LOVE AFFAIRS

William B. Cairns Collection
Of
American Women Writers
1650-1920

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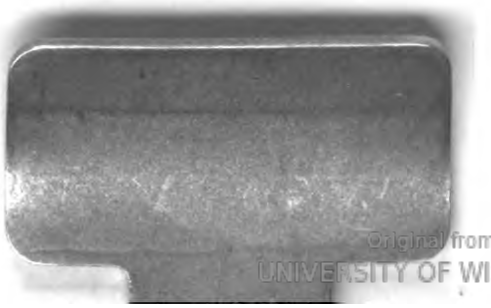

"She opened a cupboard, and, taking down a pack of cards, began to shuffle them in a very mysterious manner, fixing on him a scrutinising look."—P. 101.

LOVE AFFAIRS

OR

CAUGHT IN HIS OWN TRAP

LONDON

JAMES BLACKWOOD . PATERNOSTER ROW.

LOVE AFFAIRS;

OR,

HOW A FLIRT WAS CAUGHT IN HIS OWN TRAP.

BY MRS. CAUSTIC

LONDON:
JAMES BLACKWOOD, PATERNOSTER-ROW

MDCCCLIV

LOVE AFFAIRS.

CHAPTER I.

UNMEANING ATTENTIONS—SUMNER PLACE.

"I REALLY should like to know how soon Mary Lamb is to be married," exclaimed Maria Sumner.

She addressed herself to her cousin, a beautiful girl, who had lately arrived from the city to rusticate a while in the village of C——.

The two young ladies stood at a window of Sumner Place, gazing after a young friend who had just retired, having made a morning call.

"To whom is she engaged?" asked Sarah.

Maria—"To Mr. Reynolds, the young lawyer whom you saw here last evening; that is, I suppose it must be an engagement, his attentions have been so devoted and peculiar for so long a time."

"It ought to be an engagement at any rate," chimed in Aunt Esther, looking over her spectacles; "but I have my doubts whether he has any idea of ever marrying her. You speak of his attentions as peculiar, Maria; I don't know how you make that out, for I know of five young ladies besides her in town, who, in my opinion, from his peculiar attentions both in public and private, his ambiguous expressions of love and admiration, his constant and persevering visits, believe, and have every reason to believe, him an honest seeker for their hearts and hands."

Anna Sumner, who had as yet seen only the bright side of the world, lifted up her sweet, honest face in utter astonishment.

"Why, Aunt Esther," said she, "you cannot think Mr. Reynolds so base as to deceive these ladies intentionally! Surely the most graceful and tender attentions do not necessarily imply a deeper interest than simple friendship. It is very foolish for girls to think every man in love with them who chooses to be polite. Some gentlemen are so very agreeable, naturally, and have such tact in saying and doing every thing just in the right way and at the right time, that they are altogether misunderstood in society. Attentions, that seem ambiguous in them, are entirely unmeaning, because they proceed from gaiety and thoughtlessness."

"Rather say," replied Aunt Esther, "from vanity and thoughtlessness. I dare say this is the foundation of most of the coquetry we see in both sexes. But it is a serious evil in these times, and these unmeaning attentions, as you call them, are the source of more disquietude and misery than people imagine."

"When I was young," continued Aunt Esther, "there was a code of morals in love affairs, as well as in politics and religion. A young man who should have been as peculiar, persevering, and dogged in his attentions to six of the beautiful girls in C——, without any other motive than his own amusement, and the gratification of his vanity, would have been drummed out of town. Then, a young lady was the first individual to know if she was courted, and now, every body knows it and talks about it before she has anything but a slight suspicion of the fact herself."

"That's a fact, Aunt Esther," said a young gentleman, who had been reading a newspaper, while his favourite dog Growler slept quietly at his feet. "Reynolds's attentions to Mary Lamb and several other young ladies, are, in my opinion, mean and dishonourable; and if the scamp should come here with his insinuating manners, and undertake to sneak himself into the favour and affection of either of my sisters, I would kick him to Jericho;" and, suiting the action to the words, he raised Growler on his foot and gave him a terrible toss across the room, while the poor dog, half asleep, and utterly unable to comprehend the cause of this sudden and unexpected transition to parts unknown, went yelping and sneaking for refuge beneath the sofa.

Maria and Sarah laughed. But Anna, who always took the part of the oppressed, dropped her work and ran to condole with Growler and sympathise with him in his trials, saying to Tom, that "he ought to be ashamed to wreak his prejudices against Reynolds on his poor unoffending puppy."

"I verily believe, Aunt Esther, we shall have to reckon Anna among the 'bewitched,'" said Tom—"See how she takes Reynolds's part. For myself, I have no patience with him. Pray tell me, Sis, how many sonnets this captivating young lawyer has written to you?"

Anna looked quite dignified, and made no reply.

"I think," remarked Sarah," "that the evil of which Aunt Esther complains is one that can very easily be regulated. If young ladies do not encourage attentions, they will not receive them. No honourable or high-minded man would persecute a lady with civilities that were not agreeable."

"It is not so easy after all," replied Aunt Esther, "for young ladies themselves to regulate these matters. I am ready to allow that a gentleman, from pure thoughtlessness of consequences and appearances, may follow up a lady acquaintance with such marked interest and devotion, and such frequent visits, as to awaken in others the supposition of a strong attachment, if not in the lady herself. It ought not so to be. But what can she do in such circumstances? She does not know that he wishes to marry her, for he has never broached the subject of matrimony. She cannot refuse herself to his calls, and decline his civilities, without revealing the fact, that either she secretly misconstrues his attentions, which would compromise her delicacy, or that she dare not continue the acquaintance lest her own heart should be endangered. What shall she do? To repel him without any reason would grieve or perplex him. To continue to receive his attentions places her in a false light before others, and causes remarks that are excessively annoying, because totally untrue. Besides endangering her own affections, this state of things is a serious obstacle to her settlement in life. What gentleman of honour, were he ever so great an admirer of a lady, would pay his devoirs to one who already was receiving the marked attentions of another?

"How many serious consequences have I known to arise from this foolish gallantry, so much in vogue and so utterly heartless!

"I may be mistaken in Mr. Reynolds, but it is my opinion, that he is trifling with the affections of several of our young friends, and with none more cruelly than Mary Lamb."

"I never looked at these things in that light. It would be cruel indeed," said Maria thoughtfully, "she is so warm-hearted and friendless; but I cannot believe Mr. Reynolds would visit her so constantly and make her so many presents unless he was engaged."

"Well, we shall see," said Aunt Esther, and there the matter dropped.

Now Aunt Esther, as she was called, was an elderly maiden sister of Gen. Sumner, one of the aristocrats of C——. She was not a captious old maid, but a generous, noble-minded specimen of disinterestedness, embodied. She was goodness itself. Whatever she had been in youth, she seemed to have outlived all human selfishness, and to be devoted to the general good of her race, so far as her influence could reach. She was known everywhere in C——, and was as popular among the young as the old, the poor as the rich. Her good sense rendered her an excellent counsellor, and her sympathising heart fitted her to be the comforter of all in sorrow.

"Sumner Place," as it was called, one of the finest residences in C——, was an old family mansion from which four generations had passed away. It was beautifully located on an eminence overlooking the town. When you had threaded your way through the long avenue of trees that wound up the hill, and found yourself on the smooth lawn before the house, and looked down upon the village that spread over the valley at your feet, you could not resist the idea that, in this isolated spot, you were out of the world, and could find that rest and retirement for which the soul so often longs.

Both the mansion and its lord were unlike any other in C——. More than one hundred years had the former stood the revolutions of time, and resisted all modern improvements. Built in the most elegant style of architecture in vogue among our pilgrim fathers by old Mr. Sumner, who had sought this secluded spot for a summer residence (spending his winters in Boston), his descendants had the good sense to let it remain as a sample of the early times.

