



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

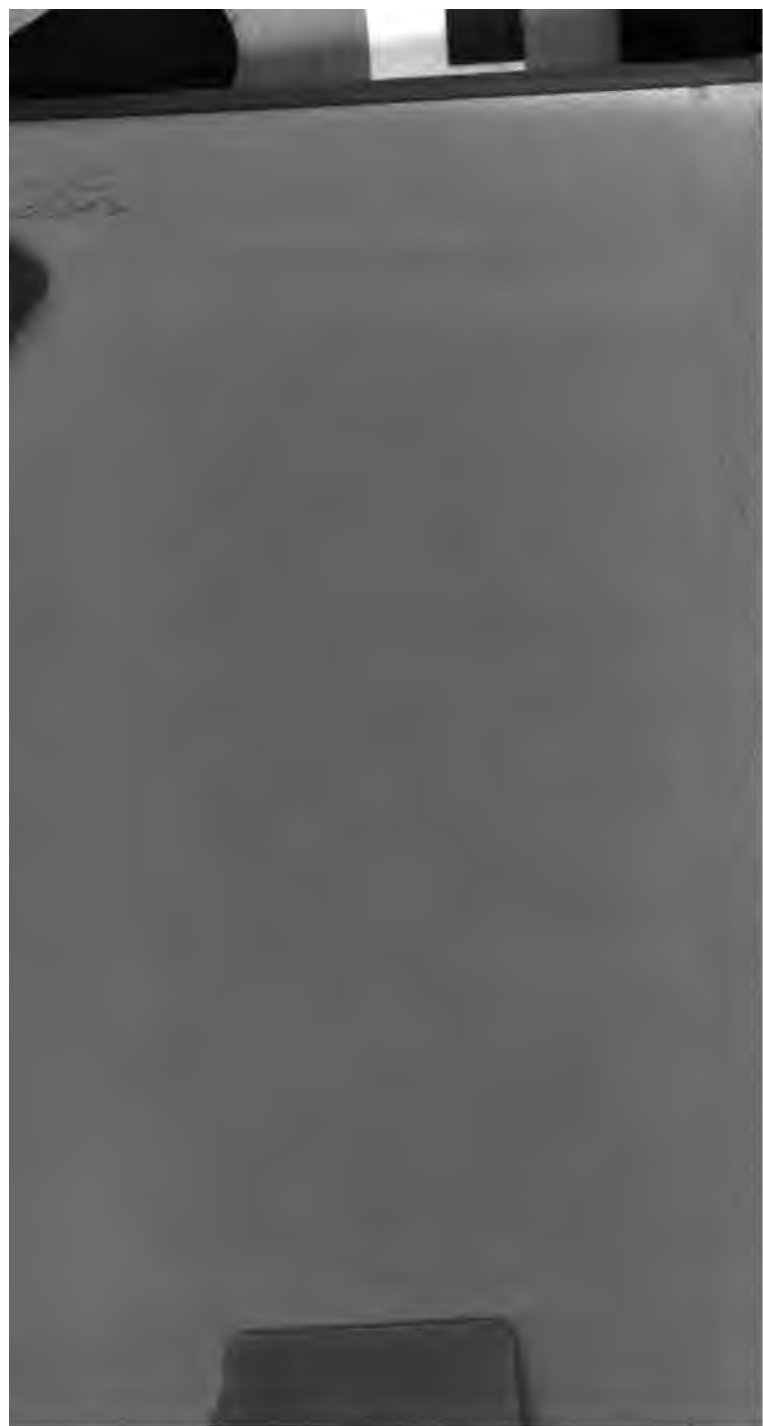
ES



38 4

Kenneth

My King











.





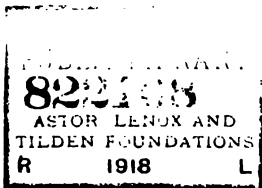
KENNETH, MY

J. Nobel.

BY
SALLIE A. BROOKS



NEW YORK:
G. W. Carleton & Co., P
LONDON: S. LOW, SON & CO
M.DCCC.LXXIII.
m.n.



Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1873, by
G. W. CARLETON & CO.,
In the Office of the Librarian of Congress, at Washington.

NOY WAM
JULY
1873

Stereotyped at the
WOMEN'S PRINTING HOUSE,
55, 58 and 60 Park Street,
New York.

he year 1873, by
at Washington.

TO
THE MEMORY
THE LATE
Dr. JOSEPH BALDWIN
OF
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA
AS A
TRIBUTE OF AFFECTION
TO ONE OF THE
PUREST AND NOBLEST
THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED
BY HIS
SISTER

Dr. Joseph Baldwin



.

.

.

.

1

CONTENTS.

| CHAPTER | PAGE |
|--|------|
| I.—Retrospection | 9 |
| II.—An Outward Look | 20 |
| III.—Mysterious Music | 30 |
| IV.—Making Acquaintance | 40 |
| V.—“I Never did have any Mother” | 49 |
| VI.—What became of the Bridge? | 57 |
| VII.—“Is there anything in wishing by the New Moon?” | 69 |
| VIII.—By the Century-plant | 79 |
| IX.—De Profundis | 92 |
| X.—More Light | 101 |
| XI.—As You Like It | 112 |
| XII.—Explorations and Revelings | 126 |
| XIII.—Is there a Skeleton in his Closet? | 139 |
| XIV.—Looking for the Baby's Grave | 151 |
| XV.—Guess | 165 |
| XVI.—That was the Ghost | 172 |
| XVII.—Our Neighbors | 187 |
| XVIII.—Éclaircissement | 201 |
| XIX.—The Brothers | 212 |
| XX.—Light and Darkness | 222 |
| XXI.—A Midsummer Fête | 232 |
| XXII.—An Unexpected Plunge | 246 |
| XXIII.—Looking to the Future | 259 |
| XXIV.—Revelings | 271 |

CONTENTS.

| | PAGE |
|--|------|
| -“ A Babe in the House is a Well-spring of Pleasure ” | 290 |
| -Something about an Election | 297 |
| -Murder does not always Out | 308 |
| -“ So Wags the World ” | 322 |
| -Coup D’Œil in the Outside World. No. 1 | 329 |
| -The Last Will and Testament | 338 |
| -“ Multitudes, Multitudes in the Valley of Decision! ” | 342 |
| -“ As a Rose she had lived the Space of a Morning ” | 353 |
| -Coup D’Œil. No. 2 | 362 |
| -Heart-revealings | 368 |
| -“ I was a Stricken Deer ” | 37 |
| -Manuscript found in a Bottle | ? |
| -Henrietta Rutherford <i>vs.</i> Harriet Royal | |
| -What Happened in Six Weeks | |
| -Kenneth, My King | |



KENNETH, MY KING.

CHAPTER I.

RETROSPECTION.

“COME!”

The word had a far-off, dreary sound to my ear, and upon my heart it fell like the dull thud, of the first spadeful of earth upon the coffin-lid.

It sickened me. In being homeless, with the strong inhabitiveness of my nature, I felt that I had been sorely misused, and could find nothing in the manner of compensation meted out to me, that could, in any wise, atone for the delights which should ever find centre in the domestic sanctuary.

A hard, bitter, cruel feeling came over me at remembrance of my friendlessness and isolation, that in a measure checked my native self-esteem, and dwarfed the growth of ambition.

“What am I?” I argued, in defiance of calm philosophy, which stared me in the face with the clear,

cold, dispassionate eyes of the Sphinx—"a mere waif, carelessly thrown out upon the sea of Time, to battle against the winds and waves of Circumstance as best I may."

And, although it was a no less dangerous recreation than an unhealthy assistant to contentment, memory would now and then most tauntingly persist in rolling back the curtains of the past, and presenting before me ravishing glimpses of the by-gone.

In these, my home was always the most prominent picture—the only home I had ever known—the home in which my infant eyes first opened on the light, and which I folded around my naked and chilled heart in associations of life-giving warmth and melting tenderness.

As it appeared to me in the magic glory of recollection, it was bathed in perpetual summer; fortunately, or perhaps unfortunately, I remembered nothing of clouds or winter. Nor was it the fierce summer-tide of July, nor the seething and scorching of that season when the dog-star sheds its baleful light, that wrapped my childhood's home in a mantle of glory—but June, beautiful June, when the skies are the bluest, and the earth is the greenest, and the flowers are the gayest, and the perfumes are the sweetest, and the air is the clearest, and the birds' throats most full of melody; June, glorious June, when all Nature is sending up, in its most harmonious strains, its sublimest *Gloria in Excelsis* to the God who moulded, and fashioned, and exalted, and refined, and beautified, and glorified Nature; verdant, leafy, choral June, which wears its mantle and crown like the maiden full-grown, who

has put aside the winning bashfulness and delicious coyness of girlhood, and realizes within her own person all the gracious endowments of her being—the holy trust, the sublime faith, and gracious responsibilities of womanhood.

Sounding in my ears was the musical murmur of a bright, gushing, rippling, restless, prattling little stream, that gambolled over its shoals in maddest merriment, and cresting its billows with the shivered sparkles of sunshine that came shimmering down upon them through the masses of overhanging foliage, bore them on like strings of glittering diamonds to the bosom of the mighty "Father of Waters," which, not far distant, rolled along in irresistible strength and matchless grandeur.

The breeze which wandered up from this little stream was as cheerful as its waters. It loved well to dally with the flowers that came in its way. As it swept up in frolic and song and wooing whispers, it would capture sweetness from the fragrant breath of the eglantines and honeysuckles which clambered over the sunny alders, and around the trunks and amid the branches of giant sycamores and live-oaks that picketed the river's banks; and from the roses and lilies and jessamines and oleanders and verbenas and heliotropes and mignonette, etc., that decked the gardens; and from the great, white, satiny petals of the magnolias, and golden-hearted and honey-laden liodendrons, which studded the lawn. And thus freighted, and willing to give of its fulness, this soft breeze would come like a gentle blessing, stealing in through the delicate, frosty lace that draped the wide

windows, filling halls, parlors, and chambers with perfume, and scattering the sunshine from its wings like showers of pearls.

Broad piazzas, whose graceful pillars and fairy-like trellises were entwined with the most luxuriant flowering vines known to our climate and section, flanked every side of the noble mansion, of which all the appointments bore testimony not only of the wealth, but of the taste, culture, and refinement, of those who inhabited it.

It stood upon a gentle acclivity, in the midst of a far-stretching lawn, intersected by smoothly graded and gravelled drives and walks, which meandered about bowers and fountains—all shaded by the rich foliage of magnificent primeval and exotic trees. Around, the prospect was exceedingly pleasing. Undulating fields, at times gay with the bright blossoms, and again glistening with the snowy fleece of the cotton, threaded by bright and rapid rivulets, with here and there a solitary pine or a clump of cedars, and far away, a boundary of grim, shaggy, perhaps ghoulishaunted forest, complete the picture.

To others this landscape may seem not remarkable, and even tame in comparison with more richly favored spots in which mountain, plain, and sea and sky prodigally commingle; but to me it is the fairest upon which my eyes ever rested. I think of it, as I fancy our first mother remembered her Eden home, without the lashing accusations of conscience, that, by act of mine, I had been driven from it.

But the dearest recollections of that home of my

infancy, cluster around a tall, slender, pale woman, who was all the world to me.

She had bright brown hair that, under a widow's cap of the sheerest lawn, was folded smoothly over a forehead as fair and smooth as polished ivory; and dark brown, wistful eyes that were always bent upon me with an expression of such intense and yearning tenderness, they seemed to draw me quite within their translucent depths, and to make me a part of themselves; and finely curved, mobile lips, which wore a smile of almost ineffable sweetness;—but this smile, though intended to carry gladness with it, could not hide the dull pain that had settled in the heart. And this tall, pale, beautiful woman, with the bright brown hair and the yearning, tender eyes, and the sweet, sad smile, was my mother.

I never knew my father. Three months before my birth a sudden and violent death came to him in a disaster to a steamboat on the Mississippi River, upon which he was a passenger.

During the remaining seven years of my mother's life, nothing could lure her, for a single moment, from remembrance of the great sorrow behind which so suddenly had set the sun of all her earthly happiness. The spirit struggled bravely against this infirmity, and duty sternly forbade, but the flesh was weak, and in its weakness yielded to the luxury of dwelling upon unforgotten joys.

In her chamber, beside one of herself, taken in the first year of her wifhood, hung a portrait of my father; and said to be, as nearly as ever possible, a life-like likeness.

It represented a man of about twenty-eight years, but possessed of a dignity which rarely attaches to so early a period of manhood. The eyes were large, lustrous, and magnetic, of what color, my mother said, she could never tell; with an expression of equal capability of melting tenderness, and stern, unyielding determination. Dark and naturally waving, but closely cut chestnut hair, revealed a broad, fair, massive forehead: his head was the head of a man, but his mouth was the mouth of a woman: it was not lacking in lines indicative of firmness, but at the same time gave evidence of a gentleness and refinement of nature not usual in the stronger and coarser sex.

It was a daily exercise of my mother to take me before this picture and recount to me the many virtues and excellences of the original; of his exceeding love for her; of the hopes and ambitions that centred around my existence; until I am sure I loved it with a devotion never surpassed by that paid the image of saint or martyr. It was the shrine before which we performed our daily sacrifices. It was perfumed with the incense of worshipping hearts. There, kneeling by my mother's knee, I would offer up the orisons of my infant soul, my morning and evening prayers. So intimate was my communion with the picture, or it may have been with the spirit of the original, I often fancied I saw the eyes brighten and flash, and the lips moving upon the canvas, and would strain my ear to hear what they might say.

I must have been a strangely imaginative child, or else there is more in the "communion of saints" than the world accredits; for at times I was sensible of a

greater than ordinary nearness of his presence, and would joyously stretch up my little arms to meet his embrace. I was wont to tell my mother whether he was grave or smiling ; and can, to this day, recall her peculiar low, quiet laugh, as I would confidently say, "I shall never need any one to point out my papa to me when I get to Heaven, for I shall know him as soon as I see him."

I could never allow myself to believe that the joyful engagements of the redeemed will make them forgetful of the loves of earth. . . .

Day by day my mother grew paler and thinner. After awhile she ceased to walk about with her quiet, spirit-like tread. The black mourning dress was exchanged for the lighter robe of the invalid. For the sake of her child, she made terrible struggles against the encroachments of her insidious enemy. For a length of time she refused to betake herself to her bed, but bolstered up in an easy chair, and almost as white as the dress she wore, her smile became more painfully tender, her brown eyes more yearning and searching. But finally the strength of human will could no longer resist the stronger strength of fell disease, and clinging to hope against hope, she resigned herself to the necessities growing out of her situation.

Physicians and extra nurses were every day in attendance, and sometimes the clergyman of our parish ; but how could I, at my age, understand the meaning of the long consultations in the ante-room, the ominous shake of the head of one and another,

the measured sighs, or the unusually affectionate and pitying caresses bestowed upon me.

In this way four months had passed, when one morning I was carefully awakened by my nurse, who bent tearfully over my pillow.

“Get up, Miss Harrie!” she cried with a broken voice; “get up, child; your poor, dear mamma is gone!”

I rubbed my eyes, and looked up in her face wonderingly.

“Gone?” I exclaimed. “Gone! did you say, mammy?”

“Your poor mother is dead, child!”

“Dead? mammy!”

“Yes, honey,” she sobbed; “she died this morning just as the clock struck one, blessed angel!”

A tempest of sobs now choked her utterance. I had never seen her in sorrow before, and I looked on, uncertain whether my greatest trouble was not in her distress. I twined my arms about her neck, kissed her dark brown withered cheeks, and essayed to comfort her as well as I knew how.

What did I know about the change that is called “death”? I had heard of it in connection with birds and lambs and flowers, and in connection with the servants of our establishment, and I felt that it brought stillness and decay; but it had never come nearer me, and seemed rather like the creation of a vague fancy, than anything which had foundation in reality.

I had an indefinite consciousness that my mother's death would most sensibly affect all my future life;

yet with it was blended a strange curiosity to make acquaintance with the dread, mysterious visitant, who had come in the midnight and enchambered himself in our dwelling. This feeling had almost equal part with my trouble.

Still I sorrowed deeply. I wept. Passionate screams echoed through the quiet halls—screams so loud that, but for the deafness which supervenes the icy touch of Azrael, would assuredly have been heard by the mute sleeper in the adjoining chamber.

“Let me see my mamma!” I cried imperatively.

“Well, child, I must first finish dressing you.”

This, with the sobs of the nurse and my own uncontrollable excitement, bade fair scarcely to be accomplished.

“Mrs. Walker, and Mrs. Preston, and the undertaker are in there with her, and she would be angry if I did not make you decent,” said the good old nurse, asserting her ideas of propriety, and her obedience to the wishes of the dead, even while she felt that her heart was breaking, and her voice trembling from the surchargings of grief.

“Let me see her! let me see her!” I cried. “I don’t care for Mrs. Walker! I don’t care for anybody, but my mamma.”

Between persuasion and threats, she at last succeeded in getting some clothes on me, and with trembling but rapid steps I was taken into the presence of the dead.

As soon as I looked upon the painless, placid, smiling countenance, all the horror in which childish imagination had invested death, departed.

Even while I gazed upon the pale, wax-like figure, with strained and wondering eyes, the face seemed to grow brighter and brighter, as if from the reflex of the soul's gradations in happiness. It was not the relaxed and passive face of one who slumbers, but it bore an expression of glad surprise mingled with triumph; the expression of one who finds a treasure, or suddenly and unexpectedly comes upon a longed-for friend.

The shadowy lines of care and heart-ache had all vanished, and over the slightly parted lips the smile of ineffable sweetness had been supplanted by a smile of ineffable peace and gladness. There was no suffering there, but joy and rest.

I glanced up at the portraits that hung on the wall. The faint semblance of this smile the artist had caught and given to the picture: she was happier then than I had ever known her to be; I felt she was happy now, and in the native unselfishness of a child's nature, my violent grief was mitigated, if not wholly stayed.

I watched all the preparations for, and went through the funeral: I saw her buried, bearing a part which excited equal interest and curiosity.

A few weeks after this my uncle came—the uncle to whose guardianship my person and property had been committed by the last will and testament of my mother. He soon gave me to understand that I was to be carried away with him. This arrangement I accepted with no dissatisfaction, because I was lonely and wretched; though my eyes were blinded with great tears, as I looked back from the carriage and

took leave of my home, bathed in the glorious brightness of a June morning.

For a few months I was quartered with my uncle's family, to be teased and tortured by six lawless, passionate, reckless cousins. I became likewise lawless, passionate, and reckless; and when the fall came, it was thought advisable to transfer me to the tender mercies of strangers. With all my craving for tenderness and sympathy—with my young heart opening for love as the flower for the dew, I was sent to be drilled and hardened, at a far distant boarding-school.

From that time, as directly appreciable by me, my uncle's supervision over me ceased; and for the love and tenderness and sympathy for which my young heart hungered, it cried until it cried itself cold, and then, to all feeling, it fell asleep.





CHAPTER II.

AN OUTWARD LOOK.



GOOD-BY ; Harrie !”

“ Good-by !”

“ Good-by !”

“ Good-by !”

Four bright young faces peeped forth from the carriage window ; four tiny gloved hands wafted up kisses to me, while in one pair of large, clear blue eyes shone a pair of great glistening tears.

“ Good-by ; dear, dear Harrie !” exclaimed one of the speakers again. “ I *do* wish you could go home with me !”

That told the story, and the secret of her sympathy. The tears had stolen down and hung upon a pair of plump, rosy cheeks.

I stood like a statue at the window of my dormitory, gazing after the last receding carriage, as it rolled down the cedar-bordered avenue, with its freight of the “ homeward-bound.”

I looked and listened, but I neither saw nor heard, for instead, I was vainly endeavoring to peer into the

countenance of the swiftly advancing future, which at that moment had to me the aspect of the ocean when a thick fog overhangs it, and the blue waves and the white sails all melt away into an indefinable cloud of mist. And like the mariner, tho' he may have been born to the "salt sea," I felt afraid to trust my untried bark upon the dim and uncertain waters.

In my hand I held a square foot of Latin-inscribed parchment, from which gayly fluttered a blue ribbon, held in place by a monstrous red seal.

What was it worth to me? Much, perhaps: perhaps, nothing!

I did not exactly regard it with contempt, yet I felt guilty of not regarding it with the measure of respect, to which many others, doubtless, would have thought it entitled.

It was my diploma; and certified by the sign-manual of the "Faculty," and the great seal of the institution, that, after having passed through a certain curriculum of study at Hamilton Female Institute, I had been duly graduated therefrom. It meant, that I had given satisfactory evidence of having looked into various branches of Natural Science; had formed some idea of Rhetoric and Belles-Lettres; had read Virgil and Horace, and Cicero and Cæsar; and Schiller's "Robbers," and Goethe's "Faust," and Dante's "Inferno," and Racine's plays, in the originals; could speak French with the barbarous American accent; had solved a problem or two in Euclid; knew the letters of the Greek alphabet, and had even dared to try the "Iliad" of Homer and the "Anab-

asis" of Xenophon; could draw acceptably; used the piano and guitar with quite as much skill as my masters; and with a naturally fine contralto voice, sang well, if not divinely. In fine, it meant that I was "educated," in the usual sense of the term, and in readiness to be released from the tiresome routine of school duties, with all their concomitant haps and mishaps, their pains and pleasures.

How long I stood at that window, straining my gaze into the befogged ocean of the future, I cannot tell; but the setting sun was flooding the cross-capped spire of a neighboring church in a shower of golden light, when my attention was arrested by a rap at my door.

"Come in!" I exclaimed, startled from my reverie, and trembling as though in affright.

"May it please you, Miss Royal, Mrs. Hamilton wishes to see you in her study," said a stalwart native of Enniskillen, obtruding herself within the open door. "And she would have you be very quick too, if you please, miss;" said Norah, who considered it always necessary to enforce a command from Mrs. Hamilton with some stirring injunction.

"Say to Mrs. Hamilton, I shall be down in a few moments," said I, hastening to light the gas, in order that I might see whether I was in proper condition to present myself before the august spouse of the President of Hamilton Female Institute.

As I looked into the mirror, for the first time in my life, it occurred to me to take some note of my own person. I had just passed my eighteenth birthday. I had seen many very much fairer faces, and

more graceful figures, but in that glance I came to the conclusion I was not altogether uncomely. My hair was of the color, but a shade lighter than my father's, and waved in massy folds over a broad, low, fair brow; my eyes were like those of my mother, but larger, and holding within them a greater amount of latent fire; and like her I had a well-formed nose, with thin, quivering nostrils, that gave evidence of the restiveness of my spirit; a short upper lip, firmly compressed at will, over a slightly pouting under lip, and so red, they must have stolen the blood from my colorless cheeks to complete their own ripeness; a well-moulded chin, and a throat as white and arching as the swan's. I was slightly under the medium height, and my figure, though slender, was willowy, elastic, and not devoid of grace.

Why I thus took account of myself, at that moment, I am sure I cannot imagine; but this was the picture my mirror presented, as I hastily smoothed my hair, and adjusted my collar.

In a moment more, I was in Mrs. Hamilton's presence. She was dressed, as usual, with the most faultless precision, and sat before a delicate lady's escritoire, in the careful examination of several open letters. She glanced up, and silently pointed me to a seat.

Mrs. Hamilton was a representative woman among women, and even men—as glittering and polished as an icicle or a diamond—but as well might you have looked in the frozen pendant, or the flashing stone, for the heart of human flesh, as in the statuesque piece of mortality before me. She felt it needful in

defence of her peculiar position, never to unbend, never to permit a warm touch of nature to melt her petrified soul; and carried about with her a stereotyped gravity that passed for dignity, and which was scarcely less ridiculous than frigid.

The Rev. Dr. Hamilton was the accredited President of Hamilton Female Institute, but the Rev. *Mrs.* Dr. Hamilton was its *factotum*. Dr. Hamilton issued his fiats with a manliness and independence intended to be characteristic; but every one connected with Hamilton Female Institute, understood they were only the repetitions of Mrs. Hamilton's suggestions, or the appreciative reflection of her unexpressed wishes; and though most frequently ungenerous and rigorous, woe to the tutor, governess, or pupil that dared essay their circumvention.

In a word, the Rev. *Mrs.* Dr. Hamilton, of Hamilton Female Institute, was a tyrant; yet I did not fear her. My own course of loveless training, during almost twelve years, under her cold, cruel, and suspicious supervision, had rendered me also hard and cold, if not suspicious; and in ordinary encounter I was her equal.

Nevertheless, for the tutelage of girls, Hamilton Female Institute was one of the most renowned establishments in the country. By dint of flaming advertisement, and successful flattery of certain persons of influence,—together, I must say, with judicious provision for all the exigencies which might arise—it had been brought by its astute projectors into the most favorable notice, and was patronized by the most eminent in the land. It was fashionable in the ex-

treme, and turned out of its walls a set of silly, heartless women-of-the-world, to control and corrupt society.

After awhile, Mrs. Hamilton looked up from the letters before her with a smile, meant, I suppose, to be kindly, but which, in remembrance of past injustice, awoke in me at once a spirit of resistance.

"I have sent for you, Miss Royal," said she, blandly, "to ascertain what you think of doing with yourself?"

I was glad she put the question to me so directly. It was the key to the subject of my musings at the window of my dormitory.

"Indeed, madam, I cannot tell," I replied, "but something, I must. 'The world,' it has been said, owes us all a living, and will hardly refuse it, if we seek in good faith."

"I am happy to see, my dear, you are so philosophical; but you may at some time find the world is not always ready to grant a living, though we do seek in 'good faith,'" said Mrs. Hamilton.

"I am nevertheless not hopeless, madam; nor have my lessons yet been severe enough to rob me of all confidence in the substratum of good, common to humanity."

I intended this to be an effective remark, and Mrs. Hamilton sensibly winced.

"You are doubtless aware that your uncle died insolvent, and by strange and injudicious investments dissipated your property as well as his own; so that, but for fortunate prepayments, you would now be in debt for your last session's 'expenses.'"

It was not necessary that she should remind me of this, when my uncle's recent death, his deflection from honesty, and my own beggary had been the theme of discussion from the lackeys in the halls to the President in the grand reception parlor. I hardly needed that she should remind me of this, when total disregard of late for my interests and feelings had taught me that yellow gold was the most efficient passport to her favor. This was not needed, when the former jealousy of certain of my schoolmates had been most ingloriously changed to a sort of sweetened contempt, or open insolence.

"As it is," she continued, with pretended deprecation, "there is still, I am told by our 'man of business,' a balance due for your graduating dress, trimmings, etc., which I think best to settle with the balance of pocket-money to your credit."

She said this with delicious *sang froid*. I was not accustomed to the discussion of matters involving money, and my cheeks tingled with the hot-blood of something like indignation; yet it was my policy to be self-possessed. I smiled and bowed. "And to inform me of this was the object of your interview?"

"Not altogether," said the cowardly woman, who, when she could, preferred greatly the use of the scalpel to the emollient. "The particular object in my sending for you this evening, is, to engage with you to take a position as a *governess*."

"In this institution?"

She smiled haughtily, as she saw the refusal of such a request on my lips.

"Not at all," said she, waving her hand signifi-

cantly. "You are much too young, my dear. But *teaching*, you are aware, is considered the most genteel occupation in which an American woman can engage, who has her own livelihood to earn, unless she may have some encouragement to successful authorship; and I dare not think you have yet tried your maiden pen?"

This remark was placed interrogatively, but I did not feel it incumbent upon me to tell Mrs. Hamilton that I *had* dared to try my "maiden pen;" that not altogether surreptitiously, "Henrietta Rutherford" *had* sent articles out, from within the walls of Hamilton Female Institute, and had had them returned to her in the same manner, after they had found place within the pages of a not unknown magazine; while her glance was searching enough to have penetrated much deeper than the depths of my secret. And wishing to put an end to an interview that was chafing me sorely, I simply replied: "I am open, madam, for engagement as a governess in a private family."

The idea, I admit, with my pride of birth, and greater pride of spirit, was galling to me; but not in consideration of the duties growing out of the position, but of the subordination to which I should be subjected, perhaps by those whose native inferiority would provoke me to despise them. I had seen too much of the supercilious notice of tutors and governesses by the Rev. Mrs. Dr. Hamilton herself, too much contemptible snubbing of impecunious assistants, for me to regard a similar position for myself, with feelings of entire complacency.

Mrs. Hamilton transferred her several letters to me

for examination. After careful consideration, I selected one, and said, "If you please, you can return a favorable answer to this."

It contained a demand for "a young lady of unexceptionable moral and mental qualifications, to take the guardianship and charge of the education of a little girl of seven years;" and in compensation therefor, was offered, in the main, the "*comforts of a home.*"

"Are you so unwilling, then, to engage in a respectable employment, as to select what seems the softest place?" said Mrs. Hamilton, with a sneer curling the corners of her thin lips.

I was thoroughly aroused.

"No, madam," said I. "I am young and inexperienced, and perhaps inclined to self-indulgence; yet I think I comprehend fully what is meant by the 'dignity of labor,' and am ready to prove it by personal experiment. But I have learned something of the capability of those in power to torture, and am rather indisposed to subject myself to more than my spirit will endure. In the *comforts of a home*, I recognize the security and protection of which every young and friendless woman feels the need, unless the sensibilities of her nature are blunted by unnatural usage; and in accepting the guardianship of a single child, instead of a dozen, I shall perhaps escape a multiplication of unpleasant abrasions; for my experience, though slender, has convinced me that young innocents, as school-girls are allowed to be, they can *hate heartily*, and *envy cordially.*"

My wrath, though it seriously angered Mrs. Ham-

ilton, was sufficiently impotent to excite her ridicule. She laughed, outright, and fearing I might be the proverbial "elephant" on her hands, said quickly, but quietly —

"I suppose we shall be compelled to dispose of you as you have elected. You shall hear from this, as soon as possible." And locking her desk with an abstracted air: "You can now retire."

As nothing more agreeable could be devised, it was arranged that I should spend the summer at Hamilton Female Institute; and in order to relieve myself of disagreeable obligation, I consented to become a copyist, and prepared for publication a series of sermons, from the Rev. Dr. Hamilton, on, "Train up a Child in the way he should go;" "Stubbornness of Temper;" "Rebelliousness of Spirit;" "The Grace of Submission;" "The Beauty of Humility;" "Female Holiness;" by all of which, and various others of similar character, we had been refreshed from Sunday to Sunday; while some of us were wicked enough to think the lessons taught us were the result of personal experience. And when the summer drew to a close, I had a large pile of MSS. in readiness for the press, with the portentous title-page:

SERMONS ON THE GRACES AND DUTIES OF WOMAN.



CHAPTER III.

MYSTERIOUS MUSIC.

IT was nearing the end of September, and the close of a beautiful afternoon, when the sky was as blue, and the air as clear and soft, as the bluest sky and the clearest, softest air of Italy, that a large, lumbering stage-coach, in the interior of which were nine closely packed passengers, drew up in front of the principal hostelry of a romantic little village situated among the highlands of Eastern Virginia.

I was not distressed at this, for I had occupied the middle of the middle seat, between a couple of wandering Israelites, who were in search of a promising locality in which to open a shop of small-wares. Just behind me was an angular old lady, whose sharp, protruding knees found convenient resting-place against my back; while immediately in front was a pragmatistical old gentleman, who openly manifested a decided contempt for pedlers, and in a manner most enigmatical, associated me with my companions of the middle seat.

As a general thing, I have pleasant recollections of these time-honored old vehicles, which have been so ingloriously supplanted by the steam-car; but on this

occasion, my journey of twenty miles was not the most agreeable of my life, although it was with no dissatisfaction that, for the stage-coach and its inconveniences, I had exchanged the clatter and rush and dust and confusion of the railroad.

My youth and loneliness in that section, and at that time, when young women were never expected to venture out without a male protector, awakened uncomplimentary curiosity among my fellow-passengers. Who and what I was, was matter of question. I felt suspicious glances measuring me, from the modest little hat on my head, to the neatly laced boots upon my feet. I was annoyed ; and should have been incensed, but for the imperturbable calmness with which I had vainly determined to accept the issues of life, let them come in what form they might.

The feeling evinced in reference to me, however, quickly subsided, when upon the arrival of the stage the door was courteously opened by a respectable-looking negro coachman, who lifted his hat with a grace which would not have been despised by Lord Chesterfield, and asked :

“ Is Miss Royal aboard ? ”

“ That is my name,” I replied in an undertone.

He and his belongings were evidently known to some of my travelling companions ; and glances were exchanged that I could not fail to observe, while I rejected the proffered assistance of one or more, and permitted the coachman to assist me in alighting.

A large, old-fashioned family carriage, drawn by a pair of strong, spirited, dappled, blood-bay horses—sleek and shining as satin—awaited me. There was

nothing flashing about it, but the whole equipage had an aristocratic air. The coachman was clad in a suit of dark gray homespun, with shining brass buttons, and a neat wool hat; and accompanying him was a dapper little negro footman, clad in the same livery.

"Sarvant, mistress," said the old man, presenting himself at the carriage door a few moments after I had been seated; "is one trunk and a box all of your baggage?"

"All," said I; at which many a young lady of eighteen, who never thinks of travelling without her dozen Saratoga enormities, will doubtless smile.

"Well, mum, it'll come on in the cart." And delivering an order to a cartman across the street, "Git up here, Jeames; and hold your eye open. If you does dare to go to sleep, boy, while you sets here aside o' me, I'll knock you off 'fore you can have time to think o' your mother."

"He! he! he!" giggled the boy as he climbed up on the box with the agility of a monkey. "Better keep your own eye open, Uncle Mose; for dese horses is awful tricky."

"Hold your tongue, you black viper," said the old coachman, lifting his whip menacingly over the head of the boy.

"And you had better take keer o' your whip; if you happen to touch de fetlocks, dey'll go worse dan lightning," persisted the incorrigible little negro, with an independence which showed, that while he might entertain a measure of respect, he was not in very wholesome fear of the *coachée*.

The old man scowled down upon him contemptuously, but gathering up the reins and slightly tapping his spirited chargers with the whip, we soon left behind us the little village and the inquisitive crowd of idlers upon the portico of the hotel.

From three days of continuous travel I was very much fatigued, and disposing myself to be thoroughly comfortable, the journey of the remaining ten miles was accomplished.

It extended through a broken country of hill and dale, brown in patches from the late ardent heat of the summer, and in spots, green with the tender verdure of the autumn; and stretches of dense unreclaimed forest. And, as the purple shadows were settling over the rugged sides of the Blue Ridge, which frowned just in front of us, and the dusky mantle of Evening was trailed heavily over the valleys, we forded a swift, rushing, rock-lined river, and turned aside from the highway into a long sinuous avenue, fringed by stiff and stately Lombardy poplars; and winding up around a long acclivity, *débouché* into a wide spreading lawn, shaded by gigantic oaks, and intersected by white, glistening gravelled walks.

In the midst of this lawn stood a large, old-fashioned, red-brick house, built in rude Elizabethan style, with high-peaked gables, and steep, sloping roofs, and dormer windows, and deep, projecting eaves, which jutted boldly out over the windows underneath; and noble porticos, with huge Doric pillars.

Things inanimate have countenances, as well as those which belong to the animal creation, and hu-

man dwellings are often the reflex of the heart and temper of the inhabitant. As I approached in the gloaming of twilight, this house had not a gloomy or forbidding aspect ; for its sombreness was relieved by the lively color of the window-blinds, which, with the lights here and there glimmering through, seemed like good-natured eyes beneath rough, shaggy eyebrows.

At the sound of the carriage-wheels, the doors were thrown open, and when I descended, I was conducted through a spacious hall, wainscoted with oak, darkened and enriched by age, and up a broad oaken staircase to a chamber in the south-eastern angle of the building.

This, as I was informed by the maid, was to be my *sanctum*. The evening was slightly cool. A cheerful wood fire, throwing out in brilliant relief a pair of brightly burnished fire-dogs, blazed upon the hearth. A gay warm-colored carpet covered the floor ; the drapery of the wide and luxurious bed was of snowy whiteness ; the most delightful cosiness pervaded the entire apartment ; and, though simple in the extreme, I could think of nothing, upon looking around, that was needed to make me absolutely comfortable, and sinking into a friendly easy-chair which had been thoughtfully pulled up in front of the fire, I felt very much like shedding tears of thankfulness, that " the lines " for me had apparently been cast in " pleasant places."

But the eyes of the keenly observant maid were upon me, and believing much in the effect of first impressions, I suppressed the surging emotions of my

soul, and its unuttered expressions of gratitude went up like holy incense from the warm altar of my heart, and found the ear of the Almighty alone.

"My mistress wished me to say to you," said the maid, "as you must be very weary from your long journey, you need not trouble yourself to come down to tea when the bell rings; I must serve it to you here."

This kindly consideration for my feelings was the crowning drop to my already overflowing heart; and in spite of every effort to suppress them, tears choked my utterance, though they did not fill my eyes.

I could only reply, with a strong mastery over myself, "Thank your mistress for me;" and when she had quietly disappeared through the door, I bent my head and wept freely.

I could not sleep that night. The tension upon my nerves had been too strong; and though my weary limbs ached and pleaded for repose, I could do no more than turn myself from side to side, and woo Morpheus, in vain, to scatter over my eyelids his soothing poppies.

I thought, but thought undisciplined ran riot into themes undreamed of before; and far in the dim distance, like the flickering light of the ignis fatuus, gleamed glintings of things that Hope painted among the possibilities of the future.

It was hard for me to realize that my position was one of more than mere passing responsibility; nor could I attach to it the measure of usefulness that the experience of riper age made apparent.

At length—and I could scarcely determine from the deep abstraction in which I was plunged, whether

I was asleep or awake—the soft, full chords of a harp, struck by no timid hand, stole upon my ear. After the symphony, into which were thrown many brilliant variations, there was an accompaniment of the human voice. It was a clear, pure, sparkling soprano, and yet as full of liquid melody as Grisi's. The air was from Handel's oratorio, "The Creation." The tones rose and fell, as a sweep of wind over Æolian harp-strings; and then warbling, pulsing, and quivering, like the notes of a bird when its matin song awakes the echoes of the woodland.

To satisfy myself that I was not the victim of a delicious dream, I got up from my bed, and striking a match, lighted the candle upon the stand by my bedside, and examined my watch for the time. It was past two o'clock. Did the family, then, keep such late hours?

I opened my door and peered out into the darkness. All was still. I crossed a hall and laid my ear against the opposite wall. Nearer and clearer seemed the strains of music. The sound was not from below, but from above, and from the angle of the building opposite that in which my room was situated. What could it mean?

The air from the oratorio being finished, the same voice sang one and another of the psalms of David; and finally, as if an overcharged spirit could not compress within fleshly bonds its exultant emotions, like the gush of a chorus of halleluiahs, it sang the glad, ringing strains of a *Fubilate Deo*; to me, sounding faintly, as I imagine it must have been when

“the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.”

I could no longer believe myself mistaken. Heedless of the danger to which I exposed my health, I remained there, standing in my bare feet, scarcely sensible of shivering, until the last note died away in solitary echo.

I was just about to return to my room, when the strumming of the keys of a piano arrested my attention. Again, I was spell-bound. The instrument was one of fine tone and in good tune, but the fingers which struck the keys could not, I thought, have been the same that swept the strings of the harp, or have belonged to the possessor of the voice. There was madness in the touch. From the most noisy and clashing fantasies, through prayers from the operas, the pieces ran into old and long-ago disused battles, in which were introduced all the clanging accompaniments of conflict—the blare of the clarion, the roll of the drum, the booming of cannon, the shrieking of wind instruments, the rattle of musketry, the sweep and charge of the horsemen, the wails of the wounded and dying, mingled with the strange, exultant shout of victory. And with this the music ceased.

By this time, but for being sustained by the wall against which I leaned heavily, I was trembling so violently, I could not have stood. As if to steady myself more surely, I laid my hand upon my forehead. It was bathed in great drops of perspiration, that hung upon the roots of my hair like beads of dew.

Chilled and heart-sick, I returned to my room. The candle flared up wildly around the great cabbage that had grown out of the charred wick, and threw grim, fantastic shadows upon the walls. The fire had burned down upon the hearth; a sombre gloom had settled over the warm-colored carpet; all the delightful cosiness had left my apartments, and with a bitter smile at the deceitful thought of *comfort*, I blew out the candle and drew closely up around my shivering frame, the soft, thick blanket with which my bed was furnished.

After awhile, "tired Nature," asserting its claim upon the mercy of the "sweet restorer," I slept; but I was scarcely conscious of sleeping. I must have slept a very little while, for it seemed to me I had but just closed my eyes, when I heard again the sound of music—soft, warbling, thrilling, gushing. A bluebird perched on a spray of woodbine that embowered my window, in the most bewildering variations, was singing his morning roundelay; and through the fretted net-work of vines, and the parted curtain, the morning sun stole in and lay upon the carpet in tremulous waves of golden light.

At that moment the door was softly opened, and with stilly steps the maid came in with fresh water and towels.

She was evidently startled, when she found I was already awake.

"Did you sleep well?" said she.

"No, yes, a part of the night;" said I, unwilling that she should learn of my strange vigil. She threw upon me a keen, inquisitive glance, laughed signifi-

cantly, I fancied, as she filled the ewer, and then turned to rekindle the fire.

“What is your name?” said I; wishing quite as much to break the silence, as to find out to whom I should hereafter be indebted for many kindly attentions.

“Patience,” said she, with a gratified smile.

“Patience?” said I.

“Yes, ma’am, Patience; and I have one sister named Charity, and another Content; and we are all in the *house*.”

I did not wish to pursue my investigations in family history further, and by way of diversion, said:

“Can you tell me what time it is?”

“Half-past six o’clock, ma’am.”

“Ah!” said I; “so early?”

I am sure I could not have slept more than two hours and a half, and yet I felt no desire to sleep longer, and made ready to get up.

“You must be an early riser, ma’am,” said the negress.

“I am,” said I; “I like to make use of the morning hours.”

“If you choose, when you are dressed,” said she, “you can come down into the big drawing-room, or the library: they’re always open;” and being satisfied that the fire would burn, and brushing carefully behind the fender, she left the room as quietly as she had entered.



CHAPTER IV.

MAKING ACQUAINTANCE.

LEN DARROW was an old patrimonial estate of magnificent proportions, which, through five direct generations, had fallen by inheritance to the present incumbent.

The Darrows were of Gaelic extraction, claiming descent from the early kings of Scotland, and never satisfied that the land with which they were so identified should lose its individuality in being merged into the Kingdom of Great Britain, in the early settlement of America emigrated, and became in Virginia the possessors of an immense tract of territory, by purchase and not by patent.

They had therefore, personally, little for which to thank England, and with feelings which had grown with their growth and strengthened with their strength through centuries of real or fancied individual injustice, they were ready to resist what they deemed encroachments, or oppression, from the Mother Country. Consequently it did not seem very remarkable when one of the name left his seat in the Virginia House of Burgesses, to co-operate in the attempt of the brave but ill-fated Nathaniel Bacon, which predated the Revolution nearly one hundred years.

In the old Darrow cemetery, on the slope of the hill beyond the terraced garden, was his tombstone ; his dust having been reclaimed more than fifty years after interment under the gallows-tree, and the blackened and mildewed marble showing in letters, almost erased, a chary record of his daring deed.

For more than one hundred years, the old house had stood, scarcely changed from its earliest form and dimensions, embowered by the same trees that had then been left from the young forest to shadow it, and frowned down upon as then by the mountains, which seemed to close it in completely in the rear, and to open out at the front, for as smiling a landscape as ever the eye might wish to find delight in ; waving billowy fields rich in verdure, and melting in the ether away off in the dim distance, as the shore melts into the infinite blue of the ocean.

I was too restless to linger long at my simple toilette. In order to wile away the time that intervened till breakfast, I took from my trunk an ambitious manuscript and glanced over it : it was full of faults, and to save it from destruction from the flames, I returned it to my trunk and locked it in.

With an anxious flutter at my heart, I descended the stairs. The house was kept faultlessly neat. The hall floor was of oak, uncarpeted, and polished until as smooth as glass. Here and there along the walls, were fastened pairs of stags' horns, upon which were laid light fowling-pieces, and fishing rods and tackle ; with an occasional picture representing field and water sports. Already the hall-doors were open, and taking a few moments to note the landscape from

the front portico, I followed the direction whence the sound of a crackling, cheerful fire proceeded, and soon found myself in the great drawing-room.

It was long and broad and high ; with a tall mantel-piece of fine yellow marble, sustaining a splendid Venetian mirror which reached the ceiling, and reflected in the most brilliant prismatic hues the rock-crystal pendants of the quaint old girandoles, and the chandelier which was suspended from the centre. The carpet was of Turkish manufacture ; the walls were hung with rich tapestry of silk and wool, and the curtains were thick and heavy ; but curtains, carpet, and tapestry—even the chairs, ottomans, and divans—bore the faded but unworn look of ancient respectability. In the centre of the room underneath the chandelier stood a table of rare mosaic workmanship, and upon this was a vase of the most costly and delicate Egyptian alabaster, in which burned a lamp of perfumed oil. Nothing in the furniture of the room seemed to bear the slightest affinity to the *modern*, except a superb grand piano, so admirable in tone and workmanship as to be scarcely affected by those dampers to sound—curtains and carpets.

All these things I took in at a single glance ; but much longer did my eyes dwell upon the pictures which hung on the walls. In them, for centuries, the Darrows were perpetuated : stately old Scotch lords and ladies, in the quaint but tasteful costumes of their times and country, smirked and smiled upon each other out of eyes, many of which were tender with love-light, and many aglow with the grander blaze which warms the heart and fires the eye of the warrior.

These to me were all full of interest, and in imagination I at once conjured up, and in course of time learned the history of each. But I confess I lingered longest and most carefully in front of a group of *five* pictures which hung on the middle wall. The colors were fresher: they lived, or *had* evidently lived, nearer my time; and as I might perhaps be in some way associated with them, they deserved superior attention.

Among these was a man of twenty-five, in the civilian's dress of forty years ago—a full-length picture, with heavy, bronzed hair thrown back from a broad, fair, massive forehead, which overhung a pair of dark steel-gray eyes, in which were mingled a look of girlish gentleness, with a coruscating flash, like the first sharp glintings of lightning from an almost cloudless sky. It was a singular expression, and one felt there must have been magic in the art, and magic in the hand of the artist, that could so perfectly have caught it. The nose was very slightly aquiline—not a Scotch nose—the mouth was firm, but the lines around it were not hard, and the chin was indicative of great strength of will, but delicately moulded. The chest was deep and heavy; the shoulders broad and muscular, but graceful, and the head finely poised.

By the side of this hung the portrait of a young girl of nineteen years, clad in a robe of the richest satin, with cords of oriental pearls around her neck and wrists, and frills of the finest lace over the bosom and shoulders, which in whiteness and softness seemed to rival the velvety petals of the lily. The hair was of raven blackness, long and abundant, combed

smoothly across a broad low brow, and wound around the crown of the head in massive braids, held in place by a comb set with pearls—the rich pear-shaped pendants hanging over the left ear, as daintily tinted as the sea-shell. The eyes were of a dark lustrous brown, overarched by the most delicately pencilled brows, and shaded by long black lashes, that dreamily swept the rose-tint on the cheeks, and gave to the veiled orbs an expression of the most delicious languor, strangely contradicted by the arch and roguish smile that played over a pair of ripe, red, mischievous lips; which, as was the nose, were of the purest Grecian contour.

Near these hung two other pictures, and from the mingled resemblance I inferred the relationship of the originals. The picture of the young man described, was that of Mr. Darrow, the present owner of "The Glen;" that of the young woman, was the portrait of Mrs. Darrow, taken in her youth; and those I shall now describe, the portraits of their two sons.

The elder had the bronzed auburn hair, and fine clear complexion of the father, with the dark brown lustrous eyes of the mother, veiled by long lashes. It was a strange face, in which good, and evil passions seemed both, in contention for the mastery, panting and pulsing, side by side, like the foul and noxious breath of the asclepias, and the sweet odor of the gentle forget-me-not. The head was well-shaped, and would have been as finely poised as that on the picture of the father, but for a slight elevation of *one* shoulder, which gave a distorted and unpleasant effect

to the picture ; controlling, it seemed to me, even the expression of the features.

The picture of the younger had the dark, shining, satiny hair of the mother, and the long shadowy lashes, with the dark gray flashing eye of the father. The brow was broad and fair, but slightly knitted between the eyes, as if from thoughtfulness ; the mouth was firm, yet capable of varied expression : it was a strange, sad face, but full of magnetism, full of spirit.

And last of all, in a richly gilt oval frame, faced in with crimson velvet of the softest, warmest shade, was the picture of a young girl, of not more than seventeen years, of Hebe-like fairness and bloom. The hair was golden, and waved, rippled, and curled in the most unaffected carelessness over a brow, neck, and shoulders as white as alabaster ; the eyes were as blue as sapphires, with a soft, melting, violet tint ; the lips were slightly pouting, ripe and red ; and smiling, awoke in the rosy cheeks little witching dimples, in each of which seemed set a sportive Cupid.

“ It is,” said I to myself, “ a bright, laughing, joyous sprite, which has never known sorrow ; and made only to be loved and caressed, hangs here like a sunbeam, wantonly throwing its brightness over the more sober faces around.”

I am not certain that this remark was not uttered aloud, and was overheard ; for just then, I felt the rustling of a dress, and turning beheld by my side a woman whose age I could not, from her appearance, begin to determine. Her hair was of silvery whiteness, but her eyebrows were almost black, and long

black lashes veiled a pair of soft, lustrous brown eyes, as in the picture above me.

She noted the look of surprise with which I involuntarily glanced up at the portrait, and smilingly extended her hand.

“The same, Miss Royal. We are all apt to grow frosty, after feeling upon our heads the snows of half a century of winters; and were I not above the weakness of growing old, I might tell you my immaculate snows were premature.”

She had clasped my hand in a warm pressure, and so informal and affectionate was my introduction, that I felt the ice thawing away in an instant from my frozen heart, and that, in the matchlessly beautiful woman before me I might indeed find a friend.

She looked at the picture of the young girl: “Yes, yes, dear; she was a sunbeam;” and then a deep sigh followed, and a sombre shade settled over her face, that brought out the furrows across her brow, and hardened the lines around her beautiful mouth. “Listen! There is the breakfast bell, and I must take the opportunity to present you.”

She retained my hand, and led me into the breakfast-room. Mr. Darrow was awaiting us. He seemed to be a man over whom the winter of life was setting kindly, though frosty also. He had evidently made the most of life, striking a most philosophical balance between its pains and its pleasures, and counting its shadows but necessary consequences. His greeting to me was scarcely less cordial than had been that of Mrs. Darrow. He shook my hand rather roughly, then grasping me by the right shoul-

der, and holding me at arm's-length, after a minute's survey, exclaimed :

“ Poor child ! And struggling alone to make your bread thus early in life ! ”

“ Yes, sir ; ” I replied with unquavering voice, and bravely looking up in his face with heavy but untrembling eyelids.

His gaze rested upon me with a chastened expression in the flashing gray eyes, that had been softened somewhat by age, and I thought perhaps, by sorrow.

“ And you will do it, ” he said, his hand resting upon my head as if in blessing, “ for you have within you the grand tenacity of the live-oak, which will break, but never bend. However, we'll to breakfast now. You look exhausted and need something refreshing, I dare say. Did you sleep well ? ”

Not wishing to reply, I purposely evaded this question, and turned to notice some remark made by Mrs. Darrow, who sat behind a glistening silver urn ; and soon our olfactories were enlivened by the fragrant aroma of strong, delicious Mocha. This was accompanied by broiled partridges, smoked sausage and fine juicy steaks, light, crisp rolls, nut-brown Indian hoe-cake, and waffles, “ as light as a feather ” (in kitchen parlance), served with fresh, golden butter, and clear, amber honey ; and pure, rich milk, with the cream standing in tenacious foam on the top, and clinging like spray to the sides of the cut-glass tumblers in which it was poured. It was a breakfast to tempt the appetite of the most fastidious—such a one as it had not been my fortune to sit down to for many years—and made all the more enjoyable by a

light conversation, in which Mr. and Mrs. Darrow skilfully managed to call me out of self, and make me forget, for the time, my loneliness, or that I was a stranger.

In the midst of the breakfast, the door of the breakfast-room was suddenly thrown open, and a bright-faced little girl, with long, luxuriant, golden ringlets, and dark, lustrous brown eyes, and cheeks and lips aglow with the rich carnation of health, rushed in.

"Tardy! this morning, my daughter," cried Mr. Darrow. "Tardy! tardy! Eva."

"Tardy!" cried Mrs. Darrow; but these exclamations were stopped by a kiss upon the lips of each, from the child; and upon presentation, as if a part of her education, she laid her soft arms around my neck, and kissed me.

"This is your charge," softly whispered Mrs. Darrow.

"And may you make much of it," continued Mr. Darrow, with a pleasant smile twitching the corners of his lips, and puzzling the child, who looked up half smiling and half annoyed.





CHAPTER V.

“I NEVER DID HAVE ANY MOTHER.”

AS we retired from the breakfast-room, Eva impulsively grasped my hand, and looking up in my face, said, with a confiding expression upon her own,—

“Will you go with me to the nursery?”

“To the nursery?” said I, a little startled. I knew my place would be much in the nursery, but I had hardly expected to be invited there so soon, and could not avoid giving utterance to some surprise.

“Yes; if you please! I want to show you my baby-house and all my babies. They are beautiful!”

Perhaps it would have been proper in me to have said: “But we must not play with doll-babies any longer. We are large girls now, and doll-babies are for little girls. It is *our* duty to think about *books*. We must learn to spell and to read, and to play on the harp and piano, and to speak French and German, and to embroider tapestry;” but I said no such silly things. I said: “Yes; I will go with you to the nursery; for I love babies, and next to real babies, I like doll-babies; and I love all little girls that are little girls, and love babies and doll-babies!”

And so she clasped both of her warm little hands

around one of mine, and skipping along, she led me up another flight of steps, from a narrow corridor that ran out from the right of the great hall, and into a bright, cheerful nursery, furnished with gay-colored chintz, and revealed the wonders of her "baby-house!" It was three stories in height, flanked by cunning little porticos, and had a kitchen with a real iron stove in it, a dining-parlor, drawing-room, library, and many chambers. From a great arm-chair she took out a monstrous doll, dressed in a heavy brocade, with a lace cap on its head; and placing it in a chair of her own, she took out another and smaller doll, and twitching a wire under its arms to make it cry, laid it in the arms of the larger one.

"Oh! Clara Augusta," said the child; "you are a terribly naughty girl! You *do* give your poor mother a sight of trouble! See how weary she looks! Indeed, indeed, Mrs. Prentice, Clara Augusta is so cross, I think I should put her to bed and keep her there all day. Come here, Felix" (and she took out a doll dressed in boy's attire), "do tell your wicked sister how she *should* behave to her dear, kind, patient mother, while her father is absent in the city."

One and another, all endowed with some fanciful name, and clad in the usual fantastic manner, she drew out of the toy-house, until a dozen or more dolls were scattered over tables, chairs, and stools; engaged in a conversation that would have puzzled the most accomplished stenographer to note down, by the wondrous magic of his art. After awhile, and a

few minutes' thought, she turned to me with a grave yet curious face,—

"It must be *mighty* nice to have a mother. I never *did* have a mother!"

"Never *did* have a mother!" echoed I; with a little astonishment expressed in my tone of voice: "Never *did* have a mother!"

"No; I never did have a mother. Only grandma, and mammy (her name is Aunt Charity), and grandpa and papa. Papa's name is Kenneth—Mr. Kenneth Darrow."

"Is your mother dead?"

"No; I never did have *any* mother, I tell you! Should like best of all things to have a mother, but papa will not bring me one, and I am afraid to ask him."

I was somewhat curious to understand how this was, and not noticing my dilemma, the child busied herself in arranging in various positions this doll and that; making one do one thing, and another, another, towards the preparation for a grand dinner-party.

"Hush! hush! Clara Augusta. I tell you, you are a little coward. There are no such things as ghosts, and raw-head and bloody-bones, and Jack-a-lanterns and hobgoblins—and all such! Nice, smart, sensible, in—in—in—oh! *what* is the word? *intelligent* young ladies, like you and I, should never believe in ghosts! Grandma told Aunt Charity she should be sent out to the *field*, and she should never be my *mammy* any more, if she talked about ghosts at Glen Darrow; and as sure as my name is little Eva Darrow, she'll do it!"

Then seeming suddenly to recollect my presence, she jumped up, dropping an apronful of dolls, and taking my hand peered up cautiously into my face, and whispered,—

"Do you believe in ghosts? Are you afraid of ghosts?"

"No," said I, with an effort to appear unconcerned.

"Well, you may," said she; "though I don't like not to believe grandma, when she laughs and says: 'No, no, Eva; there is no such thing as a ghost!' I can't help hearing them some nights; and mammy says she has seen them many a time! As sure as you are *alive*, this old house is haunted!"

"Hardly, I should think," I ventured to say.

"Oh, dear! oh, dear! I do wish it would catch fire and burn down, and then grandpa and papa would build a fine new house, and we could lock the ghosts out."

I could not resist a hearty laugh, while I was surprised at the artlessness and ingenuousness of the child—in such marked contrast to the fashionably drilled little automatons to which I had been accustomed at Hamilton Female Institute.

And then pressing closer to me, and sinking her voice still lower—

"And the ghosts were all about last night! I heard them, and mammy heard them; and said: 'Hush, Miss Eva; go to sleep! They shall not hurt you, darling!' We heard the same old *harp*, and the *beautiful singing*, and the piano that was beat

upon and beat upon, until all the keys cried and groaned, as if they were hurt."

"Indeed!" I exclaimed, feeling that it was policy, at least, in me, to keep the counsel of my own night's experience to myself.

"Grandma was afraid you would hear the ghosts, and wouldn't sleep. Did you hear them?"

"Not the ghosts," said I, evasively.

"But didn't you hear the music?"

I turned from her and commenced humming a tune.

"Tell me; didn't you hear the music last night?"

"I suppose you can read, Eva?" said I, in an effort to distract her attention from the theme that I felt sure had something in it of more than merely passing interest, and about which I, in my relation to the family in whose service I was, should evince no unwarrantable curiosity.

"No, not much;" said she. "I could read once, my a-b abs, and in three letters; but I was very sick—almost dead—had the fever—and papa said I mustn't be pushed. I can read my a-b-c's all through, and recite ever so many beautiful pieces of poetry. Listen—

"The old house by the lindens
Stood silent in the shade,
And on the gravelled pathway
The light and shadow played—"

And from this exquisitely beautiful and simple little production of Mr. Longfellow, she ran on, over piece after piece, betraying a well-trained memory, and rare powers of voice and expression.

"Who taught you, Eva?" said I.

"Grandma taught me some, and grandpa taught me some, and mammy teaches me all the easiest pieces."

"Doesn't papa ever teach you?"

"Papa! No. Papa will not speak to me sometimes, though he is ever so good. He brings me doll-babies, and picture-books, and bonbons; but he doesn't like at all for me to trouble him. Sometimes he looks cross at me, and sometimes he looks sorry, but he never kisses me."

The child's lips slightly trembled as she said this, and folding my arms around her, I drew her closer to my bosom, in a measure to shield her if I could from the dwarfing, hardening, freezing, petrifying influence of an unloved and an unsympathized-for childhood—a childhood that leans forward, and looks out, and yearns and watches and longs for affection—if it be but the withheld affection of a single being—as the starveling plant for the air and sunshine.

In some inexplicable manner the child felt this, and a strange drawing towards me—she could not—nor neither could I then, tell why; but from that moment a singular kinship was established between us; and clasping her arms around my neck, she drew my head down, laid her warm, rosy cheek against mine, and murmured,—

"I was afraid of you, before I saw you. I thought maybe you were cold and cross; but I am glad you have come—I am going to love you."

It was easy then—with the love and confidence of the little being whose guide and companion I was to be—to commence my duties as a governess. Half of the sting which attached to my subordinate position,

was dulled and had lost its poison. It was easy to give my first lesson, illustrated by every object that I thought would find interest in the eyes of the child ; and it was easy ever afterwards to instill what she drank in, as greedily as the flowers the dew, because it was a tender hand that placed the cup to her lips ; and over the rim of the cup she could ever look into a pair of kindly answering eyes. And in the course of time, the irksome and hampering duties, which had so chafed against my inclination, became as delightful as needful exercises. The walks and talks, the songs and rides and drives, the lessons learned from and the lessons given to my little pupil, were green spots and cooling springs, that grew and gushed up in my youth's barren, burning, desolate Sahara.

"Which is your father, Eva ? "

"The one with the black hair, in the drawing-room."

She understood my question.

"Where is your father ? "

"Oh, everywhere !" said she. "He goes all about."

"Who is the other one ? "

"My uncle, I believe ; I do not know."

I smoothed back the shining golden hair, and looked down into the fathomless depths of the large, lustrous brown eyes before me. She was the most beautiful child I had ever seen, but bore not a single trace of resemblance to the portrait of the black-haired man in the drawing-room.

"And whose is the portrait of the fair young girl,

with the soft blue eyes, and the hair so like yours?" said I.

