consider yourself at the head of the establishment; but you will find that there are other wills here besides yours. For the present you must change places with Jackson, and to-morrow you will hear more upon the subject."

Without a word, Clinton passed to the lower end of the store, as Sands directed. His head was erect with manly dignity, and his eye burned with scornful indignation. The gentleman who had watched him

with so much interest, noted his appearance with a triumphant smile, and, nodding his head emphatically, as if to express his approbation, he folded his paper and leisurely left the store.

Mr. Gay had been absent from the city on a short pleasure-excursion; and when he returned, on the morrow, his partner gave him an exaggerated and misrepresented account of Clinton's conduct. The persecuted boy was called into his private counting-room for a conference with him. The old gentleman was very angry, and, like all persons in that state, exacting and unreasonable. Clinton readily perceived from his countenance that an explanation, at that time, would be worse than useless. "Well, young man," were the words that saluted his ear, "you have gone to work strangely during my absence; you have been guilty of most reprehensible conduct; you have meanly taken advantage of my favoritism; you have insulted my partner, and attempted to take the ordering of affairs into your own hands; you have undervalued my goods, and shown yourself very careless of my interests."

The angry man paced the narrow apartment, as waiting for a reply; but the poor boy was almost breathless at such unexpected and undeserved charges.

"I don't wonder you are silent; silent with shame! I did think you were worthy of my affection; but I now say that you are ungrateful — unworthy of my patronage."

"O, my dear sir, do let me explain it to you —"

"Explain!" interrupted Mr. Gay; "I don't want any explanation. Has n't Mr. Sands told me the whole story, and is n't his word to be believed? But, Clinton," he continued, more calmly, for his distressed countenance softened him somewhat, "if you

will promise to make amends, and comply with Mr. Sands' orders, perhaps we can overlook this."

"I will comply with all reasonable commands; but I can't sell goods that I know to be damaged."

"Not a word about damaged goods. Damaged goods in my store, sir!" cried the merchant, hotly.

"You shan't stay in my employ a day longer, unless you promise to obey implicitly all my directions and those of my partner. I'm determined on that! So, will you promise?"

Though greatly agitated, Clinton answered, respectfully, "I am sure I ought not to make such a promise; will you please to let me go away now, for I know you would not wish me to make the promise, if you knew just how it was."

"No; I shan't let you creep round me. I want your word now. Will you promise?"

"No, sir!"

"Then I discharge you from this moment! You are no longer my clerk. I command you to leave my premises immediately."

Half-astounded by these words, Clinton advanced, with an imploring look, towards Mr. Gay.

"Go!" cried the enraged man, pointing to the door; "go! I care not if I never see you again."

Clinton needed no further command, and, vainly striving to compose his outraged feelings, he turned his steps towards the mansion that, for five happy months, he had called home. He ascended to his chamber, unobserved by any of the family, and hastily placed his clothes in his trunk. Then he hailed a passing coachman, and desired him to carry it to J——'s Hotel. Now he tried to collect his disordered thoughts, and arrange some plan of action. For a moment he was tempted to remain in the house until Mr. Gay returned, as he imagined he might

relent towards him when his temper had cooled; but he felt too much injured and outraged to harbor the thought of suing for favor; and, even should Mr. Gay voluntarily restore him to his former position, he knew that both Sands and Jackson were his enemies; and, such being the fact, he felt little desire to remain. "Yes," he said to himself, "he bade me go, and I will go; but first I must say good-by to Mrs. Gay and the young ladies." Though he tried to appear calm and self-possessed as he entered the parlor, where the ladies were seated, Fannie instantly noticed his altered looks.

"Are you sick, Clinton?" she asked, kindly.

"No, dear Fannie; I have come to bid you and your mother and Miss Marion good-by."

"How does that happen?" said Mrs. Gay. "I hope you are not going to leave us."

"Yes, madam, I must leave immediately. I am no longer in your husband's employ."

"O, you must n't go off!" said Fannie. "What makes you dissatisfied? Something has vexed you, I know, for I see you are angry now, though you try to speak calmly."

"I have no choice," said Clinton. "Your father is very angry with me, and has discharged me."

"Discharged you!" cried Fannie, incredulously.

Mrs. Gay looked surprised. "You had better stay till Mr. Gay returns. He is very hasty sometimes, and I dare say you will remain with us yet."

"I thank you, dear Mrs. Gay; but circumstances have occurred which make it impossible for me to stay. So I must say 'good-by' to you."

"Then you are really going?" said Fannie, with starting tears.

"Yes, I must," said Clinton, resolutely. "You will think of me, sometimes, Fannie?"

“Yes, yes, very often.”

“O, you will be back again in less than a week,” said Marion, cheerfully; “father will search Philadelphia through before he’d go without you, even if he does send you off in a passion. Good-by, Clint!” and she gave him her hand, with a pleasant smile. He shook hands with Mrs. Gay, and once more with Fannie, and hastened away, before they had time to detain him longer.

“I wonder what Clinton has done to anger father so much?” said Mrs. Gay.

“I don’t believe he has done anything wrong,” said Fannie, decidedly; “and I say it is too bad in papa to send him away without a minute’s warning!” The young girl buried her face in her hands, to hide her streaming tears.

Marion looked at her weeping sister, while a peculiar smile played round her lips. If she had spoken her thoughts aloud, she would have said, “If they were not such mere children, I should say it was a lucky accident which separates my little sis and this handsome, black-eyed boy so soon.”

CHAPTER XII.

NEW DEVELOPMENTS.

WEARIED and disheartened, Clinton leaned against a jutting window, where varied autumn fruits were temptingly displayed to allure the passer-by. It was a rare, golden September day, whose very brightness mocked the sad one. He took off his hat, and the soft breeze and glittering sunbeams played with his jetty locks, as he sighingly thought of the vexations and disappointments of the past two weeks. How many streets had he traversed and retraversed; how many curt replies, cold rebuffs, and insulting denials, he had received; how often had his heart sunk with despondency, or throbbed with indignation and wounded feeling, in his vain search for employment!

Even the smallest merchant insisted upon good references; and if poor Clint acknowledged that he had been the clerk of the rich Amos Gay, then came a long series of questions, with the invariable conclusion that he would "not suit." Then he sought for other kinds of employment; and when his small stock of money was nigh spent (Mr. Gay, in his passion, had forgotten to pay him), his humble inquiry was for "anything to do." By chance jobs he now and then earned a few pennies; but the finger of

fate seemed pointing sternly at him, and turning all hearts from him in coldness.

"I will leave the city immediately," he said to to himself; "it is of no use for me to stay here longer; fate is against me. I will go to Oakville, and see if all have changed as have Josie and Mina. The doctor's last words were, 'Clinton, remember I am your true friend. In any trouble or emergency, do not fear to apply to me.' I will not accept anything from him, but his influence will certainly secure me a place where I can obtain an honest livelihood."

But Clinton could not put his resolution into immediate effect, as he had not sufficient money to carry him to his former home. Disagreeable as was the task, he must renew his search for work, and earn the requisite sum.

"Sir, I am very anxious to get some work; could you employ me, even for a few days?" he said to a gentleman he was passing.

The gentleman stopped short, and stared at him as if something in his appearance or his petition surprised him greatly.

"I am in search of some honest employment," Clinton said, a little abashed by the keen, questioning glance which followed the first look of wonderment.

"O, you want employment, honest employment? That's well. But what do you prefer to do?"

"I should prefer to perform the duties of clerk or secretary; but I am ready and willing to do anything."

"What have you been doing, and who has employed you?"

Clinton hesitated; then, remembering he had no cause to be ashamed to confess that he had been discharged from Mr. Gay's establishment, he answered

candidly, "I have been clerk in Mr. Amos Gay's store during the spring and summer months."

"But you have left him, and are now seeking some 'honest employment'?" said the gentleman, with a tone of irony, and an insinuating smile, which brought a flash to Clinton's eye, and dyed his face with crimson. Clinton looked up questioningly into the gentleman's face, but he could read nothing there; he was evidently playing with him. "I see you have nothing for me to do, so I will not trouble you longer," said the boy, with the air of one who does not choose to have his honor trifled with.

"Wait, my boy," cried the gentleman, his manner suddenly changing, and a genial smile breaking like a sunbeam over his noble countenance; "wait a moment. I have really taken a great liking to you, and must talk with you. I will be serious now, for I have found out what stuff you are made of. Will you explain to me why you left Mr. Gay. Trust me, for I am disposed to be your friend."

Clinton could not withstand his friendly manner, and he briefly but explicitly related the circumstances occasioning his rupture with Mr. Gay.

The gentleman was charmed alike by the integrity and modesty manifest in his simple narrative, and indignant because of Mr. Gay's hasty and unjust conduct. Clinton begged him not to speak harshly of his former friend and patron. "Though I felt wronged by his passionate treatment," said he, "his previous kindnesses to me demand my gratitude and respect."

"Well, well, my boy; glad to see you thus disposed to remember favors. But I'm going to tell you something that will surprise you a little, I fancy. I was in the store when Mr. Sands gave you your orders for selling the silks; I saw your reluctance to

comply with his command, and watched with great interest all your proceedings. I read the struggles in your mind, and saw your triumph over temptation. I knew you when you spoke to me, — should have known you in France! There was something about your face that struck me at first; and now, as your black eyes grow big with wonder, it seems as though I had known you before. Strangely familiar those eyes, and that firmly-set mouth!" continued the gentleman, as if talking to himself; "who, who, does he remind me of?" —

"Clint Forrest! as I live! O, I've found you at last, you young scamp!" cried Mr. Gay, seizing Clinton by the shoulder with a hearty shake. "What did you hide yourself for? Gritty, were you? Well, I can't blame you for that, I suppose, when I've got so much of the real grit myself; but come right home with me before I lose you. They will all be glad to see you. Fannie has half cried her eyes out because you ran away."

"Indeed, Mr. Gay, this is very unexpected," said Clinton. "Do you really wish to receive me again as your clerk?"

"Wish it! I insist upon it! Did n't I engage you for a year, and you ran off without giving any warning? But I'll forgive that," said Mr. Gay, with a good-natured laugh, "and engage you for another year, dating from to-day, with this express stipulation, that, even if I discharge you three times a week, in a passion, you are to stay till I tell you, soberly and calmly, to go."

"Before I accept your conditions, sir, I must know whether or not you fully understand the cause of the trouble between Mr. Sands and myself?"

"Yes, dear Clinton," replied Mr. Gay, dropping his playful tone. "After inquiring into the affair, I

found that you were in the right. Sands did not mean I should know anything about the injured goods; for he was aware that it was against my principles to have any such underhanded work as he wished you to engage in. He and I have parted lots, and, as I now am sole proprietor, I can't possibly get along without you."

Clinton's face beamed with pleasure as he tried to express his thanks.

"Don't stand here stammering," laughed the kind old merchant; "come along, quick; I want to show you to Fannie."

"Stay, sir," cried the gentleman to whom Clinton had confided his grievances; "I question your right to hurry this lad away so unceremoniously. We were conversing, and you interrupted us."

He presented his card, which Mr. Gay accepted with an apologetic bow. "Ah, I am happy to make your acquaintance. Though I never have had the pleasure of meeting with you before, your name is familiar to me. You must excuse my interruption, but I had quite given up finding Clinton Forrest, and was consequently much gratified to discover him."

"Clinton Forrest," repeated the gentleman, "that is an uncommon name, — Clinton Forrest! I must have a half hour's talk with him in private. My hotel is near; we will go there, and, after our conversation, with your permission I will accompany him to your house."

"Certainly, sir, most happy to see you; shall expect you to remain to tea. Clint," he continued, moving off, "I shall confidently expect you to make no engagements with any persons except myself."

Clinton's companion took him by the arm, and hurried him along as though he were a refractory child; then ushered him, without ceremony, into the

most luxurious apartment of a fashionable hotel. "Sit down, Clinton Forrest," he said to the bewildered boy, "and answer all my questions without reserve, I beseech you. Who were you named after?"

"My father, sir."

"And what was your mother's name, — her maiden name?"

"I only know that it was Annie; for she died at my birth, and my father died a few days before."

"Annie!" The questioner's voice was choked; and, pale with agitation, he placed his chair close to Clinton's, and took his hand in his.

"But don't you know her last name?"

"No, sir; I never could find it out, and I never have seen a single relative in all my life."

"This is all very singular," said the gentleman, in a low, musing voice, while Clinton's surprise gave place to vague, half-formed, yet delightful hopes, — "very strange. Tell me all you know about your parents."

"I know nothing about them, except what my acquaintances in Oakville (my native place) have told me since I was old enough to feel curiosity about the matter. My parents went to Oakville about a year before I was born. They were entire strangers, and seemed to avoid becoming acquainted with any of their neighbors, so that no one in the place ever found out where they came from, or the names of any of their friends. People said they seemed devoted to each other, though my mother was very melancholy, and callers often found her crying. She was so reserved that some folks called her proud, and others said they guessed she was n't 'any too good.' But I know that was all tattle," continued the boy, becoming warm in the defence of his mother, whom he had

never known ; “ for something in my heart tells me that she was good and true. My father’s death was a terrible blow to her. They say she never appeared rational after that.”

“ But she did n’t die without speaking of any of her friends, without telling who she was ? ” eagerly asked the attentive listener.

“ Yes ; though the kind lady who took care of her tried to make her comprehend that she was leaving me, her baby, without a protector or friend in the world, she only murmured something about her husband being an orphan, and that her brothers would care for the poor baby.”

“ Were there no papers to be found, which could give any clue to the whereabouts of her friends ? ”

“ Strange as it may appear, there could be found no family record, or letters, except a few on business, which threw no light on the mysterious subject. They had but very little furniture or clothing, which, when sold, could only pay the expenses of their sickness and funerals. I lived seven years in the almshouse, a neglected, wretched child ; but at last God raised me up kind friends, who taught me self-respect, and gave me the means of attaining a respectable education. My mother wore two rings, which the lady who nursed her saved for me. I always carry them with me as precious mementos of my mother.”

“ Show them to me ! ” was the eager exclamation.

Clinton drew from his pocket a small morocco case, which he unclasped, and took therefrom a plain gold ring, and one set with hair of three shades, with the name “ Annie ” engraved on the inner side. The gentleman seized the latter, while his face grew pallid with contending emotions. His eyes were fastened upon the ring as if in fascination. He mournfully

turned it in his hand, kissed it, and placed it upon his little finger.

"It was as I feared," he said, in a low, tremulous voice. "O, Annie, you died alone, without a friend to hear your last prayer, — our pet bird, our beautiful one! 'Brothers would care for your babe'? O, how gladly would they have cherished it had Providence only permitted!"

Tears streamed down his cheeks; his head sank upon the table, and his whole frame shook with convulsive sobs. Mute with amazement, Clinton gazed upon him, while tears of compassion filled his eyes.

"You look wonderingly upon me," said the gentleman, after a momentary indulgence of his emotion. "God grant that you may never shed such tears of sorrow. O, my boy, this ring assures me without doubt that you are the son of my only and dearly-beloved sister! I gave it to her on her eighteenth birthday, with her hair, my own, and our brother's, woven in it. I little thought then that it would ever come back to me with such a melancholy tale. You have never known a mother's love or a father's care; have never seen a relative in all your life! Poor boy! poor boy! Come, my nephew, lay your head upon my breast; let me fold my arms about you. I will be father and mother to you, sister and brother, — all that your desolate heart can ask!"

With a joyful cry and a tumultuous burst of tears, Clinton sprang into his uncle's outstretched arms. He had proved friendship fickle, and now, with a blissful feeling of confidence and security, he pillowed his head upon the breast of his new-found relative.

CHAPTER XIII.

EXPLANATIONS AND DISCOVERIES.

A LETTER! it has a magician-like power! Beneath its seal lies an invisible spirit, ready to spring forth with art to awaken any or every emotion of which the heart is capable. A letter! now the reader's eye dances with joy, and pleasure wreathes the lip with smiles. Affection's flame burns brighter as the glowing words daguerreotype themselves upon the tablet of the soul. Anon, a stroke of wit calls forth a mirthful laugh, or a reminiscence fills the heart with tender memories. Perchance the tale it tells is of sorrow. Then tears rain on the speaking paper; or the breast may heave with slighted love, and swell with angry resentment, as words of coldness or rebuke pierce their arrows in the soul. Joy, sorrow, love, hate, hope, fear, anger, and jealousy — each and every passion of the human soul is subject to the sway of that little, mystic thing — a letter!

Methinks written words coming from the hand of a beloved friend have greater weight than those that are spoken; they assume a palpable form that brings conviction to the mind. We read the lines again and again, imagining the look and tones of the writer, while the subtle, invisible, still existing chain, linking kindred minds, though mountains, seas, and mighty countries intervene, is woven more closely round the heart. But to our story.

Elmina was very lonely after the departure of her two dear brothers; and, as her father had accompanied Frank to Boston, she had no one at home to appreciate her feelings. During the excitement of preparation she did not realize how hard the parting would be to her affectionate nature; but when the 'Good-by' was said, and they were really gone, she felt inexpressibly lonely, and yielded to what she then thought her inconsolable sorrow.

Under these circumstances, the companionship of the cheerful, energetic Josie Lee was invaluable. By her judicious conversation and advice, Elmina resumed her former studies and occupations; and soon the quiet, placid smile, so peculiar to her lovely face, played upon the features and sent its healing influence down into her heart. If inward peace produces outward cheerfulness, it is equally true that placidity of manner and determined cheerfulness, even if assumed, will soften and make more endurable the concealed sorrow.

When she received two letters,—one from her father, telling all the circumstances of Frank's embarkation, and stating his own intention of remaining in the city several weeks, and the other from Clinton,—she joyously sprang up the stairs into her own room, where she might enjoy their perusal undisturbed. With all her efforts at self-control, she could not restrain the tears which flooded her eyes, or her eager impatience to receive at once the whole import of those welcome missives.

"I must answer Clint's letter directly," she said to herself. "As he is journeying about, I shall lose track of him unless I do." She seated herself at her little writing-desk, drew forth a sheet, and soon her pen was flying nimbly over the snowy page, embodying, in fitting words, the warm outgushings of her heart. When

she had nearly finished her pleasant task, her aunt Jane came in, and seated herself near the desk. With a bright smile, Elmina tossed the letters into her aunt's lap, saying, "I suppose you wish to hear from father and Clinton."

While Mrs. Clement read, she now and then paused to look upon Elmina's animated countenance, as she plied her pen more assiduously than before. "You are writing to your father, are you not?"

"No, aunt; I am answering Clinton's letter, and I want to put it into the office to-night, for he may leave Philadelphia very soon. I shall write to my father to-morrow."

"It seems to me that you are neglecting your father in your haste to correspond with this young gentleman," said Mrs. Clement with a disagreeable intonation. Elmina made no reply, but wrote the last line, and affixed her name at the end. "It is a very unusual thing, and highly improper, in my opinion," continued her aunt, in the cautious manner which some persons assume when they have a hidden object to gain, "for a boy and girl of your ages to hold a correspondence. I am sure your father would not approve of it."

Elmina looked up with innocent surprise, exclaiming, "Where can be the impropriety, aunt Jane? Clint is just like a brother to me; almost as dear as my own Frank!"

"Of course, child, you can't see any impropriety in it. Girls never do in any of the silly and improper notions they get into their heads. Clint is n't your brother, nor any relation at all; so your calling him brother don't alter the matter in the least."

Though unused to question the opinions of her superiors, Elmina could not blindly yield her will to what she felt to be unsound reasoning. She said

gently, "Don't you remember, aunt, that father often called Clint his son, and was pleased to have Frank and me consider him as a brother?"

"O, yes," interrupted her aunt, "I remember that he was petted and praised till he fancied himself equal to the best in the house; and it is none of my affair, of course, whether you write to him or not. I have given my opinion, however; so my conscience will be clear if you do make yourself ridiculous."

The young girl revolved the question in her mind; there seemed but one conclusion,—that it would be extremely unkind to neglect the affectionate epistle she had just received. As she folded and directed her letter, she said, "Please excuse me, aunt Jane, if I do not take up with your advice. I cannot bear to grieve Clinton by silence and neglect."

She expected Mrs. Clement would be angry with her, and was agreeably surprised, when she rose, saying, quietly, "Well, I dare say 't will do no harm, for the boy will find new friends, and soon forget all the favors he has received in this house. It is late for you to go out, so I will take your letter and send James with it to the office."

Elmina thanked her, and, when left alone, fell to wondering if it were possible that Clint could ever forget her. She judged him by her own true heart, and answered the mental question with a decided, "No!"

One day, when she was ill with a nervous headache, James brought Clinton's second letter. It affectionately chided her for not replying to his previous epistle, and ended with an earnest petition for her to write immediately. The unsuspecting girl dreamed of no fraud, and, though surprised and annoyed that her letter had been miscarried, she had not a thought of blaming any one. She rose from

her pillow, and wrote a few words, assuring Clinton of her unaltered friendship and regard, and apologized for her short note on account of her headache. She then called her cousin, and asked him to take it to the post-office. James, who really loved Elmina, willingly accepted the little commission. As he passed his mother's room, she called him in, and, after closing the door, inquired in a low voice if Elmina had had not given him a letter for Clinton.

"You give it to me, James," she said, after he had answered in the affirmative; "give it to me; you need n't carry it."

"Why, mother, I promised Mina that I would; and she will think it very strange if I do not."

"Leave the letter with me, and go down the street so that she will have no suspicions. If she asks you about it, tell her you gave it to the post-master."

James looked at his mother inquiringly. This was not the first lesson in deception which she had taught him, but he could not understand her motive in this instance.