The parlour was wainscoted with cedar, and the large panels that surrounded the room suggested the idea of secret doors and hidden treasures. A large picture of a foreign city, perhaps the birth-place of its original owner, was imbedded in the wall over the fire-place, and, though smoked and faded by time, bore marks of beauty still. The old "beaufet" beside the fire-place, was to modern eyes a perfect curiosity, with its little, narrow, circular shelves, and its old-fashioned blue china, so like the baby tea-sets now-a-days, that we are naturally in a maze of wonder how Dr. Johnson and some of our old grandmothers could have become such tea-sots when they were in fashion. The floors, too, were carpeted, not with modern fabrics, but with painted figures in dark colours, with a border round the sides. The windows were small, and the glass of the most diminutive size. The chairs were of an antique pattern (all the rage now), and cushioned with embroidered roses and flowers of marvellous brightness, but of questionable naturalness; and a secretary of olden time, with its ring-handles and dazzling display of brass ornaments, which every week were made to shine like gold, were among its curiosities.

The stair-case in the hall was a perfect contrast to the cork-screws which modern feet travel up, so patiently and at such imminent risk to ribs and spines. The steps were broad and low, with ample stairs occasionally to rest the weary climber; and the balusters of mahogany, in curiously-carved work, formed a beautiful finish to this comfortable stair-way. At the head of the stairs stood the tall old clock, with its great white face, unweariedly pointing its slender hand to the hour, warning the present generation of the lapse of time as faithfully as it had done the past.

General Sumner, the patriarch of the family, was a gentleman of the old

school, Washington-like in his majestic figure and dignified manners. He pertinaciously adhered to his old-fashioned breeches and silver buckles, and wore his hair in a long cue behind, braided with great care.

His hair was literally as white as snow, and contrasted finely with his florid complexion, and the jet-black suit he always wore. Mrs. Sumner was his counterpart in dignity of manner. She was tall, slight, graceful, and affable. To Aunt Esther you are already introduced. Two daughters and one son, besides, composed the family circle.

The son was a noble-hearted, generous, impulsive fellow, who had a mind of his own on all subjects, and was not afraid to say so. Anna was seventeen, bright as a bird and beautiful as a fairy, with one of those sweet sunny faces, that wake up a momentary gladness in every beholder. Maria was older; a pensive beauty, dignified like her mother, calm, discriminating, and prudent.

General Sumner was inflexible in character, and peculiar in his views. He indulged many prejudices and whims, which could only be accounted for by the fact, that he was born in Boston, the "City of Notions."

He idolised his daughters, and, with all a father's solicitude and pride, looked forward to their settlement in life. But one of his odd fancies was this: that his daughters should never marry either a physician or a clergyman! The whys and the wherefores he never saw fit to explain; but, like the laws of the Medes and Persians, his opinion never altered.

Having introduced you to all the members of this family, gentle reader, methinks I hear you say, "And who was Reynolds?"

CHAPTER II.

THE VILLAGE—THE NEIGHBOURS—MARY LAMB—REYNOLDS—THE DISCUSSION.

BEFORE satisfying your curiosity in regard to Mr. Reynolds, let us take a view from Sumner Place of the village, and obtain some general knowledge of its inhabitants.

A New England village has a charm peculiar to itself. I do not allude to the mushroom villages that have sprung up in a season for railway depôts or manufacturing purposes, which wear such a rough and uncomfortable aspect often; but to an old town, whose echoes have never been waked by a steam-whistle or the tramp of the iron horse; whose farms have been cultivated for more than a century with unwearied industry and skill, and where all the thrift and order and economy of the New England people are manifest over hill and valley.

Do you see that old gray house, facing neither the road, the east, west, north, or south, which stands sideways, looking askance at the main street in town, as if, miffed at the obtrusion of those two elegant white houses with green blinds and shrubbery, it had partly turned its back on the whole neighbourhood? That is old Deacon Brown's, and has been in the Brown family from the time of the oldest inhabitant. It was built before the town was laid out, and that accounts partly for its queer position. It bears no marks of improvement, but the white paint about the window frames and sashes, which the old Deacon was prevailed upon by his pretty Nelly, against his inclination, to add by way of ornament, "to brighten up the old house, and make it less dark and forbidding," she said.

On the other side of the street is a red frame house, near which stands a magnificent elm, whose branches spread far and wide, and, like a vast umbrella, shelter the dwelling from the scorching heat and heavy rains. The

green sward in front slopes down to the road, and is always kept free from withered branches and rubbish of every kind, looking as if it was swept every morning; while a row of tin pans are ranged at the side of the house to sun, and glisten like silver vessels. Here lives old Captain Robbins, a revolutionary soldier of considerable means, whose fine family of daughters, well educated, are among the belles of the town.

Farther down the street is a very elegant and tasteful residence, embowered in shrubbery. Here live the Langdons.

In the afternoon of the same day on which the preceding conversation occurred at Sumner Place, might be seen a young lady, sitting by an open chamber window, at Squire Langdon's, and gazing thoughtfully at the beautiful landscape around. Her mind was ill at ease; troubled thoughts she could not dispel stirred up the deep fountains of her soul. It was Mary Lamb. The repeated inquiries of the morning, during her calls, and the playful sallies she met with almost everywhere in regard to her friend Reynolds and her intended marriage, had distressed and annoyed her beyond endurance. Her positive denial of any engagement was not credited. She could not but confess that his frequent visits and constant devotion might well give rise to the supposition of an engagement. He spent many of his evenings with her; he invited her to ride often; he waited upon her to Lyceums; he attended her home from church often in the day time, and generally in the evening; he often spoke of the charms of domestic life, and of undying friendship; he was always bringing her a bouquet, a piece of music, a book, or some trifling thing which it would seem rude to refuse, and he had also presented some costly gifts: but he had never spoken of love. And yet all these kindnesses had misled observers, and, should she say it, even herself! Yes; she blushed to own that his kind words, his apparent thought and care for her happiness, had won her heart. Could he be trifling with her affections! Had he discovered her deep interest in his conversation and agreeable society, and danced attendance upon her merely to gratify his vanity!

Burning tears scalded her cheeks at this thought. She would hereafter avoid him, and when compelled to meet him in society, she would nerve herself to up to treat him with cold civility, and nothing more.

Then her heart relented. What had he done? What had he said? Nothing; only manifested kindness and sympathy for one, whose early friendships had been chilled by death's grasp—for one who had no earthly kindred to love—and who, out of compassion, had been adopted by the friends of her dying parents when a child.

But, ought she not, for her own peace, to relinquish his society and put an end to the bantering of her companions? How could she, without any reason, decline to see him? What would he think if she avoided him? What would he think of her coolness and sudden change of manner? Little would she care, if she could really feel the indifference to him, which she intended to show. While absorbed in such thoughts as these, the servant entered and said Mr. Reynolds was below. What should she do? She trembled with emotion—hesitated a moment, and then, in a faltering voice, told her to say, that "she wished to be excused."

Reynolds heard the unexpected message with surprise. He slowly sauntered down the walk, snapping off, with a sudden whirl of his cane, a beautiful moss rose that drooped over the border.

But who was Reynolds? A young lawyer of good family and of wealth, who had practised law for a year in C——, or rather had had an office in town. He was a remarkably agreeable fellow, genteel in his address and commanding in his figure. He dressed well and talked well. He could talk

with every body on every topic. Was agreeable to the grandmammas and acceptable to the mammas; could romp with the babies, and was in his element in the society of young ladies.

Reynolds strolled along into the office of a brother lawyer, next his own, and threw himself down carelessly into a vacant chair. Three young men were there, chatting together.

"Where have you come from, Reynolds?" said one of them.

"I have been down to see Miss Lamb, but she refused to see me."

"She did?" said Mr. Grenville inquiringly. "Well, by the way, report says she will be Mrs. Reynolds shortly."

"Rumour does not tell the truth always; and, in this instance, is entirely mistaken," said he.

"How is that?" replied the other; "no falling out, I hope."

"No," said Reynolds, "there never was any falling in with such an idea on my part."

"Well, what the deuce do you treat the young lady in such a way for—following her about like a shadow, and giving the impression far and wide that you intend to marry her if you can?" retorted Grenville.