"Isn't it beautiful?" exclaimed the child eagerly. "It is almost as beautiful as grandma was, when she had her portrait painted, away over yonder, across the big ocean."

"Yes; but whose is it?"

"I don't know. Mammy says it was one of papa's nieces. Grandma never talks about the pictures."

Eva again turned her attention to housing her dolls, and feeling, through my curiosity, very much like a spy, I forebore further quest.





CHAPTER VI.

WHAT BECAME OF THE BRIDGE?

I HAD been at Glen Darrow just a month—a pleasant, swift-winged month—and golden October was waning, and Indian summer, nowhere softer and more beautiful than among the mountains of the Old Dominion, had thrown its fleecy veil of silver mist over the earth, and softened the glorious tints in which the frost-king had clad the autumn landscape.

As I looked forth from the south-west window of my room, over a pair of bold, rugged mountain spurs, that forced their rock-ribbed sides in our very faces, and noted the wealth of gorgeous colors that lay against them, like the dazzling confusion of un-mixed pigments in all their primal richness upon a painter's palette, I began to wonder why the imagination should wander off into the far-fetched realms of fancy, to conjure up the impossible splendor of Arabian romance, when so much beauty, so much splendor, so much glory fed the eyes, without even the wishing for it.

For awhile I moralized, and my moralizing ran into

a dream; and my dream I interpreted as the heart's secret worship of Nature.

Running down from a broad, box-edged, gravelled walk—that traversed the garden, and extended from this around the cemetery, and towards a ravine formed between the two mountain spurs—was a narrow, not much travelled path, that looked sufficiently romantic to tempt my exploration.

And on this October afternoon, when the air was so hazy and soft, and the sun's rays lay in such golden waves over the mystic veil of Indian summer, and the chirp of the mournful katydid seemed just the music to resound through the quiet and thoughtful welkin, preferring to hold communion with the only mother left me, alone, I threw a light shawl around me, and stealing away from Eva, set out upon my walk.

Following the path, I soon found myself as completely shut out from the outer world, as though of all humanity I was the only living thing; and in a wild, rugged gorge, that cleft its way along, and after an advance of perhaps a hundred yards, made a leap into a fearful chasm of near a hundred feet in depth.

This opened like the huge jaws of a ravenous monster; with jagged, protruding, stony fangs, incrusting with black, angry-looking moss, and gray, dark, slimy lichens, with here and there a green, tender spray of feathery fern, making the contrast seem more dark and ominous, rather than lightening and enlivening.

Over this tumbled a wrathful, bellowing cascade, that awakened in the woodland echoes a sullen howl.

I shuddered as I looked over, and receded from the precipice; though it was awfully fascinating, and I feared to trust myself on the brink.

A few feet below the cataract there seemed to be the remains of a rustic bridge, for on either side were rotten abutments. There was an appearance also of its having been violently wrenched away; but as I looked down into the roaring, furious stream, rushing on so many feet below, I could not, for a moment, believe that any freshet had ever risen so high as to tear it away from its supports. On the other side leaves had covered, and young undergrowth had almost obliterated, all traces of what had been the continuation around the mountain side, of the path upon which I then stood.

But turning a little to the left, by the side of the gulch, the depression becoming greater and greater at every step, I came to where spread out a narrow valley; and the stream having spent its fury over the rocks, wended its way almost noiselessly along, as a chastened spirit after the storm of passion subsides.

There, it was so narrow that I could step across, and following the path, I went along undisturbed, save by the chestnuts that fell upon my head and rustled down upon the dry leaves.

I had gone but a short distance further, when I heard the soft, smothered lowing of kine, as if away off, around the mountain; and then the tinkling of a bell much nearer by; and soon appeared before me, the wreathing smoke and the rough walls of a cabin of unhewed pine logs.

There was a clearing of eight or ten acres. In the rear of the cabin was a cornfield, at the edge of which was a large stable and cow-house, and at the side was a thriving kitchen-garden, beautified and enlivened by the inodorous but hardy flowers common among the simple settlers. Hollyhocks and marigolds, and white and yellow chrysanthemums, flaunted their gaudy heads, giving brightness if not perfume to the homely surroundings; and clambering over all, and flinging out their parti-colored velvet trumpets in the most wanton luxuriance, was the delicately beautiful morning-glory.

While I stood leaning over the garden-paling and leisurely surveying the multifarious products of the half acre, I was startled by a strong, clear voice, singing one of the old familiar church tunes of the woods; and before I could retreat from the midst of a wealth of vines, was espied by a large, brawny, middle-aged woman, who was dressed in a clean but coarse homespun, a cap of barred muslin, with a wide, flaring border, a checked apron of the most prodigal dimensions, and who peered up at me through a pair of large, heavy, steel-rimmed spectacles.

Dropping at once a basket of dried beans that she had been gathering, she approached the paling, and in the most hospitable spirit invited me to enter her cabin.

"I know you must be tired," said she, "if your pretty little feet came down that dreadful hollow over the sharp stones. So just come right in, and sit awhile in Barbara's house; and have some water and a mug of cider. We have the best this season I

think I ever had made from the apples of the crab trees around on the sunny side of the mountain, next to 'The Glen,'—almost the best that ever was."

It was impossible to resist the invitation and the extended hand of the old woman, who carefully led me through a few luxuriant briars and weeds into her rude but neat dwelling.

"Git up, Jemima Ann, and give the young lady a chair," said she, addressing a young woman of perhaps twenty-two, as we entered—the counterpart of herself.

"Ah, yes; I know you. I know you! You are the teacher over at 'The Glen.' The young lady that teaches little Eva."

She then ran on with such a volley of this and that, which showed an intimate acquaintance with her exalted neighbors, that a chance to ask her name amounted almost to an impossibility.

"Mrs. Johnson, Barbara Johnson, bless your little soul," said she. "My old man has been dead nigh on to fifteen year, come next Whitsuntide; and as honest and hard-working a cretur was he, as ever druv a plow or lifted an axe.

"My father, you see, was overseer for *old* Mr. Darrow; and John Johnson—my husband's John Johnson's father—was overseer at 'The Shades,' that grand old place five miles above this. (Do you mind my taking a little smoke?" said she, drawing a cob pipe from her capacious pocket, and filling it from some leaves of dried tobacco that hung against the wall, of what was, at the same time, her bedroom, kitchen, refectory, and parlor.)

“Well, as I was goin’ on to say,” puffing out a satisfactory volume of smoke, “it was the finest place in all this country round, except ‘The Glen.’ I put that agin any; and when John and I growed up, we thought we might as well jine teams and git married.

“Now *my* father was mightily agin it, because old Mr. Darrow, he run in the ’lection agin old Mr. Singleton, and beat him; and from that very time old Mr. Singleton, he hated old Mr. Darrow (God rest his soul), and did every mortal thing agin him, he could. But he never did prosper, and John’s father knowed it. His crops all turned out bad; and his niggers died; and one of his sons got drowned in the Rappahannick river; and his daughter run away and got married and come to a bad end; and after awhile the old man died himself, and after awhile old Mrs. Singleton died, and the old place has just gone to rack and ruin. They do say, some people, there is a curse on it, and the ghosts walk about even in the daytime.”

With this she puffed most furiously at her pipe, and uttered a long sigh.

“Now I must come back. When John and me got married, *old* Mr. Darrow—the *old* man—Mr. Darrow’s—Kenneth Darrow’s father’s father—he give us this little place—fifty acres of *good* land, and here I’ve been ever since. John, he died fifteen year ago, come next Whitsuntide, o’ the measles.”

“Of the measles?” said I, thinking only children ever had measles.

“Yes; to be sure, the measles, child. Why, he took cold when the ’ruption was thick out on him,

and it druv in, and turned on his brain, the doctor said, and made him crazy, and killed him.

“ Oh! Mrs. Darrow, the good angel over at ‘ The Glen,’ took on awful about it. She always said my John was a fine, industrious man; a’ raisin’ his children ra’al *genteel*.

“ But—oh,—the good Lord saw fit to take him; and I’ve just scuffled on, an’ scuffled on, the best way I could—the Lord only knows how—raisin’ my child’en, in credit like.

“ My boys, they was smart lads, then. Sam, he was just a’ turnin’ fourteen, an’ George most twelve; an’ Jemima Ann, here, was a little gal ten years old. An’ then I lost, an’ lost, an’ lost—till I lost three as fine boys as ever you saw; and my poor little blind Emily, named after good Mrs. Darrow, was a baby just one year old.

“ The boys helped me a sight, after their father died. They worked my garden and cornfield, and fed the cows and the pigs and the horse, and cut the firewood; and Jemima Ann, she helped to cook and wash. I don’t know what in the name o’ the Lord I should ha’ done, if he hadn’t given me these child’en; for all child’en’s so troublesome like.

“ George, he’s a good carpenter now; an’ he’s married an’ has six fine child’en of his own; an’ Sam, he’s married too, but *his* wife is sort o’ cross, poor fellow; Jemima Ann, she’s not married yet. I call her my nest-egg.”

“ And the family at ‘ The Glen;’ are they still very kind to you?”

“ Oh, yes! just as kind as ever. I tell you, they

are mighty grand people, and mighty *good* people too, though they *do* say some mighty strange things."

"Oh, mother!" remonstrated the daughter, who up to that moment had permitted the mother to talk on uninterruptedly.

"Hold your tongue! Jemima Ann," said she; "I am not a' goin' to tell any secrets."

"Mother, you must not!"

"Hold your tongue, gal, I say!" and the old woman gave her daughter an assuring look, which, however, did not seem to make Jemima Ann any more comfortable.

"Did you never hear?" she then turned to me, lowering her voice, and opening wider her eyes.

"Never!" said I, feeling that it was time that I should leave Mrs. Johnson, unless I wished to hear something that I should not hear; and I arose and drew my shawl around me.

"Do set down, honey! Do set down! You ain't rested yit."

The old lady, "on generous cheer intent," bustled around, and drawing out a fanciful and gaudy Japan tea-tray, took from a cupboard in the corner, several handfuls of chestnuts, and some fine yellow pippins, and presented them.

"Has Kenneth got home?"

Jemima Ann seemed uneasy.

"No."

"Why, yes; I *did* hear he hadn't come. Well,—he's the most of a gentleman I ever set eyes on; I don't keer what they say. But somehow—some

times—it all seems so strange—and he's always so grieved like—”

“Mother!” cried the daughter, piteously.

“I'm almost bound to believe it!” exclaimed the old woman, taking her pipe from her mouth, and knocking out the ashes with a jerk.

Jemima Ann jumped from her chair and rushed from her mother's presence.

“What? Pray tell me!” I cried, quite forgetting that I was doing a most dishonorable thing.

“Nothing, child; nothing! Leastways, he never *killed* his grandfather!”

“Killed!” I exclaimed; and felt the blood rushing to my head like a torrent of flame.

“La! child; I really *don't* believe Kenneth Darrow could kill a sparrow, let alone—let alone—but—never mind! Humph! humph!” I had involuntarily again risen to my feet. “Set down, child! set down! Kenneth Darrow is the tenderest-hearted man and the tenderest-handed man in all this country. Why, when my Sam was stretched out on his bed for six weeks,—*six weeks*,—with that risin' on his hip as made his hip stiff, Kenneth Darrow used to come every day and see him, the same as my George; an' when the risin' come to a head, and the doctor had to lance it, why he actually did hold the bowl for the matter to run in. I couldn't 'a done it myself, for all Sam was my own son, it would a' made me so sick at the stomach. To my little blind Emily, he's jes like a father. He gits books for her with *raised* letters; and taught

her to read by her fingers—and she reads the blessed Bible' beautiful! Come in here, Emily."

A fair, fragile little mountain blossom, much under size for her years, and as gentle and refined as the child of the most gentle, came out from an adjoining room; and when asked, with seraphic smile, as if she was antedating the "*Rest*" of which she thought so much, sang:

"On the other side of Jordan,
 "In the green fields of Eden,
 "Where the tree of life is blooming,
 "There is rest for the soul!

"There is rest for the weary,
 "There is rest for the weary,
 "There is rest for the weary,
 "There is rest for the soul!"

Then, to suit the wants of her own spirit, she improvised—

"In the blessed fields of Heaven,
 "There will endless joys be given,
 "For the Saviour's face is shining,
 "There is light evermore.

"I shall see him in His glory,
 "I shall tell the wondrous story,
 "All His mighty love divining,
 "In the light that beameth o'er."

She sang these simple lines with such thrilling pathos, as she turned her sightless eyeballs upward, and seemed longing that they might be unscaled, that I felt the tears gather in my own eyes and roll down my cheeks, and such a sense of the nearness, the tenderness, the mercy of God, as I had never known before; and bending her head, Mrs. Johnson lifted a

corner of her coarse apron, and wiped away the stream that had gathered on her gray lashes.

When the little singer had finished, and relapsed into that melancholy silence that always settles over the blind, Mrs. Johnson heaved a tenderer sigh than I thought her capable of, and said, "*He* taught her all this;" and then for a moment meditating—"My religion is: 'What is to be will be!' and if Kenneth Darrow *has* done any great crime, he couldn't help it. The devil got his eye on him, and the devil made him *do* it. It does seem mighty hard that he, so good, should be punished forever!"

Mrs. Johnson, from the independent and high-spirited manner in which she had always lived, could hardly be said to be a representative of what are termed at the South, "Poor white folks," although she owned no negroes, a species of property that among negroes was necessary to make "white folks" respectable. She fairly illustrated a certain class of the uneducated and superstitious, and also a sect of religionists, founded remotely on the doctrines of Calvin, intermixed with the austerity of John Knox, in which predestination and election locked the gates of Heaven from all but the few; those fortunately, finding the key in baptism by immersion, and in turning a deaf ear to all the pleadings of charity. In this latter particular, however, Mrs. Johnson was eminently exceptional.

"If Kenneth Darrow *did* do anything wrong, the devil made him do it!"

I was quite too much shocked by the intimation behind the ambiguous declaration of Mrs. Johnson,

to attempt to refute her religious views, or a word in defence of my favorite theory of the free agency of man, with conscience as a monitor, and reason as a guide; and taking friendly leave of Mrs. Johnson, Jemima Ann, and little Emily, I wended rapid steps to "The Glen."

As I passed through the dim forest aisles, and the twilight deepened, it seemed peopled with spectres. The gulch beside me opened wider; the stony fangs looked sharper and blacker; and the cataract growled more fiercely, and snapped and shrieked; and Echo was growling and snapping and shrieking as well: and though I had a brave and determined spirit, and would laugh a ghost in the face, my poor heart, as I sped up to the cemetery, beat against my ribs as if it would burst through.





CHAPTER VII.

“IS THERE ANYTHING IN WISHING BY THE NEW
MOON?”

I WAS neither fatigued nor frightened, but I was trembling so, that my limbs well-nigh refused to bear me on, and I leaned heavily against the ivy-covered stone wall, that fenced in this “God’s Acre,” for support. I ran my ungloved hand in among the damp green leaves; my pulses were throbbing wildly, my hands were dry and feverish, and the damp touch of the dewy foliage was cooling and grateful.

Did I hear a footfall near me? I looked over my shoulder, saw nothing coming out of the deepening shadows of the wood and mountain, and laughed at my own foolishness. But again there was a sound; I hushed the very beating of my heart and listened! There was a faint rustling amid the leaves! a light step pressed the gravelled pathway.

“Excuse me;” said a voice just beside me, and from the interior of the cemetery. “Are you not afraid to expose yourself to the chill air of twilight and the heavy dews of our mountains, and that ‘bogles’ may overtake you, if you walk alone at this hour, in the woods?”

I should have screamed, but that vocal power had

forsaken me, and still more heavily I leaned against the damp ivy.

"Do not be frightened," said the voice, in those deep, full, mellow chest notes, so charmingly musical in a man; "do not be frightened. I am flesh and blood, though, being remotely from the Highlands of 'Auld Scotia,' I am entitled by birthright to a belief in the supernatural;" and opening an iron gate, a little ahead of where I stood, the figure emerged from the graveyard, and placed itself before me, with extended hand.

"I have rather the advantage of you," said he. "I know who you are. Heard a month ago of your arrival at 'The Glen,' and only by chance happened to be in this resting-place of my fathers, whither I came to look out for the health of a seedling rose, that I am fostering with most tender care, over my honored grandmother's grave."

"And who are you?" I cried; surveying the six feet of humanity revealed dimly between me and the purple twilight of the western sky—magnified to gigantic stature, as much by startled imagination as by atmospheric cause.

"I am the owner of the name of 'Kenneth Darrow,'" said he, laughingly.

I felt my own indomitable spirit of resistance, nay, even of repulsion, rising within me; and had not my hand, rather through courtesy than gratulation, been already returned to him, I should have assuredly retained it from the friendly pressure with which it was grasped.

"Kenneth Darrow!" The name slowly burst from

my shivering lips, and all the horror implied in Mrs. Johnson's mysterious allusions, took definite form in my imagination; nor should I have been surprised to have seen blood—human blood—on my own hand when released from that pressure.

“‘Kenneth Darrow!’” he repeated, catching the key-note of my whisper, and echoing it in his own rich, flowing barytone, “and in Miss *Harrie Royal*, as he is informed, he hopes to find an excellent friend.”

I was about to reply—to say something entirely non-committal, if not very enigmatical, when I happened to raise my eyes to the windows of the south-eastern angle of the house—the part whence had sounded the midnight concert that disturbed my first night's sleep at Glen Darrow, and was transfixed.

That portion of the building was brilliantly illuminated. Three wide, deep windows, just underneath the projecting eaves, with the Venetian blinds thrown wide open, and the curtains looped back, revealed a large and elegantly furnished room, in a blaze of light. What was going on within was distinctly visible.

In front of a full-length cheval mirror, stood a young woman seemingly, not very far past her girlhood, with long golden hair, which fell over her shoulders and to her waist in massive, rippling waves, that twisted themselves in large, loose, graceful curls at the ends—a wealth of hair—such as Titian painted on his wonderful Magdalen—but of a warmer, richer, brighter color. She was clad in white, and I could not mistake, white satin. It looked like a bride's dress, and fell in the graceful folds of that of the heaviest and richest, such as is woven for princesses

of the blood. On her head, with the assistance of an officious negro maid, she was arranging a veil of costly lace, and over this a wreath of orange-flowers. She was exceedingly careful in the manipulation, bending and coaxing the artificial sprays, as I have since seen many a fair young belle, as she arrayed herself for the bridal altar. This done—and almost as quickly as I have told it—for a moment she surveyed herself in the mirror, and then walked leisurely up and down the room, arranging the folds of her veil, and admiring the sweep of her train.

My companion had seen all this—I knew he had, but he had turned aside, and I felt that I dared ask no questions. The stars had come out thickly, and the young moon had hung its silver crescent over a mountain behind which the sun had set, and left a broad sea of crimson glory flushing the horizon.

I made a movement to proceed to the house. When Kenneth Darrow next spoke, he said cheerily,—

"See, there is the new moon; look over your right shoulder, show it a piece of gold, and *wish*, Miss Royal."

"Is there anything in wishing by the new moon?" said I, under my breath.

"Some think so," said he; "and I respect many of our old Scotch superstitions for the poetry in them."

"For that alone?" said I.

"For not much more," said he, "despite my Highland extraction."

"Then the charm of the new moon, though invoked over the right shoulder, and with the aid of a 'gay gold ring,' may not avail?"

"Perhaps," said he gayly.

"Then I don't think I shall wish."

"In your wanderings through these woods, and around these mountains, did you find your way to the home of my good friend, Barbara Johnson?" said he.

"I did," said I falteringly, almost fearing the confession might elicit from me something special, in reference to my interview with that garrulous old woman.

"Mrs. Johnson is what novel-writers would call 'a character.' Mr. Dickens could make good use of her."

"Doubtless," said I; "for in Mrs. Johnson there seems to be abundant material, of the crude and undigested."

"Is little Emily, the little blind girl, well? or did you see her?" said he gently.

"I saw her; she was not complaining, but looks pale and fragile, as if not in strong health."

"Emily Johnson," said he, "is a freak of Nature. From a stock purely of the earth, earthy, she possesses the most truly refined and unearthly spirit I ever knew encased in human frame. Did she sing for you?"

"Yes."

"What did you think of her voice?"

"Of her execution, you mean?"

"Of both."

"Perhaps the fact of her being blind may have affected me peculiarly, and I have no doubt it did. No singing to which I have ever listened, has awakened within me such deep and thrilling emotion."

I said this, I cannot tell how. I had intended to be unfriendly; but the unexpected *insouciance* of his manner, the kindly inquiries made after his humble friends, and particularly the little blind girl, did much towards subduing the spirit of resistance that had risen up against him; though at the next moment I could have cried for vexation at my weakness, when I remembered that even Satan sometimes assumes the form of an angel of light, or at least I had heard Rev. Dr. Hamilton say some such thing.

"Her singing so affects me," said he. "I fancy it always makes me better. What did she sing for you?"

"'There is rest for the weary,' a simple chorus tune, that has in it much more of *sound* than *senti-ment*; more that is soothing than refreshing."

"Yes, yes; but a favorite with her. And yet, I hardly think she has ever realized that weariness of life, even with her great infirmity, which makes some of us worldly-wise ones wish to 'shuffle off this mortal coil;' for her own pure imagination has created for her a world of beauty, and nothing but beauty."

"But how can beauty exist without light?" said I. "In light alone I comprehend the abstract idea of beauty; and she must see *death*, according to the doctrines of the Christian faith, before she can see *light*; for then the blind shall receive their sight, and the night shall be as the day."

"So theologians tell us, and so we believe, without running into abstract principles, or puzzling ourselves as to the why and wherefore of natural causes. A

darling project with me is to have that little girl's sight restored to her. I am sure it can be done.”

We had reached the house, we had reached the light—the full glare of the lamp in the hall. How strangely I had made a new acquaintance! I turned now to look at him, but he had entered the narrow corridor on the left of the hall, that led to his mother's *suite* of rooms, and hastening up to my own room, I found Eva busily engaged by the lamp on my study-table, in making a fanciful patchwork quilt for her *large* doll's bed.

She jumped up immediately upon my entrance.

“Where *have* you been all this time, Miss Royal?” she exclaimed.

“Strolling in the woods, and making a call on your friend Mrs. Johnson,” I said quietly.

“I've got something to tell you.”

“What is it?”

“My papa's come.”

“Ah!”

“Yes; and he brought me a nice little book-case full of story-books, and a nice little *papier maché* writing-desk, and a great *big* wax-doll; and I'm going to call her ‘Harrie Royal!’ Here she is!” withdrawing an elegant toy from underneath a veil that lay on my bed, and presenting it to me. “And he brought grandpa—oh! *such* a queer pipe; and grandma a nice new picture of himself, in a velvet frame; and he brought a great *big* roll of music. He always brings music.”

“Indeed!” said I.

"Yes; and I don't know what he wants with so much."

There was a tap on my door announcing that tea was ready, and with Eva clinging timidly to my hand, I descended the stairs; and as we passed through the hall she pointed to the roll of music on the hall table.

The family had already assembled when we entered, and Kenneth was carefully examining an engraving of one of Landseer's finest deer pieces, that had lately been hung over the mantel.

Upon my entrance his mother attracted his attention, and we were formally presented—neither betraying the slightest sign of recognition.

His seat was on the right of his mother, who always sat at the head of her table, and served the tea or coffee; mine, on her left; and beside me sat little Eva. I might have been mistaken, but from my furtive glances I fancied that the shadow upon his mother's brow had deepened for his coming.

The table-talk was cheerful, and well sustained; chiefly in the interests of the family—running into planting operations and stock-raising, with the gossip of the neighborhood, and the sayings and doings of the city, from which he had just returned.

Being scarcely an interested party, and appealed to very occasionally for a passing opinion on this or that, in the social body-politic, I found excellent opportunity to notice Kenneth Darrow.

The portrait in the drawing-room must have been excellent when taken of him, but twelve or fifteen years had robbed him of the callowness of boyhood,

and added a majestic dignity to his countenance and porte. His mother's hair was bleached to frosty whiteness: amid his raven locks were a few shining silvery threads, gathering more thickly, and glistening more whitely over the temples. The flashing, steel-gray eyes of the father were intensified in the son, with pupils that dilated with each emotion of the soul, as if they would have you see what was passing in the infinite depths, and yet blazed and scintillated like white heat. But around the mouth were sad, drooping lines, that sometimes took the bitter curl of scorn, as though the heart, of which the finely curved mobile lips were but the reflex, was sore or had been sickened—lines so deep, they could not be concealed by the dark full moustache, which displayed in vivid contrast the pale but healthy hue of his complexion, and the dazzling whiteness of his teeth.

It was a proud, cold face when in repose, with a shadow over it similar to that which rested over that of his mother, but when excited, it glowed with magnificent passion.

He had evidently acquired the masterly control over his features, which belongs to every well-trained character, but whenever, however momentarily, his glances rested on Eva, the knitted lines between his eyebrows would grow deeper, and those around the mouth harder; his lips would curl uneasily, and his thin nostrils quiver like those of a fettered racer.

The usual careless prattle of the child was hushed. Her nurse stood near: She dispatched her evening meal in such silence as sensibly annoyed me, and

when finished, with a silent embrace of her grandmother, she noiselessly left the room.

"Eva is progressing astonishingly, with Miss Royal," said Mrs. Darrow.

"And Miss Royal takes to teaching with quite as much zest as Eva to books," said old Mr. Darrow, wishing to compliment me.

Kenneth Darrow bowed across the table deferentially, and turned the conversation by asking some question in reference to Assyrian history—a question so irrelevant that I could not suppress a low, sharp, bitter laugh.

When I retired from the supper-room, I missed the roll of music from the table in the hall, and that night, for several hours, the sound of the harp and piano, sometimes accompanied by the same voice I had heard once before, pierced the stillness of midnight, and called me again to my vigil, with my ear pressed to the resounding wall.

That the musician and the golden-haired woman that I had seen in bridal dress were the same, I had no doubt. I had never heard her name mentioned ever so remotely; but she also was "flesh and blood," and I thought resembled the portrait of the golden-haired young girl in the drawing-room.





CHAPTER VIII.

BY THE CENTURY-PLANT.

ALTHOUGH living in almost uninterrupted seclusion at Glen Darrow, I did not realize that time hung heavily on my hands.

Since the ushering in of my young-ladyhood, I had never had opportunity for a plunge into the vortex of what I had heard termed "Society." Indeed, I knew nothing of this fascinating monster, but what I had learned through its prospective representatives, the more precocious, and perhaps the more fortunate, among my schoolmates. I had therefore no need of its delights or distractions, to stimulate or excite.

My mornings were all too fully occupied in my duties as governess, to feel that the hours lagged in their flight; my afternoons in physical exercise, or with books or music, and my evenings, usually, in some literary endeavor more or less ambitious. And all this, varied, after Kenneth Darrow's arrival, in the involuntary study of what seemed to me his inexplicable character, left me little leisure to speculate on what might be going on in the great world outside, or to nurse insidious discontent.

I purposely avoided again intruding upon or accepting the generously tendered hospitalities of Mrs.

Johnson, and not more carefully because she was socially uncongenial, than because I had no wish to hear anything that might tend to increase restless suspicion, or add to the discomfort I experienced in the coldness of Kenneth Darrow to his child.

As my acquaintance with him progressed from day to day, this became more and more apparent ; while I very soon discovered that he was unusually careful that all her material wants should be properly attended to, and ministered to every wish and caprice which might not involve his individual contact with the little girl. His repugnance to this, he took no pains to conceal, and his conduct to her evidenced little else than positive aversion.

It was a bright Sunday morning, a few days after his arrival—one of those calm, delightful autumn days which come with the warmth and beauty, if not the perfume, of spring, and seemingly mock with their radiance the very thought of clouds or winter—and a solemn, holy stillness brooded over Nature.

I had arisen early, and made a more than ordinarily careful morning toilette ; then running down, I took a few rapid turns on the long front portico. A soft murmurous breeze, unusual in Indian summer, swept up from the valleys, and rustled the parti-colored foliage on the great old trees ; and a belated robin-redbreast perched in a pear-tree not far off, and made the morning vocal with melody. Enjoying to the fullest extent the witching influences of the hour and place, I was soon out on the lawn sniffing the breeze, and thence I ran into the conservatory, the door of which had been thrown open, leaving to exhale the

rich, mingled perfume of exotics from almost every clime. In the centre of this conservatory, in an immense pot, which stood upon a round platform about one foot in height, was a magnificent *Agave Americana*, its stout, fleshy leaves, lifting their spear-shaped points in bristling defiance, while recklessly showered down upon by the falling petals of roses, camellias, oleanders, and jessamines.

I was peering curiously through the leaves of this strange, mystical plant, which, it is said, condescends but once in a century to display its blossoming beauties, when Kenneth Darrow, from another direction than that by which I had entered, parted the draping foliage of a flowering vine, and was in my presence.

If it had been possible, I should have escaped his notice. I would rather not have seen him. His presence irritated me, and I feared to trust to the very small stock of politeness that I felt disposed to expend upon one that seemed to me so heartless.

His morning greeting was cordial: so much so, that I fancied there was in it an unnecessary amount of patronage, and this served to increase my impotent irritation.

"Do you know anything of the history of this plant?" said he, approaching, and laying his hand on a leaf of the century-plant.

"The botanical history, do you mean?" said I.

"By no means," he replied. "I had no idea of playing the inquisitor upon your educational acquirements. I simply wished to know whether you had heard anything of the particular history of this par-

ticular specimen—with two exceptions, the only one north of the tropics.”

“Oh, thanks! Nothing further than that Mrs. Darrow has informed me of its descent through several generations of your family, and of her hope that it may not be very long before it will blossom. I was just looking to see whether there was any sign of the swelling of a scape.”

“We think it possible through this year or the next; and when at home, I watch with as great solicitude for every sign which may show a tendency to a bud, as I fancy the French people must have done for the heir-apparent to the throne of the first Emperor. For three generations, this mysterious old aloe has been one of the belongings to this estate, and not the least precious of the Darrow legacies. It came to my great-grandfather from a naturalist who had travelled in South America, in consideration of substantial assistance at one time rendered him, and was the offshoot of a plant that is reported to have grown in the garden of one of the Incas of Peru. It has a rare history, if it be true.

“My great-grandfather received it when visiting Lima at one time in the interests of certain members of his family, brought it with him to North America, and here it has lived through nearly three generations, drinking in life, and it would seem, perpetual youth, from the air of our mountains; while the most of my name have found a resting-place out yonder under the willows.”

The story interested me, and made me thoughtful.

He bent over the aloe, and looked earnestly down amid the leaves, and then turning to me,—

“Do you like flowers?” he asked.

“I might say better, almost,” I replied, “than human beings, for they generally afford me more pleasure.”

He laughed, I thought, ironically.

“Are you then a misanthrope?”

“No; and probably from my limited acquaintance with the *genus homo*.”

“Yes; *most* probably,” he replied with emphasis; for he seemed to have discovered that I was not in a particularly amiable mood, and determined to tease me.

“‘A little learning is a dangerous thing,’ has been dignified into a golden aphorism, and will apply quite as well to our acquaintance with humanity, as to the ‘footprints’ men leave in the shape of books. The more we know of mankind—of the secret impulses which animate the heart and life, the better will we be assured of the good that underlies even *original-sin*! Selfishness is hardly connate, but the result of education; and crime is the result of selfishness.”

I thought of Eugene Aram—I thought of a dozen murderers; and looked up into the large dark pupils that opened widely upon me, to find whether in their transparent depths I might not see some blood-stained victim. But whether or not he suspected, his gaze was unwavering.

“How with Cain?” I ventured to say, as I turned away somewhat abashed, and to hide a feeling of chagrin, wound a spray of white and purple fuschia in my hair.

“ I have always pitied Cain. Of the two brothers, with his fierce, impetuous, sensitive nature, have thought him much the greater sufferer. Perhaps in the main, very much too much sinned against ; since his offence was so rank, it needed only the curse of Heaven to complete the immortal agony with which conscience tortured him ; while, as another apology for Cain's envy, it may have grown, I have sometimes dared to think, out of the indiscreet preference of Eve for her younger son, as in the case of the quarrel between Esau and Jacob.”

“ If we credit the accounts in the Bible, they are not parallel cases ; and it seems to me you are begging the question, merely, in a merciful attempt to forget Cain's unbridled passions, and sad want of principle. Nor would your course of reasoning hold good, beside what St. Paul says about the offering of the heart—”

He took up my remark—“ when uncleansed by what is known as ‘ regeneration ! ’ ”

“ I have great faith in what St. Paul says, and leaving inspiration out of the question, regard one of his short letters as worth more in the way of theology than all the labored disquisitions, from all the great minds of earth, since that time. But without compromise of this opinion, I have sometimes thought this worthy Apostle to the Gentiles had in him some of the spirit of a martinet. At least, his theology does not seem so well suited to the wants of my special nature as that of St. John, for instance. It smacks too much of the ‘ terrors of the Law.’ I like better the ‘ sweetness of the Gospel.’ ‘ The still small

voice' is with me more powerful than the 'thunders of Sinai.' And as for the doctrines of election and reprobation, *versus* the atonement, as held and taught by some, they seem to me rather like the spurious decrees of heathen Fate, than the designs of a kind and merciful Providence. They suit better the inflexibility of faith with which our friend Barbara Johnson clings to her inexorable theory—'What is to be will be.' "

I laughed. I could see no reason why he should take such pains to defend a faith which only ran into universal salvation, and which seemed to me quite as much at variance with the justice of God, as did election and reprobation with His mercy; though to this idea I should willingly incline, if I were not possessed of the orthodox idea that man is finally to be judged by the deeds of the flesh. But disliking controversy, and particularly controversy of the nature that sometimes places in the balance, reason against revelation, and conscience against education, I varied the argument.

"But are you not," said I, "forsaking the faith of your fathers, in departing from the principles of the Scotch Covenanters?"

"Many of the extremes, it seems to me," he replied, "that grew immediately out of the Reformation were the result, as much of political as religious conviction; and that impression, in the course of time, when the world's history shall have wrought itself out more perfectly, must generally obtain in the minds of the unprejudiced."

"I have thought," I here remarked, "the feeling

that 'I am better than thou,' that in matters of conscience 'I am in the right, and you in the wrong,' infuses in all religions the spirit of persecution; and under the garb of sanctity, cloaks despotism." I said this pointedly.

"Yes," he answered, "and distinguishes individuals as well as communities, without at all interrupting my theory of the *good* above the *bad* in the heart. My Scotch ancestors never held exactly the doctrines of the respectable old Covenanters, but inclined to a more liberal, if not a more literal interpretation of the 'letter of the Law.' And, therefore, it was but natural that they should find it comparatively easy, to ingraft themselves upon the colonial church as it existed just here, with all the scandal that attached to it through the laxity in the ministry."

I made no reply to this remark, but busied myself in arranging a small bouquet that I intended presenting to Mrs. Darrow at the breakfast-table. In this bouquet there were several leaves of rose geranium, a spray of purple heliotrope, and a buff tea rosebud. He looked down upon the cluster of beauties in my hand.

"What a happy combination of sweets!" he cried. "Which is your favorite flower?"

"The heliotrope, I believe."

"Why?"

"Because of its delicious odor, and because of its wonderful instinct."

"In its worship of the sun?"

"Yes." I might have cavilled at, but I did not care to vary, his term "worship."

“The coarse, flaring sunflower does this.”

“True; but the coarse, flaring sunflower does not send up a delicious incense, as a grateful return for the notice of its god. It only drinks in the light needful for its life, without a thank-offering.”

“Like the heathen who pays divine homage to the sun, and then turns and feasts his maw on the carcass of his brother?”

“No; the sunflower nourishes in its germ what is useful. This can scarcely be said of the cannibal.”

“Yet, I have always thought,” continued he, carefully, “the nearest akin to the worship of the God of the Christian, was the heathen worship of the sun; and in this you will recognize your abstract idea of *beauty* with *light* as the ultimate principle.”

I had hardly thought he had remembered my chance remark, and I did not care that he should see by the warm flush that spread over my forehead and temples, that he had struck a sympathetic chord in my bosom; so I buried my face amid the white, creamy blossoms of a cape jasmine, and drank in the intoxicating perfume.

“Christianity,” he proceeded thoughtfully, “is embraced in one single word, and that is LOVE! the essence of God’s nature, and God is LIGHT! And thus, this modest little heliotrope, in turning its face always to the sun, as well as in its fragrance and beauty, may represent the adoration of the soul, which makes its return in good deeds.”

Lucifer! I looked up at him inquiringly.

Eva appeared at the conservatory door in search

of me, for breakfast. The fretted lines between his eyebrows deepened slightly, and he raised his right hand as if to wave her off; but instead, reached up and plucked the most beautiful rose-bud that his eye fell upon; and gave it to the child.

Was his coldness then the result of a false idea of the dignity of his relation as a father?

The little girl, with astonishment depicted in her countenance, nestled close beside me and grasped my hand. Almost a scowl flitted over his brow, and she hid her face against my dress.

Was he then only a canting hypocrite?

I turned my head away in disgust, and compressed my lips tightly to avoid remarking on his unnatural conduct, while I gathered a few flowers to add to the child's rose-bud.

Eva then started forward and we followed her.

"Do you go to church?" said he, as we stood upon the lawn and in the distance beheld the glistening of a church-spire through the woods.

"Yes," said I, abruptly; "but quite as much from force of habit, as from a sense of duty. I cannot say that impulse has anything to do in the matter."

"Why is this?"

"Because, I suppose, my faith in church-goers is not of the most implicit character."

"That is unfortunate," he said, with a cold smile curving the corners of his fine lips. "We are all conscientious church-goers here. That modest little church in yonder oak grove, is very precious to us, as is its angel."

"I have had the happiness of meeting its *angel* at

dinner, besides 'sitting under the droppings' of his sanctuary."

He laughed—a low, musical, provoking laugh—which grated on my nerves like the rasping of a file.

"What did you think of him?"

"I have thought so little, that I cannot say my thoughts have shape definite enough to transfer them to another."

We were advancing very slowly towards the house.

"You are morbid on this subject," said he. "Your experience must have been an unhappy one, for your years."

He was evidently playing upon my inexperience, and attempting to draw me out for his own amusement. I was angry, and I did not care to conceal my feelings.

"In the religious training that I received in school, I was given to understand much more of the force of example, than of impulses arising from the wants of the heart; 'and it came to pass,' that *my* heart in time seemed to have no part nor lot in our religious exercises. I am sure it was hardened by learning that precept and practice did not go hand in hand with my mentors."

We stood upon the piazza, and his face was graver than it had been while in the conservatory.

"This is sad for a young girl, and one in your situation."

I turned away from him and looked out over the smiling eastern landscape.

"And yet you acknowledge the necessity for the

worship of something higher and holier than ourselves? than we find in temporal things?"

"It *is* a necessity of our nature," I murmured, unwittingly; "yet the feeling may be only a deception growing out of human weakness."

"No; the feeling is not deceitful," he said. "No human soul can exist without this necessity. It is to the soul what the air and light are to the vital existence of the flower; what the smile of the sunshine is to the adoring heliotrope."

I passed through the hall to the breakfast-room; and as I sipped my coffee, and listened to the flashing, polished wit of the father, parried by the brilliant repartee of the son, all answered by the calm smile and pleasant rejoinder of the wife and mother—whose soft dark eyes turned with such pride from these two, to rest with a world of solicitude upon the golden-haired little child that sat by my side—and thought how all this refinement, this purity, this social elegance, were perhaps a mask that concealed a grinning death's-head, or a silken curtain that hid a ghastly skeleton, I turned sick at heart and felt I was in a strange nest.

I did not venture to join in the conversation that ran upon anecdotes and history, that pertained to the Colonial Church in Virginia; bringing up many a rare peccadillo and laughable *bon-mot* of the rollicking, powdered-wigged clergy; throwing over many a surprising unclerical freak the mantle of charity. My thoughts ran from the cheerful breakfast-board to a fair-haired young woman who was locked away in the south-east corner of this grand old Elizabethan

villa ; and who mimicked "the fine lady" when the stars came out, and midnight drew its black scroll over the mountains.

My abstraction was not observed, and hardly my departure from the table. When I got to my room, I picked up the first book upon which I laid my hand (perhaps it was my Bible—I do not know,) to steady my wandering thoughts ; but between me and the page came the proud, splendid face of Kenneth Darrow, and in my ears were sounding the mellow tones of his rich voice. I could neither shut my eyes nor ears against him, and I pressed a finger on my lips, and bowed my head.

But hark ! the full sweep of a harp-chord, and the glorious strains of the *Te Deum Laudamus* !





CHAPTER IX.

DE PROFUNDIS.

AT ten o'clock the large family carriage was at the door, with Uncle Moses on the box, looking more consequential than ever, in new homespun livery, and bell-crown fur hat, with black cockade.

With his hand upon the carriage door stood James, the miniature of Uncle Moses in dress, discoursing pompously to another young expectant footman, who was gazing in undisguised admiration on the glistening vehicle, and the shining dappled bay horses.

"Git away, boy! It'll be some years yit, afore you'll be high enough to reach the handle of this carriage door," said James, superciliously looking down upon his prospective rival. "So jist git away, Mr. Tony, and go 'bout your business."

"No, 'twon't, neither," said the younger boy. "I is up to *your* shoulders now, and Mr. Kenneth let me hole his horses twice. Dare now!"

"Hole the hosses twice? Ah, but that isn't goin' in the carriage, an' openin' the door at the meetin'-house;" and James most unceremoniously elbowed away his junior. Whereupon a scuffle ensued which

called down the irate wrath of Uncle Moses, who bent himself around from his exalted perch and cried out :

“ What in the name ob de Lord is you after ? you young varmint ! Clare yourse’f down to de quarter, Tony, and stay dar. If I hears the sound o’ your tongue agin Jeams, I’ll wear out dis whip on you, if it is Sunday morning ! ”

“ Not soon, Uncle Mose ! ” cried James, hiding behind the carriage, and indulging in a nudge or two with Tony, before he was fairly off to the place of his destination.

A stop was put to the quarrel by the sound of Mr. Darrow’s footsteps in the hall, and James found time to regain his position at the carriage door, and Uncle Moses straightened up upon the box, grumbling fiercely to himself, and heaping all sorts of anathemas on all “ niggers in gineral,” and these “ two young scamps in pertiklar.” Behind, came Mrs. Darrow, followed by Eva and myself, the rear being brought up by Patience and Charity.

“ I am very glad, Moses,” said Mr. Darrow respectfully, “ to see your horses in such fine order.”

“ Yes, sir ; oh, yes, sir ; and thank’ee, master ; ” said the old negro lifting his hat, his grave face lightened by a hearty smile. “ You never did have a better hossler, sir, than Simeon. He tends to his business like a man, sir. Yes, sir, he does ; yes, sir ; master.”

“ And the carriage,” said Mrs. Darrow, in compliment to the old man, “ is in very nice order, Moses,” looking carefully about the running gear.

“ Thank you, mistress. ’Spent four mortal hours on

dis coach yisterday, for I was 'termined to git all de red mud off de wheels, from de trip dat rainy day. It stick worse dan paint." The old man with hat in hand, bowing all the while, with a polite deference rarely found among domestics of a paler tint.

During this colloquy, Mr. Darrow assisted Mrs. Darrow, Eva, and myself into the carriage, then getting in himself, James gave Charity a lift, which placed her up on the box beside Uncle Moses, while he sprang up behind, and laid hold of the fringed straps, whistling under his breath a plantation tune, and indulging in a quiet shuffle.

As we drove around the lawn, from the other side, a stylish light *barouche*, with the top thrown back, and drawn by a pair of young, supple, iron-gray trotters, was driven up to the door, and springing into this, Kenneth Darrow followed on to church.

Our route was along a portion of that over which I had come to Glen Darrow; but after fording the river, we proceeded up on the opposite bank, along the windings of the stream about two miles, then crossing the river again, we wound around a mountain through a romantic defile, and came out on a beautiful plateau about two miles in circumference, in the midst of which was a fine grove of indigenous oaks that sheltered the church.

This, in part, was a pre-revolutionary structure, built of brick, with Gothic doors, windows, and ceiling; and all around for a space of two acres were the battered down and crumbling monuments of those who had long ago worshipped there.

For many years, for want of the material support

derived when Church and State had mutual interests, and after the confiscation of the glebe lands and the destruction of the parsonages, under the advent of a republican form of government, this old church, as a place of worship, had been unoccupied; and the cemetery which surrounded, only made use of by those who could not afford, upon their own lands, to appropriate an acre for the burial of their dead.

The roof fell in, the walls crumbled away, and in the body of the church near where had stood the tall pulpit, with its vaulted sounding-board, a stately tulip poplar had grown up, as if to fill with the perfume of its honey-tinct blossoms, the place of the incense which should have arisen from humble and grateful hearts.

It was not until the condition of this waste place in Zion impressed itself on the notice of the present Mrs. Darrow, through her individual spiritual wants, that it was recovered from ruin, with its inhabitants, the moles, the owls, and the bats; the walls builded up, the roof and spire restored, and the worship of God re-enacted within. It was rebuilt in its original form—the Greek cross—the upper portion of the nave being railed around for a chancel.

Our party, but for the loquacity of Eva, who, out of sight of the eyes of Kenneth Darrow and his shadowy scowl, found her tongue loosened, and liberty to tease and caress "grandpa" to her heart's content, was a singularly silent one. Mrs. Darrow read the psalms and lessons for the day, and I—I gazed out upon hill and valley, wood and wold, mountain and ravine, blue sky and tumbling, foam-

ing, frothing, gurgling stream, seeing all, but wholly unconscious that anything was making impression on the retina of my staring, stony eyes, which had turned inward, and looked down through the soul into chaos.

I was musing—wondering—running away back to the times when I had knelt before my father's picture and said my prayers—my innocent, confiding prayers—wondering whether he too was a fraud—whether I was a fraud—whether all were not frauds, or the victims of evil genii, that magnified or sublimated involuntary acts into virtues.

In the midst of this, a turn brought us up to the open door of the church—so quiet, so holy—away off there with the crumbling gravestones around—where no sounds of busy life, the bustle and buzz of the city, nor the whistle and shriek of the steam-engine could disturb the sanctity—only the great bell that sent its resounding echoes over the mountains and through the valleys, calling the settlers to worship; and the breeze that murmured a requiem for the still sleepers beneath the rustling leaves of the oaks, and the souging pines that here and there had lifted up their heads, to make less cheerless the winter.

But already Kenneth Darrow was there: half a mile back had flashed by us in his glittering "turn-out," with a bow and a smile; had already alighted, and waited to hand us out of the carriage.

The congregation was small, consisting mostly of the large planters' families within ten miles around; the more humble of the inhabitants of the neighbor-

hood and section, having wandered off, after the Revolution, and the decadence of the Episcopacy, into other pastures of Christ's flock.

Though, as I had told Kenneth Darrow, I had not given special attention to the deservings of the "angel" that ministered, I could not fail to notice that the service was well read; while the responses were most irregularly delivered from one and another, scattered at intervals along the aisles, and among the pews; the choir occupying a gallery in the transept on the right of the chancel, with a small but well-toned organ; the gift—as I had heard—of Mrs. Darrow.

In this church there was nothing remarkable, save that, above the black Gothic panels that hung upon the upper end of the nave, behind the chancel, upon which were inscribed in gilt letters, the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, and the Apostles' Creed, was fitted a stained-glass window, on which was represented the *Ecce Homo*, after Guido's original in possession of the Corsini, at Rome. There was the same sublime agony on the features betraying the humanity; the same upturned, piteous eyes, the same pallid, quivering lips; the same torn and bleeding brow; the same cruel crown of sharp, piercing thorns. This window was a masterpiece of its kind, and served well to illustrate the peculiar occasion.

Beneath "a fair linen cloth" on the chancel table, were the elements of the mysterious Eucharistic feast; and the subject of Dr. Manton's discourse was the passion, suffering, and death of the God-man.

The eloquence of Wirt's blind preacher, without

the added impression through his infirmity, could not have been greater than that which flowed from Dr. Manton's lips on this morning. I could not avoid hearing; I could not avoid feeling—though my senses had seemed asleep and my heart frozen.

The necessity for the atonement; the agony of the Son of God, through His humanity; the ignominy of his death and the triumph of His resurrection, were drawn in a picture as if the lips of the speaker had been touched with "live coals from off the altar." But longer, more touchingly, and with greater warmth of feeling did he descant on that exceeding great *love* wherewith He loved us, "in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

The abstraction in which I had been plunged on my journey to church, had been merged in the wonderful mystery and history of the incarnation, the ministry and death of Christ; until the thorn-crowned head seemed to bend its sorrowful lips on me alone, and feebly the cry rang in my ears, "Father, forgive!" as if I were the worst of all His enemies.

I bowed my head under the weight of condemnation that, for the first time in all my life, pressed down like an avalanche upon my smothering soul; when like the thunder-peal of doom came—"Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani!" and the Bible on the desk was reverently closed, and the people knelt in prayer.

Although he sat beside me, I had not dared to glance at Kenneth Darrow. I did not wish to look at him. I did not wish the spell that Dr. Manton's eloquence had cast over me to be broken; and from this feeling I did not recover, until distracted by the

usual church collection, and I caught the flutter of a twenty-dollar bill as the alms-plate passed him.

“Ye who do truly and earnestly repent you of your sins, and are in love and charity with your neighbors, draw near”—this was the invitation.

Mr. and Mrs. Darrow were among the first to move toward the chancel, but Kenneth merely made way to allow them to pass him in the pew, and then calmly resumed his seat.

With such emotion as I had never witnessed this ceremony before, I looked on; and though for several years it had been my custom to partake of the communion, I could no more at that time have approached and knelt at the chancel railing, than with my trembling hands I could have lifted a hammer and driven a nail into the Saviour's hand, or thrust the ponderous Roman spear into His side.

I had not the temerity to risk such a performance, when the vilest suspicion, I will not say hatred, rankled in my breast against the man who sat beside me—suspicion which robbed me of all feeling of brotherly kindness, of all fellowship which might entitle me to a seat at that board. Therefore, I simply left my “gift before the altar,” and went my way to be “reconciled,” perchance.

The services were ended! The joyous strains of the *Gloria in Excelsis* arose above the pitiful cry of Christ's humanity, saying,—

“For Thou only art holy; Thou only art the Lord; Thou only, O Christ, with the Holy Ghost, art most high in the glory of God the Father! Amen!”

I did not stand when this was sung. I was fastened

to my seat by the weight of accusations that came rushing over me, and gibbered like maniac friends, at the mocking service I had rendered the risen Lord.

Neither did Kenneth Darrow stand, during this triumphant chant. Why, I never asked. There were tears—bright, glistening tears—on the cheeks of his mother, when she arose from her knees after the benediction, and lifted her eyes to her son. He might have been marble from the stony stare he returned, through the contracted pupils of his strange, magnetic eyes. But his breathing was quick; the muscles of his face twitched far below the surface, and the veins in his temples were throbbing sharply. Eva glanced up at him, and then nestling close beside me, with both of hers, grasped my left hand. He stood at my right side. As we left the church he lagged behind—behind all who were pressing through the aisle, and whispered me,—

“ You are a communicant, are you not ? ”

“ Yes, I am.”

“ Why did you not go to the table to-day.”

“ I did not wish to go. Are *you* not a communicant ? ”

“ I am not.”

“ Why ? ”

“ I am not worthy to be.”

His voice was husky. I looked up to catch the expression of his countenance, but he had been recalled by Dr. Manton, and was soon leaning over the chancel railing engaged in earnest converse.

His mother looked back, and sighed.



CHAPTER X.

MORE LIGHT.

NOT only the social, but generally the moral standing of one, may be inferred from the greeting he receives in public. And thus, as well from the kindly as the deferential greetings received by the Darrow family at church, the generous inquiries made after their health, and this and that that pertained to them, I inferred they were not only people of distinction, but sincerely beloved. Our footsteps were thronged, even to the carriage door, and we had no need of James's services in getting in the vehicle that stood there.

As we sat in the carriage waiting for Mr. Darrow, who had been called into the vestry-room by a brother vestry-man, Kenneth came out of the church, and to the door of the vehicle :

" I am thinking," said he, " I shall disburden this chariot of a portion of its load, by taking Miss Royal out with me ; and it may be, give her a better benefit of the fine scenery about us."

I felt myself recoiling at once from the proposition, and was about to tender a refusal when Mrs. Darrow looked up at me with one of her rare, calm, sunny smiles from which there was no appeal : " Yes, dear ;

you will go with him ?" said she ; and before I had time to realize how very disagreeable a thing I was doing for myself, I was transferred to the open *barouche*, and being whirled away from the quiet old church ; the mouldering old tombstones ; and perhaps forever, from the good spirit which had troubled the waters for me that day ; for no sooner than out of sight, all the strangely gentle influences that had been at work at my heart fled, and my old doubting self came back, pointing at me with skinny finger, and jeering at the facility with which I had yielded.

That Kenneth Darrow was a charming talker, my reason could not deny : it mattered not how bitterly the rancor at my heart curdled against him. And this I realized fully, when in his rich musical voice, he recounted legend after legend of this place and that—passed by, or pointed out, in the distance—in connection with the unfortunate aborigines of America, or unlucky pioneers who had followed in the wake of his forefathers. While elegant and graceful, beyond all comparison, when he ordered his coachman to halt, he stood up and pointed out the valley to me, intersected by the river that wound its way along like a wide silver ribbon, and dotted with beautiful homesteads—a valley, " beautiful enough," as he said, " to have been the one that paled and grew common, upon the sated fancy of restless Rasselas."

As we drew near the poplar-bordered avenue that turned into the grounds which immediately surrounded the house, we beheld Mrs. Johnson afoot, coming up from the opposite direction.

Knowing that " The Glen " was her destination, he

had the carriage stopped, and inviting her to a seat beside the coachman, gave her the happiness of a drive of a mile behind his iron-grays.

"Thank you, Mr. Kenneth," said she, when she found herself fairly seated; "for I'm mighty tired. I've walked full five mile."

"Which way have you been, Barbara?" said he.

"Down to the baptizin', bless your soul! Brother Peterson has had a revival meetin' goin' on down at Salem meetin'-house, for nigh on to ten days. But I've not had a chance to go until to-day, seein' as little Emmie has not been so well."

"Ah! Is Emily sick?"

"No, not to say sick; but you know she's monstrous delicate, poor little thing."

"But I hope nothing serious is the matter."

"No, no; bless your soul! You'd better believe not; or Barbara Johnson wouldn't ha' left her child, baptizin' or no baptizin', though a hundred sinners had got converted from their sins."

"A hundred converted?" said Kenneth.

"Yes, more'n a hundred, I believe in my heart; because I thought brother Peterson, and brother Jenkins, and brother Jones never *would* git through with baptizin' 'em."

"I am really very glad to hear of the prosperity of your church, Barbara."

"To be sure, Mr. Kenneth, and I should be gladder still ef I had some children to jine now. But seein' as how I've none but little Emmy, an' she's so modest like, I'm sort o' sorry."

"Sorry for what, Barbara?"

“ Sorry I’ve not got a hundred child’ en to send into the service of my Master.”

“ You are a very patriotic Christian, Barbara, but I rather think He knows best about these things, and will hardly hold us responsible for the impossible.”

“ Yes, Mr. Kenneth, I knows that ; but I’ve been so stirred up, seein’ so many young believers buried in Him, I couldn’t help wishin’ all my child’ en could go down under the water agin, an’ be baptized over.”

“ I have no doubt your aspirations are all good, but since they rather transcend the requirements of the Bible, you may err in your misconception of what is your duty.”

“ Now Mr. Kenneth, seein’ as I’ve not much edication to speak of, I don’t always know jest what you mean when you use grand words. An’ anyhow, my business with you to-day is, ef it is Sunday, to tell you somethin’ about Sam, poor fellow. You always thought a sight o’ Sam.”

“ Yes, yes ; what is the matter with Sam ? ”

We had, by this time, reached the lawn and were winding around the carriage-way to the door, and Mrs. Johnson, heaving one of her long sighs, took out a large pocket-handkerchief, and wiping off the perspiration that had gathered on her forehead, said, as if burdened with the weight and importance of what she had to communicate : “ Well, Mr. Kenneth, I’ve got a heap to tell you, and we’d better wait till we git in the house. I’ve got a heap to tell you ’bout Sam, poor fellow. His wife’s mighty quarrelsome, an’ never will let him have any peace of his life. I tell ’em that’s the reason they’ve such bad luck.

But who wouldn't say you were a raal born gittleman, every inch o' you, for pickin' up a poor crittur like me, and givin' her a ride in this fine carriage?" and Mrs. Johnson rather clumsily climbed down from her seat, and meeting Patience on the door-steps, exchanged with her the most friendly salutations.

She was out in her best rig—her "Sunday clothes," as she called them—a cigar-brown woollen dress, with a large, coarse, heavy straw bonnet, flaunting great bows and long streamers, and covering a cap with a wide border of coarse lace, with loops of a bright yellow flimsy satin ribbon, for ornament. Her feet were incased in stout country-made brogans, with the heaviest soles—shoes made for rough roads and rough weather, as well as a rough wearer. She looked in her holiday finery even more brawny and gigantic than in her home dress; yet in everything was so scrupulously neat as never to be repulsive.

After a little while the large carriage with its inmates drew up, and after denuding ourselves of bonnets and wrappings, and retiring to the small family parlor, Kenneth resumed his investigations into Sam's distresses.

"Oh, Mr. Kenneth, bless your dear heart! Sam's had all sorts o' troubles. Little Barbara, my namesake, more's the pity, his little deformed child, with the one club-foot, she's dead—died o' the whoopin'-cough last Sunday week, 'cause her mother did *not* take keer o' her, and keep her from a'ketchin' cold. I should a'thought it a God's mercy to the poor little thing, ef Sam didn't take on so about it. An' his big brindled cow, that give two gallon of milk a day

—*every* day of her life—she took the blind staggers from catin' some kind o' pisin' weed, and she died the Monday after. An' Tuesday his gray mare hitched her left hind leg in the draw-bars in the fence across the new clearin,' and broke it, so that he had to knock *her* in the head. An' *what* should happen next day, but that the sheriff must come an' levy on his other horse,—the one *your* father give him—for his wife's store-bills, down at Murray's store at the cross-roads. The poor fellow's a'most run mad, he is."

"Poor Sam!" said Kenneth, with a quiet smile; and a look of concern, making it still more beautiful, came over Mrs. Darrow's face, as Mr. Darrow, laughing outright, essayed a little of the generosity of Job's comforters in: "Troubles never come one at a time, you know, Barbara;" and Eva, her little soul full of sympathy, crept up to the old woman, and laying her plump, soft hand in the horny one on Mrs. Johnson's lap, looked in her face, to find what she might do to mend the matter.

The old woman, as if seized with an idea entirely foreign, laid one hand on the child's golden crown, and placing the other under the round white chin, lifted up Eva's face, exclaiming:

"Bless my soul! The living image of Mr. Richard! I al'ays said so! Gits more and more like him every day; only she's got all the good and han'some, without havin' any o' his savage, wild sort o' look!"

Mrs. Darrow turned fearfully pale, and a spasm of acute pain crossed her brow, and twitched her lips.

I turned for a glance at Kenneth. For a moment he also turned pale, but his pallor was almost instantly succeeded by a hot, angry flush; and getting up he pushed his chair violently aside, and going to the window threw it up, and as fiercely whistled an irreverent air, as if he had been in the forest depths. Old Mr. Darrow alone retained his usual composure.

“Don’t you think, sir, she’s like Mr. Richard—leastways, when Mr. Richard was young an’ innocent-like? Her beautiful eyes are jest his’n for all the world!” and gathering the wondering little girl to her, she stroked her shining ringlets, and imprinting a kiss on her forehead: “But her hair is her mother’s!”

I pitied Kenneth Darrow, for he suffered—that proud, strong man. I noted the heaving of his heavy chest, and the passionate yet furtive clasp of his hand across his brow. He beat a tattoo on the carpet with the toe of his boot, to keep time with the tune he was whistling down the wind—hardly in mockery of the mocking-bird on the trellis, that had caught the notes of the robin-redbreast, and saucily improved upon them by throwing in his own matchless variations. He whistled awhile, and then hummed—hummed a bar or two from an air of Verdi; and then seeming to recollect himself, he turned sharply around: “Pardon, mother! will you? Do you think, Barbara, an investment of a couple of thousand dollars for Sam’s benefit, and a location in the cooper’s house down at the mill, would do him any good?”

“ Bless your soul ! to be sure it would ; ef he could
only git his horse out o’ the sheriff’s hands.”

“ That can very easily be done, I dare say. I’ll
see about it. You can tell Sam to make himself
easy ; but in the name of all that’s respectable, not
to quarrel with his wife.”

“ Bless your dear heart ! he wouldn’t quarrel a bit,
ef she didn’t try his patience worse than Job’s wife
tried his’n.”

“ It is cowardly and small, to say the least of it, for
a man to bandy words with a woman.”

“ Indced it is,” said Barbara emphatically, “ seein’
as some women never has any reason about ‘em !
But, Mrs. Darrow, I’ve got somethin’ to tell *you*.”

“ Ah ! what is it, Barbara ?” said Mrs. Darrow
wearily.