"I will explain my plan to you, James, or you will defeat my object by some blunder. I am determined to break off all communication between your uncle's family and Clint Forrest. I burned Mina's first letter, and, if I take care of this, I don't think Clint will trouble us with any more letters; for you know he is sensitive and high-spirited. If we don't hear from him, your uncle will feel himself neglected, and say the boy is ungrateful. That is just what I want; for the doctor thinks so much of him now, that like as not he will give him some of his property, and I think he has spent enough already on that beggar-boy. Just get him out of hearing, and you will have a better chance to gain the doctor's favor.

You see that a mother is always ready to do anything to advance the interests of her children, and in this case you will be glad to help me, for we have neither of us a very particular affection for Clint."

As may be supposed, James made no opposition to the scheme of his unprincipled mother, and left the letter with her, though he informed his cousin, at night, that he had given it to the postmaster, and had no doubt it would go safely. Thus was Elmina, as well as Clinton, made the victim of a selfish, jealous woman.

When the doctor returned from the city, one of his first inquiries was for his young protégé. He read the letters his daughter had received with much pleasure, and expressed impatience to hear from him again, as he wished to write to him himself. Week after week passed away, and they wondered, and made all possible and impossible conjectures as to why Clinton did not write. They heard regularly from Frank, who wrote in fine spirits; but still the good doctor felt disappointed and dissatisfied, and Elmina extremely grieved, at the neglect of one whom they had treated with so much affection and consideration. Mrs. Clement often expatiated upon Clinton's apparent ingratitude, and assured her brother-in-law that he might always expect to be thus rewarded for conferring favors on those out of his own family.

When Clinton's letter to Josephine Lee reached its destination it was in vacation time, and Josie was absent on a journey; hence the reason of its being unanswered. This train of circumstances severed Clinton for many years from the place of his nativity and the friends of his childhood.

About a year after the incidents above recorded, Elmina discovered, by mere accident, the cause of the

before inexplicable silence of Clinton. One day, in altering the arrangement of her drawers, Mrs. Clement threw a quantity of old papers upon the carpet, and desired Elmina to take them away. She gathered them up in her apron, but let them suddenly drop with an exclamation of surprise, as she caught sight of a sealed letter. Mrs. Clement endeavored to snatch it away, with a look of apprehension; but Elmina held it firmly. It was directed to "Clinton Forrest, Baltimore." For a moment the young girl was motionless with surprise, and then unsealed the letter. There could be no mistake; it was the second letter that she wrote to her dear, wandering brother.

"What is it, child, that strikes you so?" said Mrs. Clement, with feigned composure.

"Why, 't is one of the letters I wrote to Clint; how could it possibly get there?"

The miserable woman tried to laugh it off. "It is rather strange, but probably it got into my drawer by accident."

"By accident!" A shameful suspicion rose in Elmina's mind, and she spoke with unusual vehemence. "Aunt Jane, how could this letter get into your drawer by accident, when James assured me that he delivered it safe to the postmaster? I can't understand it."

"I hope you don't accuse me of knowing anything about it."

"I don't accuse any one, aunt; but I must have an explanation, for I know it could n't all happen by accident."

"Must have an explanation!" cried Mrs. Clement, losing all self-control. "You demand it, do you? Well, then, listen, and much good may it do you. I took that letter away from James, and threw it into

my drawer. I was a fool for not burning it, and then it would never have been discovered."

Elmina stood transfixed with astonishment.

"Don't look at me in that way, child! I say I wish I had burned this, as I did the other! You little thought I could punish you so handsomely for scorning my advice."

She clasped her hands upon her heaving breast. Anger, scorn, withering contempt, gleamed from those eyes, usually emitting so tender a light. She could not speak, but her look was more expressive than words, even than the strongest words of passion and reproach.

Her aunt was almost beside herself. "Elmina Clement," she screamed, "I know now that all your pretended sweetness and gentleness is mere sham, for you look like a perfect fury! Are you speechless! If so, leave my presence, for I will not be looked through and through by such a minx."

Without a word, and with the bearing of a princess, Elmina left the chamber and entered her own apartment. Here the unnatural tension of the nerves gave way; her lip quivered, and her heart heaved wildly. Resentment gave place to grief, and she wept bitterly. "O, dear Clint," she murmured, "how neglectful, how unkind, you must think me! Poor, poor boy, while I was blaming you unjustly, you were wondering and grieving that Mina could treat you so ill."

Soon her tears ceased to flow, and she thought of her aunt's wicked conduct, which, to her pure, truthful mind, assumed the darkest hue. She had tried to love her; she had daily prayed for meekness and patience; but now her heart swelled with a bitterness that had ever before been a stranger to her gentle breast. The angel in her heart, called conscience,

whispered words of admonition. She fell upon her knees by the bedside, and prayed for the spirit of love and forgiveness. With tears and sobs, she called upon her sainted mother to help and bless her. Her prayer seemed answered, for the quick sobs gradually subsided, and, at last, she arose from her knees, with a face calm as the summer sky. A gentle tranquillity sat upon her brow, and softened to indescribable sweetness the expression of sorrow around her mouth. She opened her Bible, her mother's Bible, and read. The holy words were, truly, to her wounded spirits, like "apples of gold in pictures of silver."

The door was opened, and the kind-hearted Ann stepped in. Elmina turned her transparent face towards her, and smiled a welcome. "Bless me!" exclaimed the girl, with a look of affectionate admiration, "how like an angel you do look! Any way, you look like the only angel I ever saw, your mother. She was always an angel—dear, sweet lady! I did n't expect to find you sitting here so calmly, considering with what an 'air' you came in, an hour ago."

"It would be very dreadful for me to feel as I did then, for a whole hour," said Elmina.

"I don't think so," replied Ann; "when I am abused, it does me good to rave about it. O, Mina, if you only knew how I hate that woman! I never have called her Mrs. Clement, and never will. I've called your dear, blessed mother so too many times to give the name to such a disgraceful woman. I was dusting the shelves in the closet, and heard what she said, and I saw you, Mina. O, I wish you could have seen how handsome you looked, with your eyes flashing so, and your face so full of scorn! You would n't have known yourself, though, but I love

you better for it; it shows that you have too much spirit to be always trampled under foot."

"Don't try to make me better pleased with myself, because I was so very angry," said Elmina, seriously. "Of course, no one could help feeling indignant at such wicked conduct; but I was wrong to get into such a passion."

"No, no, I shan't let you blame yourself, when you have borne so much and so long with such sweetness and patience. I have wondered how you could do it, many a time."

"Ah, Ann, you forget how often I am irritated by aunt's trying ways. Sometimes I despair of ever doing as my mother would have me. I can't always be patient."

The kind-hearted but undisciplined girl looked at Elmina as if she loved and admired her, but could not quite understand her. "Well, my dear," she said, "I guess good will come out of this trouble, for your father will be terrible angry. I don't think he will let your aunt Jane, as you call her (I'd never call her aunt, though), stay another day under his roof."

Elmina's countenance changed. "I have not thought of that. Papa is most always ready to excuse people's faults; but anything like this which aunt has done I know he would not overlook."

"I am so glad!" cried Ann. "She will surely have to go away. O, I will keep the house just like a new pin, and you will make such a darling little mistress!"

"I am afraid I ought not to tell my father," Elmina said, thoughtfully. "It would be such a disgrace to aunt, to be turned out of the house; and then, you know, she'd have to work very hard to earn

her own living. We must try and bear with her longer."

"I don't care if she does have to earn her own living. I should be glad if she was obliged to go out washing!"

"Now, Ann, don't talk so," said Elmina, persuasively. "I must think about it; and don't, I beg of you, tell the affair to any one, at present. Please go away now, and, if you love me, you will be silent on the subject."

"If I love you? You know I do, Elmina," said Ann, kissing the fair, upturned brow; "so I will go about my work, and hold my peace."

When Mrs. Clement's passion had a little subsided, she became alarmed for the consequences of her unguarded confession. She was fully aware that the doctor would not tolerate her longer in his family, when informed of the unworthy part she had played. She concluded to unbend her haughty temper, and conciliate her injured niece, if possible, so that she might retain her pleasant and easy home. With a face wreathed in counterfeit smiles, and her voice tuned to its softest cadence, she sought Elmina, who had already generously determined to spare her from the anger of the doctor.

"I hope you will excuse my harsh words, dear Elmina, for you know that I am naturally hasty."

Elmina bowed her reply. There was neither haughtiness nor anger in her manner, but a reserved dignity, as though the two had suddenly changed places, and the conscious superiority of virtue had made an impassable gulf between them.

Mrs. Clement was secretly irritated, still she spoke in the same bland tone. "It was regard for you, child, that induced me to destroy your letters. I thought it was improper for you to hold a correspond-

ence with one of the other sex; and, if I mistook my duty, I hope you will believe that my motive was good."

"I believe that I fully appreciate your motive."

Mrs. Clement looked puzzled. She was entirely unprepared for such a dignified reception, and these words of irony made her sit very uncomfortably. She suddenly changed her tactics, and appealed to the compassion of her young companion.

"Elmina, I am a poor widow, without a friend to help me, except your father, and, if he should set me adrift on the world, I know not what would become of me. If you should tell him your story, I fear he will be very angry with me."

"He would be, undoubtedly. I don't think he would retain you in the family a day longer."

"Then you will tell him?" cried Mrs. Clement, resorting to her handkerchief. "O, dear! how can you be so cruel? What will become of me and my poor, fatherless boy? O, that I had never come here, to be sent away in disgrace, and to starve!"

Elmina could not help smiling at the tragic air of her aunt. "You distress yourself unnecessarily," she said; "I had resolved, before you came in, not to tell my father anything about it, unless it became my duty to do so in Clinton's defence, and thus save your wicked conduct from exposure."

She winced at this bold speech, but the promise it contained made it endurable. "Then you promise not to tell him," she said, eagerly. "You will keep your word?"

"I give you my word," said Elmina, in a meaning tone, "and you can trust me."

Elmina rose, as though she wished to put an end to the interview. Her aunt looked upon her with involuntary respect. Though her form was girlish, it

enshrined a woman's heart and mind. Mrs. Clement felt this, and never addressed her as "child" again. Completely awed and humbled in the presence of her whom she had tried to govern and bend to her own will, she hurried away, thanking her stars that, for a time, at least, she was to be saved from enduring the just penalty of her sin.

CHAPTER XIV.

SORROW. — NEW PLANS.

YEARS have come and gone, bringing sad changes to our friends in Oakville. Dr. Clement's mansion wears a lonely aspect. The blinds are closed; the garden walks unswept, and the luxuriant vines untrained. No footstep echoes through the deserted rooms, no voices break the strange stillness there. He who was once owner of the place, has passed over the threshold, never to return, and his sorrowing children have left their desolate home for a season.

But three months ago Dr. Clement bade his daughter an affectionate adieu, as he left home for Charleston, on business. Ah, little thought they it was the last farewell! The steamer in which he sailed was burned, and Dr. Clement was among the lost.

Frank Clement, who was at that time in Boston practising medicine with a distinguished physician, immediately went to Elmina, to weep with her, and comfort her with brotherly love.

Dr. Clement was loved and esteemed by all about him, and the intelligence of his sudden death sent a thrill of grief and horror through the community. The most respectful and delicate attentions were showered upon the bereaved son and daughter, and often repeated was the kindly inquiry, "Can I do anything for you?" Alas, there was nothing to be done! This fact added weight to their anguish. They could

not look upon the still form of their departed father ; they could not lay his loved remains beside the sacred dust of their mother ; no flowers could they plant above his resting-place, for he slept beneath the ocean wave !

They walked about the grounds which his taste had beautified ; they gazed upon the trees he had planted, upon the pretty arbors and trellises his hands had made ; and felt, with breaking hearts, that his loved presence never more would make glad the spot.

Mrs. James Clement had continued to be a member of the family, and her son, though always talking of choosing a profession, still idled away his time, freely spending the money of his indulgent uncle. Now the scene was changed. Mrs. Clement was really shocked at the death of her brother-in-law, and, for a few days, appeared inconsolable. But when she learned that he had left his property in a bad state, and that, when all debts were settled, only the house and adjoining grounds would remain to the heirs, she speedily laid aside her grief, and accepted proposals of marriage from a rich old miser. Mr. Wells was a selfish, ignorant old man, who had spent his life in hoarding wealth ; and only for his golden charms did Mrs. Clement marry him.

A few weeks before Frank returned to his professional duties in Boston, Elmina declared her intention of teaching school. Frank strongly objected to such a plan, saying that he should esteem it a privilege to provide for all her wants.

“ But you are young,” persisted Elmina, “ and probably can earn only enough for yourself, for several years to come. I am determined to do something for my own support, and I think I should like teaching very much.”

“ Indeed, Elmina, I shall not consent to any such

thing," said Frank, "while I have health my dear and only sister shall not wear out her life in teaching school. It is harder work than you think for, and you are not very strong."

"You make me out a useless thing, Frank. Now let me reason with you."

"Nay, Mina, let me reason with you," said Frank, drawing a letter from his pocket. "Here is a letter from aunt Lucy Lincoln, which may influence you a little."

Elmina read the affectionate epistle of her aunt with glistening eyes. Mrs. Lincoln was the half-sister of Dr. Clement, and twenty years his junior. She had not visited Oakville since she was a young girl, and consequently was a stranger to her brother's family. She expressed the kindest sympathy for the grief of her nephew and niece, and spoke with regret of the very limited intercourse which had existed between her deceased brother and herself. She begged Elmina to come to her, and make her house her home. She needed "a companion, a younger sister;" and her husband joined in her earnest request. There was sincerity breathing through the whole of the epistle, and the brother and sister felt that every word was from the heart.

"I know I shall love aunt Lucy," said Elmina, smiling through her tears; "I know I shall love her. She seems to possess as kindly a heart as did our father."

"Yes," said Frank. "I like her very much, as she appears in her letter. There is a girlish simplicity about it that makes me think her heart is fresh and true; though I suppose her husband is very wealthy, and she a fashionable lady. Then how kind her invitation for you to come and be her 'companion and younger sister.'!"

“But I cannot accept of the invitation unless she permits me to teach her children, or do something which will take away all feelings of dependence.”

“That’s right, Elmina; I am glad you are so independent. I should like to have you teach our little cousins; for I have no fear that you would be called upon to exert yourself beyond your strength in the house of our father’s sister. You had better write to her now, telling her that you will visit her, at least, and express the conditions upon which you will become a member of her family.”

An extract from Mrs. Lincoln’s reply will show how Elmina’s communication was received by her New York friends.

“Though I am sorry that you will not accept our ‘hospitality,’ as you term it, without the conditions you mention, still I love you for the independent spirit you manifest. George (he is my husband) was delighted with your letter, and says that, if you wish to teach our children, he should entrust them to you with perfect confidence. Helen and Grace say: ‘Do let our cousin teach us, for we are tired of cross old governesses.’ Grace and Bertie, my little twins, have picked out the pleasantest apartment in the house for cousin Elmina. Don’t lament the loss of your fortune, for we have enough for ourselves and you too.”

Elmina was now nineteen years of age, and the promise of her childhood was more than fulfilled. In her character was united the cheerful energy of her father with the sweet Christian temper which had made her mother’s life so beautiful. Though death had long divided them, the influence of the mother over her child had been wonderful, for Elmina had never forgotten her precepts or example.

O, who can express the worth of a true Christian mother? Living or dying, her influence is most precious. She rears her monument in the characters of her sons and daughters, and her memorial is written on the tablets of loving hearts!

CHAPTER XV.

NEW FRIENDS AND A NEW HOME.

BEFORE leaving Oakville, Elmina promised Dora May that she would write her long letters, in the form of a diary, in order to lessen the loneliness of separation. The first of these letters continue our story so naturally, that we copy from them, preferring their conversational style to the common mode of story-telling.

“NEW YORK, Sept. 5, 18—.

“MY DEAREST DORA: Though scarcely rested from the fatigue of my journey, I cannot let another night pass over my head without writing to you. With Frank for my escort, you will readily believe me when I tell you that I had a very pleasant journey, which was happily free from all disaster.

“We found uncle George Lincoln at the landing with his carriage. He received us with cordiality; and, while we were waiting for the crowd to disperse, I had leisure to study his personal appearance. The survey was very gratifying to me, and I felt acquainted with him from the moment he took my hand in his. His features are quite regular and pleasing, and it is only his projecting brows and deep-set eyes that save him from the charge of effeminacy. His abundant brown hair looked as if he were too busy to spend much time upon its cultivation, and his dress, though fine in texture, was somewhat negligent; still his

bearing was so easy and courteous that I instinctively pronounced him a true gentleman.

“The carriage drew up before a lordly mansion, and uncle ushered us in without ceremony. The drawing-room was vacant, but he requested us to be seated, and sent a servant-girl in search of her mistress.

“Scarce three minutes had elapsed when aunt Lucy came tripping down stairs with an eagerness that was almost childish, but very charming in her. She shook hands with Frank, and then flew to me, and embraced me most affectionately. She called a servant to remove my bonnet and cape, and then insisted upon doing everything for me herself. All this time she chatted to me with great vivacity, and in the sweetest voice in the world. She had a white muslin wrapper; her shining hair had been hastily drawn into a knot and fastened with a gold pin, while half a dozen stray tresses danced like threaded sunlight over her shoulders; and, when she stepped away from me, I perceived that one foot was encased in a congress boot, and the other in a white slipper.

“Her husband looked upon her with a tender, but roguish, smile, and playfully remarked upon the strangeness of her attire. She blushed slightly as she looked down upon her feet, and passed one hand over her hair, saying, ‘Ah! you must excuse me; I really did n’t expect you for an hour yet, and I had such a delightful story that I delayed dressing too long. Maggie had just taken down my hair when you sent for me, and of course I could n’t keep the dear children of my brother waiting while I completed my toilet; so I twisted up my hair, slipped on the first shoes I could find, and hastened to welcome them.’ I expressed my pleasure in her unaffected cordiality. She smiled, and, glancing

bewitchingly backward to her husband, excused herself, and glided away.

“‘Ah!’ thought I, ‘here is a “child-wife” in real life,’ as charming as Dickens’ Dora, though with more character, and not a bit more lovely than the dear Dora to whom I am writing.

“Am I too exuberant, too minute in my description? I hope I do not weary you; for I wish you to become acquainted with my relatives here, as fast as I do, by my pen-and-ink introduction. I was then shown into my apartment by a neat little maid, where I exchanged my travel-soiled garments for those more suitable to the parlor.

“After I had finished my toilet I returned to the drawing-room. Aunt Lucy was there before me, dressed with such elegance and taste as assured me that she was far from being indifferent to the adornments of dress. Uncle Lincoln and Frank were engaged in a pleasant conversation, and aunt Lucy half-reclined upon a sofa. There was an air of languor in her attitude, which I fancied was the reaction of her former enthusiasm. She pointed to a voluptuously-cushioned chair, apologizing for not rising, as she was ‘so very weary.’ Then she began to tell me how happy she was because I had come, and how much she knew she should love me. Her manners were so ingenuous that I could not accuse her of flattery; so I responded warmly. If she remembered rightly, I resembled my father very much, though my hair and eyes were darker. And when she saw the tears that would come at the mention of that dear name, she looked half-shocked, and tried to turn my thoughts to other subjects, with such earnestness that, for her sake, I resolutely banished every trace of emotion. She seemed relieved when I smiled again,

and rung the bell, saying she would send for her children, and present them to me.

“My three little cousins embraced me with every demonstration of pleasure. Helen is seven, and Grace and Herbert, the twins, are five years old. O, Dora, I have seen beautiful children, but never before such perfect gems of childish loveliness! Grace and Bertie are exceedingly small, and dazzlingly fair. Their features are so much alike, so exact in their resemblance, that, were they of the same sex, and dressed alike, I think it would be impossible to distinguish one from the other. Hair like their mother’s, only more golden, softer and more glossy, ripples in shining curls over their snowy, dimpled shoulders. Every feature is chiselled after the purest model, and their eyes are as clear and blue as a June sky. Even now, dear Dora, till you have seen them, you can have no idea of the cherubic loveliness of these little ones.

“I turned from the children to their girlish-looking mamma (who has counted only twenty-five years), and half repented that I had called her a ‘child-wife;’ but, an hour afterwards, I involuntarily pronounced her a ‘child-mother.’ She yielded herself to their simplest wish, and joined their play with such perfect abandon, that she seemed a very child among them. Though each character was so becoming to her, and she appeared as happy as a bird, my heart feared for her something which even my own thoughts could not define.

“At dinner I was introduced to the other members of the family, Mr. Ike Lincoln, brother to aunt Lucy’s husband, and Loretta Fay, the gentleman’s ward. Mr. Ike Lincoln is a very benevolent-looking, portly bachelor of thirty-eight. He studied my face all dinner-time; at last I grew nervous under his

sharp glances (he has the keenest eyes I ever saw); and, when he perceived it, he devoted himself to his dessert, but with a peculiar smile upon his lips, which I tried in vain to read.

“Miss Fay is handsome, and haughty, and cold. I have hardly heard her speak yet. She seems to look down upon my humble self as though I were unworthy of her notice; still I may like her much upon acquaintance.

“*Sept.* 8. — I begin to feel quite at home now, and think I shall be happy here. I wanted to commence teaching my little cousins at once, but aunt Lucy declared I should not while brother Frank remains with us, which is to be but a few days.