"Oh," said Reynolds carelessly, "you know I like ladies' society, and so occasionally I wander about and pass an hour or two, by way of variety, among them,"

"Well," replied the other, "I must confess you have kept up a pretty brisk acquaintance with Miss Lamb the last six months; for, as I have felt some little interest in that quarter myself, I have looked on with a degree of solicitude; had I for a moment supposed you were standing in the way of others for your own amusement simply, I should not have kept so far in the back-ground, I warrant you. But seriously, Reynolds, you carry this thing too far. How do you know that your attentions have been received with as much *sang froid* as they have been paid? Indeed, I would not dare to try such experiments as you do. I would not think it generous or right either. I know, in this instance, you have kept me at bay, and who knows how many others? Miss Lamb has no home of her own, and no claim on those who have adopted her; and the old people are so infirm and childish, she cannot enjoy much of their society. No doubt a good home and a kind husband would not come amiss to the lady, and I reckon I'll try my luck in winning the prize, if you have not carried on such a campaign that I shall lose my chance."

"I reckon you've lost her," said Mr. Barlow, the young lawyer in whose office they were.

"How so?" rejoined he.

"I judge so," replied Barlow, "from what I have seen of this farce myself, and what I know of the lady's disposition. I'm mistaken if what has been sport to Reynolds here, has not, as in the case of the frogs in Æsop's fables, been death to her, or at least a serious disappointment. She can't take a joke. She is too simple-hearted, confiding, and sincere, to understand such tom-foolery."

"Well," said Reynolds yawning, "the fact is, the ladies jilt us sometimes, and it is but fair that we should take our turn. 'What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander'—and *vice versa*."

"There's another adage older and truer than that," replied Grenville gravely: "'As ye sow, so shall ye reap.' Maybe you'll sing a solemn tune about these things some time."

"I'll risk it," said Reynolds; "never fear for me."

The conversation changed; but Reynolds felt rather uncomfortable, not that any suffering he might cause to the young lady would give him special

uneasiness, for he was a heartless fellow; but he was made to feel, that his conduct had been noticed and was despised by others. He knew well enough, and had secretly gloated his vanity with the thought, that the friendship of Miss Lamb was stronger than she dreamed; but little did he care. In order to solace himself and dispel the discomfort of the moment, he concluded he would drop in a while to see Julia Marvin; she was another fine girl whom Mr. Reynolds had seen proper to distinguish by the most assiduous attentions.

She was the only daughter of the late Dr. Marvin, perhaps the most general favourite in town among all the belles; and the village of C—— boasted of more pretty girls than any other village within thirty miles of Boston.

Reynolds was a little puzzled to know whether he had made a really decided impression upon this young lady, for she had not such a tell-tale face as Mary Lamb, whose every thought was mirrored on her sweet features as it passed through her mind.

"There," said she to Angeline Lee, her guest, "there's Mr. Reynolds he is coming in to pass the evening, I dare say. Dear me! I wish I knew how to treat him."

"How so?" inquired Angeline earnestly. "Why should he be treated in a different manner from other people?"

"Well, because—because"—and just at that moment Mr. Reynolds's step was heard in the hall, and she only had time to say, "I'll tell you another time."

He greeted Miss Marvin with the greatest warmth and familiarity, and bowed most respectfully and gracefully to her stranger friend.

Julia's curious remark previous to his entrance, and her apparent seriousness of manner, puzzled Angeline, and she regarded the interview with unwonted interest. Reynolds was a splendid fellow in his person and manner; his conversation was spirited and sensible. Julia seemed perfectly at ease, and to enjoy his society. He spent the evening. He complimented her highly; but she deserved it, and it was no flattery, for her voice was as sweet as a bird's, and she played elegantly. She had been a pupil of Madame R.'s school in Boston, and no expense had been spared to make her a thoroughly accomplished young lady.

Angeline was utterly at a loss to account for her friend's strange exclamation as the gentleman entered, and she was glad when he took up his hat and departed, and they were left alone, that she might have the mystery solved.

CHAPTER III.

JULIA MARVIN—THE ROBBINS—THE CALL.

"Do explain yourself now," said Angeline; "I'm at my wits' end to know what you meant. I supposed this Reynolds was 'a great bore' from the manner in which you spoke of him; but he's a splendid fellow, to my thinking—not positively handsome—but good looking enough, the very pink of gentility, and has more agreeableness and good sense than one in a thousand."

"Yes," added Julia smiling, "and is worth $20,000, it is said, and is of an excellent family."

"All the better then, I'm sure," replied Angeline. "Why do you hesitate

as to the manner in which you shall treat him? If I were you," said she, looking archly into her face, "I should treat him well."

Julia—"But you do not understand the case yet. Let me tell you about him, and then say what you think."

"I will be all attention," exclaimed Angeline, and she drew a chair close to her friend.

"In the first place," resumed Julia, "Mr. Reynolds made his *début* in our village about a year ago. Letters of introduction to several of our first families procured him free access to our society. Of course he was well received; you saw this evening how very agreeable and acceptable he makes himself."

"He seemed very anxious to be agreeable to you, I plainly perceived," said Angeline, laughing.

Julia—"He is too particular in his attentions to the ladies to make himself understood. He is a perfect enigma. He seems to be in love with several, but offers himself to none. He annoys one by his attentions, vexes another, and misleads a third into the belief that he is deeply attached to her. He knows it is reported and believed by many that he is engaged to Mary Lamb, yet he denies it, and is so ungenerous as to persevere in those very attentions which created the rumour. He is believed by others to be engaged to me. It is not so; and yet I cannot tell him of these reports in circulation, and ask him to call less frequently, though I long to do so. If I thought his course was prompted by vanity, I would treat him with a coldness which should freeze him. If it arises from pure thoughtlessness, its selfishness and injustice is so reprehensible, that I should feel he deserved contempt. If it proceeds from a sincere attachment, then of course it should meet with a different treatment. But this is the puzzle. Sometimes, I am quite indignant, and can scarcely be civil to him. At other times, I reproach myself as doing him injustice, and am ashamed of my vexation. Occasionally, I am so convinced of his sincerity, that I am compelled to look upon him with favour. I wish I understood him."

Angeline—"I concluded last evening he was an admirer of yours, and thought him a very agreeable, yes, more, quite a fascinating man. But he may be a heartless coquette. I'll study him," said she, playfully; "and if he is, he ought to be taught a few lessons in his own art. There is nothing more despicable and base, in my opinion, than the conduct of a man who descends to the selfish, ungenerous, cruel sport of a male-flirt. It is abominable in a woman, but in a man it is hellish, because woman is so defenceless, so sensitive, and generally so artless."

"I wish," replied Julia, "you were acquainted with another gentleman we have here, a perfect contrast to Mr. Reynolds. I mean Mr. Barlow. His conduct towards ladies is on all occasions unexceptionable. He is always so polite, considerate and attentive; while such a sense of propriety and delicacy characterises his civilities, that they are received gratefully and frankly, and are never liable to be misconstrued."

Angeline—"I often think men take us for fools, and imagine that nothing but flattery and nonsense are suited to our capacities and appreciated by us. I sometimes imagine if they could only see themselves as they appear to us, even when most assiduous to please, how differently would they address us! Women have a sense of discrimination and an exquisite delicacy, for which they receive little credit."

Leaving these ladies to their own reflections, let us now look into the family of Captain Robbins, whose residence has been pointed out.

Captain Robbins was a wealthy farmer, and both he and his wife were excellent people. Domestic peace and comfort rendered their home a de-

lightful resort; and as four highly educated and truly beautiful girls enlivened their domestic circle, their house was full of company.

A female academy had been in operation for many years in C——, and was a blessing, not only to the town which gave it birth, but to all the country around. C—— was also the county-seat, and, during the sittings of the court, brought together the most prominent persons of the neighbouring towns. There was therefore no lack of society in C——; there was always life, energy and bustle enough to make it an agreeable residence.

There was but one church in the place, and its pastor had held his ministrations there for many years. A pastor was settled for life in those days, and it would have been almost as disgraceful for a church to have dismissed their minister, as for a man to get rid of his wife.

Good old Mr. May was a fine specimen of the patriarchal times. He had a deep affection for his flock, and well he might have. He was settled over them in his youth; this parish was his first love. He had married the young, baptized the children, buried the dead, been a partaker in the joys of his people and a sharer of their sorrows. He knew the history of every family in the village, and had been the depositary of many secrets, which were carefully locked up in his own breast, but which gave him an intimate and thorough knowledge of the town which no other person shared. His wife was fitted to be the companion of such a man. They had four children, the eldest of whom was Lucy, a sweet, gentle girl of nineteen. Mr. May was a near neighbour of Captain Robbins, and both, with all the families to whom I have alluded, except General Sumner's, were clustered about the common, as it was called, on one side of which were ranged the church with its tall spire, the court-house and the seminary, the three prominent points in the town.