“ Well, when Miss Royal, here, was over at my
house, I told her Jemima Ann, she was my nest-egg ;
but it seems she isn’t to be neither.”

“ Why, how is that ?” said old Mr. Darrow. “ Is
Jemima Ann about to leave you, Barbara ?”

“ I really do believe so ; an’ I’ll tell you all about
it. Why one day since the big meetin’s been goin’
on down at Salem meetin’-house, brother Jones, he’s
a widower, you know—lost his wife about four months
ago—he come home with my Jemima Ann ; an’ after
dinner, an’ eatin’ almost a whole fried chicken ; and
three sweet-potatoes as big as a baby’s leg ; an’
drinkin’ three whole mugs o’ my cider, as he set
pickin’ his teeth, an’ lookin’ powerful comfortable, he
says, says he :

“ ‘ Sister Johnsing, Sister Jemima Ann is a mighty fine girl.’

“ ‘ As fine a girl as ever trod sole-leather,’ says I, ‘ ef she is my child.’

“ ‘ Sister Johnsing,’ says he, ‘ the Good Book says, ‘ it is not good for man to be alone.’ An’ I’ve been thinking, and sister, Jemima Ann’s been thinking—’

“ ‘ What in the name o’ the seven stars have you been thinkin’ ?’ says I.

“ ‘ We’ve been thinking we’d get married !’

“ ‘ Why, Brother Jones,’ says I, ‘ your poor wife’s hardly cold in her grave.’

“ ‘ But Mrs. Jones is as dead as she’ll ever be,’ he said, sort o’ solemn like. I felt the cold chills run all over me.

“ ‘ But what’s the use o’ resistin’ a girl, when she takes marryin’ in her head ? An’ so I said : ‘ Brother Jones, my Jemima Ann will be twenty-five years old come next January ; an’ ef she feels like a-leavin’ her poor old mother all by herself, an’ her little blind sister—she’s of age—an’ I spose she will ; an’ that’s all I have to say.’

“ ‘ Then Brother Jones, he took an’ set down by Jemima Ann, and went on to talkin’ all sorts o’ soft nonsense before me, jest the same as ef I hadn’t been there.

“ ‘ I riled up at that ; an’ fillin’ my pipe an’ taken a puff or two, says I : ‘ An’ when do you purpose to jine teams ?’

“ ‘ An’ says he, ‘ When, Jemima ?’

“ ‘ An’ says she, sort o’ bashful like, ‘ The twenty-fourth day of December will be soon enough, will it not, Mr. Jones ?’

“ An’ says he : ‘ That’s not quite as soon as I’d like, Jemima.’

“ An’ says she : ‘ Then the fifteenth, Mr. Jones.’

“ So it was all fixed right before my eyes ! I tell you, girls were a sight bashfuller when I was young ; an’ a fine time she’ll have a takin’ keer o’ his seven children. Though, ef it suits her, I spose it must suit me.”

“ Jemima Ann is a sensible girl,” said Mr. Darrow. “ Congratulate her for me, and tell her I shall give her a fine Durham heifer for a wedding present.”

The announcement that dinner was ready put a stop for the time to Mrs. Johnson’s loquacity ; and being invited to join us, Kenneth gave up to her his seat on the right of his mother, and took that on the left of his father, opposite Eva.

Mrs. Johnson’s rough-hewn remarks, falling right and left, and sometimes with powerful effect, though not intentionally rude and always laughable, did not serve to lift him out of a spirit of moodishness that made him silent, or rather, sententious. He was troubled, and labored to avert his gaze from Eva, with her brown eyes furtively glancing up at him, and reading more of his disquietude than added to his comfort ; while his father, mainly supported his simple but respected neighbor, drawing from his wife an occasional smile or answer in monosyllable.

After dinner I retired to my room with Eva, and taught her a pretty little poem—not a hymn, for she had committed a hymn to memory that morning—and asked for something else ; and not regarding Sunday as a day of penance, I told her also a pretty

little story that made her happy, and gave her a realization of the rest that springs from simple pleasures.

But what a long day it had been for me! What a long Sunday! How many things had happened that gave me food for thought, for speculation! How strangely had Mrs. Johnson come in to awaken a spectre that might otherwise have been conjured to sleep!

I threw up my window and looked out at the gray clouds that were scudding over the sunshine, and throwing their sombre shadows over the mountains, and deadening the brilliant tints that lay in careless gorgeousness on the sides; and I felt sad and chilly. I dreaded winter.

I heard the sound of Mrs. Johnson's voice. Winding down the garden terraces, and around by the cemetery, I followed her with my eyes. Kenneth Darrow walked by her side, carrying in his hand a small basket of cold dainties—a part of our dinner—for little Emily.





CHAPTER XI.

AS YOU LIKE IT.

“It is the hour when from the boughs
The nightingale’s high note is heard ;
It is the hour when lovers’ vows
Seem sweet in every whispered word.”

THAT is, the hour between daylight and dusk, when the western sky is aflush with the crimson of the sun’s departing glow, and over the earth, twilight draws her purple mantle,

“And pins it with a star.”

The hour when the weary laborer sweetly thinks him of rest, and nerves tensioned until they thrill like tightened strings of a musical instrument, catch some of the spirit, and claim a measure of that repose, which tired Nature is folding to her bosom.

It was at this hour, on the day subsequent to the events recorded in the last three chapters, that I thre aside “The Bride of Lammermoor,” with a sigh over the multiform distresses of the gentle Lucia ; and, with the potent spell wrought by “The Wizard of the North,” in full possession of my senses, ran down-stairs, and through the sympathetic dusk of the long

hall, with its stag's-horn brackets, and murderous fowling-pieces and fishing-tackle, to the drawing-room.

At this hour, when my heart seems most in unison with exterior influences, and best attuned to melody, I like best my own musical efforts; and at that particular time, my mood and the remembrance of the silent grand piano, impelled.

The hickory-wood fire had burned well-nigh down on the wide hearth, and a great heap of red and blackening coals sang a murmurous song, all to itself.

Gazing down into the glowing and smouldering pile, and leaving imagination to do its "perfect work," I was not long in conjuring up a picture, a curious picture: a camel driver on the Great Desert cheering on a long line of weary dromedaries; the mysterious Sphinx lifting her broad face and looking benignantly out over the toiling caravan to the towering pyramids, which raised their tall, peaked heads to a very dark, red cloud that the remorseless Simoom was rolling up; or, some dark flakes of trembling ashes which clung to a persistent billet of half-charred wood, that now and then emitted a low, sullen groan, like distant thunder, and a sparkling flash, like midnight lightning.

And *à propos* of my picture, after its completeness had wrought itself on my brain, I lighted the much unused lamp in the Egyptian alabaster vase, when lo! around the brim, in almost magical lines of light and shadow, appeared a heavy wreath of lotus blossoms; and distilled over the apartment was the rich perfume of lilies, such as I fancy voluptuous Cleopatra was wont

to breathe, with ear drinking in the honeyed eloquence of silvery-voiced Marc Antony.

I opened the piano, but having no definite *theme* in my mind or at my finger-ends, I strummed an air from "Moses in Egypt;" and then—I could not tell what—improvising first on a minor, and then on a major key, until I found myself running into some of the delightful airs of Rossini; and without being conscious of what I was doing, I was singing in an undertone, *Una voce poco fa*.

I do not remember that I left the door open when I entered, nor did I hear the sound of footsteps on the soft Turkey carpet; but, by that strange instinct, to which those cunning in science have never yet been able to assign a characteristic generic name—it matters not how industriously they may have dug among Arabic, Greek, or perchance Sanscrit roots, for something high-sounding—I felt that some one was in the room beside myself.

After hushing my song, I listened for a breath which might betray the whereabouts, but could hear only the fitful beating of my own heart. I jumped up from the piano, and dreading to meet the intruder, had my hand upon the door-knob, when, ashamed of my cowardice, I was seized with another idea, and recalling the remarks that Mrs. Johnson had so witlessly let fall, and humming the strain of my song, I walked across the room, and scrutinized closely the portrait of the one I knew must be "Mr. Richard," with the good and evil in the face cropping out from the canvas. From this, with the flashing brown eyes reflecting the untempered fire that burnt behind, my

scrutiny wandered to the portrait of the young girl with the waves of molten gold hair falling around the neck and shoulders, and the violet blue eyes, and the smiling coral lips which held in durance sweet, unborn dimples ; scarcely less winsome for the shadowy light that fell upon it through the lotus blossoms.

"Yes, Mrs. Johnson is right," I thought—I might have said, almost aloud. "An accidental resemblance it may be, but very wonderful the blending, to be accidental only. Ah, but Nature is governed by no rules in her freaks, it seems." And turning from these without casting my eyes to the portrait of Kenneth Darrow, I bethought me to close down the lid of the piano.

He stood, apparently watching all I had done, his elbow resting on the corner of the instrument.

"Oh ! oh !" I exclaimed in sudden tremor, almost as much startled as if an apparition from the other world had arisen and stood there in his place. "Excuse me ; I was not expecting to see you !"

"Do I look ghostly ?" said he.

"No," said I, evasively.

"You are troubled with nerves, then ?"

"Yes ; unfortunately, sometimes."

"Pardon my intrusion," said he, with much feeling. "I heard the sound of your voice in passing, and could not resist the temptation to come in. I like the random sort of music in which you have been indulging. Have been sitting in the shadow of that *fautcuil* for the last ten minutes. Ought to have left as noiselessly as I came in. Go on with your music. Don't let me disturb you."

"Thanks! I do not feel like singing more now."

"Then I will leave. I am sure I must be in the way."

"By no means," I said, stammeringly. "I—I don't think—I should—have sung—anything else," glancing up at the portraits which seemed looking upon me, in keen interpretation of the thoughts which then ran through my soul.

"Did the study of those faces frighten away the spirit of Song?"

His voice had a clear, cold, sharp, metallic ring, as when steel clashes against steel on a winter morning. I scarcely knew what to reply. I did not wish him to feel that I had noticed what Mrs. Johnson had said; and after a few seconds' hesitation, in which conscience made some compromise between honesty and politeness, I murmured, "It may be. I do not know;" and then, forgetful of the caution that I had imposed upon myself, asked,—

"Whose is the portrait of the man with auburn hair?"

"My brother's," said he, indifferently.

"Whose the young girl with golden hair?"

"A cousin's;" without changing his tone of voice.

"Would you know anything more?"

"Nothing," said I, endeavoring to assume his indifference, while I was indeed frightened at my presumption in forgetting the innocence of my curiosity.

He drew a quick breath, and turned suddenly away.

"Will you meet me in the library an hour after tea?"

I might have asked for what? or pleaded a valid

excuse, for I did not wish to meet him ; but I feared. He had made a movement forward, and turned for my reply.

“ Yes.”

“ Very well,” said he ; I thought, with emphasis.

He stepped rapidly through the hall to the corridor which led to his mother's rooms, whistling the same tune that I had heard him whistle down the wind, the day before. A whistle from his lips was so incongruous.

“ But what does he wish of me in the library, an *hour after tea* ? ”—I said to myself. “ Does he mean to discharge me ? to send me adrift to look out another place, and because of my asking a few questions which might go to the unmasking of some dreadful secret ? Well, I don't care if he does.” I fell back upon my old philosophy.

“ The earth is wide. I do not think it was made for the ‘ Elect,’ though heaven might have been ; and the world owes me a living, and I mean to have it ! Then let him discharge me if he dares ; he cannot muzzle me ! ”

Feeling that I had almost a holy duty to perform in the investigation of his secret history, I stood up defiantly before his portrait, so like him, and yet so unlike in the lack of the soul, and searched through every feature, and in the conformation of the thoroughly-balanced head, for something which might aid me in the more than half-formed suspicion that he was capable of, if indeed he was not already guilty of some heinous crime. My thoughts ran away to the fair-haired prisoner I had both heard and seen, and

memory ran over the fairy legends of childhood—over stories that made my blood run cold—stories of poor imprisoned females in old feudal castles. Alas! the days of knighthood were over, and chivalry only the creation of some crazy poet.

A few minutes after this, I sat opposite Kenneth Darrow at the tea-table, and listened to him, in the deepest, mellowest pathos of his wonderful voice, discourse of a visit to the Blind Asylum at Staunton, and of certain measures he should urge in the next General Assembly of the State, for the still greater amelioration of the unhappy condition of those unfortunates who never see the glorious sunshine—who know of *light*, only as a word.

I fixed my eyes upon him, searchingly, wondering! How could I help wondering? He did not seem to notice my gaze. He did not seem to notice that Eva forgot the evening meal as she listened, when his theme drifted directly to the case of little Emily Johnson, and a late inflammation which had attacked her sightless eyes, checking hopes that she might ever see. An hour later I made my appearance in the library.

What a charming haunt of the Muses it was, with its old, dark, carved oaken book-cases reaching up to the ceiling, filled with all sorts of rare, as well as more common books; in our own vernacular as well as various foreign tongues, both ancient and modern; bound in oak, and parchment, and royal calf, and substantial sheep, with a few in flashing morocco gilt, and Russia leather—with here and there a niche or bracket from which peeped down some world-re-

nowned author, or god, or goddess, in marble, bronze, ivory, or alabaster—while upon every convenient spot on the walls, and above the mantel, hung some rare work of the pencil and palette.

How cosy it was, with its dark green curtains and carpet; its old morocco-covered sofas and chairs, and desks and study-tables, scattered over with folios of old rare engravings, and journals and magazines and reviews—the “Westminster,” and the “British Quarterly,” and the “Edinburgh,” and “Blackwood’s,” and the “North American,” and the “American Quarterly,” and “Graham’s Magazine,”—a few juveniles, and this and that, for momentary mental refreshment, and acquaintance with what was going on in the great world outside our mountain barriers!

How cosy it was on this particular evening, with its heavy curtains drawn, to keep out the chill November blast, and the snow-drifts that swept down from the Blue Ridge; and its bright wood fire sparkling behind a pair of huge bronze *cerberi*, and flashing and singing through a fender of wire gauze!

When I got in, Kenneth Darrow was already there; had made himself comfortable in a sable-trimmed robe of rich dark purple velvet, which, however, scarcely added anything to the haughty imperiousness of his proud style of manly beauty, and was worn only occasionally, as I afterwards learned, in acknowledgment of the donor, an admiring college-chum at Heidelberg.

He was half reclining on one of the sofas, his right shoulder pillowed on a rich patchwork Russia leather sofa-cushion, and luxuriating in a finely scented

Havana cigar, the very impersonation of elegant ease and care-free luxury.

He did not rise upon my entrance, but with a graceful, and I thought a condescending, inclination of the head waved me to a seat beside the centre-table, upon which blazed a Germain student's lamp, with a white porcelain shade. Beside this, lay a mammoth volume of Shakespeare, with type almost coarse enough to have been read at ten paces, bound in parchment.

"Is the odor of the cigar smoke offensive?" said he, lifting the cigar from his lips, and gazing lazily up through the vapor as it curled to the ceiling in fleecy wreaths.

"No, I rather like it when fresh," I replied, as a pleasantly small quantity of the intoxicating incense penetrated my olfactories.

"That is immensely accommodating!" he exclaimed. "I am anxious that we should become friends, and I am sure the prospect will be much fairer, if you do not take it into your head to ostracize my cigar."

"That depends upon where and when you use your cigar," not wishing him to be deceived in supposing I should accommodate myself to his caprices with extraordinary facility.

"I shall hardly obtrude it within forbidden recesses," said he, "or when there may be headaches in the way. But my good mother is amiably disposed to be indulgent; and with a thorough airing to-morrow morning, these curtains around us here will be none the worse for this baptism."

"What do you wish of me?" said I, feeling restless, and altogether desirous to bring the interview to a close.

He smiled in a deprecating sort of manner.

"Well, as I am sometimes disposed to luxuriate perfectly, and still not absolutely to abuse time, while I dream away the effects of a comforter like this," pressing with his fingers the half-consumed cigar, "I wish you to read to me of evenings, when you are not otherwise employed."

"Oh, monstrous!" cried I.

He laughed provokingly.

"Was such a thing understood in the contract, when I engaged here as governess?"

He had placed his cigar again between his lips, and a cloud of smoke hung over his head like a veil of grey gossamer.

"You are a tyrant," I exclaimed indignantly, irritated by his coolness, and failure to answer me.

"Doubtless I am," he said playfully, "and one, of the most despotic order."

"Do you really mean that I must read aloud for you?"

"I *really mean* something of the kind, unless I mistake my own meaning," said he, smiling mischievously through the cloud of smoke that issued from his lips.

"I cannot."

"You can," said he earnestly.

"And Shakespeare?" opening the volume before me.

"And Shakespeare," said he, mimicking my tone. "I have marked the play."

An ivory paper-cutter lay between the leaves at—
“As You Like It.”

I thought of a compromise.

“If I must do a thing so disagreeable to myself, do let me read Spenser’s “*Facrie Queene*,” Shelley’s “*Queen Mab*,” Byron’s “*Childe Harold*,” Pope’s “*Essay on Man*,”—anything, rather than attempt the difficult task of rendering Shakespeare to the hypercritical comprehension of another.”

“How do you know that my comprehension is hypercritical?”

“I judge so,” said I, doggedly, “from the opinion I have conceived of you.”

“Which, on the whole, is not particularly flattering.”

I laughed to avoid a petulant fit of weeping. He saw that he was teasing me, and I thought enjoyed it.

“No, you must read Shakespeare. I feel peculiarly in the mood for the ‘Bard of Avon’ this evening.”

I looked over the *dramatis personæ* of “As You Like It,” and sighed.

“There, be a good girl,” said he: “I wish to hear your interpretation of the dear, brave, sparkling, dashing, mercurial Rosalind.”

I drew on a rueful face, and not without cause; but I was too brave myself, to be intimidated by the ridicule implied in the last remark, and again ran over the list of actors in the play.

“If I must read Shakespeare, let me try some other play.”

"You feel more like interpreting Lady Macbeth, do you not?" said he.

"Or Shylock or Iago," said I.

"Or Caliban," said he, throwing the stump of his cigar in the fire, and looking at me quietly, while the blue in his eyes scintillated a thousand mischievous stars, and the black pupils became more intensely black.

"Don't be a baby!" he cried. "Let us have Rosalind now, and at some other time we will have Shylock, or Iago, or Caliban, or what you will."

With a determined pout upon my lips, I opened the book again, and read the argument. I had not proceeded in the play further than a page, before he arose from his seat impatiently, and said:

"Did you have a teacher of elocution in your school?"

"Yes."

"Then he must have been a knave."

"He did not train a class of *public* readers;" said I, "nor prepare girls for the rostrum."

"That is very evident," said Kenneth Darrow, coolly, "but he was a knave, nevertheless. You have yet to learn *anything* about the compass of your voice. Your inflections are altogether unnatural and false, and your enunciation is intolerable!"

I was offended.

"Will you excuse me, then, from making another *exposé* of my many imperfections."

"If you will permit me," he said, seriously, "I will teach you to read, and you will not realize that you are taking a lesson. Forget that any one is pres-

ent. Throw yourself, as nearly as possible, into the characters of the play ; give to every word its proper value ; do not strain your voice, but let the gradations of sound be with the emotion engendered by the subject, and you will make no mistake. Read slowly."

He said this so gently, I thought he intended to pity me, and my proud spirit rebelling against it, there were tears of vexation in my voice when I commenced again. But becoming thoroughly interested in the characters of the play, I read on, almost forgetful of my audience, until the third act was finished, and my voice grew hoarse.

"Bravo! That will do for this evening!" cried he. "Now thank me for teaching you what you never knew before, and to-morrow evening we will continue our lessons."

I was more than glad to be released ; but the next evening I went, not reluctantly, to my task.

"As You Like It" was completed, and in a few evenings "Macbeth," and "The Tempest," and "Othello," and the "Merchant of Venice;" and the characters of Shakespeare were discussed and commented upon until two weeks had passed ; but all the while I was sensible of a secret dissatisfaction in finding that in his estimate of Shakespeare's heroes and heroines, he was in perfect sympathy with me.

"Why should this be?" I asked myself, "when I find constant fault with him, through his incomprehensible treatment of his child?" and after teasing me in various ways, at our last reading, he said,—

"I shall not torment you much longer. In two

days I shall leave, to be absent all the winter, except during the Christmas holidays."

"Where will you go?" I asked, carelessly.

"To take my seat in the State Senate."

"You are a *politician*, then?" said I, maliciously.

"Something better than a mere politician, I hope; while I do not arrogate to myself a very high degree of statesmanship. For the want of a nearer and dearer love, I have centred all the affection I can withdraw from my mother, upon my country. Will you regret me when I am gone?"

I did not feel like saying "No," and offending him, nor like saying "Yes," and half offending myself; so after a moment's hesitation I said,—

"Perhaps—I really don't know that I shall."

He laughed.

"You would be honest always, if not possessed with the idea that sometimes candor compromises good-breeding. I think I understand you."

His words fell with cutting effect; and bidding him "good-night," I left the library with my declaration on my lips; but notwithstanding, a feeling at my heart that Glen Darrow, would be more lonely without him.





CHAPTER XII.

EXPLORATIONS AND REVEALINGS.

ONE afternoon, a few days after Kenneth Darrow's departure, while in my room, and busily engaged in throwing in the golden stamens of a water-lily on a piece of bead-work, there was a gentler rap than usual from Eva or Patience upon my door, and Mrs. Darrow entered.

She rarely visited that part of the house, and it was the first time she had so honored me.

Being an industrious housewife, and superintending all the arrangements of her *ménage* personally, she had little time to devote to anything, or any one, beyond her regular routine of duties.

"I do not like to disturb you, my dear," said she; "but I have come up to dust and arrange Kenneth's treasures, and if you are fond of curious things, you can go with me. His suite of rooms are quite a rich museum. They remind me of the shop of an antiquary."

I cheerfully accepted her invitation, and was glad of an opportunity to explore a mysterious realm, which to me, otherwise, would have been forbidden. The tastes or inclinations, indeed characteristics, may generally be inferred from the adornment of the person

or dwelling-place. I was therefore anxious to look into the peculiar sanctum of this man, who was so strangely fascinating me, despite my growing suspicion that his polished exterior was but little more than the "whited sepulchre" which concealed a festering corpse, or crumbling, bleaching, ghastly bones. I at once threw aside my glittering work, with the yellow heart of my bead lily, hardly half grown, and followed Mrs. Darrow through the hall, to a door opposite, leading into a narrow corridor, from which another door entered into a suite of apartments, just over those occupied by herself. These rooms were large and handsome, and literally filled with rare articles of *vertu*, from almost every part of the world; the gatherings up of years of travel, and a plentiful supply of money.

In his personal accommodations there was nothing luxurious. His mother pointed me to a hair-cloth sofa, with a traveller's woollen rug for covering, which served as his couch; while in an inner room stood an unused Turkish divan, with the gorgeous drapery of the Orient, set in a frame of ebony inlaid with ivory and silver, and overhung by a canopy of crimson velvet fringed with gold—luxurious enough, it seemed, for the popped dreams of the Lord of the Harem.

"He never indulges in this," said Mrs. Darrow, carefully running the soft brush in all the interstices of the delicate framework, shaking the heavy curtains, and adjusting the rich satin pillows. "He is not disposed to inglorious ease, and would scorn to 'woo the means of weakness or debility.'"

Persian rugs in various combinations of color and design covered the floor. Upon tables, cabinets, and brackets of ebony, buhl, and ormolu, were scattered Etruscan vases, and drinking-cups; rare specimens of old Venetian glass-ware; cunningly devised ivory and silver ornaments of Chinese handicraft; fancy boxes in Japanese lacquered ware and marquetry. On tables and easels, were huge folios filled with rare old engravings, Chinese pictures, and copies of famous frescoes. Around the walls hung a few exquisite pieces of Dresden and Gobelin tapestries, and some fine pictures, among which were a few which bore the stamp of the old masters—though doubtless the work of clever copyists. One was a small landscape, said to have been the work of Salvatore Rosa, with rugged muscular features and dark, grim shadows, bringing out the bold outline of a rock-lined chasm, something like that which divided the mountains at the back of Glen Darrow; and another, bore the impress of Claude of Lorraine, with its spiritual tints, soft sunshine, and the delicate haze which always overhangs his imaginings, like a perpetual Indian summer, or the fancies we sometimes indulge in, of the rare atmosphere of Eden or Elysium.

In niches, and upon brackets, were small groups of statuary of exquisite design and finish, and bronze and marble statues—the heroes and goddesses of the Greeks—stood here and there, upon appropriate pedestals; while upon an antique centre-table in one room, was an excellent copy of the Narcissus of Pompeii, the original of which was found clasped in the arms of a skeleton at one of the gates of the buried city—

the household deity, gathered to the bosom of some poor devotee, who was overtaken in the awful destruction belched forth from fiery Vesuvius.

There was a prodigal display of works of *vertu*, but all attesting a refinement and purity of taste, and an innate conception of the True and the Beautiful.

But what most particularly attracted my attention was an admirable copy, of that too much abused original, of Beatrice Cenci. It hung above the mantel in his bedroom, surrounded by exquisite medallions in *cameo* and *intaglio*, of lava, and amethyst, and sardonyx, and cornelian, and coral—all gems of their kind. They were placed around, as if votive to the spirit of the unfortunate young girl, with the soft, brown, searching eyes, which take such deep hold upon the heart, that in the beautiful criminal we forget the crime, that in sorrow for the actor we lose sight of the foul act; the full, ripe, trembling lips, betraying in every curve and shade, the long and wild heart-crushing to which the unhappy daughter had been subjected, while the white, ghastly drapery that binds the head and shoulders, but hides the cruel scars of the rack and the wheel.

Hung about the frame was a faded myrtle-wreath, the waxen berries still giving out a delicious perfume.

I stood long before this picture, as the rays of the setting sun threw a red glare athwart it through a western window, and lighted up the pale cheeks, and the heart-searching eyes, with a life-like gleam.

With tears bedimmed my vision, I contemplated its surpassing loveliness, running back over the sad story associated with it, to the fearful motive which

prompted a young, gentle, confiding girl to a deed of such unequalled horror ; and a chilling shudder seized upon me.

Unperceived by me, after she had finished dusting and arranging the various things which were lying around, Mrs. Darrow approached and stood beside me, gazing upon the Cenci.

"Do you think of any one," said she, "who bears a resemblance to this picture?"

"I am not peculiarly gifted in tracing resemblances," I replied, "unless they are too evident to be mistaken," my mind reverting to Eva, and her singular likeness to the portraits in the drawing-room. "I only know this sadly beautiful face draws me, as by a spell. I feel that I could never tire of gazing into those mournful eyes ; and yet the emotion they engender is one of bitterness, rather than sympathy."

"Perhaps I ought not to tell you : it may sadden, or it may inflame your vanity, if you have any ; but Kenneth has told me, that sometimes, when your better moods are on, you forcibly remind him of this picture."

I felt a hot blush mount to my cheeks, and surge in a crimson wave over my forehead. I did not feel complimented, but was angry.

"When my *better moods are on!*" I exclaimed. "Has he taken sufficient notice of me to discriminate between my good and evil tempers?"

She smiled. "He thinks well of you : that yours is a very transparent character ; that you are honest and truthful, but that you take no particular pains to be amiable."

"I hate people who affect the amiable!" I cried; "Yet I was not aware I had rendered myself strikingly disagreeable. I make no pretence, but I am sure I intended nothing obnoxious; and I have felt scarcely responsible to Mr. Darrow for my actions, beyond my special duties to Eva."

"He has no fault, believe me, to find with the manner in which you discharge those duties. On the other hand, he gives little attention to them, leaving Eva wholly under my guidance."

"In what, then, have I offended him? I confess I never make any decided effort to appear what I am not; have generally endeavored to be accommodating, though sometimes against my will."

"I fear, my dear, you misunderstand me. Kenneth may be sometimes impatient and exacting, as in the matter of the Shakespeare readings, over which he amused himself not a little, though he is never willingly cruel or unjust. His, is truly a noble nature, unselfish and affectionate towards his friends, and generous and forgiving to his enemies. He has had some very terrible, some corroding trials; and with his native sensitiveness, his almost womanly delicacy of feeling, I wonder that all the good instincts of his nature have not been warped, or crushed out."

I turned away. I did not wish to wound or offend Mrs. Darrow, and could only listen incredulously to what she was saying. I had then been too little associated with mothers, to be aware of their ever-readiness to throw over the shortcomings of their children the mantles of charity and forgiveness.

My ideas of right and wrong were altogether angu-

lar ; they had not been softened down by the gentle sponge of society, nor did I know enough of the world to have learned that the emollient is more frequently laid over the actions of men, than the caustic or probe applied.

Mrs. Darrow, in the attempt to apologize for or explain away what she must have known I had noticed and disliked in her son, was developing a new and a weak phase of character to me, and the pinnacle of respect upon which I had placed her in my esteem, began to totter. I regretted it.

I could not believe myself quite an Ishmaelite, nor did I feel prepared to revolt altogether against conscience in my likes and dislikes.

“Kenneth is a very unhappy man,” she sighed.

“Unhappy! Why?” said I. “I can see no reason why he should not be the happiest of men.”

“No, you can see no reason, my dear ; but, ‘The heart knoweth its own bitterness.’ The shadow of a terrible *living* sorrow rests over him. I cannot tell you now : at some future time you will probably find out all about it. It is something which sapped the strength of his early manhood, and but for his devotion to principle, and the conscientious integrity of his character, I am sure he would long since have made shipwreck of faith in both God and man. These early trials warp one’s whole existence ; and men, for distraction, often take refuge in anything which may excite for the moment.”

Decorum demanded that I should give heed to what she was saying, while I must admit I was not wholly uninterested, nor were my sympathies entirely

unawakened. How far they ran out towards the mother alone, I am not prepared to say. But as far as Kenneth Darrow was concerned, I was thankful for even an implied excuse for what had seemed so shockingly unnatural in him.

“We feared at one time,” continued Mrs. Darrow, “he might drift into open infidelity, for he scoffed at the teachings of his childhood, and mocked the Christian religion as the most clever of fables. For something to gratify the cravings of his mental nature, he dived deep enough into German metaphysics to be convinced it was but a tissue of elegant sophistries. He afterwards gave a full year of study to the Hindoo philosophy;” laying her hand on a musty old volume of Sanscrit, and turning the yellow leaves, “only to be more discontented.”

“Was he not tempted to dive into the mysteries of the Black Art? And was he fortunate enough in his wanderings to come across the veritable Solomon’s seal?” said I, laughing satirically. “If I could believe in that very uncomfortable Pythagorean theory of metempsychosis, I should think that in his transmigration he had come up through”—I could not tell what. I had never seen anything in all the great kingdoms of nature that seemed quite to correspond in spirit with Kenneth Darrow; and so my sentence, for all time, must remain unfinished.

But fortunately Mrs. Darrow did not hear my cruel remark. I had spoken in an undertone, coward as I was; and her fingers were rustling the dry leaves of the myrtle-wreath around the Cenci picture, as she picked off the decayed berries.

"Disgusted with infidelity," I said, "he has returned again to the simpler teachings of the Bible, to mend the mischief," a slight sneer curling my lip.

Just then Mrs. Darrow turned her eyes upon my face, and must have caught the expression, and divined the feeling that gave it birth. A slight flush mantled her pale forehead, and a momentary fire lit her calm, dark eyes.

She was deeply pained; I felt this; and I was sincerely ashamed that I had so wantonly caused her pain. What could I say by way of apology?

"Yes," she went on to say to herself rather than to me, "my son's impulses are all pure and good and noble. His actions are all prompted by the best of motives. His early hopes were so completely blighted, and his life made such a dearth, we endeavor to atone to him, as far as we can, for his extraordinary misery. We never interpose an objection to anything he may suggest, but study to anticipate even what may be his caprices, and indulge them."

"And this injudiciousness may account for his being arbitrary," I thought, but could not find it in my heart to say, to his mother, whose voice had grown low and tearful, and whose hand rested heavily on my arm as we quietly left Kenneth Darrow's rooms.

On the opposite side of the corridor was a locked door, which from its position I felt certain led into another extensive suite of apartments, and above which, from their locality, I did not doubt my lady of the golden hair was imprisoned.

"And where does this door lead?" I said to Mrs.

Darrow, as much to break the silence that had fallen over her, as through curiosity.

"Into the rooms that were my son Richard's," she said softly, with a little tremor still in her voice.

"Where is he?" I asked.

I could not help it. It was an involuntary question. No one would be further than I, from tearing open wounds which may be healing, or from uncovering and disturbing sealed fountains of bitterness; but I was young, and youth is generally accepted as apology for recklessness or inadvertence.

"He—is—dead!—we think—we fear!" she said with a choking voice, tightening the clasp of her small soft hand on my arm, until it pinched like a vise; and her knees bent under her, as I felt a sharp thrill run through her frame like the quivering shock from a galvanic battery.

"Oh, madam!" I cried, laying my right hand on the ice-cold hand that grasped my left arm, "are you ill?"

For a moment no reply came back to me, but Mrs. Darrow leaned against me heavily, and gasped for breath.

"No,—my dear,—I—am—not ill! I thought—I thought—I was stronger,—stronger—but.—Pardon me;—we never—never speak—of—of—our poor boy!"

"Oh, pardon me! pardon me, madam, will you?" I exclaimed. "It was an idle question. I did not intend—"

"Yes, dear, I understand You intended no harm. It was only a natural question in one of your years,"

she said with more composure. "I should—I should be stronger, but—but, child,—Time is an indifferent healer—healer of wounds,—that—that strike home to the heart—and—and rankle there."

We had reached the door of my room. I led her in, placed her in an easy chair, and lighted the lamp. She was frightfully pale, and the calm, beautiful features of her face were writhing convulsively. I bathed her head and hands in *eau de Cologne*, and could have gashed my reprobate tongue for its unruliness.

At length, when somewhat recovered, she said, "This is, though it should not be, a forbidden subject. We should learn to look sorrow calmly in the face, and say to Providence, 'Thy will, not ours, be done.' The fruits of resignation are sweet, but the lesson is bitter, for a long while. Richard, my first-born, may be, or he may not be, dead! He disappeared very mysteriously. I have many times dreamed that he was murdered, and sometimes, oh God! I have dreamed he was a murderer. This, I shut out from my heart. How could it be? I do not know: my Heavenly Father does.

"It has been almost eight years since the door of his room was opened. He locked it, and the key has never been seen since. It may never be opened again. This is all I can tell you."

To tell all this had cost an effort that was pitiable to behold. I had dropped down upon my knees at her feet, and one of her cold, white hands rested in motherly tenderness on my head.

The great grief which lay upon and crushed her

warm womanly heart, and that had blanched the raven hair of her girlhood, had made her sacred ; and then and there I could have bowed down and kissed the hem of her garment, or even washed her feet with my tears. But stroking my brown hair gently, she bade me stand up, and murmuring, " God be with you, dear young girl ! " with the old calm smile breaking up the hard, sad lines around her mouth, she left me.

To say that I hated myself, would not be all the truth. I could not find a word in our language, to express the contempt with which I measured my conduct. My suspicion rose up before me hydra-headed—a vile creeping thing that was turning the blood in my veins to gall, and dwarfing all the nobler instincts of my womanhood.

A bright, crackling fire had blazed up on the hearth, and threw a cheerful glare over the room, working my shadow upon the remote wall into an uncomely monster which frightened me.

The heat was suffocating. I threw up my window to bathe my burning head in the cool breeze that swept down from the mountains.

From the direction of the barns—built just at the foot of a rocky spur on the eastern side of The Glen, behind which the broad full moon was coming up, like a great round ball of fire, a dark, fleecy cloud hanging above like a dense smoke—I heard, for the first time, the stentorian concert of a negro corn-husking.

I listened, well pleased to the savage, clashing echoes of the wild chorus that broke against every rock on the mountain sides. They accorded with the still wilder tumult in my heart.

I listened again. The sound of the chorus had subsided, and the leader's voice alone awoke the vibrating responses in the welkin. I bent my ear to catch the theme of the song. A single name, rudely wreathed around in every conceivable manner of praise, ran through every line. It was Kenneth Darrow's.

Echo caught it and ran with strange vibrations up the wooded heights, sighing it among the pines, and crashing it against the great granite boulders. It came back to me in shivered, splintered particles, trembling wearily on the evening wind, but it was Kenneth Darrow's still.

I closed down the window to deaden the sound. Was I sowing dragons' teeth ?





CHAPTER XIII.

IS THERE A SKELETON IN HIS CLOSET ?

IT was Christmas morning. A heavy snow had fallen through the night, and smoothed by its glistening sheet the rugged features of the mountain landscape.

Between sleeping and waking, with the eyelids more than half closed over my lazy eyes, I lay, looking out through the half-drawn curtains over the bowed heads of the great, straight pines, weighed down by their sheeny burden, their mournful soughing hushed, and lit up into myriads of gems by the bright sunshine which burst out from the red clouds that Aurora had flung across the East.

Between sleeping and waking, I lay, dreaming over again the dreams of the night ; dreams almost indefinite to my slumbering senses, but yet alive with beauty.

With much more than her usual caution, Patience turned the knob of my door and entered—her arms piled up with light-wood, and so rich in resin as to look like condensed sheets of clear amber-colored honey.

Peeping over carefully, and finding me unsuspect-

ing, her features relaxed into something more definite than a smile, showing perfect arches of ivory-white teeth.

“Christmas gift, Miss Harrie!” she cried. “Christmas gift! There! you can’t say Patience didn’t ketch you!”

I turned over, shaking the poppies of blessed old Morpheus from my drowsy eyelids, and yawning in that delicious laziness which makes us all good-natured.

“What did you say, Patience?”

“I say it’s *Christmas* mornin’, Miss Harrie Royal, and it’s high time you were up, or every soul in the house’ll ketch you; and you’ll have to pay more Christmases than you like.”

It had been so long a time since this peculiar game of forfeits had come under my notice, that I had almost forgotten the penalty of being caught.

“Well, *there’s* a Christmas present for you, at any rate, Patience,” said I, pointing to a package which contained a dress-pattern of bright-flowered calico, a couple of gay plaid handkerchiefs, some necklaces of fancy-colored glass beads, and sundry articles of cheap, showy finery; purchased for my accommodating *femme de chambre* at a neighboring country store, a veritable bazäär, furnished with a heterogencous supply of almost everything for domestic use, from a reaping-machine or cooking-stove, to French jewelry or delicate millinery.

“Have you heard the news?” said Patience, amid kindling the fire and overwhelming me with thanks for my Christmas gifts.

“ No ; is there anything startling ? ”

“ Mas' Kenneth's come. Come this mornin' just afore daybreak. Cars run off the track somewhar. 'Layed him all n'ight. Didn't git to the depot till long after sundown, and driv all night in the snow. 'Twas a terrible night ! ”

“ Ah ! ”

“ 'Deed it was. ”

“ Ah ! ”

I turned over towards the wall, and folded my eyelids down for another dream. “ Mas' Kenneth's coming ” was not a matter of superior importance to me, and I easily shut him out for the fairy people which come in our sleep.

In a single moment they were around, but strangely, he was the principal one. I was enacting Rosalind to his Orlando. In an incomprehensibly short space of time, I had played the whole of the first and second acts, and was in the third at the point in which Shakespeare's heroine was giving the anxious Orlando her uncle's marks of a man in love :

“ A lean cheek, which you have not : a blue eye and sunken, which you have not : an unquestionable spirit, which you have not : a beard neglected, which you have not : but I pardon you for that, for simply your having in beard is a younger brother's revenue. Then your hose should be ungartered, your bonnet unbanded, your sleeve unbuttoned, your shoe untied, and everything about you demonstrating a careless desolation. But *you* are no such man ; you are rather point-device in your accoutrements ; as loving yourself than seeming to love another. ”

“Fair youth, I would I could make thee believe I love!”—

I had just leisurely surveyed, and listened with a most tormenting delight in my disguise, to this touching declaration of my enamored Orlando, when the door creaked with a prolonged creak, and an ominous whispered “Hush!” awoke me from my fictitious existence; to see Eva with finger on her lip and an expression of command on her countenance, her apron filled with an incongruous burden, slyly creeping up to my bedside, followed by three little negroes, of age slightly superior to her own, in bright plaid homespun linsey-woolsey dresses, and fresh white aprons.

“Oh dear! oh dear! what a foolish dream I have had,” cried I, rubbing my eyes, and opening them on the group around my bed.

“Christmas-mornin’ dreams, ’sure to come true,” said Patience. “I’ve heerd my mammy say so often.”

“Hush!! Patience. Hush, Minty! Hush, Jenny! Hush, Nancy!” cried Eva; and then a wild burst of laughter from Eva and her trio. “Christmas gift! Christmas gift! Christmas gift! Christmas gift!” from the four pairs of saucy lips, and loud enough to have awakened me from much deeper sleep than that in which I was plunged when enacting Rosalind.

“See what Santa Claus has brought me!” climbing up on my bed and kissing my eyelids wide open.

“See what he dropped for me, down from his sleigh,” displaying a pair of crimson worsted stockings that her grandmother had knitted, filled to the

top with French bonbons, delicate little toys, and miniature books, while one of her little hand-maidens held up a wooden box, containing a Dresden China dinner set, another a new doll in a bride's dress, and Nancy a *crocheted* Harlequin and Columbine, of which I had had some idea before; and for which, from a mysterious expression on my face, she again kissed me and laughed.

But the crowning treasure, from the generous hands of the goodly old patron saint of Christmas, lay beneath the neck of Eva's white linen apron. Suspended from a delicate Venetian gold chain, she wore an exquisite locket, on one side of which was a spray of forget-me-nots in delicate blue enamel, and on the other side a wreath of baby forget-me-nots, surrounding the name *Eva* in tiny diamonds, in the centre.

"Who gave you this beauty?" said I.

"Santa Claus."

"But by whom did Santa Claus send it?"

"Oh, I don't know. Papa, I reckon. He came last night when we were all asleep. I found this chain around my neck this morning when I waked up."

"What is inside?" said I curiously.

"Inside? Oh, I don't know," said the child, searching for the clasp of the locket. "Open it and see?"

I touched a spring in the handle; the locket unclasped; there was a blank, but settings on each side in which a miniature might be placed. I was chilled, but hardly disappointed at the disclosure.

The child looked at it thoughtfully, and the faintest

sort of a shadow passed over her bright eyes, but fading away quite as quickly as it had gathered, she exclaimed—

“Ah! I know what I can do. I can put grandpa on one side, and grandma on the other. Let me run down and tell them.” Then gathering up her treasures, and followed by her little sable friends, with each a well-filled stocking dangling from her arm, she darted out of my room, and downstairs, to communicate to “grandma” her discovery.

An hour afterwards I met the family at breakfast. Kenneth Darrow greeted me cordially, but with no *empressement*. He looked well, I had never seen him looking better, showing little of the effects of his night-drive through the snow, and loss of sleep. A large cut-glass bowl of eggnog, and another of steaming apple-toddy, were added, in honor of the day, to the usual good cheer.

Beside my plate was a morocco case of Shakespeare's Play's, each bound separately in a small, beautiful volume; an ebony writing-desk inlaid with silver; a heavy gold pencil-case, and a handsome bronze standish—on each piece of which, glittered my monogram, in gold letters.

Mrs. Darrow's eyes were turned kindly upon me, as these unexpected tokens of affection and appreciation met my sight.

“Santa Claus did not forget you, my dear, you see,” said she tenderly.

I could not feel ungrateful, though, but for this remark, which developed a sympathy by which I could not help being affected, I should hardly have

been pleased; for such attentions often bring with them a feeling of obligation by no means comfortable, unless there is a prospect, in some way, to reciprocate.

"From Santa Claus to a good little girl," said Kenneth, allowing me no chance to protest, while Mr. Darrow lifted to his lips a glass of foam-crested eggnog, and bowing and smiling, proposed first Mrs. Darrow's health, and then extended the compliment, not excluding Eva in the toast. Kenneth looked over a large package of letters, and with a fresh supply of gossip, anecdote, and jest, the breakfast was dispatched—the eggnog and apple-toddy, however, being charily indulged in, and left to be dispensed in the kitchen.

At ten o'clock the great plantation sleigh was at the door, and bundled up in shawls and buffalo robes, we dashed off to church, with Uncle Moses on the box, less morose or thoughtful than I had ever seen him, and James more saucy and fidgety—such is the wonderful exhilaration that ever seems born of Christmas day. Kenneth followed and passed us, kissing his hand and laughing, in a light "jumper," swan-shaped and as taut as a freshly rigged cutter, drawn by a dun-colored horse as fleet as the wind, that Uncle Moses and James called "Hurricane;" and was at the church door to lift us out when we arrived.

Dr. Manton's discourse was what it should have been for the day—a beautiful and feelingly drawn picture of the scenes which attended the Saviour's birth, the necessity for the Redeemer, and the loving-kindness of God; no fire and brimstone warning

of the horrors of the Second Death, nor prosaic instruction as to how we should live in order to avoid it.

The thorn-crowned Christ of the window, looking down through a wreath of holly and cedar, appeared less accusing, less sorrowful to me, the quivering lips less pitiable than before ; and the Babe of Bethlehem smiled, as I fancy he smiled on the waiting shepherds who came with the piloting star across fen and mountain, until it "stood over where the young child was ;" and Santa Claus was transformed and multiplied from the fur-clad, jolly old saint in his reindeer-drawn sledge, to the Wise Men of the East, who opened their treasures and presented unto him gifts, "gold and frankincense and myrrh."

Then the Germans were not the first to recognize the patronage of good old St. Nicholas.

Insensibly, I had begun to compare the stories of the Apostles, and to be in love with the beautiful theory of the faith I professed, but had never realized.

There was a cheerful solemnity that brooded over the services, and cheerful hearts exchanged gratulations when the services were concluded.

Christmas day is the day of family reunion at the South, a *sans souci* day, when the scattered fragments are brought together under the old roof-tree, as on Thanksgiving day at the North ; and all hearts are glad, that can be.

Three heavily laden sleighs, and two large carriages, followed our sleighs, and disgorged their contents at Glen Darrow, with several booted and spurred horsemen ; and the old halls rang with a

merriment that shook the evergreen wreaths, that were festooned about, enlivening the dark wainscoting, and brightening the old mirrors and pictures.

At three o'clock, amid the mingled odors of hot-house flowers, that called up imaginations of Araby and Cashmere, we sat down to dinner; and such a dinner as not many beside Aunt Judy could prepare. Aunt Judy, the undisputed autocrat of the kitchen, who at that moment gloried, only less, than in the viands she was dressing up in the perfection of her art, in a *bran new*, bright linsey-woolsey dress, a red and yellow and black and white plaid *head-handkerchief*, and a pair of new, flashing, broad, crescent gold ear-rings.

Aunt Judy was a happy woman, that day.

Mock-turtle soup, that could not be told from the genuine, served up boiling hot, in a great silver tureen, was followed by roast oysters, which smoked on the shell, with acid sauce. Then a three-year-old ruby-colored ham, embedded on white, crisp, curled cabbage, the characteristic Virginia dish; an infant porker as brown as a nut, meekly kneeling, and pretending to refresh himself with a sunny-cheeked russet apple; the king turkey of the poultry-yard, with his powerful wings clipped and ignobly pressed to his sides, and placed in tempting proximity, to a crystal dish of apple-sauce; a pair of Poland ducks swimming helplessly in their own gravy; the saddle of a noble stag, lying in a sea of crimson currant jelly, as clear and bright as a first-water gem; *entremets* (Aunt Judy would have been disgusted at the French

Kenneth Darrow stepped out beside me and touched my shoulder. I looked around quickly.

"Come in. You may take cold from this exposure. The air is very chilly."

"I am not afraid of it."

"You are not wrapped up."

"That makes no difference," said I, testily.

"I don't wish you to grow hoarse. Remember our readings."

"Ah! Selfishness is the darling impulse that prompts, always," I replied.

"Yes," said he, quietly; "the best of us are selfish."

I hummed an old Scotch air.

"Will you come in?"

I thought I might provoke him, and hummed on.

"I must hear you read 'As You Like It,' again, and I wish your voice to be clear. Do you know I think you would make a good Rosalind?"

I thought of my dream, and the hot blood surged up to the roots of my hair. Could he see this by the moonlight? I feared so.

"Good-night!" I ran rapidly by him, and through the hall, upstairs.

As I approached my door the sound of the harp arrested my attention, accompanied by that clear, full soprano voice, singing the *Adeste Fidelis*. Some one else was keeping Christmas; and it was my lady of the golden hair.



CHAPTER XIV.

LOOKING FOR THE BABY'S GRAVE.

THE Christmas holidays, with their round of festivities for master and servants, were over.

It was New Year's Day—bright, warm, wooing, summer-like. The snow had all melted off, except in clefts of the rocks and densely-shadowed places, and the walks on the lawn and in the garden were almost as dry as in May.

Dr. Bolling was at Glen Darrow ; he had been there two days ; had come up from Richmond by engagement with Kenneth Darrow, to make an examination of Emily Johnson's eyes, and to decide what could be done towards their restoration to sight.

With Dr. Lynn, of a neighboring village, he had made a careful diagnosis : the disease was " cataract," and " the flap extraction " was by no means a difficult operation. He had seen cases much more stubborn relieved ; she was young, and youth is most generally in favor of the patient.

This was satisfactory to Kenneth Darrow. Dr. Bolling's skill in his profession was unquestionable. He was possessed of the three necessary characteristics, viz., the serpent's head, the lion's heart, and the woman's hand.

"How are your nerves this morning, Miss Royal?" said Kenneth, sending for me to the library, where I found him with Drs. Bolling and Lynn, indulging in their after-breakfast cigars.

"Pretty steady, I believe," wondering why he asked such a question.

"Very well. We shall have need of you. I am afraid to trust my mother; she has undergone so many shocks, and is so easily unstrung, that she is not equal to scenes of intense excitement. Can you be ready to go over to Mrs. Johnson's at ten o'clock?"

"Certainly I can."

Dr. Bolling looked down upon me dubiously, and his feeling, Darrow interpreted.

"There is very wonderful fibre in that little anatomy, doctor," said he. "The most you will want of any one, you say, will be to take care of Barbara, and some one you must have, and especially now, since her disgust has been so sensibly excited against Jemima Ann for her recent marriage; and this Miss Royal has the courage to do.

"At least to try," said I, with no chance to demur, and many doubts disturbing my conscience.

At the appointed hour, leaving Kenneth Darrow with his father and the surgeons to take the carriage-route around the mountain, I took Patience, who was furnished by Mrs. Darrow with a basket in which she had placed a bundle of old soft linen, a couple of bottles of wine, a bottle of old cognac, a loaf of fresh sponge-cake, some grapes and oranges, and made my way through the woods. The air was so soft and balmy, I almost felt the odor of violets around me,

and looked for their blue heads to peep up from under the brown leaves. The melting of the snow had swollen the brawling little stream that formed the cascade, and more angry and howling than when I first saw it, it tumbled on over the rocks, and leaped the fearful chasm.

With a play of contending emotions through my soul, I ventured to stoop over and break a tender green fern-leaf, from the shattered abutment of the bridge, and then wended rapid steps to Mrs. Johnson's cottage.

When I arrived, I found her in the highest state of excitement. As nearly as it was possible for such a tissue of bone and sinew, she was yielding to one of those hysterical attacks to which delicately organized women are sometimes subject. She was pacing the floor of her cottage, wringing her hands, her breast heaving with suppressed groans.

Jemima tried in vain to comfort her mother.

"The doctors and Mr. Kenneth say she will not feel it, mother," said Mrs. Jones earnestly.

"Don't tell me that, Jemima Ann. I don't keer what the doctors say, she will feel it. As for you, you would hardly feel anything, I should think, if you could do the disrespectable thing of marrying a man afore his poor wife was cold in her grave."

After this cruel onslaught from her mother, Jemima Ann left the office of consolation to me.

It required a combination of the all eloquence and reason of which I was mistress, to begin to persuade her of the quieting, and yet not dangerous, effects of the ordinary anæsthetics in use for surgical opera-

tions. During all this time, in another room, clad in the Christmas frock that Mrs. Darrow had presented, the little blind girl, with a joyous hymn on her lips, and joy in her sightless eyes, awaited the man who was to clear away the film from her benighted vision, and give her to see the glorious sunshine.

"Has the doctor come, Miss Royal?" she asked as I entered, rubbing her soft hands over mine, and lifting to me her beaming face.

"He will be here very soon, Emily."

"Oh, suppose I should get my sight!"

"He hopes and thinks you will, Emily."

"Then I shall sing all my life, like the birds."

At this, Mrs. Johnson could restrain her feelings no longer. Rushing out of her house, she ran into the garden, and when the surgeons arrived, she was leaning on the rustic paling, weeping like a wounded and sickened child.

Emily's pale face flushed a little when she heard the confusion of steps and voices, and her pulse fluttered a little more wildly; but she smiled, and clasping both of her hands around that which Kenneth Darrow laid upon her head, she drew it down and kissed it in the very *abandon* of gratitude.

The preparations for the operation were quickly made. A reclining chair, furnished for the purpose, was drawn where the light fell full upon the child's face. The soft lincn handkerchief wetted with chloroform was applied to her nose. Dr. Bolling kept his fingers on the pulse, and soon the sluggish flow of the life-stream from the great fountain, showed that she was in the necessary condition.

Dr. Bolling had made the study of the eye a specialty. With every coat and humor and lens and nerve of this most beautiful and delicate organ, he was fully acquainted. The pressing back of the white lids, the insertion of a sharp, delicate instrument, the making of the flap, and the pressing out of the capsule filled with the white, flocculent diseased matter from the left eye, was the work of a few seconds. The surgeon's fingers were carefully lifted. The muscles of the lid contracted around the ball, and the blue iris quivered, as when too many rays of light crowd themselves into a healthy pupil. A smile of triumph lighted the benevolent physician's face.

"Good!" he exclaimed, looking up at Dr. Lynn and smiling.

Kenneth Darrow's breath came quickly, and his tall, strong form trembled from concentrated feeling. A like operation was performed on the right eye. The muscles of the lid contracted as around those of the left; the blue iris quivered; the surgeon's finger and thumb rested on the forehead and cheek of the child; he looked from one to another triumphantly:

"There! it is all over."

A low cry of pain escaped from little Emily, as her eyelids folded down over the lacerated balls; a sigh, as when one awakens from deep sleep, and then in a whisper she said: "Mother, mother, what a long dream I've had!"

"All right!" exclaimed Dr. Bolling.

A green shade was placed over the child's eyes; a teaspoonful of port wine administered, and as quickly as possible she was removed to a cool, dark room.

Then was communicated the news to her mother. This office was left to Kenneth Darrow.

Mrs. Johnson had wandered off to the skirt of the woods, where neither sight nor sound of Emily's sufferings could add to her own.

"Come, Barbara; it is all over," said he, gently laying his hand on her arm.

Her face grew ghastly pale; her eyes started in the sockets.

"Is my child dead, Kenneth Darrow?" she cried with a sharp scream.

"Dead!" he laughed. "No, Barbara; the doctor says Emily will see after awhile."

"Emily, my little blind child, is blind no longer?"

"He thinks so."

The pallor left her face, and a warm glow succeeded. She threw her arms—that coarse, rough woman—around that man of ease, elegance, and refinement. She shouted, "Thank God! Thank God! Thank God! O Mr. Kenneth, why did I ever think evil on you? May the good Lord strike me dead if I ever do again! I can never think evil on you any more. Never, never! If you ever did anything wrong, Mr. Kenneth, the devil tempted you, he did."

He was calm and unremonstrating under all this, though aware that all she said was heard by me, while waiting on the doorsteps; and it might have been, by Dr. Bolling.

"Come in, Barbara. You must control your feelings. Even the life of your child may depend upon it. She must not be excited. Come in! Take a

glass of wine ; and Miss Royal has a cup of tea for you."

Between shouting and weeping, suppressing the loud tones of her voice, she entered the house, showering down blessings upon Kenneth Darrow.

"To think," she said, in a trembling voice, "he took two thousand dollars out of his own pocket, and set my son up, and took his horse out of the sheriff's hands, and give him the cooper's house down at the mill—and now!—now that he's brought a great doctor that has made my little Emily's eyes to see!—"

Her body swayed spasmodically to and fro in her rush-bottomed chair, and her horny hands nervously pulled at her frowzy hair. "Yes, yes ; ef he did do it, the devil tempted him ! I al'ays said so."

She wept, and talked, and shouted in a whisper, while gulping down the tea and the wine ; and finally, a heavy dose of extract of valerian and camphor quieted her distracted nerves.

Emily dozed in very little pain, vaguely comprehending what had been done, with a mute thankfulness at her heart, that could not find expression in words. She had an indistinct idea that life was henceforth to be full of beauty to her ; yet she knew not how it should come, and nothing of *light* as the essence. She only realized an overwhelming sense of gratitude to her benefactor, and, in the enjoyment of this, something of the *rest* of which she had been wont to sing.

It was thought best that her mother should for awhile be excluded from her room ; and Mrs. Johnson, a very child, through the surcharging emotions

of the soul, of which she knew no more than of the chemical transmutation of light into the colors of the solar spectrum, was obedient to the will of her superiors.

"It is all so strange! so strange!" she would say, "that she will *see* all the pretty flowers she has loved to smell and handle; and the green trees that she liked to sit under as the wind rustled the leaves; and the bright clouds; and that she will *see* her poor old mother's face! It is too much! I can't believe it!"

Barbara's spirit was refined by this trial. The earthiness of her nature had been purified, and a softened expression came over her hard features.

It was arranged that Mr. Darrow and myself should remain at the cottage, while Kenneth and the surgeons should return to "The Glen" for dinner, to come back in the afternoon with his mother, who, in the meantime, would have completed the reorganization of the holiday-demoralized household forces, and recovered from the strain laid upon her nervous system, in thought of the operation upon little Emily's eyes.

At half-past three they arrived. The sunshine had grown dull; a slow, murmurous east wind had arisen, bringing a chill with it, and dark grey clouds, their wings heavy with snow, began to spread themselves over the blue sky in a lead-colored sheet. Remembering Eva in her loneliness, half an hour afterwards, I started with Patience to "The Glen," rejecting the use of the carriage in which Mrs. Darrow had come, and preferring the walk through the woods.

We had not proceeded a great distance on the

route, before the snow began to fall in great feathery flakes, drifting down through the leafless branches of the trees upon the brown, dead leaves in ghostly whispers. How different from the sunshine of the morning!

Patience kept close by my side, breathing heavily and treading harshly; overcome by a superstitious feeling in the sudden rise of the dark clouds, and the swift falling of the snow, so soon after the Doctor had said Emily would "not much longer be blind."

She did not dare to open her lips, and shied away from the great chasm as we passed it, with the white snow kissing its red waters, and mingling in their mad flow.

By some of this feeling, I, too, had been infected. I did not like the leaden clouds, and their icy freight. I peeped once, and carefully, over the rock-lined ravine, and retreating, I quickened my steps, up and around the hill, until again, to find breath, I leaned against the ivy-draped stone wall of the cemetery.

A sound, a strange sound, from within, fell upon my ears.

"Listen!" whispered Patience, laying her hand rudely on my arm, and opening her eyes wide upon me, like a piece of petrification. "Ghosts!"

"Nonsense!" said I, trying to shake her off.

She trembled, and tightened her grasp on my arm.

"Be still, Patience. It is nothing!"

"Listen!"

A soft, wailing sound on a minor key, like the dying away of the night wind, came from within.

Patience pressed her hand upon her mouth to suppress a scream.

"Be quiet!" I said, sternly.

Yes; it was—it was the same clear, rich soprano voice that delighted in making the small hours of the night vocal with its melody; but now it was quivering, trembling, uncertain.

Patience at length found courage to speak, in an ominous whisper.

"For the Lord's sake, Miss Harriet Royal, come on! You'll kill yourself standin' out here in the snow."

"Hush, Patience!"

"Miss Harriet Royal!" pleadingly. "You'll ketch your death."

"No, I shall not. Be quiet!"

How sweet the voice was that came up through the snow-flakes, but as sad and plaintive as Ophelia's!

"I had a baby once,
 It was so bright and fair,
 With eyes of sapphire blue,
 And curling, golden hair.
 A winsome thing it was,
 With lips like cherries red,
 But woe is me, my darling bright
 Is dead!—is dead!—is dead!
 But woe is me, my darling bright
 Is dead!—is dead!—is dead!"

The refrain took hold of my heart, and wound itself through every fibre of my being.

Patience endeavored to drag me away.

"Lord ha' mercy, Miss Harrie, you musn't stay here! I really do 'spect it's Miss Bertie, an' you know

she's crazy. I'm afeard of her ;" and suiting her actions to her words, her coward feet betook themselves to flight, leaving me to contend alone with whatever emergency might arise.

I walked a few steps farther on, and looked over the wall. Upon one of the remote gravestones sat the golden-haired woman, that I had once seen in bridal costume from the windows of the south-eastern third-floor chamber—the same windows that now looked down upon me dark and frowning.

She was clad in black, with her long, rich, warm-colored hair unbound, and floating over her shoulders. Around her head she had fantastically thrown a wreath of cypress and ivy, and in her hand she held a small bunch of bruised, frost-kissed white roses. She turned her eyes about and sang, peering here and there as if in search of something, while with one hand she held the collar of a small, sleek, elegant, mouse-colored Italian greyhound.