“I like Mr. Ike Lincoln extremely well; he is rather eccentric in his ways; some people would call it originality. I have almost forgotten the piercing glances which so disconcerted me when I first met him, for his eyes now beam with a friendly light. Aunt Lucy says it is his peculiarity to look through everybody until he is satisfied in regard to their character. He is a physiognomist, and says that never, upon acquaintance with any one person, has he had reason to change the first estimate he made of his or her character. Aunt Lucy laughingly tells him that this is the very reason why he never has been married, and why, she fears, he never will be; for, if he can discover every defect of character at first sight, he will be in little danger of losing his heart. For my own part, I might be embarrassed in the presence of such a skilful reader of human hearts, were it not for his genial manners, which throw a perfect charm around him.

“He wishes me to call him ‘uncle Ike,’ as the children do. I was much amused at the idea of

calling so young a man, who could not claim the title, 'uncle;' but he insists upon it so earnestly, that I am forced to yield. In fact, he is 'uncle Ike' to the whole family; aunt Lucy and Lauretta both call him so, therefore I shall be in the fashion.

"To-night there are several visitors in the drawing-room. I grew weary of being among strangers, and have stolen away to my own chamber to write to thee, my dear Dora. There is a gentle knocking at my door; it is my little cousins asking for admittance; so I must lay down my pen and chat a while with them.

"They have gone, the dear little ones, and I resume my talk with you. They begin to call me 'dear cousin Mina,' and I love them dearly, though I've not known them a week.

"Helen said, to-night, 'I am glad you have come to be our dear cousin and teacher, for I don't think we shall be lonesome any more.'

"I expressed my surprise that children, in such a beautiful home, with so many books and costly playthings, should complain of being lonesome. 'I am often lonesome, though,' persisted Helen, 'for, since our governess went away, I have only my music lessons to attend to. Mamma has company every day, and visits so much, that she hasn't much time to talk or play with us; but we have a nice frolic now and then with her, and sometimes uncle Ike takes us out to ride.'

"'But you know we don't go out often, Nellie,' said little Grace, 'and then it seems as though the long days never would let night come; and Maggie is cross, and Lauretta don't love to have children around her. I am glad you are not such a great lady, cousin Mina.' (Here the little one showered kisses on my forehead, lips and cheeks.) 'O, I do love you so

much! I shan't ever call you governess; for governesses are cross sometimes, and I know you never will be. I shall call you "cousin Mina;" and O, we've got a "cousin Ned," too! Did you ever see him?'

"How the little girls pitied me because I did n't know 'cousin Ned'! Cousin Ned was so handsome, and so good, and funny, too! When he was at home they never thought of being lonesome, he told such droll stories, and frolicked with them, and made them lots of presents. O, they wished he had stayed with them, instead of going off to Europe!

"Bertie raised his ringleted head from my lap, where it had lain quietly during his sister's rhapsodies upon cousin Ned, saying, 'You have n't told the best thing he does; he tries to make us good, and teaches us little songs about Jesus and the shepherds. Every story he tells is n't funny. Don't you remember, Grace, that one about little Moses in the basket, and how his mother hid him in the rushes close to the river? I like such stories best.'

"'But, you have n't told me who cousin Ned is?' said I.

"'O, I forgot that!' cried Helen, laughing; 'why, he is papa's and uncle Ike's nephew, and this is his home, only he has been gone to Europe ever so long.'

"'Uncle Ike calls him his boy,' said Grace; 'but he an't a boy — he is a tall man, and uncle says he is his "sole heir."' What does "sole heir" mean, cousin Mina?'

"When I explained it to her, she laughed gleefully. 'O, I am glad, for then I shall have a cunning little pony! Ned said he would get me one when he had money enough. How rich he will be! Don't you know Uncle Ike is dreadful rich, even richer than papa, and papa has got plenty of money?'

“ ‘Are there any flowers about your home in the country?’ asked Bertie.

“ ‘O, yes, a great many.’

“ ‘How I should love to live there!’ cried the little fellow, a glow of delight overspreading his beautiful features. ‘We all went to the country in July, and Gracie and I picked our hats full of the pretty flowers every day.’

“ ‘You are a beautiful flower, yourself,’ I thought, as I kissed his blue-veined forehead. Their nurse called them to go to bed, and they went away, saying, ‘good-night, good-night.’

“ Dear Dora, I have learned to-night that these lovely children, though possessing affectionate and amiable parents, and surrounded by every luxury wealth can command, are hungry for that food which nourisheth the soul. Every intellectual and physical want is supplied, but chance is suffered to mould their infant spirits. How unlike my own richly-blessed childhood! That sainted mother, whose memory is ever vernal in my heart, knew and understood every want, every impulse of my childish soul. While she lived, my spirit seemed to grow into hers, so complete and beautiful was her influence over me. Even now I feel her presence near me, prompting me to teach these little ones those things which will germinate heavenly plants in the garden of the heart. May her spirit guide me, that I may do my duty well!

“ *Sept. 12.* — All of aunt Lucy’s children are much petted and beloved, but little Bertie is the idol of the mansion. He is never chided, whatever he may do, or wherever he may go. There is a charm about the child; his voice and smile seem to throw a spell round every heart. I feel it already myself.

Though I love Helen and Grace dearly, I have unconsciously given Bertie the largest share of my heart.

“ At first, I fancied that Grace and Bertie were as much alike, in character and disposition, as they are in form and feature; but I find it is not so. Grace is like her mother, affectionate, impulsive, volatile. Over Bertie’s face, and beaming from his eyes, there is a spiritual light, never reflected from the countenance of his gay little sister. He is a dreamy, earnest, thoughtful child. I am often startled by his quaint conceits, or by the holy expression of his face when he sits quietly thinking. There is a heavenly presence about him; sometimes I think the angels are communing with him.

“ He is passionately fond of flowers, and often his papa buys a choice bouquet for his darling. It is really affecting to see the joyful tenderness with which he will examine the little floral gems. I must tell him their names; and those which he has seen growing, he regards with peculiar pleasure. The vases in aunt Lucy’s chamber are always filled with Bertie’s flowers. He often trims my hair with them, or twines them among his own fair curls.

“ Bertie loves everybody, but Grace better than all others. She seems to be the sunbeam, the joy of his life; and the buoyant Grace regards her more delicate brother with a strange mixture of tenderness and admiration. She will lead him about with a patronizing air, and, when he is weary, lay his head in her lap and sing to him, until the canary joins in a wild chorus.

“ Uncle Ike will take him into the library, and spend hours in turning over books of plates, and listen with delight to his unanswerable questions. The servants almost worship him; and was there one

particle less of the angelic in his composition, they would spoil him with indulgence. Even Lauretta's haughty smile is softened when he is by, and her tones, in addressing him, are love-tones.

"Dora, do you think my description of little Bertie is too glowing to be actually true? Believe me, my sweet friend, I have written with the pen of truth, not imagination. Bertie is an angel 'strayed from Paradise,' and I fear that earth cannot keep him long.

"I hope you are not tired of my juvenile stories, for I must tell you one more. Last night the children called me into the nursery, where they were undressing, and begged me to tell them a story while they went to sleep. 'Please come in, cousin Mina,' pleaded Bertie, 'and hear us say our prayers. Maggie is in such a hurry, we have to say them by ourselves, only when mamma has time to come to us.'

"I could not resist their entreaties; so I dismissed Maggie, and put the snowy night-dresses on their fairy forms, and tied over each little head a tiny ruffled cap. Then I sat down, and the darlings knelt around me. A sweet solemnity rested down upon my heart. I fancied the air vibrated with the rush of angels' pinions. Think you not it was so? For, if celestial guardians ever attend children, as I believe they do, might not a bright band encircle them when they knelt to pray? I felt they were there, holy and glorious, but scarcely more pure than the sinless ones bowed at their evening orisons.

"First, Helen repeated her prayer, slowly and reverently, with her head bowed, and her hands folded meekly upon her breast.

"Bertie commenced, 'Our Father,' with his head thrown back, and his clasped hands upraised. A rapt smile played round his mouth, and his eyes seemed to pierce the veil hiding heavenly things from our mor-

tal gaze. His tones were exultant, as though his soul rose upward on the holy words. A little child, praying thus! My heart stood still with awe. I feared, in that ecstatic trance, his spirit, too beautiful, too strong for his fragile body, would soar heavenward, and leave untenanted the lovely clay. When the 'amen' was breathed, his head dropped slowly till it rested in my lap, as if the strugglings of his spirit had exhausted his tender frame.

"Then Grace lisped her prayer in sweet accents, with a roguish gleam in her blue eyes, which were upturned to mine. With the last word upon her lips, she sprang forward, and threw her arms about my neck, telling me, 'mid a shower of kisses, 'how very much she loved me'!

"After they were in bed, I told stories to the coaxing girls until slumber kissed their white eyelids. Bertie had lain quietly in his crib, but, when I rose to go, he spoke out, suddenly, 'Cousin Mina, if I should die, should I be an angel?'

"'I sincerely believe you would, darling.' I put my hand on his forehead. It was feverish to my touch, and his eyes burned with a strange, unnatural lustre. How I wished in my heart that he would say something simple and childish, and then drop off to sleep, as his sisters had done!

"'Mina, do flowers grow in heaven, and does God let his little angels pick them?'

"'I never have seen heaven, Bertie, but I think there must be flowers there.'

"'Yes, I know there are!' cried Bertie, half raising himself from his pillow; 'brighter and sweeter than these we have here. When I am an angel, I mean always to wear a crown of flowers! Won't that be beautiful?'

"'Very beautiful, indeed, my love; but why don't

you go to sleep? Helen and Grace are far in dream-land now.'

" 'I am going to sleep now; good-night. Perhaps I shall dream I am an angel.'

" 'I watched him until the golden lashes rested motionless upon his cheeks, and he slept sweetly. As I turned to leave the room, aunt Lucy stepped in. She looked gratified to see me there. 'I always come to look upon my darlings before I sleep,' she said; 'but not often until after their eyes are shut fast.'

" 'I told her of the evening prayers, and of Bertie's earnest questioning. She bent over her sleeping child, with glistening eyes.

" 'Bertie is a strange child; so unlike his sisters! He asks the oddest questions, sometimes, about things I never thought of! He is so beautiful — so good! I fear I cannot always keep him with me. Elmina, I fancy I read reproach in your eyes. You think I am too thoughtless and giddy for a mother.'

" 'I reproach you, aunt Lucy!' I exclaimed. 'What possible reason have I to do so?'

" 'She looked at me seriously; and such a look was so unusual on her face, that I felt it the more deeply.

" 'Elmina, I don't know why it is that ever since I have known you, I have felt dissatisfied with myself. There is something in your ways, though I know you never meant it so, my dear, that keeps telling me I am wasting precious time in useless, trifling pursuits.'

" 'There was such sweet simplicity in her manner, that I felt privileged to speak with the freedom that I would to a young companion. I told her of the holy trust God had committed to her, in the guidance of her children, and how delightfully she might spend a share of her time in teaching and amusing them.

“She listened earnestly, and then said, with a half sigh, ‘You are very right, I have no doubt; but you know my position in society makes it impossible for me to devote much time to my children, for there is such a continual round of visiting and company, and I never could have any system about my affairs. Though you are so young, you know better how to manage children than I do, and I entrust them to you with perfect confidence.’

“I thanked her for her good opinion, and expressed my pleasure in the duties assigned me; still, I wondered how a mother could so willingly resign her highest duty and dearest privilege to another.

“Aunt Lucy cleared the thoughtful shadows from her brow, and, with a light laugh, said that I was a dear girl, but so practical and sensible she was almost afraid of me. Then she tried to coax me into the drawing-room; she had learned a new piece of music, which she must play to me. I resisted her playful entreaties, and went to my own chamber, where I sat down and dwelt tearfully upon the scene with my cousins.

“My feelings were so mellowed that my griefs rose before my mind with new acuteness and power. I yearned to see my mother’s quiet grave, where the last rose of summer has bloomed and withered. I thought of my father, sleeping in the broad, cold ocean; of Frank, who has gone to toil at his profession in a distant city; and O, how I longed to see your dear face, my sister, friend! What wonder that my tears fell, or that my head was bowed in anguish, at the tender, melancholy retrospection?

“But, before I slumbered, I read one of the blessed Psalms, which seemed woven of comfort and hope; and I laid my head upon my pillow, with a heart peaceful and resigned.

“*Sept. 16.* ‘Cousin Ned’ seem to be household words; I hear them almost every hour in the day, coupled with expressions of affection and praise. Uncle Ike had a letter from him this morning, and read it aloud at the breakfast-table. How pleased and animated everybody was! Even the taciturn Laretta was eloquent in praising ‘cousin Ned.’ I was glad, too, from sympathy; and really wished I knew this same cousin Ned. I asked aunt Lucy about him, and her long story I will tell to you in a few words. He is an orphan, and was adopted, some years ago, by his uncle, Ike Lincoln. Uncle Ike — who declares himself an incurable old bachelor, and I marvel at it, when he is so young, and so finely constituted for domestic happiness — has determined to make this Edward Lincoln his heir. He has educated him liberally, and has now sent him to Europe, as the finishing means of making him a complete gentleman. And, if I am to believe his partial relatives, he is worthy of all the wealth and affection lavished upon him; a paragon of manly excellence. Do you wonder that I am impatient, with the rest, for the return of Edward Lincoln from his foreign tour?

“Perhaps you would like to have me tell you something about Laretta Fay. She, too, is an orphan and an heiress. People suppose her fortune to be very large; though Uncle Ike, her guardian, shakes his head doubtfully when Laretta’s property is spoken of. She was the only child of an old friend of uncle Ike’s, and, since her father’s death, she has made this house her home. She is handsome, and might be beautiful, were it not for the coldness and hauteur which characterize her manners. I imagine she is a coquette, from what little I have seen of her in company. She dresses magnificently, and is constantly attended by a train of admiring and obsequious beaux.

I cannot get acquainted with her, for the peculiar tone in which she says, 'Miss Clement,' checks every feeling of familiarity.

"Aunt Lucy and Laretta spend a great amount of money and much time, in 'shopping.' The quantity of silk, satins, embroideries and ribbons, which they purchase, is astonishing to one of my simple habits.

"There! Helen and Grace are calling me to go and walk with them. I cannot deny the dear children; so I drop my pen. More anon.

"ELMINA."

CHAPTER XVI.

VARIOUS OPINIONS.

“WHO is that beautiful young lady leading Mrs. Lincoln’s little twins from the room? Excepting your queenly self, she is the loveliest girl I have seen for a month,” said one of Laretta’s admirers, at a small party given by Mrs. Lincoln.

Laretta colored with vexation, and, curling her lip scornfully, replied: “O, she is a sort of a cousin of Mrs. Lincoln’s — a poor girl from the country. She is the children’s governess, though she is treated as one of the family.”

“O—h, a—h!” stammered the gentleman, evidently ashamed at his egregious mistake in praising a governess.

“And you think her beautiful?” asked Laretta, smiling brilliantly, still throwing a look of tender reproach into her flashing eyes.

The young gentleman was enchanted. “I don’t think anything about her,” he said, with a flattering bow. “Miss Fay is so radiant to-night, that all other stars, however bright, are dim beside her dazzling beauty.”

The fair coquette bent her head graciously.

Miss Arlington now approached, exclaiming, “I beg you to introduce me to that charming girl when

she comes back again. They tell me she is Mrs. Lincoln's niece. What a smile she has! Still there is a look of quiet sorrow upon her sweet face."

"I believe she has buried her father lately," said Laretta.

"Poor girl!" said Miss Arlington, compassionately. "That accounts for her gentle, reserved manners. I am sure she is amiable, for when little Grace asked her to go into the nursery, and tell her and Bertie a story before they went to sleep, she went directly as though it was her greatest pleasure to make others happy."

"It is quite natural that Miss Clement should wish to gratify the children, as she is their governess," said Laretta.

Miss Arlington's intelligent eye told that she understood the hidden meaning in Laretta's tones. She redoubled her enthusiasm. "How the dear children must love her! There she comes again; I mean to get acquainted with her if possible. Come, Miss Fay, and introduce me."

"Excuse me, I am too weary to cross the room now; her aunt is standing near her, and will doubtless do you the favor. You must generously overlook all her oddities, or mistakes, as she is quite new in society."

The young lady knew how to appreciate the smile which accompanied these words, and answered with a little more spirit than is consistent with Chesterfieldian etiquette: "I do not imagine that I shall discover any oddities or mistakes to overlook. Miss Clement has evidently had the advantages of education and of refined associates, though she may be new in New York society. There is a graceful ease in her manners which would become any who pride themselves upon being leaders of the ton."

If Laretta had known that uncle Ike's eyes had been sending scornful daggers, and that his ears had heard all her conversation, she would have trembled as he came near. When he began speaking, she guessed the truth, and shrank from his gaze. He spoke to Miss Arlington, but looked at Laretta.

"Miss Arlington, may I have the pleasure of presenting you to Miss Clement, the young lady standing by my sister-in-law? She is her niece; and, in my opinion, the most accomplished and amiable girl of my acquaintance."

"Thank you, Mr. Lincoln; I have been wishing for an introduction, for I am quite charmed with her appearance."

"The spell will not be broken when you converse with her, as her mind is as symmetrical as her person. Let me conduct you to her." Uncle Ike gave Laretta another withering glance, and gallantly led Miss Arlington away.

Laretta fanned herself, violently agitated, while burning blushes poured over her neck and brow. "What shocking eyes, Mr. Ike Lincoln has!" she said. "I actually tremble to have him look at me."

The exquisite by her side coincided with her opinion. The gentleman in question was shockingly abrupt and straightforward in his ways; so eccentric, too! just to think of calling Mrs. Lincoln's governess the most accomplished lady of his acquaintance!

"But rich bachelors are privileged personages," said Laretta, pouting prettily, "and Miss Arlington is as bad as uncle Ike. She presumes upon her station in society, and is frightfully independent."

"Miss Arlington's manners are intolerable," said the gentleman, knowing it would delight his companion to have him abuse her rival, as she considered Miss Arlington; "no one thinks of admiring her.

Let me lead you to the piano; there seems to be a pause in the conversation, and your incomparable music will make a refreshing interlude."

Lauretta took Mr. Carleton's arm, and passed with him through the drawing-rooms, listening graciously to the unmeaning flattery which he whispered in her ear.

Elmina soon found herself the centre of a circle consisting of the most intelligent and refined in the company, brought together by the tact of uncle Ike. Unconscious of the admiration she was exciting, she joined earnestly in the conversation. The freshness and originality of her expressions, combined with the unaffected ease of her manner, had more potency over the admiration of the other sex than all Lauretta's coquettish graces and dazzling smiles.

When Lauretta perceived that her music was unnoticed by those whom she most wished to attract to her side, she rose proudly from the piano, and no persuasions on the part of Mr. Carleton could induce her to finish the brilliant overture she had commenced. She saw the respect and attention paid to Elmina, and that Miss Arlington and her aristocratic brother were already talking with her with the familiarity of old acquaintances. Her bosom swelled with angry jealousy. She had counted Mr. Arlington among her admirers, and his wealth and high station, independent of his cultivated mind and elevated principles, caused her to value his attentions above those of any gentleman present. Her ill-humor was so apparent that Mr. Carleton left her, feeling himself somewhat aggrieved.

After an agreeable conversation, Mr. Arlington proposed to Elmina that she should play and sing for them.

"I make no pretensions to musical skill," was

the smiling reply. "I only play for my own pleasure."

"I hope you will play for our pleasure now," said Miss Arlington. Elmina hesitated a moment, but Lucy whispered encouragingly, "Do not hesitate, Mina; you need not fear to play." She suffered Mr. Arlington to lead her to the instrument, and, without one foolish apology, commenced playing a simple melody, and accompanied it with a voice of surpassing sweetness. Everybody was pleased, and she was persuaded to play again, and yet again.

"My dear Laretta!" exclaimed Lucy, "why do you sit here alone? every one is asking for you."

Laretta sat alone in the library, moodily pulling in bits her fragrant bouquet. "Let them ask for me, then; I prefer to be alone."

"What is the matter; are you sick?"

"No, I'm well enough."

"Then come and play," said Lucy, coaxingly. "Elmina and Miss Arlington have been playing, and the company now begin to call for you. Come now, you know you are the best player and singer present, and it would be unkind to deny our guests the pleasure of hearing you."

"If Miss Clement has played, I am sure I shan't! The company must have grown fastidious after listening to her performance."

Gentle Mrs. Lincoln looked bewildered and half frightened. "What excuse shall I make for you, Laretta?" she said.

"O, here she is, the queen of song!" cried Mr. Arlington, gayly, as he stepped into the room. "We have been listening to some excellent music, and now we wish to hear Miss Fay's rich voice; do not deny me."

A flash of pleasure lighted her face; these well-

timed compliments restored her to brilliant temper. "I was a little weary, and so I stole away by myself; but, if it will give you pleasure, I will play."

Lauretta was a superior player, and her voice was rich and full. She almost excelled herself on this occasion. Elmina listened with unfeigned pleasure. She said to uncle Ike, "My simple performance is quite thrown into the shade by Lauretta's splendid playing." Elmina spoke from her heart, and without a single touch of jealousy. Uncle Ike understood her, and replied, with a kind smile: "Lauretta is certainly an excellent musician; but your 'simple performance,' as you call it, gave me the most pleasure. You played to gratify others — she for effect."

"However much I might disagree with you, I dare not dispute you," said Elmina playfully. "You claim such skill in reading the thoughts and motives of people, that you doubtless would call me presumptuous should I express my mind."

"Nay, Elmina, I could not be so unjust; but, supper is announced, and I see Mr. Arlington coming this way; he will offer to escort you to the table."

"I wish you would wait upon me, uncle Ike, if there is no other lady whom you should prefer."

"I declare, you are nervous because Mr. Arlington looks at you so earnestly. I see you are unused to such overpowering attentions."

"I don't like to be flattered; I never know what to say."