With all Captain Robbins' good sense, his wife's good management, and the advantages enjoyed by his daughters, there was one great fault in their education.

Whatever man's "chief end" might be, they had grown up with the impression that woman's "chief end" was, to get married—to make a good settlement in the world. And it was really curious to see what great mistakes they made in this, the main business of their life. While their mother busied herself with unwearied assiduity to render everything about home inviting and agreeable, the daughters were considered as parlour ornaments, and spent their time in adorning their persons or contriving some fresh device to embellish their charms. Every pleasant evening their parlour was crowded with visitors.

The fond mother consoled herself with the idea that so much company was a necessary evil. She sometimes complained, that her daughters had too many beaux! And she had to sit up so at late at night, to shut up the house, because the young gentlemen would stay so late, while she secretly rejoiced that her blooming girls were so much admired and were on the high road to such grand matches.

Neither the Captain nor his wife felt it incumbent upon them to inquire who all these beaux were, or ascertain the character of those who frequented their house. The young ladies, with all their ignorance of the world and with all their inexperience and lack of judgment, were left to manage their own affairs, and make themselves agreeable to all who chose to seek their acquaintance, and, if annoyed by any impertinent or disagreeable intruders, to get rid of them as they best could.

It never occurred to the Captain or his wife that they owed a duty to their daughters in this matter—that they should know every visitor who presumed to make their acquaintance, and that it was an easy and appropriate

task for them to regulate the hour of their guests' departure, by establishing a seasonable hour of shutting up their house. They never dreamed that the course they pursued in relation to their daughters was the most direct one to secure a family of old maids, or was running the risk of marrying their daughters in a most ineligible manner. Mrs. Robbins was sometimes quite nonplussed as she considered the fact, that year after year was passing away, and none of her fair daughters had yet arrived at the acmé of her wishes—were not even engaged yet. What could be done to hasten matters? She could think of nothing that had been left undone on her part, or, in fact, on the part of her daughters, to bring to a happy termination her anxious days and these everlasting nights. And she sighed that she knew not what more to do!

But, gentle reader, let us see what the gentlemen themselves think of setting man-traps.

Barlow's office was a favourite resort of a few of the best young men in town. He was a lawyer of great respectability for talent, industry and honourable feeling. He had established himself in a thriving business, and, with a handsome patrimony, had for some time been determined to marry, and, like a second Cœlebs, had been looking about for a wife. As yet, his search had been fruitless.

"Have you become acquainted with the Misses Robbins yet?" inquired Dr. Wilson, a young physician in the neighbourhood.

"Slightly," replied Barlow; "I have met the ladies several times in company, and was quite pleased with their appearance and manners; so much so, that I ventured to call upon them once," said he emphatically, "and that was enough for me."

"What do you mean, Barlow," said the Doctor; "did anything unpleasant happen when you called?"

"Oh, no," he answered, laughing; "but they have too many worshippers to suit me. My heart misgave me as soon as I entered the hall. I counted eleven hats on the table, and had the honour of being the twelfth booby on their docket that evening. I should have retreated at once, had not one of the ladies seen me from the window as I entered the gate. If I was confounded by the number of visitors I found, I assure you I was still more surprised at their character. Instead of seeing, as I expected, a pleasant family party, parents and all, I found the young ladies arrayed like puppets for a show, and holding a levee, at which persons of all descriptions, high and low, vile and honourable, were welcome guests. If ladies will admit to the home-circle the debauchee, the drunkard, and the gambler, they will have to dispense with the society of those who choose their associates. I was so disappointed and disgusted with my visit, that I never repeated it. I must confess I had felt quite an interest in Miss Ellen, but that evening entirely dispelled it."

"Perhaps," interrupted the Doctor, "the young ladies were not so well aware of the character of their guests as you were."

"Very likely," replied Barlow; "but the parents ought to have known; they should acquaint themselves with such matters, and regulate the circle that have access to their fire-side. When I choose a wife," he continued, "I intend to look sharp for good common sense, and a keen sense of propriety."

"Two scarce articles," said the Doctor. "Do you know Lucy May?"

Barlow—"Not so well as I wish I did. I am watching an opportunity to make her acquaintance."

Dr. Wilson—"Well, you will find her a diamond of the first water. Her simplicity and frankness are absolutely bewitching. Although on intimate

terms with the Robbins, being near neighbours, their views of life and habits of action and thought, are entirely dissimilar. I know of nothing more delightful, than, after a call on the former, to pass a few hours at the old parsonage. It is like emerging from the vain, heartless civilities of a cold and selfish world, into the calm, genial, loving, sincere, warm-hearted circle of one's own home. The Robbins exert themselves unweariedly to please, but it is all evidently for selfish ends. Lucy is gay and social, but seems not to live for herself, but to make others happy, and render herself useful."

"You must get me an introduction to her, Doctor," said Barlow; "I like your account of her. 'Living to make others happy, and to be useful,' you say; that's exactly the right way to live, for anybody, man or woman. Whoever pursues that course will not only diffuse happiness around him, but will always be happy himself. I have admired Miss Lucy at church, for her sweet face and gentle manners, but you have awakened a desire for a further acquaintance."

It was not long before Dr. Wilson, having obtained permission to introduce his friend Barlow to the pastor's family, made an evening call at the parsonage.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PARSONAGE.

THE parsonage was a pretty white house with green blinds, and a neat little picket fence in front. A graveled walk, which gracefully curved to the right and left of the door, ran round the house and was lost to view in the garden walks. A Lombardy poplar stood on each side of the gate, tall, grim, and stately, as if to guard the entrance of this quiet abode. Two beautiful elms, planted, one at each side of the house, when the present clergyman took possession of the premises, many years ago, had reached a fine growth, and had become an ornament and a shade. Shrubbery and flowers filled the border, while here and there an evergreen or a lilac was interspersed among the green grass in the ample yard. There was an air of simple, quiet beauty about the place, which suggested the idea of comfort and peace within.

Lucy came to the door to meet the guests, whom she had seen enter the gate. She received the Doctor with a sweet smile and a cordial greeting, while she bowed in the most graceful manner to Mr. Barlow.

Mr. May and his wife also met their guests in such a courteous, hearty manner as to prove their sincere pleasure at the interview. They felt at once that they were welcome.

What is more grateful to the heart than sincerity? What more truly beautiful than simplicity? These two qualities are of more value than all the pomp and display of artificial society. So thought Mr. Barlow, as, with an observing eye, he noticed and admired the appearance and arrangement of this truly happy and Christian family. So agreeably were they entertained by the affable manners, and pleasing, as well as profitable, conversation of Mr. and Mrs. May, that time passed swiftly away. Tea came and went with no display and no apparent variation from its accustomed course.

Mr. Barlow had fine opportunity to converse with Lucy. He found her sensible, intelligent, and refined in her feelings, as well as free and unconstrained in the expression of her opinion on all subjects. There was a can-

dour and a frankness about her that were truly charming. She made no effort to display her powers of conversation, and seemed to make no choice of words to convey her thoughts, but they were introduced in a simple, graphic manner, which was peculiarly fascinating. Her views of men and things, too, for one so young and retired from the world, were so sensible, so just and accurate, that our friend was both surprised and delighted. He ventured to inquire "if she did not sometimes feel the want of amusement, and weary of retirement, and long for more of the society of 'the great world?'"

She laughed heartily at the idea. What could she desire more than the exhaustless sources of amusement in her father's library, her parents' society, the artless prattle of the younger members of the family, the beauties of nature around her, and the active employment and exercise she always had at home and about the parish, and last, not least, the delightful society of a few companions of her own age in the village! The days were not long enough for the enjoyment of all these resources of pleasure within her reach. She had mingled in city life occasionally, enough to feel the difference between its chilling formality and heartlessness, and the warm glow of pure friendship, unadulterated with interest, and policy, and selfishness, which is diffused in a country town.