The snow was thickly powdering her hair and sable robe, and the nervous little animal at her feet, chilled and miserable, whined and cried pitifully. My duty was evident ; it mattered not what danger there might be in meddling with the poor, dazed woman, I could not leave her there, even long enough to go to the house and send some one to her help. I opened the iron gate and entered. She did not seem to hear my step upon the soft gravel, until the greyhound pricked up its small ears, and gave notice by a sharp, shrill bark.

"What is it, Fancy?" she said quickly, looking around. "What do you see, Fancy?"

I stood beside her, and laid my hand on her shoulder.

"Who are you?" she said, sharply.

"A friend."

She laughed, a little, low, ringing, cunning laugh.

"That is not much. I have plenty of friends."

"I am glad of that: but can't I be of some use to you?"

"I don't know. What is your name?"

"Harriet Royal."

"Harriet Royal? I have never heard of you before. My name—well—my name is Bertha Hastings."

"Permit me help you to the house. It is getting very cold, and you may grow sick."

"No, not yet. If you wish to serve me, you can, by showing me where they have buried my baby," with a rippling laugh.

"Your baby?"

"Yes; the darlinest little boy I ever saw. Hush, hush, Fancy!

"'His mother's joy he was'—"

"Don't sing just now. Your voice out here in the cold will become hoarse. Let us look for his grave."

"If you please. I wish to lay these beautiful roses over him. He was much more beautiful than any rose."

"I have no doubt of that; and this pure white snow will make a nice covering for him."

"The snow? That is cold! so cold!"

She drew her long hair around her and shivered.

"His name—let me think—his name was Richard.

It should have been, Kenneth, but it was not. Richard was very, *very* fierce, sometimes. I was afraid of him."

She wandered about under the snowy sheet that was fast covering us, until she came to a stone with a marble lamb reposing upon it.

"Ah! this is it. I thought perhaps they had never buried him; but, as I tell you, I have many friends, and I don't think they would have let *my* precious little lamb lie out in the cold and freeze."

"No, never!" said I.

"You would not, would you?"

"Oh no!"

She bent over and laid her warm cheek on the marble lamb; then kissed it and scattered over the roses, singing—

"But woe is me, my darling bright
Is dead!—is dead!—is dead!"

I read the name; it was "ELSIE, daughter of RICHARD and EMILY DARROW," with date of birth and death, many years back—almost as many years as Bertha was old.

She then murmured a short prayer, and laid her hand on my arm.

"Let us go now," I whispered.

"I shall love you," said she. "Your voice is kind, and your heart must be warm. Richard was not good."

Not doubting who she was, I led her on coaxingly to the gate. As we approached this, I heard a firm step on the outside, and coming up from the direction of the gorge was Kenneth Darrow!

He met us at the gate and stopped.

"Why, Bertha!" he cried, I thought, angrily.

The snow was falling rapidly and the twilight had thickened almost to blackness.

She looked up at the sound of his voice, released her hold on my arm, and gathering up her dog, which was barking fiercely, she uttered an agonized shriek, and fled towards the house, finally disappearing through the portico on the eastern end.

"How is this, Miss Royal?" said he, with the clear metallic ring in his voice, that I had heard once before.

"I found her in the cemetery."

"What was she after?"

"Looking for her baby's grave."

"Another fantasy. This must be looked into. She may at some time find her way to the precipice. Content must take better care of her."

He walked on to the house without saying anything more. The hall lamp was burning brightly when we entered. He lifted his hat from his head, as if it oppressed him, and shook off the snow nervously. The perspiration hung in glittering beads to the roots of his dark hair; and his features, with the deepening lines drawing nearer together his finely arched eyebrows, were as pale and rigid as if carved in marble.

His look frightened me.

"Can I do anything for you, Mr. Darrow?"

"Nothing, thank you!" he said wearily.

Dr. Bolling and his father returned, leaving Mrs. Darrow to watch through the night with little Emily.

I did the honors of hostess at the tea-table. Kenneth did not make his appearance.



CHAPTER XV.

GUESS.

“For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in the land.”

THE winter, though devoid of excitement, had appeared neither long nor dreary to me. Between teaching Eva, and watching the beautiful development of her finely toned mind, ministrations upon little Emily, and waiting for the result of the operation upon her eyes, the days of cloud and rain and sleet and snow had fled rapidly away.

And during the long evenings, which were wholly my own, I had not been heedless of the suggestions of “Henrietta Rutherford,” who had, in return, begun to appreciate my tractability, in a manner so substantially complimentary, as greatly to cheer and encourage me.

The heavy and mysterious documents that I now and then dispatched to the Post Office had excited the curiosity of Mr. Darrow, Sr., who delighted to twit me on the bulk and gravity of my correspondence; and no less had an occasional check, which he was requested to cash, surprised him.

My life, though so real, so earnest, for one of my years, was not untinged with *couleur de rose*; while I had a feeling that I imparted something of what contributed this beauty to my existence, to others, perhaps less favorably endowed. I was daily growing more confident in the use of my literary powers; my visions of the Beautiful were more frequent, and more clearly defined. Therefore, although I might have missed the society of Kenneth Darrow from "The Glen," I was more than requited in the uninterrupted use of hours, in which he might have required me to submit to some wish or caprice.

It was the Saturday afternoon of a cloudless day in the early part of April. The cirri, which had hung in flocculent masses over the morning sky, had dissolved into ether as blue and smiling as if they had never been melted into tears, and only had a bright face to turn to Mother Earth.

The south wind, coquetting with the flowers that had forced themselves up through the snow-drifts, came up laden with sweetness, and sang a joy-laden song, as it stole through the old wainscoted hall. Dinner being later than usual, with a "charity-stock-ing" which she was knitting in her hands, Mrs. Darrow had drawn her sewing-chair into the hall, and had there taken her seat, to enjoy the freshness and fragrance; and I joined her with the unfinished piece of bead-work, which served very conveniently to take up the odds and ends of time, not more pleasantly or more usefully employed.

We had been sitting there an hour or more, engaged in pleasant conversation upon topics of domes-

tic interest, when Mr. Darrow, booted and spurred in the most' approved style, *à la cavalier*, rode up to the door. Throwing the reins of his bridle to James, who was in waiting, with a grave smile on his lips, he entered the house.

With the never-neglected deferential bow to me, he approached Mrs. Darrow, and in the fondness of a young lover, placed his hand under her chin, gazed down into the liquid depths of her eyes, and bending over pressed a warm kiss upon her forehead. She blushed like a young girl unaccustomed to lovers' caresses, and half coyly catching his gloved hand, chided him for this demonstration before another.

He laughed, and taking a seat beside her, and throwing an arm around her waist, tore the knitting from her hands.

"I have some news for you, dear," he said, looking down admiringly on her silvery hair.

"What is it?" she asked, glancing up at him, the warm flush still playing over her cheeks and temples.

"Guess!"

"Oh, my dear, I am an indifferent guesser. Do give me the news you have, if it is of any value."

"We are to have some new neighbors."

"Ah! Where?"

"Guess, Emily."

"Do not trifle with me, husband."

"Is your curiosity excited?"

"Yes, I believe it is," she replied with a smile.

"You confess then to Eve's weakness of having some such thing as curiosity?" he said, teasingly.

"This is rather unmerciful, dear," she said, in deprecating voice.

Mr. Darrow leisurely unbuckled his spurs, and threw them clanking against the wall.

"Then to relieve you," he said quietly, "the owls and the bats, the snails and the moles, the ghosts and the goblins, the fates and the fays, have all been exorcised at 'The Shades;' and brick-masons and carpenters, painters and upholsterers, furnishers and gardeners, are getting the ghoulish old castle in readiness for its forthcoming occupants. I wonder we have not heard something of all this before, from servants' or neighbors' gossip."

"Who are to be the occupants?"

"Guess?"

"Mr. Darrow," said his wife, "you are astonishingly provoking. Do tell me who they are to be!"

"Guess, my dear; guess."

"I am neither a Yankee, nor quick-witted," said Mrs. Darrow in despair.

"Well, my dear, if you were to try till the end of time, I dare say you would not guess who has purchased and is fitting up 'The Shades' as a place of residence."

"The superstitious would think he had strove his nerves, at any rate," said Mrs. Darrow musingly, her thoughts running over the various stories connected with the old, long-neglected, but naturally beautiful homestead; "but I have often thought Glen Darrow were not our home, I should like to live at 'The Shades.' Who has bought it?"

"Judge de Russey, of Louisiana."

Mr. Darrow looked at her husband with an incredulous expression, mingled with surprise.

"The family are now in Richmond," he continued, "but will be there only a few days longer, when they will come up to their new home. Kenneth will also be at home in a few days. The Legislature has adjourned, and he will most probably wait to have the company of the De Russeys on the journey."

I thought I detected something like a shadow pass over the brow of Mrs. Darrow.

"You remember them, do you not?" said her husband.

"Yes, perfectly. I wonder what could have induced them to make a residence in this State, so far remote from Judge de Russey's interests," said she, thoughtfully.

"He wishes to give up his judicial position," said Mr. Darrow, "besides being nearer their sons, who are at the Virginia University at Charlottesville."

"They have been there several sessions, I believe," she replied, "and most probably are very nearly through with their course of studies by this time."

"Ernest doubtless is, but they tell me Louis is the most consummate scapegrace in the institution; and as fast young men are said to abound there, he must be considered among the irredeemable."

"I remember him well, as he was when a little boy at school in Geneva. I thought him then possessed of nobler impulses than his brother."

"Oh, yes; he was brave and generous, but daring, and promised to be reckless. This is the character I

understand he has established for himself at college. His mother is very anxious about him, but his father, I am told, seems to have extraordinary faith in the native good which is the substratum to his apparent evil."

"Mrs. de Russey was a charming woman twelve years ago."

"And Charlotte, a charmingly beautiful and attractive child."

"She was, indeed, one of the most fascinating children I ever knew. She seemed to combine the fine points of both her brothers. With Ernest's sensitive, poetic nature, she possessed Louis's generous, sympathetic, warm-hearted frankness."

"She still retains these characteristics, it seems," said Mr. Darrow. "See Kenneth's letter. He is enthusiastic in her praise; says she is now the reigning belle of Richmond." A flitting cloud again shadowed the light in Mrs. Darrow's eyes. Mr. Darrow passed a letter to her.

"I have been so occupied," said he, "I had quite forgotten to read to you Kenneth's letter to me, which came to-day."

By this time dinner was announced, and hastily examining the contents of the letter, with a sigh, Mrs. Darrow placed it in her pocket, and proceeded to the table.

"You will enjoy the society of the De Russeys, dear," said Mr. Darrow, looking up from his soup.

"The time was, my husband, when I should have been delighted to have had them as neighbors, but now I feel rather unfit for the entertainment of those

accustomed to the sayings and doings of the fashionable world."

Mrs. Darrow sighed faintly, and an expression of the most tender commiseration swept over the face of Mr. Darrow, as his gaze dwelt lovingly on the face of his wife ; and a twin sigh echoed from his bosom.

"We must exert ourselves, my wife, to make them feel that the proverbial hospitality of the Old Dominion has not been exaggerated. Yes ; were things somewhat different with us from just what they are, unfortunately, we might promise them a greater amount of gayety, but surely not a warmer welcome. I wonder if Bertha would remember them? They were particularly fond of her."

"No!" said Mrs. Darrow sadly. "The past is all confused to her mind, poor, dear child. She seems to have no definite idea of individuals at all. A most remarkable form of lunacy."

"What a wreck of reason!" exclaimed Mr. Darrow. A silence of some minutes ensued. The dinner was enlivened by commonplace remarks, on topics of general interest, carried on between Mr. Darrow and myself. Mrs. Darrow had relapsed into thoughtfulness, and was evidently subjecting herself to rigid introspection.

It was the first time I had ever heard the name or condition of Bertha alluded to in the family. That she had been, and still was, very tenderly beloved by them, I felt confident. Speculation as to the cause of her insanity was again rife in my mind, and I could not avoid, in some way, associating it with Kenneth.



CHAPTER XVI.

THAT WAS THE GHOST.

AFTER dinner I made ready, and taking Eva and Charity—with the various dainties always in readiness for little Emily—I wended my way to Barbara's cottage.

The walk was delightful. The twigs on the trees were as glistening as if a fresh coat of varnish had just been applied, and swollen with unborn leaf-buds; the willows and poplars were tossing their catkins recklessly over our path; the maples were aflame with their scarlet blossoms; the forests were party-colored with the profuse garniture of the dog-wood and the redbud; violets and anemones peeped up from under the dead leaves; the air was full of the mingled perfume of hundreds of flowers; the landscape was bright and lush in the tender verdure of spring; and even the cataract that poured over the gorge seemed to have lost its angry growl, and to have caught a glad, gurgling sound.

Eva ran on before me, filling her hands with blossoms for Emily; and Charity absorbed, doubtless, in her own thoughts, my musings took definite form and wrote themselves out in a happy poem on my heart.

The walk did not seem as long as usual, and the

delightful reverie in which I was plunged was rudely broken by Barbara's voice, delivering her peculiar estimate of an ebon hireling in no very polite tones.

"I say, Letty, of all the lazy pieces that ever trod sole leather, you are the laziest."

As I looked over the paling and discovered Letty's rough, dark, bare feet peeping out boldly from beneath her homespun woollen dress, I could not help doubting seriously whether Barbara's remark was applicable to her handmaiden; for, armadillo-like as they seemed, I could not believe, until my eyes accidentally fell upon a pair of half-worn brogans at no very great distance from their owner, that Letty's feet had ever known the luxury of a pair of shoes.

"Ef you don't go to sleep over that hoe you hold in your good-for-nothing hands, I shall be 'stonished—that's all! Why don't you dig, gal, as if you had some strength in them arms o' yourn?"

With that Barbara grasped the hoe from the hands of the willing negress, and plunged it back and forth into the earth with an earnestness and vigor which indicated a determined spirit. She then lifted herself and looked grim vengeance upon the good-natured culprit.

"Now take this hoe, an' ef you haint got no power in your arms and can't work a garden, jest go into the house an' set down and play lady, an' I'll do all the diggin'."

In the meantime Letty had espied me, and hiding her diminished head behind her mistress, was giggling in a manner that was likely to set at defiance all attempts at authority, as far as intended for her benefit.

Barbara turned around. With a peculiar worm-like

twist of her body, Letty still managed to keep behind the ample shield of Mrs. Johnson's figure.

"What on the yearth is the matter of this gal?" she cried. "I tell you, ef I once take a brush to you, you'll go to work in yearnest, I reckon; an' I'll do it, this livin' minit!"

Without further resistance to this threat than an increased and now an uproarious burst of laughter, Letty pointed her sable finger to where I stood, leaning over the garden paling.

Barbara's glance followed the direction to which the girl so provokingly pointed. She was unbonneted, and the breeze blowing back the broad frill that bordered her cap, she looked as wild and fierce as "Norna of the Fitful Head," as she raised her tall, brawny figure, and recognized me. The hoe was dropped, a smile instantly supplanted the frown that had knitted her brow, succeeded by a pleasant laugh at the dilemma in which I had surprised her.

In a moment more, the rustic gate was thrown wide open and my hand grasped by a horny hand, whose pressure indicated that the heartstrings of the owner tingled even to the finger ends. I stopped awhile to notice her gardening operations, and to admire the pale green leaflets that sprinkled her "plant-beds."

"It's a rather late spring, it is, Miss Harriet," said she, ruefully noting the unfinished work around her.

"It is very warm and promising at present, nevertheless," said I, encouragingly.

"Yes; but the late frosts have put things back awful. The apple-trees ought to be in bloom by this time, but there is not a sign of leaf or flower on' em."

“ But if this weather continues they will be in blossom in less than a week, I should think.”

A row of neatly made hillocks, like miniature volcanoes when an eruption subsides, yawned with open throats for the food which was to multiply into food for Barbara's household.

“ Letty ! ” she cried, shaking a menacing finger at the negro girl, who was rejoicing in the thought of deliverance from the Gorgon eyes of Mrs. Johnson, “ don't let me see any more ragged hills like this 'ere one,” flattening an unshapely mound with the sole of her ample shoe ; “ an' mind you, don't drop more'n three beans in a hill. Beans spreads mightily ; an' they never bars so well when they's too thick in the hill.

“ An' these beans, Miss Harriet,” turning to me, “ is called 'saddle straps.' They's the best you ever eat, unless it was 'cut-shorts.' I think in my soul 'cut-shorts' is the very best beans a soul can eat. They melt in a body's mouth jest like so much butter.”

I did not attempt to combat Mrs. Johnson's opinion about the comparative deliciousness of “cut-shorts,” as they had never been the pabulum upon which *my* soul had been fed ; so I smiled at her defence of her favorites, and said nothing.

“ An' when you have finished droppin' the beans, plant the cimblin seeds in them hills over there agin' the fence next the stable, an' the gourd seeds agin' the fence of the cow-shed ; so the vines can have a chance to climb. Don't mix 'em ; or we shan't know when we come to eat 'em whether we're eatin' gourds or cimblins.

“Do you know, Miss Harriet, ef you plant 'em nigh one another, they run together, an' you can't tell one from tother, when they come to blossom an' bear?”

I did not know, and confessed to Barbara my ignorance of horticulture, and the various tricks that the vegetable world is wont to play on the ignorant and unsuspecting; while here it may be as well to tell, that several months afterwards it was found that Letty had slept over her work; had mixed the cimblin and gourd seed; and the consequence was, a hybrid vegetable, with the warty, yellow body of a cimblin, and the long, slender, curled neck of a gourd; and so bitter, that Barbara feared to feed even to the milch cow; and only a pet pig and a brindled yearling were richer and happier for the negro's mischief.

With pride, she pointed out to me, on neatly thrown-up borders, her beds of sage and lavender, and sweet-balm and marjoram, bachelor's buttons and marigolds, pretty-by-nights and nasturtiums, larkspurs and pinks; and with special delight, a thrifty young multiflora rose, that was extending its branches, and aspiringly clambering up and around the white-curtained front window of her rustic log dwelling.

“Mrs. Darrow give me that,” she said, “when it was a little bush not more'n my hand high; ain't it growin' lively?”

The quacking of a duck arrested her attention. She turned quickly, and looking towards the path which led through the woods to “The Glen,” saw a large grand-looking, iris-hued drake, in the most conscious dignity piloting a brood of ducklings.

"Letty! Letty!" cried Mrs. Johnson, in evident alarm, "run! drive them ducks back! Run! I tell you. Limber them legs o' yourn, and go like they had some spring in 'em.

"That drake's a mongrel drake, Miss Harriet; he's a cross between the Poland and the Muscovy; and the mischievousest duck you ever hearn tell on. He's of no yearthly account, except to lead the other ducks into danger. I have to watch him day in an' day out; and raaly should kill him ef he wasn't so pretty. It would seem more'n a shame to wring *his* head off."

During this colloquy, Letty had dropped her hoe and her seed-bag, scattering the seed in many places where they were not intended to fall, and was leisurely proceeding to carry out Barbara's injunctions. In the meantime, sir drake and his willing followers, imagining themselves released from the lynx-eyed espionage of their owner, and quacking their satisfaction from the deep bass to the slender treble of the tiniest duckling, were penetrating deep into the shadows of the wood, much to the anxious woman's dismay.

"I thought so," said she, in an undertone; "when that old green duck went to settin' and hatched them young ones afore their time. I said no good would ever come of 'em." With lazy, clumsy strides, Letty was following their course. Mrs. Johnson's patience was exhausted.

"This will never do, in the world!" she cried. "Before that lazy huzzy reaches 'em, they'll git to the branch, and swim up under the fall an' drown. Did any mortal 'oman ever have such a world of

pest? Go into the house, won't you, Miss Harriet, and talk wi' little Emmie. She's smart to-day! An'—I'll—run and head them ducks myself. That gal 'll never do it!"

Suiting her action to the resolve, she left me at the door, and pursued by Eva and Charity, was soon in the wake of the ducks, which ere long came quacking back in terror—their general a prisoner in the stalwart arms of Barbara.

Emily's sight was rapidly gaining strength, while the gloriousness of light was taking deeper and deeper hold upon her. She was learning by comparison and through touch, the real and relative dimensions of objects that were permitted occasionally to fall upon her unbound eyes. At first she had seen men, "like trees walking;" the tops of the trees clave the sky, and the birds that perched upon them she fancied got glimpses into heaven, with its cloud-curtains of silver and gold, and green and purple. But instructed vision had corrected many of her mistakes, and in a short time she learned to read "the Book of Nature" much more wisely.

"Emily's comin' on amazin' well," said her mother, after she had wiped the great beads of perspiration from her forehead, and delivered herself of her troubles with "that mongrel drake." "I'm overjoyed at it, bekase Kenneth 'll be so proud when he gits back an' sees her."

"Then you are expecting him?" said I.

"La, child, yes! Didn't you know he was a-comin'? To-day, isn't it, Emmie? He writ her a letter that she got yesterday; wasn't it, Emmie?"

"Then you have later news from him than his father," I replied. "He is not looked for at home quite as soon."

"Yes; he did say, as my Sam read, that he had made up his mind all at once, to come up before the folks that is comin' to live at 'The Shades;' an' told Emmie (just like him, he makes her believe that she is of some account) to tell Sam—no; her 'brother Samuel'—to go up to 'The Shades' and do a job o' work there. But, bless my soul!" she murmured, musing, "I can't for the life o' me see how anybody can make up his mind to live in that old house, where they see sich awful sights, an' hear sich awful noises."

"Is it haunted?" I asked, laughing.

"To be sure it's haunted."

"Dear me!" I cried, "I should like to see a ghost."

"Like to see a ghost?" exclaimed Barbara, with staring eyes. "Well, I shouldn't!"

"Did you never see the ghost at our house?" cried Eva, who had caught the matter of the conversation, as she listened to the prattle of Emily.

"NEVER, Eva!" I answered, with emphasis.

"Mammy's seen it!"

"Never!" I replied.

"Well, then, you have heard the music of nights?" she persisted.

"Yes; I have heard the music."

The child looked up, well assured.

"I thought so."

"They tells terrible stories about the ghosts at 'The Shades,'" said Barbara.

“What are they?” cried Eva, running up, planting her elbows on Mrs. Johnson’s knees, and gazing into her eyes. “Do tell me.”

I shook my head; Barbara laughed.

“Nothin’, child,” she said, mysteriously. “Little gals mustn’t hear about ugly things.”

The child discomfited, left her, and sauntering out to the garden, soon became interested in Letty’s operations.

“Well,” said Barbara, when Eva was out of hearing, “they do say as how some awful murders was onct done at ‘The Shades.’ A travellin’ pedler, as come along with his pack on his back, was let stay all night there; and he gits up in the middle of the night, an’ kills every white soul in the house, an’ steals a lot o’ money. Nex’ mornin’ he gits up before the break o’ day, an’ steals out o’ the house with his pack on his back, and the money he took, an’ goes on. One o’ the niggers comin’ back from his wife’s house, secd him as he come down the hill towards that clump o’ willows, an’ sort o’ thought there was somethin’ spicious in his looks, but didn’t say nothin’. But after broad daybreak he goes up to the house an’ finds all the doors locked tight. Well now, people around here, where there’s no rogues, don’t ginerally lock up their houses. So he goes to one o’ the house-women, and says he: ‘It’s mighty strange all the house doors is locked up, Dorothy.’ An’ says she, ‘Git off, Jupiter, you is a fool!’ But says he, ‘Dorothy, it’s all so, gal.’

“So she went up to the house, an’ roun’ an’ roun’; an’ sure enough ivery blessed door *was* locked fast.

Then the niggers goes, as was right, to the nearest neighbor, an' tells him that all the house doors at 'The Shades' was locked, an' nary white soul a-stirrin' out. So he got another neighbor, and they two got another, an' come over and bust open the doors, an' found all in the house in their beds wi' their throats cut from ear to ear. So they sent for the constable an' took up ivery nigger that belonged to the premises, an' put 'em in jail.

"Jupiter he tells his story, an' they sends men out in ivery direction, huntin' for the pedler; an' sure enough they finds him at last, two counties off, his pack on his back, and six thousand dollars in gold hid all about in his pockets, an' in his pack, an' in his boot-legs.

"So they took him up, an' brought him back, an' put him in jail. He tried to swar out first, and fastened it on two o' the niggers; an' seein' as how niggers couldn't give in, in court, he was mighty nigh havin' the poor creturs hanged. But, as good luck would have it, he took sick with a fever, an' the fever went into his head, an' he got 'lirious, the doctors said, and talked all sorts of strange, mad talk. He told what the old man said to him, an' as how the old lady prayed for her life, an' as how the young man fought him, an' hurt him on his arm, an' as how beautiful the two young ladies looked with their blue eyes and brown hair, prayin' that he wouldn't kill 'em.

"Well, they let him git well, an' tried him for his life. An' while the trial was a-goin' on, he got sort o' skeared, an' up an' told the whole story—ivery word

of it. An' they hanged him out in the old field, about two miles away from town.

"Sence then, nobody's ever lived at 'The Shades.' All that happened afore I was born; but my mother and father told me all about it many a time. They do say ghosts walk about the old house even in the daytime."

"Ah!" I exclaimed incredulously, though shuddering at the ghastly, if not ghostly, narrative.

"But for all that," said Barbara, thoughtfully shaking her head, "I don't think that tale's as bad as—. Fore the Lord, I said I would hold my tongue, an' I will!"

I was frightened at her earnestness. She took down her cob pipe from the shelf above the fire-place, and with a jerk, filling it with tobacco, lighted it; and while a dense volume of smoke curled up around and enveloped her, she shook her head, and mumbled nervously to herself. At length, knocking out the ashes, and taking the stump of a knife-blade to clean out the bowl, she turned to me:

"Kenneth's comin' to-day?"

"I don't know, indeed, though Emily tells me so."

"Emmie will be raal proud to see him."

"I should think so," I returned.

"He's a monstrous good friend, where he takes a likin'. My Sam—"

I did not wish to hear again the story of Sam, and getting up, I prepared to leave.

"You aint a-goin' yit?" she cried. "I was jest a-thinkin' o' crackin' some hickory nuts for you."

"Thanks, Mrs. Johnson, I do not feel like eating

any. I must go now. Good-by, Emily. If Mr. Darrow gets home to-day, you will certainly see him to-morrow, I suppose."

The child's face brightened, and, with a rude clasp of my hand, Barbara followed me out, and called Eva and Charity, who had wandered down to look after the ducks which had given so much trouble.

My return through the woods was, as usual, more thoughtful than my coming. It was evident that, in Mrs. Johnson's mind, something revolting was associated with Kenneth Darrow, or in some way with the Darrow family. The willow catkins blew rasp-ingly against my cheeks ; the odor of the violets was sickening, rather than delightful ; the breeze wailed through the trees, or murmured a ghostly requiem in my ears ; and the pleasant gurgle the cascade had taken to itself, had changed again to a maddened growl.

Eva and Charity lingered behind, gathering a fresh supply of flowers for Mrs. Darrow. As I approached the gorge, the sight I witnessed transfixed me. Over the edge of the cliff hung the figure of Bertha. She was clad in light green—doubtless in compliment to the season ; on her head she wore a broad-brimmed leghorn hat twined with spring blossoms ; while her hair, unbound, fell around like a veil of glistening amber. "O God!" I cried, in the impotence of my spirit, fearing to proceed, lest I might startle her to her destruction, yet fearing to retreat. Farther and farther over the chasm she bent. A stone loosened under her feet, and tumbled into the seething waters. She did not hear my step. I made a sudden resolve,

and springing up behind her, with almost super-human strength snatched her from the edge of the precipice.

"Who are you?" she cried, turning savagely upon me, with an intense glitter in her eyes.

"A friend," I said with forced calmness and a husky voice.

"A friend?" she echoed. "Then be a friend, and go down and gather up Kenneth's bones; they lie at the bottom of this chasm."

She threw her arm around my waist, and attempted to fling me forward. I screamed in affright.

"Go down, I say, and bring up Kenneth's bones," she hissed.

A pair of strong hands unclasped her maniac hold upon me, and turning, Kenneth Darrow stood by my side, his face as pale as Parian marble, and his features locked like a vise. "Bertha," he exclaimed under his breath.

At the sound of his voice she trembled violently, sank upon her knees, and lifted up her hands in piteous supplication.

"Forgive, Richard, forgive!" she murmured. "I was only trying to get a bunch of violets to lay on my baby's grave."

He raised her from her knees, and bent upon her a look of such unutterable sorrow as I have never seen in the face of another. "Where is Content?" he asked, turning him in the direction of the graveyard. "The one supreme dread of my life is, that she will some time find a grave in these waters."

"Here!" cried the nurse at that moment coming

up, and bursting into tears. "She got away from me, Mas' Kenneth: indeed she did. She is so cunning sometimes."

"You must take better care of her," he said with icy coolness, but kindly.

Like a wretched and frightened child she laid her hand in that of the nurse, and permitted herself to be led back to the house.

Eva and Charity had come up. Kenneth was too much excited just then to notice the presence of the child; therefore I was spared the angry feeling which always took possession of me, in his want of tenderness to her.

She held my hand, trembling in every limb.

"Miss Royal," she whispered.

"What, Eva?"

"*That was the ghost!*"

"Nonsense! Eva, nonsense."

A strange glare was in the little girl's eyes, and more than ever before, the resemblance to the expression on the portrait of Richard Darrow forced itself upon me.

Kenneth caught this, and a light like the reflection of fire on steel, flashed up in his own.

This the child saw, and hiding her face against my dress, she wept silently.

He held out his hand, took mine, and pressed it in the gentlest manner, dropped my hand and laid his caressingly, on the head of the little girl.

This man, then, had two natures—the demoniac and the angelic, the hard and the soft, the good and the evil, by turns held him in durance. Have not all

of us two natures? or are our distinct dualities intended to illustrate distinct and opposing capabilities?

He turned away, and leaving us to follow poor daft Bertha, plunged into the recesses of the forest, as the sun shot up his last red ray behind the mountain, and earth drew around her the purple robe of twilight.

It was quite dusk when he returned to the house. At the tea-table he was calm, and except in the palor that had not left his complexion, gave very little indication of the storm through which his soul had passed—a storm stirring all the fountains of bitterness to their deepest depths, and leaving them to curdle in hard, sullen agony.

Instinctively his mother felt this, and though a tear was in her voice, she made a brave effort to be cheerful.

That night Bertha consoled herself in the practice of a new opera, and gems from the oratorio, on her harp.





CHAPTER XVII.

OUR NEIGHBORS.

“ Those were the days of Summer which intrude
Their sultry fervor on the realm of Spring,
And push its buds to sudden blossoming.”



YOU will not fail to wait on Mrs. and Miss de Russey this afternoon ? ” said Kenneth Darrow to his mother at dinner, the Saturday after his return home. “ The roads are in very good order, and the weather is delightful. Mrs. de Russey must be expecting you. From indications on Thursday when I called to see them, they are well settled by this time in their new establishment, and will be glad to see you. You know they have brought with them their most efficient servants, and as Judge de Russey intends cultivating only fifty acres immediately around the mansion, in gardens and pleasure-grounds, they will not be many years in reconstructing a mimic Paradise at ‘ The Shades. ’

“ I know of nothing to prevent our calling on them this afternoon,” said Mrs. Darrow, turning to me for an objection, if one was to be urged against the project. As I had not at all considered the matter, I had no objection to it, and offered none ; but my evidently negative expression did not appear to please her son.

“ And as you, Miss Royal, are the representative *young lady* of the family, you will be ready to do the

honors?" he said to me, in a questioning rather than an authoritative tone.

"Pardon me," I replied. "I was not aware that such responsibilities were supposed to rest upon me, and thus have given the subject no thought. As I have no claims upon society, I should really prefer to be ignored."

It was not the first time I had shown a spirit of resistance; and what he had regarded as the result of diffidence heretofore, he now began to think was the offspring of obstinacy. A slight frown knitted his brow, which in an instant flitted.

"Do as you please," said he, "but as you are intended to enjoy all the social privileges which attach to our family, you are consequently expected to assume certain of the obligations, and can hardly be ignored."

I bowed my thanks, as there seemed no possibility of retreat from the position, though I should have preferred greatly to have been recognized as a subordinate, inasmuch as I should then be absolved from the unjust reflection which is sometimes cast upon one, whom penury alone, has placed in a subordinate sphere.

"Will you not excuse me?" I pleaded.

"No," he answered firmly, but mildly.

I turned to Mrs. Darrow. She smiled,—

"We must be ready, my dear, to start in half an hour, therefore you have no time to lose in making your *toilette*."

At this remark I winced. I confess that I dreaded to appear before those accustomed to the elegant

toilettes of the fashionable, in what I could produce from the scanty wardrobe with which I had emerged from boarding-school. However, my best dress suitable for the august occasion was donned—a simple, dove-colored merino, quiet enough for a Quakeress—and this, enlivened by some bright ribbons, with the *feather in my hat*, did not look very contemptible. By a single significant glance, Kenneth surveyed me, *cap-a-pie*, when I descended to the hall, and seemed satisfied. I blushed under his scrutiny, in the cowardly manner in which one is apt to blush, when made the subject of close scrutiny, and the mischievous smile that played over his *moustache*, as he assisted me into the carriage, added to my vexation.

Eva was allowed to accompany us, and as Eva's inevitable shadow, Charity took the seat beside her. Mr. Darrow having made his compliments to the family at "The Shades" a few days previous, excused himself; and Kenneth followed on, on horseback.

The landscape had grown wondrously in beauty during the week. The orchards were blushing with apple-blossoms, nestled amid the tender green foliage; the Virginia fringe-tree, as white as freshly-fallen snow, waved its silken filamented wands; infant leaf-buds thickly studded the twigs of the forest; fully-coated lambs frisked on the hill-sides; the birds were singing their merriest songs; the meadows, flecked with golden buttercups and dandelions, were as green as emerald; the mountains were as blue as sapphire; the brooks were as bright as molten silver; the winds, full of balm, were whispering their

most loving whispers—God made the country ! Oh, how surpassing beautiful it was on that clear, soft, warm April afternoon ! when Uncle Moses slept on the postilion's box ; and James under his breath whistled a plantation tune, as he held on to the carriage-straps behind ; and Eva discoursed to Charity of the matchless wonders of a new box of toys ; while Mrs. Darrow indulged in retrospection, and I, speculated upon the probabilities and improbabilities of the future.

When a witching spell of loveliness holds the soul in thrall, there is no desire to break it by uttered word ; and so when the mind is turned in upon itself, and wanders in a maze of thought.

“ Did you ever see anything finer than that ? ” said Kenneth Darrow, riding up suddenly to the carriage window and extending his hand out towards a portion of the landscape in which hill and dale, forest and meadow, mountain and river, commingled to form a picture, in which all of the elements of the sublime and the beautiful, were thrown together in wanton prodigality. “ Did you ever see *any* thing finer ? ”

His eyes were enkindled with a rapturous light, and his face beamed with inspiration. Mrs. Darrow lifted herself from her reverie.

“ Never ! ” she answered.

“ Never ! ” I echoed, with a mental protest, in remembrance of my early home.

“ I doubt whether there exists a finer picture on earth, taken in all points ! ” he cried, falling back behind the carriage, the motion of which had been ac-

celerated by the sudden and unwilling awakening of Uncle Moses to the heretofore unappreciated beauties of this particular landscape, his duty as charioteer, or from some other unexplained motive. A few turns among the hills, brought us to a brook fringed with willows—the proverbial clump of willows, shading the spring just ahead—and cresting a long hill, embowered in magnificent oaks, and other giant forest-trees, stood the venerable old mansion dignified with the name of “The Shades.”

A broad double piazza, supported by huge granite pillars, extended along the entire front of the house, and the low-browed eaves, garnitured by westeria, Virginia creeper, and ivy, running over the gables and clambering up to the chimney-tops, all in wild, unkempt luxuriance, gave to the house a cosey, comfortable, inviting look.

The carriage road wound up around the trees to the steps of the piazza, where, in true, Southern style, we were received by Judge de Russey,—

“A man of haughty port—
A man beyond his prime, but still unbent,
Though the first frosts of age already lent
Their softness to his brow.”

He left his rustic balcony-chair—a great rocker with a reading-rack—in which, we more than half-suspected he was enjoying an after-dinner nap—and threw aside his paper, to give us an open-handed and an open-hearted welcome.

We were ushered into a large drawing-room, with vaulted ceiling, heavy bevelled oak cornices, dark

wainscoted walls, large windows set with small, queer panes of glass, and a tall, elaborately carved oak mantel-piece. The furniture of this parlor was in perfect keeping with its antiquity—old, odd-looking pieces, which had been gathered up here and there, with some that had been brought from abroad, and now came into admirable use; and all enlivened by luxurious *fauteuils* and sofas; books, and costly articles of *vertu*, which at this day usually enter into the ornamentation of a home of ease and opulence.

Ere long, Mrs. de Russey entered with Charlotte, repeating the warm greeting extended first by Judge de Russey, and not forgetting in the pleasure of meeting her old friends to include me, though comparatively insignificant in that welcome.

“A perfect woman, nobly planned,”

was the commentary that rose to my lips, as I took in her tall, graceful figure, yet unbent by time, though, like her husband's, the rime of age had slightly silvered the threads of glistening black hair; while her cheeks were round and unseamed, and her large dark brown eyes still lit up by the warm glow which belongs usually to youth. She was clad in a grey silk dress, relieved by a soft lace head-dress, and her manners, though tinged with a certain degree of hauteur which belongs to Southern blood in every clime, were easy and affable.

But what shall be said of Charlotte de Russey? If she were compared to a pearl, a ruby, a diamond, a star, in turn, she was entitled to comparison with each, to either or to all.

“She filled me as the moon a sleeping sea.”

She was a rose—the soft, creamy tea rose, its petals deepening into rich crimson; no; “*La triomphe de Luxembourg*,” the queen of roses, in its rich perfection. Somewhat above the medium height, she had the lithe slenderness of the willow, while her limbs were as round and her hands and feet as perfect in proportion as though modelled by a sculptor—from all of perfections, most nearly perfect. Her complexion was that of a pearl, which had been for generations an heirloom in a ducal coronet—of that soft rich tint which belongs only to the pearl—a complexion generally pale, but which lost its paleness with the kindling emotions of the soul, and warmed up into rich shades of color, the coral of her lips deepening to the ruby, and the rose hue mounting to her cheeks, and resting there like the velvety blush on the petals of the queen of flowers. The diamond in its lustre could not exceed, at such times, the lustre of her dark brown eyes, which now and then melted into liquid softness, and again shone like midnight set with stars. Her mouth was small, her lips pouting, her nose straight and approaching the Grecian, her forehead fair and moderately high, and her hair of a lively shade of brown, long and full, without a ripple to break the sheen of light that played over it.

She wore her hair in massive braids wound low on the back of her head, and a broad coronal across the front. In it, this afternoon, she had carelessly placed a spray of scarlet geranium. Her dress was black, of some thin, light, gauzy, silken texture—such as

Southern women delight in—relieved at the throat by a frill of rich lace confined by a branch of coral. From her shell-like ears depended coral drops ; around the finely moulded wrists, from which her loose flowing sleeves fell carelessly away, she wore coral bracelets ; while on the third finger of her left hand gleamed a first-water diamond—of rare lustre and value.

She looked a youthful queen—she walked a queen. About her was an air of authority, before which the most daring would bow, mingled with a charming grace and winsomeness ; indeed a candor and artlessness, that in a very little while contradicted the impression of greater age and wisdom than that which belonged to her.

How could she be otherwise than proud and imperious, with the blood of the Castilian and Andalusian through her mother, and of the Gaul and the Anglo-Saxon through her father, meeting in her veins ? How could she, with such a commingling at the life-fountain, be otherwise than high-spirited, warm-hearted, generous, confiding, and sensitive ?

“ I am indeed very, *very* glad to see you, and to know you ! ” said she, holding my hand in a prolonged pressure, after a more affectionate greeting of Mrs. Darrow. “ I have heard Mr. Kenneth Darrow speak so frequently and so kindly of you. He thinks you quite a marvel of bravery. I hope we shall be very good friends. ”

“ I hope so, indeed, ” I could only say.

I had never made very firm friends among my school companions. The envies and jealousies that are so apt to infect the social body-politic of a large com-

munity of school-girls, had forbidden my cultivating more than passing attachments ; and I was scarcely prepared to enter into very warm relations of friendship with one near my own age. I had much dread of the petty strifes and contentions which sometimes obtain between girls and women, and had begun to cling with a measure of fondness to the isolation which gave me more congenial and friendly companionship in books and nature. And now, the difference in position between Charlotte de Russey and myself was so great !

“ I hope so, indeed ? ”

The exclamation was involuntary, and therefore must have sprung from the heart ; but a moment after it was uttered, I despised myself for bending to a polite conventionalism.

“ This is such a quiet community,” she said, “ it seems to me it will be difficult to know what to do with one’s time. Do you not find it so ? ”

“ Not at all,” said I. “ My duties and pleasures absorb all of mine.”

“ Ah, yes ; I had forgotten that you are generally busy. I think my brother Ernest will like you. He is quiet and studious—is fond of books, and of those who like books. But you should know Louis. He is our bad boy, but then so brave and high-toned and generous. We are all in constant dread of his doing something terrible, yet he is the soul of honor, and as chivalrous as he is honorable. I have great faith in poor Louis. Though he may be wild and reckless, he will never disgrace himself or his family, or harm any one. Let me tell you, he is said to be

in every piece of mischief practised at the University—has never borne away the shadow of an honor, though this is his third session—is the pet and the oracle of the students, and consequently the terror of the faculty. They would doubtless have expelled him for some effervescent freak, but for the regard in which they hold Ernest. I love Ernest very much, but Louis is my darling. I know you will like him !”

“We are apt to love those best who give us the most anxiety,” said I, not knowing what else to say.

“They say so,” she replied ; “but there is everything in Louis to love, though there is much to grieve.”

This defence of her unfortunate brother was to me very beautiful.

“But he is a terrible tease.”

“Ah !” I could say no more.

“You will doubtless be much better pleased with Ernest.”

“Perhaps so,” I returned, though already propitiated into tolerating Louis’s irregularities, if not into positive admiration of him.

“Don’t you think we have a charming old house ?”

“Yes,” I answered candidly, my eyes running over its appointments, and taking in, in their survey, the landscape in front of the parted window-curtains.

“I am already in love with it. They say it is haunted. I really hope so, for I am endowed with the wonderful faculty of making friends with ghosts ; I mean to have many a *séance* with those that inhabit here.”

A playful smile flitted over her features, and gave an arch expression to her splendid eyes.

"How did you hear that story?" I asked.

"Why, from a gossiping old woman who has been to see us, and tells a terrible tale of a pedler and his atrocities. She says her name is Barbara Johnson—a sort of retainer of the Darrows, I should think."

"Barbara has then called on you?"

"Yes, the day after our arrival, to know whether mother had any *spinning* to put out."

I smiled.

"You know her, then?" said she.

"Very well."

"She is such a character as Mr. Dickens could make use of."

"Decidedly!" cried I, in love with Mr. Dickens' skill in portraiture.

"She reminds me of 'Meg Merrilees,'" said Charlotte, thoughtfully.

"Or rather, in physique, of 'Norna of the Fitful Head,'" said I, remembering well her appearance in her garden.

"She says she is coming frequently, and I hope she will," said Charlotte, "for a bit of gossip occasionally will be refreshing. Says she is intimately acquainted with all of the family at 'The Glen.'"

"Yes; she has long been one of their retainers, and is under many obligations to them."

I felt that it would be almost cruel to caution her against Barbara's propensity to retail the news that so idly floated about the neighborhood, and by an allusion to an old picture that hung upon the wall oppo-

site, drew her into enthusiastic description of certain works of art in Italy, and thence into topics associated with books and travel.

"You must see my *boudoir*," she suddenly exclaimed; and drawing aside a curtain from an arched recess, she led me into a small room, hung and curtained with rose-colored tapestry; a rich soft carpet of light ground wreathed with roses covered the floor; a few choice pictures hung upon the walls; a luxurious sofa, a pair of *fauteuils*, and several light chairs invited to comfort; a harp, guitar, and tapestry frame had appropriate places; and upon tables, *étagères*, brackets, and pedestals were scattered her pet articles of *vertu*, among which were several exquisite statuettes, copies of famous originals by the old masters.

"Isn't it a beauty?" cried the passionate and volatile girl. "This is my peculiar sanctum. Only the favored few shall ever be allowed to enter. I do not mean it shall ever bless the prying eyes of the curious; but you, Louis and Ernest, can have *entrée* whenever you choose."

I thanked her for the privilege, sinking into a *fauteuil* and closely examining a miniature "faun of Praxiteles."

"Oh, that is a darling!" cried Charlotte, "but you should see the original. Ah! that cabinet in the Capitol! Christian art has not done much for sculpture."

She had touched the master chord of my soul, that held a wish imprisoned. I made her no reply, but simply breathed—

"Italy!"

She drew near, laid her arm around my neck, and kissed me.

"You will go to Italy some time. I have a faith, that whatever we most wish for, if it is not wrong we should have it, God will give us."

I seized her beautiful white hand and pressed it to my lips. There were tears in my eyes. Mine had been such an unloved and unloving life; had this girl then come to brighten it, and make it more blessed?

She bent over and kissed my eyelids down.

"There! I don't like to see tears."

To change the current of feeling she uncovered her harp, and tried the tone. A few strings needed tightening.

"I shall sing something for you."

She sang the "Casta Diva." As I had imagined from her tropical temperament, her voice was a full, deep, rich, impassioned contralto. Music was the utterance of her spirit; she was indeed a living, breathing poem—a beautiful epic, with deep dramatic and sparkling lyric passages, and the rich waves of sound, as they floated from her lips, were but the natural notes of a heart whose every expression was melodious.

"That is rather heavy for you, I think," she said, when the piece was finished, and sang a sportive little aria from "Rigoletto."

Tea was served before we left "The Shades." At the table Kenneth Darrow engrossed Charlotte, Judge de Russey claimed the exclusive attention of Mrs. Darrow, and I was left to make a more intimate acquaintance with Mrs. de Russey.

"How do you like our neighbors?" said Kenneth to me at the carriage-window, as we drove home.

"Very much indeed!" I answered.

"Do you regret your visit?"

"No, not at all."

"I am glad you went."

"Thanks!"

"Yes, dear, we are very glad that you can have the society of so amiable and cultivated a young person as Charlotte. She is a noble girl," said his mother.

And as we drove on, the light of the broad full moon flooding the mountain-tops with silver and making denser the shadows on their rock-ribbed sides, I discovered that I had left much of my heart with the young friend I had just found.

"You like Charlotte?" said Kenneth to me, as he assisted me from the carriage, at home.

"Very much, I assure you!"

"Why does he ask me this question?" I pondered.
"Alas! If—if—"

My thought did not take form in words. I fled from it, as though sinful; and yet all of us at some time find ourselves repeating the sad refrain: "It might have been." A mocking-bird, which had built its nest in one of the great chestnut oaks, sang a wild, gushing song to the night; and while a shadow of regret, or it may have been a rebellious feeling against what is known as "fate," had entered my soul, I ran up to my room, with the notes of the mocking-bird in my heart, happier than I had been for many, many days.



CHAPTER XVIII.

ÉCLAIRCISSEMENT.

AFTER this time, visits between "The Glen" family and the family at "The Shades" were frequently interchanged. Indeed, the coming of the De Russeys seemed to infuse fresh life into the whole neighborhood. Every one of the old settlers, for miles around, felt committed to their entertainment; and a succession of dinner and evening reunions ensued, which fully sustained the "Old Dominion" in its proverbial character for generous hospitality.

Charlotte de Russey was delighted. She declared her life was a continual *fête*. In her rides and drives and walks, she generally selected Kenneth Darrow as her cavalier. Between them, the *ententé cordiale* was perfect—though rumor had appropriated to her a prospective husband, in the person of a gallant young Englishman, who, beside her, had found many other things to like in America. And the fact of her engagement was substantiated not only by the diamond which flashed upon her finger, but by her own proud acknowledgment.

Her visits to "The Glen" were usually on Friday afternoons, when my teaching duties were over for the

week ; and when, as she said, "Eva could be dismissed to hunt flowers and chase butterflies in the meadows," and she could take me to herself. To effect this more certainly, she rejected the offer of a separate chamber, and installed herself in my room, sharing my bed.

A new life had opened to me through my acquaintance with this pure-hearted, unselfish child-woman,—wise in education, travel, social contact and native intelligence, yet as *naïve* and free from what passes counter for worldly wisdom, as the most uninitiated young denizen of our mountain fastnesses might be supposed to be of the sayings and doings of court-circles. For her, Nature's great volume had interest in every page, and in every line ; whether studied in her ruder phases, or in the delicate tintings of her lights and shadows. She was guileless. The heart of Charlotte de Russey was as clear as the transparent waters of a mountain lakelet, and reflected the heart of a friend, as a flawless steel mirror.

We had one night retired, and, as usual entered into a confidential communion of thought and idea—an interchange of fancies, hopes, and fears—when there stole upon the ear, the thrumming of Bertha's harp, accompanied by the melody of her voice, in a soft, plaintive hymn.

"What is that? Where is that music?" cried Charlotte, springing up and listening.

"It is Bertha's midnight serenade," I replied.

"Bertha's?"

"Yes."

"You mean Mrs. Kenneth Darrow, do you?"

“ I do.”

“ I thought she was in an insane asylum.”

“ No ; she has apartments in the eastern wing of the house.”

I had never heard her mention Bertha's name before, and was not aware that she had any knowledge of her existence, if, indeed, she remembered her at all.

“ Do you know anything of her ? ” I asked.

“ Why, yes ; I remember her perfectly, as she was when we met some years ago in Geneva. She was at that time, the most lovely young woman, I think, I ever saw.”

“ Did she then show any symptoms of insanity ? ”

“ Oh no ; I think not ; and, although I was too young to have noticed anything of the kind, I have many times heard my father and mother say, she was not only particularly bright and beautiful, but peculiarly fascinating.”

“ I wonder what could have dethroned her reason ? ”

“ Ah ! the story must be a sad one. Sickness, perhaps ; yet, in such cases the reason is generally restored, with re-established health,” said Charlotte sadly.

“ Was she then married to Kenneth Darrow ? ”

“ No, they were married after their return to America.”

“ Did he seem fond of her ? ”

“ His love, as it now recurs to me, was like the undercurrent of the ocean, demonstrated, only now and then, by an uncontrollable swelling surge, that stirred all the depths of his nature, and awoke him to

passionate commotion ; while forever it flowed on silently, in its hidden grandeur."

I laughed. " You are eloquent in defence of your friends."

" Kenneth Darrow's nature is sublime ! " she said, with fervor in her voice.

" He seems to me cold, if not calculating."

" You mistake him, Harrie."

" I hope I do, but I do not think I do. Did you ever know his brother ? "

" Yes ; very well, at that time."

" What of him ? "

" Oh, he was unfortunate. With the exception of the almost marvellous beauty of his features, there was no comeliness in him. He appeared to be made of scraps of Nature's odds and ends, of physical and moral deformity. By instinct, he seemed to be depraved ; or it may be his physical misfortune had warped his instincts. His mind was active, and perhaps brilliant, but his soul was low, cunning, malicious, and revengeful."

" I cannot understand this, with my faith in inherited instincts and propensities."

" Nor I, with such a father, such a mother, and such position and advantages."

" May you not have been prejudiced against him ? "

" Prejudice was impossible in my case."

" But you were then too young to understand and analyze character."

" True ; it might be thought so ; but children begin to discriminate at a very early age ; and though they may be guided solely by intuition—while we

know that they are altogether amenable to bribery, and utterly unable to appreciate the force or weight of the impressions made on them—yet we know also that their attractions or repulsions are always respected. In later life they begin, themselves, to understand them. It is said, and truly, ‘a child or a dog is the best judge of character.’”

“Then you disliked Richard?”

“I rather feared and dreaded him. This was the feeling he engendered.”

“Were Richard and Kenneth affectionate, as brothers?” I asked.

“Richard was cruel and envious towards Kenneth. He was jealous of his father’s confidence in him, and his mother’s pride and love; and kept up a petty warfare of spite and contempt.”

“Do you account, in this way, for the coldness and reserve in which Kenneth Darrow has encompassed himself?”

“To a certain extent; but to a noble, high-toned, independent nature like his, Kenneth Darrow has had such chilling, dwarfing trials.”

“Ah!” said I, evasively; feeling all the while that I was condemned to playing the spy, by no means elevated in my own esteem, and extremely uncomfortable. “I really do not know what has been the character of his troubles.”

“The rivalry and persecution of his brother, who was himself insanely in love with Bertha Hastings; his goading, torturing provocations; her loss of reason after her marriage; and his brother’s subsequent and mysterious death, have greatly dwarfed his domes-

tic affections, and increased his hauteur and iciness. I do not think he loves his child."

"Why?" said I, with deep earnestness.

"He is so indifferent to her."

I started up, rested my elbow on my pillow, and peered through the darkness for a look into Charlotte's face.

"And I almost *hate* him for that!" I cried.

"It is unnatural," said she, "but we cannot always understand the motives which prompt to feeling or action. I have noticed his unsympathetic manner towards Eva—she wonderfully resembles the portrait of Richard—and—I—sometimes—think—"

"What?" I asked fiercely.

"That what they say is true."

"What is that?"

She hesitated. "Dear Harrie, forgive me! I cannot tell you. It is what neither you nor I, should talk about. Perhaps, after all, it is only the prating suspicion of an old, good-natured gossip."

"Who, Charlotte? Do tell me!"

"I am almost ashamed to say, Harrie. Our old neighbor, Barbara Johnson, tells a very mysterious story."

I clutched her hand and held it firmly.

"You do not believe it, Charlotte? you do not believe it?"

She lifted herself from the pillow, and throwing her arms around me, drew me down, and gently covered my shoulders.

"I cannot say, Harrie. I pity him. It is altogether too awful for us to speak of."

The perspiration had started out, and moistened my hair like dew.

“ Harrie, do you like your position here ? ”

“ Yes ; no ; yes—I don’t know, Charlotte. They are all kind and affectionate. I love Eva. But—under no circumstances is there reason why—he—should be purposely cold and unfeeling towards a harmless little child.”

“ Oh, Harrie, he is a noble and kind-hearted gentleman. Trust him for this much, at any rate ; and we will try to excuse him for what seems unnatural and cruel. Rest assured, there is some apology for it. But listen ! ”

Charlotte sprang up from the bed. I followed her, and lighted the candles on the bureau. We were both as pale as marble, and Charlotte’s hair, as my own, was damp and clinging. Putting on our slippers and throwing on shawls, we went out into the hall, and laid our ears against the wall.

Bertha was performing a brilliant fantasia on the piano ; a piece which called into exercise the most difficult and careful execution. Every note was full of expression, and as clearly and delicately rendered, as Ole Bull’s most magic performance on the violin, as finely quivering as the nicest pulsations of the magnetic needle, or as softly harmonious as the sighing of the night-wind.

I had never known her music to be so felicitous.

“ Wonderful ! ” exclaimed Charlotte.

“ Yes ; wonderful indeed ! ” I answered.

We listened until the last musical vibration died

away in the deep silence of the small hours "ayont the twal."

"I do not recollect," said Charlotte, as we stealthily glided back to our bed, "that she displayed any very remarkable musical abilities, when I knew her in my childhood."

"Perhaps you have forgotten."

"Impossible. Music has been the food of my spirit from infancy. No; this talent has been given her in recompense for intellectual darkness," she whispered confidently. "The laws of compensation always work right. They are dispensed by an All-Wise Providence."

The candles were still burning on the bureau. Great tears hung like glistening diamonds on Charlotte's cheeks.

"Your faith is comforting," said I ironically, "to some of us, when we note contrast without being able to divine the cause."

"My poor, proud darling!" she cried, stroking back my hair, and kissing my clammy forehead. "Some of us are born to suffer, Harrie; and generally the best are selected. 'Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth.'"

"That brighter may be the crown hereafter, according to the orthodox idea," I said, with a bitter feeling at my heart, turning my head away that she might not note the scornful smile that hardened my lips. "I should prefer some good in this life."

She mused: "I like Kenneth Darrow, nevertheless. If Walter Traverse shall prove to be as good and as pure a man, I shall be a happy wife.—But—but—Walter *is* pure, and noble, and good!"

She was nervous and agitated. She buried her

head on my shoulder and wept. Her tears were gentle, healing tears, and ere long her emotion subsided.

“Do you ever see Bertha, Harrie?” she whispered.

“Occasionally, when she breaks her bonds, or is taken out for exercise.”

“Is she ever disposed to be violent?”

“Very rarely.”

“I wish I could see her!”

A few more remarks passed between us, when Charlotte's breathing became more regular, and she slept—her sleep broken by soft murmurings and fitful starts.

She remained at “The Glen” until Sunday, when she joined her family at church.

The next evening, as we returned in the twilight from a walk to the ravine, then fringed with ferns, and gay with the eglantine that crept down among the jagged points of rock, we saw that the upper rooms in the east wing were brilliantly illuminated. The curtains were looped back and the windows raised. The poor, daft young woman was again enacting the bride. She stood before a full-length mirror—a tall wax-candle on either side—clad in her satin robe; while Content was deftly arranging the lace veil, and adjusting the wreath of orange-flowers.

An expression of gratified vanity shone on her countenance. She clasped pearls around her neck and arms, and significantly swept back the folds of her skirt.

We had reached the graveyard, and leaned against the ivy-covered wall.

“She is yet beautiful!” sighed Charlotte. “Poor thing! Poor thing!”

“Poor thing!” I echoed, in earnest sympathy.

Lingering a few moments to see her *toilette* completed to her satisfaction, we proceeded to the house, and with hearts too much oppressed for ordinary conversation, silently took our seats in the library.

The lamps were shaded, and the evening air came in, laden with balm.

A rustling sound was heard in the long hall, and the swish of a dress over the floor.

"There is Bertha!" I whispered.

We stepped noiselessly to the door.

With a candle in each hand, the mimic bride swept along in her beauty and elegance, her lace veil shrouding her like a sheet of frost-work, and her pearls glimmering like pale moonlight.

She was laughing, and talking to herself. "Ha! ha! Content did not anticipate me this time. Kenneth will be waiting, and I shall meet him. He will be glad. Dear, dear Kenneth!"

A temporary dismissal of her handmaiden had secured to the insane woman the opportunity, and making use of it, she was airing her *toilette*.

Old Mr. Darrow met her in the hall.

"My daughter, my daughter," he said tenderly, "it is too late to go out this evening. The dew is heavy, on the grass."

"Is it?" she said. "Then it will cool my head. I am feverish and tired—I have waited so long for Kenneth."

Mr. Darrow looked towards the rear portico.

"Where is Content?"

Bertha's laugh rang out triumphantly.

Kenneth entered from the front portico.

She shrieked, "Oh, Richard! Richard!"

The candles dropped from her hands. The flame caught her veil, and dashed up above her head like sheet lightning.

Kenneth had her in his arms. The lace was torn from her hair, which fell down in a golden mass, and the orange-flowers, scorched and blackened, were scattered over the hall floor.

Charlotte's grasp was buried on my right arm.

"Is she burned? Is she injured?" she cried, as Kenneth lifted her like an infant, gathering up the heavy satin skirt, and preparing to take her back to her room.

"Her hair is singed: I hope she has sustained no more serious injury," he said, quietly.

And with the satin skirt still brushing up the blackened shreds of lace, and the torn and trampled wreath, he bore her out.

"If she should have swallowed the flame!" sighed Charlotte, trembling. "Poor Mr. Kenneth!"

Eva had slipped in, unobserved, behind her grandmother. Her hand sought mine, and her eyes shone with unnatural brightness.

"There was the ghost again!" she whispered to me.

Charlotte laid her hand under the child's chin, and lifting her face to the dim light of the shaded lamps, peered down upon it with a startled expression.

"Poor Mr. Kenneth!" she repeated.

This was all she said.

Eva broke from her scrutiny, and followed the strange procession which turned into a corridor that led from the hall.



CHAPTER XIX.

THE BROTHERS.

T being expected that Ernest de Russey would bear away a heavy crown of college laurels, it was determined that the families from "The Shades" and "The Glen" could not do otherwise than attend the closing exercises of the session at the University of Virginia, and witness the bestowal of his honors. The period of my vacation having arrived, my consent to the arrangement was taken for granted. Mrs. Darrow had said to Charlotte, "Yes, she will certainly go," and no chance for refusal was left me.

Charlottesville, the seat of the University of Virginia, is a picturesque but straggling little village, cresting a ridge which is shadowed east, south, and west, by mountains; while it overlooks the beautiful valley of the Rivanna, a brawling, babbling, rock-lined, rushing mountain stream, that is now and then coaxed from its channel to turn a wheat or grist-mill, or a more pretentious manufactory in the shape of a woollen mill.

It is the centre, not only of one of the richest agricultural districts in the "Old Dominion," but of one of the most moral, religious, and highly intelligent communities to be found anywhere in America. The

influence of the University is so potent to this condition of the social body-politic in its vicinity, that, like Cambridge, with its Harvard for the North, Charlottesville has been termed, "The Athens of the South."