"Well, I am not flattering you, when I tell you that I feel honored by your preference." Uncle Ike laughingly offered his arm: "Come, my charming, fresh little friend!"

Mr. Arlington turned away disappointed.

CHAPTER XVII.

WELCOME HOME.

“HURRA! hurra!” cried uncle Ike, dashing into the dining-room, in mad haste. “Good news! Ned is coming home!” In the exuberance of his joy, he performed sundry boyish antics, and then seated himself at the table with a comical air of suddenly assumed dignity.

There was a joyful echo of the words, “Ned is coming home!” “When? how soon may we expect him?” was repeated in the same breath.

“In about a week,” said uncle Ike, referring to his letter. “He writes that we may look for him in a week after receiving this.”

“O, joyful!” shouted the children; and the beaming faces of their elders showed that the feeling was responsive in every breast.

Then there arose a discussion as to the manner in which they should receive the beloved traveller. Mr. Lincoln thought, with Lucy, that the pleasantest way to welcome him would be to invite a select party of his personal friends on the night of his arrival. Uncle Ike wanted to give a great ball, and have a general jubilee; but Laretta protested against either course. “Let us receive him quietly,” she said. “After so long a separation, we shall want him all to ourselves for a few days, at least. I really think Ned would

be disappointed to come home and find the house full of company."

"I don't know but you are right," said uncle Ike; "and your opinion shall be weighed with the rest, after Elmina has expressed hers, as the least interested one. I think her the best fitted to decide upon the proprieties in the case."

"If I am to express my opinion," said Elmina, "I shall certainly agree with Laretta; if I were in the young gentleman's place, I should prefer to be received by my relatives alone, and without any parade."

"Then the matter is decided," said uncle Ike. "We will make no parade about it."

Laretta looked kindly at Elmina, as if grateful for her assistance.

The next day was cold and rainy, so all the female members of the family were forced to remain within doors. Laretta and Elmina sat with Lucy in her private parlor, and the children quietly amused themselves in one corner. Each lady had her needlework, and the minutes flew happily by, in spite of the inclement sky without. Laretta seldom favored the family with her company when there were no visitors; and when, by chance, she sat an hour or so with them, she was usually cold and silent. But to-day she was in her sunniest mood, — she threw off her haughty reserve, and chatted cheerfully with her companions. Elmina's heart warmed with pleasure at this first unbending of the proud heiress towards her, and she talked and laughed in her own sweet way until Laretta wondered that she had not before discovered what an agreeable companion she was.

They were interrupted in a pleasant conversation by the sounds of footsteps, and eager talking in the

hall below. "I really believe Ned has come!" said Lucy, opening the door.

"He has! he has!" cried Grace, following her mother. "He is coming up stairs with papa and uncle Ike." The little girl sprang up and down, clapping her hands gleefully.

Ned had arrived, and five days sooner than expected; but for this his welcome was all the more joyful.

Elmina retreated to the further part of the room, that she might not intrude upon the first moments of their reunion.

The young man was as demonstrative of his pleasure as the children, who were wild with joy. He shook and kissed his little cousins, affectionately saluted Lucy, and put Laretta's hand to his lips, while his eyes expressed volumes of admiration. A flush of joy glowed on Laretta's face, and animated her features. Elmina thought she had never seen her look so beautiful before.

It was many minutes before the greetings were over, and then a flood of questions unanswered, and answers without questions, were poured from every tongue. Each seemed to vie with the others in saying the most in the shortest space of time. Elmina had a fair opportunity to observe the personal appearance of this much talked of "cousin Ned." His figure was tall and finely proportioned; the developments of his head were somewhat marked; his wavy hair, of raven blackness, was thrown back from a forehead broad and white; and his eyes were full of fire, yet softened with refined feeling. There was an air of high-breeding about him, seemingly more natural than acquired, and his voice was peculiarly musical; there was something in its mellow tones which touched a chord of olden memory in

Elmina's heart. She regarded him with a new and increasing interest. In the eloquent play of his features there was something strangely familiar. It could not be his resemblance to his uncles, for his looks and manners strongly contrasted with either of them.

Lucy now bethought herself to introduce her niece. The young gentleman took her hand with cordiality, but Helen and Grace were so importunate in their calls upon his attention, that he merely gave her a passing glance.

Elmina took a retired seat and resumed her needlework. Mr. George Lincoln left for his place of business, and Lucy went to the basement to give some additional orders about dinner. Uncle Ike took a large rocking-chair, and, folding his arms, sat silently gazing upon his nephew, with an expression of fond affection. Soon Helen and Grace went to get the pictures they had drawn, and the presents they had received during Ned's absence, to display to him. Laretta and the young traveller occupied the sofa together, and little Bertie nestled silently and fondly to his cousin's side.

How beautiful Laretta looked! All her hauteur was merged into a graceful cordiality, all the coquetish airs which she often assumed in company with those of the opposite sex were exchanged for a sweet simplicity of manner; a new and pleasing light beamed from her eye, and brightened every feature, and her lute-like voice seemed to flow in liquid music from her heart.

Elmina gazed upon her, marvelling at the transformation. Could this be the scornful, arrogant Laretta Fay? An unconscious smile parted her lips as she said to herself, "If Laretta does not love this Ned Lincoln, she certainly values and

esteems him above all others of her acquaintance." And Elmina could not wonder that it was so, as she listened to his manly, intelligent conversation. His choice yet simple language testified of a cultivated mind, and his expressions were sparkling with wit and humor. Elmina's breast was stirred with feelings which she herself could not define. It was not the fascination of his manner which riveted her attention; but his voice and smile—where had she heard and seen them before? The query was repeated so often that she grew bewildered, and, at length, in considerable agitation, she left the room, inwardly chiding herself for yielding to the unconquerable weakness.

Uncle Ike's eye followed her with a quizzical gleam, and a knowing, self-satisfied smile spread itself over his benign countenance; he even rubbed his hands softly together, as a gentle vent to some inward exultation.

At the tea-table cousin Ned, for the first time, narrowly observed our heroine; and then the little start he gave, and the sudden lighting of his face, made her pulse beat nervously. He did not address her, but she knew his eyes were often stealing a glance at her. She grew embarrassed at the painful earnestness with which he regarded her. She felt that his observation of her was very unlike the sharp scrutiny which so discomposed her at first meeting uncle Ike, and as unlike the undisguised admiration spoken by Mr. Arlington's eyes at their evening party. She could not analyze his look, or her own emotions. At length, she did not dare to raise her eyes, and the long lashes swept her crimson cheek.

Uncle Ike rallied her upon her silence, and wished to know if it was awe of his travelled nephew which chained her tongue. Lucy joined in joking her, and

for a moment Elmina felt as though she could not bear their banter.

Uncle Ike enjoyed her confusion, and then, just as he felt a pang of remorse, Elmina, with a great effort at self-control, stilled the tremor agitating her frame, and raised her head composedly. She was herself again.

Uncle Ike seemed infinitely amused, though no one at the table could guess why, and laughed uproariously.

Elmina usually spent a couple of hours in the library before breakfast. The bookcase, with its rich and varied stores, was the chief attraction, and, as the apartment answered somewhat to her ideal of a study-room, it was her favorite seat. The furniture was elegant and costly, but simple in style, and the rich hues of the carpet blended with the delicate green of the silken curtains, and threw a warm glow upon the rose-wreaths blooming in almost life-like beauty upon the frescoed walls. A few rare paintings, busts, and statuettes, filled the niches, which seemed expressly made for them. Elmina often sat at a beautiful desk of oriental workmanship, which she preferred to the ponderous writing-table in the centre of the room. Here she spent her happiest hours, in the silent yet intelligent companionship of books. Here she revelled in the poet's airy dreams, or bent breathless over pages of historic lore. Here she wept or laughed in obedience to the changing spirit of the drama, and pored curiously over huge scientific volumes, which many maidens would push away in disdain.

On the morrow, Elmina arose with the sun, and, after making her simple toilet, took her accustomed seat in the library. But somehow, on this morning,

her tastes were capricious; for, though she had selected her favorite poet, her thoughts wandered far away into the shadowy past. Her eyes were fixed upon the page, but pleasant memories rose before, and hid the letters from her gaze. She dreamed of the sweet time when death or changing circumstance had never robbed her of a single friend; of the blessed days of childhood, hallowed by the love of tender parents, and of that beautiful friendship which brightened those glad days. Now, both father and mother had sought a better home; now, she was separated from her only brother and her beloved Dora, and years had passed since she had heard a lisp from Josie Lee, her dear teacher and elder sister, or Clinton, whom she still remembered fondly. But she forgot the present in the happy past, and her countenance was softly irradiated with the sweet memory.

"Good-morning," in a manly voice, started the dreaming girl. It was uncle Ike's nephew and heir who stood before her. She returned his salutation, half-bewildered, for he took her hand and held it fast, gazing upon her with a tremulous lip.

"It is a lovely morning," she said, ineffectually trying to regain her hand.

"I have not thought of the morning; I can only think of the joyful fact that I behold Elmina Clement!" His tone was full of feeling. Elmina could only look upon him in anxious surprise.

"I recognized you at the tea-table," continued the young man, "but, as you did not claim my acquaintanceship, I could not speak to you till we were alone. Elmina!" he repeated, with increasing earnestness; "but you do not respond to my pleasure. And is the past forgotten; and must we form anew our acquaintance, as though we had never met?"

He relinquished her hand, and stepped back with a reproachful, sorrowful air.

“Mr. Lincoln, I do not understand you! though it seems that I have known you before; I cannot tell when and where.”

The young man approached her again. A sudden, joyful thought darted across her mind: “Can it be possible that this is Clint ——”

“Can it be possible you do not know me? Mr. Lincoln is not my name; but Clinton Edward Forrest!”

“Clinton! my dear brother Clint!” cried Elmina, holding out both her hands, with overflowing eyes.

He drew her to him, and tenderly kissed her brow.

“You are unchanged,” he said, studying her sweet face; “only grown into womanhood, fulfilling the rich promise of childhood. I did not believe that you would meet me in coldness, though I might have argued so, from your unbroken silence.”

“O, Clinton, I have much to explain to you! But first let me assure you that I had not the most remote idea that the ‘cousin Ned’ whom I have heard so much about and the adopted brother of my childhood were identical.”

“What could my uncle have been thinking of?” said Clinton. “I wonder he did not know at once that you were the dear little Mina Clement whom I have so often described. And you imagined my name was Ned Lincoln?”

“Yes, though I never heard any one call you any thing but Ned. Now let us sit down, and I will tell you of the circumstances which have caused so long and complete a separation between us.”

They sat down together, as free from restraint and embarrassment as though they really were brother and sister, and time and distance had never separated them.

“You remember, Clinton, that my aunt Jane appeared to be jealous of my father’s regard for you;

but, O, Clint! you do not know—you have not heard of—of—” The painful recollection, coming so suddenly upon her mind, quite overcame her, and she hid her face upon the shoulder of her newly-found brother, and wept silently.

Clinton half-guessed the cause of her emotion. “Mina, my sweet sister, do those tears tell me that your good father is dead?”

“Yes, yes,” she sobbed.

For a time they were silent; and then Elmina raised her head, with restored composure, though her voice quivered as she said, “I cannot tell you about him now; some other time I will. Now I must tell you of the fate of your letters. I said aunt Jane was jealous of you. I knew it, but did not think her capable of performing such acts as that jealousy excited her to do. Your first letter gave me great pleasure, and I answered it directly. Aunt Jane tried to convince me that it was improper for me to write to you; but I persisted, and, to my surprise, she amiably offered to send James with it to the office. When I received your second letter, I was ill, with a headache; but I was so much grieved that you had not heard from me, that I wrote a hasty note, and intrusted it to my cousin James. He told me, at night, that he had delivered it safely into the post-master’s hands. After a while I grew impatient that you did not write again, and father was as anxious as I. Frank inquired for you in all his letters. Aunt Jane said some disagreeable things to father, about your having found better friends, and called you ungrateful. For a time father was very unhappy about it, and I was sadly grieved. Dora and I talked much about you,—always wondering and mourning over your unaccountable silence. After several months, by accident I found, in one of aunt’s drawers, one

of my letters to you. At first aunt Jane tried to excuse it away; but my suspicions were aroused, and I insisted upon an explanation. Then she angrily acknowledged that she had burned my previous letter, and concealed this, with the intention of destroying all communication between yourself and our family."

Clinton's eye and cheek were glowing with the fire of indignation. "Wicked, unfeeling woman!" he cried. "Alas, how well she succeeded in her scheme! I thought you cared no longer for me, and mourned almost as sadly as though death had divided us. And you and your father must have felt injured and grieved at my apparent ingratitude. What did your father do, Elmina? He did not let her stay in his house any longer, I hope?"

"Ah, Clint!" said Elmina, "I should have known you anywhere, looking and speaking as you do now; just as I have seen you look a hundred times, when your spirit was roused by the injustice of another."

Clinton smiled, a little deprecatingly, as he said, "You will find that I am the same impulsive Clint whom, in the days past, you so often curbed with your gentle, restraining voice; though I hope more reason and moderation temper my spirit. I suppose you forgave your aunt Jane, even before she asked pardon, and coaxed your father to forgive her, also."

"Nay, it was very hard for me to forgive her; but I feared to tell my father, for I knew he could never overlook such duplicity in a member of his family; so, rather than have her turned in disgrace from the house, I concealed the facts from him. I confided my grievances to Josie Lee; and you know I could not find a better or truer friend."

"But I wrote to Josephine, too. Did the same fate attend her letter?"

"It was in vacation, and she was off on a journey,

at the time it arrived. When she received the letter, it was too late to address you as directed. We both hoped and expected you would write again, that we might have some clue to your whereabouts. Josie often shed tears when talking of her absent little brother, as she ever called you."

"I see that I was wrong, very wrong, to let my proud spirit rule me then," said Clinton, sorrowfully; "but I thought the poor orphan boy was no longer cared for, and I could not force myself upon the notice even of those so dearly loved, merely because they had befriended my desolate childhood. But, in my hastiness, I wronged you all; and the punishment it brought was severe enough to expiate the sin."

"Do not reproach yourself," said Elmira, "for we never dreamed of blaming you, after we knew you had not received one word from your Oakville friends. When Frank came home, out of justice to you, we showed Josie's letter to him, which stated that you had heard nothing from me; but I never told him of the part my aunt had acted, for I knew the house could not hold them both, after that. I am so happy to know, Clinton, that you have found this good home, and such a noble guardian as uncle Ike. Pray tell me how you discovered your relatives."

In rapid language, Clinton told of the circumstances which placed him in Philadelphia; of his rupture with Mr. Gay, his employer, and the opportune meeting with uncle Ike. His listener's face was beaming with pleasure, as he concluded his brief, but interesting narrative.

"And you have lived in plenty, and had every opportunity for intellectual culture?"

"Yes, Elmira, everything to make me happy, but the knowledge that I was kindly remembered by my childhood's friends. My uncles both treat me as a

avored son ; uncle Ike long since declared me to be his adopted son and heir, and his wealth and love have been lavished unsparingly upon me."

"O, Clint, how happy this knowledge makes me ! I never dreamed that the poor, unfortunate Clint Forrest, whom I so pitied in my childish days, would find such proud and wealthy relatives."

"No, dear sister, — I do love to call you so, — it was my wretched condition which interested your tender little heart for me. Whatever others may have done for me, you deserve my first and deepest gratitude."

Her hand lay in his, and her tear-wet eyes beamed affectionately upon him.

"Ned, Elmina, what does this mean !" said uncle Ike, standing gravely before them. "Is not this unwarrantable familiarity for a young gentleman and lady holding their first tête-à-tête. Elmina, I thought you were very maidenly and reserved ; here I find you talking with my nephew, who is an entire stranger to you, as though he were your brother, lover — I might say."

With a varying cheek, Elmina rose, and said, "When you bade me call you uncle, I did not imagine you had so good a claim to the title. I have found in your nephew the adopted brother of my childhood."

"What — how is this ?" said uncle Ike, the assumed sternness of his countenance gradually relaxing into a smile.

"Uncle Ike, you cannot deceive me !" exclaimed Clinton. "I read it in your eyes ; — you know this is the same Mina Clement who was a good angel to your orphan nephew."

"Yes, yes, I suppose I must own up. Bless you, Elmina, for your loving heart !" cried uncle Ike, laughing, and almost crying.

“Why did you not tell her who I was?” said Clinton. “It would have made her happier, could she have known that I was your fortunate nephew.”

“You see, Ned, I was always angry with those Oakville folks, in spite of my gratitude, for dropping you so suddenly. So, when I discovered that Lucy’s niece was the darling little Mina you have so often eulogized (which was immediately after she came here), I thought to punish her a little for so cruelly neglecting you. I persuaded brother George to say nothing which would give her any idea as to who ‘cousin Ned’ was; and as Lucy had no suspicions, it was easy getting along with it. But when I learned to know you, dear Mina,” he continued, looking fondly upon the happy girl, “I was sure you were innocent of any unkindness to Ned, and that you could make a satisfactory explanation. Still I persisted in the harmless deception, for I wanted to see how soon you would recognize each other.”

“I thank you for believing that I did not wilfully neglect Clinton,” said Elmina; “for I assure you I was as much affected as himself, when I found that, through the ill-will of another, all my letters to him had been detained.”

“I have not the least doubt of it, my dear; and it’s a fact, I’ve been sorely tempted, many a time, to thank you for your goodness to little Clint, and to ask about that good Josephine Lee.”

“I am almost bewildered, trying to think how all this came about,” said Elmina. “How could the child of your sister be left to struggle with poverty, and without friends?”

“It is a long, sad story,” said Clinton. “Uncle Ike, will you not tell her about my unfortunate mother?”

“Certainly, she has a right to demand an explana-

tion. Let us sit down here together, and I will tell the story in the fewest words. You must know, Elmina, that my father was a very wealthy and aristocratic man, proud as Lucifer, and unbending in his will. My mother was his opposite in every respect; gentle and timid, almost to a fault. George, Annie, and I, were the only children. Annie was very unlike George or myself; her hair was black as midnight, and her eyes dark and lustrous; her form was superb, and she had the daintiest hand and foot. She knew that she was very beautiful, but she ever seemed indifferent to the admiration her beauty excited. She inherited her father's passionate temper and indomitable will, and possessed her mother's confiding, affectionate disposition. How we loved and worshipped our beautiful Annie! From her infancy, father never denied her a single wish, and our mother's very life was bound up in hers. George watched over her with fond pride, and I, her younger brother, looked up to her as the very embodiment of beauty and goodness. She had the most engaging ways! — I see her now, with her fascinating smile!

“At school she formed the acquaintance of a young man named Clinton Forrest. He was an orphan, and poor; yet, in spite of all obstacles, he was determined to acquire a classical education, and fit himself for a lawyer. This young man and my sister loved each other. My father did not appreciate the manly worth of Forrest's character, but felt outraged that a poor boy should aspire to the hand of his daughter. He treated him with insult, and commanded Annie to see him no more. He then introduced her to a wealthy and aristocratic gentleman, with a strong hint to encourage his addresses.

“In vain did Annie plead the cause of her lover; in vain did she entreat our father to permit her to

wait a few years, in the hope that Forrest would win his good will, for he angrily forbade her to mention his name again.

“Annie could not bear this injustice. She was too proud—too like our father. She suddenly disappeared from our home, leaving no trace by which we could ever find her. In the brief note of farewell, which was found upon her table, she stated that young Forrest had given up studying for his profession; that they were to be married, and then seek some obscure place, where they hoped to make a happy, though humble, home.

“Our parents were filled with grief and dismay, and made strict but unavailing search for her. Our dear, broken-hearted mother died soon after, and father lived until old age, a changed and sorrowing man.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

AN OLD FRIEND APPEARS UPON THE STAGE.

IT is a small back chamber, meagrely furnished; and yet there is an air of refinement in the disposal of the few articles of furniture. In one corner stands a table, with a handsome portable writing-desk upon it, and a few well-bound books; proof that the higher faculties of the mind are not forgotten in the midst of wearisome labor for bread and raiment.

In a low chair, by the window, is a pale, high-browed woman, sewing rapidly by the fading light. She is youthful still, though there are lines of care and grief upon her sweet face, which make the quiet cheerfulness overspreading it very touching.

At her feet, playing with some wooden blocks, are two children, apparently three and four years old. "Josie," said the mother, at length, when the heavy twilight caused her to drop the bit of steel which she had been plying for many successive hours, "Josie, you may draw out the trundle-bed now; it is time for you and little Willie to go to sleep."

That clear, sweet voice — that cheerful smile — they are not unfamiliar to us. We recognize Josephine Lee, the happy-tempered girl we so loved in the days of yore. Alas! she is a widow; and her own slender fingers are the sole support of herself and little ones.

God help the widow and the fatherless! brighten with sunbeams of hope their shadowy pathway!

Josephine listened to the evening prayers of the little ones; for a moment she bent over them in silent supplication, and then resumed her work by the flickering light of a single candle. She had spent a week of incessant labor upon an elegant evening dress, and now a few stitches would complete it.

She rose, in answer to an imperative knock, and admitted a young lady dressed with exceeding richness. Josephine politely offered her a seat, assuring her that her dress would be finished in five minutes, if she would have the goodness to wait. The lady seated herself with a contemptuous glance at the bare floor, and one of cold surprise upon the sleeping children. There was a chilling silence, broken only by the little click of thimble and needle. The humble Josephine could not address the proud lady before her, and the lady herself would have laughed at the idea of speaking more than was necessary to a poor seamstress.

When Josephine arose, saying her task was done, the lady inquired the price of her work.

"Three dollars."

"Is not that high merely for making a dress?" said the young lady, taking out a tasselled purse.