"There is one evil," said she, "in the country, which can be avoided in a city life. In a small community like a country village, every person and every event attains a notoriety which is sometimes quite annoying. For want of the abundant variety which affords material for city gossip, the most trifling and foolish event here, or a speech even, is dished up and hawked about, and commented and speculated upon in the most absurd and ridiculous manner."

In the midst of conversation, a knock was heard at the door, and Mr. Reynolds made his appearance. He had of late become a very frequent visitor. Miss Lucy was one of the many ladies this gentleman particularly admired, and upon whom he lavished some of his choicest attentions—not in public, however. He was restrained from such open demonstrations of interest and gallantry, from a doubt whether they would be agreeable to the parents.

Barlow regarded him with a scrutinising eye, nor did Miss Lucy herself escape the same searching glance.

Reynolds, as usual, levelled his battery of compliments, and flatteries, and tender looks at Miss May, and Barlow watched to see how they were received. She seemed impenetrable to flattery, and totally unconscious of his admiration. She managed him and every subject introduced with inimitable tact. She was neither awkward, embarrassed, bold, nor flippant. Barlow could not but admire her self-possession, freedom from vanity, and native dignity. He thought he read in Reynolds's manner and look an earnestness of feeling and a depth of interest, which he had discovered in him toward no other of his female acquaintances, and his curiosity was aroused to know with what feelings she regarded him; but that was a mystery he could not fathom. At an early hour they separated, each differently affected toward the other. Barlow could not but acknowledge to himself that Miss May came nearer to his model of a wife than any other lady he had seen. Reynolds had for some time been convinced that his regard for this young lady was more real and sincere than that he cherished for any other; but not till he met her in compony with Barlow, and a suspicion of Barlow's interest in her flashed upon him, did he know how deeply he was interested in her, and how necessary she was to his happiness. This evening opened his eyes to the fact.

As for Miss Lucy herself, in spite of her apparent ignorance of the state of Reynolds's mind, she had long more than half suspected his feelings toward her. From the moment that such an idea entered her mind, she withdrew herself quietly, as often as possible, from his notice; she avoided meeting him, and sought to give him no opportunity for farther acquaintance. She was no stranger to his manœuvres, his artful civilities, his coquettish habits, and she despised him in her heart. To her straightforward, matter-of-fact character, there was such a dishonourable, disingenuous exhibition of soul about him in his conduct toward ladies, that, notwithstanding his elegant appearance, his talents and his wealth, nothing could induce her to regard him with anything but dislike and disgust; yet she was too ladylike to make any manifestation of it openly, and was afraid to trust herself in his presence, lest, in her frankness of manner, she should betray what she would fain hide to save his feelings.

Three days afterwards, Lucy sat, sewing busily, near the window. She was in great haste to finish a piece of work, and had told her mother she did not intend to leave her seat till it was done. She looked toward the light to thread her needle, when, throwing her work down as if a sudden thought struck her, she hastened out of the room, merely saying, "I am going over to Mrs. Wilson's a while, mother;" and before her mother could recover from the surprise this sudden movement occasioned, a loud knock was heard at the door. It was Reynolds. But Lucy, who had thrown on her bonnet and run out of the back door, was already out of sight. She took the shortest route to Mrs. Wilson's, finding fences and walls no impediment in her course. Having rather tumbled over than climbed the last stone wall, which brought her in sight of the little old house in the edge of the wood she had taken such a sudden notion to visit, and finding herself completely out of sight of her own home, and out of breath, she sat down to rest, while she could not help laughing within herself at her strange procedure.

"What will mother think of my abrupt flight?—But I have done right," said she to herself. "I will not encourage the visits and civilities of that man. It shall not be said of me, as it is of Mary and Julia and others, that I am engaged to him. I will not be flirted with; nor shall he have a chance to offer himself to me if he wishes. I will not receive his attentions, at home or abroad."

Her cheeks glowed with exercise, and her eyes sparkled with determination as she untied her bonnet; and tossing back her beautiful auburn curls, which had fallen carelessly over her fair, noble forehead, she sat panting in the shade of the wall. She turned her head and espied her friends Julia Marvin and Miss Angeline Lee in the woods near her, gathering flowers, and at almost the same moment they discovered her.

"Why, Lucy," said Julia, "how do you happen to be here, so out of breath and alone? You look as if you were on an errand of life and death."

"Oh no," said Lucy, laughing, "I am going over to Mrs. Wilson's, to see her sick child; but the truth is, if I had not seen Mr. Reynolds coming to our house, I should not have taken wings. I am so out of patience with him, that I will not see him when I can avoid it."

"Well, I think it is time for us girls to bestir ourselves in regard to him, and take him seriously in hand," replied Julia. "This distribution of sonnets and love-letters, and rides and gifts, and enigmatical speeches, and fond languishing glances and sentimental bouquets, and lending of books with marked significant passages, is not to be borne. For my part, I am totally at a loss how to understand him. Does he imagine that he can win us all? Does he think that he can amuse himself by bamboozling us with pretended attachment, and make us a town talk, and we sit quietly and patiently,

while he is fooling and flirting, and laughing in his sleeve at our simplicity and folly? No," said she with animation and a serio-comic air, "let us teach him that women have both sense and sensibility."

"Appoint a committee of ladies," said Angeline, "to stick pins into him." The girls laughed.

"I wish," exclaimed Lucy, "he could get paid in his own coin."

"Oh yes," retorted Angeline, "that's it—good Bible doctrine—'treat a fool according to his folly,' or something like it. I'll tell you what, girls, pass him over to me! I'll fix him!" said she, laughing at her own thoughts.

"What will you do?" inquired the girls earnestly.

"Oh, never mind," said Angeline, archly, "just give him up to me. I'll manage him for you. Will you renounce all right and title to him while I am here?" asked she mischievously, "may I monopolise him?"

"Entirely," replied Lucy; "and, moreover, if you want any friend or ally while you carry the war into the enemy's camp—that is, in any fair, honourable way—you may reckon on me." "And on me too," added Julia.

After making the girls promise to say nothing to any one, and obey all instructions, they rose to go.

Lucy visited the little hovel in the wood to see Mrs. Wilson's child. Little Fanny was her Sunday scholar, and was fast sinking from consumption. Oh, how the dear child's eyes brightened when she saw Lucy's sweet face peer in at the door! And how like music did that loved voice fall on her ear! To her young mind Miss Lucy seemed almost an angel, for she alone had taught her of heaven, and led her to long to be holy, obedient, and pleasing to God. Lucy took her little pale hands within her own, and spoke such words of tenderness and love as melted the child's heart; and then kissing her, sang to her one of her favourite hymns:—

"See how the tender Shepherd stands,
With all engaging charms;
Hark! how He calls the tender lambs,
And folds them to His arms."

The poor mother listened and wept. Lucy's gentleness and kindness sank deep into her sorrowing heart, and comforted her.

CHAPTER V.

THE PIC-NIC.

WHAT is more delightful in a pleasant summer's day than an old-fashioned country pic-nic? A beautiful day in July was appointed for this annual gathering of the young people. All went as they chose, and when they chose. The only definite arrangement about it was, that at three o'clock they should all meet on the north slope of the Round Pond, as it was called, to dine. The day before was quite a day of preparation. Each carriage was supplied with fishing-poles, and pails for gathering whortle-berries, and a well-stored basket of roast fowls, ham, pies, cakes, &c., to contribute to the general fund, and hand over to the committee, who were to arrange the dinner when they arrived on the ground. Every gentleman was expected to invite one or more ladies to accompany him, and furnish such a conveyance as he pleased.

Reynolds was in quite a dilemma. Barlow had got the start of him in inviting Lucy May. He was piqued at it. Mary Lamb had refused to see him, and he wished to tease her.

Julia Marvin's manner had a little too much hauteur toward him in his last interview with her, which nettled him. Perhaps it would be well to awaken her jealousy somewhat. As for Catherine Sinclair and Ellen Brown, he would like to annoy them a little by showing slight indifference. So he concluded he would be the gallant of Miss Angeline Lee for the day. Miss Lee accepted his invitation with evident pleasure. It just suited her plans. She was in her gayest mood. She knew how to be agreeable, and never did she make a greater effort to please than now. They talked of poetry and prose, discussed opinions, and finally thought exactly alike. They told stories, and laughed, and sang. The horse trotted gaily through the still pine woods, while the butterflies flew in shoals from beneath his feet.