The beauty of the surrounding scenery could hardly be surpassed; and when awakened into freshness by the warm spring sunshine, or draped in the silvery haze of Indian summer, with the gorgeous wealth of October-tinting on its forests, would vie in beauty with the far-famed Vale of Arcadia. The valley of the Rivanna is beautiful always, whether garnitured in the fresh and flowery robe of spring, the glory of summer, the golden richness of autumn, or in the rigors of winter—with its mountain ramparts lifting their turreted heights glittering with icicles, and sparkling as if set with myriads and myriads of gems. Following their huge arms, the mountains branch out from the south, far to the north-east and south-west, sheltering a vast amphitheatre of hill-country—upland and meadow, forest and dell—in many portions still in primeval beauty, but most generally tamed and softened by culture, and dotted here and there by an imposing homestead, or a rustic cottage, peeping out amid a wealth of foliage, bright and refreshing, from the background of dark rich red, carnelian-tinted loam, peculiar to the Piedmont section of Virginia.

To the east of Charlottesville, and three miles distant, Monticello, the residence of Thomas Jefferson, third President of our Republic, rears its classic head; commanding away to the north and south a view of the Blue Ridge for a hundred and fifty miles, and bringing under the eye one of the noblest and most beau-

tiful horizons in the world. On the east, it presents an extent of prospect bounded only by the spherical form of the earth, "in which," says William Wirt, "Nature seems to sleep in eternal repose, as if to form one of her finest contrasts with the rude and rolling grandeur of the west." Monticello is one of the billowy range of little mountains that, breaking away from the Blue Ridge, extend their granite waves, many miles towards the sandy level of tide-water.

In front of the University the old "Thoroughfare," which hides within its fastnesses an almost semi-civilized race of hardy, independent settlers, rises, with a good-humored frown; on the western side, Lewis' peak serves for the sun's night-cap; and beyond, the azure cliffs of the Blue Ridge tower up, in kindly, but rugged sublimity.

A mile south of the village stands the college, an effective rather than an imposing pile of red brick buildings, with huge Doric pillars, supporting long colonnades which flank either side of a wide, terraced lawn. At the centre of the upper end, is the rotunda, a classic and handsome structure—a miniature copy of the famous Pantheon at Rome—with a majestic Corinthian portico in front, but spoiled of its resemblance in the rear, by a still more majestic portico, that serves as a vestibule to the Public Hall, which is dignified by a fine copy of Raphael's School of Athens, in the Vatican.

Nature has done much, Art comparatively little, towards the attractiveness of the University of Virginia; yet Art can be forgiven for her tardiness or chariness, while around it "the everlasting hills" lift their

rocky summits to the deep blue sky, and, catching the rays of the sunlight and the moonlight, weave a perpetual picture of enchantment.

Our destination not being immediately accessible by railroad, the journey to Charlottesville was accomplished in private carriages—Mrs. Darrow and Mrs. de Russey occupying one ; Charlotte and myself, with Eva and Charity filling a second ; while Judge de Russey and Kenneth drove in a light buggy, followed by a farm baggage-wagon, with the effects of the party.

The trip was performed leisurely—stopping for luncheon at a road-side inn—Uncle Moses, and even James, more than half the way sleeping on the box, while the coachman from “The Shades” was equally sensitive to the soporific influence of the musical rumble of carriage-wheels, and the continual jolting over the rocky roads of that section.

It was about four o'clock in the afternoon when we drew up at the principal hotel of the village, our cavalcade causing a flutter of excitement among the loungers on the piazza, who ingloriously strained their necks right and left to get a look at the occupants of the coaches. We were met by Louis de Russey, who was awaiting us ; and received with an *empressement* which would have been gratifying enough for the most exacting.

“You are here at last !” he cried, after a dozen or more embraces of his mother, Charlotte, and Mrs. Darrow. “I have actually been thinking my eyes would burst from the sockets, so anxiously have they been peering north, south, east, west, for your *cortège*. But I could not mistake it, as it loomed up over the hill at the other end of ‘Quality Row.’”

"Where is Ernest?" said his father after this volley, and another wring of his volatile son's hand.

"Standing his examination, sir, on Mixed Mathematics. He took that, you know, as the *souppçon* of vinegar for his A.M. salad; and calculates to 'put it through' before midnight."

"Then he will get the A.M. degree?" said his mother, her eyes kindling with fond pride.

"Unquestionably, madam!" returned Louis, "and is the very first in his class. Ah, mamma, *chère*, you will be a proud mother, I trow, on Friday next, if fair; if not, the next fair day."

"Are your exhibitions here, controlled by the state of the weather?" said I, innocently.

"Not exactly," he laughed, "begging my proper mother's pardon; except in, as far as it extends to the display of the summer wardrobes of the belles hereabout."

"O Louis, you are as sad a teaze as ever!" cried Charlotte, throwing her arms around him. "But while Ernest is winning such glorious academic honors, what is *mon chère frère* doing for himself?"

Louis hung his head in simulated shame.

"Now, Lottie, that is a cruel question; but, to be honest, for fear that he should be most relentlessly 'pitched,' *votre chère frère* prudently 'threw up.' You understand what that means, sister mine."

"Considering 'discretion the better part of valor,' my son," said his father, a cheerful smile softening the usually stern features of his face, and deepening the glow of pride, with which he regarded his luckless boy.

"But what *have* you been doing with your ignoble

self this session?" said Charlotte, seating herself on her brother's knees, and stroking back the dark hair from his unruffled, care-free forehead. "You rarely ever wrote home: you must have been busy about something."

"Asleep, perhaps," said his father, laughing.

"Not all the time, my honored sir," said Louis.

"Vagabondizing considerably, Lottie; calathumping occasionally, and disturbing the serene slumbers of my professors; and making my way into the hearts of as many of the village girls as would permit me."

"Oh, my son!" remonstrated his mother; "how could you? You have not, Louis!"

"Indeed, mamma, I have. Ernest represented the respectable side of your family, and it was simply left for me to compliment the other side, you know. And as for flirting with the girls—my dear mamma, those brought up in this vicinage, are, the most of them, ready for a *passage d'armes* at a moment's warning; and are never, I believe, very much damaged by a *rencontre*."

"I shouldn't wonder if you are oftenest the vanquished party, Louis," said Charlotte, kissing down his long-fringed eyelids.

"I should not be surprised if I am, Lottie," said he, "though just now I have the better of about a dozen of them."

"How, tell me, if you please, arrogant fellow!"

"Well—about two dozen of the prettiest, and the wittiest, have held themselves in reserve for engagements with me, to take them to the various Society celebrations of this week; but knowing that you in-

tended to have Miss Royal with you, I have reserved myself for her exclusive entertainment, provided she will allow me the honor of her company."

He turned to me and bowed profoundly.

"I shall be most happy," I replied, "and thank you for your consideration."

"I do not know that you need feel particularly complimented by my attention," said he, "as I am popularly regarded by my brother's and my father's friends, as the most hopeless reprobate in the institution. But then, if I discover that I fail to make myself agreeable, I shall very soon find a substitute who can. The boys here delight in a fresh belle now and then; the nicest girl in all the world will grow stale in the course of time, unless a man happens to fall somewhat in love with her."

"Then a belle's chief merit is in being fresh," said I.

"Undoubtedly, for young men who divide their affection between their *moustaches* and the girls," he replied.

"You are a graceless young malapert!" said Charlotte.

"Exactly! I grieve to confess," returned Louis; "yet an honest one, grant me, Lottie."

"It would be hard indeed, Louis, if you had no redeeming virtue."

"Hard? yes, it would be hard! Why even the most incorrigible of the Faculty admit that I am possessed of remarkable candor."

"I believe you were always truthful, my son;" said Mrs. De Russey, with an air, as if truthfulness was an inherent quality in Louis, and he deserved no special praise for its exercise.

“Now what can you do for *me*, in the way of beaux?” cried Charlotte, springing up from Louis’s lap, and adjusting her ruffled collar before a mirror.

“In the absence of our *beau-frère*, *expectant*, Lottie, Ernest, I believe, has in reservation for your witcheries, a dozen or more of his boon-companions—the most proper boys in college—some fourth-year academics, the most respectable ‘meds,’ certain preparatory ‘limbs of the Law,’ and unfledged theologues—though theologues are rather scarce in this, not over-pious community.”

“Dear me!” cried Kenneth Darrow, “how formidable.”

“You may well say so!” returned Charlotte. “And what a *belle* I shall be, provided the young gallants do not discover there is a mortgage on my heart and hand!”

“Heart and hand!” exclaimed Louis. “Your heart is not of much value, *ma sœur*, and as for your hand—well, that might do to pawn when a fellow is in need, since that diamond belongs to it.”

“Well, my house and lands then,” said Charlotte, again kissing her brother warmly, and gathering up her travelling conveniences, at the notification from a servant that our rooms were in readiness for us.

“Don’t you like my madcap brother?” said Charlotte, when we had reached our chamber.

“Yes;” I answered, decidedly, “I do like him!”

“I had hoped you would; though you could say nothing but ‘yes,’ in answer to me, Harrie. Louis is truly a noble boy, although he may do some very naughty things, sometimes. Ernest is altogether dif-

ferent. Dear fellow, I am so glad his last examination will be over to-day. He is nobly ambitious. I fear his health will suffer from severe study."

At dinner I was presented to Ernest. He was together different from Louis. Of all the mingled blood that ran in the veins of his family, he seemed only to have inherited the English and the Castilian. He had nothing in face or figure of the Andalusian or the French; and in character he had none of the strength of passion of the former, nor of the spontaneity and vivacity of the latter. He was proud and dignified, thoughtful and reserved; but gentle, affable and considerate. About him there was a name attraction, though he courted not confidence, and repelled all attempts at familiarity, except in the favored few. Among his fellow-students he was regarded as exclusive; his tutors, impressed with the loftiness of his character, pointed to him as an example, and predicted for him a brilliant and honorable career.

He was pale, but not wan, and, though less strikingly handsome than Louis, possessed greater power of fascination. The student, rather than the ideal, was impressed upon his countenance; yet, at times there was about him a far-off, dreamy look, a thought or fancy introverted, was conjuring up pictures far more beautiful than those which unheliciously fell upon the retina of his dark blue, lustrous eyes. A look which sent the crimson to his cheeks, and called forth a sigh from his watchful mother.

"Did you get through, Ernest," cried Louis across the table.

"I think so," he answered with a smile.

"Give me your hand, old fel!" said Louis.

"I betted a basket of champagne on you, last night, and I am awfully anxiously to win it for a good-by treat to the boys on the hill, on Commencement evening."

"Suppose you should lose?" said Ernest.

"Then I must pawn my pistols to raise the means to get the wine. But how many stood on Mixed Math.?"

"One, beside myself."

Louis laid his hand familiarly on his father's shoulder.

"Are you not proud, sir, of the boy?"

"I wish I could say I was proud of another one of the boys," he answered laughing.

Louis hung his head.

"I reckon, Lottie, that was intended for a home-thrust."

"Perhaps it was, Louis; but papa is not hopeless of good in you, yet."

"He doubtless expects me to seek 'the bubble, reputation, at the cannon's mouth'—out in the Crimea, for instance; or to 'pluck bright honor from the pale-faced moon;' be a poet, Lottie; or, to 'drag up drowned honor by the locks;' defend the character of some effete ancestor.—In all of which, I may disappoint *paterfamilias*, Lottie; for I don't think I was born to be great, and feel disposed to resent the greatness which must be thrust upon a man."

Judge de Russey pleasantly received this sally of wit, and Ernest's glance fell upon Louis, full of proud affection and earnest interest.



CHAPTER XX.

LIGHT AND DARKNESS.

IT was a gala-week at the University. The session had been an unusually prosperous one; the number of graduates, larger; and in consideration of the higher standard for graduation, the class in each school, comparatively superior.

On the evening, but two, after our arrival, occurred the valedictory celebration of the Jefferson Literary Society, instituted and sustained in honor of His Excellency, Thomas Jefferson, the founder and chief patron of the college. Ernest de Russey had been elected as valedictorian of the occasion.

Unaccustomed, as I had been till late, to such demonstrations, the scene presented was to me like a glimpse of fairy-land—the brilliantly illuminated hall, calling forth from the dusky canvas, the old Greek philosophers and scholars on the peristyle—Plato and Aristotle, Socrates and Alcibiades, Pythagoras and Empedocles, Zoroaster and Ptolemy, the half-naked Diogenes, the vine-crowned Epicurus, Apollonius vain, “a writer of conic sections,” Zeno and Euclid—who looked benignantly down from their classic alcove, over the philosophers and scholars, farmers and statesmen, brave men and fair women,

that moved to and fro, with a smile on each lip, and each eye brightened by the smile.

Kenneth Darrow and Judge de Russey had been invited to seats on the rostrum with the Faculty and Trustees of the institution ; Mrs. Darrow and Mrs. de Russey had been appropriated by a party of friends from the President's house ; Charlotte had already become the centre of attraction to an admiring throng of gay and gifted young men and women ; while Louis, having appointed himself my special *preux chevalier*, was entertaining me with a continual gem-like shower of sparkling small talk—brilliant satire, witty *bon-mot*, pointed epigram, good-humored criticism, with an occasional emotional utterance of such deep pathos as to indicate that under a glittering exterior of sun-crested bubbles, there welled up within his soul fountains of thought and feeling, that had been, but indifferently sounded.

At length there was a momentary hush in the audience ; a triumphant swell of music ; a more expressive movement on the part of the white ribbon-decked marshals ; a more demonstrative flourish of their batons, and in the midst of gushing applause, the youthful orator was escorted up the long middle aisle to the rostrum.

I have always thought, aside from moral worth and sound judgment, which form the true substratum of all real greatness, that eloquence was the most splendid gift ever bestowed by the Deity upon man. And as I looked forward to the painted group of Athenians behind the tribune, the eyes of silvery-voiced Demosthenes seemed to twinkle, and every figure around him

to pulsate with sympathy for the pale, bashful young speaker, who trembled before the ordeal through which he was about to pass.

"I'd bet my bottom dollar that Ernest doesn't fail," whispered Louis to me, in proud consciousness of his gifted brother's ability to pass that ordeal. "But dear'me, he is awfully frightened, poor fellow. I believe I would rather not possess such tryingly won honors."

The strains of music ceased. The President of the Society arose and introduced a reader of the Declaration of Independence—after which, the representative for the occasion. With quiet grace Ernest responded to the applause which was called forth by his presentation. Kenneth Darrow's brow flushed; Judge d Russey looked up timidly; just in front of where sat, was Mrs. de Russey, silently shedding a few tears; and Charlotte's eyes glistened brightly.

Ernest, after a brief exordium, in which he brought thought him to express his gratitude to his honored Alma Mater for all that she had done for him, announced his subject. It was characteristic of the bent of his mind—"The Past as compared with the Present, and the responsibilities which rest upon the Future."

By a few well-turned remarks, in which thought was condensed into its nicest significance, and clad in the most delicate robe of fancy's weaving, Ernest reviewed the civilizations of Egypt, Assyria, Persia, Greece, and Rome; ran through the darkness of the Middle Ages; over the history of England; adverted to the effect of the discovery of America, the impuls

to a broader political platform than the old monarchical systems of Europe, which plunged France in revolution, and developed the dynasty of Napoleon ; and the obligations which hang over the present, in our own and other countries, to apply the lessons gained by experience, in woe and weal. He drew a forcible contrasting picture of the good or evil which would accrue by an improper use of these lessons ; and amid a hushed murmur of approval, delivered a peroration so eloquent of feeling as to call up tears to the eyes of strong men ; concluding with a prophecy of subsequent greatness to the Western continent, beside which the greatness of all the old empires, in all their magnificence, should pale as the moonlight beside the full splendor of the noonday sun.

The hall rang with applause that rose like the swell of the spring-tide, as with flushed cheeks and dilated eyes, and wildly throbbing pulses, Ernest took his seat.

The notes of a grand march sounded from the orchestra. Professors, trustees, and fellow-students crowded around, and wrung his hand and the hand of his father. Behind a thick veil, Mrs. de Russey was weeping ; Charlotte sat silent, and seemingly passive, while a number of Ernest's friends gathered round her to express their congratulations ; and Louis' garrulous nonsense for the nonce was hushed in generous pride for his more fortunate brother, as one and another whispered a compliment in his greedy ear.

At length he burst forth—

“ Ernest is a glorious boy ! Don't you think he is ? ”

“ I do ! ” I said, from my heart.

"Well," said he, then, turning half lazily on his seat, "it is well for the credit of the family that he is what he is: it has a sorry member in me."

"Not altogether," I could but say.

"That remains for the future to tell, Miss Royal," he said, more seriously.

The crowd was dispersing. Borne along by a dozen or more congratulating friends, Mrs. Darrow, Mrs. de Russey, and Charlotte were proceeding down the aisle. I made a movement to follow.

"Let us wait for Ernest," said Louis. "I promised to resign you to him for this evening."

I had not been made aware of the arrangement, but consented at once.

With Kenneth Darrow hanging on his arm, Ernest descended the steps of the tribune and approached me.

I extended my hand: he pressed it warmly.

"Thanks! Miss Royal," he whispered. "I appreciate your sympathy."

Kenneth Darrow stood by my side.

"What do you think of Ernest's address," he murmured.

"It was very fine, in all points," I answered.

"Worthy of Patrick Henry," he continued in an undertone; and joining Judge de Russey, he left me.

Ernest offered me his arm, and with a somewhat prouder feeling, I am ashamed to confess, than that with which I had accepted the *dévoirs* of Louis, I was led out by him, amid the glances and questions of the curious, to the lawn.

Ernest was physically, well-nigh exhausted. His

mind, relaxed from the long and severe tension to which it had been subjected, needed quiet and rest; and though he made an effort to be gay, the promenade under the arcade was performed almost in silence.

"I fear you find me excessively dull," he at last said: "I hope you will excuse me. I am a poor substitute for Louis, at my best estate, and should not have inflicted myself on you this evening. I thought I should be stronger and fresher."

"I regret that you are not feeling well," was the only reply I could make. Anything more or less would have been a reflection either upon himself or his brother; so I affected no further notice of his remark.

"I can't say that I am not well; but I feel like a watch that had been wound up too tightly, and the mainspring had broken—perfectly good-for-nothing."

A convenient settee, and entirely unoccupied, presenting itself underneath a linden which threw over it a dense shadow, "Let us sit down here for awhile," I said, "and listen to the music;" and suiting my action to the suggestion, I dropped down on the seat. There was no moon, and the stars were shining brightly, mimicked by the gas-lights which studded the plateau.

Several students gathered near, but evidently did not see us.

"Campbell," said one, "De Russey is a splendid fellow!"

"Which De Russey?" said the young man addressed. "There are two of them, you know."

"Ernest, of course. His is the best address of the session."

"Yes; but I think Louis is also a splendid fellow."

"But you do not think he compares with his brother?"

"More than well, except in application," said Campbell.

"Pooh!" exclaimed a third speaker. "A contemptible rowdy! But to save his brother mortification, and for the influence of his family, he would have been sent 'kiting' long ago."

"Ah! Do you think such hindrances would prevent the Faculty here, from doing their duty?"

"Well, they simply chose to be a little more tolerant toward De Russey, than in most cases."

"He is, I grant, a wild frolicsome fellow, but every inch a gentleman," said Campbell pointedly. "I know him well. He is not a student, and ready at any time for *fun*—if you will allow me to use a vulgar word—but further than that, I do not know any charge which can be brought against him."

"I don't know him, and have never cared to know him," said Thornton.

"Perhaps he could return the compliment, Thornton," said a fourth young man, who felt disposed to enter a word in Louis' defence. "I will venture to say he doesn't owe one cent in the shape of 'a debt of honor,' *restaurant*, or tailor's bill, in all this vicinity."

Thornton winced. "You make paying his debts, then, the test of a *gentleman*?"

"All things else agreeing, I do," said Randolph.

"I suppose you know it is said he has half a dozen or more heavy flirtations on hand?" said Thornton, in self-vindication.

"How many marriage engagements?" said Randolph, significantly.

Thornton again winced, and shrugged his shoulders with a laugh.

"We cannot always give credence to rumor; but where there is smoke, there must, somewhere, be fire," said Thornton.

A fifth young man joined the group, and catching the significance of the last remark, slapped the speaker on the shoulder.

"That is conclusive, Thornton," said he, "and I therefore infer you intend doing the honorable towards Clara Fisher."

Thornton feigned deafness, or suddenly found something to attract him on the other side of the lawn, and left his companions.

"You are cruel, Randolph," said Campbell, quickly.

"I should shoot him if I were a brother of Miss Fisher. They tell me he has shamelessly jilted her, and the poor girl is in declining health. She is a charming girl. Not one of the brainless coquettes you sometimes see, and by no means equal to the cunning of such a fellow as Thornton. He has jilted her because he understands the report of the wealth of her family is all false, and now he is manœuvring for an introduction to Miss De Russey."

"I would warn him against trifling with her," said Campbell, "else Louis de Russey would pretty soon prove to him of what sort of metal he is made, notwithstanding he is ready to denounce him as a rowdy."

"By George!" cried Miller, "Miss De Russey is magnificent. By a great deal the most splendid looking, among the galaxy of belles which has appeared at this Commencement! What a sensation she would have created had she been here last winter! Would have turned the heads of half the students in college! And even now—see, there she is on the other side, with our bachelor Professors Beverly, and Marshall. She is dressed in India muslin. Has splendid taste in dress. Altogether a *distingué* party—the Darrows and De Russeys."

"By the bye, Randolph," said Campbell, "do you know the little girl that is with them? I mean the one with brown hair, with whom Louis has been promenading for several evenings?"

"I do not," said Randolph; "but to me she has a deeply interesting face. There is something in her countenance indicative of peculiar sensitiveness and refinement of spirit. Reminds me of pictures I have seen of Beatrice Cenci."

"I am of the opinion," said Thornton, who had returned unobserved, "that she is a sort of *protégé*—a dependant in some shape—of the Darrows. I notice the little Darrow-girl with her on the street. Perhaps, a governess. Louis de Russey is no fool. He never means to propose. Is flirting with her to save him from certain complications down town."

"*Bétise!*" was whispered hissing in my ear.

I looked over my shoulder. Louis de Russey was rapidly walking away in the shadows, down the lawn.

"Let us go!" said Ernest sternly, taking my hand and placing it on his arm. His hand was cold, and,

heedless of the eyes that might be fixed upon him, he retained mine closely clasped in his, until he reached the arcade, and joined our party at the steps of the President's house.

"Come in with me," he said. "Let us have a glass of ice-water."

My hand shook, and my teeth chattered against the glass as I placed it to my lips.

When he parted from me at the hotel that night, "You will go up to-morrow," he said, kindly.

"I do not know that I shall."

I was indignant rather than wounded, and did not wish to appear again.

"You must."

"Then I will."

A rare brightness irradiated his calm countenance, and his voice was soft and tender.

"How strange for Ernest!" cried Charlotte, following him with her eyes as he retreated through the hall. "Where is Louis, Harrie?"

"Your humble servant, *mademoiselle*," said Louis at her side.

He was more grave than wont that night, and his eyes were sad as he kissed his sister.

Charlotte was restless, and I wept myself to sleep. My dreams were confused. Kenneth Darrow, Ernest, and Louis mingled incongruously in them, and dark, angry waters surged up around and threatened to engulf me.

Commencement passed off listlessly to me; yet I heartily congratulated Ernest, as the blue ribbon of his A.M. diploma fluttered in my fingers.



CHAPTER XXI.

A MIDSUMMER FÊTE.

AN interesting event was expected at Glen Darrow. Upon our return from the University, fleshy excrescences, slightly scaled, had made their appearance on the tall scape which had shot up from the heart of the century-plant. This appearance was unusual; the plant was in perfect health; these tender green tumors were not leaf-buds; and after a day or two, during which the most careful observations had been made, it was decided that the warty protuberances could be nothing else than flower-buds!

“At last!” cried Kenneth, exultingly. “Eureka! How many years has it been in our family, father?”

Mr. Darrow thought, and then examined a record which bore upon the ownership of this singular old heirloom. This proved that it had belonged to the Darrows eighty years, and more. Its age, previous to coming into their possession, could only be guessed at, though there was incidental testimony which made it inferable, that the mystic old aloe was just now about to fulfil its destiny of bringing forth its single crop of blossoms in a hundred years.

As soon as the fact became manifest, it was determined to make the event the occasion for a grand *fête* at “The Glen.” Invitations were at once issued,

which extended to all the country round about; friends in cities, who might conveniently take that in their route to the Fountains of Healing in the western section of the State; and devotees of Science and lovers of the Beautiful were bidden; while from day to day the unborn flowers—closely guarded and tended—were watched with almost equal interest to an event which should give an heir to a throne. About the same time it was expected that an old *cactus grandiflora* would blossom, and in this was an additional source of pleasure.

Preparations for the *fête* were entered into, with the extraordinary zest that the occasion demanded. From the lady of the manor in her drawing-room, to Aunties Hagar and Venus in the kitchen; from Mr. Darrow as host, to Uncle Jupiter as chief shepherd of the South-downs; from Uncle Moses as *coachée* to James as footman, all in the establishment felt the responsibility, and exerted themselves to meet it with becoming grace.

The day for the reunion arrived. A long, pale-green, tender scape covered with sheathed buds, lifted its head to the warm summer sunlight, and already through the bursting calyx of the night-blooming *cereus*, a subtle and powerful perfume exhaled to the morning breeze.

“Suppose these flowers should not fully open to-night?” said I, to Kenneth, as we stood over the aloe, after breakfast.

“Suppose you cast your doubts to the winds, as generously as the *cereus* gives away its delicious odor,” said he in reply.

"But if they should not burst?" I persisted.

"The disappointment would be great, indeed," he answered thoughtfully; "and I should regret it more than you can imagine."

"You are acquainted with the habits of the cacti?"

"Yes; from close observation, and from that have reckoned, as I think, the exact time for this blossom to unfold."

"I hope you have not miscalculated," I said with dogged perverseness.

"I hope not," he answered slowly; "but if I have, I can only say more weighty disappointments have reached me in life, and still more weighty may be in reserve for me. So I may as well prepare to bear it with fortitude, if it should turn out that I have miscalculated the birth of the expectant blossoms."

I was sadly reproved by his calm manner. He rarely referred to his past history, or in any wise to himself; and relapsing into a silence, in which I imagined that he, as well as I, was speculating upon the story the aloe might tell, if a tongue had been given it, I did not attempt to disturb his reverie.

This was broken, however, by the appearance of Charlotte de Russey and Louis, who, on horseback, swept round a curve in the distant highway, and turned away from the route to the house, into the shadowed road which wound along the banks of the river.

He looked after them.

"They are out early," he said.

"Charlotte generally rides before breakfast, every morning," I answered.

"She manages her horse like an Amazon," said he.

"She does everything she attempts, well," I replied, with fervor.

"Truly!" he exclaimed, following earnestly with his eyes the white feather of her riding-hat, and catching the ring of Louis' jocund laughter, as their horses plunged into the ford.

"You like Louis," he said, turning to me with a searching glance, which was very annoying.

"Very much?" I returned.

"Better than Earnest?"

"For some things."

He laughed significantly. "Non-committal! You are somewhat cowardly."

"I have answered you truthfully, sir," I said with emphasis; for I was more than half angry.

With another laugh, in which I thought I detected all the cynicism which is generally supposed to attach to a masked character, he peered inquisitively down upon the flower-bud of the cactus; and I left him, to go into the house.

He called after me quickly: "Miss Royal."

I awaited him on the piazza.

"I suppose, of course, you will come down this evening in the 'bread-and-butter dress.'"

"I don't know what you mean, sir," said I petulantly, and not caring to conceal my vexation.

"*White muslin with blue ribbons,*" he said, with a *cruel* smile, I fancied, distorting his lips.

"I have nothing else to wear, sir," I said frankly; "and if that does not suit your taste, I prefer never to be offensive, and shall be only too happy to be excused making my appearance at all."

It was exceedingly difficult for me to restrain the indignant tears which started up to my eyes, but were forced back to their fountain by a giant effort of the will.

"I cannot excuse you," said he. "You will be invaluable to the success of our entertainment. Come into the library with me."

I followed him pretty much as an unwilling slave would have done, a selfish and exacting master.

He handed me a neatly sealed package.

"Here is something for you. Do not open it now. Good-morning. I wish to be alone."

My warrant given, I rushed up to my room and opened the box. It contained a full supply of sash and hair ribbons, of various colors and shades, and among them, several of the elegant scarfs and sashes of Roman manufacture.

I burst into angry tears, and tossed the beautiful heap from my lap to the floor.

"Then he is not willing I should be seen in the simple dress my means will afford. I shall not wear his contemptible gifts!" I cried.

Then my poor heart wailed out its agony: "O, mother! home!" and bowing my head, a full sense of my friendlessness and poverty came over me.

There was a tap on my door, and Mrs. Darrow came in.

"What is the matter, my dear?" she asked earnestly.

I turned from her to hide the bitterness of my emotion.

She gathered up the ribbons, carefully folded them, and returned them to the box.

"This must not be," she said. "We wish you to be bright and happy to-night. Kenneth ordered these ribbons for you, some weeks ago, from New York. Are they not beautiful? I have also a lot for Eva. We regretted they did not come in time for you to have them at the University. Now, permit *me* to select what you shall wear this evening. This delicate green is a fresh, exquisite color, and will be peculiarly becoming to your age and complexion; and a few natural flowers in your hair, with your muslin dress, will complete a most charming costume. Dry up those naughty tears. We can't have any swollen eyelids or cheeks to-night."

Her arm was about my waist, and her soft cheek against my own.

"Say, can you not assist me in putting a final coat of frosting on some cakes? Venus has more to do than she can properly attend to."

She opened a drawer and laid the box of despised ribbons away. I accompanied her down stairs, and between frosting cakes, moulding ices and jellies, arranging flowers, and this, that, and the other of housewifery duties antecedent to a large entertainment, I forgot my personal troubles. The day passed away, and half after eight o'clock, evening, found me arrayed in the white muslin—my graduating dress—with the green ribbon around my waist, and a cluster of moss rosebuds with a half-blown rose, and a few leaves, amid the brown braids on the left side of my head. I knew that I was looking well, and the satisfaction which had settled on my face, was an indifferent reflex of the clouds and tears that had disfigured it in the morning.

By that time the guests had begun to arrive. Like an auroral cloud, in white gauze over rose color, pink ribbons about her waist, and pink *crêpe* myrtle in her dark lustrous hair, Charlotte de Russey, unannounced, glided into my room.

"O Lottie, how lovely you are!" I exclaimed, with not a single throb of envy or jealousy disturbing my heart.

And you are quite *point dévise!*" said she, with a gratified smile, holding me off at arm's-length, and running her eyes from my head to my feet. "You care so little for dress, I came up before you could possibly make your appearance, to see if you were *au fait*. Yes; you will do very well for an unsophisticated little country-girl." She kissed me. "I am glad to see, dear Harrie, that you have none of that vile powder so much in use, on your skin. Louis says you are provokingly natural."

"Does he?" I answered, rather than asked.

"He does. I don't know what Ernest, dear fellow, thinks of you. He is provokingly reticent on subjects of extraordinary interest."

She adjusted the folds of her skirt, drew on a pair of white kid gloves, and slipped a lace handkerchief through a jewelled handkerchief ring.

"But what of the century-plant, Harrie? Wouldn't it be a terrific disappointment if the stubborn old aloe were to take it into her queenly head to keep her blowing beauties concealed twenty-four hours longer?"

"She will not," I replied. "Whenever I could, I have watched her closely all through the day. The

calices have already burst, and the edges of the petals are breaking through like sheets of wax."

"Ha! I am delighted!" said Charlotte.

In the hall below were the sound of footsteps; the rustle and sweep of dresses; the murmur of voices; the gush and ripple of laughter—on the stairs, the same were repeated, while from Bertha's apartments, in mournful contrast, came the notes of a wailing song, unaccompanied either by the harp or piano.

Charlotte listened—her pearly teeth set firmly against her under lip, and a shadow mantling her brow.

"Will she be allowed to see the flowers?"

"Bertha?"

"Yes, Bertha."

"I think she will."

"Did you know that Mrs. Johnson was coming over to-night?" said Charlotte, the shadow disappearing, and a quizzical light flashing over her face.

Said I pointedly, "Rest assured the sight would not be denied Barbara."

"Nor a share in the feast," said she.

"Nor a share in the feast."

A few more touches on our *toilettes*, and we descended to the drawing-room.

In the course of an hour, the rooms were filled, a band from Richmond, hired for the occasion, were discoursing the music of a quadrille in the wide hall, and Charlotte, with a heightened color, and more splendidly beautiful than I had ever seen, was floating in the mazes of the dance. Between music, song, and dance—"The feast of reason and the flow of soul"—

grave disquisitions among men of science, who here and there clustered together, discussing the physiology of the vegetable kingdom, and the habits of the aloe particularly; the hobnobbing and gossip of stately duennas; whispered compliments and *passages d'amour* between the younger portion of the guests—and a few flirtations; the evening flew by as on wings of gossamer, until the noon of night drew nigh, and the great stars had opened their glittering eyes. There was then a significant movement made. Mr. Darrow gave his arm to Mrs. de Russey, Judge de Russey had taken Mrs. Darrow in charge, Kenneth following with the next most notable lady; and by twos, the whole company—Ernest and myself bringing up the rear—proceeded to a spot on the lawn, unsheltered by trees, in the middle of which, upon a platform slightly elevated, were placed the pots containing the century-plant, and night-blooming cereus.

Around them had been drawn a wire *cordon*, so that all might see, but none might touch the rarely precious blossoms.

Directly overhead hung Luna, her disc, full-orbed, and her cloudless face emitting its brightest, softest, most silvery rays, and wakening to its liveliest tint the golden heart of the fully expanded cactus, whose pearly petals from tip to tip measured more than twelve inches.

A feeling of mysterious sanctity brooded over the spirits of all who gazed, and not an audible sentence broke the solemn stillness of the midsummer midnight. Comments were in subdued whispers. One and another passed around, for some minutes looked into the many-stamened heart of the flower, drank

in its rich perfume, and turned away, all to sigh and many to weep.

At a signal lights flashed up all around, and like the gleam of a monster snow-flake, its creamy whiteness shone out more brightly, and its dark fleshy leaves, armed with natural spikes, seemed more stiff and threatening. After awhile, curiosity satiated, one by one the gazers dropped off, and betook themselves to seats on the lawn, or sought the shelter of the piazza ; and the lights were extinguished.

As I stood, the last, and gazed on the white blossom, as on the face of a friend that I should soon lose forever, Kenneth Darrow touched me on the arm.

“ Will you go around to the rear portico,” said he, “ and pilot Bertha ? I have told Content to bring her down that she may see the flowers.”

When I reached the portico, I found her awaiting me, dressed in her scorched satin robe, with sprays of hawthorn in her hair.

“ This is the anniversary of my wedding,” she said, as I gave her my hand and led her on, followed by the nurse. “ This is the anniversary of my wedding. Content could not find my veil and orange-blossoms, so she dressed my hair with these,” touching the hawthorn sprays.

When we arrived at the *cordon* Barbara was already there.

“ La, sakes ! ” she exclaimed, referring to the cactus-blossom, “ it’s bigger than the maganoly that Kenneth brought up from Richmond to my little Emmie.”

“ Kenneth ? ” cried Bertha, turning away from the cactus, and her gaze wandering over the figures that

moved about on the lawn. "Kenneth? Where is he?"

"She's no better nor ever!" whispered Barbara, mysteriously, to me, quietly slipping to the other side, as if she feared Bertha. "She's worse, I reckon, in the full o' the moon. Crazy folks allus is."

"Kenneth! Kenneth! my Kenneth! dear, dear Kenneth!" sighed Bertha. "The dark waters may be rushing over his bones, and tangling his hair, but his spirit is here beside me. It lives in this snowy, golden-hearted flower. I know it is as old as time, and as imperishable as eternity."

"Didn't I tell you so!" murmured Barbara. "Did you ever, in all your born days, hear sich talk?"

I heard a step on the grass beside us, and looked over my shoulder. Kenneth Darrow was near, moving restlessly about on the edge of the lawn.

"Let us go, Bertha!" I pleaded after she had gazed upon the flower fifteen minutes, with scarce a glance at the century-plant.

"Go! No, no!" she cried; "let me die here, with my eyes on his white spirit-face."

For some time longer she remained, her lamentations or rhapsodies broken by the unsympathetic murmurs of Barbara.

There was again a footstep beside us, and Kenneth Darrow stood in our midst.

"Bertha!" he said in a suppressed voice.

She turned to him, and waved him off. "Oh, Richard! cruel Richard, you can never harm me more, for I have seen him as he is in heaven. He tells me through this flower, that he is watching me,

and shall guard me from all evil. I fear your threats no longer."

"Then you will go with me?"

"I will go with you," she said meekly.

He went with us until we reached the shadow of the southern angle of the house, and left me to take her back to the rear portico.

Supper had been announced, and full soon the good cheer of Glen Darrow, divided the exclusive interest that, for the hour, had hung over the mystic old aloe and the splendid night-blossoming cactus.

"May you live as long as the century-plant!" said Louis de Russey, holding up before me a glass of sparkling champagne, while Ernest stood with a brimming bumper, in readiness to pledge me in something more probable. Just then a brilliant sweep of the fingers in a few perfect chords sounded from the piano in the drawing-room, preluding a rich symphony, and then in her fullest, clearest notes, Bertha sang from "Lucretia Borgia"—

"It is better to laugh than be sighing."

From across the table, Kenneth glanced at me with a startled expression.

"Will you go to her, if you please," he whispered.

I touched the wine to my lips, and resigning the glass to Louis—"Excuse me!" I cried; and flew across the hall to the drawing-room.

Bertha had by that time finished the first stanza of Donizetti's spirited drinking-song, and her fingers were running over a rich impromptu interlude.

I laid my hand on her shoulder.

She turned to me with an almost unearthly smile, and a strange fire in her eyes.

"I am so happy! so happy, my friend!" she exclaimed, clasping my hand in hers, and lifting it to her lips.

"I am very glad," I replied, "but are you not weary?"

"No; I shall never be weary again. I have seen the dear face of Kenneth, and he was an angel of light."

"It is very late, and you must need rest."

"Indeed I do not. Listen to me!"

She commenced the second stanza of the song.

I took her fingers from the keys, and imprisoned them within my own.

"Ah, you like the harp better. Then I shall send for my harp."

"Not to-night," said I. "At some other time I shall be delighted to hear you sing."

"My voice was never in better order. Remember, I have seen an angel."

Content, whose curiosity to see something of the company assembled in the supper-room, had encouraged her to abate her watchfulness over her charge, had caught the sound of Bertha's voice from the front portico, and came rushing in, in affright.

"We must go home, Miss Bertha!" she exclaimed, taking her by the hand and pointing in the direction of the corridor.

"Home?" echoed the poor unfortunate.

"Yes; and this very minute."

Her tone of authority was somewhat potent with

the insane woman. She arose to go ; but as she did so, Content turned her head, and her eyes rested fully on the portrait of Richard.

“ Lord ha’ mercy ! ” she cried ; “ so much like Mas’ Richard ! ”

Bertha’s glance followed that of the negress. With a wild scream she flung up both arms, and sank back upon the piano-stool.

Kenneth heard the scream, and running in, gathered her up in his arms as if she had been an infant, and rushing through the hall, fled through the corridor and up the private stairway, resigning her to Content only at the door of her chamber.

The scream was heard by many in the supper-room and the flight through the hall witnessed, yet but few knew that it was not one of the guests who had been suddenly attacked by a fainting-fit.

The night wore on. After supper, pilgrimages to and from the century-plant were of constant recurrence, until the last carriage had rolled away with its freight, and the silence of the small hours brooded over Glen Darrow.

Towards the dawn the glistening white petals of the cactus-blossom grew limp and yellow ; and when morning came, and the sun’s red rays shot athwart the mountain-tops, the blossom had rolled itself together as a sealed scroll, and my heart was saddened at the sight.



CHAPTER XXII.

AN UNEXPECTED PLUNGE.

WITH her usual tact and cleverness, and without my knowledge, on the night of the *fête*, Charlotte de Russey had arranged that Glen Darrow should be the radius for a fishing excursion, to be carried into effect during the next week: "because fish are said to be most attracted to the bait on the decrease of the moon," said she.

I am not sure that Charlotte was any better acquainted with the moon's influence on the appetite of fish, than on the tidal waves of the sea and atmosphere; or on the fluctuations of the human intellect; or on the planting of potatoes; or the laying of a Virginia worm-fence; but she was a true woman, and when determined on a project, was most prolific in reasons, why agreeable or feasible. And so, in this instance, in the presence of a slight demurrer, she threw the responsibility on poor poetized, apostrophized, derided Luna.

When the plan was mentioned to me a day or two afterwards, in consideration of certain unfinished MS. over which my thoughts hovered, I felt very much inclined to ask to be excused from joining the party; but before I could enter an individual objection, Louis cried out, noticing my indecision:—

“‘Do with me what you will!’ as the sheep said to the shearer.”

“My presence, Miss Royal, will depend upon yours,” said Ernest, a slight color mounting to his cheeks.

“There!” exclaimed Charlotte, “there is no appeal from that. We cannot do without Ernest, though he is not the most boisterous or successful of fishermen. And then, you know, dear Harrie, you will not have us to disturb your serenity much longer, as the next week we leave for the Lakes and Niagara.”

“You will go,” said Kenneth Darrow quietly. “All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy. You are young enough to wait for fame.”

He turned away. Had he penetrated my secret? and did he despise my ambitious efforts? The covert allusion in his remark stung me much more severely than his assumption of authority. The blood mounted to my temples, and I felt the flash that leaped from my eyes, like the electric spark from the knob of the Leyden jar.

He returned and placed himself by my side.

“I shall not reveal your secret,” he said, smiling. “Trust me.”

I was vexed, and made no attempt at reply.

“Then it is settled that you will go with us?”

“Yes,” I answered with bad grace; not relishing the idea of enacting the illustration of the sheep before the shearer, or the helpless clay in the hands of the potter.

On the morning in question, ‘The Shades’ family breakfasted at ‘The Glen,’ and by ten o’clock, a com-

pany of a dozen or more were wending their way on foot, down the poplar-bordered avenue, towards a point on the grassy bank of the river, studded by sunny alders and overhung by giant sycamores, willows, and birch-trees.

The morning's operations were but indifferently successful. The coquettish trout, which displayed their begemmed garniture in the bright summer sunshine, seemed wary beyond their kind; and not less so the silvery perch that flashed here and there under the limpid waters, and contemplated the bait with amazing incredulity. In vain we hushed prattle and laughter; in vain impaled fresh worms; in vain moored our rustic canoes from point to point: Luna was not propitious, or the fish had little inclination towards the gridiron, and we were compelled at the noontide luncheon to satisfy ourselves with a very contemptible piscatorial feast, while we did ample justice to ham, tongue, broiled chicken, pickles, buttermilk cakes, wines, and other dainties from the generous larder of "The Glen."

After luncheon, for better luck, our party separated. Selecting the trimmest, tiniest, and fleetest canoe Louis invited me to join him, and in a trice, gathering up the oars, dashed out to the middle of the stream, and soon almost as swiftly as the flight of an Indian arrow, we shot down, quite out of sight of the rest of the party, and threw out our lines.

"Fishing is tame sport, unless the fish bite," said Louis thoughtfully, as he watched the chariness with which the finny tribe glided about the concealed hook.

"Yet you deprecate their resentment, for the artifice you practise to entice them, do you not?"

"I am hardly a philosopher," said he, "as the spider said to the fly," hauling in his line, and releasing a sun-perch that glistened like a steel mirror.

I glanced at its gaspings and flounderings.

"Poor fish!"

"Can you not reserve some of your surplus sentiment for a nobler object? Mrs. Darrow shall have that fish for her breakfast."

"When a worthier object needs it," I answered.

"I shall remember your promise."

"Very well," I answered, laughing.

His line was again in the water, and becoming interested in the motions of a trout, he relapsed into silence.

We were much more successful than we had been in the morning, and in an hour, a very respectable number of perch, cat-fish, and trout lay gasping for breath in the bottom of the boat.

"Do you like to fish?" said Louis, releasing his last stout trout from the hook, and quietly watching the dolphin-like hues that played over its dying body.

"I cannot say that I do. The distresses of the poor creatures rob me of all the pleasure derived from catching them."

"But you like them for breakfast, when Aunt Venus sends them in as brown as a nut?"

"I believe I do."

"Don't you think we have enough for a breakfast for twelve hearty mountaineers?"

"Hardly, I should suppose."

"Well, at any rate, we will let the rest alone; he threw his pan of worms out to the greedy devils in the stream.

He took the rod from my hand, drew in our line, and, winding up the tackle, deposited it in the bottom of the boat. He then gathered up the oars and rowed down to a portion of the stream much deeper and wider, near a rocky islet, against which white, frothing waves impinged in frolicsome violence, and then ran gurgling off, a well-satisfied sort of smile on their wrinkled lips.

"How do you think you would like the sensation of drowning?" he said, rocking the boat in a threatening manner, with volumes of mischief in his eyes.

"I think I should prefer a natural death," I replied, reaching out for the oars, with a vengeful frown wrinkling my brows.

But before I could catch them from him, he flung them up in the air, and by a vigorous and well-timed effort, so far careened the little barque that in an instant it capsized, and we were both submerged underneath, the half-dead fish sliding down uncomfortably around our necks and faces, and joining their living companions below.

Fortunately the boat became disengaged, and floated down on the rapid current. Catching my dress, and being an expert swimmer, Louis brought me up, and struck out for the islet, about one hundred paces distant.

A more forlorn-looking pair could scarcely be imagined than we, as we perched upon a rock

offered a seat, the water dripping from our hair and garments, and the waves laughing around us in cruel mockery.

“What shall we do?” I cried.

Louis laughed. “Do you hate me?”

“Yes—no—I believe I do.”

“Tell me the truth—the whole truth. I can stand neither negative love nor hatred.”

“Well, yes; I do hate you just now.”

“That will do. Now, what do you think of the situation?”

“It is not promising, surely.”

“But might be much worse. Imagine you were in mid-ocean. He pointed to our islet.

“‘Oft, in my fancy’s wanderings,
I’ve wished that little isle had wings,
And we within its fairy bowers
Were wafted off to seas unknown,
Where not a pulse should beat but ours,
And we might live, love, and die—alone.’”

“Pray do not mock me,” I pleaded, too sincerely miserable to take any pleasure in his merriment.

“I regret it much, believe me,” he said gravely; “but a much worse misfortune might befall one.”

“You have suddenly turned philosopher,” I returned pettishly.

His laugh became immoderate.

“What shall we do?” I repeated again and again.

“Swim to the shore,” he replied, with the most provoking coolness.

“What?”

"Swim to the shore."

"I cannot swim."

"But I can."

"I know that; but—"

"I know what you would say. I am a slender fellow, but have remarkably tough muscle. Do not scream; it is useless. They would never hear you. And then—let us keep this *contretemps* to ourselves: you will do to laugh over for the rest of our mortal lives. Trust yourself to me; I can get you across to the bank safely."

I surveyed his slight, boyish figure, and could not forbear an incredulous smile.

"Will you trust yourself to me?"

His question was now an earnest, serious one.

"I suppose I must."

He took off his coat, boots, and hat, and threw them back on the rocks. Then gathering me to himself as if I had been a little child, he plunged into the water, and in a few rapid, bold strokes bore me over the rippling, gurgling wave to where it was stiller and slower, pulling up to the shore by some hanging branches of a birch that laved its leaves in the stream.

"And now you are safe," he cried, seating me on the grassy bank, and throwing himself down beside me. "Can't you smile your thanks?"

My smile deepened into a semi-hysterical laugh. I buried my face in my hands, and wept at the same time.

My hair had fallen down, and lay in a dripping mass around my shoulders. He lifted it, and wrung a

shook the water from it. I glanced up at him through my tears and smiles, and tried to look grateful.

"Oh, if you could only see what a charming little naiad you make, you would thank me for making one of you," he said by way of comfort, while his laugh joined mine, and went rippling down the river.

"Let us be still, for mercy's sake!" I cried.

"Assuredly, if it will please you," he said, moderating his laughter, which suppressed, flashed out over his face in comical twitches that were tormenting to me.

At length I drew a long breath. "And what shall we do now?"

"If you have recovered sufficiently from the fatigue incidental to your first lesson in swimming, we shall go to your home," he answered, tauntingly.

I looked out to the long stretch of sandy highway that bordered the stream. "How?" I queried.

"We shall find out when we are ready to start."

Taking the dilemma as calmly as possible, we remained until he pronounced me in condition to move, and, parting the drooping branches of the trees, emerged into the highway. On the opposite side, ran a tall rail-fence, that enclosed a wide stretch of "The Glen" bottom-land, then covered over by a luxuriant crop of corn.

"Do you know where we are?" I asked.

"Yes," said he; "I am never very wide of the mark in the points of the compass. If we level a panel of this fence and cross, we shall, by a pretty direct line through the cornfield, reach 'The Glen' within a mile and a half. Do you like the prospect?"

"How far do you suppose it is by the highway

"Would you run the risk of meeting the other
The eyes of Mr. Kenneth, for instance?"

"I do not dread the eyes of Mr. Kenneth, particularly; but hardly care to meet any one in my present plight. I imagine I must look almost as hideous as the witch of Endor."

"Why do you think she was hideous?"

"Because she was a witch."

"The Bible does not say she was a witch."

"Well, that is her designation, through human interpretation. We will not discuss her character, at the present. Let us go through the field."

My decision satisfied him. Taking down rail from the fence, a corner of the fence was soon level with the ground, and we were on the inside, and replacing the rails as speedily as we could. The water still dripping from our garments, we wended our way between the rows of tall stalks—bending over us their tassel heads, beating back the long blades, their wavy sword-like edges striking harshly against our faces: we went to a hill that formed a portion of the rear of the lawn which surrounded the house. There we parted company.

"I must leave you here," he said, "and go to the stable, saddle and bridle my horse, ride to 'The Shades,' get another hat and suit of clothes, and return before the rest of our party. You can now help yourself; and, if we are a little careful and sagacious, we need learn of our misfortune. A man's dress is at best, very little noticed, and Charlotte will hardly remember whether I had a hat at all this morning.

I followed his instructions, making a surreptitious entrance through the back door of the house, and in a few minutes, from the windows of my room, saw him, hatless, at the full speed of his horse, Reindeer, flying around the hill that lay half a mile distant, in the direction of "The Shades."

By sundown all of our party had returned, but not in advance of Louis. We were severely chided for selfishness or exclusiveness, and at the tea-table most closely and mercilessly questioned, and more than one guess came very near the fact; but Louis' face was inscrutable; by dint of strategy I evaded all direct questions, and managed to keep our secret.

The evening was cool and delightful. A light breeze from the west had sprung up, and rustled the leaves on the trees, like soft whispers from the world of spirits.

After tea, Charlotte engaged Kenneth Darrow and several of his guests with some new music in the drawing-room. The moon, in her third quarter, was slow to lift her hornéd visage above the mountains, but the stars shone out as brightly as in mid-winter, while the shadows on the lawn were light, though dusky.

Stealing out of the drawing-room, I sought the front portico and took a seat near the library window. The room was lighted by the Germain lamp on the table, but not an audible sound came from within. In a few minutes Louis joined me. He was singularly taciturn: appeared to be listening to the strains of music that flowed out from Charlotte's well-trained touch. I was myself wholly absorbed, drinking in

the soft airs that seemed born for a summer night that.

Thus an hour passed—it might have been a longer time—I was roaming in a land of dreams; a land of beauty, in which I forgot my lonely, cheerless, loved life.

Finally, Louis aroused himself from his reverie.

“This has been a charming day to me,” he said.

“Throughout?” said I.

“Yes; throughout. Why not?”

He relapsed into thoughtfulness so deep, I did not dare to allude to our *contretemps*.

To break the silence: “Are you fatigued?” I asked.

“Not at all.”

“I thought you might be.”

“Ah! Are you?”

“Not in the least,” said I.

His mood was a strange one. He jumped up suddenly from his seat, walked out on the lawn, whistled an air altogether discordant to that which Charlotte was playing in the drawing-room. I was gallant and courteous: this was decidedly not courteous, not to say rudely impolite. He returned hastily, after awhile, and taking a seat again beside me—

“Harrie,” he whispered, and then aloud, “did you know what I thought to-day as I was bearing out of the river?”

“No; I do not,”

“I thought I would rather we should both die here than there, than that I should live without you.”

“O Louis!” I cried, with deep reproach.

“Yes, Harrie, and because I love you. I have loved you from the very first moment I saw you. I know that I am an ill-assorted, undigested mass of humanity, but I feel that I could be what the world terms: ‘*a gentleman*’—and more, a *useful man*; and for your sake, dear Harrie, that I could throw away the clown—all that is light and trivial in my nature—for you, for your love. Do not say you do not know why I love you. I know. It is because you are a true, deep-hearted woman, with none of the gloss and meretricious finish with which the world and fashion invest your sex. I am talking like a man of the world. Well, I have seen something of the world. My poor sister is destined to experience much more of it than would be healthy for any woman less incorruptible than she. Do you think you could ever love me, Harrie? could ever think of becoming my wife? I am not in jest. I am in earnest, terribly in earnest.”

I had opened my lips to answer him—to tell him how much he surprised me; to tell him I did not love him as I felt he loved me—when I heard a quick sharp breath close beside me, and looking up, saw the pale face of Ernest, writhing in suppressed agony. He was concealed from Louis by the curtain that swayed to and fro in the breeze, and this, doubtless, prevented Louis from hearing his gasping, smothered sigh; but he caught my glance and lifted his hand in mute deprecation.

A sad truth flashed upon me—a truth for which, at the moment, I know not why, I despised myself, and would gladly have vanished into nothingness.

"Tell me, Harrie!" urged Louis.

I arose from my seat and released the hand I imprisoned closely within both of his.

"Not to-night, Louis, not to-night," I gasped, fled for refuge to the drawing-room.

I saw neither of the brothers again that evening. A week later, they had all left for a Northern tour, and the summer passed with me quietly, but clouded with the incubus weight of a dreadful responsibility.

My heart assured me I loved neither Louis nor Ernest, yet the rejection of the one would excite false hopes in the other; while the rejection of the other might be deemed rather a matter of conscience than of feeling. Louis wrote me lengthy and frequent letters: Ernest never wrote, but his silence spoke more loudly than volumes of words.





CHAPTER XXIII.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE.

SEPTEMBER had come again—the matronly queen—with her sun-browned locks and her clear blue skies; with her stealthy stillness brooding over the atmosphere—the brilliant solidago bending its golden head over the fresh green grass that peeped up through the stubble, and the gay cicada chanting in the groves and fields, as the breezes dallied with the young autumn roses, and kissed into bursting, the early asters.

And with her coming, a dreaded, mysterious, unwelcome visitant had intruded into our neighborhood. There was fire in its touch, poison on its breath, and death in its heart. It was Typhoid Fever!

It seemed passing strange that it should gain a foothold among us, with our hardy, rugged hills, lifting their rocky swell, high to the smiling heavens, and drinking in the soft airs that wandered down from the mountains—oftenest for fun and frolic, over dale and upland—washed by the clear, healthful streams that made for us unceasing music. It was passing strange, I say, that such a scourge should reach us; and yet, scarcely a dwelling in all the country round escaped. Victim after victim fell beneath Az-

rael's fateful decree, until men held their in impotent feebleness, and asked, "Who is spared?"

"How are the sick at 'The Shades?'" said Darrow, as Kenneth, with his spurs clanking boot-heels, and his countenance inscrutably bowed, came into the breakfast-room.

"Louis is considered no better, mother: E at rest."

Mrs. Darrow unconsciously raised higher the cup in which she was about to draw his coffee. Her hand was shaken as if with palsy, and her eyes asked the sorrowful question her lips refused to ask.

"Yes, madam; Ernest de Russey is dead!"

The cup dropped from Mrs. Darrow's nerveless fingers, and with itself, crashed several of its members on the silver tray at the head of the table.

"He died about one o'clock this morning."

If a thousand demons had pointed their accusing fingers in my face, I could not have felt a sense of condemnation than at that moment upon my heart. Yet, why should I have felt that had meant my poor young friend no harm: I had done him no wrong. Kenneth's gaze fell morosely upon me, and like a guilty thing, sent to me several accusing darts. I was sensible that the pallor which had robbed my face of all color was supplanted by a vivid flush from the hot blood that surged through my temples like waves of molten lead.

The breakfast—further than a single cup of coffee—that Mr. Darrow and Kenneth forced themselves to swallow, and Eva's simple repast—was un-

A dead silence, broken only by the click of the tableware, reigned over the morning meal.

Kenneth, with a sigh, pushed his empty cup from him.

“I had a message from Mrs. de Russey and Charlotte, this morning, before I left ‘The Shades,’ though I did not see them after Ernest died. They wish you, mother, and also Miss Royal, to come to them as speedily as possible. Of course you will go. I shall order the carriage to be made ready at once. Eva will be safe with Charity; and Content can be otherwise trusted. I hope, Miss Royal, you will prepare to remain as long as you may think you are needed. They will wish you. You will be in no greater danger there than here. Young men seem to be more susceptible of the disease than young women, thus far. I fear, however, it will desolate the whole country. Several of our servants at the quarters must die. I called to look after them this morning, on my way from ‘The Shades.’ Strange that this fever should be so insidious and obstinate!”

In half an hour we were ready—a large satchel, bearing necessary changes of raiment, in the event of my remaining longer than a single day.

When we arrived, we found Mrs. de Russey and Charlotte in that state of stony, insensate grief which comes from an unexpected stroke, paralyzes thought, and burns out the spirit, like its unvented lava, the heart of the volcano. Judge de Russey bore his terrible affliction like the *strong man* should, not defiantly, but in humble submission to the Power higher

than man; though in the death of Ernest, many hope that clustered in his line had set, perhaps not to rise again. Upon Mrs. de Russey's face would occasionally play a smile like the winter sun upon Alpine snow, mocking in its brightness the dead cold underneath. And this smile she brought into the presence of Louis; he could not be permitted to hear of his brother's death, for fear the shock might precipitate his own.

Ernest's body had been buried two days, and one morning, an hour before the dawn, Charlotte still dressed, from her night's vigil by the bedside of her brother, awoke me from a little sleep that I had sought, almost for the first time since I had been in her.

"Harrie, dear, will you get up? Louis knows you are here: he has either dreamed it or some of the nurses has unwittingly told him of it. He insists upon seeing you. Do you feel that you can get up? I dislike very much to disturb you, but I think it better not to refuse him any reasonable request. I shall announce your coming; and pray be very careful when you do go in. But I am sure you will. Pardon me, dear."

She bent over, and kissing my forehead, let a cold tear upon my cheek—the first I had known her to shed in her great sorrow.

With Louis the crisis had passed; the poison wrought all the mischief it could; the fever had subsided its utmost force in the active young veins, through which it had so madly crept. As weak as an infant and as pale as the pillows over which his dark

swept, he looked less alive than dead. A feeble smile lit up his passive features, as he held out a feeble hand, in a touching attempt to press mine, gratefully. I could not forbear bending over and pressing my lips upon it.

"This is good of you, Miss Harrie," he whispered faintly. "You are a noble little woman."

"Thanks, Louis," I returned; "but do not exert yourself to talk now."

"Oh! I have had such wild and terrible dreams, Harrie. I have all the time been following you, over rocks, and precipices, and roaring rivers, and you have always been snatched from me, at the very moment I had my hand on you. And then your cries—!"

"Yet here I am, you see, and unharmed."

"And you will not leave me?"

"Not for awhile."

"That is right, Harrie."

"Then, be quiet."

"I shall, now that you are here. Sit down beside me. Don't let go my hand. Your touch is soothing. There, that is right. I shall go to sleep now. You will not go away?"

"No; I shall not go away."

"Well, place your other hand on my forehead."

His hand lay passively in mine, all muscular efforts relaxing as his lids closed over his eyes, and his breathing indicated that his slumber was light and healthful. Fearing to disturb him, I made no attempt to move except to lift my hand from his forehead, and laying my head on the back of the chair on which I sat, "tired nature" refused longer to withstand the

gentle influences, and sleep also sealed my senses from the things of the outside world.

Venturous sunbeams were struggling to penetrate through the thick curtains of the man's chamber, when we both awoke. There was a greater strength in his voice, and a stronger gleam in his eyes, as he turned his head toward me.

"Harrie, is that you?"

"It is, Louis. Will you have anything?"

"Do not leave me, darling."

"I shall not yet."

"I wish to keep you always."

"Do you. You must not talk about it now. You are not strong enough."

"Why? What is the matter with me? You tell me I cannot talk?"

"You have been sick, Louis."

"Have I?"

"Yes."

"Not much, I reckon."

"Yes, very sick."

"Very sick?"

"Indeed you have."

I thought it best to tell him the truth, as I might be safe.

"For a long time, Harrie?"

"No; not a very long time."

"I feel as if I had come to a deep chasm, like at 'The Glen,' and had fallen over, and forged the past."

"Ah! Well, we will hear of all this at some time. You *must* be quiet."