"I think not, Miss Fay," said Josephine, gently. "I have worked upon it a whole week, and sat up very late some nights. It took me a long time to embroider the sleeves and bosom. I hope it pleases you," she continued, displaying the beautiful work.

"I have no fault to find with it. I have no small bills; can you change a ten?"

Josephine could not; she had but a dollar in the world, and that she owed the baker. She shook her head negatively.

"It is just as well," said the lady, returning the bills to her purse. "I shall have some more work for you soon, and can pay it all together." With a slight inclination of her head, she turned away, followed by her servant, who carried the box containing her elegant dress to the carriage.

Josephine stood like one stupefied, then sank into a chair, covering her face with her hands, as if to shut out the appalling vision which rose before her.

For many months she had maintained her family by work received from an extensive ready-made clothing establishment. But the pay was so scanty, that she had undertaken this fine work as an experiment, hoping to receive better remuneration. Now the experiment had been tried, and proved a failure.

What wonder her spirit fainted by the way, or that she wept sadly, almost despairingly, over her unconscious children?

"Mina, I have a most philanthropic plan in my head," said Clinton, one morning after breakfast, "and I want your assistance. Uncle Ike has a block of dwelling-houses building on A street. It is going to be finished plainly, but neatly, and the location is healthy. I have begged the privilege of finding tenants for him; and when I told him I meant to fill the building with those who needed good homes, he said he supposed he must humor me, even if it would be at the expense of his pocket. I have already found three poor but respectable families, who are delighted with the prospect of living in a comfortable tenement, and not being obliged to pay an exorbitant price. I suppose you know, Elmina, that there are hundreds of poor women and young girls in this city, wearing their lives away by sewing, night as well as day, for a mere pittance. Many an

innocent seamstress is obliged to live among low people, merely because she cannot afford to pay for respectable lodgings. Now, my plan is, for you to help me find enough deserving needle-women to occupy the remainder of the block; then I shall depend upon you and Laretta and aunt Lucy to supply them with work at fair prices. Come, Laretta, will you go with us? we may find amusement, if we can do no good."

"Impossible," said Laretta, repressing an exclamation of disgust. "I could not endure to go into dirty lanes and gloomy houses; and of course you cannot find your poor seamstresses without going into such places. And as for the amusement, I should call it very questionable."

"Elmina will not disappoint me, I am sure," said Clinton.

"Certainly not; I am charmed with your benevolent plan," said Elmina, as she tripped away to get her bonnet and shawl.

After they were gone, Laretta threw herself languidly upon the sofa, a frown of dissatisfaction disfiguring her smooth brow.

"Does your head ache?" sweetly inquired Bertie, who stood near.

"No," said Laretta, drawing the little fellow towards her. "I was thinking how strange it is that no one loves me any, since Elmina has come here."

"Not love you any!" repeated Bertie; "I am sure I love you better than before. I love everybody more than I did before dear cousin Mina came. And now cousin Clint has come, I am so happy! Don't you think Clinton is a prettier name than Ned? Mamma says Clinton sounds pleasantest to her because Mina calls him so."

“What is the reason you all love Elmina so much?”

“O, because she is so good.”

“Then you think her very good?” said Lauretta, peevishly. “It is strange that I never have discovered it.”

O, fie, Lauretta! thus to expose your jealousy to pure-hearted Bertie. The little one raised his heavenly blue eyes to her face in surprise, and then walked slowly away, with a grave, sorrowful expression, as though he were wounded at her words.

Tears came to Lauretta's eyes. “I have frightened angel Bertie away from me. O, it must be that I am indeed unlovely!”

Clinton and Elmina succeeded beyond their expectations, and were every moment growing still better pleased with their somewhat novel expedition. A child met them on the pave, dressed in coarse but clean clothes. There was an air of native grace about the little one, which prompted Elmina to stop her with a kiss. “What is your name, sis?”

“Josephine Lee Emery,” was the reply, in the quick, lisping accents of childhood.

“Is not her countenance familiar to you, Clinton?”

“It is, indeed. Can it be possible that this is the child of Josie Lee, our dear elder sister?”

“I think it must be, Clint; for her husband's name was Emery, and this child resembles her greatly.”

“Where do you live, little Josephine?” said Clinton. “Far from here?”

“Only a little way down that street,” answered the child, pointing with her dimpled finger. “Do you know my mamma? I wish you would go and see her, for she is sorry to-day.”

“We will go with you, sweet child,” said Elmina, “and perhaps we shall make your mother glad.”

Filled with joyful expectation, they were led by Josie to her mother's door. One glance at Josephine Emery's worn but still beautiful face was enough to assure them that they had found the beloved friend of their childhood. As she did not recognize them, they passed in as strangers. Clinton made known their mission in the same manner he had done to the other poor women with whom they had conversed.

“Your plan is a noble one,” said Josephine. “I cannot sufficiently thank you for your kindness, for you have come to me in my greatest need. I can find no work which will bring me a fair reward.”

“O, Clint,” cried Elmina, unable longer to restrain herself, “we have found Josie Lee in the midst of want and privation!”

Josephine started forward, looking earnestly from one to the other; then, in joyful recognition, she exclaimed, “Clinton! Elmina! is it possible I behold you both again?”

We will not attempt a description of this happy meeting, or the long explanations, which, though interesting to themselves, would be tedious to the reader. Suffice it to say, they spent a joyful hour, and the rose-color again glowed on Josephine's cheek, and happiness sparkled in her eye.

As they were leaving, Elmina gave the little Josie a golden eagle, with the playful remark that it was for her mother's looks which she wore.

Clinton would not have Willie slighted, and placed a similar coin in his chubby hand. Josephine understood their delicate kindness, and thanked them, in her overflowing heart, in silence.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE BROKEN IDOL.

“Wert weary, gentle dove, of this cold world?
And didst thou long to rest thy little pinions
Far in those bright and beautiful dominions
Where they at last are furled?”

Wert homesick, darling? *Could* thy little heart
Yearn for a love more tender than we bore thee?
Yearn for a watch more fond and faithful o’er thee,
That thou shouldst hence depart?”

C. M. S.

LUCY had returned late at night from a scene of festivity. Before she laid aside her costly dress, or unclasped the jewels decking her graceful person, she glided with soft foot-fall to the nursery. It was the instinct of her motherly tenderness which made her yearn to look upon her children before she slept.

Helen and Grace lay side by side, folded gently in slumber’s embrace, beautiful models of health and innocence. The young mother kissed each white brow with irrepressible fondness, then turned to Bertie’s bedside. Why does her cheek pale, and her breath come quickly, as she bends over the sleeping cherub? Bertie’s face is flushed with crimson, and the blue veins in his temples rise and fall with fearful quickness; the little arms are tossed restlessly above his head, and, ’mid his labored breathing, he murmurs incoherently. For a moment Lucy gazes upon him, and then seeks her husband in nervous haste.

“George, come into the nursery quickly! I fear Bertie is very sick.”

“You are fanciful, dear Lucy,” said Mr. Lincoln, playfully, as he followed his wife. But one glance at Bertie changed his unbelieving smile into an expression of alarm. “You are right, Lucy,” he said; “he appears to be in a high fever.”

“O, send for the doctor, quickly!” cried Lucy, clasping her hands.

“I will go myself; for delay might be dangerous.”

Lucy impatiently requested her maid, Maggie, to waken Elmina, and ask her to come to her immediately. Elmina needed not a second bidding. Springing lightly from her bed, she threw on a loose wrapper, and hastened to the nursery.

“What do you think of him?”

“He seems to be violently attacked with fever; his breath is almost scorching,” replied Elmina, a shade of anxiety overspreading her face.

Lucy wrung her hands. “O Bertie, my dearest, most beautiful child! If he should die! Elmina, tell me, what shall I do?”

How strangely at variance was her gala dress with the anguish written on her face, and her half-frenzied words! Her unbound hair fell wildly over the rich folds of her satin bodice, and the jewels on her arms gleamed fitfully in the pale light. Elmina looked at her with a strange fear chilling her heart; still she said, with gentle composure, “Dear aunt Lucy, try and calm yourself. The doctor will be here soon, and may relieve him immediately. I will stay with Bertie while you go and put on a more suitable dress.”

Lucy followed Maggie to her dressing-room. Elmina bathed Bertie’s burning limbs in cool water, and bound a wet linen cloth about his forehead

“Wake up, darling, and drink some water,” she tenderly pleaded; but he only moaned and tossed feverishly from side to side.

Soon the physician came, but his skill seemed baffled. All his remedies, all the efforts of agonized love, failed to shake off the stupor which bound the senses of the precious one; and quicker, fiercer still the life-current rushed through its tiny channels. When the morning dawned upon their tearful vigils, the doctor left them, saying there was no hope. In wild delirium little Bertie rolled upon his downy pillow.

O, the days that followed—days of hopeless watchings, and long nights whose agonized hours seemed endless! Heavy gloom rested upon that gay and worldly household. Tripping footsteps and light laughter were exchanged for the muffled tread and broken whispers. Eyes unused to weeping were dimmed with grief-drops now, and pale, sad faces haunted the stairway and entrance to Bertie’s chamber.

How powerless is human aid when death broods over a beloved one! How powerless is human sympathy when such waves of anguish flood the soul! Without the abiding presence of the blessed Comforter in the stricken heart, there is indeed no hope, and all words of consolation are but mockery.

Though the hearts that so idolized the little Bertie were generous, and filled with kindly impulses, they were undisciplined and thoughtless. They had looked upon religion as a beautiful thing, to be praised and revered, but they had no realization of its life-sustaining power. It had no hold upon their affections, for earthly objects and pursuits occupied their whole attention. Now their idol was stricken with fearful disease; the arms of death were opened to receive

their best loved. O, how wild was the rebellion in their grief-wrought hearts! How fearfully love struggled with iron necessity!

In all Elmina's trials and afflictions, she had never been entirely left a prey to haunting grief; for early education had implanted in her breast a living Christian faith. She was inexpressibly grieved to witness the utter despair manifested by her uncle and aunt, and, in fact, by the whole family. She alone was serene and self-possessed. She constantly attended upon the little sufferer, and directed the whole arrangements of the sick room; for poor Lucy appeared like one walking in a dream, and was completely unfitted for the least care.

In all the wanderings of Bertie's mind, he murmured of beautiful things, — of birds and flowers, of the sweet country, — and often the names of his best-loved friends were upon his lips. Not until the morning of the fifth day did the cloud obscuring his mind pass away. Then, after an hour's slumber, he woke with a familiar smile upon his cherub face, and the old love-light in his eye. But his face was paler than the frosted lily, and he had scarce strength to speak above a whisper, or to raise his tiny hand.

"Mamma," he whispered, "I am better."

Lucy covered him with kisses, while joyful tears streamed from her eyes. Elmina, too, was deceived, and looked up at the doctor with a hopeful smile.

The doctor looked upon the child, whose spirit's pinions were already pluming for his heavenward flight, and sadly shook his head. "I told you at the first there was no hope," he said, "and it would be wrong in me to deceive you now. Bertie can never see another sunrise."

"O, doctor, don't say so! he must be better. See

how natural he looks; he has no fever now, for his hand is cool and moist."

The kind-hearted physician dashed aside a tear. He could not look unmoved upon that mother's imploring face. He pointed to Bertie, over whose brow were already stealing the shadows of death. Lucy had never seen death, but she felt instinctively that it was present now. With a faint cry, she hid her face in the bed-curtains.

"Good-by, mamma!"

"Bertie, why do you say 'good-by'?—you are not going to leave mamma!"

"Yes; there is an angel coming for me. There are flowers there, mamma, such beautiful flowers!"

"Bertie, Bertie, don't talk so! Are you not here in your own little bed, with mamma beside you?"

"I shan't be sick in heaven, mamma. Mina says angels never are sick. Good-by;—you will come, too, some time."

A rapt smile played over the little, wan face, the blue eyes closed, and he slept, breathing gently. "O, I cannot see him die!" cried Lucy, falling into insensibility. The poor, stricken mother was carried away from the death-bed to her own chamber.

With blanched faces, the whole family gathered round the bedside. When those little eyes unclosed again, and the white lips parted once more, every breath was suspended to catch the faintest accents.

"Dear, dear papa!" murmured the boy, as he saw his father's pale face bending over him. The father imprinted one long last kiss upon his brow, and turned away in anguish. Uncle Ike wrung his brother's hand, and cried, "O, my God, how gladly would I give my wealth to add a few days to his precious life!"

Lauretta could not endure the scene, and went

weeping from the room. Helen and Grace broke out into loud and bitter crying.

“Nellie, Gracie, don't cry. Mina says Jesus loves little children, and perhaps he will want you to-morrow,” said the dying child. “Please, Mina, take me in your arms.”

Clinton raised him from the pillow, and placed him in Elmina's arms. With silent awe they gazed upon that face, where death's mysterious, solemn seal was set. “Good-by, two dear cousins, I love so well! — There are flowers there!”

There was a slight quivering through that tiny frame, a faint sigh, and, painlessly, the spirit parted from the beautiful clay.

“Blessed are the early dead.” O, Bertie, thy life was one beautiful hour of love and happiness! Now, in thy unsullied purity, thou art transplanted to celestial gardens, where bloom immortal flowers. “It is well with the child; it is well.”

Methinks, if those who are wailing over the lovely temple, so lately enshrining the spirit, could look upon his rapturous flight upward, they would rejoice, and say, “It is well!”

“Weep not for him,—he was too pure
For such a world as this;
No breath of guilt had dared to mar
His spirit's holiness.
But, sinless as the golden flowers
That yield their breath in tropic bowers,
Or the bright gems that span the sky,
His few but joyous years went by.”

CHAPTER XX.

COMFORT.

Child-angel! O, a mission bright
With thy sweet life has ended;
Sad are the hearts which thou didst light,
And with thine own were blended,
O, so tenderly!

“Do not bury him from my sight! Spare him to me a little longer! O, Bertie, Bertie, shall I never hear your voice again?”

Lucy bent over the little coffined form, moaning in tearless anguish. Very beautiful was Bertie in death. The flowers, which had been types of heaven to him, were scattered over his satin pillow, and one half-opened bud was laid upon his pulseless breast. His long, bright hair had been cut away, but a few golden rings lay about the lovely brow. The light of a heaven-born smile diffused a holy serenity over every lineament of his face.

Beautiful, but soulless clay! that must moulder back to its native element, while the pure spirit, once animating it, expands forever in the eternal light of heaven. It is not Bertie over which the mother bends in frenzied grief; it is only the fair garment which he wore for a little season, and has now thrown aside for one more perfect and enduring.

But Lucy did not realize this. She felt that

blackness had shut out the sunlight—from her life-path, and the cold winds of desolation swept over her sensitive heart.

The religious services had been performed, and the attendants were ready to bear away the dead; still Lucy clung to the coffin, crying, "Let me have him a little longer! I cannot spare him yet!"

Her husband's arm supported her, but his own tears fell so bitterly that his influence made her still weaker and more unreconciled. Elmina stood by them. "Dear aunt Lucy," she said, beseechingly, "look again on Bertie's face. See the holy smile about his lips. Think upon the new life which he has entered. You know that he is happy now."

"Yes, he is happy, to be sure; but I can't feel it—I can't realize it!"

"Bertie fully realized it. His last words were, 'There are flowers there.' He was so glad to go, you cannot wish him here again."

"No, I ought not to wish him back again," said Lucy, more calmly, and with a changing countenance.

"Perhaps his glorified spirit is hovering over you now, trying to comfort you with the assurance that he is still near you, and loves you."

Lucy looked up suddenly, as though she expected to see the gleaming of angels' wings above her head. She clasped her hands, crying, "Bless you, Mina! your words are coming true to me—Bertie is here!" Once more she embraced the little, still form, saying, "Carry him away now, for I feel that Bertie's sweet spirit is with me."

The star of resignation had pierced through the dark woe overshadowing her, and soon the Sun of Righteousness was to dissolve into sweet hopes every vestige of darkness left.

Grace had manifested little emotion, for she could not comprehend the mystery of death. But when they returned from the grave, she burst into passionate crying, saying that they had hidden Bertie in the ground, and she should never see him again.

Elmina took her in her arms, and gently stroked her fair hair, whispering soothing words. Her touch was magnetic; for soon the child's sobs were hushed; the wet lashes rested upon her cheeks, and her soft, deep breathing proclaimed that her grief was forgotten in kindly slumber.

Elmina thought, as she gazed upon the sleeping child, "O, if she could ever thus forget her griefs in innocent sleep! But years may bring sorrows which slumber cannot heal, and time only will rob of their sharp edge."

Grace awoke with a smile, so like that which had constituted the peculiar beauty of Bertie's face, that Elmina tightened her clasp upon her, with a quick heart-throb of fear.

"O, Mina, such a dream! I saw Bertie in a beautiful garden, and there were lots of little children there. I thought they had buried him up in the ground; but I shan't cry any more, if he is in such a pretty place."

Bertie's mantle fell upon his little sister. She grew earnest, thoughtful, and spiritually minded; but her buoyant health and rapid physical growth were equal to her mental development.

At night, after the different members of the family had retired to bed, Elmina sat alone in the parlor. Her strong spirit had supported her through days of watching and grief, but now she was completely exhausted and unnerved. She felt the need of that very comfort which she had given to her afflicted friends.

Those who have felt it know the unspeakable desolation resting upon the house from which the dead have just been borne. The startling stillness! — the waves of woe, rolled back, leaving in the heart an aching void, more dreadful than the first rude shock!

Elmina felt all this with exquisite pain, and, before she was conscious of it, she was sobbing aloud. But a moment passed, and her head was raised and placed upon a manly breast, and Clinton's voice said in her ear, "Brave, noble Mina! I did not half know you before. I do not wonder you are weak and dispirited now, after all your exertions. You have been an angel of hope and consolation to this desolated household. Comfort yourself with the thought that you have acted a noble part. I feel that little Bertie's death will not be in vain, for already my own heart is lifted upward, and God and heaven seem nearer."

Not in vain was Bertie's short life — O, not in vain was his untimely death! What holy affections had his smile and voice awakened! What wealth of hopes and tenderness had been poured upon his head! Living, he had bound many hearts to him in deathless love; and dying, he had drawn upward those hearts, with new hopes and higher aspirations.

O, when Bertie entered heaven, a ray of its eternal glory fell through the open portal! It brightens with a holy gleam the places where he has been, and nourishes in the mourners' hearts a faith born of God!

CHAPTER XXI.

A WANDERER FOUND.

JOSEPHINE EMERY did not remove into uncle Ike's new building, for that benevolent gentleman said she should no longer toil with her needle. A suite of rooms in a genteel quarter were furnished for her, and uncle Ike's influence procured for her a small school, from wealthy families. Thus she was placed above want, or wearing physical labor.

Josephine was happy in the vocation which in her girlish days had been so congenial to her tastes and abilities. She entered upon her duties with cheerful ardor, and soon won the hearts of the young girls intrusted to her charge.

When Lucy had recovered in a measure from the stunning effects of her affliction, she called upon Josephine, and invited her to dine with them the next day; for she was resolved to cultivate an intimate acquaintance with one about whom she had heard so many favorable reports. Josephine was touched by her unaffected cordiality, and accepted the invitation, knowing it would be very gratifying to Clinton and Elmina.

Uncle Ike was always very courteous to the gentler sex, and on this occasion he treated Josephine with marked attentions. He drew her into conversation with himself, and led the way to subjects of a high order, such as are seldom introduced into the drawing-

room. Elmina understood that he wished to sound the depths of her mind, as well as to learn the sentiments of her heart; but she did not tremble for her friend, as she felt that she would fully stand his critical test.

When Josephine was introduced to Lauretta, she instantly recognized the lady for whom she had made the rich evening dress; but there was nothing in the unembarrassed ease with which she saluted her which would have awakened a suspicion that they had ever met before. She had the advantage of Lauretta, for the latter was mortified and confused.

As soon as she could, with propriety, the proud girl hurried away by herself. "How mortifying!" she exclaimed. "How could I know that that poor seamstress would turn out to be a favorite of uncle Ike's — and so lady-like and well educated too! It is so provoking! and I owe her three dollars; but I shall never dare to pay her. Dear me, if uncle Ike should ever find it out!"

Several months had passed peacefully away. Late one afternoon, Josephine called to see one of her pupils who had been detained from school on account of sickness. She found the child very ill, and was induced by the anxious mother to remain until night.

When she turned her steps towards home, she saw that the street lamps were lighted. Somewhat startled, for she had never been out alone in the evening before, she passed on rapidly. A man stepped out from an alley and followed her. She was slightly alarmed, for the aspect of the man was not prepossessing; his eyes were hidden by a large, slouching hat, and the lower part of his face was covered with a thick growth of beard. She crossed the street, and he followed a few paces behind. Chiding herself for her foolish

nervousness, she stepped one side, that he might pass her; but, to her great alarm, he wheeled round before her, and grasped her arm, rudely.

The light of a lamp fell full upon Josephine's pale and agitated face. The stranger looked upon her intently for an instant, and said, in a hollow voice, "I thought it was you. O, Josephine! Josephine!"

Seeing her alarm, he relaxed his hold upon her arm, saying, "Josie Lee, you see before you, your long-lost, miserable brother Gilbert."

With a cry, half of doubt, half of amazement, she looked upon the wretched being claiming to be her brother.

"You don't know me," said the man, wildly. "Indeed, I am your brother Gilbert, and, if you have a home in the city, for mercy's sake take me to it quickly! I am a poor, hunted, houseless, hungry wretch!"

"O, my brother!" cried Josephine, weeping; "thus to find you, after such a long separation! But come with me to my home."