At length they reached the land of berries, and tying their horse in the shade, they joined the groups that were scattered about, amid the rocks and upon the knolls. Mary Lamb was there with Grenville. Reynolds passed her with a bow so cold and formal that her colour entirely forsook her. She tried to appear cheerful and careless, but emotion choked her. Lucy and Julia kept together, and as far aloof from Reynolds as possible, keeping an eye occasionally on his movements, and quite amused at the idea that he had fallen into such good hands. When tired of strolling about the ladies sat down, while the gentlemen cut up the bushes, and brought them into the shade for them to pick.

Then they fished till they were weary; and at length came the dinner, which was served up in the most delightful primitive simplicity, and, while seated on the grass, was eaten with great relish and mirthfulness. Then came the gathering up of fragments and dishes, while an hour or two longer remained for a stroll before it became necessary to return home. Full of excitement and hilarity they scattered about in groups, some picking berries, others fishing; and others still, in a merry mood, clustered together, relating some funny anecdote, which called forth peals of laughter, or indulging in some sally of wit, which they were all in a humour to enjoy.

What is a more healthful, delightful, or innocent recreation than, when summer is dressed in all her beauty, the forests are filled with birds, and the air is perfumed with the fragrance of fresh flowers, and sunshine and gladness seem to pervade all nature, to shake off the cares and turmoil of busy life, and seek a calm, cool retreat in nature's own leafy bowers, and spend a day roaming in the woods?

So Barlow thought as he wandered about with Lucy May, who could enjoy such simple and natural pleasures with as great a zest as himself. Julia Marvin and Ellen Brown had joined them with a few others; and they all seated themselves in a shady nook, while exclamations of fresh admiration at the scenery around continually burst from their lips.

Reynolds and his newly-found beauty came dancing gaily by.

"Reynolds," said Tom Sumner, one of the group, "is never so happy as when making some new conquest, it seems to me."

"Yes," added Mr. Colman, a young gentleman who was studying theology with the minister (as was customary in those days), "he is always in love with somebody—a perfect lady's man; and, for all he is so fickle and inconstant," said he, glancing sideways at the young ladies, to see how the remark would be taken, "he is always in good repute with them. For my part, I cannot conceive how ladies are willing to risk their hearts and their future settlements in such flirtations, and all to please a heartless coxcomb, whose greatest pleasure is to feed his vanity. Some of them, I believe, have lost their hearts already. There's Mary Lamb, and"—

"Take care, Colman," exclaimed Sumner, laughing, and looking at the girls, "you are treading on my corns."

But Colman did not take the hint, and ran on. "There's Mary Lamb, one of the finest girls in town, completely infatuated with his attentions, and, I dare say, thinks he is really and truly desirous of making her his wife. But I myself heard him say the other day he never had such an idea."

Poor Mary was in a situation to hear every word. She was picking berries quite alone, having wandered from her company, and was concealed from the group only by a few bushes. She dared not stir lest she should be discovered, but every word sunk like a dagger into her wounded heart. She almost died with shame and mortification to be talked of thus by her companions; to have the very thoughts of her heart, which, she supposed, were buried from every mortal eye, dragged forth and exposed. And then to know that Reynolds had confessed he had no special interest in her, after all the sympathy and friendship he had expressed for her to her face! As she looked down, her eyes fell on the ring he had given her, and asked her "to wear for his sake." She had not power to move from the spot, if she had had the desire. She stood like a statue, pale as marble, and breathless with surprise and astonishment. But no one knew she was there, and Colman continued:

"Reynolds, I presume, will now commence a regular flirtation with that city belle, and so we'll have another seven days' wonder."

"It is time there was a thorough reform in society, both among ladies and gentlemen," said Miss May. "If there was more sincerity of manner between them, how many vexations, and heartaches, and misunderstandings, would be avoided!"

"Well," replied Barlow, "I have always pursued one and the same course, and I believe it is the right one. I am fond of ladies' society, and should be sorry to be debarred from it; but I never allowed myself to become intimate enough with any one to form an attachment, and never treated any lady in so ambiguous a manner as to mislead her, or in so peculiar a manner as to excite the attention of others; and no honourable man, in my opinion, will do otherwise."

"I think that is the right course," said Sumner.

"If all pursued it," said Lucy, "ladies would not so often seem to play the coquette. They often receive that name when they do not deserve it, I am sure."

Mr. Colman—"I should like to hear you defend coquettes. Please go on."

Lucy—I do not intend to do any such thing, Mr. Colman; I detest all coquettes, both male and female. Their conduct is heartless, base, and contemptible. But I do think gentlemen, by too assiduous attentions, often place ladies in such false positions as are very uncomfortable and highly injurious to their interests, and sometimes make them appear coquettish when they are not. I know that ladies are sometimes at their wits' end in deciding how to treat such gentlemen, not wishing to offend, and unwilling to do or say anything which amounts to rudeness."

"Ladies should not encourage attentions that annoy them," said Colman.

"Rather say," answered Julia Marvin, "gentlemen should be more cautious, and less profuse in marked civilities, than they are. The reform must commence on their side. They make advances, and we receive them, often because we do not know how to help it. Don't think the ladies all pine for admiration, and flattery, and extraordinary civilities," added she archly. "It is not so. There is a respect, a deference, and politeness, which is always exceedingly grateful to a lady's feelings, and is subject to no possible objection. Then there is a devotion of manner, and an obscure, doubtful style of address, that is extremely embarrassing, and liable to misconstruction, which is neither agreeable nor proper."

Mr. Colman—"You speak as if you were talking experimentally, Miss Marvin."

Julia blushed. "I believe," said she, "all young ladies, who have a large circle of acquaintance, occasionally experience serious annoyance from the inconsiderate, reckless gallantry of the times, which seems to be growing worse rather than better."

"Since we are on this matter, do enter into particulars more minutely," continued Colman. "It is a subject I never thought of, I must confess, and I am not sure but the gentlemen are the most to blame. I will freely own, that I always have been disposed to think the ladies were generally pleased with all the attentions they could gain—the more the better—and that they countedtheir beaux with as much satisfaction as a monk does his beads."

Tom Sumner laughed heartily. The girls pouted a little, but still could not refrain from smiling.

Lucy—"Let us catechise these gentlemen a little, and make them condemn themselves. I suppose, Mr. Colman, you can say your catechism," said she humorously.

"I used to have it," he replied, "on my tongue's end. We all used to say it regularly every Sunday at home, just as regularly as the Sabbath came, all sitting in a row. But I will not promise," added he, laughing, "that I can say it on this occasion, and apply it to the case in question."

"Well, we will see," said Lucy, gravely.

"What is the eighth commandment?"

Colman—"Thou shalt not steal."

"Very well," said Lucy, laughing.

"What is forbidden in the eighth commandment?"

He pondered a little; at last he said: "The eighth commandment forbiddeth whatsoever doth or may unjustly hinder our own or our neighbour's wealth or outward estate."

Lucy—"What is the ninth commandment?"

Colman—"The ninth commandment is, 'Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.'"

Lucy—"What is required in the ninth commandment?"

Colman—"The ninth commandment requireth the maintaining and promoting of truth between man and man, and of our own and our neighbour's good name, especially in witness-bearing."

Lucy—"What is forbidden in the ninth commandment?"

Colman—"The ninth commandment forbiddeth whatsoever is prejudicial to truth or injurious to our own or our neighbour's good name."

Lucy—"Well, that will do; you say your catechism admirably. Now as you are already half a minister, and ought to begin to 'make applications,' don't you see that a gentleman, who pursues the course to which we have alluded, of paying a lady those attentions which, by common consent, imply a deeper interest in her than that of friendship, when he has no purpose in it but the gratification of his vanity, deceives her and deceives others—'may unjustly hinder her wealth or outward estate,' in other words, her best good —'bears false witness' to others, which 'is prejudicial to truth' and 'injurious to her good name,' especially if it produce the impression abroad that she is flirting with him and practising coquettish arts." They all laughed heartily. "And suppose," added Lucy, "in process of time, he should steal her heart, what then? Is it not as wrong to steal one's heart as one's purse?"

Just then Reynolds and Miss Lee passed.