He laughed feebly.

"You are a little tyrant, Harrie."

"I know it."

"Schoolma'ams frequently are."

"They are compelled to be," said I, smiling.

At this juncture his father came in, and by earnest remonstrance, put a stop to his efforts at conversation.

"If you will not send Harrie out," he said with decision.

"She must go, my son, and take some breakfast, and then she may return, if you will promise me, like a man, not to attempt to talk. Your strength is not sufficient for any exertion."

"I will promise you, father," he said; his great anxious eyes speaking the prompt obedience of a child.

And thus days passed, the family relieving me of my watch by his bedside, when he would occasionally yield to my need for rest.

One morning while he slept, I sat with Charlotte in her *boudoir* as she gave directions to the colored sempstress as to the making up of certain articles of mourning, which she had not yet dared to wear in the presence of Louis.

"Isn't it strange, Harrie, that Louis has not yet asked for Ernest?" said she after a deep musing had been broken by a heavy sigh.

"Yes; I think so."

"Do you know that in his delirium he raved about you constantly? and"—her voice grew gasping and unsteady—"Ernest also seemed to be haunted by distressing visions of danger to you. He imagined

he had in some manner wronged Louis, and with promise in the most earnest and pitiful manner he would make restitution, or any sacrifice which would secure Louis's happiness. I sometimes think he must have been in love with you; and if you had loved you might, by your magnetism, have won him back to life. O Harrie, if you had only been here—!

She little knew of the burning coals she was bringing on my head. I did not reply to her reproaches. What could I have said? I looked out wistfully at a splendid stretch of mountain landscape, and wondered what the veriest wretch that lives could not have become a greater sufferer from the lashings of conscience.

"Louis loves you, Harrie. We very much dread a relapse for him. You will not let him die?"

Had I then killed Ernest? I could but feel I had had a hand in his death; and the criminal under the scaffold, with the blood of his victim still on his fingers, could not have felt a more terrible sense of guilt than did I at that moment.

"No, Charlotte, he shall not die," I whispered hoarsely.

She looked into my eyes, the great tears sprang up and glassing her own.

"Sister! Sister!" she cried.

Her arms were around me; her head was pillowed on my bosom, and we mingled our tears—hers, and mine, a sense of gratitude that rolled off the stone from my well-spring of healing waters, which quench the fiercest fires of consuming sorrow—mine, the result of over-tension of the nerves—a confusion, an infirmity, a weakness which robbed me of self-control.

.

A week later, Louis sat up for the first time after the fever had attacked and prostrated him, but still as pale as his linen gown.

"Harrie," he said, "I have really been so happy with you to nurse and care for me, I have not thought to ask whether father, or any one of the family, has heard from Ernest, since he sailed for Europe. He must have reached Heidelberg in time for a letter to have been returned before this."

"No letter has been received," I ventured to reply. My voice was painfully unsteady, and it required a powerful effort of the will to control the muscles of my face.

"Why do you stammer so?" he asked.

"Do—do—do—I—I—I—stammer, Louis?"

"Yes, fearfully." He laughed.

I turned from him, and busied myself with some attention to his wants.

"Harrie!" he said.

"What, Louis?"

"Come back and take this chair beside me."

I obeyed him, with much reluctance.

"Harrie, tell me the whole truth. I am, in a manner, confused. I don't know what I am talking about. I have thought more than once, that mother—Charlotte—fath—O Harrie, tell me, tell me all."

"You can bear it, Louis?"

"Yes; anything better than all this mysteriousness around me."

"Perhaps not, Louis."

"Anything better than this suspense, then."

"Perhaps not."

"Tell me."

"Ernest has safely arrived."

"Where, Harrie?"

"Where we shall all go, some time."

"Do you mean?"

He had started up from his chair.

"Sit down, Louis. You promised to be s
Ernest is dead!"

He staggered and fell back on the chair, rem
motionless, as if stunned by a sudden blow.

I laid my hand on his, and whispered,—

"Louis, you said you could bear this."

He looked down wildly upon me, and clasp
hand tightly: "Not yet!" he cried, "not yet.
man nature is weak. My good, my noble bro
why was he taken and I left? God forgive m
ever—ever—by thought, word, or deed, wa
him!"

"Amen!" I murmured from my heart;
make you better in future, Louis."

Tears sprang to his eyes—"Yes, yes; Harri

A bitter, surging tide of grief came over hi
he bent before it as the frail spar bends befo
wind. When this had passed, he turned to me ca

"Harrie, I was once a good little boy. I w
to Sunday-school, and still remember many
simple and beautiful lessons learned there.
King David lost the child he loved better than
bowed his head, and said, 'The Lord gave, a
Lord has taken away, and blessed be His nam

He said no more, but a look of determined
nation rested on his face.

"And now, Louis, I have something more to say to you," said I, with some hesitation.

"What is it?" he asked.

"I must leave you to-morrow. The time has already passed when my duties with Eva should have recommenced."

"O Harrie!" he gasped.

"Yes, Louis, I must go."

For awhile he seemed lost in thought, and then bending forward, his eyes sought mine.

"Do you remember, Harrie," said he, "that you did not answer my questions that night at the window?"

"I remember," I said, tearfully.

His gaze grew more penetrating.

"You know I love you. You cannot have forgotten all I then said to you. Do you think you could ever love me?"

I could not be false to myself. The accusing demons all hissed around me, and the calm, accusing face of Ernest rose up to torture me. I did not love him; of that my heart assured me. Could I ever? In this form the question presented itself. Love does not come when it pleases us to bid it. Neither can it be readily banished, when the heart is weary of entertaining it. Charlotte's remark echoed in my ears—"if you had only been here!" How rapidly my mind weighed the *pros* and *cons* of the situation, is now marvellous to me. My promise to his sister—I could not send Louis back to be consumed of fever, and yet—and yet—"Tell me, Harrie!" he importuned; "tell me if you think you can love me?"

"I will try, Louis."

"Will you be my wife, when I am worthy of you?"

"Yes, Louis; if I am ever worthy of you."

"Will you give me your hand on that?"

I laid my right hand in his, and he clasped it firmly to his heart.

"Now hear me, Harrie." His slender figure dilated and his voice grew firm and deep-toned. "From this moment, I am no longer a boy. At this moment the man is born in me. The hopes that died in my brother have found birth in lazy, fun-loving Louis. My father shall never be ashamed of the name he gave me. My mother shall be proud of her son; my sister of her brother; and my wife of her husband. Mark my words. I shall fill the place at Heidelberg intended for Ernest. His spirit shall be my guide up Learning's heights, while I shall endeavor to emulate his manly virtues."

His left arm encircled my waist, and drawing me close to his bosom, he imprinted a kiss on my lips.

And thus the compact was sealed.

"When I return with my laurels, you shall be mine, Harrie."

"When you return, Louis; yes."





CHAPTER XXIV.

REVEALINGS.

HOW is Eva?" said Kenneth Darrow to me, one morning near the end of October, as I met him in the hall after my twelfth night's vigil by the bedside of the sick child.

"She has been in delirium for the last ten hours, but has just fallen to sleep. We hope she will be better when she awakes. The doctor says the fever has reached the crisis."

"Do *you* think she will get well?"

There was a nervous tremor in his voice, and an agitation in his whole manner, which betrayed to me greater solicitude than I had any idea he felt in the little girl.

"Sir, do you wish your child to recover?" I asked in reply to his question, and in a tone that made demand for an honest answer.

He turned upon me, with an intense frown darkening his countenance.

"What do you say?"

"Do you wish your child to get well?"

"She is not my child," he answered slowly.

"Not *your* child, sir?" said I; a feeling of faintness coming over me. "Pardon me! I thought, sir—I thought—I did not dream—"

"Enough!" he said, sharply. "Of course you did not."

He looked around cautiously, as if to see whether we were entirely alone.

"You say she is sleeping?"

"She was when I left her."

"Had just fallen asleep?"

"A few moments ago."

"Who is now watching her?"

"Mrs. Brown, your mother, and Charity."

"What do you intend doing with yourself for the next hour?" he asked hurriedly.

"I came down, sir, for a change of air, and exercise."

"Do you feel very much fatigued?"

"Not as much as might be expected."

"Can you give me a little time? I have something I should like to say to you."

"I think I can."

"Then come with me."

He opened the drawing-room door, and invited me to enter. The morning was bright, chilly, and bracing. A cheerful hickory-wood fire was aglow on the burnished andirons, and the eastern light, coming in through the parted curtains, fell directly on the group of family portraits on the opposite wall.

He led me up to the picture of Richard.

"Did you ever detect any resemblance in Eva to this?"

"Many times, sir."

"Did you never suspect the child's relationship to the original?"

"Suspect, sir!" I said with emphasis. "What could I suspect?"

"Then know the whole truth. She was his child, not mine."

"Your brother's?" I whispered.

"My brother's," he answered.

The feeling of faintness that had seized upon me in the hall had deepened into a death-like sickness. I dropped down on the sofa beneath the pictures for support to my trembling frame.

He seated himself beside me.

"And this surprises you?" he said.

"Very greatly, sir."

"I thought it would. Now listen to me, and perhaps you will be prepared in a measure to understand the unconquerable aversion, which I have never been able to overcome, for the presence of this little girl. I do love the child; but I would fain love her with all the craving of my soul. To no one else, has the story I shall tell you, ever been committed. My father does not know—my mother does not; it might kill her if it were to come to her ears. By your conduct since a member of our family, you have won our confidence, our highest respect, and our affection. Your sense of right is keen and active; you cannot tolerate injustice under any guise or circumstance; and I can no longer bear that you should hate what seems cruel and unnatural in me, to say the least of my avoidance of the presence of Eva.

"Then, to begin. The character and position of my family you have discovered to be of undoubted respectability, and no little influence. That this, to

a certain extent, is the result of pecuniary independence, I am ready to admit; but I am proud to say we are descended from no ignoble blood, while honor has been the key-note of merit with us, and virtue an absolute requirement. I have come from a long line of *gentlemen*, in the truest acceptation of the much misapplied term.

“ My brother and myself were the only children of my parents, and unfortunately the idols of their hearts and hearthstone. What the beauty of his face was, you can discover from his portrait, which, however, gives but feebly the complexional tints, and more feebly the symmetry of features which combined to make it beautiful. The unfortunate deformity of his figure is slightly indicated upon it by the elevation of the right shoulder. He was, from his birth, a hunchback, and his limbs unnaturally long and unsightly.

“ Whether this misfortune narrowed his mind and distorted his spirit, I cannot tell; it is certain that in heart and temper he seemed to be moulded of Nature's worst elements. Toward me, his younger by two years, he indulged in the most mischievous envy, and his malice was never satiated. It is needless, then, to tell you I was the object of his most unrelenting spite and persecution. This I endured, until, in many instances, endurance failed to be a virtue; though I forebore resentment through sympathy for his infirmities, and a sense of fraternal obligation.

“ Bertha Hastings was the only child of a first cousin of my mother, and with whom she had been reared as a foster-sister. The mother of this child

dying at Bertha's birth, the infant was committed to my mother's care ; and the father following his wife to the grave within two years, the sole rearing and training of the orphan fell to my parents. Though inheriting ample wealth, she was adopted as their own, and grew up as our sister.

“ I cannot say when my love for her began. From her earliest infancy, she was to me as a part of my own soul—an element of my being, without which existence would have been tame and aimless. As a child, she was not less beautiful than Eva ; and as childhood advanced, she developed from day to day in greater loveliness of person from the increasing loveliness of her inner nature—the pure spirit incarnate in her form. I felt that to me individually, she had been sent as a gift from heaven ; and long before I attained the estate of manhood, I knelt in worship to her, as before the shrine of a divinity.

“ My brother knew all this, and loving her himself, refused with scorn to recognize my claims as a rival, while he expended his jealousy in petty annoyances, great enough to torture, but too mean to resent.

“ When Richard was nineteen years of age, we were sent abroad for the completion of our education ; he, to one of the German Universities for the study of the abstract sciences, mainly, for which he had exhibited taste and talent, and I, to Cambridge, England, for a course which had in view the study of law.

“ During the four years that followed, we saw each other only in the recesses of our respective schools, and for summer travelling.

“ At the end of this time, our parents, with Bertha, joined us in London. Bertha was then seventeen years old : her mind had been diligently and carefully cultivated : she was possessed of many more than the ordinary accomplishments of young ladies of her age : her manners were as simple and unaffected as a child of ten, with unusual thoughtfulness and dignity combined ; and a vision of greater personal loveliness never crossed my path in the shape of woman.

“ I loved her then madly ; and so did my brother. My love for her I did not attempt to conceal. His love, he chose to hide beneath a mask, and trusted to subtlety and intrigue, with the superior claims of the elder brother, to poison Bertha’s heart against me, and win her for the mistress of his heart and home ; for know that if living, he is the legal owner of Glen Darrow, after my father’s death.

“ Bertha loved me. This, she was not slow to discover, and my brother’s envy was intensified into the most determined hatred.

“ At the end of that autumn we were affianced, with the full approval of her guardians. For three years we travelled, touring over much of Europe, Egypt, Persia, and the Holy Land ; and then we returned to America, to celebrate, three months thereafter, our nuptials at Glen Darrow.

“ All this while, Richard had prosecuted his suit—hopelessly he well knew, but persistently.

“ Bertha’s disposition towards him was that of the most morbid fear, rather than of positive aversion. She seemingly assented to many of his caprices, because she dreaded his stinging sarcasm or

withering scorn. She feared to be alone with him, and in order to avoid the consequences of his jealousy, we agreed to return to Europe, to remain for an indefinite length of time.

“As the period for our marriage drew near, Richard grew vastly more placable, and indeed exhibited a friendliness toward me, which awoke all that was noble in my nature, to forgive the past, and love him with the full measure of a trusting brother’s love.

“Three days preceding that set for our wedding, after all preparations had been made to suit the dignity of my family, position, and means, Richard invited me to an afternoon walk in the woods beyond the graveyard.

“It was the last week in October, and the earth was bathed in the glory of Indian summer, which throws its soft, silvery haze like a veil of the finest gossamer, as you know, over the gorgeous tintings of our forest drapery. My spirit, in unison with the beauties of Nature, felt itself beautified, and full to repletion of all that it demanded of earthly good. I did not think it had ever been that man was so happy.

“We had just passed the cemetery and were descending the hill which is cleft by the ravine, when Richard drew from his pocket an ivory and silver-mounted pistol of the most delicate mechanism and exquisite finish.

“‘Here, Kenneth, is a wedding-present for you,’ he said; ‘and a beauty, is it not?’

“I had borrowed his knife, and was at that moment paring off an agnail that troubled me. Receiving

the pistol in my hand, I closed the knife and dropped it in my pocket.

“‘A beauty, indeed,’ said I, ‘yet rather a strange wedding present, Richard.’

“‘Do you think so? I think it altogether *à propos des bottes*. I have the mate to it. See! here is my name engraven on the hilt of mine, and there is your name, on yours. I have all my property marked. My name, you will discover on the silver plate on the side of my pen-knife. It is well, you know, for the security of treasures.’

“‘I must thank you, Richard,’ I returned, ‘for the pistol, though I hope I shall never have need of it. You know I am not practised in the use of fire-arms, nor do I wish to be. It is indeed very beautiful and valuable, and I accept it in the spirit in which I hope it is given.’

“A sinister smile flashed over his face. ‘But I am well used to pistols,’ he said sharply, ‘and these are loaded for emergency.’

“‘Are they?’ I asked carelessly, not comprehending the import of all he had said.

“‘They are,’ he said under his breath; ‘and we may have need of them before we expect.’

“We proceeded down the hill, the features of his face writhing as if some terrible emotion had possession of his soul, while he muttered to himself things unintelligible by me. As we neared the ravine, his breathing became quick and hard, and a cold, clear, ringing laugh burst from his lips.

“‘Ah, brother mine,’ he cried, ‘I am at last even with you! Nature played a miserable freak upon me

even before my birth, and the devil has been playing pranks upon me ever since; but now, ha! ha! I am even with you and all the world.'

" 'How?' cried I, feeling that some miserable mischief was at hand.

" 'Listen, and I will tell you. Perhaps the kisses of your bride-elect will fall more thrillingly on your lips, and her embraces will be all the more precious, after what I shall say.'

" 'I laid my hand on his shoulder. 'Take care!' I exclaimed, 'how you use *her* name, or your relation as a brother shall not rob me of my vengeance.'

" His laugh echoed through the words, and seemed to become a part of the rollicking fury of the stream that lashed itself over the rocks below.

" 'You think Bertha Hastings immaculate, do you not?' he said to me, mockingly.

" 'As pure as an angel,' I replied with fervor.

" 'Well,' said he, 'it grieves me most sadly to awaken you from your delusion; but under the circumstances consider it no more than a fraternal duty.'

" My fingers tightened their grasp upon his shoulder.

" He shook himself angrily, and growled,—

" 'Take your hand off, if you please—or'

" I released my grasp upon him, heartily ashamed of its violence.

" We walked on a few paces, and turned upon the bridge which at that time spanned the chasm.

" 'You think her as pure as an angel?'

" 'For Heaven's sake,' I cried, 'tell me all you would!'

“ ‘ You will believe me ? ’ said he.

“ ‘ That depends, ’ said I, mentally reserving to myself the right to believe or not, as the nature of the revelation might prove.

“ He then hissed into my ear a secret so dark, so cruel, so terrible, that the day turned to night around me ; I reeled where I stood, and grasped the railing of the bridge for support.

“ ‘ Oh, Richard, ’ I gasped, when consciousness returned to me, ‘ tell me you lie, and I will forgive even this demoniac jest ! Tell me so, for God’s sake ! ’

“ ‘ Lie ! ’ He laughed loudly. ‘ No ; thank His Highness, the Prince of Devils, I do not lie ! ’

“ The night had become day again, and with the returning light came to me the strength of a Samson.

“ ‘ Devil ! ’ I muttered ; ‘ worse than devil ! ’ and grappling him by the throat, we wrestled over the keystone of the bridge. Swaying to and fro like a pair of young giants, the issue soon became one of life or death. More than once, by superhuman agility, he got the advantage of me, bent me over the railing, and with horror-stricken eyes I looked down upon the jagged rocks, and black, roaring waters below. At length, by a powerful effort, I disentangled his hold upon me, and picking him up, as if he had been a little child, I dropped him over the baluster into the chasm. His last cry came back to me in the form of a vengeful oath, while his body went hurtling down into the roaring current.

“ I did not stop to look after him—I had no care whether he was killed or not—but crossing rapidly,

was soon lost in the depths of the wood on the other side.

“Remembering his fatal wedding-gift, and now not doubting his purpose in it, I drew it from my bosom, and firing off the six charges with which it was loaded, flung it from me as far as my strength would send it; and then fearing I might be tempted to use a knife on him, if he should be alive and meet me again, I took his knife from my pocket, and threw it in the direction of the pistol.

“Nearer a maniac than a sane man, I wandered for several hours over the forest; and as the gloaming deepened into the purple of twilight, I returned to face the truth or the falsity of Richard’s revelation.

“Bertha had come out in search of me, and awaited me at the cemetery gate. She took my hand in both of hers, and pressed it timidly: she was ever timid in her demonstrations.

“‘How cold you are, Kenneth!’ she exclaimed, in a strangely tremulous voice.

“‘Am I?’ I asked drearily.

“‘Yes. Are you sick, dearest?’

“‘Yes,’ I replied; ‘I am very sick.’

“‘Come in then out of the chilly air,’ she said tenderly, taking a shawl from her shoulders and throwing it over mine.

“I replaced it around her. ‘No, I do not need this.’

“‘What *is* the matter, Kenneth?’ she said in alarm. ‘Let us go in at once!’

“I stopped her.

“‘Bertha,’ I said gravely, ‘why have you been so unhappy and listless of late?’

“ ‘ O Kenneth, Kenneth, ’ she cried, ‘ as you value my life and your own, do not ask me ! ’

“ I looked up. The stars had come out and thickly bespangled the clear, deep blue-black sky.

“ ‘ Bertha, ’ said I, ‘ would you not be afraid to be guilty of falsehood, with all the eyes of these stars looking down upon you, it may be to the very bottom of your heart. ’

“ ‘ Kenneth, as long as I have reason and a conscience, I would be afraid to tell a falsehood if there were not a star in the sky, or a God in heaven. ’

“ ‘ Richard, ’ I whispered, ‘ has told me a fearful story. ’

“ She dropped before me, and clasped her arms tightly around my knees.

“ ‘ Tell me that he has lied, my darling, and I will forgive this last act of cruelty, and bless you, bless you forever. ’

“ She had bowed herself to the dust.

“ ‘ Say, Bertha ! ’

“ I lifted her up, and pillowed her head, dank with the dew it had brushed from the grass upon my bosom.

“ ‘ Alas, Kenneth, ’ she sighed, more nearly dead than alive, ‘ *he has not lied !* ’

“ She slid from my arms and crouched at my feet.

“ ‘ Bertha. ’

“ She did not answer my call.

“ ‘ He threatened your life, did he not ? ’

“ Still she did not answer.

“ I raised her again, and held her firmly in my arms. Tell me ! ”

“Do not ask me!’ she whispered. ‘I am afraid to tell you all.’

“I know all. He will never trouble you again.’

“O Kenneth,’ she cried, ‘where—?’

“Ask me no questions, Bertha,’ I returned. ‘We shall be married at the appointed time. I love you too well to see you exposed to the world’s scorn, though I believed you the guilty wretch the world might deem you. I would sacrifice life with all its hopes and aspirations, to save from dishonor the good name your father gave you.’

“The stars that looked down upon us registered my words, and a night-bird that perched in a neighboring tree croaked hoarsely.

“The sound seemed to affright her. ‘Where—where is—?’

“Enough;’ I answered her. ‘Richard will never trouble us again;’ and throwing my right arm around her waist to sustain her tottering figure, I led her into the house, with many injunctions of secrecy.

“We were married. By the force of a strong will I got the mastery over my feelings, and Bertha’s *distract* passed for the natural pre-occupation which sometimes fills the soul of a bride.

“Richard’s absence was commented upon, but set to the score of his usual eccentricities, as incomprehensible as his temper was capricious.

“But from the hour of our marriage, Bertha’s reason began slowly to fail. Day by day her intellect grew more and more beclouded, until she reached her present condition, which the best medical advisers of Europe and America have pronounced, that

of hopeless insanity. She has always been harmless, and therefore we prefer to have her under our own keeping, to placing her in an asylum. From the time of Eva's birth, she has fancied me dead, or that I have been transformed into Richard, with persecuting intent. She has never known her child, but imagines she has lost a little boy, whose grave is in the family burial-ground; and while she expends all the sentiment of her life over the grave of this fancied child, she finds never-failing amusement and comfort in music—oftenest, as you are aware, using the night for its practice.

“For four years we remained in Europe.

“And now of all the world, you have possession of my wife's secret. A few months in the age of a child of four years, make but little difference in its size and appearance. The fatal resemblance to Richard is all that ever attracts peculiar notice to the little girl, and this is regarded as merely a perverse family likeness, inherited rather through *my* father, than through *hers*.

“This likeness is what is so annoying to me. I cannot meet the glance of her innocent eyes, without having all my wrongs brought up in maddening torture before me, and while I would do all a father's duty, and heap upon the little girl all the advantages purchasable by my means, with all the indulgences which go to make up the measure of a child's happiness, I wish to exclude her from my sight whenever possible, without subjecting her wholly to the care of strangers.

“Yes; believe me, I do wish, and more, I pray

for her recovery; and have much for which to censure myself in my course towards her."

"Do you not think, sir," I asked, "that your mother sometimes suspects the cause of your strange conduct to the child? A mother's instincts rarely ever mislead a conclusion. She once told me you had had very severe trials."

"No. She is under the impression that Eva's birth was the sole cause of Bertha's insanity; and that love for the child, not being commensurate with the loss of my wife's love and companionship, with the loss of her reason, therefore my carelessness or alienation. She does not suspect the reality."

"Have you ever had reason to think that Mrs. Johnson suspected more than the world knows?"

"Has Barbara been gossiping to you?" he asked quickly.

"To some extent, and through insinuations, mainly."

"What does she insinuate?"

"What you have revealed to me—the fathership of Eva."

"Anything else?"

How could I tell him of the intimations of crime that the prating old woman had let fall, under all her protests and deprecations?

"Has she insinuated anything else?"

"Do you think your brother was killed, when you hurled him over the bridge?" I asked, in order to avoid a direct answer to his question.

"Has Barbara said anything about this?" he asked in turn.

“What she has said to me has had a bearing on the absence of your brother.”

“Has she intimated that—”

“The primeval sin, sir,” I said candidly, feeling that candor was due him in return for his confidence.

“Is that true?” he exclaimed. “Horrible!”

He arose and paced the room with uneasy steps. “It may some time bring me into trouble. I can do nothing. I do not believe Richard was killed. There were certain evidences to induce us to think he was afterwards in his own rooms, though seen by none of the family. On the next day his doors were found locked, and from that time to this, have never been opened. *I believe he is still alive!*”

“What other evidences have you to induce you to think he is living?”

“After my return from Europe, not being able to bear the sight of the bridge which spanned the ravine, I had it cut away; but before doing so, from time to time, for several weeks, I carefully explored the stream, and could never find anything like human remains. Although he did me foul wrong, and I never wish to see him again, the fear that I caused his death, sometimes almost maddens me.”

“Do you know whether Mrs. Johnson ever saw you, when exploring the stream?”

“I do not know, but I hardly think she ever saw me, or that she would have suspected why I probed the waters.”

“Have you any evidence that he was ever seen afterward?”

“No positive evidence.”

He said no more at the moment, but standing before his brother's portrait in a contemplative attitude :

“ I remember to have seen, somewhere,” said he, “ an essay on the ‘ Mechanism of Faces,’ in which the idea was advanced that the human face might be cultivated into beauty or repulsiveness by the indulgence of pure or evil thought ; it appeared to me reasonable. Symmetry of features, while it assists, does not convey the abstract idea of beauty, which rests chiefly in the expression ; and this is but the reflex of the emotions of the heart ; and so, many times, a rugged face is rendered sublimely or touchingly beautiful by the indwelling spirit that illuminates or softens it. ‘ Pretty is that pretty does,’ is a proverb which grown-up people should heed as well as the child. Richard's features, you see, were faultless, and yet even in this picture you have traces of the distortion of his spirit, almost as plainly visible as his unfortunate physical malformation. However, at times, he showed himself capable of generous and noble emotion. There were instances when the good momentarily conquered the evil in his nature, and transformed the lion into the lamb. In such moments, I pitied him sincerely, believing that physical distortion alone had rendered him morbidly selfish and cruel.. Yet his gentle moments were very occasional.”

He left the portrait and resumed his seat beside me.

“ And now,” said he, “ do you still blame me as much as before you heard all my story ?”

I hesitated but a moment.

“ I blame you more. I do not feel that it is right to visit on the head of the child—”

“ The sins of the father ? ” he interrupted. “ And yet, according to the Bible, it is one of the penalties of sin.”

“ But judgment and punishment are reserved to God only,” said I, decidedly.

“ True, very true,” he returned with a deep sigh. “ But will you endeavor to understand me better in future ? ”

“ Provided, sir, my sense of justice may not revolt against what you may do.”

I heard Charity's voice in the hall, and knowing she was in search of me I left him.

When I returned to the nursery Eva was awake. A more healthful light shone from her brown eyes, and a weary smile played over her pale lips.

“ Miss Royal, will you sit down beside me ? ” she said languidly, holding out to me her little thin hand, damp with the dew of perspiration. “ When did you see my papa ? ”

“ This morning, Eva.”

“ Is he mad with me ? ”

“ No, no ; he is not, dear child, he is not mad with you.”

“ Does he talk about me ? ”

“ He sometimes talks about you.”

“ Will he come up to see me ? ”

“ I think so.”

“ Will you ask him to come ? I wish to see him.”

I went down and delivered the child's request, with many doubts whether he would consent to comply

with it ; but immediately he came up to the nursery, and sat by the bedside of the little sufferer.

“ How are you, daughter ? ” he asked with more tenderness than I had ever known him to use toward the child.

“ I have been very sick ; but I shall get well, if you will let me, papa.”

“ If I will let you ? ”

“ If you will love me.”

“ Then I will love you, Eva.”

She tried to raise herself in her bed, and held up her lips for a kiss. He leaned over, and kissed her with reverence.

“ Now you may go, papa, if you wish. I can sleep, I think.”

The white lids closed down over the brown eyes, and the golden brown lashes rested on the pale cheeks of the beautiful little girl.

He kissed her again. A radiant smile lighted up her face, and the lids unclosed, to let it escape from the brown eyes beneath their silken fringes. Kenneth Darrow smiled also ; and laying a finger on his lips, noiselessly left the room.

Eva got well.





CHAPTER XXV.

“A BABE IN THE HOUSE IS A WELL-SPRING OF PLEASURE.”

BY the third week in November, the state of Louis' health had so much improved as to render his removal judicious, and “The Shades” family, unhappy in the midst of surroundings so sadly associated, left their newly made home, to spend a month in New York City, antecedent to sailing for Europe.

It had been arranged that Charlotte's marriage should be solemnized in Paris during the coming February, and as soon as his strength might justify, Louis should proceed to Heidelberg, and enter upon the course of study he had projected for himself.

Our engagement had been made known to, and met with the entire approval of his family ; but, both preferring, it was not disclosed to our friends at “The Glen.”

“There will be time enough for that,” said I, “when Louis returns to claim the fulfilment of my promise ;” and in delicate consideration of my feelings, Judge de Russey consented that it should remain unknown to my patrons.

Louis took cheerful leave of me, with many assurances for the future, founded on hopes, the forecasting of which had almost the form of realization.

By the first of December, Kenneth Darrow left, to take his senatorial seat in the State Legislature ; and my office as governess having, for the time, changed to that of assistant nurse for Eva, we settled down for the winter at "The Glen," in a routine of duties, uninterrupted, except by the usual Christmas festivities. To share in these, Kenneth returned, bringing with him, as commissioner of kind old St. Nicholas, a greater than usual number of holiday treasures. Eva's new stockings—the surreptitious handiwork of Mrs. Darrow—filled to the brim, hung above a table heavily laden with an incongruous supply of dolls and books, fancy boxes and *bijouterie*. I was not forgotten in the family munificence, nor was Bertha, as a new Christmas carol that reached my ears, testified.

In its course through our neighborhood, the fever had not neglected the humble family of Mrs. Johnson. While little Emily was spared its poisonous touch, her brothers were not, though constitutional vigor enabled them both, to withstand the ravages of the disease, and Christmas day found Barbara, with an unbroken family circle around her homely table.

And this circle had been increased within two months by the advent of a little stranger, which had made instant way to its grandmother's heart, and strangely softened its stoniness, and melted its iciness towards its mother, Jemima Ann.

This little animated ball of flesh, which smiled in its osier cradle, when the angels whispered in its ears, had caused the grandmother to feel she could forgive "Brother Jones" for his speedy forgetfulness of "Sister Jones, No. 1," and even for his successful onslaught

upon her own domestic nest. O magic power of infancy ! The little waxen arm, that, in the course of time, learned to stretch itself out to meet the embrace of the hardy, honest old grandame, did more towards driving in the ploughshare, and frowning up the flinty crust which had hardened the mother's heart, than all the eloquence or argument which might have been brought to bear upon it from every other source in the universe.

The day after our Christmas reunion, with Eva's consent, I accepted an invitation from Kenneth Darrow to drive over to Barbara's cottage ; and our coming was received with such acclaim as to assure us of a welcome, which might in vain be looked for in the halls of wealth and fashion. Barbara's horny hand grasped Kenneth's, with an outpouring of congratulation, in which she found space to mingle sundry thanks for half a dozen barrels of white-wheat flour that had been deposited in her larder.

Emily's general health had greatly improved, and one object of Kenneth's visit was, to discuss with her mother the necessity of taking her to Richmond in the spring, to have lenses suited to her eyes.

Barbara was not long in producing her pet treasure. Dragging it up from the recesses of its cradle, she proudly held before us Jemima Ann's baby.

"Did you ever see a finer child ?" she asked ; a broad smile flashing all over her sun-browned face, and flaring back still more stiffly, her broad quilled cap-border. "Weighed an even *ten pounds* when it was born, an' had hair all over its head, as thick as most o' children at two years. It's name is Barbara Johnsing Jones. They say it looks like me, and I sort o' think

it does. See its eyes, an' nose, an' mouth. The very cut of my eyes, an' nose, an' mouth. My mother used to say I was as likely a little gal as any in the country. But you wouldn't think it, would you, to see me now?"

We ventured a compliment to Barbara's comeliness, however little we could detect the pattern of the grandmother's features in the little undefined features of the grandchild.

And then followed a series of shakings, and soothings, and rockings, with snatches of rude lullaby songs, peculiarly understandable by babies, and tolerated if not enjoyed by older persons, because all older persons were once babies;—a picking up of each chubby little hand; a counting of each pink finger; a displaying of a pair of plump, soft feet; and a counting of each rosy toe; as if babies' hands and feet and fingers and toes, had not been fingered and kissed and admired by every mother and grandmother, from the time that Eve nursed her first-born, to the present. And the baby's face was tickled to make it laugh, but making it cry, instead—

"Dare den! dare den! little dallie!" said the dotting grandmother. "Dare den! dare den!—don't oo ty!"—and the smile faded down to a soft light, that gave a gentle, almost saintly, radiance to the rough features of the old woman. "Jest to think, Kenneth!" said Barbara, after the petting of the babe had subsided, "I used to rock you and sing to you in this very way, when you wasn't even as 'old as this little thing.

"An' now—. Well, well!"

To have our babyhood recalled to us is always a ridiculous, though it may be an interesting theme. Kenneth smiled as though he might have remembered when he was rocked and shaken and sung to, and had his fingers and toes counted by Barbara, while he did not seriously enjoy the allusion.

"An' a purtier baby than you was then," said she, "I never set my two eyes on."

"In your eyes and my mother's, doubtless, Barbara," he said, kindly.

"Yes, indeed; an' in ivery body's that seed you. An' so cooin' an' crowin' and good-tempered. But Richard—your brother Richard—was the fieriest little fellow you ever hearn tell on. Well—Richard was never in good health. His back, you know, was sort o' weak; an' your mother didn't think for a long time she'd raise Richard. It's a pity, I sometimes think, that he hadn't ha' died when he was a baby."

Kenneth grew restless, and would have changed the subject at once, but Barbara, though not intentionally unkind, was not the person to *feel* her way over the tender places in one's heart.

"I remember mighty well how jealous he used to be of you," she continued in compliment to Kenneth.

"Ah!" said he.

"Yes; an' how he'd fight you, until you got big enough to 'fend yourself."

"Ah!" he said, evidently ill at ease.

"But I was always sorry for poor Richard."

"I am glad you were."

"Have you ever heard of him since he went away?"

"No, madam," he said positively.

"Not one word?"

"No, Barbara; not one word."

"Well, it was all mighty strange, anyhow. He was a likely young man when he would choose to be; but—"

And then drifting off in a tangent upon something in connection with Bertha's infancy, while she rocked more vigorously the now screaming baby, Kenneth invited George out to examine a pair of Berkshire pigs that Mr. Darrow had sent Barbara as a Christmas present, leaving me to the old woman's details of Bertha's beauty with "hair like the floss of a yellow cocoon, and eyes as blue as wood violets," until it was time for our return.

Kenneth was unusually abstracted, on the drive home. Arousing himself, finally, from a reverie that had been unbroken during a drive of more than two miles, which ran through a rugged defile in the mountain then behind us,—

"There!" said he; "I said nothing to Barbara about sending Emily to me in Richmond, before I return in the spring. Her garrulousness cheated me this time of the object of my visit."

"But you can go over again, can you not?"

"Yes; I shall have to see her before I leave. I wish, from my very soul, she could forget she ever knew Richard. His failings are a source of never-ending comment with her."

I made no reply to his remark; but musing on the cause which had without doubt so early frosted the dark hair of the man who sat beside her, I looked

out over the broad lands of the Darrow estate, at the time covered heavily with snow, and thought how much less cold and cruel was winter to the earth, than winter to the heart. The one has its spring-time, its flowers, its birds, and its summer; the other, once frozen, rarely ever buds and blossoms, or is melted again.





CHAPTER XXVI.

SOMETHING ABOUT AN ELECTION.

SPRING came, as spring in that latitude usually comes, tender, warm, and wooing; whispering winter away with her balmy breath; gently melting the snow that lay in the clefts of the rocks and shady places; and awaking the ice-bound rills into songs of gushing merriment.

Young lambs frisked on the hill-sides in the bare joy of existence; the meadows were covered with verdure; the south wind had called up the early flowers from their long sleep, and coaxed the fruit-trees to array themselves in mantles of blossoms.

The course pursued by Kenneth Darrow in the Legislature, as well as that taken by him in a late important State Convention, had so commended him to the good opinion, not only of his own constituency, but the public at large, as to induce them to decide that to him might be intrusted their interests in the National Legislature, rather than to their representative then invested with its dignities. Accordingly, in a caucus of certain leading and reliable men of the district, he was put in regular nomination as the rival candidate for Congressional honors.

“Will you accept the nomination?” asked the President of the Senate, his face kindling with the

glow of pride in the popularity of Kenneth Darrow, because he knew that he was a statesman, that his statesmanship grew out of patriotism, from which, alone, all true statesmanship has origin. Darrow was his friend, and in this friendship he felt peculiarly honored. "We shall do ill without you in our deliberations in this body."

"That depends upon whether my terms of acceptance are acceptable to the nominating committee," replied Kenneth Darrow. "I have never sought place or power to gratify the ends of mere personal ambition. In political action, I am impelled only by a sense of duty to my State and country, and mean never, under any circumstances, to be hampered by party principles or prejudices against my own judgment of what I conceive to be right; with due regard, however, to the wishes of the people whom I may be chosen to represent. If they who have honored me with this evidence of their confidence, think it proper to send me to Congress with these facts before them, I shall be proud to be the object of their choice, and shall engage to serve them, in season and out of season, to the best of my ability, and in strict conformity with all the requirements of our National Constitution. But, if I am expected to truckle to the behests of a faction, I shall excuse myself from the contest."

"Have you signified this to the committee?"

"I have by letter; and this is my *ultimatum*."

"The present, you know, Darrow, is an interesting, nay, even a critical period in the history of our country. The vexed questions which have so long

disturbed the minds of the thoughtful, are daily becoming more and more momentous, and must, ere long, assume an intensely exciting form. Unless great wisdom and forbearance are exercised, they cannot much longer be kept within the walls of the Forum, but must find adjudication in the Field; and by the Sword rather than the tongue and Pen."

"Do you know of any period," said Kenneth Darrow in answer to this remark, "which has not been of superlative, if not of critical importance in the political history of a great nation? If we study the disturbing causes which have, in the end, wrought the overthrow of all the powerful nations of antiquity, we shall find their origin comparatively insignificant, or of importance to but the few. And so in the confusion of the modern. Questions of small concerns in themselves, have been 'the leaven which has leavened the whole lump;' and the 'little matter' has enkindled all the mighty fires, which have among all peoples, destroyed the homogeneousness of the body-politic. Or else personal considerations have been made to assume the appearance of popular interest, and demagoguism has stolen the guise of zeal for the popular good. 'The bone of contention' in our own country has grown out of the differences of opinion between our early statesmen, Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton, in regard to ideas of government—the one contending for a government wholly subject to the will of the people, which we choose to call 'a democracy;' and the other for a government, which, underneath the will of the people, should centralize within itself a certain amount of power as security

against the factious at home, or aggressive from abroad; without intending, we hope, any encroachments upon the liberties of the governed. And this was then understood as 'federalism.'

"But when we narrow down these terms to their true signification, as interpreted by the genius of our political institutions, and the demands of this people, they mean so nearly the same thing, that we can but smile with something like pity, if not contempt, upon the wordy wranglers who ring the interminable changes on them. Strangely, the father of the democratic party in this country was called in his day a republican; and by gradual and consequent modifications the federal party claim to be the republican party; so there is little in a name, indeed.

"They have been made to differ, mainly, in side issues which have been provoked for party purposes; while in itself, the one or the other, 'democratic' or 'republican' is intended to embody the principles of a government in which the rulers must submit to the *vox populi*, in all contingencies. A *pure* democracy has never yet existed, while certain republics have exercised a rule as despotic as any that ever characterized a monarchy. In the American mind, there is a universal revolt against the centralization of power in a single individual; and yet in social caste, which must everywhere exist, despite governmental forms, there is as determined a revolt against the democratic idea which involves equality: so that the two parties insensibly approach, the separating terms understanding a distinction rather than a difference."

"Still you think, in a country with such a govern-

ment as ours, the existence of two parties necessary to the public good ? ”

“ To a certain extent, as a check, the one upon the other ; though we can but doubt the healthfulness of the continual ferment in which the public mind is kept by party strife. ”

“ You do not then enjoy the excitement of politics ? ”

“ The least of all things. My inner nature is altogether opposed to it, and from it suffers constant abrasion. ”

“ But in your district, in which a single School of politics has been so vigorously sustained and defended, you will have few difficulties to contend against, arising from opposing faction. ”

“ But far worse. Individual likes and dislikes, jealousies and prejudices, will subserve the purpose of party differences ; men, rather than measures, will give theme for discussion ; slander and suspicion will have part in the canvass, and answer for the use of the demagogue with no issue at command. ”

The Lieutenant-governor grasped Kenneth Darrow's hand and shook it fervently,—

“ Then,” said he, “ my noble fellow, you can have nothing to fear. Neither the one nor the other has power to assail you. ”

Kenneth shook his head and sighed.

“ We cannot tell, sir. I cannot hope to be exempt from the raspings of the one, or the poison of the other. I shall be a rarely fortunate man, if I am. ”

We stood in the vestibule of the Capitol in Richmond—Mrs. Darrow, Eva, Emily Johnson, and I ; and near by, Kenneth Darrow, with a group of his friends.

That noble effigy of the Father of his country, the statue of Washington, by Houdon, looked down from its pedestal, benignantly, upon the throng that was moving in towards the different legislative halls in *the old building, now a sorrowful monument to the memories of certain as brave and noble, and honorable and virtuous, as known in their age*; and from its niche, the marble face of the gallant La Fayette, as if well satisfied with the part taken by him in making us a free people, a great people, a nation among nations.

Mrs. Darrow turned to her son when he made the last remark.

"We should greatly prefer, Kenneth, that you would retire from political life."

"I cannot yet see how that could be possible, mother," he answered, "and do my duty."

"Your son is right, madam," said the Lieutenant-governor. "The time has not yet arrived when he can be yielded up from public council."

And drawing out his watch and noting the hour, they passed forward, and soon in the senate-chamber we were listening to a convincing speech from Kenneth Darrow in support of a bill intending, through an increase of internal improvements, the development of the exhaustless resources of the Old Dominion. With the graces of oratory, he wielded the power of argument—clear, cool, subtle, and irresistible; and in his peroration, pointing to the past glories of the ancient commonwealth, he appealed for a future which should be richer in glories, declaring his determination to spend and be spent in what would most certainly conduce to her greater greatness and prosperity.

In a few days the Legislature adjourned. As he had predicted, the Congressional canvass was between *men* and not measures ; and severe in proportion to the part taken, from personal pique or individual jealousy. He refused to travel over the district, and in defence of his position, asked only an investigation of his political antecedents. In default of the hydra-headed mischief of party-spirit, malignity was actively at work ; charity hung its diminished head, and brotherly-kindness forgot its office of patience, long-suffering, gentleness, forbearance, and meekness. The fruits of the spirit were contention, strife, selfishness, bitterness, craftiness, cruelty, foolishness, and confusion.

Beside the high-handed acts of malfesance in his competitor, certain enemies of Kenneth Darrow, or rather certain friends of the opposing candidate, had caught up a whisper that Mrs. Johnson had inadvertently let fall to one of her *brethren in the church*, on the occasion of a " week-day meeting ;" and this, gathering strength as retailed, in a little while developed into a cloud that covered his fair fame with blackness, and begrimed the honored name he bore with the foul stain of calumny.

" Made way with his brother ? Monstrous ! To get the estate, most likely ? And they say he ran that beautiful young wife of his crazy, and keeps her a prisoner in his father's house ? Infamous ! "

" Even so ! " said one and another, whose doubts might have been greater than they chose to acknowledge, but whose wisdom it was, to appear believing.

But all this talk, however, arose too late to damage

seriously his prospect for election, although here—there—everywhere over the district, it found circulation; and many doubtfully asked—“If that man is not to be trusted, who can be?”

Day by day the canvass waxed hotter. Kenneth Darrow expressly forbade that the purchase of votes, by any means should be made in his cause; or that any instrumentality, except what was strictly open and legitimate, should be used, to obtain the favor of the class, who hold the balance of power in all questions decided upon by the ballot in this country.

But not so conscientious was his competitor. The story which ran so glibly from lip to lip, was impressed upon the credulous by the generosity of the retailer. Where the potent glass seemed not likely to prove effective, a convenient horse that might, or might not be, recovering from spavin; or a cow with the hollow horn; or a shawl or dress for the wife; a bottle of eau-de-cologne for the daughter; or a doll or top for the two-year-old child; or other appliance, was called into requisition, and all obduracy, in many instances, melted. And in cases in which larger subsidy was needed, the ambitious to be flattered, or the progressive to be advanced, an accommodating office in the County, State, or National Capital threw open its door as if by magic, and invited to entrance.

Yet, there were those who refused to give heed to the voice of the charmer, charming never so wisely. These were not prepared to lose confidence in one who, *sans peur et sans reproche*, had never abused their suffrages nor forgotten their well-being. They were not prepared to suspect *him* of the primeval

sin, "who was kindly to the most humble and gentle to the most erring." They were not altogether ready to lose respect for the man who was with the people and of the people, and yet, not with them nor of them, inasmuch as he was wiser, and nobler, and better than they; inasmuch as equality of citizenship does not comprehend equality of virtue, and usefulness, and talent; and in these qualities they recognized his superiority. They were not willing to withdraw their support from the man, who, by all the country round, was acknowledged the friend of the poor and the helpless. With what he had been, and had done, directly before their eyes, they were not ready to make shipwreck of their faith in Kenneth Darrow, for suspicion founded on the idle gossip of a garrulous old woman, so far removed from him in all save the common tie of humanity, that thought of her ability to do him harm had only less frequently crossed his mind than hers.

Therefore, on the fourth Thursday in May, which was destined to witness the tug of battle, it mattered little that his opponents brought the halt and the lame, the deaf and the blind; the bed-ridden from his couch, and the pauper from the alms-house; the man whose vote represented the ownership of the princely domain, and the man who laughed in the face of the revenue officer because he was not troubled for taxes; the man who

"All learning and all science knew,"

and the man who scarce remembered

"The name his mother called him by"—

the votes for Kenneth Darrow continued to roll up from precinct to precinct, till his foes ground their teeth in rage, and muttered: "The end is not yet."

The morning had been bright and cloudless. Never did the sun rise upon a fairer day than that which beheld the citizen in his carriage—on horseback—on foot,—with him brought by his neighbor's pride or prejudice from his mountain fastness, from the valley and wood, to assert the right of franchise.

And that evening's sun would have set upon Kenneth Darrow's election, but; that shortly after noon, "a cloud no bigger than a man's hand" arose in the west, and beginning at once to spread and deepen, in half an hour's time, like a leaden scroll, it stretched itself across the bright blue firmament, and sent down to earth a copious shower of rain. This continued for the space of thirty minutes—no more—but was made the pretext in three counties in the district for keeping the polls open the remainder of the week, and not until the sun of the following Saturday had sank behind the western mountains, was the strife declared at an end.

The struggle had been fierce. Attack and recrimination; the covert sneer and the open reproach; the harsh word and the sharp rejoinder; the threat and the blow; the dissolution of old friendships and the building up of new; rivalry and contention, had marked the events of those three days, and stamped themselves on the local history of that people, in characters not soon to be forgotten.

And is it not so, of almost every such contest in our country? Yet we boast loudly of our freedom,

and hold the elective franchise as the security for all national good, all national order, when daily the ballot-box is degraded by the means used to control it, and the voters of the land, if not the slaves of passion or prejudice, are bondsmen to demagogues—the petty operatives of cliques, or the tools of rings—bought for more or less, at the expense of national honor or individual honesty.

The returns came in slowly. Not then as now did the wires of the telegraph thread mountain and meadow, hill and valley, of interior and remote sections of the country, to retail thought as quickly as conceived, and action as soon as accomplished; but in straggling fragments came in the tidings—sometimes for, and sometimes against—throughout a whole week—when, despite the energy of his opponent and the malice of his enemies, Kenneth Darrow was declared duly elected to represent his district in the next Congress of the United States, by a slender majority of votes.

He received the news with calmness, when waited upon by a few of his neighbors in advance of James—who tarried on his way from the Post Office, to watch the evolutions of a hawk, which, with captive intent, careered above the nest of a lapwing—and when informed of his success, he gave his hand, merely saying,—

“I am grateful for the friendship of my people. I must be careful not to abuse their trust:” and bowed his head on his hand.



CHAPTER XXVII.

MURDER DOES NOT ALWAYS OUT.

THE excitement into which the public mind had been thrown by the late canvass, had apparently subsided; the waves of popular opinion or prejudice, which had been lashed into tumult, had seemingly become calm; the heart of the body-politic, lately heaving in contestant throes, had, to all appearances, settled down to rest under the decision of the ballot, but not so, in fact.

We were in the middle of June. It was a cloudless Saturday morning, just two weeks after the latest returns had proven Kenneth Darrow's election; the dewy air, laden with the perfume of myriads of flowers, filled the breakfast-room, and gave additional zest to the comforts of the board spread out before us.

“As you will not be busy this morning,” said Kenneth, looking across the table at me, and balancing his spoon on the rim of his coffee-cup, “suppose we resume our Shakespeare readings. I have sadly missed them lately, and regret they have been so long interrupted. If convenient, will you come down to the library at ten o'clock, and we will pay our respects to the ‘Merchant of Venice.’ In anticipation, I have been studying the play for the last two

days with unusual care ; and agree with Mrs. Jame-son in considering ' Portia ' the most sagacious, if not the noblest, of all Shakespeare's heroines."

" I shall be most happy," I answered, " but am sorry you did not mention it to me sooner, so that I, too, might have given some study to the subject. Before that hour I shall not have a spare moment : must take a walk in the garden with Eva, and then go over her Sunday-school lesson with her. That is a Saturday-morning exercise we never neglect."

" At any rate," said he, " we will make several sessions of our reading, taking a single Act at a time, in order fully to digest the author's conception, in each character introduced."

He pushed his chair back, arose, bowed with his usual affectionate and deferential smile to his mother, and excusing himself, left the breakfast-room.

" I am delighted to think," said Mrs. Darrow, " that Kenneth has a little time again for domestic pleasures ; he so greatly enjoys them. You find, my dear," she continued, turning to me, " that you are useful to all of us. We shall wish to impress you for life."

" Yes, decidedly !" said Mr. Darrow, his brown hand seeking the bright head of Eva, as the little girl, well-pleased, raised her eyes from an empty glass thickly lined with pearly beads of cream, and held between her fingers the bottom crust of one of Aunt Venus's whitest and lightest French rolls.

From our run in the garden we repaired to the nursery, where the next hour was given to lessons on the Church Catechism, the Sermon on the Mount,

and the Ten Commandments ; and at the end of that time, resigning Eva to Charity and her dolls, I descended to the library, and found Kenneth Darrow already there, luxuriating in the expiring whiffs of one of his most fragrant cigars.

The heavy edition of Shakespeare's writings lay on the table, opened at the play selected ; but before our reading commenced he gave me an account of his last visit to the wonderful "City in the Sea," when the skies of Italy were bluest under a May sun, and the full moon mirrored its perfect orb in the deep blue lagoon ; of the ancient maritime splendor of the Venetian republic ; of the power of her merchants ; of the emblematic lion that once closed the portals of the Orient, and growled defiance at Genoa, with her mighty Doria ; of one and another of the doges—of Dandolo, "who harried the seas ;" of Marino Faliero, who yielded his life in defence of his wife's honor ; of the Foscari, father and son—poor Jacopo, condemned by the fearful inquisition of the relentless "Council of Ten," to exile and martyrdom ; of the scenes on the *piazza San Marco* with the marvellous old cathedral in front, lifting its Saracenic spires high above the marble palace of the doges, and reflecting them in the waters, far out towards the church of "Our Lady of Health ;" of his explorations to find all the evidence upon which the Bard of Avon founded his story ; of the remnants of God's ancient people, who still work in "fine gold" in their small, dingy shops, and ply their commerce on the arch of the "Rialto ;" of their continued control in the fiscal relations of Venice, through their superior instinct as

“money changers”; of much that served as an appropriate preface to the subject of the text.

I had never seen him in a more cheerful temper. The slight frown which habitually fretted his brow—the reflex of bitter memories—had, for the time, banished, and a well-satisfied, playful smile rested over his features.

“Be sure you have your breath; forget that you have an audience; conceive, if you can, the author’s idea in each character that opens before you, and you will enjoy your performance as much as I shall,” he said kindly, placing a glass of ice-water beside me, and a stool at my feet; “and make yourself entirely comfortable.”

I had advanced in the Third Scene to that point in which “Shylock” reproaches “Antonio” for the treatment he had received at the merchant’s hands, in the masterly vein of satire which none but a Jew could have cause to vent upon a Christian, and no one but Shakespeare could have embodied in fit language—when we were interrupted by the sound of wheels on the gravelled carriage-road to the door, and the tramp of heavy feet upon the portico; and a moment after, a rap sounded on the hall-door, so harsh and sonorous as to startle me to letting fall the heavy volume from my hands, and Kenneth Darrow, to bringing him instantly to his feet.

He did not await the coming of a servant, but quickly stepped out into the hall to see who might be the intruder. The party retreated to the portico, and he followed.

Involuntarily I changed my seat to the sofa under

the window, and glanced out. Three stern-looking men, in plain garb, stood before him, one of them in an agitated manner unfolding a paper, which bore the appearance of an official document.

"I am very sorry to inform you, Mr. Darrow," said the man, "I have an unusually disagreeable duty to perform."

"What is it, sir?" asked Kenneth, calmly, looking down upon the paper, without touching it.

"This, you will see, is a warrant for your arrest, sir."

"For my arrest?" said Kenneth, with unchanged voice, glancing over the paper. "Upon what charge, pray?"

"The murder of your brother Richard, sir, some eight or ten years ago."

"Yes, I see!" said Kenneth, in the same tone, "I see, sir!"

A momentary blindness seized upon me, and a confused roaring in my head, like the tumult of many waters, which prevented my hearing each word as it fell from the sheriff's lips, but my ear caught—"skel-eton"—"found in the woods, concealed behind a fallen hollow tree, near the gorge"—"pistol, with your name engraven on it"—"date 18—"—"knife, with the name of your brother"—"an old neighbor of yours—Mrs. Barbara Johnson, very humble old woman—principal witness, it seems"—"very unfortunate affair, sir; very!"

"Unfortunate, indeed," said Kenneth, still apparently unmoved. "I have nothing to say against you doing your duty as an officer of the law. I am

a law-loving and a law-abiding citizen, and favor its most righteous enforcement."

"No one would ever have suspected *you*, Mr. Darrow, of anything like this," said one of the bailiffs, evidently awed by the dignified bearing of the accused; "and we hope you know, sir,"—

"That you, my friend, are in no wise to blame," said Kenneth Darrow smiling, and extending to him his hand. "You say you met my father on horseback on his way to the village?"

"We did, sir."

"Did you tell him you held this warrant for my arrest?"

"No, sir;" said the third man. "It would have been a little rough on the old gentleman, and we left him to find it out in some other way. Ours is not the most agreeable calling a man can follow, sir; you know."

"Thank you! But doubtless he has been informed before this time. Ill tidings have swift wings. And now if you will permit me to go to my room for a few changes of clothes, I shall very soon return, and be ready to accompany you. It is likely I shall need a supply for several months. I do not mean to apply for bail, even should this prove a bailable case."

"Certainly, you can go, sir," said the sheriff, with perfect confidence. "You are an honorable man, Mr. Darrow."

Kenneth Darrow stepped into the library in passing. He was somewhat paler than when he left it, but his countenance bore, otherwise, no evidence of mental agitation.

"You have heard what these men have to say?" he said to me, quietly.

"I have," I answered, gasping for breath, and my limbs refusing to raise me from my seat.

"I need not explain to you. Be as self-possessed as possible. My father will break the news to my mother when he returns this afternoon, and save you the pain. Rest assured, all will be well with me. Good-by!"

With a rapid step he walked across the hall and up stairs, returning in a few moments with a valise packed, and taking a seat in the vehicle with the sheriff, more like a king than a culprit, was driven off.

I was stupefied by the suddenness of the transaction. Gazing out of the window, I followed the course of the carriage through the lawn; down the poplar-bordered avenue; I heard its plunge in the river; saw it emerge from the other side; and then my eyes went with it along the red, glistening highway until it grew to be but a speck against the horizon, and was caught back into the pure ultramarine of the cloudless June heavens.

The day seemed far too bright for such a shadow to dare intrude its blackness upon it.

The sound of Mrs. Darrow's voice came to me from the garden. She was engaged in giving directions to the gardener in reference to the training of a Malaga grape-vine, which had been ingrafted upon native stock; wholly unconscious of the terrible distress that had reached her, her laugh rippled back to me like the low notes of dance-music. It had never before seemed so cheery, and now came in mockery.

“ Was Kenneth Darrow guilty ? ”

My heart said “ No ! ” The story I had heard from his own lips was literally true ! I would have staked my life on his word. The story which had been wrought up from Mrs. Johnson’s garrulity, might or might not have been true, as concerned the pistol, knife, etc. ; but Kenneth Darrow was incapable of deception. He had evidenced this, even in his unamiableness to Eva ; and whatever circumstances might have woven their unhappy tissue around him, he was as free from the crime of murder as the innocent proof of his brother’s malignity and treachery.

With my hands folded on my lap, and the odor-laden breeze ruffling my hair ; looking out upon, yet not seeing the glories of the June landscape ; in the body, yet far beyond, in one of those incomprehensible states of human existence in which the soul seems to forsake its tenement of clay—yet feeling all the while a sense of impotence more impotent than the feeblest of earth’s creatures before the decree of the inevitable—I sat at that window until the tinkling of the silver bell awoke me from my merciful abstraction, and bade me mask myself under an air of carelessness, that the peace of mind of Kenneth Darrow’s mother might not be disturbed a little while longer.

The savory viands from the dining-room greeted my olfactories untemptingly. Mechanically I heeded the call of the bell ; but with no thought that what awaited me would prove in the least enjoyable. To eat is the most difficult of all exercises when the soul refuses to recognize the demand of the body for food.

“ Where is Kenneth, my dear ? ” said Mrs. Darrow

to me, as I took my seat at the table. "I thought he was with you in the library."

"He left the house, madam, a few hours ago with some gentlemen," I replied, with all the complacency I could summon to my aid.

"Indeed! I did not know he had any idea of leaving home this morning: some urgent business, I dare say, has called him away. The soup is particularly fine to-day. Hannah has quite excelled herself in it. Waive etiquette, and have some more. Ah! but I see you have no appetite. 'Yes?' Allow me to differ in opinion with you. Perhaps the chicken or the raspberries may tempt you. You need more exercise. Walk over to Barbara's this afternoon, and take Patience with you, to carry the late supplies of clothing which Kenneth ordered for little Emily. I shall drive over to the church to attend the meeting of our Dorcas society, and have promised Eva to take her with me. I wish there was room in the buggy for you also. You are paler than usual, my dear; are you not well?"

"Not altogether, Mrs. Darrow," I ventured to return. Thanking her for her solicitude and suggestions, I forced myself to take something of everything she offered, sustaining as well as I could, my painful position, while I seriously dreaded my interview with Mrs. Johnson.

I nevertheless, thought it best I should see her, and to some extent ascertain the amount of the mischief she had done; and accordingly, shortly after dinner, set forth for her cottage.

For the first time in my life, I found myself wholly insensible to the influences of nature. Flower and

tree, rock and rivulet, plain and mountain, appealed alike in vain for notice. Carried out of my present self into the dim possibilities or the probabilities of the future, objects that had never before lacked the power to charm, charmed no more. Like a mere automaton, I walked on, heedless of the sweet incense of the flowers; of the music of bird and stream; of the soft monotone played by the south wind through trees of the wood; of all the sights and sounds wont to add to my enjoyment.

On that portion of my path which led up the hill to the brink of the gorge I met Barbara, walking rapidly and breathing heavily.

"Blessed sakes! Miss Royal," she cried, when we came in collision—neither, till that moment, being sensible of the approach of the other—"Blessed sakes! I'm so glad I've met you."

"Where are you going?" I asked quietly.

She had taken off her sun-bonnet, and with one corner of her homespun apron was wiping away the heavy beads of perspiration that clung like dew-drops to the roots of her grizzled hair.

"I was jest a-goin'—"

"Be careful," I whispered. "I do not wish to have Patience hear what you may say."

She replaced her bonnet on her head, took a position nearer me, and depressed her voice to a low key.