In silence they threaded their way, until they arrived at Josephine's pleasant home.

"Am I safe here, Josie?" said Gilbert, peering suspiciously around the little parlor.

Josephine, who perceived that he was slightly intoxicated, gently assured him that he was perfectly safe; then she hastened to prepare him supper, without asking any questions.

She soon appeared in the parlor again, bearing a waiter, with cold meat, bread, and hot tea. Gilbert swallowed a few mouthfuls, and then threw himself heavily upon the lounge.

"You are sick," said Josephine, vainly struggling with her emotion.

"I don't know," groaned the miserable man;

“I’ve not had an instant’s rest for more than a week. Let me sleep now.”

The grieving, wondering sister placed a pillow beneath his head, and watched him while he fell into a deep slumber. Then she undressed her children, who were loudly calling for her, and laid them in their little bed.

Once more she stood by her brother. O, God! could this man, with the traces of unbridled passions engraven deep upon his face, be the same fair boy whom she had called brother in childhood? It seemed impossible, and yet her heart told her it was so. Now she remembered only his good qualities; his affectionate temper, and pleasant ways. Her sisterly love spoke eloquently in the tears which fell thickly upon the sick man’s face.

Through what varied scenes had he passed since their sad parting? What errors had he committed; how often had he needed his sister’s influence and love, to shield him from temptation? Had he committed any actual crime, or were indolence and inebriation his chief faults? These and many like queries crowded Josephine’s mind, as she watched over her fallen brother.

The hours of that night seemed endless to her, as she sat, still watching by his side, until the gray dawn parted the curtain of night. Towards morning, Gilbert grew restless and feverish. He moaned in his sleep, and would often cry out, as if in fear or pain. When he awoke, he gazed about, vacantly. Josie spoke to him.

“O, I remember it all now!” he said, putting his hand to his head.

Josephine kindly inquired if she should get him either medicine or food. No; he wanted nothing. Suddenly, he started up, fearfully: “Am I safe

here?" he said, eagerly; "can I stay here, free from danger?"

"Certainly, dear brother, replied Josephine, thinking his mind wandered. "I have a pleasant home, and kind friends, who will rejoice with me that I have recovered my lost brother."

"Don't tell anybody I am here; if you do, I must go away." He tried to raise himself up, but fell back, weakly, upon his pillow.

"Gilbert, you are very sick; let me call a doctor. I will do everything I can to make you well and happy again."

"I won't have a doctor; and, for mercy's sake, don't let anybody know I am here! I wish I could get up and go away. What if somebody should come in, and see me? Lock the door, Josephine quick!"

Josephine grew sick at heart.

"Lock the door, I say! Do fasten the door! I can't get up myself and do it."

She felt, now, that it was not the mere wanderings of a disordered mind which made him fearful. Could it be the goadings of a guilty conscience? She fastened the door, and he grew calmer.

Josephine sat down by the couch, and took one fevered hand in hers. "Dear Gilbert," she said, in pleading tones, "tell me the meaning of this. Surely, you are not afraid to confide in your sister?"

"No, Josie, I am sure I can trust you. You were always kind and forgiving; but, when you know that I am a guilty wretch, will you still love and care for me?"

"O, Gilbert, what would affection be worth, if it could not live through danger, and even disgrace? I implore you to tell me all, without reserve."

The poor man turned his head away. He could

not repeat his story, looking upon her pure face, or in the light of her tender eye.

It was a sad tale of error and misfortune, which he poured into his sister's ear. He told of his first voyage, so long and crowded with misfortunes; of his unavailing regrets for his base ingratitude to his friends, and of his wearing home-sickness, which embittered every moment. It was five years before he again trod America's shores; and then he learned, for the first time, that father, mother, and brother, were sleeping in the grave. In bitter, remorseful anguish he wept over the green mounds concealing from his sight his wronged, but ever-loving parents. The pale, deathly face of his father haunted him, and he felt that that father had gone down to the grave mourning for him. He told of his yearning to see his dear sister then. He sought her out, and hung around Oakville several days, fearing, longing, and still dreading, to make himself known to her. He told of seeing her once, surrounded by a happy group of children, and he drew near enough to hear the tones of her voice. O, how he longed to fall at her feet, and beg for her love and forgiveness! But she passed him by, unconscious of his presence. Then he fell upon the ground in despair. He knew that she was good and happy, and he ungrateful and unworthy. He had ever been a source of grief and anxiety to her, and why should he recall to her mind all the sorrows of the past by intruding himself upon her? He was sorrowful, even penitent; but he had no self-reliance, no strong determination to reform. And, feeling as he did that he could never become worthy of her love, he resolved to let her continue to remain in ignorance of his existence.

Again he embarked on a long, uncertain voyage, caring little whither he went or what became of him.

At last he grew weary of his wandering, dissipated life, and, with a determination to become a better man, he engaged himself to a wholesale flour-dealer in the city. Gilbert spoke of his weak struggle against his appetite for strong drink. But for that he might have been favored and respected by his employer. Now he grew restless and dissatisfied; he thought if he had a little capital he might set up business for himself in some country town. He confessed how this thought came again and again, until it became his strongest desire. He dreamed of finding money in the street, and from that starting a great fortune. One day a man handed him a roll of bank-bills to deliver to his master. His first impulse was to take the money directly to the owner; but it looked so tempting in his hand that he stopped to count it. "Five hundred dollars," he said to himself; "just the sum I want." His evil genius whispered, "Take it, take it;" and he weakly, wickedly yielded to her fallacious promptings.

He knew there would instantly be a search for him, and hid himself in some by-place, thinking discovery less likely than if he left the city for the open country.

Then he began to repent of his wicked deed. O, how heartily he wished he had delivered the money to his master! He loathed it; he hated it now, and still he must conceal it about his person for fear of detection. For more than a week he had wandered about the city, stung with remorse, and writhing in fear.

Josephine made no sound or motion when he finished his story. "You are horrified, Josie," he said. "I knew you would be; but God is my witness that I never committed theft before. I have been idle and dissipated, but never criminal, only in deserting my poor dying father. But now, O, now I am ruined

forever! There's no use, now, for me to try to reform!"

"Gilbert, dear Gilbert, there is hope for you yet! You are truly repentant, and will commence a better life from this hour."

"God in heaven knows how true my sorrow is; how I detest my past useless, miserable life. - But it is too late; I am now stained with a crime."

"You have not spent the money, brother; and if you return it, humbly begging forgiveness, I am sure that Mr. Jones will grant it. Then you will be relieved, and will expiate your error by your future good conduct."

"Josephine, if I should carry back the money, I should be in jail before an hour. Mr. Jones is a stern, relentless man. Once I saw him from one of my hiding-places, and I heard him cursing me with cruel oaths. He said that he would find me, and I should feel the whole force of the law. I heard some one say, 'Perhaps he will repent, and bring the money back.' Jones laughed spitefully, and said that no repentance would suit him; nothing short of a term in the penitentiary would answer the purpose. O, what can I do with this money, Josephine? Take it from my sight — it burns my fingers."

Gilbert drew from his breast-pocket the fatal bills, and handed them to Josephine. She opened a drawer and placed the money safely within it, weeping silently; but, when she turned round again, her tears were supplanted by a hopeful smile.

It was now time for Josephine to prepare for her school; and, as Gilbert was much exhausted with his long conversation, she advised him to try and sleep while she was gone. He would not let her go until she promised solemnly to hide the fact of his being

there. He even insisted upon her locking the parlor-door after her, and taking the key away.

Poor Josephine performed her school duties in an abstracted, mechanical manner, and as soon as possible returned to her unfortunate brother. She found him really sick. Exposure and anxiety had brought on a slow fever. She begged to be allowed to call a physician; but his morbid fears had increased so that he was frantic at the bare mention of the thing, and she could only soothe him with repeated promises of concealment.

CHAPTER XXII.

LOVE. — HOPE FOR THE FALLEN.

UNCLE IKE desired Clinton to go on a business trip, which would take him several weeks from home, and the young man, happy to oblige his kind relative, cheerfully accepted the commission. The separation which he anticipated from his friends was so short, that he made his adieus lightly and gayly. He laughingly received the good-by kisses of Helen and Grace, and shook hands with Lucy and Lauretta.

But, when he turned to Elmina, an exquisite pain shot through his heart. He did not press his lips to her pure brow with brotherly freedom, as had been his wont, for the vague, undefined emotions of his breast were in that instant revealed to him. The expression of his eye thrilled Elmina: her beautiful lip trembled, and her eyelids dropped until their silken fringes rested on her cheeks, now bathed with tints, brighter than Aurora's blush. No farewell words were spoken, but one mute pressure of the hand told all that language could not. They were no longer brother and sister, but united by a tie infinitely more precious.

As Clinton was borne quickly away by the swift-winged steam-horse, a strange feeling of mingled assurance and doubt made his heart turn backward with painful yearnings. He felt that Elmina was

his; still unsatisfied, he longed to hear the blessed assurance from her lips.

When Clinton and Elmina met, after their long separation, which had brought them from childhood to the first years of their maturity, they renewed their intercourse upon the old platform of brotherly and sisterly affection. No false timidity, or foolish trifling, cast a shadow upon the perfect confidence existing between them; but the interchange of refined thought and feeling daily brightened the link uniting them. Unconsciously a kindred germ, existing in the hearts of both, took root in the deepest, holiest soil; and, ere they were aware, young love, gently displacing fraternal affection, bloomed freshly and purely in each heart.

“Mina, cousin Mina!” cried Helen, with playful impatience. “I have asked you twice to look at my drawing. Have I shaded this castle right, and will you show me how to make the pretty shadows in the water?”

“Certainly, my dear; I think you have drawn it very nicely.”

“But, you have n’t looked at it yet,” said Helen, half vexed; “you are looking straight at that little blue flower in the carpet.”

Grace laughed merrily. “I guess cousin is asleep with her eyes wide open, for she den’t mind a word you say.”

“Asleep!” Elmina started, with a high color. “No, not asleep, only thinking very busily. Give me your pencil, Nellie, and I will help you.” With an effort, Elmina threw off the delicious reverie which had momentarily stolen all her faculties. One glance at the pencilled castle on Helen’s paper dissolved the glittering dream-castles with which fancy

had just peopled her mental world. A single touch of reality sent imagination into the background, silent and abashed.

When the children had finished their lessons Elmina endeavored to engage her mind with books or work, but to no purpose. A sweet unrest possessed her. A length she threw on her bonnet, telling her aunt Lucy that she would go and spend an hour with Josephine Emery.

She rung twice before Josephine's little maid appeared, and then the girl seemed to hesitate about admitting her. She said both "yes" and "no" to Elmina's inquiry as to whether her mistress was at home, and with a very red face showed her into the dining-room. Little Josie and Willie were playing together very sweetly. Elmina chatted with them a moment, and then asked for their mamma. Josie pointed significantly to the parlor-door, which was slightly ajar. A feeble voice could be plainly heard murmuring confusedly and impatiently.

Josephine appeared at the door. Her careworn face lighted with a smile of pleasure, as she advanced quickly and grasped Elmina's hand.

"Dear Josephine, you look very weary. Whom have you here that is sick?"

"My poor brother Gilbert, whose sad story you have often heard. He came here day before yesterday, completely prostrated with fever, and is now seriously sick."

Elmina's face expressed her sympathy; but she asked none of the questions which rose to her mind, for the quivering lip and glistening eye of her friend warned her.

"You must have a nurse, Josie, for you can't keep school and take care of a sick man too. I have half a mind to chide you for not sending for me to help

you, as well as to rejoice in the recovery of your long-lost brother.”

“O, Mina, how gladly would I have done so! But Gilbert has committed a great error, and is fearful of discovery. He is perfectly frenzied at the thought of my sending for a doctor, and has made me promise, again and again, to conceal his presence here. But, as you heard his voice, I thought it was but justice to myself that I should explain.”

Elmina looked thoughtful as she understood the unpleasant position of her friend, and for a time they sat in silence. Elmina feared Josephine would become ill with over-exertion, and at length persuaded her to lie down for a few hours. She promised to take care of the patient until night. There was no difficulty in this arrangement, as Gilbert was slightly delirious, and did not perceive the change.

Elmina now made it a point to spend the hours usually devoted to recreation, in assisting Josephine in her manifold duties. And for several days Gilbert knew not that any but his sister's hand administered the healing draught or bathed his burning temples. One morning he awoke with new strength in all his limbs, and coolness in every vein. He had a dim, confused recollection of hours of feverish pain, but knew nothing of the long and tender watchings by his pillow. He saw Josephine dress for the street, and then Elmina's radiant face supplied the place of her anxious one by his bedside.

“So my sister has betrayed me!” said Gilbert, in a trembling voice.

Elmina kindly assured him to the contrary, and that his secret was perfectly safe with her. He looked relieved, but still made her reiterate again her promise of secrecy. When he had become accustomed to her presence, she read a short and appro-

appropriate chapter from the Bible. The holy words fell upon a contrite heart, and the low, sweet voice which uttered them invested them with strange power. His eyes were filled with tears when she concluded, and he thanked her in a broken voice. She had gained his whole confidence, and on the morrow he was strong enough to confess to her the story of his errors. Like Josephine, she spoke hopefully, even confidently, of his future course. She assured him that the past would be forgiven and forgotten if he would relinquish all his bad ways. Poor Gilbert listened half-doubting, half-believing. Her words had more weight with him than Josephine's, for he thought that the sisterly love of the latter caused her to overrate his power to overcome his bad habits. Worthy resolves grew up in that wayward heart, beneath Elmina's influence; and the angel of Repentance was crowned with the wreath of Hope.

Lucy playfully accused Elmina of being dissipated, as she had been to the opera with Mr. Arlington, and went out calling every day. The little lady had set her heart upon making a match between Clinton and Elmina, and was quite vexed because of Mr. Arlington's marked attentions to her niece. She was full of wonderment as to what led Elmina from home so regularly every day. Still our heroine kept her secret inviolate, and no one in the family had the remotest suspicions of the real facts.

Gilbert Lee had fully recovered from his illness. One bright day he sat with Josephine and Elmina in the little parlor which had been the scene of his sufferings and repentance. The flush of returning health tinged his pale cheek, and his eyes burned with a clear and steady light. He was in truth a fine-looking man, with his shining brown hair, and broad, fair

brow. But a phrenologist would have said he lacked firmness and self-esteem, and that the delicate curve of his under lip indicated effeminacy and indecision of character.

After thanking his sister and Elmina for their kind care of him, he said, "If it were not for that unfortunate money, still upon my hands, I might, in a distant state, earn a new name and a good reputation; but that clings to me like a curse."

"Gilbert, I beseech you to take it back to Mr. Jones," said Josephine.

"Yes, I beg you to do so," said Elmina. "I dare say Mr. Jones will readily grant you his forgiveness, and then you will feel greatly relieved."

"The money must be placed in his possession, but I dare not carry it myself. I have no faith in his forbearance. He is a hard, unyielding man, and would not rest until the law should punish me. I deserve severe punishment, I know; and have I not suffered, and am I not still suffering, the penalty of my crime? O, the days and nights of misery since that fatal deed!"

Elmina's face brightened with a happy thought. "I have it," she cried. "Let me confide your story to Mr. Ike Lincoln. He is one of the kindest and most benevolent of men. I can almost pledge my word that he will deliver the bills to the flour-dealer, and induce him to overlook your error."

"O, do, dear Gilbert, consent to this!" said Josephine, eagerly. "I have perfect confidence in Mr. Lincoln."

"No, no," said Gilbert; "I cannot consent. No man would look upon my sin as leniently as you two generous ones do. You cannot judge others by yourselves. Mr. Lincoln would doubtless reproach you for harboring such an unworthy man, and would

deem it his duty to deliver me into the hands of justice."

"You wrong Mr. Lincoln," said Josephine, sadly. "Can we not persuade you, dear brother?"

Gilbert shook his head slowly. His companions perceived that his morbid fears would never permit them to carry out such a plan. After a thoughtful silence, Elmina spoke: "Trust me with the money, and I will deliver it safely to Mr. Jones."

"But what if he should command you to tell him where I am?"

"I should not tell him," replied Elmina, with decision. "And, more than that, I will obtain his word of honor never to molest you."

"Dear Miss Clement! but he may deny you."

"I am sure he will not," cried Elmina. "I feel confident that I can serve you better than any other in this matter. Will you trust me?"

"Trust you? O, Miss Clement, with my whole heart! And, if you succeed, I promise you, by all my faith in God, and hope of heaven, to henceforth lead a useful and virtuous life!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

ELMINA'S MISSION.

IN a small and dingy counting-room sat two men in close conversation. One was a white-haired, pleasant-looking old gentleman, the other was in the meridian of life. The latter was a short, thick-set person, with a morose, unpleasant countenance, and a heavy, lifeless manner. Avarice and stubborn firmness were written in the strong lines about his mouth. His companion was evidently a person of some consequence, for he treated him with cringing civility, meanwhile trying to lure him into an unwise bargain.

A little Irish boy thrust his head through the doorway, and then looked back with a quizzical glance. "What do you want?" gruffly demanded his master.

"Plase, sir, a lady wants to see you."

"A lady!" said the man, rising, in awkward surprise, just in time to bow to the female, who entered unbidden. The lady was young and dressed genteelly; and when she threw back her veil, disclosing a face of surpassing sweetness, the proprietor politely handed her a chair. "To what circumstance am I indebted for this visit?" he said, with an attempt at being agreeable.

The color deepened on Elmina's face (the reader has doubtless recognized our heroine) as she timidly replied: "I have come on a somewhat singular errand, but I will speak to the point directly, without apology.

You had in your employ, a short time ago, a man by the name of Gilbert Lee?"

"Do you know anything of him?" asked Mr Jones eagerly, a frown lowering his brows.

"It is for him I came to see you."

"The thieving scoundrel! where is he, and where are my five hundred dollars? Can you give me any information concerning him? I have offered a reward for his discovery."

Elmina's lip curled slightly with the scorn she could not repress. All her timidity vanished, and she fixed her dark eyes fully upon Mr. Jones. She related her story in a dignified and unembarrassed manner. "Gilbert Lee retained your money unlawfully; it was very sinful: but remember it was his first theft. He repented very soon, but did not dare to throw himself upon your mercy, for he knew you were making strict search for him, and had declared revenge. For a week he skulked about the streets, the most miserable of men. Shame, fear, and exposure combined to bring on a fever, and for many days he lay near death's door; but, under God's providence, he has recovered. I think he has repented truly and sincerely. He has vowed to live a strictly moral life, and become a useful man. I firmly believe he will keep his vow, if you will but grant him your forgiveness, and will never accuse him of his crime."

Mr. Jones listened with undisguised displeasure. "You have got up quite an affecting story," he said insultingly. "And so you think I can afford to lose five hundred dollars, and let the rascal go unpunished into the bargain?"

"Not so; the unfortunate man felt such compunction for his sin that he could not spend a cent of the stolen money. He has sent it to you by me, as the most tangible evidence of his repentance."

Mr. Jones took the money with a somewhat mollified air. "It is all right," he said, with a grim smile of satisfaction, after carefully counting it.

"You will be content now, sir, and let the poor man go free?" asked Elmina anxiously.

"I have not said that. It is against my principles to let a thief remain loose upon the world."

"But, sir, this is his first theft, and I believe will be his last. I beseech you to spare him; he may yet be a useful man. But if he goes to prison he will lose all self-respect, and will feel ruined for life."

"Who are you that pleads so strongly in behalf of this unfortunate man, as you call him? Are you his sister; or perhaps his sweetheart?"

"There is no tie that binds me to Gilbert Lee, save that of our common brotherhood," said Elmina, as she rose with dignified composure.

"I will not detain you," said Mr. Jones. "Of course I cannot compel you to betray your friend, nor need I promise to give up my search for him."

"I promised Gilbert Lee that I would obtain your pledge never to molest him; so that he might walk the earth free from haunting fears. My mission will be unfulfilled, nor can I go content, until I gain that pledge."

"For shame, man!" cried the old gentleman, sharply. "If this fellow were ten times over a villain I would forgive him for the sake of the sweet lady who pleads for him. And she is right, — bless her fair face! If there is any manhood in you, promise what she desires, and let her leave this unfit place."

Mr. Jones was quite taken aback, and looked at the old gentleman in blank amazement. He who reproved him was very rich and influential. It would not do to displease him; so, smothering his anger, he

said to Elmina, "Well, well, miss; it shall be as you wish."

"You pledge me your word of honor that you will not arrest Gilbert Lee should you ever discover him?"

"Yes."

"And this gentleman will be your witness?" continued Elmina.

"Certainly — don't fear; he shall keep his pledge," said the gentleman, kindly offering his arm. "Let me wait upon you down the narrow, dusty stairs."

Elmina thanked him with a smile.

Clinton had that day returned, and, though Elmina was impatient to enjoy his company, she went directly to Gilbert Lee to announce her success. We will not dwell upon the affecting interview between the brother and sister and she who had been like an angel to them in her delicate, considerate kindness. On the morrow Gilbert was to leave the city, and in the far West to carve out a good name and a fortune. There was so much to be said on all sides that it was quite night before Elmina could tear herself away; then Gilbert offered to escort her home, and she proudly accepted the arm of the now redeemed and hopeful man. On the way, she breathed into his ear pure and invaluable advice, which he never forgot or neglected. As they stood upon the marble steps before Mr. Lincoln's door, Elmina slipped a small packet into his hand, saying, "Take this trifling sum; it may serve you till you earn more. When you wish to repay me, give it to some poor brother as unfortunate and needy as you now are. Farewell, and may happiness and prosperity attend you."