"What are you all talking about, so cozily here?" said he.

"We have been saying our catechism to Miss May," replied Sumner, "and she has been preaching on the eighth and ninth commandments; you

ought to have been here to have heard her exposition. I think it would have suited your case."

Before Reynolds had time to request an explanation, the horn was blown long and loud, the signal for a general rendezvous before starting for home; so, cutting up a few bushes to pile in the carriages to take home to the little ones, who could not enjoy the privileges of "the berrying" abroad, they hastened away, and soon a long, merry procession was seen winding its way among the pine woods, as the twilight shades fell over hill and valley.

CHAPTER VI.

FANNY WESTON—KEZIAH WRINKLE.

WHEN Colman retired to his room for the night, he was in a thoughtful mood. The chit-chat in the woods had awakened thoughts and feelings that disturbed him. His own conduct in relation to Fanny Weston appeared to him in a new light; it had certainly been imprudent, to say the least. He was a noble fellow, had a keen sense of honour, and a most generous and disinterested spirit; and in all his intercourse with her, he had been prompted by kindness and pity for one who, like himself, had few friends. He had for a year waited upon her wherever she wished to go, attended her to singing-school and returned with her, was always ready to gallant her to a party or to see her home; she had full liberty to call upon him for any favour, as if he had been a brother, merely because no one else would attend upon her, and he wished to be useful in any way to anybody. Could it be possible that his constant kindness for so long a time had been viewed in any other light by her or others? The thought never occurred to him before, but it caused him now most painful apprehensions, and he was surprised that he had been so inconsiderate and so thoughtless of consequences. He resolved to change his course, for no idea of uniting her destiny with his had ever for a moment crossed his mind; if he had committed any error it was from sheer thoughtlessness. But how, in reality, did matters stand?

Fanny Weston was the teacher of the village school. She was an orphan, and had been left alone in the world at sixteen, with no inheritance but a superior education and a well disciplined mind. She had found a quiet home and a kind friend in Mr. Dana, a respectable widow, who owned a neat little white cottage near the parsonage. Kindly sympathising words and unsolicited favours are never so fully appreciated as by the friendless and desolate, because they meet the necessities of the heart. Every gentle word and generous deed is garnered up among the treasures of a grateful, sensitive, isolated woman. So had been the unsought, disinterested favours of Colman. Unconsciously his presence became necessary to her happiness, and her heart wandered after him when away. She watched for him, and was disappointed if he did not come when expected. If rallied about him, she always declared his kindness was pure disinterested benevolence simply, and yet she wondered in her heart why his patience did not tire. Mrs. Dana had for some time surmised that her heart was not her own, but Fanny had never acknowledged its loss even to herself. Others can often read us better than we can read ourselves.

Colman called as usual the next evening to wait upon her to the singing-school, but told her, as he should leave town for a few days, he would endeavour to engage some of his acquaintances to call for her hereafter. Having thus arranged matters, he made a solemn resolution never to bestow on

any lady special and unremitting attentions, unless he wished to make her his wife.

It was not until weeks had passed away, and Fanny seldom saw Mr. Colman, that she realised how much she had valued his kindness, and what a desolation of heart his absence had caused. She was astonished to find how many of her thoughts were interwoven with him, how bright and beautiful life had seemed to her in the future, and how lonely and dark her path was now. His presence had been like sunshine in her way, and his absence had brought a cloud over everything. She was vexed to find herself in chains that she never dreamed she wore, and appalled at the difficulty she found in shaking them off. She had thought her heart was as free as a bird, and she sighed to find herself enslaved. She felt she had no one to reproach but herself. She entirely acquitted him of blame in the affair; she remembered now his careless, unconstrained manner, and wondered how she could have been so foolish as to misconstrue civilities that were always ostensibly for her benefit. She learned a lesson as well as Colman, but it was a costly one. It weaned her from the world, and made her seek with earnestness and diligence "the best Friend," "whose favour is life, and whose loving-kindness is better than life."

Among the most important characters in the village was Miss Keziah Wrinkle, generally known by the name of "Aunt Kizzy." She was shrewd, witty, originally, and sensible; she had had no educational advantages, and had seen little of the world, but was as independent in her opinions, and as satisfied of their correctness, as if she had studied and read extensively, and travelled the world over. Her memory was remarkable. She never forgot anything she ever heard, or anybody she had ever seen; and what was more, she could give you the history of everybody in town, not excepting even their pedigree. Give her the name of a person in the adjoining villages even, and she could generally figure out what family he belonged to, and perhaps entertain you for a long time with an account of his father, or some of the kindred, and generally ravel out a pretty correct history. It always was a marvel how she contrived to keep herself so "posted up" about parish matters, and her neighbours' affairs. And then her prophecies—for what she did not know she could predict—so often came to pass, that she was looked upon with a vague sort of fear by the young, and no little wonder by the old. She always went to church, rain or shine, and as the interval was generally too short to admit of her returning home at noon, she usually dropped in among her friends. The truth was, it was during these calls, and by pumping everybody she saw, and by means of her own tact in cyphering out results, that she acquired so much notoriety as to knowing everything, and foretelling future events. She was precise in all her ways, punctual in her habits, and had no charity for anybody that lived without order or system. She always came to church nearly an hour before the time, "to get rested and prepared for the meetin'," she said; though some of her neighbours thought it gave an opportunity for the parish to pass in review before her eyes, which she truly enjoyed. She animadverted most severely on the conduct of Capt. Robbins's daughters, in particular. They were always late; they regularly made a point to walk up the aisle to their prominent position in the church after everybody was seated, and the service commenced; "No doubt," as Aunt Kizzy said, "to make folks look round and see what pretty gals they were, and what they'd got on."

Everybody supposed she was more than half right, and if the young ladies could have read the feelings of beholders, even of those whose admiration and esteem they more especially craved, and heard the remarks their hurried manner and flushed cheeks, and invariably tardy appearance caused, they

would soon have relinquished this mode of making themselves conspicuous. Aunt Kizzy in due time dropped in to spend the interval at Mrs. Dana's. Colman's long attentions to Miss Weston, and their abrupt termination, had not escaped her observation. Of course it must be inquired into. Having no love matters of her own to absorb her attention, she could more naturally and easily afford the time to look into the affairs of others.

"So you and Mr. Colman ain't a goin' to make a match after all, be ye?" said she, bluntly.

Fanny blushed, and said "Such a thing had never been talked of."

"Well," replied Aunt Kizzy, "it would a done nicely. Mr. Colman is a good man, and everybody thought you'd got matters fixed long ago. But times has changed since I was young. 'Twould puzzle a lawyer to tell now who's courtin' and who ain't. There's Captain Robbins's darters, nice gals enough if they hadn't bin spiled in their edication. They don't know nothin', and they ain't good for nothin', no way nor no how. They have more fellers of an evening to see 'em than most gals have in all their born days. And what comes on't? Why, nothin' at all; they're no nearer bein' married now than they were five years ago."

Here Aunt Kizzy stopped, but nobody said anything. It was not necessary, for she had only paused to take breath.

"Laws me!" she continued, rolling up her eyes, "the money and the time that's wasted by them gals in duin' what's of no use to nobody, is awful! Why, they've worked a turkey buzzard, and framed him in gold, and hung him up in the parlour, and it tuk one on 'em weeks and weeks. And," said she, quite contemptuously, throwing herself back in her chair, "it don't look nothin' to be compared to our old rooster at home! You've no idee how they du spend their time. I was in there onc't, and Susan was a duin' up Fanny's hair. There Fanny sot and sot; her hair was done up in curls all over her head, and her head looked for all the world as if a swarm of bees had lit on't. And Susan combed and brushed, and curled more'n a whole hour, and Fanny looked in the glass this way and that way, and before and behind, and all round. To be sure she did look like a picter when she was all fixed, but she said it had to be all tuk down and dun over every day. Then they're allys a sewin' some fol de rol or nuther, instead of helpin' about the house, and savin' their mother's steps. When they get rigged, they stick themselves up in the parlour, lookin' jest like wax figgers. They du nothin' that'll spile their hands, and their mother slaves from mornin' till night. All this cums of havin' an edication. I think such an edication is a cuss to any gals. An' they du it all to get married. Now what's sich wives good for, I'd like to know? I've hearn folks say, that the Captin doesn't know hisself who comes to see his gals, nor what they're arter. And I know, for people say, that some of these fellers is no better than they should be, and I shouldn't wonder, arter all, if they didn't marry so well as their neighbours, for everybody knows, that gals that has so many beaux, if they git married at all, ginerally git husbands that are good for nothin'."