"I was jest on my way to The Glen, to tell Mrs. Darrow, blessed angel, I would ha' had my tongue cut out from the very roots, afore I'd ha' said a single word to hurt a hair on his head, I would. An' I wish from the bottom of my soul my old wicked

tongue had ha' been cut out afore I told that thing to Brother Clark, old Judas as he is! I thought, you know, he was Kenneth's friend, (leastways he *made* me think so) an' I told him one day at the meetin'-house, out under the trees, when the meetin' was over, as how Kenneth Darrow was the tenderest-hearted man in all this country, though some people did say he never did love his brother mighty well, an' Richard's goin' was somehow mighty quare.

"An' says he, 'Sister Johnsing, will you tell me all you know 'bout this?'

"An' says I, 'Well—yes—I reckon so!'

"So I told him a few little things—not all I knowed, by a long shot—an' says he: 'All right! All right!' an' he laughed a little, soft, chuckling, wicked sort o' laugh, that made me sort o' mad, an' said, 'It's mighty strange, it is, Sister Johnsing.'

"This was jest two weeks afore the 'lection day. But one day that same week my Sam he come in, an' says he, 'Mother, what did you tell that fellow, Clark, 'bout Mr. Kenneth, 'tother day, at the meetin'-house?' An' says I, 'Sam, you ought to be ashamed o' yourself for callin' Brother Clark, that fellow, sence he's a full member in good standin.' 'But,' says he, 'mother, what did you tell him?' An' I up an' tells my Samuel every word, every blessed word I did say.

"An' says he, 'Mother, your tongue is too glib. When it gets to running there's no more chance o' stopping it than a mill-wheel when the water's turned on. I've hearn of this from at least one dozen men down at the mill, an' they're everywhere talkin' 'bout

takin' him up, an' tryin' him, an' hangin' him, 'lected or not 'lected.'

"An' says I, 'Lord ha' mercy, Sam, I wouldn't ha' said a word to save my own life, ef I'd ha' thought he'd a made mischief out o' it.'

"An' says he, 'Mother, I know you wouldn't; but the harm's all done, now, and what you've got to do is jest to hold your tongue the balance o' your life.' An' the good Lord helpin' me I will.

"Now all that time I knowed too 'bout the skelepin, but I didn't open my lips. I knowed that skelepin was there behind the old hollow black oak, for more'n three years; an' sometimes I've been afeard to go through these woods—though I don't much believe in sperits—but I didn't open my lips 'bout the skelepin. How on the yearth they ever found it behind that old rotten, hollow log, the good Lord only knows, I don't! Some tarrier dog must ha' scented it, I reckon."

"It will all be explained very soon," I said, aside.

During this time we had seated ourselves on a mossy bank, and taking her cob-pipe from her pocket, filling it, and lighting it with a match, between each clause of her narrative, Mrs. Johnson relieved her distress by furious drafts upon its powers of consolation.

I arose from my seat. "You must not see Mrs. Darrow," said I, "in your present excited condition; you must go back to your cottage."

"Mustn't I, Miss Harriet," she said, pleadingly. "I was goin' to tell her all 'bout it. The men ha' been to my house to let me know I had to come

down to the Court House on Monday mornin', an' swear away Kenneth Darrow's life, an' I wish I was dead, I do!"

"I am, indeed, very sorry for you, Mrs. Johnson," I said kindly to her. "You must be extremely careful of what you may say under oath. Remember, you may have the life of your best friend in your hands."

"I'll tell jest what I know, an' not one word more, ef they pull my tongue out for it," she said with vigor, jerking off her bonnet at the same time, and furiously fanning herself with it.

We were nearing her house. Her features bore an expression of great mental agony.

"Don't you think me a villain, Miss Royal?" she said meekly.

"No, I do not, Mrs. Johnson," I answered; "but perhaps you have been incautious and unwise. Your sins, I dare say, are oftener of the head than the heart."

"But don't they say murder will out?"

"Yes; but murder less frequently reveals itself, than innocence suffers from circumstantial evidence."

"Yet all comes out sooner or later?"

"True, generally, if murder has been committed. 'Guiltiness will speak, though tongues were out of use,' has been an oft-proven adage."

"Then you don't think Kenneth killed Richard?" she said quickly.

I was fortunately advised, else I might have made answer that would have committed me.

"I hope not, Mrs. Johnson," I answered.

“And the good Lord knows *I* hope not, Miss Royal. Let me tell you; I’d as lief wrong my Jemima Ann’s little Barbary, as I would Kenneth Darrow. I’ve knowed him ever sence he was born; an’ a better boy never *was* born.”

We had reached the cottage door; the subject was dropped in the presence of Jemima Ann and little Emily—the little Barbara, in the meanwhile, by the various tricks of healthy infancy, serving in a measure to withdraw the grandam’s mind from the trouble into which she had plunged herself.

The sun had set before I returned to The Glen. Mrs. Darrow and Eva had reached home in advance of me. As I entered the hall from the back door, I saw Mr. Darrow take Mrs. Darrow by the hand, tenderly, and lead her into her own chamber. In a moment more, I heard a faint scream, and then the fall of a heavy body to the floor.

Mr. Darrow called. I rushed in. He stood over the apparently lifeless body of his wife.

When the next morning dawned, I was a watcher by Mrs. Darrow’s bedside. She opened her eyes feebly, and held out to me a pale, cold hand.

I pressed the hand reverently to my lips. We feared a hemorrhage.

“Do not attempt to speak, madam,” I whispered.

“My noble, noble son!” she sighed.

The sigh was followed by a short hysterical scream, and a flood of tears came to relax the tension of the overstrung nerves. Her husband bent over and wiped off her tears, and turning aside, “Thank God!” he cried. “She will not die!”



CHAPTER XXVIII.

“SO WAGS THE WORLD.”

THE news of Kenneth Darrow's arrest spread with far greater rapidity than had the rumor of the crime with which he was charged. The latter had been whispered of, under breath, and always with a protest involving volumes of doubt; the former took wings of lightning, the tongue of a clarion, and was proclaimed from the house-tops.

The evidence before the grand jury had been of a sufficiently convincing character to warrant his indictment, and as a matter of form, he engaged counsel in his defence.

Exhumed from its long resting-place beneath the decaying leaves of years, the skeleton aforementioned, bleached of snowy whiteness—and revolting, as the ghostly skeleton of humanity usually is—was dragged out, with the rusty pistol, the crumbling knife, and every shred and tatter of testimony which could render surer the conviction of so illustrious a culprit, or fill the itching ears of a credulous public.

“I have always thought there was something not altogether right about that man,” said Mr. Toady, a *parvenu* of the most recent importation, who, from successful speculation, thought it most respectable to

retire to a land-ownership—and was inevitably committed to the idea of social equality with those known as "the older people," but at the same time cherished a wholesome dread of exposing the fact that his "family thread" was waxed at a not very remote end by a decidedly "plebeian vocation"—"and that is the reason I could never make up my mind to support him for any place for which he has been a candidate. I have always suspected he was not right, sir; was not right!"

"I would stake everything I own on this earth, and I might say almost my hopes for the next world, on the integrity of Kenneth Darrow," said Farmer Williams, between pressing a friend to accept the freedom of his homely mansion, and giving some directions to his negro hostler in reference to the better keeping of his mules. "Yes, sir; I have known that man from his babyhood, and no more honest or purer-hearted gentleman lives. I have supported him whenever he has been brought forward by the public, and mean to do so until a better man is found; and I very greatly doubt whether this will be in my day."

"I thank my stars," said a starchy knight of the thimble and shears, "that I never was roped into giving that man my vote and influence. I took, quite a hundred votes to the polls for the other"—planting his goose firmly beside him; dexterously feeling in the right-hand pocket of his perfectly fitting trousers for a lately swollen *portc-monnaie*; glancing out of the end window of his shop at a dubious cow that, lowing, wended her way to his meagre shed, at the end of a rickety stable—leaping, with a practised spring,

from his cross-legged position on his bench ; adjusting his front hair and his back ; vigorously brushing off each bit of thread and each speck of dust from his garments ; straightening his already straight vest, and drawing on his immaculate broadcloth—" I could never make up my mind, gentlemen, to cast my suffrage for Kenneth Darrow. True, he has been a patron of mine for many years ; but no matter ; he is not the man to represent me in any body."

" I'll vote for young Mr. Darrow till Gabriel blows his horn !" said a worthy blacksmith—the glowing sparks flashing up around his great head from a bar of red-hot iron that he was hammering and welding into a shoe for a refractory colt, which impatiently champed an unaccustomed bit, on the outside of the smithy. " He never was the man that was afraid to soil his white fingers, in the grasp of the hard, besmudged hand of Oliver Tanner. Not he, sir. And if they send him to the State Prison to-day, and to-morrow run him for Congress, here's the man whose vote he'll get ; or, if they hang him to-day, and he could come to life to-morrow, I'd vote for him for President. Yes, sir ; I would ! as sure as this water is cooling this horse-shoe ! He was born a *gentleman*, Kenneth Darrow was—none of your stuck-up trash like Mr. *Suobs*, or that fellow Toady, for instance—and murderer or no murderer, *he's* the man for Oliver Tanner's ticket !"

" I have ever been inclined to exercise a certain measure of doubt in regard to the fitness of Darrow for office within the gift of the people," said Augustibus Smart, Esq., a hopeful pettifogging " limb of

the Law," whose pretentious gilt-lettered sign as "Attorney and Counsellor" swung far out over the rudely paved sidewalk of the court-village—just opposite the principal hotel—mutely soliciting a generous share, in the picking of clients' bones—"All is not gold that glitters.' The rumor of his having killed his brother, never struck *me* as being perfectly groundless, and I am not very much surprised at the turn of events. In behalf of an outraged community, it behooves me to volunteer my assistance in the prosecution." *Sotto voce*—"May make my fame!—who knows!—and fame will, in the end, make money!" And Mr. Augustibus Smart complacently contemplated his slender library, while he turned aside with disgust from the still more pauperish heaps of red-taped documents which found convenient space in a generous number of professional pigeon-holes.

Ministers of the gospel of our Lord and Saviour—forgetting, in their mission to the "Lost sheep of the house of Israel," that excellent thing called "Charity," and despite the benefit of the "doubt" always presupposed to the accused, until the proof of guilt bears something like the stamp of incontestibility—treated the distinguished prisoner to the unmitigated hospitalities of Gehenna, and held him up in his naked moral deformity, before gaping congregations, as

"A pathless comet and a curse;
The menace of the Universe."

The M.D. by the bedside of his patient—even while counting the delicate pulse-beats; the miller

above the clack and roar of his mill ; the pedagogue to his pupils in recess-time, like Eugene Aram ; the carpenter as he shingled the roof of a prospective church of God ; the stone-mason as he picked the block of noble mountain granite into shape and comeliness ; the gentleman planter as he imbibed his mint julep through a wheat-straw before breakfast ; ladies over their tea or ice-cream ; and even the sable laborer that heaved the hoe and drove the plough, found a prolific theme for discussion in the terrible offence of which Kenneth Darrow was accused, and the probabilities or improbabilities which awaited him, in the shape of punishment.

Groups of men knotted together on hotel porticoes, on the corners of the streets, on the court-green, in church-yards—everywhere, at which men "most do congregate"—found nothing else of so much interest ; and a partisan warfare, for and against Kenneth Darrow, was waged as vigorously as when he stood before the people, nominated by them for the highest honors in their power to confer.

In all the speculation which grew out of the skeleton, the fact that no bones were broken by the six murderous bullets which were supposed to have riddled the body, seemed strangely, in no wise, to serve as rebutting evidence against the probability that the subject came to his end by shots fired from the rust-eaten weapon of death. "Every ball must have penetrated some fleshy part of the corpus" (?) as if intelligently seeking a comfortable lodgment ; but nowhere about that fallen, rotten, hollow, black oak log could a bullet be found ! The public mind in the

midst of its wild excitement did not take cognizance of this fact. The spinal column of this skeleton showed no sign of unnatural curvature; the skin, the ankle bone, and cranium, found no ethnological savans to discuss their shape or density; this skeleton was that of Kenneth Darrow's brother: it could be none other; no other man had been missing from the community for time immemorial; all the neighborhood knew that Richard Darrow had not been seen or heard of for years; and so many years ago in the same woods in which this skeleton was found, Kenneth Darrow did fire six shots from that same pistol: Mrs. Barbara Johnson had so affirmed on oath—and *ergo*, and *ergo*.

In the meanwhile Kenneth Darrow, in his prison cell, bore himself with becoming dignity. By no question, however adroitly put, was he ever induced so far to forget himself, as to say a single word about the situation in which he was placed, except to his counsel. To him he related the same story he had related to me. Nothing more; nothing less.

"Do what you can for me, Mr. Carrington;" he said. "My brother may be dead; but that is not the skeleton of his body, nor did I ever fire a bullet at him. I realize fully the unhappiness of my situation; yet wish you to do nothing which may involve a compromise with your own conscience, or that may circumvent the ends of justice."

The summer at Glen Darrow wore away heavily in sad contrast to the bright season which beheld the fate of the century-plant—made brighter by the presence of Kenneth, and the genial polish of the De Russeys. The summer heat was sickening; the sum-

mer shades, ungrateful. The skies were less blue; the air was less balmy; the mocking-bird's song was harsh and grating; the hues of the flowers were dull; and the beauties of earth were enshrouded beneath a sombre veil.

Gradually Mr. Darrow's lithe, sinewy figure began to bend, until, in a few months the weight of half a hundred years, seemed added to his stooping shoulders. The silver threads in his auburn hair multiplied *ad infinitum*; the furrows deepened and thickened on his brow and cheeks, and the broad, cheerful smile around his lips became cold and hard.

Mrs. Darrow day by day grew paler, until almost as wan as the soft lace that fell over her snowy hair; her eyes lost their soft lustre, and though her face beamed with a smile, it was such a smile as calls forth all the pity that has lodgment in the soul. To sustain the bowed spirit of her husband, she made a vigorous effort at cheerfulness: her voice, often broken between a sigh and a sob, had taken a gentle, trembling cadence, and all her movements were listless and uncertain.

To assist me in helping to bear the burdens of my friends, weekly came Louis' letters—high-toned, noble, generous, and independent. A single clause will reveal the temper of the writer:

"Do not, dear Harrie, permit what I have told you to shake your faith in the innocence of Kenneth Darrow. Doubt me, doubt yourself, doubt almost Heaven, before you leave room in your soul to believe him a murderer. If you say I must, I shall come to you, dearest, and go to him."



CHAPTER XXIX.

COUP D'OEIL IN THE OUTSIDE WORLD. NO. I.

IN one of the principal thoroughfares in New York City, side by side with a church whose cross-capped spire reaches far up towards the heavens, stands one of those palatial private residences which so greatly conduce towards making "the Great Metropolis" one of the most splendid cities on the globe. With its brown-stone front, massively pillared stoop, mullioned French plate-glass windows, and architectural finish, it presented all the appointments of comfort, luxury, and fashion.

But jealously guarded was the interior from the prying gaze of the passer-by. The neighbors on the opposite side of the street took note that rarely ever during the day was the front door opened, and still more rarely were the window-blinds unclosed, and never was a female figure seen to cross the threshold; though the cut-glass lights above the door, and the chance interstices between the folds of the heavy curtains revealed the fact that, of evenings, this house was much more brilliantly illuminated than usual in even the habitations of the most wealthy and fashionable. And they of the most daring, who were wont to frequent this *rendezvous* of vice, told charily of its

exceeding magnificence—of the tessellated pavement of the wide hall—of the French moquette tapestry, of a pile so thick as to resist the softest echo of the tread of feet, which covered the floors of the spacious drawing-rooms—of the richness of the curtains, mirrors, sofas, and chandeliers—of the fabulous value of the pictures which hung on the walls—of the table which glittered with gold and silver and Bohemian glass and Sevres porcelain; sparkled with rare wines and liquors; steamed with fragrant Mocha; and literally groaned beneath the rich viands which sent forth their tempting odors—of the greater than Oriental magnificence which offered its temptations to those whose evenings and nights were spent there.

The master of this establishment was said to be "a queer fellow"—an outbreaking reprobate, who had no fear of man, and but little fear of God, before his eyes. No one knew whence he came. Some ventured to affirm, that he was an unfortunate English nobleman, who, on account of a physical malformation, had, Ishmael like, raised his hand against every man's hand; and in his gorgeous, glittering, gambling den, sought to avenge himself of Nature's malicious freak, by doing all the mischief he could. His fiendish delight was in his brother's undoing; and he valued his surroundings only in proportion to the superior advantages they gave to his purpose.

He gave his name as Roland Dare; and while never seen in the financial or commercial marts of the city, no name was much better known on the Exchange, and no man's paper commanded a much surer discount. The city authorities were well aware

what trade was plied behind the massive walnut doors that gave ingress to his mansion, but no dishonorable dealing as "a fancy man" had ever been alleged to Roland Dare; and the police kept steady beat before "the place of the hunch-backed gambler," without ever a thought of making "a descent" upon it.

Stories of marvellous generosity were now and then retailed of the man; and half a score or more of endowments to the noblest charities in the city were entered to his credit.

It was near the end of September. Few of the birds of passage who annually wing their flight from the hot walls of the city for the summer season had returned, though an unusual stir in the stock market had called back certain of the money-changers, whose interest it was to be there; and Roland Dare's drawing-rooms were, per consequence, nightly filled with those who lightly win and lightly lose.

On the evening in question, the faro dealer was singularly *distract*. His eagle eye had lost the pointed glance which measured a man on the instant. It seemed to matter little with him whether the bank lost or gained. Piles of gold changed hands with a recklessness not often seen in commerce with the precious metal, and men chuckled at the coolness with which Dare resigned his yellow treasures. But the moment came when the tide of luck turned for the dealer; and black spot and red, hearts and diamonds, spades and clubs, aces and tens, swam before the eyes of his victims, like glowing or smoking coals from a vengeful furnace.

As the clock struck ten, a young man who had notoriously *lost*, after the reopening of Roland Dare's establishment for the fall campaign, came in. He was pale, and made an effort to be calm, but carried about him a reckless, haggard air, sadly at variance with his native refinement and beardless youthfulness.

As he entered, Dare stretched himself to his greatest height, and a dark frown still more deformed his seared and defiant visage.

"Douglas," he cried fiercely, "why are *you* here again to-night?"

"Why?" responded the young man, approaching Dare, and, as caressingly as a timid girl might be supposed to fondle a tiger-cat, laid one arm across his shoulders.

With a demonstrative shrug, Dare shook off the boy's arm, and contemptuously pushing aside a heap of gold which had just been transferred to his side of the counter, turned away with a deeply heaved groan.

"Yes, I ask; why are you here again to-night?"

"To tempt His Satanic Majesty to surrender back to me the five thousand lost two nights ago. That money was not mine: not a penny of it. It was placed in my hands to deliver to 'the old governor;' and rather than he should know it was lost, and how lost, I shall find a bed in the East river. See, I have borrowed this, to commence my fight with 'the tiger' on;" displaying a fifty-dollar bill. "Perhaps Dame Fortune will condescend to smile on me,—who knows?"

A cruel sneer curled the corners of Dare's lips.

“And to conceal the sin of using your father’s money, you have come back to wrestle with ‘the tiger.’”

Douglas was silent for the moment, and his features twitched uneasily.

“Not altogether, Dare,” he said in an undertone.

“Then what is your reason, young fellow?”

“I have a mother, Roland Dare; and—I have a sister.”

Dare turned upon him with a scornful smile.

“And what care you for mother and sister?”

“So much,” said Douglas, “that I do not mean to have their names bandied about in such a place as this.”

Dare gave Douglas his hand. “And somewhere, young man, I have a mother, God bless her, if she is still alive; and—and—if I had had a sister—perhaps—!” He sighed nervously, and the gas-light fell upon a single great tear, which hung like a first-water diamond on the fringe of his lower eyelid. Douglas noted this, and stepping aside, through a feeling of delicacy, murmured—“The story of this loss of mine would send my mother to her grave, and would break my sister’s heart.”

“I know it!” said Dare; “and yet you come here again to steep your soul still more deeply in infamy? This is no place for such as you, Douglas. If to redeem the five thousand is your only aim, and you will promise me never again to come into this or any other gaming den, the amount shall be at your command. The money was not yours; and my conscience is too tender to allow me to filch a father’s money from an uninitiated stripling.”

“What are you driving at, Dare?” cried Douglas.

“Driving at sending you home with a pocket full of money, and quite as much disgrace.”

“Do you intend returning the money you won of me?”

“That is my intention.”

“Let me look at you, Dare,” said Douglas, doubting the evidence of his senses. “Are you in earnest?”

Douglas held up Dare’s face to the light, and looked incredulously down into the unblenching eyes of the gambler.

“Why, old fellow, your face is as long to-night as a Puritan preacher’s. On the stool of repentance, hey? Saul among the prophets!”

“Hush, Douglas. I mean all I say. This is no place for so callow a fledgling as you. I am not the unmitigated villain the world may deem me: have some heart and a little honor left yet. Make the promise, Douglas, and in half a minute my check for the five thousand shall be in your hands. No, stay! My paper would commit you. I will hand you the bank bills, and send along with you my private watchman to protect you against the ‘light-fingered gentry.’”

“Dare,” said Douglas, in a dream-like whisper, reeling at the same time as if stupefied by drink, “are you in earnest in what you say?”

“I am, boy! But be quick! Be quick! My moods change suddenly!”

Douglas had turned frightfully pale, and staggered to the nearest chair.

"O Dare!"

"Speak, boy! Speak!"

"I promise, Roland Dare!"

"May the One they tell me is above, help you to keep that promise, boy!" said Dare, reverently.

Douglas burst into tears.

At this unusual sound, in a place where scoffs, jeers, taunts, and oaths were the expression most generally given to feeling, one and another, who had watched with strained eyeballs as an assistant dealer told the mystical language of the cards, turned momentarily aside from the tables, and gathered around Dare and Douglas.

Roland Dare was an autocrat in his establishment. With a scowl he waived the men off, and stepping aside to a safe which might have been taken for an ornamental buffet, took out the requisite roll of bills, and placing them securely in the breast-pocket of the young man's overcoat, with his watchman as an escort, dispatched him forever from his gilded halls of iniquity.

The morning star was sinking low over the waters of Long Island Sound, before the last *habitués* left Roland Dare's gambling house; and then with the understanding that from that night it was no more to be open to them.

"Why is this?" said they, the one to the other.

"The devil himself only knows!" was the reply, in the demonstrative language of gentlemen of the craft. "Some incomprehensible freak of the genius, I guess. And well he may foreclose upon us, after such a haul as he made to-night. He can now

endow an asylum for the worn-out birds he has plucked."

"Yes; and doubtless you and I will be drafted as the first beneficiaries," said the listener with a bitter laugh, ascending the marble steps of a great house on Murray Hill, "for we are penniless."

At this hour, in the midst of the silent splendor of his deserted *salons*, Roland Dare sat beneath the flooding light of a cut-glass chandelier, his frame quivering with emotion, and his eyes aglow, as though they would burn into the paper he held before him.

"Devil I may be in part," he muttered, "but I am not quite all devil; and it is not yet too late to forsake my cursed allegiance to all that is foul. Let me see how this reads: 'The trial of Kenneth Darrow, Member of Congress elect, for the murder of his brother, Richard Darrow, ten years ago, will come off at the next regular term of the Circuit Court for — County, — District, Virginia. The distinguished social position of the family, and the previous moral position of the prisoner, will render this one of the most extraordinary cases of assize that has ever occurred in this country. The enormity of the alleged crime is, in many of its respects, without parallel; and no complication of extenuating causes can be expected to relieve the accused from the extreme penalty of the law. The excitement, already intense, is daily becoming greater; and summary proceedings are feared from an indignant community, should justice to the offender be long delayed.'

"Ha! ha! So! so!" chuckled Roland Dare. "There is such a thing as putting a stop to proceed-

ings that make haste to the end. There never was a Darrow yet, whose throat was made for a hempen necklace. I shall simply relieve the executioner of his agreeable (?) duty in this case. Three weeks? Very well; in less than three weeks I can wind up all my affairs here, and shall be in time to refute the claim of that skeleton upon my corpus. My revenge was long ago accomplished against Kenneth, poor fellow, and shall now be lifted."

He folded the paper, placed it carefully in his pocket, and ringing a bell for a servant, ordered all the lights extinguished, and with a lighter heart than for many a day had beaten in his bosom, ascended to his bedroom.

Strange, but ere he retired, the old feeling of innocent childhood came over him, and, as when at his mother's knees, he knelt by his bedside and whispered:

"And now I lay me down to sleep;
I pray the Lord my soul to keep;
And should I die before I wake,
I pray the Lord my soul to take."

The busy hum of morning life rose over the city, and the sun had reached its meridian height before Roland Dare awoke from his dreams; but when he awoke, he felt as if he had cast a heavy burden from him, and the stony calmness of his face relaxed into a smile that was almost winning in its warmth. Those who knew him wondered, but said nothing; for none were sufficiently courageous to dare disturb the demon which had been so happily exorcised.



CHAPTER XXX.

THE LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT.

AND you purpose leaving New York, Mr. Dare?" said the solicitor.

"Yes, sir."

"For what length of time?"

"Perhaps forever, sir."

"Ah! Rather a sudden movement, is it not?"

"Rather sudden, sir."

"What is the cause? Any unfortunate complication?"

"No, sir."

"Heavy losses?"

"No, sir."

"Debts accumulating?"

"No, sir."

"Why is it, then?"

"For causes best known to myself, sir."

"Ah, I understand. Tired of your present mode of living?"

"Yes, sir."

"And desire to make some disposition of your effects?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, here, sir, is a blank form."

The lawyer picked up his pen, and began filling it up.

“In the name of God, Amen! I, Roland Dare, of the city of New York, being of sound mind and memory, do make here—”

“Stop, Mr. Ingraham,” said his client, “I must inform you that ‘Roland Dare’ is not my name. It is but an alias, assumed for reasons of my own. You will please insert instead, Richard Darrow, Jr., now of the city of New York, formerly of — County, State of Virginia.”

“Richard Darrow!” cried the lawyer.

“Richard Darrow, sir. An elder brother of the Hon. Kenneth Darrow, member elect of the next Congress of the United States, now in custody for the murder of his brother Richard—the identical man who sits before you.”

“Is this not an imposture, sir?” said the lawyer, sternly.

“Not unless I am imposing on myself, sir.”

Mr. Ingraham laid down his pen, and fastened his gaze on the face of his client.

“Is it possible?” he exclaimed.

“More than possible,” said the man. “It is inevitably true. Will you proceed with that testament, sir? revoking in favor of my only brother, Kenneth Darrow, all rights, claims, and hereditaments accruing to me on the estate bearing the name of ‘Glen Darrow;’ comprising two thousand nine hundred and sixty-five acres of land—being a moiety of a tract purchased by the first of my name and family that emigrated to America—lying in the south-western

portion of — County, State of Virginia, bounded by the lands of —, —, —, —, with all the dependencies thereof, in the shape of personal property. To my cousin Bertha, wife of my brother, Kenneth Darrow, and her heir or heirs, I bequeath all my estate, real and personal, in the city of New York, comprising lots No. —, on — avenue, lots No. —, on — street, lots No. —, — avenue, with — shares of stock in — Steamship Company, — shares in — Railroad, — shares in — Silver Mines, — shares in — Insurance Company, and seventy-two thousand dollars in bond and mortgage, in trust for her benefit, in the hands of —, and —, and —, bankers. As executors of these bequests I name my father, Richard Darrow, Sr., of — County, State of Virginia, and —, and —, of New York.

“In testimony whereof we affix our signatures, this 29th day of September, 18—.

“RICHARD DARROW, JR.

“Witness, — —.

“Witness, — —.”

“But hold, sir; were the title-deeds of the real estate you own, made to ‘Roland Dare’ or Richard Darrow? This is important to know,” said the lawyer.

“To Richard Darrow, sir. You may rest assured I anticipated any and all technicalities, which might hamper my right to devise my possessions.”

“And is this all, sir?”

“All of which I have any knowledge. I do not

owe ten dollars in the world, and can easily settle up with my creditors. My friends here will witness my will."

He passed the lawyer a munificent check for his services, and otherwise thanking him, left the office.

"Remarkable man!" said the lawyer, closing his door. "*Very* remarkable man!"

A few days after this, the red flag of the auctioneer was flung out from the stoup of the hunch-backed gambler's house; and sanctified feet trod the rich velvet carpets; and dainty hands, which were held up in holy horror at his manner of life, fingered the heavy satin curtains; and elegant figures surveyed themselves in the plate-glass mirrors; and delicate lips touched the rim of gold and silver and glass that had been breathed upon by lips defiled by muttered oaths.

Roland Dare was not present at this invasion of his mysterious abode; and between comments on his singular refinement of taste in the appointments, and the debasing use to which his home had been appropriated, the vendue of his goods proceeded, until from cellar to garret there was nothing of his, but what had changed ownership.

"Remarkable man," said the auctioneer.

"Very remarkable," said the clerk.

"Yes; very, very," was echoed on all sides, as one after another passed through the massively pillared stoup, and the doors were shut.



CHAPTER XXXI.

“MULTITUDES, MULTITUDES IN THE VALLEY OF
DECISION!”

LONG before the hour of the calling of the court, the court-green was filled with the anxious and the curious, who had flocked to the village to be present at the trial of Kenneth Darrow; and on the tiptoe were they of expectation, for the sound of the crier's voice, and the moment when the iron doors of the prison should be unclosed, and the culprit passed out before the gaping crowd.

At length the time came; the crier sounded his call, and shortly thereafter the sheriff with his assistants led the prisoner forth, when, like

“The Dead Sea path of the Exodus,”

the gazers fell back on either side, to permit the *cortège* to wend its way to the House where justice is supposed to be administered.

Kenneth Darrow had lost none of the proud dignity of his bearing, by the position in which he was placed. With head erect, and bowing occasionally to an acquaintance, as he passed between those phalanxes of eager, questioning faces, the doubts of some gave way, and a feeling of burning indignation against his accusers, surged up like the swelling tide of an ocean storm.

"The stars must begin to fall, and the moon turn to blood," said a rough-looking but honest countryman, "before I shall be ready to believe *that* man a murderer. It seems, if a criminal at all, the grand jury might have found a milder form of indictment in manslaughter."

"Suppose it should all be a mistake!" said another in an undertone, as if afraid to trust his speech to the winds. "Wouldn't it be dreadful?"

"Better be a mistake, my friend," said a stranger who had overheard the remark, "than that the crime alleged should be proven against him. Better anything—anything, than that."

"Don't expend your sympathies too generously," said another, "who for a pretence made long prayers, and loved greeting in the market-places." "Satan," we are told; "sometimes borrows the livery of an angel of light."

But all were pressing to the door of the courtroom; and soon vestibule, halls, galleries, and chambers—every available spot, was filled by those who awaited impatiently each moment towards the opening of the trial.

As usual in cases which stir to its deepest depths the feeling of a community, the impanelling of a venire was found to be a matter of exceeding difficulty. It was hard to find a man who had not already formed and expressed an opinion as to the guilt or innocence of the accused, from the rumors in possession of the public. Scores of men were summoned, and scores dismissed, before twelve could be decided upon as eligible to the office of a jury.

The introduction of the witnesses being the next step of importance, Mrs. Johnson, attended by her sons George and Samuel, myself, and others, was brought in.

Overwhelmed by the knowledge of the fact, that her unwary love of gossip had brought Kenneth Darrow into the situation in which he was, and had elevated her into the position of chief witness against him, she trembled from head to feet like an aspen leaf in the wind; and it required not only all the moral support that the presence of her sons could afford, but the whispered encouragement of some of the bystanders, to give her strength to stand the trying ordeal through which she was passing.

The Holy Book was placed to her lips—the oath administered—to “speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth”—and pale with affright, her teeth chattering in her head as if shaken by an ague, she awaited the legal inquisition. It was not unduly rigorous, but nevertheless gave rise, all along its course, to technical objections which awakened discussion, more or less spirited, for or against the prosecution, until the lengthening shadows of the declining sun counselled an adjournment of the first day’s proceedings.

Barbara’s evidence was to the effect that she would be sixty-two years old “come the 20th day of next January;” that, she had been, all her life, more or less dependent upon the Darrow family; that, she had known Richard and Kenneth Darrow from the moment of their birth; that, Richard was always a wilful, hot-headed, malicious boy, who delighted in nothing

so much as the mortification of his brother, whom he envied and hated ; that, Kenneth had ever been patient towards his brother's injustice, and forgiving of his injuries, at all times, until, as she believed, arose the rivalry between the brothers for the hand of their cousin, " Miss Bertha Hastings—who was beautiful enough and good enough to be an angel, if she had only had wings ;" that, this was the state of feeling between them, when the family returned from Europe, and preparations were being made for Kenneth's marriage to Bertha ; that, Bertha became very melancholy, and that she (Mrs. Johnson) suspected Bertha had more cause than the world would have dreamed, for her dread of Richard ; that, a day or two before the wedding, as she passed through " The Glen " woods on the opposite side of the gorge from the mansion-house, she saw Kenneth walking very rapidly from the direction of the bridge, with a pistol in his hand ; that, she saw him fire six times, but did not see at what he directed his aim ; that she was so much frightened, she was enchained to the spot—saw him when he flung the pistol from him, and then something else from the " right-hand pocket " of his vest—which she supposed was the knife ; that, from that time Richard Darrow was missing ; that, she dared not make mention of these facts to his parents in all their grief for his absence, for reasons which could be readily divined ; and that, not until seven years had elapsed, could she summon resolution to look out for what Kenneth Darrow had fired at, when, behind " the old fallen hollow black-oak tree," she found the " skelepin, bleached as white as the snow that then kivered the yearth ;" that, when

he returned again from Europe "Miss Bertha had clean gone crazy;" that, her "little gal—the prettiest child she ever did set eyes on, was the livin' image of Richard—only she did not have Richard's wicked eyes, and wickeder ways;" that, she "couldn't help a-thinkin'—God forgive me!—that Mr. Kenneth, when he couldn't stand Richard's devilment any longer, had put his brother out o' the way." This was all. Mr. Kenneth was "the tenderest-hearted man a-livin'"; had been as good to her as "one of her own boys," and nothing but the strongest provocation could have induced him to imbue his hands in Richard's blood.

"Then you did not see Richard Darrow fall by the shots fired from the pistol of Kenneth Darrow?" said the prisoner's counsel in the cross-examination.

"La, no, sir! I never said any such thing."

"And you are not positively certain he did come to his death from those pistol shots?"

"I couldn't help a'thinkin' he did, from all I know'd."

"Do you know any more than you have told the court?"

The old woman's indignation was roused, and bristling like an indignant lioness, she turned savagely upon the attorney.

"I swore to all I had to say, an' you can't get *nothin' but* the truth out o' me!"

"Be careful, old lady," said the Judge, "else we shall have to commit you for contempt."

"Indeed, sir," said Barbara, "I don't know what you mean by that; but the Lord knows I don't disrespect you."

“Very well,” said the Judge, laughing. “Go on!”

“You never saw Richard Darrow after that time?”
said the attorney.

“No, sir!”

“And no one else saw him?”

“Not that I knows on, sir.”

“You never heard Kenneth Darrow mention his brother?”

“Lord love your blessed soul! no, sir! He never come a-nigh callin’ Richard’s name. Not one word of it!”

“But you saw him breaking away the bridge? You have failed to say anything about this?”

“Yes; to be sure I did! An’ I asked him what on the yearth he was a-doin’ that fur; an’ he said he didn’t like that bridge: it made him onhappy.”

“And you suspect the little girl to be—?”

This question was objected to by the prosecuting attorney, and after several hours’ debate, in which the sanctity of the Darrow home was ruthlessly laid bare to the pitiless eyes of the public, the question was ruled out, and Mrs. Johnson’s examination concluded.

Kenneth Darrow’s father’s evidence was to the effect that, the dispositions and propensities of his sons were, as had been represented by Barbara. That, the exciting cause of Richard’s disappearance was what she had suggested, he had never suspected; but from certain evidences left behind him, he had reason to think his son had returned to his home after it might have been supposed he had been shot, from the fact that his suite of apartments, open the

previous evening, were found locked the next morning; and from that time the keys had never been seen in the house. And that he still lived, he had some reason to hope, though he had never heard anything from him, from the date of his disappearance.

My own relations with the Darrow family, presupposing an intimate acquaintance with their private history, I too, had been subpoenaed as a witness; but the questions put to me, being rather of a general than a special character—inasmuch as my advent at The Glen had been so many years after the supposed tragedy—I was spared the committal of Kenneth Darrow's confidence.

His demeanor during the entire investigation into the testimony had been quietly self-possessed, evidencing an interest in the process, with none of the nervousness which usually attaches to guilt.

My position when on the witness' stand, being such that I could obtain an occasional glimpse at his face, I noticed that he bent anxiously forward in the dock, resting his elbow on the railing and his chin on the palm of his hand, while he listened with absorbed attention; and when the inquisition was ended, he leaned back with a sigh of relief, and gave me a look which implied volumes of gratitude.

The argument in the case was searching, scathing, and protracted. Investing every item of testimony with the highest coloring of sentiment; imbuing the horror of the crime in the romance of consanguinity, and doubly dyeing the criminal in "the insanity of his young and lovely wife"—by the prosecution, Kenneth Darrow was made to appear so iniquitously

black, as to shame the face of day, and to throw a veil over civilization and Christianity. Every trick of the craft, every quibble common to the profession, every artifice known to jurisprudence, was brought to bear against the possibility that the skeleton found could be other than that which was once clad with the flesh, and formed a tenement for the soul of the brother of the accused; or, that Richard Darrow's absence could be accounted for otherwise, than in his death by the hand of Kenneth.

The counsel for the prisoner, on the other hand, made a most careful analysis of the evidence—rebutting fact against fact—unravelling the finely woven tissue of his adversary, and exposing the fallacy of pitting a concatenation of circumstances—vague in themselves at best—against mere possibility; and admitting the deed, drew a vivid picture of the terrible incentive understood in the case.

For and against, for three whole days, the twelve men in front of the bar had been harangued—the tide of decision ebbing and flowing—in favor of and opposed to the prisoner—until, in a vast burst of eloquent appeal, the counsel for the prosecution demanded justice to an outraged public, despite all the pleadings of mercy for the man on trial, and that the case should be given to the jury.

At this point there was an unusual commotion outside of the bar.

“Let the man pass! For God's sake, let him pass!” said a man to the sheriff, who was remonstrating with the unknown. “I verily believe the ghost of Richard Darrow is before us!”

With that, a man prematurely gray, and bent beyond a natural deformity which disfigured his proportions, hat in hand, made his way within the bar, and turned his face full upon the Judge.

“Wait a moment, if you please, your Honor, before delivering your charge. Perhaps your Honor may have forgotten Richard Darrow; but he had at one time the pleasure of your Honor’s acquaintance, and now desires to renew it.”

The Judge arose from his chair, and bent over a railing that divided his seat from the place on which the man stood.

“Richard Darrow!” he exclaimed.

“Richard Darrow, sir,” said the man. “Doubtless there are many present who remember ‘hunch-backed Dick,’ though your honor may not.”

“My son! My son! My lost boy!” cried his father in a feeble voice, rising up from his seat, and falling forward into a pair of friendly arms, in the attempt to reach the hatless man.

“Richard Darrow!” said the clerk, pushing aside the heap of papers before him; “is it indeed you?”

“It *is* I,” said the man, coolly; “though I dare say I have changed some, Mr. Campbell, since you saw me last. Ten years of adventure leave their mark on even the comeliest men’s appearance, and they cannot be expected to be more generous to the ill-favored. I have come to refute the claim of that skeleton to my identity, and to save these gentlemen of the jury the mortification of hanging an innocent man. If I know myself, gentlemen of the jury, I am Richard Darrow, Jr. I never was shot by my brother

Kenneth, though I do confess to a rough-and-tumble fight on the keystone of a bridge that spans the gorge of 'The Glen,' a dizzy fall, and a chilly plunge in the waters at the bottom. I did, however, manage to crawl out, the worse for a few bruises; that night made my way back to my paternal roof, packed a valise, and before the break of day, decamped, in the hope of an excitement which might bring my brother to justice then, and prevent his marriage. Failing in my designs, I drifted off—it does not concern the Court to know where; lived—it does not concern the Court to know how; and here I am, with the keys of my rooms in one pocket, and the mate to that pistol there, in the other;" drawing out the keys and the pistol, and laying them on a table in the presence of the Court. "The pistol, you will see, is in rather better keeping than my wedding-present to my brother, which seems to have seen some very rough usage."

His father took the keys from his hand, and then the pistol. The keys he identified; the pistol was marked with the name, Richard Darrow, Jr., and date, 18—; and, folding back his left sleeve, the son displayed to the father a well-remembered scar.

The identification of the son was complete. The father fell on the son's neck, and wept.

"As the Court is doubtless satisfied as to who I am," said Richard Darrow, his old smile of scorn curling his handsomely-formed lips, "it may be as well to suggest to our listeners that a little investigation into the ethnological question, which is now disturbing the brains of the scientific, would be of benefit in this community; so that they may make no more

mistakes between the skeleton of some wandering, snowed-up, unfortunate son of Ham, and his cousin-german of Japheth; especially when the latter has a shapely heel, a finer shin, and a more delicate cranium, though disfigured with a bow-shaped backbone. All this may be somewhat against the popular idea of a 'common origin,' but valuable, very, in special cases."

The crowd had pressed around in breathless silence. After delivering himself of this piece of withering sarcasm, and muttering something in reference to Medical Jurisprudence, which meant much, Richard Darrow sat down, and, for the first time, turned his face to his brother.

At this stage, the Judge's gavel rapped loudly on the table by his side, when, stating the singular cause, without more ado released the prisoner, and dismissed the Court.

A cheer, that echoed far out into the surrounding welkin, rang through the building; and amid tears from the strongest men, and congratulations from all, Kenneth Darrow took the arm of his counsel, and went forth to the world again, honored as he was honorable.

That night the elder son's rooms at Glen Darrow were opened, "swept, and garnished;" the *two* brothers slept once more beneath the ancient roof-tree; and from Bertha's rooms stole down to the grand old drawing-room the strains of the *Gloria in Excelsis*, while *Gloria in Excelsis* filled the soul of Barbara, as she smoked her cob-pipe, beside her great cottage-fire.



CHAPTER XXXII.

“AS A ROSE SHE HAD LIVED, THE SPACE OF A MORNING.”

THE strains of Bertha's voice died with the midnight stroke of the hammer of the great hall clock, and, retiring, I had been asleep little more than an hour, when I was awakened by a vigorous rap upon my door. Upon opening it, I found Patience in the hall, a lighted candle in her hand, and her face wearing an expression of mysterious import.

“What do you wish?” said I as, but half awake, she shivered ruefully.

“Content begged me to ask you to come right up to Miss Bertha's room, Miss Royal,” she said, with a yawn. “She says she doesn't know what can be the matter with her. Believes in her soul she's getting her senses again.”

“What is it for, tell me, Patience?” I cried.

“Miss Bertha, Content says, is talking as if she had her mind again, and is asking all about Master Kenneth, and Master Richard, and old master, and old mistress. Content, ma'am, says please put on your shoes quick, and some clothes, and come up with me.”

This extraordinary requisition disconcerted me not a little.

"Have you seen Mr. and Mrs. Darrow?"

"La, no, ma'am! Content says it wouldn't do to disturb them; they've gone through so much lately."

"I hardly know what to do," said I. But fearing that Bertha was ill, having heard that physical illness sometimes relieved mental derangement, I made haste to throw on something warm and comfortable, and go to her.

It was the first time I had ever been summoned to her rooms, and with very uncertain steps ascended the stairway which led up to the south-eastern angle of the building—the fanciful realm of Kenneth Darrow's wife.

Her apartments were brilliantly illuminated by the tall wax candles she was wont to use, when arraying herself for the bridal that never came. With other rich articles of furniture, her harp and piano, swinging baskets of rare exotics, vases of the finest flowers from the garden and conservatory, and cages of singing-birds, were various costly articles of *vertu*—valued heirlooms, or the collection of foreign travel. Leading out of this, was a small and cosily-furnished bedroom, with hangings of rose-color and white; the full-length *chival* mirror before noticed; on the tables a few well-thumbed books, and all the refined ornamentation of the chamber of a woman of cultivated taste.

In this bedroom, clad in a night-wrapper of the finest cambric, with frills of soft lace around her throat and wrists, and on her feet Indian sandals of crimson velvet, embroidered with gold, Bertha reclined on a luxurious lounge, her heavy hair unbound and float-

ing in a rich wavy mass over her shoulders, and sweeping down to the bright-flowered carpet.

As I entered, she was humming a sad, familiar air, while a perplexed smile slightly knitted her fair brow, and gave a deep meaning to her large, lustrous eyes. At the sound of my footsteps, she lifted her head and kindly gave me her hand.

"I am happy to see you," she said pleasantly; "but excuse me; I really do not know who you are."

"Indeed!" I answered, scarcely knowing what I should say; "I am Eva's governess."

"And who is Eva?"

"Mrs. Darrow's little grand-daughter."

"Mrs. Darrow's little grand-daughter? And whose daughter?"

"Her son's daughter."

The smile of perplexity deepened on her countenance.

"The child of which of her sons?"

I evaded this question by endeavoring to withdraw her mind from the subject; but it was useless.

"Is it my child? I had a dear little babe once," she said.

"I have been told so," I answered.

She laid down again and sighed: "Let me see! Do I remember? Oh, it all seems so like a dream—a horrible dream—and has lasted so long! I have all the while been in search of Kenneth. But I believe my poor brain is getting clearer. Richard, Richard, how wicked he was! Poor Kenneth! All the hopes of his youth were blasted! Can you tell me where Richard is?"

"He is at home," I answered frankly.

"In this house?"

"I believe so."

"Then he has come back again?"

"Yes."

"Does Kenneth know it?"

"Kenneth knows it."

"He wished to make Kenneth believe he had killed him."

"How do you know this?" I asked.

"From this letter you will see."

She drew from beneath the pillow of her couch, a letter, yellow with age, written by Richard after his escape from the gorge; in which he had threatened both her own life and that of her husband. This, she had carried with her all the years of her mental oblivion—a secreted curse in her bosom.

"He did not kill Kenneth, then?"

"Oh, no!"

"It all seems like a dream!" she sighed thoughtfully. "How long ago was it? I remember everything, yet nothing so distinctly as to trust myself to speak of it. There came a time when something like twilight darkness fell over me, and deepened and deepened till my life grew like night; and since then I have walked as one that is blind. My babe—did it live?"

"Oh yes, it lived!" I said cheerfully.

"Where is it?"

"It is no longer a babe, and is in this house."

"No longer a babe! What do you tell me?"

"That your babe is now a little girl of almost ten years."

"A little girl!"

"Little Eva: my charge."

"A little girl! Ten years old! Eva! You amaze me! I thought my babe was a boy, and died. Can I see my child?"

"Not to-night. She is asleep. We should not awaken her."

She looked around.

"Yes; I believe it is night; but so much darkness has broken away from my brain, I feel it ought to be day—always day. I may see her, then, when she awakes?"

I could not promise this, and asked if she did not feel the need of sleep.

"Oh, dear no!" she exclaimed. "I feel as if I should never wish to sleep again. I have so much to do, and so little time to stay."

She had grown paler, I fancied, and the lines on her face had fallen, as if "the silver cord" was being slowly loosened.

"Do not ask me to sleep," she said. "I am not weary. I must see Kenneth, dear Kenneth, and—and my child. Did I sin? If so, God is merciful, and will forgive that for which heart and flesh have suffered so much! Years of darkness must have atoned for the sin of being a weak and defenceless woman. May He forgive poor Richard!"

The night wore on—my sad vigil continuing till the morning light broke in the East, and the sun hung his bright shield above the mountain tops. Then Mr. and Mrs. Darrow and Kenneth were summoned, and finally Eva, who had once thought the tenant of those rooms a denizen of the spirit-world.

Bertha had evidently become much feebler during the night—almost as feeble in strength as an infant—but the light of unobscured reason filled her eyes; and smiling as one returned from a far country, she hailed each, with the glad welcome of a warm and loving heart.

When Eva was brought before her, she raised herself up on her couch, and gazing long and wistfully into the face of the child, she drew her to her bosom, and burst into tears. “Bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh!” she cried; and after this convulsive embrace, she released the little girl, and with quivering lips and chin, like a timid and wounded child, she looked up at Kenneth: “Yes, yes,” she sighed, “I remember all, all now! All the deep agony I endured! Kenneth, my dear Kenneth, let not the innocent suffer for the guilty. Love, and be a father to my child!”

She fell back on her couch; a dark stream issued from the corners of her mouth, and placing her cambric handkerchief to her lips, full soon it was stained with great spots of blood.

“The end has come,” she whispered faintly.

Kenneth had rushed down to despatch a messenger for a physician, while Mr. and Mrs. Darrow busied themselves in administering such remedies as were within reach.

“Tell my husband to come back,” she whispered, as the flow of the hemorrhage ebbed; “I have much to say, and very little time in which to say it.” And turning to Mrs. Darrow—“Can I have some one to pilot me over the river?”

"Yes, my dear child," said Mrs. Darrow, well understanding what was meant in the request; and going down, sent immediately for the rector of the parish.

Between the ministrations of the priest and the doctor, the day passed off; the rites of the church were administered, and, as the last rays of the setting sun crimsoned the western sky, Bertha's face became suddenly illuminated, as though a new and blessed conviction had had birth in her soul, and lifting her small fair hand, she exclaimed, in a strong, clear voice, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit;" and with the smile, that in the effort had grown into greater radiance, the spirit returned to the God who gave it.

A solemn stillness settled over the chamber, and looking from one to another, the friends of the dead woman knew not what to say.

But the sorrow for Bertha's loss was of that chastened character which admitted no rebellious repinings.

"As a rose she had lived, the space of a morning;" and to the hearts of those to whom she was the more endeared by her infirmities, came the sweet feeling that the poor earth-bedimmed spirit would walk no more in night.

"Better thus, far better thus!" said Mrs. Darrow to Kenneth, who clasped the still figure of his wife in his arms, as though he could not yield it up to the cold embrace of death.

"Yes, better," he answered with a deep sob, "in God's will," releasing his grasp and bowing his head on her pulseless bosom.

A quiet funeral, attended only by a few loving and

sympathetic friends, commemorated the demise of Bertha Darrow; and a grave in the family cemetery, close beside the little mound she had tended as the resting-place of her babe, received her body.

"Ashes to ashes, dust to dust," said the minister, sprinkling a handful of damp mould upon the coffin lid, and soon spadeful after spadeful hid the silver-mounted casket from sight.

The last clod had been heaped on, and the mound smoothed into shape, and turning sadly away, all left the spot but the two brothers, who stood on either side, looking down upon the hillock that covered the body of the *one* woman, both had loved.

At length Richard looked up, and caught the eye of Kenneth. Extending his hand across the grave: "Kenneth, my brother," he said, "beneath this heap let us bury our old enmity. We have had enough of it! Let it here end!"

A hard, bitter feeling, for the instant took hold of Kenneth Darrow's heart, but seeing the look of deep contrition that rested on Richard's face, his bitterness relented.

"Let us bury our quarrels in Bertha's grave," said Richard.

Kenneth gave his brother his hand.

"It is enough;" said Richard. "Life has nothing more in store for the poor hunchback. Ask our father and mother to forgive all my infirmities, and forget all my follies. Good-by, Kenneth!"

I had turned aside to gather a spray of autumn roses to lay on the newly made grave, and Mrs. Johnson stood beside, sobbing in an undertone.

Suddenly, she clutched me by the sleeve, and uttered a sharp scream.

Before Kenneth could divine his intention, Richard had drawn from his pocket the pistol he had exhibited in court. I saw the gleam of the silver-mounting, the flash—I heard the report, and in another instant, Richard Darrow fell forward, his heart's blood moistening, and his right arm embracing Bertha's grave.

Kenneth sprang to the other side, and lifted up the body of his brother. The shot had been aimed in wisdom. A triumphant smile, mingled with a slight shade of scorn, irradiated Richard Darrow's already stiffening lips. In another moment life was extinct. They buried him there ; but remote from the side of Bertha.





CHAPTER XXXIII.

COUP D'OEIL, NO. 2.

MAMMA, which do you think the most becoming of my latest Paris dresses?" said a reigning belle of the National Capital, turning, on her piano-stool, from one of Verdi's finest compositions, to her mother, who sat at the centre-table, industriously examining the pages of a fashion magazine.

The mother laid aside her glasses, and in a half-abstracted manner looked up.

"What did you say, my daughter?"

"Which do you think most becoming—my *point d'Aiguille*, my *crêpe de Chine*, my *gaze de Chambéry*, or, that superb *ccil-blue poult de soie*?"

"What is it, my dear?"

"Mamma, are you dreaming? In which one of my dresses from Worth's, do you think I look best?"

"Why are you anxious to know?" asked her mother, provokingly.

"Can't you understand, mamma? You seem singularly beside yourself this evening. In the first place, I wish to look my best at Madame ——'s ball, which is to come off, you know, on Wednesday evening next."

"Why?" said her mother, angrily.

“For various reasons;” said the daughter petulantly. “It will be the most splendid ball of the season.”

“Ah!” said the mother.

“And I wish to create a sensation.”

“Your sceptre, as Queen of Hearts, this season, is undisputed, I believe; and I cannot tell why your solicitude to look well should be particularly excited, in prospect of this event.”

“Tra, la, la!—Tra, la, la!” sang the young girl, with a slight expression of *ennui*, springing up from the stool, and throwing herself on the sofa. “Mamma, indeed you are very stupid. Pray put aside that trash you are poring over. I suppose you have heard the latest society sensation is the Member from —— District, Virginia.”

“No!” said the mother. “I have never heard of him in society.”

“Well, until very lately, this invincible lion has not condescended to accept social patronage. He ignores the overtures of His Excellency, and consents to be present at Madame’s ball, because of some obligation for attention when abroad. They talk of him, I am told, for a foreign appointment.”

“Ah!” said the other, “I do believe I have heard his name mentioned recently, in connection with his legislative attitude.”

“They say his speeches bring down the House,” said the daughter.

“But ‘Members’ are not generally among our best society men.”

“Very true,” said the young girl, laughing.

“Some of them are not altogether *au fait* in drawing-room and dinner-table etiquette, and are rather *mal apropos* in the *salons* of fashion ; but this Mr. Darrow is said to be an exception to the ‘Honorables’ generally. He is refined, elegant, intellectual, handsome, cultivated, and they say is the owner of a baronial estate—one of the first families, and—”

“Ah !” said the mother, with a significant laugh ; “first families and baronial estates are not uncommon in his section of country.”

“But all the accessories which attach to him are by no means common,” said the daughter, warmly. “There is said to be nothing spurious about him ; and, in these times of humbuggery, a genuine gentleman—one to the ‘manner born’—is rare. And then there is such a delightful romance in connection with him.”

“Yes ; and what else ?” said the mother.

“They tell a story of the deadly hatred and jealousy of a deformed brother of his ; of his marriage to a cousin, one of the most beautiful and highly-accomplished women of the land ; of her subsequent insanity and long imprisonment in his father’s house, like a distressed lady of feudal times ; of his arrest and trial for the murder of this deformed brother, who had, years before, mysteriously disappeared ; of this brother’s reappearance in court, refuting a long tissue of remarkable circumstantial evidence, and of the release of the prisoner ; of the immediate death, then, of his wife ; of the suicide of the hunchback brother over her grave ; and, oh, dear me, I can’t tell how much besides, that is interesting.”

“Quite a thrilling story !” said the mother. “Suit-

able to found a latter-day novel upon. Where did you get it?"

"From that dear little talkative, vivacious Miss Semple, of Richmond, who says she knew him well when in the State Senate, and can vouch for the truth of every word of it."

"And anything more, my dear. I fear our *diplomat's* cause will suffer."

"O dear mamma, pray don't speak of that man to me. I am heartily tired of twisting up my tongue through the Slavonic consonants."

"Doubtless!—

"Oh, swear not by the moon, the inconstant moon,
Which nightly changes in its circled orb."

Have you anything else to say?"

"But," said the daughter, with a half sigh, "they do say Mr. Darrow's heart is invulnerable."

"What a pity!" said the mother, whose policy it was to be satirical with her queenly daughter.

"They say he never raises his eyes to a woman."

"And you wish to attack the citadel of this invincible fortress. What a brave girl my daughter is!"

"They say he excluded himself from all but his intimate friends, last winter," said the daughter, musingly.

"Becoming in him, surely, after the part he played in that romance over which you are raving," said the mother.

"Perhaps for the period of mourning," said the daughter.

"Perhaps so," said the mother.

"He has a kingly bearing," said the daughter. "It made my heart swell to see him rise on the Floor yesterday morning. The women are all crazy over him; so graceful is his gesticulation—his voice so deep, rich, and melodious! Were he not incased in so much native dignity, he might be an Antinous!"

"The contrast with your Cossack is rather disparaging to the latter, is it not?" said the mother.

"I wonder if he will refuse presentations at the ball?" said the young lady, straightening the coronal of dark hair which encircled her fine head, and glancing across the room in a mirror.

Her mother more carefully contemplated the group of colored figures before her, and closing the pamphlet, her eyes rested admiringly on the figure of her daughter, who now stood before the mirror, adjusting the folds of her rich silk dress.

"What do I think you had best wear to the ball, my dear?"

"Do tell me, mamma," pleaded the girl.

"Wear your *point d'Aiguille*. It will be most becoming to your style and complexion; and then, every one cannot afford a *point-lace* dress."

"You think I shall look better in it, than in my rose-colored *crêpe*?"

"I do."

"And my *parure*—what should it be?"

"Of pearls and wild roses."

"Do you not fear, mamma, that wild roses will be too youthful to be effective?"

"Nothing is more effective than youthfulness, to a man of a certain age."

“ Or rather of an *uncertain* age, mamma ? ”

“ Then have it so, my daughter. ”

“ But, mamma, it seems he had a Dora, in— ”

The young girl here made a pause, and a slight blush revealed the direction of her thoughts.

Her mother laughed softly: “ How do you know ? ”

“ Miss Semple says so. ”

“ And you wish to enact his Agnes ? ”

The daughter made no reply, but reseating herself at the piano, her fingers were running into a brilliant overture to a fantasia that occupied the next fifteen minutes, when the hall bell rang, and the coming in of visitors put a stop to the discussion of the handsome Member.





CHAPTER XXXIV.

HEART-REVEALINGS.

TIME, which assuages, though it may not always heal, the wounds common to the human heart, had done much towards lifting the dark cloud of sorrow which hung so heavily over Glen Darrow.

As—in the oft-quoted simile—the reed, after being bent to earth by the rude blast that sweeps over it, will again essay, when the storm has passed, to raise its head and woo the gentler breezes; so, after the first bitterness of her sorrow had been tasted, Mrs. Darrow was enabled to see the goodness of God in His providences to her, and to taste the blessed sweetness of resignation to His Divine will. In a spirit of philosophy, mingled with the Christian principle, she weighed the deaths of Bertha and Richard—saddening as they were—against the establishment of the innocence of Kenneth; and, seeing the light through the darkness which enveloped her, her heart was filled with gratitude, that by the lesser evil she had been visited.

But not so was it with her husband. The oak whose tall head is bowed—whose limbs are writhed and torn—whose roots are loosened and broken by the storm, may bud and blossom and put forth leaves

again, but it is nevermore the sturdy monarch of the forest, which defies the wind and growls at the tempest. No force of reasoning, no comparative blessing, could restore to him his wonted geniality of temper, or call forth the wonted cheerfulness of his spirit.

With Kenneth Darrow, the past was a sealed book. It was noticed that an early frost had settled thickly over his dark hair ; that the gravity of his demeanor had increased ; that at times his brow was ruffled and his sighs heavy ; that he was listless and abstracted, but he did not complain ; and some there were who charged him with heartlessness.

In the home-circle, the names of the sinning and the dead were never mentioned ; yet no one dared to think they were forgotten by those whose lips were impressed to silence.

Almost two years had flung themselves into the by-gone, after Bertha and Richard had found rest in the tomb ; and autumn roses were blossoming around the white stones that covered them. October was again flooding the landscape with golden sunshine ; the earth, from one field, was yielding up the ripened fruitage of her bosom ; in another, the brown mould was upheaved to receive the seeds of her increase. Great wains, freighted with corn, called forth the husbandman's happy "Harvest Home," as he drove them into ready granaries, on the one side ; while his seed-basket, on the other, betokened his care for the year to come. The quail piped in the fields ; the flaunting solidago lifted its yellow head above the gray stubble ; the "honk" of the wild goose, as he wended his flight southward, was heard in mid-air ;

the squirrel in the woods grew merry over his storage of nuts ; the leaves of the forest betrayed the first kiss of the frost-king ; the season was glorious !