Gilbert was overcome with conflicting feelings. He wrung her hand with passionate fervor. "I accept it," he said, "for I could refuse nothing given

by you. I cannot express my deep, undying gratitude to you. May you enjoy every pure pleasure known to mortals, and may God hold you in his tenderest keeping! Farewell! While I have life and memory, your name will be dearest in my heart."

He turned away, and Elmina, much affected, passed into the house.

Clinton had grown impatient at Elmina's long absence, and had sallied forth in search of her. He saw her coming with a gentleman, and stepped one side that they might pass him. He saw they stood a moment in earnest conference, and, though he could not distinguish their words, he heard Gilbert's impassioned tones.

A jealous pang shot through his heart. "How like lovers they seem!" he muttered. "I wonder if that was Arlington?"

At breakfast Clinton was very unlike his cheerful, companionable self. He ate nothing, and played absently with his coffee. Lucy rallied him upon his forlorn appearance, but she could not make him relax into a smile. Suddenly he gave his coffee a vigorous stirring, and then swallowed it at a draught.

"Uncle Ike, I am going to Saratoga," he broke out at length.

"To Saratoga in November?"

"No; I meant that I am going to the White Mountains."

Lucy burst into a merry laugh. "Clint, I verily believe you are crazy! The White Mountains would be charming in winter! Come now, act like yourself, and don't talk of going away again. We can't spare you."

Clinton colored with the consciousness that he had made himself ridiculous; still he persisted in saying

he should leave New York. He was tired of the city, and meant to spend the winter in Massachusetts. In spite of the opposition of his friends, he made his adieus immediately. Uncle Ike laughed in the midst of his vexation, and said he had no doubt that the wilful boy would be back shortly.

Elmina's pillow was moistened with a few quiet tears that night, for she felt wounded at Clinton's abrupt departure; but she soon slept peacefully as a child.

Alone, in the privacy of her apartment, Laretta bowed her head in strong anguish. Beneath her cold exterior were volcanic fires threatening to deluge her undisciplined heart with the scathing lava of selfish passions. O, Laretta, save thyself from thyself, ere it be too late!

CHAPTER XXIV.

OUR HERO BROUGHT TO HIS SENSES.

“NEW YORK, June 3, 18—.

“DEAR CLINT: I am thoroughly out of patience with you for rambling all over the country in such a foolish and unsatisfactory manner, when we are all in a fever to have you come home. Nearly six months have passed since you took your abrupt departure, and in that time I have had only half a dozen letters from you, and those even short and lifeless. What made you leave us so suddenly, and why you remain away, I cannot conceive. If you have any real trouble oppressing you, who would be more willing to relieve you than your dotting uncle? And, if it is nothing but a protracted fit of the blues, I insist upon your immediate return. Do come home, dear nephew; I am longing to see you, as are all the rest of us. Laretta droops, and your name brings a blush and a sigh. Elmina seldom speaks of you, though I fancy she thinks of you often. She has changed since you left; her cheek is paler, and her smile less frequent. Though she is cheerful as ever, she cannot conceal from me her inward disquiet. Clint, have you done aught to grieve our Mina? Is there not a little quarrel or misunderstanding to atone for? Once I thought you loved her, and that she responded to your love. What is it that has come between you? I do hate this mystery.

“Don’t answer this letter except by your much-desired presence. We are sad and lonely without you, and feel little Bertie’s death more painfully when you are away. I count the days before your return.

“From your ever affectionate

“UNCLE IKE.”

Clinton threw down the letter with an exclamation of self-reproach. “How foolish, how impetuous I have been! and yet how kindly uncle Ike writes to his unworthy nephew. Elmina’s roses fading, and her bright smile dimmed, and I the cause! Elmina, dearest, best, if I have wounded you, I will a thousand times atone for it! How much stronger and better I feel, — and but a moment ago I felt quite languid! Ah, I always jumped at a conclusion! But Laretta’s testimony — can it be that she deceived me? I will find out, anyway. The shortest possible time shall take me to my good uncle and all the dear ones of our home circle.”

Mr. Lincoln had recently purchased a residence eight miles from the city, and thither the family removed when flowery June trod in the fragrant footsteps of departed May. As soon as they were fairly domesticated, their city friends were invited to come and dedicate their new home. It was truly a social party, entirely free from parade or artificial display. Sparkling eyes flashed in the brilliant light, and beaming smiles shone on every face. Sweeter than sweetest music was the gushing laughter ringing out on the balmy air, and joy’s melodious voice woke echoes in every breast.

Lucy Lincoln moved among her guests with unaffected grace. She yielded herself to the inspiring influence of mirth; she sought out every silent or

unoccupied one, and drew them into the merriest circle. Once she would have entered into the gayeties of such a scene with her whole heart; but now that heart had hallowed one recess with beautiful memories, and *Bertie* was the magic word which shut out worldly thoughts. The mission of sorrow had been to add a womanly dignity and thoughtfulness to the sweet simplicity of her character. If her smile was less frequent than before she had tasted affliction, it was more tender and expressive.

Elmina could not enter into the feelings of those around her. The laughter and music struck discordantly upon her ear, and delicate compliment and ready wit failed to call forth her powers of repartee. She was sad at heart, and the presence of gayety was distasteful to her. At the first opportunity she stole away by herself, and stood and mused upon the piazza, until the soft breath of evening seemed to fan away her disquiet. A figure advanced slowly up the flower-edged path; her heart bounded, as she recognized the object of her thoughts; — it was Clinton. She was outwardly composed when he reached her side, though her face was glowing with feeling. After their first salutations, they stood silently together. Often, when we have most to say, we say the least. The silence grew painful, and Elmina felt a bashful timidity, which she had never before experienced by the side of Clinton. She persuaded him to enter the house, and have his arrival made known to the family and guests.

Clinton's appearance was hailed with great pleasure. Uncle Ike was almost beside himself with joy. Though the young man was disappointed in finding the house full of company, for the sake of his friends, he entered into the gay circle.

“Clinton, your old friend and employer, Mr. Gay, is here, with his daughter.”

Clinton's countenance brightened. “Yes, I see them in the music-room. I will go to them instantly.”

Old Mr. Gay was delighted to see his former young clerk, and the blushes and dimples which spread over Fannie's face bespoke her pleasure. An hour was spent in recounting old times and inquiries for old friends. A little later in the evening Elmina and Fannie Gay were together, mutually pleased with each other. Fannie begged leave to present Elmina to her father, and led her to the old gentleman. She instantly recognized him who had joined her cause as she pleaded for Gilbert Lee, in the flour-dealer's counting-room. The recognition was mutual. Mr. Gay looked upon her varying face with admiring approval.

“Brave girl!” he whispered, as he held her hands; and then, as he passed along with his daughter, he turned to uncle Ike, and related the story of his first meeting with our heroine. Uncle Ike's kind eye filled, and a proud smile broke over his face. “Just what I should expect from her,” he said. “She is the most self-sacrificing girl I ever knew.”

Once, when Elmina was chatting with Mr. Arlington, she felt Clinton's glance upon her. He was leaning against the marble mantle, at the further end of the room. She was quite startled at the reproach speaking in his eye, and his melancholy aspect. She observed that he was thin, and looked more than half ill. “Clint's wandering life has worn upon him,” she thought; “he needs rest and quiet.” She drew near him, in order to dissipate his sadness by her cheerful sallies. Lauretta joined them, and, against the battery of their united charms, Clinton grew companionable, and outwardly cheerful again.

A momentary shadow rested upon Fannie Gay, as she beheld Clinton between these two beautiful girls. "But what a foolish child I am!" she said to herself. "Clinton Forrest is nothing to me." Mr. Arlington drew her into a tête-a-tête, and she soon forgot everything but his fascinating conversation.

Mr. Arlington loved Elmina, but he knew his love to be unreturned. Though wounded, he could not reproach her, and, like a true man, he endeavored to overcome his disappointment. He fancied Fannie Gay resembled Elmina in manners and disposition, and he felt a pleasure in her society, which soothed the pain Elmina gave him, now he knew she could never be his.

The night waned, and the guests retired; there was empty silence where mirth and gayety had reigned supreme. Elmina passed through the vacant drawing-rooms and entered the library to get a favorite book, which she wished to carry to her chamber. She was surprised by seeing Clinton sitting there alone.

"Are you up still? I thought you had retired, Clinton."

"I am glad you have come, Mina," he said, in a monotonous tone, much at variance with the strong agitation written on his countenance. "I cannot rest until I have unburdened my mind."

With a cordial smile, she unhesitatingly sat down by his side.

"Mina, it is for you to make me the happiest or most miserable of men. Hear my story. When I was a forlorn child your angel ways awoke the first affection in my heart. I loved you worshippingly, for you seemed infinitely above me; but, as we grew older, and we lived so much like brother and sister, you grew nearer and dearer to me. You gave me a sister's love, but I loved you for father, mother,

brother, sister — you were all the world to me ! That boyish affection is now lost in a deeper, more enduring love. I feel what language cannot express. Elmina, do you love me ? ”

Her voice trembled slightly, but there was a rippling sweetness in its tones, as she replied, “ Clinton, you know that I love you ! ”

“ Yes, I know you feel a friendly interest in my welfare ; but is your love like mine ? Do you remember that cousin Bertie’s last farewell was to the ‘ two dear cousins he loved ’ ? He spoke of us together, as though the intuitions of his soul told him our spirits were united, and that our names and destinies would likewise be one. O, Elmina, is it not thus ; shall it not be so ? ”

“ Yes,” she whispered, “ I am yours, only yours ! ”

CHAPTER XXV.

HAPPINESS. — LAURETTA'S PRIDE.

“Terrestrial love is like the chameleon ; it takes the colors of the heart on which it creeps.”

ON the morrow Clinton went to the city, and when he returned, at night, he brought a letter for Elmina, from Gilbert Lee. It had been enclosed in one for Josephine. It was written in such a grateful, happy spirit, that we cannot forbear to give it a place on our pages. Thus it ran :

“DEAR MISS CLEMENT: Would it give you pleasure to hear from the erring, desponding man whom you rescued from destruction, and sent away, strong in new hope and courage? I pray for you night and morning; and, if the prayers of one so unworthy could be granted, you would be blessed indeed!

“I came directly to M——, and found respectable employment and good pay; and, what is far better, I found good friends. If I am blessed with health, in a year I shall be able to furnish me a little home, and O, there is such a dear one to make that home happy! She whom I love is a poor girl, and not very well educated, to be sure; but she is modest and gentle. Her heart is full of kindness, and — and she loves me! I have told her the whole story of my life, and still she trusts me, and says she will marry me, if I continue

sober and industrious one little year. I have told her of my deep, reverential, almost worshipping affection for you, and she is not jealous, but says she would give the world to see you. Isn't that beautiful, and isn't she a dear, kind girl? O, I am so happy; and to you I owe everything! I have foresworn the wine-cup, gambling, and everything which leads to idleness and dissipation. 'Industry and sobriety' is my motto. All the good I may do, and all the happiness I enjoy, I ascribe to your exceeding goodness and consideration. May you be as blessed as you deserve to be. I can say nothing more.

"Joyfully, gratefully, I am yours,

"GILBERT LEE."

Elmina's eyes swam in tears, as she handed the letter to Clinton, who read it, and then returned it, with a look of affectionate admiration.

"I understand the whole story of it," he said. "Josephine Emery has told me all. I thought I knew you, but I did not; I did not know the true beauty and strength of your character. And now, Elmina, when I deserve it least, when I am entirely unworthy of your precious love, you grant me the priceless boon. How can I repay you, except by a life of devotion to your happiness?"

She placed her hand trustingly in his. "If I thought you unworthy," she said, "my love would never have been given. And what need I, in return, save your strong arm and manly heart to lean upon through all life's trials?"

"Which you shall ever have, beloved Elmina!" cried Clinton, fervently. "I will be your protector and support; you, my guide and star! As I cherish and make you happy, so may God bless and prosper me!"

“ Now I must explain a little to you, else you will think me wilfully capricious, when impetuous haste was my greatest fault. Mina, I thought I loved you as a very dear sister; I had not sounded the depths of my own heart until I came to say ‘good-by’ to you, before leaving home last summer to do some business for uncle Ike. Then, in an instant, the beautiful fact was revealed to my mind, and I fancied I read the response in your agitated manner. O, how impatient I was to get back to your side! I slept to dream of you; and, waking, your dear image was ever before me. When I returned I determined to tell you of my love immediately, before another could win your coveted affections. On the very day of my arrival you went out directly after dinner, and did not return until evening. I was a little mortified, but could have borne it quite well, had not aunt Lucy tried to make me jealous. She told of Mr. Arlington’s very flattering attentions to you, and declared that, if he had not already proposed, he would do so very soon. I knew, by the roguery in her eye, and her low, tickling laugh, that she had guessed my secret, and enjoyed my too evident discomfort. ‘Still there may be a little chance for you, Clint, if you are only quick enough,’ she said in her peculiarly bewitching way, and then went off, singing a provoking love-song.

“ Then Laretta came to my side, and said she had a little secret to tell me, which I must not reveal, as it was not her own secret. Mrs. Lincoln did n’t know it, not even uncle Ike, but Elmina had confided everything to her. ‘Arlington had proposed, and Elmina had accepted!’ O, Mina, those words were barbed arrows to my heart. She went on to say that as it was so sudden an engagement, you wished to

keep it secret a few weeks, and on no account must I breathe a word of it.

“ I was greatly afflicted, but still hoped it might be a mistake. When it grew dark I went out, hoping to find you in the street. I met you with a person whom I fancied to be Arlington. I did not understand the conversation between you, but I thought the tones very lover-like. I passed a long and dismal night, and arose unrefreshed. Lauretta was first in the breakfast-room.

“ ‘ Lauretta,’ I said, earnestly, ‘ can you vouch for the truth of all you told me concerning Arlington and — and Elmina? Are you sure it is so?’

“ With a proud, half-offended look, she assured me it was just as she had said. I had only time to apologize for my question, when the family came in to breakfast. I was half-distracted with disappointment and jealousy. I had lost the prize for which I would have staked everything I possessed. You, whom I loved with the most ardent affection, was the promised bride of another. I could not stay a day in your presence, and hurried away, my mind in a whirlwind of excitement. I never dreamed of reproaching you — I only blamed my own blindness and backwardness. Uncle Ike’s letter brought me to my senses, and I have come back with the same precipitancy with which I left. Now I am so light of heart that I cannot realize that I have spent near six wretched months. Elmina, can you forgive the pain I have occasioned you? Can you forgive my headlong haste? Will you still love me with all my faults?’ ”

Clinton was more than satisfied with the trusting smile which answered him. But a grave look came instantly, as she said, “ How ashamed Lauretta must feel when she knows that we have discovered her falsehood ! ”

"I knew Laretta was proud and selfish, but I thought that she was honorable. A woman who sullies her lips with a falsehood, is despicable!" said Clinton, indignantly. "What possible motive could she have had, Mina?"

Elmina's cheek took a brighter, richer tinge, and she looked up archly, but without replying.

"Poor girl!" she said, after a moment's pause, "she must be very miserable."

"Miserable!" repeated Clinton, "how ashamed, how disgraced she must feel! I scorn the intriguing girl."

"Nay, pity her instead. Let us never expose or reproach her, but treat her as we have ever done. She will suffer enough without our adding a single pang."

"Your generosity exceeds mine, but for your sake I will do as you wish. Happy would it be for Laretta Fay, if she should copy some of your virtues. I recollect that your father thought that your mother was almost perfect; and she was, indeed, one of the noblest and loveliest of women; but you bid fair to surpass her, though you are very like her."

"I surpass my mother! O, Clint, don't praise me! If there is anything beautiful or consistent in my character, any virtue worthy to be copied, it is hers. While she lived, her hand led me, her voice guided me; and, since she became an angel, the memory of her spotless life and elevated principles has daily grown brighter in my heart. I believe she is my guardian angel, for I often feel her spirit-presence in my inmost soul."

"O, Elmina," said Clinton, caressing her with an overflowing heart, "with you for my life-companion, who have an angel-guide, I should walk in a higher and better path than I have even yet trod. Together

we will seek to attain that high spiritual life, which will overcome earth's strongest trials, and fit us for useful happiness, and a triumphant death."

Night had kindly hung her curtain before the blazing sun, and threw her cooling shadows over the heated earth. It was a fascinating night in June. The full moon, suddenly rising above a mass of fleecy clouds, poured her silvery beams through the open casement. Lauretta could not bear it; the clear, calm light, mocked her woe. With an impatient gesture, she arose and closed the shutters, and lighted a shade lamp. Then she sank upon her luxurious lounge in an attitude of despair. Her face was crimson with the fire of raging emotions; the pearly teeth tightly compressed her aristocratic lips, and her azure eyes were distended with a wild, fierce expression. No tears quenched their unnatural brightness. Her small, jewelled hands were clinched above her breast, as though she thought to still the tempest there.

"If I could only cry," she murmured, hoarsely, "if I could only cry, and wash away with tears this terrible fever at my heart! But I am too miserable to cry—too miserable! How he must hate and despise me! and I, O, how I loved him! And I have smiled, and smiled, when my heart was breaking. Now I am disgraced. I have deceived him who is the very soul of honor. If I could only blot out that one hour of my life! I had rather my tongue had been palsied. I knew she had refused Arlington for Clinton's sake; but I thought to blind him, and win him to my side, and I have failed. I have lowered my pride and stooped to deception, and now my punishment is more than I can bear. They are so happy in their love, and I am alone in my shame. O, I had rather they would never look at me again than to treat me so

kindly when I know they scorn me! But I loved him, and hated her who rejoiced in his smile."

She hid her face in the silken cushions, and lay motionless. Gradually her mood softened, and the tears gathered beneath her lashes. She sprang to her feet and scornfully dashed the bright drops away.

"Tears! I will not shed one tear for him! I do not love him — I never loved him! Lauretta Fay give her heart unasked, unsought! Never! Many have asked for my hand, and Clinton Forrest shall not see me droop and pine because he has not sought for it. I will not shrink and cringe; my pride shall sustain me! I will be married before they are, and he need not think it was for love I told him falsely; and that soft-voiced Elmina shall not triumph over me.

"Let me think," she continued, dropping her head thoughtfully. "I have refused two within a month; Arlington long since left my ranks, and Carleton only remains upon the lists. I don't much fancy him, but it matters little. He will visit me to-night, and I will bring him to the point. He shall propose, and I will insist upon an early marriage. It is eight o'clock; he will be here shortly, and I must dress to receive him."

The strong hand of pride had composed her nerves, and she stood calmly before her mirror. A proud smile played over her features as she beheld the queenly beauty reflected there. She bound her long, bright hair with pearls, and covered her white arms and taper fingers with jewels; an elegant dress of blue silk set off her fair complexion, and a fold of costly lace covered her bosom, still beating painfully, in spite of her glittering smile. Just as she was arrayed in faultless taste, the door-bell rang, and she descended the stairs with a stately step, to welcome her foppish visitor.

That night Laretta was betrothed to the unprincipled Carleton, who loved her only for her wealth, with which he hoped to build up his own broken fortune. But Heaven was merciful. On the morrow she was taken violently ill, and for several weeks was confined to her chamber. Elmina was her constant nurse. She watched over her, with all the apparent solicitude of a fond sister. At first Laretta shrank from receiving the attentions of one she had tried to injure so deeply, but Elmina's affectionate ways prevailed at last, and won her love and gratitude.

With tears of contrition Laretta confessed her misfortune, her error, and her mad folly, in the engagement to Mr. Carleton. "But I do not respect him," she said in conclusion, "and, as he has not called upon me during my sickness, I am convinced he does not love me, and therefore I shall send him a note requesting him to release me from my promise. Had I not best do so, Elmina?"

"By his own conduct I think he has lost all claim upon you," said Elmina, taking up a daily paper and giving it to her companion. "Read, Laretta, and thank God for your deliverance."

Laretta glanced eagerly at the paragraph pointed out. She grew pale, then crimson with shame, and burst into a flood of tears. Elmina put her arm kindly about her. "Do not weep, dear Laretta," she said; "your secret is safe with me; no one shall know that you ever seriously encouraged the attentions of so unworthy a man. Strive to forget him, and you may be happy again."

Carleton had been arrested for an extensive forgery, and was at that time in confinement, awaiting his trial. He was convicted and condemned to a long imprisonment.

Laretta reëntered the gay circles, from which she

had been missed for a season, and none dreamed of the smothered pain and mortification in her breast. She danced, and flirted, and coquetted, as before. In all outward things she was unchanged, save in her treatment of Elmina, whom she now tenderly loved.

CHAPTER XXVI.

UNCLE IKE IN A DILEMMA.

CLINTON was in the library, reading, when uncle Ike entered, with an unusual expression of gravity upon his full, benevolent face. He closed the door, and commenced walking the floor slowly, with his arms folded behind him, and his head bowed upon his chest.

"Clinton," he began, a little nervously, "I have educated you, and spent my money freely upon you; and I have been richly rewarded. You have been as a son to me, or rather as a younger brother."

"And you have been everything to me,—father, brother, and uncle," said Clinton, with a glow of grateful feeling.

"I have called you my heir, have I not, Clint, and made a will in your favor?"

"You have called me your heir, uncle; but I have looked upon it as a title of affection and respect, as you are yet a young man, and we shall grow old together."

"Well, you have had reason to expect that I should give you a handsome setting-out in life." Uncle Ike walked faster and faster, with his head averted from his nephew. "Now, what should you say, what should you do, were I to burn my will; cut

you off with a paltry thousand, — in short, disinherit you?"

"I could bear it all very well, if I can only retain your affections. But it must be I have offended you. What have I done wrong?"

"Nothing."

"I don't understand it, uncle," said Clinton, in a tone of concern. "I must have grieved you in some way; please tell me how, and I will make every reparation in my power."