“ May I hope to have the pleasure of a drive with you this afternoon ? ” said Kenneth Darrow to me, as we lingered at the dinner-table. “ I wish to give you a trial of my latest purchase—an importation of Tartar stock. He is a beauty ! Is splendid in harness ! Has the grace of a reindeer, and is as fleet as the wind ! I call him ‘ Telegraph ! ’ We will drive up to ‘ The Shades, ’ and see how the old place looks after the long absence of our friends. You will like it, will you not ? Be ready then, by about four o’clock. ”

At the appointed hour a light covered buggy, with Telegraph hitched to it, was at the door ; and James, proud of his charge, whispered caresses, and smoothed with his hand the soft, silken, dark-brown coat of the magnificent animal, that curvetted in his harness ; stamped restlessly, as though the earth were not fit for the tread of his dainty feet ; champed upon the bit, and flinging back his small head, threw off the white froth from his thin, pink, quivering nostrils, as the sea its snowy foam from rose-lipped shells. As Kenneth drew up the reins, after we were seated, the horse made a significant, bow-like plunge, and springing forward, we were soon distancing the stiff breeze that blew back his silken mane, as he flew along over the highway and through the forest glades that lay between “ The Glen ” and “ The Shades. ”

We were returning, somewhat saddened by the loneliness that rested over the ghost-tenanted old

homestead, but drinking in, with a sense of delight which nothing else can equal, the bracing air that came down from the mountains, with health and cheerfulness on its wings. Seeming to appreciate the influence of this *elixir vitæ*, Telegraph swept along over hill and valley like an incarnated meteor.

"How noble he is!" I exclaimed, as on the crest of a ridge, the wind lifting his black mane, he raised his head, shook it proudly, as if conscious of his beauty and strength, and darted forward. A moment more, and a sudden spring to the left gave me but a single glimpse of a white object that flashed across the road, and shutting my eyes against the danger that impended, I resigned myself to whatever fate awaited. Darkness came over me, and what happened I knew not.

With a confused sensation in my head—a sort of dizziness in which I realized a sense of utter helplessness, without physical pain, consciousness returned.

"Poor little girl!" I heard whispered in my ear, and the slightly tightened pressure of a pair of strong arms around me.

I dared not open my eyes, and despite the knowledge that something more or less terrible had come to me, a flood of undefined happiness welled up in my bosom in a surcharging tide, and forced great tears from beneath my closed eyelids.

"Poor little girl!" again sounded in my ears as the tears were gently wiped from my cheeks. I felt Kenneth Darrow's head bend over mine, and the nearness of his lips to my forehead; and, in affright, opened my eyes. He raised his head without look-

ing up, and the most tender sympathy rested on his countenance: "Forgive me, dear Harrie," he murmured, "for all this. But—I hope you are not seriously injured." A sense of the inappropriateness of my position coming to me, in a blush that burnt my cheeks, with more of an effort than I had an idea was needed, I drew myself from his arms, and with his assistance arose to my feet.

A sharp pang, as quick and fierce as the lightning's dart, shot from my wounded ankle through every nerve in my frame: the mountains swam, and the earth turned black around me, and sinking back in Kenneth Darrow's arms, I was again wrapped in insensibility.

When consciousness the second time returned, a large carriage was halted beside me, and wiping off the water which brought me to life, from my face and hair, Kenneth Darrow lifted me into the vehicle; and pillowing my head on a stranger's shoulder, I was conveyed back—passing *en route* the shattered buggy, and Telegraph, who grazed peaceably on the road-side, looking a little less proud in his tattered trappings.

The injury I had received proved to be much more serious than could have been anticipated. By surgical examination, it was discovered that the ankle was not only dislocated, but a small bone was broken.

As usual in such cases, my suffering was intense, and recovery tedious and doubtful. To beguile the time of my invalidism, Kenneth Darrow devoted his every spare afternoon to me—reading whatever I might choose for my entertainment—oftenest one of Shakespeare's plays, and sometimes one of the lesser

poets—Scott, or other master of Romance—varying the lesson as my caprice might dictate.

The last week in November found me still an invalid. "After another week you may venture on crutches," said the doctor by way of assurance; "and, in the course of time, may perhaps be able to walk without them. But such a malady as this is not to be relieved in a day. Take care of her, Darrow, and do not let her fret. Be patient. Good-by!"

But I did fret. The effect of the wound upon my nervous system was, to make me querulous and exacting; and, like a petted child, I frequently shed needless tears.

"How pale and spectral you have grown!" said Kenneth Darrow, after the doctor had left, taking my right hand and raising it to the light.

I looked up at him through the unshed globules that hung upon my eyelashes. His eyes were filled with a strange, melting light—his soul, seeming to wish to leap out through the great dilated pupils, which glowed with an intensity I had never seen before; and his voice took a tender, thrilling tone to its native richness I had never heard before.

"Harrie," said he, "you were never made to contend with the world—its roughness and harshness."

I turned my eyes toward him in a questioning manner.

"Eva is getting to be a large girl, and must soon be beyond your jurisdiction. Then what will you do?"

"I do not know," I replied, truthfully, for the instant forgetting, that Louis was pledged to take care of me.

"We do not wish you to leave us."

"But I shall have to leave, sometime."

"No; you need not, little one."

"But I must, Mr. Darrow."

"You must not. You are more necessary to me, than to any one else on this earth," he said, in a low tone.

"Mr. Darrow!" I cried, not comprehending his meaning.

"Harriet Royal, hear me!" he exclaimed, almost with sternness. "I love you. That is why I wish to keep you with me. Do you love me?"

"Yes, I do love you!" I replied, under an impulse which refused to permit my lips to prevaricate, or speak a direct falsehood; and not knowing that it was conventional to be coy, and deny an emotion that filled my soul.

His hand tightened its pressure on mine, and trembled with the thrill that shook his voice, as he bent nearer me.

"Then, Harrie, you will be my wife?"

The pupil of his eyes shone on me like firelit diamonds.

"I cannot! I cannot!" I cried, feeling that in doing so I had thrown from my lips the cup of life, beaded with all the happiness earth had in store for me.

"What do you say?" he asked, in a husky voice.

"I cannot, Mr. Darrow. I have promised to be the wife of another."

His hand pressed mine like a vise, and grew as cold and as hard as marble.

"To whom have you made that promise, Harrie?"

"To Louis de Russey," I whispered.

The hard, cold pressure of his hand slowly relaxed. I ventured once more to look up at him. The dark gray, beautiful iris had drawn itself around the pupils, and forced back the warm soul which had glowed and trembled there, a dull, leaden hue taking its place, in keeping with the sudden pallor of his complexion.

At length he rose to his feet, and stood at the head of the sofa upon which I lay. His cold fingers still feebly clasped mine, and his breathing was quick and hard. Resting his left hand on my head: "God bless you, Harrie!" he said, faintly. "God bless you, child!" With a sharp wrench his fingers closed on mine. "Good-by!" He was gone.

Like one stunned by a heavy blow, I lay insensible of what was passing around me. Patience came in, lighted the lamp, and shading it, placed it on the table by my side, on which was arranged my daintily-served evening meal.

"Will you have anything more, Miss Royal?"

"Did you speak to me, Patience?"

"My mistress wants to know whether you would like some boiled sora?"

"Assist me in getting to bed, Patience," I answered.

"Before you eat, Miss Harriet?"

"I do not wish to eat."

"Are you sick?"

"Yes; make haste; I wish to be alone!"

She assisted me to my bed, and awaited other commands.

"Put out the light," I ordered.

The girl hesitated, her countenance expressive of the deepest concern.

"Put out the light, and leave me to myself, if you please," I said, fretfully.

She obeyed, closing the door gently, and opening it again to see if she were needed.

"Do go!" I cried, fiercely.

She closed the door quickly, and I was alone.

Clasping my hands across my throbbing temples, I counted the night watches till the day dawned, and sounds of life were astir in the hall below. The rolling of wheels on the gravelled carriage-road attracted my attention, and peeping through the window-blinds, I saw Kenneth Darrow's phaeton at the door, and behind it the family baggage-wagon.

I pressed my forehead to the cold glass, and peered anxiously out. I heard his steps in the hall, and his orders to the servants in a subdued tone; and coming out he leaped into the phaeton, took the reins from James, and drove rapidly off.

When Patience came up to serve me, "Master Kenneth's gone to Washington!" she said, mysteriously. "I wonder what made him go so soon. Only yesterday, I heard him tell old master he shouldn't go for three days, yet. Do you want some breakfast this morning, Miss Harrie?"

"I suppose so, Patience."

"Are you as sick as you were last night?"

"Yes, I am."

"Then I'm sorry for you, poor Miss Harrie."



CHAPTER XXXV.

“I WAS A STRICKEN DEER.”

T was the dark hour “just before the dawn,” and mid-winter. The tall candles on either side of my *toilette* mirror burned with a dull, sickly glare, and cast an ashen pallor over my complexion, which seemed to deepen the purple circles around my sleepless eyes. My countenance wore an expression of forced resignation; my features were pinched from long suffering, and my fingers so cold and trembling that I could scarcely tie my bonnet-strings.

“Let me tie them for you, Miss Harrie,” said Patience, as she sympathizingly laid my cloak around my shoulders.

“Thank you, Patience; tie them if you can,” said I, sinking into a chair, glad to be relieved of the slight trouble.

“I must go in to see dear little Eva before I leave. I must look on her face once more!”

“And she doesn’t know you are going?”

“She knows nothing of it,” I answered.

“She will be dreadful sorry, Miss Harrie, when she wakes up and finds you are gone,” said the girl, clumsily adjusting a bow under my chin. “Please turn your face a little more to the light. My fingers seem

to be all thumbs this mornin' ;" realizing that she, too, lacked her accustomed self-possession, and was trembling from the surcharging of ill-suppressed grief.

"That will do," I whispered gratefully. "I shall not soon forget your many kindnesses, Patience. You will find some little things which may be useful to you in my drawers, as well as in that trunk in the corner. A few remembrances for others of the servants, I have marked with their names: I leave you to dispense them. Let me go now."

I held out my hands for my crutches, and being assisted by my handmaiden, I made my way noiselessly to the nursery.

A shaded lamp was lighted, and placed behind the curtains, which hung around Eva's luxurious bed. Her heavy curls flooded the delicate pillow, like flocks of shaded sunshine. One small creamy white hand was thrown up, and the tips of its fingers half buried in her golden ringlets; her lips were parted like the velvety petals of a half-open crimson rose-bud; her breathing was soft and regular, and a smile, as if the angels were whispering to her in her sleep, lighted up her beautiful features.

Disposing of my muffled crutches, I knelt by the child's bedside, and uttered a wild, short, agonizing prayer, that the God of my worship would shelter and shield, and bless and keep, and comfort and cheer, and solace and save this little one of earth's wanderers, so dear to me, amid all the trials and cares, and vexations and crosses, and revelations and mortifications, the future might hold in store for her. My soul tra-
vailed; my lips were motionless.

She stirred upon her pillow, then throwing up both hands and grasping the lace curtains, lifted herself with the convulsive spring common to one suddenly aroused from sleep.

"Miss Royal! Dear Miss Royal!" she cried. "What did you say?"

I sank back behind the head of the bed, and was silent. For a moment she looked around with wide open eyes, and seeing no one, with a perplexed smile, softly fell back on her pillow.

"I was dreaming;" she said. "I thought Miss Royal spoke to me;" and turning her face to the wall was soon asleep again.

I raised myself from my crouching position, gazed earnestly on the child to whom my soul so clung, and pressing a single kiss on a curl that had straggled over to the edge of the pillow, I gathered up my crutches, and, as noiselessly as I had entered, left the nursery.

There were a few sounds of life below; but the hall was dreary and cheerless with its one dimly lighted lamp, making the dark shadows seem more dense on the old wainscoted walls, and giving grim indistinctness to the pictures of field and water sports, that overhung fowling-pieces and fishing-tackle.

Mr. and Mrs. Darrow awaited me in the breakfast-room. A feeble light-wood blaze was struggling up between the hickory logs on the hearthstone; but the usually genial apartment, was as cold and sad, as were the faces of the master and mistress at either end of their generous board.

What breakfast I managed to take was against a

heart-protest, that I could not subdue, by any mental hint of physical need. Mrs. Darrow shivered and sighed, as she listened to the shrieking sweep of the wind which came down from the mountains and tore around the house like an infuriated maniac; and raising my eyes, I received from Mr. Darrow a long, searching, pitying look, that robbed me of the modicum of appetite with which I was then trying to force upon myself, a cup of coffee and a boiled egg.

The repast was finished in silence. Giving a hasty glance around the room, endeared by associations upon which memory would ever delight to dwell, I took up my muffled crutches, and made my way to the hall again, to find a long array of the servants of the establishment, awaiting a leave-taking. As one after another pressed forward and wrung my hand, I heard low sobs and received whispered blessings. James stood at the further end of the hall, his hand upon the knob of the front door, and a look of subdued sadness on his usually saucy face.

As I approached he opened the door. The wind whipped in with a whistling snap, and on its wings brought a blinding snow-drift.

"It is terrible weather in which to be out?" said Mr. Darrow, wiping the snow from his eyes, and drawing my shawl more closely around me.

"Yes, sir; for Uncle Moses and James and the horses," I replied. "I regret, more than you can imagine, that I should be the cause of exposing them to such a storm."

"Ah! Moses and James and the horses are sometimes accustomed to, and can stand rough usage. But

you—I insist on going with you, as far as the village, in spite of rheumatism."

"Then Mr. Darrow," I said, gravely, "you will give me serious trouble, and I positively object."

"Oh, my child!" said Mrs. Darrow, "if you would only consent," with great tears in her eyes and a tremor in her calm voice, "it is not yet too late for you to give up leaving us. Why can you not make yourself happy here?"

"I must go, madam!" I replied in a cold, relentless tone, suddenly assumed. "You would not have me forfeit my honor?"

"No! no!" she cried; "anything rather than that."

"I duly notified you of my intention to leave, and engaged my services elsewhere."

"I know it all," she murmured, "and would not have you make any sacrifice or compromise;" folding her arms around me, and bedewing my neck with her tears. "God bless you, child! If the world should ever prove rough or unfeeling, remember you have place in our hearts and home."

"Thanks! thanks!" I murmured from my heart rather than my lips, and releasing myself with a sudden wrench from her clinging embrace, I rushed out on the door-step. Uncle Moses was on the box, and looked more sorrowful than glum.

"Hurry up, James! Hurry up, boy!" he cried. "Do you see how these horses is a-shiverin'?" The carriage door was quickly opened; with a single bound I was inside, and, as if in sympathy with the suffering beasts that drew me away from the watching windows of the old manor-house, I shivered ner-

vously also, because I could not weep. We had left the lawn, and were rapidly descending the long poplar-bordered avenue, when my hand sought my pocket, and my fingers grasped Louis' last letter. Had I been stung by a viper, a sharper thrill of pain could not have run along my nerves and settled at my heart.

"Louis! Louis!" I cried in impotent wretchedness, sinking back into the corner of the carriage, "you have asked of me bread, and I have given you a stone! God forgive me! I did not mean to do this. Kenneth!" Why did that name come up then to increase my infidelity, and to steep my coward soul more deeply in dishonor?

The carriage had reached the brow of the hill beyond the river, upon which I had once seen Kenneth Darrow caught away—a dim speck behind the circling horizon, and looking out of the window, I sought another look upon the spot I had left. But in vain. The heavens were all black—the earth all white. A thick vapory mass of snow hung as a dense curtain between me and the home of Kenneth Darrow, and feeling like the shipwrecked sailor on the wide ocean, with hardly a bit of spar between him and the fathomless depths below—"Alone! alone!" burst from my lips, and I closed my eyes.

When next I opened them, the carriage had been halted before the village hotel; and giving James the reins, Uncle Moses sprang down from his seat, opened the door, and let down the steps for me himself—an unusual honor for the old postillion to confer. "I am very sorry to lose you, my mistress," he

said, taking off his snow-laden hat, and bowing with deferential dignity. "I had thought to drive you many a day from this."

I looked, but could not speak my gratitude, and leaving in his hand a broad piece of gold for himself, and a smaller piece for James, permitted him to ensconce me on the back seat of the waiting, old-fashioned, lumbering stage-coach, in which a few years before I had been a passenger *en route* for Glen Darrow.

"Good-by! and good luck to you, mistress!" was his parting, as one after another, a few discontented, grumbling passengers packed themselves around me. The driver took his seat, drew up the reins, cracked his whip, and the heavy snow-clogged wheels of the vehicle began slowly to move. I looked out. Uncle Moses and James, on the box of "The Glen" carriage, lifted their hats respectfully to me. The turn of a corner hid them from my view.

"Home!"

The word came back with its far-off, dreary sound to my ears; and the dull thud, like the first spadeful of earth upon the coffin lid, fell once more upon my heart.

"Are you ill, miss?" said a kindly-faced old gentleman, who heard an occasional sigh from me, and noted the ashen hue of my complexion. "This is hard weather for a delicate young woman to be out in. Take some of this"—producing a bottle of old Port from his satchel. "It may revive you. 'No?' Well, make yourself as comfortable as you can then." He pillowed my head on his extra shawl, and placed

his fur foot-rug under my feet ; and so we moved on over rock and rut, until the shrill shriek of the steam whistle aroused me from the semi-comatose state which had steeped my senses in the blessed oblivion of sleep.

The car-wheels played an incessant polka—a mockingly gay measure, as they rolled on and on, and on and on, over the southern portion of the classic, blood-dyed soil of the Old Dominion ; through the pine forests of North Carolina ; over the wheat and cotton fields of the Palmetto State ; the rich savannahs of Georgia ; and through the weirdly grand forests of Alabama and Mississippi, with their towering pines, and majestic live-oaks, studded with emerald tufts of mistletoe, and veiled with moss—their magnolias, their liodendrons, and palms—until the old familiar rush and roar of the Father of Waters fell upon my car—and ere long floating upon its ruffled bosom, the roofs and spires of the Crescent City greeted my sight, as the stars hung high in the heavens, and the gibbous moon mirrored its disk in the blue waters of the Lake. And by the time the great clocks struck the midnight hour, I was installed, under my new engagement, in one of the small, uncomfortable rooms appointed the assistants in the Finishing School of the famous Madame de Blande.

"I find her extremely capable and efficient," said Madame to M. de Blande, two weeks from that evening.

"Seems patient and industrious," said M. de Blande, looking meditatively through his glasses upon the columns of the last number of the *Courier des Etats Unis*.

Yes; I was *capable, efficient, patient, and industrious*, I discovered in the course of time, and so is the blind horse in the tread-mill; but he enjoys his amiability—not more than his work.

In truth, I was a machine that worked well, as many machines do, yet I had little pride in my accomplishments, and could not invest my performances with any self-reflected value; but moved to the hourly ringing of the bell, as would any other automaton have been compelled to move.

Could I ever escape from the thralldom that bound, and the drudgery that galled my spirit?

I despise myself in the recollection. Louis was willing to relieve me. Should I permit this wrong to him? To him I had promised the service of my life. How much of life can one give without the heart? Did Louis have mine? No. What should I do? Louis' hopes for happiness in the future were all centred in that promise. Should I break it? I had not the courage to do that; but my soul was armed to sacrifice, and I could smile as I laid my heart on the altar, and laugh as the smoke of its consumption stole up to my nostrils. This I could and would do, rather than wreck a prospect that, to a guileless, trusting young soul, seemed so fair; and when doubts arose of my strength to fulfil what I had determined upon, in the agony of my spirit I prayed:

"O God, who hears the feeblest cry of the feeblest of Thy creatures, help me to forget Kenneth Darrow!"

To Louis I owed duty: that should be rendered him. To Kenneth I owed gratitude; and that, in my heart of hearts, I could render him.

Automaton-like, I spent my days under the roof of Madame de Blande's finishing school ; but—

“ When the evening shades came on ! ”

and I could withdraw to my simple little chamber, I became “ Henrietta Rutherfoord,” building my castles as I pleased, and peopling them as I liked—“ Henrietta Rutherfoord,” who lived in the realm of fancy, forgetful of the blights upon the youth and happiness of Harriet Royal—whose imaginings were beginning to be caught up by the insatiable maw of the Press, as *bon mots*, or gems ; and over whose brow a slowly appreciative public was preparing to lay the laurel.

Harriet Royal felt the gnawing of the canker upon her vitals. “ Henrietta Rutherfoord ” took dainty draughts from Helicon, and now and then drank from the intoxicating spring of Ambition. They were not very good friends, but agreed to disagree, and lived without the world's knowing upon what points they clashed.





CHAPTER XXXVI.

MANUSCRIPT FOUND IN A BOTTLE.

MARCH, of that year, came in like a lion greedy for prey, and went out—not with lamb-like gentleness, but, as a lioness robbed of her whelps.

Never in the memory of the oldest, had equinoctial storms of such universal violence swept over the earth.

In northern latitudes there had been snow and rain and wind and tempest ; in southern, dense clouds had draped noontide skies in midnight blackness, and vengeful tornadoes had scattered destruction in their pathway. In the Arctic regions, rude old Boreas had played furious and pitiless pranks in his terrible course ; while the ominous red streak across the firmament, from the Mexique sea to the tropics, had been the lightning brand of ruin and desolation.

And there were terrible times with those who “ go down to the sea in ships.” Joining hands with the enemies to human life, old Neptune entered into gigantic gambols, and furrowing up the waves like a boiling caldron, tossed and played with the proudest vessels, as though they had been babes for his handling, or toys devised for his amusement.

It was on the morning of the 15th that the *Arion*,

one of the largest and most trustworthy steamers that ploughed the ocean, bound for New York, cut loose from its moorings in the harbor at Liverpool. On the second day out from Queenstown, under a stiff breeze, that carried her rapidly westward, she was spoken. "All well!" On the morning of the 21st she was spoken again, nearing the Banks of Newfoundland, riding the waters like "a thing of life," but battling against a storm that lashed her sides with relentless violence.

From that time, the good ship Arion was seen no more. Friends in America looked long and anxiously for friends who were coming to them; and friends in Europe waited long and tearfully for tidings from friends who had left them, but waited in vain. As days rolled on, and weeks and months, hope wrestled with hope, and hope against hope, until hope took the merciful form of doubt, and then died in despair.

Louis de Russey had been one of the ill-fated little colony that had taken passage on the Arion at Liverpool, and looked westward with a glad dream at their heart. In his last letter to me he had said: "I am coming, dear Harrie, and soon we shall commence life, not as twain, but as one flesh. I sometimes feel that I should not have asked you to be my wife, just when, and as I did; that sympathy for me in my ill-health and affliction may have impelled you to consent; and that, if your promise has proven galling, I ought to offer to release you. But how can I, when my life is so given up in thought, feeling, aims, purpose, and ambition to you? Yet this much I engage, dearest; that you *shall love me*, if the absolute wor-

ship of one heart can ever win the passing fondness of another. Then, if they can be prevented, do not let any delays come between us and our marriage. If necessary, fulfil your business compact, but let it be under the sheltering wing of your husband."

My resolve had been taken. I meant to marry Louis. In time, I hoped to love him, with the love that is born of duty, if not with the passionate clinging with which the heart singles out its one mastering affinity; and as days lapsed into weeks, and weeks into months, and half a year had settled itself back in the realm of the Past, I buried the ghostly corpse of duty, and shed bitter tears over the mound that covered it.

The autumn session in Madame de Blande's school had opened, and promoted to a more responsible position, I commenced again the teacher's routine. A settled calmness of spirit had taken possession of me, and was never shaken off until Harriet Royal doffed her identity to Henrietta Rutherford, when the work of gairish day was over, and the evening lamp shed its light over the creations of her brain.

One November noon at recess, while enthroned as monitress in the grand tribunal seat, in the great hall of the institution, and listening to the cheerful clatter of the voices, and the silvery laughter of two hundred and more young girls—free from care—with the wine in the cup of life beaded to the brim, with sparkles of expectant happiness—I drew from my pocket one of the journals of the city, from the contents of which to wile away the hour, seldom marred by a gross offence.

Almost mechanically my eyes ran over the column of Congressional items, until they rested on the following :

“The most promising and progressive man in this body,” said a correspondent of the Lower House, “is, undoubtedly, Kenneth Darrow, of — District, Virginia. Impelled *only* by motives of patriotism, he has risen above faction, spurns the career of the demagogue, and as an independent leader, regardless of sectional or party influence, is making such a name for Statesmanship as few of our public men, since the early days of our country, have been entitled to. He is mentioned in his State as perhaps the only man suitable to fill the coming vacancy in the United States Senate ; and there are those who confidently expect to see him, in the course of time, clad in the robes of the Presidential office. And no man in the nation, by virtue of intellect, intelligence, or unselfish devotion to his country and its interests, is more worthy of the Chair of the Chief Magistracy.”

My heart was filled with pride in my friend, and with gratitude to those who so appreciated his merits ; but between Kenneth Darrow and myself, I felt that a great gulf was fixed, nor did I, in the life I had mapped out for the future, desire that it should be bridged.

Another paragraph, copied from a London journal, again arrested my attention :

“WHIO IS HENRIETTA RUTHERFOORD ?

“We cannot daily listen to the notes of a song-bird

which delights the ear with its melody, and thrills the soul with gladness, without the wish to know in what tree is its perch, whence it came, and what its species: neither can we listen to the talk of a philosopher, or the story of a charming romancer, without wishing to see his face, and know his name.

“ ‘Henrietta Rutherford’ has flung her songs off from her pen, as the bird its gushing lays; has woven her poems, and taught her philosophy, and told her stories, delighting the ear, instructing the reason, and charming the fancy—and yet to the outside world she is a myth. ‘Henrietta Rutherford’ is most probably a woman, but may be a man; for, while in much to which that signature is affixed, there is the head of a man, in much more is there the heart of a woman; the sweet, sympathetic nature of a woman who has known sorrow, and has grown better under it; the soul of a woman that has been tried by fire, and has come out from the furnace without the smell upon its vestments.

“ Why cannot ‘Henrietta Rutherford’ unmask from her disguise, and wear the laurels a grateful public would fain place upon a brow so worthy of them? or, if indeed, the name which has brought pleasure to so many hearts be the real name of the writer, why can she not permit the world to know her hiding-place, that it may look once on her face and be satisfied? America should be proud of such a child. She is respected and admired for the intellect which beams through every line that has emanated from her pen, and loved for the good and the beautiful that entwine themselves around like a wreath of

blossoms, shedding the rich perfume of the roses of Cashmere. England would gladly, if she could, claim this child of genius."

My soul was kindled at the moment with a glow of vanity, and it might have been that a deepened blush suffused my cheeks, when the tears arose and glassed over my eyes, as several of the girls nearest me shied carefully away, looked over their shoulders at me, and whispered significantly.

I held the sheet up between me, and my spectators, and through the dew that bedimmed my sight, a third paragraph riveted my gaze :

NEWS FROM THE ARION.

MANUSCRIPT FOUND IN A BOTTLE.

At last the missing ship has been heard from. A vessel, not long since, arrived in the harbor at Havana, bearing with it a large bottle, corked and sealed, containing the subjoined note, written in pencil. [We are not prepared to vouch for its authenticity, but about the note there is a *vraisemblance* of truth; and if by fortunate chance the person addressed should be reached, the world would be indebted for some acknowledgment.]


"DEAR HARRIE :—Hoping, through some kind Providence, that this may reach you, I cannot neglect, in this, the last hour of my life, the testimony I would fain make to you, face to face. The nobility, worth, gentleness, and true womanliness of your nat-

ure, I have never seen excelled, and in rare instances equalled. Since first I knew you I have loved you. My love has never known the shadow of variable-ness. Let this suffice. I cannot say more now. Take it as the declaration of the dying. For five days we have battled against wind and wave, and clouds and rain. Until within the last hour we have had hope that our noble vessel would outride the storm, which has swept off rigging and masts, till, a dismantled wreck, with the shaft broken, and a fearful leak yawning beneath, she is rapidly settling. The pumps are useless, and worse than vain it would be to risk the boats. In another hour the waters will have closed over us. I shall die in the full exercise of the Christian faith, and in the blessed hope of a resurrection to a better life beyond the tomb. Comfort my mother, my father, and my sister, as best you can. Bear to them the deathless love of a son and brother. God bless you, my darling! The waves already wash my feet. A bottle, a cork, a piece of sealing-wax, and a few matches, are all that are left me. Good-by, Harrie! My greatest love and my last fond prayer, are for you. I shall bear your image in my heart into eternity.

“LOUIS DE RUSSEY.”

While reading, my eyes felt as if lighted with fire; when through, the fire was extinguished; the hall, filled with gay, laughing girls, reeled around me, and then came darkness.

A pungent odor restored my deadened olfactories



"You are ill?"

"No; I believe
—the paper!" I
the sheet that con

"You are ill," p
you think you can

"Yes," I smile
tears. With an a
and taking her arm
one of the male tea
up to my room, w
tween my trembling

For the next four
me, and in delirium
I am sure I am than
to rob my heart of
of the weight that la
my sick-bed, and I
cowardice of guilt, I
hated myself.

A full revelation w

tered sheet glimmered the magic word, "Immortality."

I closed my eyes against the sight, and my soul went down into the deep with poor Louis, as the waves of time, beat cruelly upon my devoted head.

"You are weary, this morning," said Miss Provost, as the January sunlight streamed in through the window of my class-room. "Allow me to take charge of your duties for the day."

"No, thanks; I feel better when every moment is employed," said I, gratefully.

"We fear you will break down again."

"No, I shall not."

The back is fitted to the burden, thank God! That night "Henrietta Rutherford" commenced a new story, "The Record of a Heart." The story pleased the critics and the public; and "Henrietta Rutherford" laughed, while Harriet Royal wept.



HENRIETTA



HOW

when

to you

who had gained
world deemed

“But take some
consider it, before

Mr. Brompton
ration I have just
future happiness.

“It is altogether
reflection. My an-

“You believe in

“Assuredly I do
out even a claim upon

Mr. Brompton's

whether woman, with the falseness and duplicity inculcated in her by fashion and society, was entitled to the sovereignty of man's heart. I became almost a sceptic, and could not control a bitter smile, when I remembered I had ever esteemed her in nature and propensity as man's superior. But association with you, Miss Royal, and noting your wisdom, with the absence of what is termed worldly wisdom—your purity of thought—your singleness of purpose—have worn away scepticism, and battered down all the prejudices indulged by me against your sex. In you I have found a *true woman*, one formed, it seems to me,

“ ‘Of every creature's best ;’

one who will dare to do right ‘though the heavens fall.’”

“I thank you kindly for your good opinion, Mr. Brompton,” I replied, deeply humiliated by his mistaken estimate of me ; “but I cannot marry you.”

“Why, Miss Royal ?” he asked pleadingly.

“You pain me, sir, by asking this question,” I replied, “and I hardly dare permit it.”

“I love you ! Take this to heart !” he persisted.

“It grieves me to tell you that I do not return your love,” I answered with an emotion I could not control.

“I am willing to trust to time and my own devotion to win your love.”

“Impossible !” I cried almost petulantly.

“Impossible !” he echoed. The lines across his brow tightened, and his voice took a colder tone. “With my love, I offer you a home, such as few wo-

men could have the courage to reject ; wealth sufficient to satisfy the most avaricious of your sex ; position that the most ambitious could not despise, and a name to which is attached nothing that could tarnish or dishonor, by act of any of those from whom I derived my existence. All that a worldly woman might ask in a husband I have to give ; and I would wear 'Henrietta Rutherford's' love as the brightest jewel that was ever set in a lonely man's heart or home."

"Henrietta Rutherford, Mr. Brompton?" I said, with an indignant feeling overcoming the gratitude which had arisen in my heart towards the noble, generous man at my side. "Henrietta Rutherford? He who wins Henrietta Rutherford must first win Harriet Royal."

He grasped my hand, and pressed it against his wildly beating heart.

"I woo and would win Harriet Royal for my wife ; and Henrietta Rutherford I would woo and win away from herself. No woman's heart can be entirely content with the poor husks that, what is called *Fame*, has to offer, while beside her flows the gentle, quiet stream of domestic life. She would now and then bathe her weary limbs, and quench her parching thirst from its sweet waters. When the honeyed sayings of the stranger-public fall upon her listless ears, and like the Dead Sea fruit, turn to ashes on her lips, there is that in her nature not to be satisfied, without home and the dear delights which cluster around the hearthstone."

I had arisen to my feet, and arising also, he stood before me.

“Plead with me no longer!” I cried. “I can never return the love with which you would endow me, and therefore it is better it should never again be mentioned.”

“Could you ever love?” he asked, passionately.

“I cannot tell.”

“Did you ever love?”

“Yes; I have loved,” I said sadly.

“Is the man you loved still alive?”

I turned away to avoid his piercing gaze, and was silent.

“Tell me!” he exclaimed, in a whisper.

I wished not, nor dared I, prevaricate.

“I hope so. I believe he is,” I whispered, and ventured to look up in his face.

He had grown ghastly pale, and the nerves around his mouth twitched convulsively.

“And that is why I am rejected?”

“No; yes; no;” I answered, in the futile attempt to evade a direct reply to his question.

“Then I have no hope?”

He staggered back to a convenient chair, and wiped away with his handkerchief the large beads of perspiration that had sprung out to the roots of his hair; then rising suddenly, he wrung my hand, flung it from him, and prepared to rush from my presence.

I called him back to me.

“Are you angry with me?” I asked, as a child repentant for mischief done.

“No!” he cried. “I would to God I could be angry with you.”

“Then you will still be my friend?”

“No! no! no!” he whispered, hoarsely. “I cannot, I cannot! I must be allowed to love you, or I can be nothing to you. It is useless to reason about this. I have loved you with the love of a *man*, not with the love of a *boy*; and I *can* not change my feelings as I do my coat.”

The nervous twitching had left his lips, and in its stead a cold, hard expression had grown over them.

I extended my hand timidly to him. He clasped it with a sudden gesture, pressed it to his lips for an instant, and was gone. What had I done? Had I been made to scatter wrecks in my pathway? God forbid! I sank down into the chair that had been occupied by Mr. Brompton, and bowing my head in my open palms, I essayed a prayer that my Heavenly Father would teach and guide me.





CHAPTER XXXVIII.

WHAT HAPPENED IN SIX WEEKS.

THE third term of my engagement with Madame de Blande was drawing to a close. Worn and weary from continuous exertion, I sat at the window of my little room, looking out upon the housetops ; hearing, but not listening to, the hum of business that swelled up from the streets ; and drinking in with a sense of comfort, the breeze that came, laden with coolness from the lake, and perfume from the flowers.

I had left the door ajar that the draught might play through the small apartment, and reduce the temperature ; and while in this listless mood, a bright young girl, with an open letter in her hand, ran up the stairway, and stood timidly in the hall. It was Clare Carroll, the acknowledged pet and pride of the school.

“ Come in, Clare,” I said, glad of the disturbance to thoughts which tended to unhappy brooding.

“ I have something to tell you,” she cried, “ something that makes me very happy.”

“ Then let me be happy with you,” said I, returning the pressure of a pair of soft, white arms, laid lovingly around my shoulders.

“ I have just had a letter from mamma ; she says

in this letter that papa joins with her in inviting you to spend the summer vacation with us. I have written them about you many times. They know I love, and wish to have you at our home. Will you go? We may, or may not, travel after a month or two; but at any rate, we claim you until Madame's next session commences."

I hesitated; and perceiving this, she continued:

"You are no stranger to them. Say 'yes.'"

"Where do you live?" I asked, by way of taking time to consider the kindly proposal.

"In — Parish. Away up in the Têche country, where the lilies spring up as thickly as the daisies in Scotland. We live in a large, grand old house, with wide doors and deep windows, and long galleries—just in the centre of a great cotton plantation; on one side is a lovely park, and bounding all, the most magnificent forest in all the South. Our place is called —"

My heart was beating tumultuously.

"How long have you lived there?" I asked.

"Ever since I was born," said the excited young girl. "Papa bought it before he was married. He says it belonged to a little orphan girl, whose uncle defrauded her out of it, and indeed, everything she had. But what is the matter? Your face is almost crimson. Are you ill?"

"No, Clare;" I faintly murmured, "I am not ill." Memory had rushed back in a flood-tide. The home she had so eloquently described was the home of my infancy. Again I was a child at my mother's knee, making my simple orisons before the portrait of my

father. Again I beheld her form growing more ethereal and attenuated; her footsteps, weaker and weaker; her face paler and paler; her countenance more and more seraphic, as her spirit more nearly approached the spirit-world: I saw her figure robed in the white cerements of the coffin; the smile that played over her waxen features, robbing death of its ghastliness: I saw them tighten the screws in the coffin lid, and she was taken from me. And then the years of unloved childhood, and lonely, struggling womanhood rose up, with much more of darkness than day in their tintings. And all this, like a swiftly moving panorama, Memory held up before me.

Clare Carroll kept her arms around my neck, and looked, rather than asked:

“You will go?”

“I will,” I answered her.

The white arms more closely wound themselves about me, and a pair of rosy lips let fall a warm kiss upon my cheek.

“That is right!” she cried, rushing down the stairway, to communicate her gladness to others.

A week later we sat on the deck of a steamer that swiftly cut a deep furrow in the rough old bosom of the “Father of Waters,” and watched the declining landmarks of the Crescent City.

A week later, as the afternoon was thinking of lapsing into evening, I stepped down from the west gallery of Clare Carroll’s home, and took a well-remembered path to a fountain in the park, around which Nature had been redeemed from some of its crudity, by the myrtles, and jessamines, and ole-

anders, planted by my mother ; and where the spray fell over mosses as soft as velvet, and as green as emerald ; and laying aside my crutches, I pillowed my head on the arm of a rustic settee, and prayed that the spirits of the departed might hover over me, to soothe my weariness. From a reverie that supervened, I was disturbed by the sound of voices, echoing through the trees, in which I recognized that of Clare, an occasional rippling laugh, mingled with fuller, deeper, richer tones. Nearer and nearer the sounds approached my hiding-place, and almost as soon as I could regain a sitting posture, Clare stood beside me, with Kenneth Darrow !

“ A gentleman who is in search of you,” she said by way of apology—“ an old friend, who insisted on coming out to meet you.”

“ An old friend,” I replied to his questioning glance, and with greater pleasure than I felt willing to display even to Clare Carroll, I extended to him my hand.

“ I am welcome ? ” he said.

“ You *are* welcome,” I answered, in a voice that quavered, despite my effort to control it.

“ Now I shall leave you,” said Clare. “ Of course your friend will remain with us to-night.”

“ How did you hear of my whereabouts, Mr. Darrow ? ” I asked, after Clare had left us.

“ I went to New Orleans in search of you, and was told of your whereabouts by my friend Mr. Brompton, on the evening of my arrival in the city.”

“ Ah ! ” I exclaimed, surprised that Mr. Brompton’s interest in me was sufficient to concern himself at all in regard to my locality. “ I have not seen Mr. Brompton for more than six months.”

"He told me so," said Kenneth, "and why he had excluded himself from your society. He has long been an intimate friend of mine, and is a man whose singleness of purpose and nobleness of soul are rarely equalled. Perhaps you did wrong in not regarding him kindly."

"I did regard him kindly."

"Then why did you refuse to marry him?"

"Because I did not love him," I replied frankly.

The glad light that I had once before seen spring up into his eyes, to give his soul language through the dilating pupils, again glowed in them, as the sun's rays shot athwart the park, and shimmering through the fountain's spray, wove themselves in a halo around his head.

"You did not love Brompton?"

"I did not."

"Have you forgotten an old love you once acknowledged?" he said in a low tone.

In my advanced experience with the world, I had grown coy, and perhaps slightly coquettish, and if I could have done so, would doubtless have made a direct evasion of this question; but how could I, with those eyes looking down into the depths of my heart, and reading their answer there.

"I have sought you, Harriet Royal," he continued, "to know whether you are willing to reverse the decision made against me several years ago. The hindrance no longer exists. I love you now as I loved you then; and ask again, whether you will be my wife?"

What woman's tongue is not dumb when the heart

demands to speak? Without a word I laid my hand in his.

“For life?” he asked.

“For life!” I answered.

A flitting cloud just then left the face of the sun, and more brightly his shimmering rays fell upon us, as words of tenderness fell from Kenneth's lips, with promises, which have never been broken.

A week later, robed in white for my bridal, I stood at the window of the room in which I was born, and through happy tears, looked out towards the spot where rested all that was mortal of my father and my mother.

“Are you ready?” said Clare, in bridesmaid's dress, delivering to me an exquisite *bouquet*, from Kenneth. “What! in tears! They await us in the parlors.”

“In a moment,” I whispered; and kneeling there, I asked that God would bless and teach me all my duty as a wife; would give me strength for all the added responsibilities of the new life upon which I was about to enter.

Few are the words that are said when a woman loses her name and identity, in the dearer name and identity of her husband; but every little word has in it a volume of meaning—a significance that ends not with time, but runs through all the cycles of eternity.

“Those whom God has joined together, let no man put asunder,” fell with thrilling cadence on my ears; the golden pledge of marriage glittered on my finger; we knelt before the priest, while he invoked

God's blessing on our union—it all seemed so like a dream—a bright and blissful dream, and not less a dream when my husband folded me to his bosom, and whispered : “ My wife ! ”

There were few who witnessed our nuptials. Judge and Mrs. de Russey, and Charlotte, and Walter Traverser were there, and gave me their blessing ; and Clare Carroll smiled through great tears, as she took leave of me at the landing.

A week later, as the mountain-tops were flushed with crimson, and along their sides lay purple shadows, and all the evening atmosphere was filled with the sensuous purple haze rarely seen, except under the soft skies of Italy, I was awakened from a trance-like spell as the horses to the carriage plunged into the stream that washes the feet of Glen Darrow. I looked out. The friendly windows of the old mansion on the hill were all ablaze with the dying sunlight, and the notes of the lowing kine, as they wended their way to the milking-shed, were notes of welcome. “ Home, dearest ! ” whispered my husband, encircling my waist with his arm, and drawing me more closely to him.

“ Home ? ” The word had no longer a far-off, dreary sound to my ears, nor fell upon my heart with the dreaded thud.

With quickened speed, Uncle Moses urged his horses up the poplar-bordered avenue, and with more than his usual agility, James sprang down from his perch to open the carriage door, when it rolled up before the piazza.

There stood Mr. Darrow, with smiles and tears in his eyes ; there stood Mrs. Darrow, in her calm,

wintry beauty, her face beaming with happiness; there stood Eva, trembling with delight; there stood Emily and her mother, not less quietly testifying their satisfaction at my return.

“My daughter!” cried Mr. Darrow, “welcome to a father’s roof!” “My daughter!” said Mrs. Darrow, “welcome to a mother’s heart!” “Let me be your child!” exclaimed Eva; while Emily covered my first disengaged hand with kisses, and Barbara’s rude laugh was evidence of her congratulation, as from the background she proudly drew forward Barbara Johnson, Jr., and a pair of flaxen-haired, chubby twin boys, that she introduced to me as “Jemima Ann’s George and Sam;” in the same breath telling me of “baby Emily” at home in the cradle.





CHAPTER XXXIX.

KENNETH, MY KING.

SINCE then, fifteen years have winged their flight, and registered themselves with the sages before the flood; and yet so swiftly have they flown, it seems to me but yesterday that I implored strength and grace for my new life, and took the vows which made me the wife of Kenneth Darrow.

The tall boy, that I see from the west window, vaulting in his saddle with the ease and grace of a young Bedouin, and now distancing the wind down the highway, on his fleet and fiery young thoroughbred steed, is my son—Kenneth, our first-born—who will to-morrow complete his fourteenth year.

Moulded after the model of his father, how noble he is—how brave, generous, and gentle! He is getting almost too large for Emily Johnson's tutelage: delights to talk of the time when he shall enter college, and the lists for laurels in the academic field; of the time when he shall go out into the wide world and carve his name among those who make individual way to notice; who win *place* by deeds which show them worthy of it. My heart sometimes fails me, when I think of the temptations and trials to which

he may be exposed, and I would fain keep him by my side through life. But he scorns the thought of being tied to "mamma's apron-strings," and laughs at the fears to which I sometimes give utterance. Will he court danger in the moral world, as he does in the exercises which have so splendidly developed his physical nature? God preserve my child in the purity of heart and life, with which he will leave the shade of his father's roof-tree!

And that little sprite, now peeping timidly through the wicket, and doubtless, with half-envious eyes, as she sees her brother sweeping up the hill—the golden brown curls on her hatless head imprisoning the sunshine which dallies there—is our little Harrie—"ten years old last Christmas," she says, "and had a real *live* pony for a birthday present, from papa." Harrie is her father's pet. He says she resembles me; and for this likeness he loves her better; but she has his eyes, and I delight in gazing down into their mysterious depths, and seeing his spirit live in them.

I heard Harrie say this morning, as Kenneth shouldered his fowling-piece and went out with cruel intent against certain mischievous birds in the orchard and the corn-field: "I wish I were a boy: boys have so much more fun than girls!"

Poor little darling! Why should she have said this? Why should any woman wish to be other than a woman, when God so richly blesses her in being a woman?

And this little smiling, cooing cherub at my side under the soft white curtains of his cradle, is my

youngest—our little Royal—and “a royal baby!” his father says he is. He has just discovered the beauty in his rosy fingers, and makes queer grimaces as he turns his chubby little hands over and over before his astonished eyes. I wonder what the angels whisper him now, that his smile should ripple out into such a musical laugh! Well, well! I am a proud mother, and proud of the pride which grows out of glorious maternity. And I believe every true woman is!

How beautiful is Glen Darrow, in its lush, flowery, May-tide garniture! The mountains that begirt and hedge it in from the outside world, are chameleon-tinted, this morning, in rose and sky-color—as soft as velvet!—their billowy outline is almost undefined against the clear ether!—on their sides hang wisp-like veils of mist, sparkling with the sheen of silver gauze! Yes; my home is beautiful! Earth is beautiful! Can heaven be more lovely? Sometimes a doubt arises in my soul, but I shut it away from my thoughts, and try to imagine the glories that shall be revealed hereafter. Yet, if heaven should be no more beautiful than earth, neither soul nor sense will have cause for complaint. I look upon nature with only the spirit to adore.

But the fifteen blessing-crowned years of my wedded life have not all been unclouded by cares, or untouched by sorrows. The blare of the war-trumpet sounded in our land, and the nation went out to conflict, section against section, friend against friend, brother against brother. In the fell destruction of Mars, in his vengeful and furious course, Glen Darrow

did not escape scourging. Yonder field, between me and the mountain behind which the sun sets, and which has, for the last nine years, "enjoyed its Sabbaths," was once ridged with breastworks, and beneath its surface, "rider and horse, friend and foe," were blent "in a red burial."

But when opportunity is allowed her, Nature is ever ready to hide the cruel scars of man's ravages upon her bosom. Mellowing rains, and warm sunshine, and the snow that covereth like wool, wear away unnatural roughnesses, and have a most mysterious fashion of coaxing up from earth's hidden recesses a mantle of loveliness. That plateau, enriched with human gore, and the burial-place of so much strife, pride, ambition, virtue, valor, chivalry, hatred, glory, and patriotism, is now green with the tender verdure of spring, and thickly besprinkled with meadow-blossoms; and the little violet-fringed brook, whose waters were once deeply crimsoned with blood, now dances on as merrily in its course to the river and the sea, as though its gurgle had never been burdened with the cries of the wounded, or echoed the groans of the dying; and the copse which fringes our Acelanda's western boundary, once so sadly denuded of its numberless branching arms, and mutilated, crushed, torn, trampled, and bruised, has drawn mosses and lichens over the old cicatrices, and thrown out fresh branches, and put forth fresh foliage, so that eye of the passer-by may not note the marks of its violation.

Yes, Nature is generous in her benefices, accommodating in her adaptations, noble in her suggestions, charitable to the revolting, and forgiving of injuries.

With the God-given instinct of motherhood, through which she would provide for, shelter, and shield every child of earth, she is a veritable alchemist; by an unpatented process peculiarly her own, in both the moral and physical world, transmuting the base to the refined, she invests the homely with a charm, and the rugged with sublimity; and, as her smiling lips frame themselves to the exulting cry, "Eureka!" she dispenses her largesses without stint or grudging.

My thoughts wander as the pen glides over the paper, and in the maze of speculation through which they seem inclined to carry me, I almost forget that I am telling a story. Pardon, patient reader!

"The ploughshare," Kenneth says, "shall never again," during his ownership, "be driven over the field" upon which my eyes have been resting. It is a sacred spot that contains the ashes of the uncoffined host, which there "sleep their last sleep."

And once, there was a time, when my husband was brought home, they told me, "to breathe his last." There was a frightful gunshot wound in his breast; his left arm was fractured; and upon his right cheek he wears the scar of a sabre-thrust, received in a hand-to-hand encounter, at the head of his column.

All this was too much for his father. The tall forest oak, so often wrenched and torn, fell to earth to rise no more. Gathering up his feet in his bed, Mr. Darrow yielded up the ghost, and went to the place of his fathers.

And now, as my eyes turn to the east window, I see Mrs. Darrow placing her daily tribute of fresh flowers, bedewed with the tears of a wife's and a

mother's love, upon the graves of her husband and children. How tenaciously she clings to life, and how more than blessed is she, in the patience with which she endures earthly ills, and in the gentle ministrations of charity !

“ I am ready to go,” she says, “ when it shall please God to call me, but I am willing to stay as long as it pleases Him that I shall.”

One of the young battle-scarred braves of our country, won the heart and hand of Eva, five years ago. A letter before me, post-marked Florence, tells me in glowing language of their wanderings here and there over classic lands—lands over which my husband has led me—and of her happiness, in the perfect love and confidence of the man to whom we committed her.

Kenneth has changed much in the fifteen years of our married life. The old shadows of gloom and doubt, which once hovered over his spiritual nature, have all vanished ; and with this change in him, I also, see spiritual things with unscaled eyes. The thorn-crowned Christ in the chancel-window of the church in the grove, seems to look less reproachfully upon us now, than when first I met its sad, earnest eyes fastened upon me. We no longer tremble before the sacred emblems of our Saviour's Death and Passion, and feel that, through His atonement, we can dare take our place at the great Eucharistic feast. We have both changed much.

But hark ! I hear Kenneth's footsteps in the hall. I must put aside my pen and paper. He says he is jealous of these things, and does not like “ Henrietta

Rutherford half as well as he does Harriet Darrow ;” though the former is a timid little unobtrusive spinster, whose highest ambition is to make him proud of his wife. Well, there ! His hand is on the knob of my door.

“ Did you say, ‘ Come in, ’ Harrie ? ”

“ Yes, Kenneth.”

“ Excuse me. I do not wish to disturb you.”

“ Do not leave, if you please ; I have almost finished, and would rather talk to you, you know, at any time.”

He is bending now over the cradle : his face flushes with pride, and becomes wonderfully tender.

“ Dear me ! how rapidly this little fellow grows.”

“ And is beginning to show some intelligence. He resembles your family, Kenneth. I can even now, trace a likeness to your father.”

“ Yes ; he is a Darrow.”

Now my husband’s hand is on my head. It never rests there without my feeling that it lets fall a blessing. And now the pressure of his lips is on my left temple.

“ Harrie ! ”

“ What, dear ? ”

“ Time deals very gently with you, my darling.”

“ Do you think so, Kenneth ? I begin to feel the dignity of the years that have been given me.”

He lifts my hair caressingly.

“ I cannot find a single frosty thread, Harrie.”

“ That is because light brown hair does not become frosty early in life.”

“ And your eyes are brighter than when I first loved you.”

"Because they are filled with a different light, my husband."

"And the roses on your cheeks are quite as fresh."

"You are a sad flatterer, Kenneth. Do not deceive yourself. I am growing old, despite all you say."

"And growing old gracefully."

I lay my fingers on his lips. With the lover's smile that so splendidly irradiates them, he snatches a kiss, then draws them away.

"Yes, my wife; with the matronly dignities in which you show such noble pride, the years have added to you greater beauty of character and expression, and dearer each day makes you, to the heart of your husband."

. . . . He has gone now. I hear him call little Harrie, from her chase after dandelions, for a walk over to Barbara's. The old woman has not been well for the last two weeks, and Kenneth is preparing Emily's mind for the great sorrow in store for her. And just now I see him stop and rest against the cemetery wall, while his mother lays a wreath on the broken shaft that marks the resting-place of Richard. At that spot, in the dim twilight, he met me first, twenty years ago. I wonder if he remembers it. I dare say he does. He looks back and kisses his hand to me. And now they enter the wood. Mingled with the rough waters of the gorge, floats back on the breeze the merry prattle of Harrie, as she skips along by her father's side.

"Is that you, Patience? Run on, if you please, and overtake them. The basket is too full to put in any-

thing more ; but you can take an extra bottle of wine in your hand."

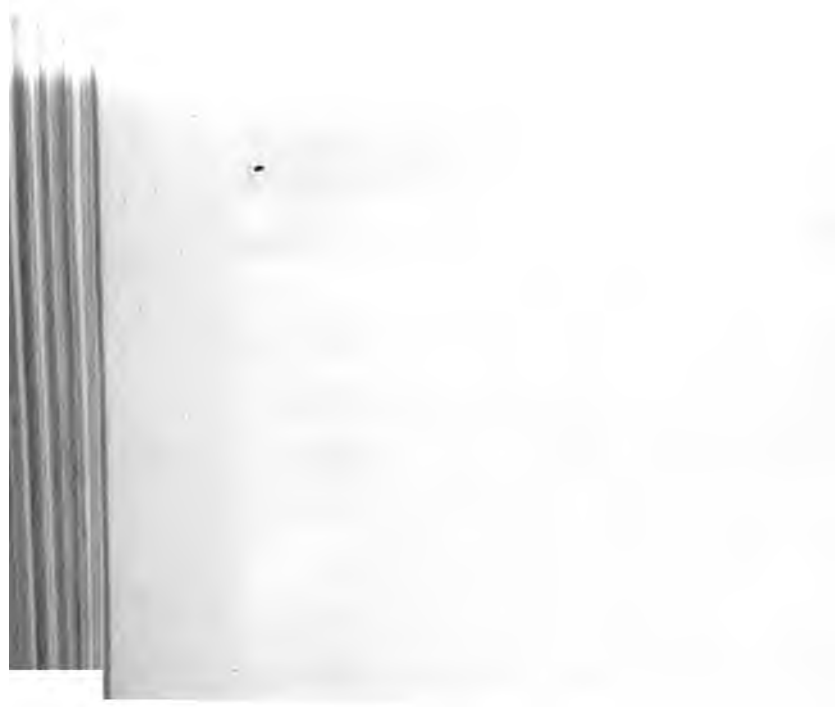
Poor, dear old Barbara, she will not need Kenneth's help much longer. The winter of her life has been most kindly ; but her sun is setting. She says she is ready to depart. Emily has her eyesight ; and I can walk without crutches. . . .

I look up. Ah ! I am tempted to look again. A mirror is before me. I had not thought of this under my husband's compliments, when I saw myself better mirrored in the fathomless depths of his loving eyes. I do believe the years *have* dealt gently with me. No, there is not a frosty thread on the temple that Kenneth kissed ; my cheeks are round, nor are my eyes less lustrous than in early youth.

Truly, reader, happiness is the greatest of all beautifiers.

How much, how much I thank thee, O God, for all Thy goodness to me ! How much I owe thee, O Kenneth ! KENNETH, MY KING !

THE END.



NEW BOOKS

Recently Published by

G W. CARLETON & CO., New York,

Madison Square, Fifth Avenue and Broadway.

N.B.—THE PUBLISHERS, upon receipt of the price in advance, will send any of the following Books by mail, **POSTAGE FREE**, to any part of the United States. This convenient and very safe mode may be adopted when the neighboring Booksellers are not supplied with the desired work.

Marion Harland.

| | | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|--------------|--------|
| ALONE.— . . . | A novel. . . . | 12mo. cloth, | \$1.50 |
| HIDDEN PATH.— . . . | do. . . . | do. | \$1.50 |
| MOSS SIDE.— . . . | do. . . . | do. | \$1.50 |
| NEMESIS.— . . . | do. . . . | do. | \$1.50 |
| MIRIAM.— . . . | do. . . . | do. | \$1.50 |
| AT LAST.— . . . | do. <i>Just Published.</i> | do. | \$1.50 |
| HELEN GARDNER.— . . . | do. . . . | do. | \$1.50 |
| SUNNYBANK.— . . . | do. . . . | do. | \$1.50 |
| HUSBANDS AND HOMES.— . . . | do. . . . | do. | \$1.50 |
| RUBY'S HUSBAND.— . . . | do. . . . | do. | \$1.50 |
| PREMIE'S TEMPTATION.— . . . | do. . . . | do. | \$1.50 |
| THE EMPTY HEART.— . . . | do. . . . | do. | \$1.50 |
| TRUE AS STEEL.— . . . | do. <i>Just Published.</i> | do. | \$1.50 |

Miss Muloch.

| | | |
|---|--------------|--------|
| JOHN HALIFAX.—A novel. With illustration. | 12mo. cloth, | \$1.75 |
| A LIFE FOR A LIFE.— . . . do. | do. | \$1.75 |

Charlotte Bronte (Currer Bell).

| | | |
|--|--------------|--------|
| JANE EYRE.—A novel. With illustration. | 12mo. cloth, | \$1.75 |
| SHIRLEY.— do. | do. | \$1.75 |

Guide for New York City.

WOOD'S ILLUSTRATED HAND-BOOK.—A beautiful pocket volume, \$1 00

Hand-Books of Society.

THE HABITS OF GOOD SOCIETY; nice points of taste, good manners, and the art of making oneself agreeable. 12mo. \$1.75

THE ART OF CONVERSATION.—A sensible work, for every one who wishes to be an agreeable talker or listener. 12mo. \$1.50

ARTS OF WRITING, READING, AND SPEAKING.—An excellent book for self-instruction and improvement. 12mo. clo., \$1.50

A NEW DIAMOND EDITION of the above three popular books.— Small size, elegantly bound, and put in a box. - \$3.00

Mrs. A. P. Hill.

MRS. HILL'S NEW COOKERY BOOK, and receipts 12mo. cloth \$2.00

Mary J. Holmes.

| | | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------|--------------|--------|
| LENA RIVERS.— | A novel. | 12mo. cloth, | \$1 50 |
| DARKNESS AND DAYLIGHT.— | do. | do. | \$1.50 |
| TEMPEST AND SUNSHINE.— | do. | do. | \$1.50 |
| MARIAN GREY.— | do. | do. | \$1 50 |
| MEADOW BROOK.— | do. | do. | \$1 50 |
| ENGLISH ORPHANS.— | do. | do. | \$1 50 |
| DORA DEANE.— | do. | do. | \$1 50 |
| COUSIN MAUDE.— | do. | do. | \$1 50 |
| HOMESTEAD ON THE HILLSIDE.— | do. | do. | \$1 50 |
| HUGH WORTHINGTON.— | do. | do. | \$1.50 |
| THE CAMERON PRIDE.— | do. | do. | \$1.50 |
| ROSE MATHER.— | do. | do. | \$1 50 |
| ETHELYN'S MISTAKE.— | do. | do. | \$1.50 |
| MILLBANK.— | do. | do. | \$1.50 |
| EDNA BROWNING.— | <i>Just Published.</i> | do. | \$1.50 |

Augusta J. Evans.

| | | | |
|--------------------|------------------------|--------------|--------|
| SKULAH.— | A novel. | 12mo. cloth, | \$1.75 |
| MACARIA.— | do. | do. | \$1.75 |
| ST. ELMO.— | do. | do. | \$2.00 |
| VANITI.— | <i>Just Published.</i> | do. | \$2.00 |
| INEZ.— | do. | do. | \$1.75 |

Louisa M. Alcott.

MORNING GLORIES.—By the Author of "Little Women," etc. \$1.50

The Crusoe Library—"Star Edition."

| | | |
|---|-------|--------|
| ROBINSON CRUSOE.—A handsome illus. edition. | 12mo. | \$1.50 |
| SWISS FAMILY ROBINSON.— do. | do. | \$1.50 |
| THE ARABIAN NIGHTS.— do. | do. | \$1.50 |

Captain Mayne Reid.—Illustrated.

| | | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------|-------------|--------|
| THE SCALP HUNTERS.— | } Far West Series | 12mo. clo., | \$1.50 |
| THE WAR TRAIL.— | | do. | \$1.50 |
| THE HUNTER'S FEAST.— | | do. | \$1.50 |
| THE TIGER HUNTER.— | } Prairie Series | do. | \$1.50 |
| OSCEOLA, THE SEMINOLE.— | | do. | \$1.50 |
| THE QUADROON.— | | do. | \$1.50 |
| RANGERS AND REGULATORS.— | } Pioneer Series | do. | \$1.50 |
| THE WHITE GAUNTLET.— | | do. | \$1.50 |
| WILD LIFE.— | | do. | \$1.50 |
| THE HEADLESS HORSEMAN.— | } Wild Forest Series | do. | \$1.50 |
| LOST LENOX.— | | do. | \$1.50 |
| THE WOOD RANGERS.— | | do. | \$1.50 |
| THE WHITE CHIEF.— | } Wild Forest Series | do. | \$1.50 |
| THE WILD HUNTERS.— | | do. | \$1.50 |
| THE MAROON.— | | do. | \$1.50 |
| THE RIFLE RANGERS.— | | do. | \$1.50 |



Vertical text on the left side of the page, possibly a page number or header, which is mostly illegible due to the quality of the scan. Some faint characters are visible, including what appears to be the number '1' at the top and '2' further down.



S 20