"I tell you, Clint, you have done nothing displeasing to me; I never loved you better than at this moment; and that makes it seem all the worse for me to disappoint your expectations." Here he blew his nose violently, as if to invoke his courage. "Whatever circumstances may occur, don't think you are any the less my dear nephew."

A new thought flashed over Clinton's mind, and his expression of perplexity vanished in a broad smile of delight. "Uncle," he cried, seizing his arm eagerly, "look at me, and tell me if I have not guessed rightly: you want to get married!"

Uncle Ike looked into his nephew's mirthful eyes, until he burst into a hearty laugh. "You are right, Clint; you've guessed it."

"I thought so, uncle, and I am right glad, too!" I wonder I did not think of it before, when I knew you thought Josephine Emery the most wonderful of all her sex. Now I can account for your frequent rides into the city. I wish you much joy!"

"Not so fast, boy; I've not asked yet. You had better wish me success. I thought it would not be honorable in me to take a step which would rob you of the property which you have looked upon as yours, without first preparing your mind for the change."

“Set your heart at rest, my dear, conscientious sir, for I have not a word against it. You are too social and domestic to make a contented bachelor. Josephine will accept you; she cannot be insensible to your worth. She will make you a charming wife; you will be a capital husband, and a good father to her children. My dear uncle, I rejoice in your prospective happiness!”

“You forget, Clint; you are rejoicing in what will make you poor. If I marry Josephine, her children will be mine, and my property devoted to them.”

“Of course, how could it be otherwise?” said Clinton. “But I am not poor; I can’t be poor. Have I not two strong hands, and a head containing a respectable amount of information? How fortunate that I had such a fancy for studying law two years ago! for a few weeks’ study will now fit me for the profession. I can work, Uncle Ike, and I will work!”

Bright drops twinkled in Uncle Ike’s eyes. “You are a noble, generous fellow,” he said. “Not one in ten thousand would act and feel as you do, in like circumstances.”

“I want you to be happy as I am,” said Clinton. “Why, since Elmina has promised to be mine, and you have blessed our love, I feel as though I must impart some of my overflowing happiness to every one I meet. I have not a regret for the fortune. There is dormant energy and independence in my character which will come out now.” Clinton threw his head back proudly, taking a deep inspiration. “Born to poverty and want, and struggling for years against every disadvantage, I am consequently better fitted for exertion than to repose in the lap of luxury. I have studied and dreamed — dreamed of doing great and worthy deeds; but your fortune, my most gener-

ous uncle, was a clog instead of a spur. Now that is removed, I can work. The world would never have heard of your 'sole heir,' but it may hear of your humble nephew!"

No wonder uncle Ike looked proudly and fondly upon the young man before him, whose handsome face was beaming with the strong purpose of his heart.

"I will tell Elmina of the change in my prospects, and I know she will feel just as I do. God speed your wooing, my incorrigible, incurable bachelor uncle!"

Josephine Emery had learned to watch for the daily coming of one whose cheerful presence had enlivened many an hour, and whose active benevolence had raised her above toil and want. Her children ran shouting "Uncle Ike! Uncle Ike!" whenever he came to the door, and her own heart beat a quick and joyful measure when his well-known step resounded through the hall.

Yes, Josephine loved Ike Lincoln;—perhaps not as she loved him who had received her girlish vows, and placed the ring upon her finger in token of their betrothment; but she felt for him an earnest and sincere affection. His sterling character had won her admiration, and his delicate and repeated kindnesses to her had deepened admiration into gratitude, and gratitude into love.

When he told her he loved her; that his greatest desire was to make her the mistress of a home which should be equally theirs; that he wished to adopt her children, and be a kind father to them;—when he told her that the deepest, holiest affections of his heart were all dedicated to her, she felt that her cup

of happiness was suddenly filled to the brim, and she quaffed it with a thankful heart.

There was uplifting of hands, and upraising of eyes, when it was whispered among the fashionables that Ike Lincoln was going to be married. What a wonder! Who was the fortunate lady? Where did she come from? Nobody knew; so everybody put their heads together to unravel the great mystery. But, when it was really known that he had married a young widow, whose only dowry was her beauty, virtue, and two little children, the wonder increased tenfold.

Manœuvring mammas and marriageable daughters, who had flattered and courted the wealthy and eccentric bachelor; those who had fawned and smiled upon him, proud to receive a smile in return; those who had swallowed his sarcastic rebukes without a grimace, because they came from him; — all these shook their heads and set it down as a very foolish affair.

But the happy couple cared not for what the world said, so long as their personal friends approved and rejoiced with them. A lovely country-seat was fitted up with everything which wealth and taste could command, and thither uncle Ike took his little family.

They were married; peace and plenty guarded the doors, and the angels of love and happiness crowning their hearts never were displaced. Tranquil pleasures, intellectual pursuits, and acts of benevolence and friendship, filled up the glad measure of their days.

“ An elegant sufficiency; content,
Retirement, rural quiet, friendship, books,
Ease and alternate labor, useful life,
Progressive virtue, and approving Heaven.”

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE BRIDAL.

“ Echo, on the zephyrs gliding,
Bears a voice which seems to say,
‘ Ears and hearts, come list my tidings,
This has been a wedding day.’ ”

A YEAR had passed. Our hero had studied faithfully and well. He had been admitted to the bar with honor, and old and wise lawyers said that Clinton Forrest would be an ornament to his profession. His heart beat with high hopes, and now the crowning wish of his life was about to be consummated.

On one fair morning, Clinton and Elmina were to start for Oakville; there, beneath the parental roof, to register their plighted vows before God and man. It was to be a double wedding; for, in the same hour, Frank Clement and Dora May were to become one in name, as they had long been in heart. Generous uncle Ike had caused a fine cottage to be erected on a lovely site adjoining the grounds once belonging to Dr. Clement, now in the possession of his son. He and Clinton had repeatedly visited Oakville, and now the house was all fitted and furnished for the young couple.

Uncle Ike and his Josephine had never journeyed together, and they thought this a fine opportunity to visit Oakville, and to accompany their young friends on their bridal tour.

George Lincoln's spacious villa was rife with the bustle of preparation. Tears and smiles, regrets and congratulations, mingled with the tender leave-taking. Uncle George shook hands with his nephew and niece, and wished them every imaginable blessing. Lucy folded Elmina to her bosom, with brimming eyes, and prayed Heaven to smile upon her ever. She embraced Clinton, with many half-serious, half-playful commands about guarding well her darling Mina. The little girls clung weeping to their dear cousins, and only repeated promises that they should visit them in their Massachusetts home could check their fast-flowing tears.

The last good-by was said, and, uncle Ike's cheerful voice sounding above the rest, the two couple entered the coach which was to convey them to the steamboat. The short journey to Oakville was executed quickly and pleasantly. We say Oakville still, though the place is now known by a different appellation, and has become almost a city in population and business.

Elmina thought the place had never looked so beautiful, and her own dear childhood's home seemed dearer than ever before. Frank and Dora were ready to greet them. O, what a meeting it was! We cannot describe it; our pen falters and shrinks from the impossible task. Here our young friends had parted with tears and regrets, and here they had met again under the happiest auspices. And the presence of their beloved instructress and her husband increased their joy.

In a state of delightful confusion, they sat down to the luxurious supper-table, over which Mrs. May presided with placid ease. The faithful Ann fluttered back and forth, more glad than she had ever been before. There had been a little love episode in her

life; but, her lover proving recreant, she came back to her old home, contented to serve the son as she had the father. And then her dear Miss Mina was to live close by, and be married to Clint Forrest, her old favorite. So many joyful things, happening all at once, made the girl almost beside herself; and, to crown all, she was to be left in charge of the mansion while the young couples took their bridal trip: for Mrs. May was to accompany them.

After tea, the merry company made a tour of the house. Everything was in order, and ready for housekeeping. Uncle Ike lingered to admire the view from the western windows, but Elmina hastened to the chamber which has been spoken of as her mother's favorite sitting-room. Great was her disappointment to find it furnished entirely anew, and wearing so different an aspect that she could hardly recognize the apartment which her father had fitted up expressly for her mother, and after her death had called hers. She turned away, with quivering lip and heaving bosom. Her interest in examining the house was lost, while the rest admired this or that, and laughed and chatted to their hearts' content.

A beautiful white cottage peeped invitingly through the intervening foliage, and upon it Elmina's eye rested longingly. Clinton, observing her abstraction, went and stood by her side.

"Is that our home, Clint?" she whispered.

"Yes, dearest. Is it not a lovely spot?"

"Very lovely!" was the earnest reply.

"Now, Dr. Frank," said uncle Ike, "we've passed judgment on your mansion, and you must lead the way to the establishment of our young lawyer. Lucky people this, to gain in one day two such talented young men! Undoubtedly, in five years, Dr. Clem-

ent and lawyer Forrest will be the leading men of the place!"

"I shall do what I can to fulfil my part of your prophecy," said Clinton, laughing.

"And I," said Frank, "must play my cards very badly, not to gain some influence. My father's name is better than a fortune to me; for the people here imagine me to possess all his virtues and abilities."

"So it seems you are both on the high-road to fame," said uncle Ike. "May God speed you, my young aspirants!"

"What a love of a cottage!" thought Elmina, as they came in full view; and "What a love of a house!" was echoed by all, as they entered the tasteful abode. The style of furniture, coloring of carpets, the pictures gracing the walls, and the arrangement of the flowing curtains, were all in perfect keeping. An air of exquisite taste pervaded the whole. While staying in New York, Elmina had half wished she could personally superintend the arrangement of her new home; but now she was satisfied — nay, more than satisfied, delighted.

"To be sure," said uncle Ike, "Elmina selected everything in New York, and Clint and I nailed down the carpets and brought in the furniture; but it is to Miss Dora's fine taste and skilful fingers that the whole house owes its pleasing appearance."

Elmina looked her gratitude, as she affectionately pressed Dora's little hand. The parlors were admired, the pretty little library, and the large convenient kitchen; and then they passed up stairs.

"This is my *beau ideal* of a guest-chamber," said Elmina, looking around in pleased surprise. "And these two smaller rooms are as pretty as can be. What, is there another large chamber?" she continued, as Dora threw open the door. "In describ-

ing the house, Clinton, I thought you spoke of but three.”

She entered the room, and the first glance about her brought a bright sparkle to her eye. The carpet, the chairs and table, were those which had belonged to her dear mother's chamber; her little library, work-stand, and even the rosewood writing-desk, were all in their proper places. Joyful, grateful tears swelled in Elmina's eyes, as she looked from Frank to Dora, and from Dora to Clinton, who were exchanging significant glances. They had prepared a pleasant surprise for her. She tried to thank them, but her voice failed her; she sat down in the little rocking-chair where her mother had often sat, and Frank put his arm about her, and they talked, in low tones, of the dear father and mother, whose spirits they felt were rejoicing in their happiness. The remainder of the company considerately left the brother and sister alone, while they sauntered about the garden-walks.

Radiantly dawned the bridal morn. The rising sun flung such a flood of glory through the parted curtains, that Dora sprang from her pillow to look out upon the lovely day.

“Wake, Mina!” she cried to her sleeping friend; “the sun is shining gloriously; the birds are singing sweeter than I ever heard before, and the air is clearer and softer — all in honor of our bridal morn! Wake, Mina! let us take a ramble before the sun kisses the dew from the flowers, or the birds finish their morning songs.”

Shortly, the two maidens, soon to step from maidenhood into the holiest relationship of life, were tripping up the green hills, and dancing through the grove, filling their hands with flowers, and their hearts with melody. Nature sang a new song to them on that morn, striking a deeper and a tenderer tone.

Never did the two friends look more lovely than when they returned with their dew-wet flowers. Exercise and excitement, with the deep happiness welling up from their hearts, combined to throw an irresistible charm over their sparkling faces.

Frank and Clinton, with their arms passed about each other, walked out to meet the dear girls. The little band of friends was united once more with unbroken links. True, love had sprung up luxuriantly in each young heart, but it could not overshadow the tie of friendship that still drew them all together in a beautiful union.

They were married, at an early hour, by the aged pastor who had ministered to the people many years. He had married Dr. Clement, whom he much loved and respected, and now he performed the same ceremony for his son and daughter, with deep emotion. It was a touching scene—that white-haired man standing so solemnly before the blooming couples, and the half-tearful, half-smiling attention of those friends who were invited to witness the ceremony.

“What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder!”

The minister bowed his head in silence. Both couples were united in bonds which death only could divide.

There was a momentary hush, while the beating hearts grew more composed, and then there was a perfect shower of congratulations, compliments and good wishes.

Uncle Ike saluted each bride with a kiss, and then the wedding-cake and sparkling water were served, 'mid such pretty sayings, meaning smiles and timely witticisms, as ever constitute the after-piece of a wedding.

Just as the company were about to disperse, the

venerable pastor, standing in the centre of the circle, raised his hands and eyes heavenward, as if to invoke a benediction. Every tongue was mute, and every eye turned upon their revered friend.

“Holy Father, pour thy choicest blessings on these young people, who have just entered the bonds of matrimony. Bless them in their houses and stores; bless them by their firesides, and in the outer walks of life! Grant that the mantles of the parents may descend upon the children, and may their virtues be the watchword of their lives!”

“Amen!” said uncle Ike.

“Amen!” was the inaudible, yet fervent response of those for whom the blessing was breathed; and “Amen!” said every listening heart.

In an hour the bridal party set out on their pleasure-excursion, and the mansion was deserted by all save the faithful domestic, who went about arranging the disordered parlors with a cheerful ditty on her lips.

The old miser, Wells, was dead; and his wife, whom we knew of old as Mrs. James Clement, was frantic — not with grief for the loss of her husband, but for the loss of property. He had left everything to a distant cousin. Thus her fearful sacrifice for gold was all in vain. Without a single friend to comfort her, or the knowledge of her own virtue to console her, the spirit of Mrs. Wells was prostrated to the dust by the wild storm of disappointment and adversity.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

LAURETTA.

“Wealth often killeth, where want but hindereth the budding”

IN order to alleviate her disappointment and chagrin, Laretta Fay plunged into the dizziest round of fashionable amusement. She dressed more expensively than ever before; the costliest jewels and finest fabrics were scarce worthy to deck her queenly person. But all the blandishments of wealth and fashion could not steal away the inward regret; her laugh echoed over a heart weary and dissatisfied.

A leisure hour was unbearable to her who had suffered her mind to remain vacant, while she merely sipped the bright foam of superficial accomplishments. She lived out of herself as much as possible. She grew more exclusive, more fastidious in her dress, more aristocratic and heartless, every day.

In the height of her giddy career, when the rich sought her favor, and even the good and gifted were dazzled by her beauty, the bubble of fortune burst. Horrified at this unexpected revolution in the wheel of fate, poor Laretta felt as if wrecked on a dismal shore, with a wild and stormy sea rolling between her and the gay world she so loved.

Ike Lincoln could no longer conceal from his ward the fact that she was lavishing an imaginary fortune, for the real wealth had taken itself wings and flown away. He placed three thousand dollars in her hand,

with the information that it was all she possessed except her wardrobe and jewels. The kind-hearted man refrained from telling her that he took the three thousand dollars from his own property, after settling her unpaid bills.

Lauretta spread the money before her, gazing upon it with distended eyes. Her fortune, which she had imagined to be almost inexhaustible, was suddenly contracted within the compass of a nut-shell. O, what was the world to her now — her world of summer friends? Often had she passed slightly by those whom fortune had deserted; and now it was her turn to shrink from the coldly-averted eye, the contemptuous smile, and, worse than all, the utter neglect of those whom she had called friends. O, it was a hard lesson for the proud girl!

She could not endure to remain in the city, now that she could no longer appear to advantage in the gay circles where she had shone preëminent; therefore she resolved to retire to the country. Her health and spirits were at the lowest ebb. At this moment of her need she received a letter from Clinton and Elmina, with a cordial and pressing invitation to visit them. She hesitated but for a moment, for she was humbled, and felt that she needed just such kind attentions and advice as she knew she should receive under their roof.

Our friends received her with open arms, for they were filled with compassion for the unfortunate girl. No reference was ever made to aught unpleasant in the past, while they treated her as a beloved friend. The mighty power of kindness overcame the pride and selfishness in Lauretta's heart, and she acknowledged, with penitential tears, that she had received good for evil.

At first Lauretta suffered in the daily presence of

Clinton, and in beholding his tenderness for his bride; but in time this feeling wore away, and a better and wiser one took its place. She began to feel pleasure in the joy of others. Ere long she was fully domesticated in this happy home, which seemed an ark of peace to her worn spirit.

Lauretta was not entirely heartless. There was a spring of womanly worth in her bosom, which was hidden by the rubbish of false education, and the glitter of outward display. Now the force of circumstances turned her thoughts within, and the slumbering good was found; warm and true feelings bubbled forth, refreshing withered virtues, and reviving forgotten resolves.

Elmina perceived with pleasure this radical change in Lauretta, and, by her advice and example, assisted her much. Lauretta was surprised that she could be so happy in a quiet country home; she sang over her sewing; and the cool grove and singing birds oft wooed her out to learn a lesson of nature. Nature is a sacred teacher; its influence was most blessed on the gay belle, whose perceptions of the pure and beautiful were just springing into life. When six months had passed, she acknowledged that, in the height of her gay city career, she had never been as happy as now. She ceased to regret the loss of wealth, since she had gained what was more desirable, health and quiet happiness. She now had time to cultivate her mind, and she soon found a new occupation and delight; the fountains of knowledge were unsealed to her.

In time Lauretta Fay became very unlike herself of old. The haughty expression of her face was exchanged for one of cheerfulness, and she was affectionate and companionable. This transformation was not effected without many struggles and prayers.

She would sometimes repine and despond ; sometimes speak scornfully to her dearest friends ; and often her proud ways would send away in disgust those who would gladly have loved her. But she viewed life from a new platform ; she perceived her moral obligations, and had a sincere desire to elevate her character. She persevered. Preconceived prejudices gradually loosened their hold upon her mind, and, 'mid all-ennobling influences, she became gentle and loving. She persevered, and the victory was hers — a glorious victory, even the conquering of self.

CHAPTER XXIX.

CONCLUSION.

THE lights and shadows of twelve years have thrown their changeful web over human life, and we lift the curtain again to bid adieu to the characters of our tale.

A country farm-house is now the home of Mrs. Wells. A comfortable room is allotted to her use, and the farmer's kind wife attends faithfully to all her wants. Yet she is lonely. No love-tone makes music through the untuned strings of her heart, and no touch of affection smooths the wrinkles on her brow. Alone and unloved, she is passing down the declivity of life. Premature age bows her form and streaks her dark locks with gray. She is dependent upon the bounty of Clinton Forrest. His generosity provides her a comfortable home. Yes, he, who when a boy she ill-treated and despised, came to her in her poverty, and saved her from the almshouse. She feels the galling weight of dependence, but no gratitude softens her heart. Sometimes Elmina comes like a sunbeam, with her sweet words and smile, but Mrs. Wells is too wretched, too much absorbed in her deserved calamities, to reply only with peevish complaints.

James Clement is a drunkard; and his wretched mother sadly contrasts his fate with that of his favored cousin Frank, but is all unconscious that her

own weakness and folly sowed in childhood the seeds of the harvest she is reaping now.

In a fair southern home, where every breeze is redolent with perfume, and wealth and taste combine to beautify, dwell the happy Arlington and sweet Fannie Gay, now his wife and the mother of two blooming children.

And would you hear a word of Laretta Fay? She is the queen of an humble, but happy home. A worthy man has won her to himself, and she reigns more proudly in his heart than ever in the gay circles of fashion.

A fair and stately young matron, dignified, yet cordial. Her cottage-home is sought by the gifted and true. Little children offer her flowers and look wonderingly upon her beauty. The suffering and needy rejoice in her gentle charities, and many an invalid's eye brightens at the tones of her voice. Her husband folds her to his heart and blesses her; and the tiny one blossoming by her side, elings fondly to her.

Can this be Laretta Fay?

Ay. The proud belle is metamorphosed into the tender wife and mother; the fashionable lady into a true woman. It is a beautiful change. Once happiness was as a gilded air-bubble to her vision; now it has a tangible hold on all the springs of life.

Uncle Ike's prophecy is now fulfilled: Frank Clement and Clinton Forrest are the leading men in the place. The present high moral and intellectual tone of the community is owing very much to the united labors of these energetic young men.

Frank has followed in the footsteps of his excellent father, and he wears high honors in his profession. And his home, — O, it is a happy one! Dora's smile is as bright as in her girlish days, and her spirit

as blithe and gay as ever. Is her husband's brow clouded? how quickly her voice dispels the shadows! Is he weary and depressed? how she charms him into forgetfulness of all save her love!

Clinton Forrest does not look upon his profession merely as a road to wealth and eminence, but he regards it as a responsible office, which, if honorably filled, will elevate himself and those for whom he labors. Right and Truth are his motto. He adjusts petty quarrels with his kindly advice as a Christian man. But when the poor, the wronged and oppressed, need him, his heart is fired with zeal and his tongue with eloquence. Elmina is the light of his home, the star of his heart. Her voice is still dearer to him than the world's praises, and her love more treasured than the wreath of fame.

Some tears have they shed. Flowers blossom on the grave of a loved one; their beautiful first-born is given back into the keeping of a Holy Father. But their little Bertie still smiles upon them, and makes music for their hearts.

Despite the clouds which drift across the sunniest summer's sky, — despite the thorns which will spring where roses grow, — our friends are walking joyfully the path of life. Honor and peace dwell with them, and love, unaltered and undimmed, burns brightly in each heart.



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