CHAPTER VII.

TROUBLE AT THE ROBBINS'.

CAPTAIN ROBBINS came in to tea one evening evidently quite disturbed in his mind. He was a man of an amiable disposition, frank, generous, hospitable, and of the strictest integrity and morality. More than all, he was a

religious man. He had but one fault, so perceptible to others as to be noticed and cause remark, and that was Eli's fault. He did not govern, and restrain, and direct, and watch over his children as every parent, especially one who feels his accountability to God, should do, and as every parent, who seeks the best good of his family for time and eternity, will do.

It rained hard. He ate his supper in silence, and then, instead of bustling about as usual for a while before dark, he took a newspaper, put on his spectacles, and sat down quietly to read, without speaking a word to anybody, and soon was apparently absorbed in his employment. When the tea-things were removed, and the girls, instead of repairing to the parlour for their evening's exhibition, had seated themselves at their sewing in the common sitting-room, the Captain took off his spectacles, laid aside his paper, and abruptly broke silence.

"Fanny, how long has Mr. Moulton been visiting here?" asked he.

Fanny—"I don't know, father; I should think it was more than a year."

Father—"Well, you should not allow such a man to visit you at all."

"Why, father?" inquired Susan innocently.

Father—"Because he is a man of no character—no, worse than that—he is a man of bad character, and should not be admitted into respectable society. I hear he is a gambling, intemperate, dissolute fellow. You should not have allowed such a visitor in the house."

Ellen's face was of a deep scarlet, even to the very roots of her hair.

"But, father," said Susan, "how could we know his character was bad? Nobody told us. Women cannot be expected to know what men are."

"Well, well," replied the Captain thoughtfully; "you must get rid of him at once—the quicker the better."

Fanny—"I do not know how we can get rid of him, father. How can we tell him he must discontinue his visits? What reason shall we give for it? It will be rather an awkward affair for us girls to manage. Would it not be better for you or mother to do it?"

"I don't know," answered the Captain; "how did you ever make his acquaintance?"

Susan—"Mr. Smith introduced him to us at a party, and they called on us together afterwards."

Father—"And is that rascal Smith one of your visitors too? Well, it is high time to look over your catalogue of acquaintances. Name some of them, Fanny."

Fanny mentioned a number of the gentlemen, who had long and constantly been received by them on the most gracious and familiar terms. Captain Robbins knit his brows. He was vexed, but more vexed with himself than with his daughters.

"You have not named more than half a dozen young men who are really respectable, and whose acquaintance is a compliment. Does Dr. Wilson ever call?" said he.

Fanny—"Very seldom."

Capt. Robbins—"Does Mr. Barlow?"

Fanny—"He has never called but once."

Capt. Robbins—"How does it happen that among your acquaintances you reckon so few of our most steady, industrious, respectable young men?"

Fanny could not tell, and the Captain said no more. He drew up the back of the next chair before him, and burying his head in his arms, which he folded over the chair, he fell into a musing mood. "I see how it is," he mentally exclaimed, "their education is all wrong. They have been brought up like butterflies, and such men as I would choose for their acquaintance and for their future husbands are not such as would seek them for wives."

This was a painful reflection, and none the less so for his entire consciousness that it was true. Moreover, the Captain was led to feel, that he and his wife had miserably failed in another respect. The biting sarcasm, with which he had been rallied a few hours before about his daughter's beaux, and the miserable character of some of them, had stung him to the quick, and opened his eyes all at once to see and feel, that he should have known "who and what manner" of people were admitted to the sociabilities of his family; whereas, he had rather kept himself aloof from the companions of his daughters, never even taken the trouble to inquire who they were, or to mingle in the circle that nightly filled his parlour. He often heard their noisy mirth and frivolous songs, but so long as his daughters seemed to enjoy themselves, he concerned himself no farther.

Mrs. Robbins, too, occupied with family duties, never thought it incumbent upon her to make one of the parlour group, and therefore the girls were left free to do and say what their young, giddy, and inexperienced hearts prompted; they rode with whom and where they choose: they walked, nobody knew where, and were as totally unrestrained and unadvised on those subjects where young ladies need the wisdom and prudence of years to direct, as if they had been orphans.

All this assumed such an aspect as startled the father, and he felt that he had unconsciously and most reprehensibly been trying an experiment with the future destiny and happiness of his daughters, which might have had a most fatal result. He blessed God that his eyes were opened to see the danger in time, and he resolved, late as it was, to remodel his family arrangements, and strive to repair the evil as far as possible.

The next evening was pleasant, and the girls held their levee as usual. They were no less astonished than their visitors to find their father ensconced in the old arm-chair, a guest in his own parlour. He could be very entertaining and agreeable, and no one seemed to regret the intrusion, save one of his own daughters, the pretty Ellen. And what was the cause of her flustered look?

Her usually nimble tongue seemed suddenly to have lost its limberness, and there was an agitated manner about her, entirely foreign to her former gay, careless appearance. However, it might have been remarked, no one spoke of it at the time. Mr. Moulton was there; but was treated in the most stately and frigid manner by Captain Robbins. His stay was short; Ellen followed him to the door, and did not return to the parlour circle that evening.

Fully resolved on a new course of procedure, Captain Robbins seemed to recover his usual quiet and happy manner, and no trace of the commotion which had agitated his mind, remained. At length the Sabbath came It was a beautiful day, one of nature's brightest. The woods were filled with the melody of the birds, and the air was sweet with the fragrance of flowers in bloom. All gathered around the breakfast table at an early hour, but Ellen. She was not there. Fanny called her, but she did not answer. Susan went to her room. It was empty. She had not slept in it. What could it mean? Every part of the house was searched, but Ellen could not be found. The servant was sent into the garden to call her, but she received no answer. The family were not really alarmed about it, but it was strange that she could not be found. Her room was visited again. It was evident she had not been there during the night. Unwilling to alarm the neighbours, the family began to call to mind where they saw her last, and what she said and did at the time. Mrs. Robbins saw her about eight o'clock in the evening, and she appeared to be looking about in the sitting-room for something before she went to her chamber. It now occurred to her, that she

looked sad, and Mrs. Robbins remembered, that she thought as she looked at her, she was paler than usual. Fanny called to mind, that she remained in the parlour but a few moments the last evening. But she had not thought of it since till now. Captain Robbins was disturbed. Ellen was the youngest—the pet—the darling of her father. What *had* become of her! A thousand nameless fears suggested themselves, and were promptly banished. But where was she? That was the question which returned with stunning force. If it had been any morning but Sunday, she might have taken an early stroll through the village; but as it was, that could not be. The breakfast was left untasted, and all were either looking for the missing member, or vainly endeavouring to consider what her absence meant.

Fanny at length appeared with a face as pale as marble; she had found the following note on a table in Ellen's room:—

MY DEAR PARENTS,—Before you read this, I shall have become the bride of Mr. Moulton. We have long been attached, but your remark a few evenings since, having convinced us that you would not consent to our marriage, we have concluded to be united privately, away from home. I hope you will forgive your own Ellen for this rash step, as you will call it, as we could not have been separated. We shall return in a few days to C——. Hope you will receive and forgive us.—Your own ELLEN.

Saturday Evening.

If a thunderbolt from heaven had fallen upon Captain Robbins, it would scarcely have been more sudden or terrific. At first, he was stupified with astonishment, and then a smothered indignation toward the base intruder upon his peace and happiness burst forth with irrepressible fury.

"Receive and forgive," said he, repeating her last words with terrible energy: "No, never," said he, striking his clenched fist on the table, which made the dishes ring—"as she has made her bed so let her lie. She has sowed the wind, let her reap the whirlwind."

Mrs. Robbins did not attempt to speak. She was utterly confounded. She had never dreamed that such a calamity would befall her; that such an undutiful, reckless step as this would have been taken by one of her daughters. She sank back into the nearest chair speechless. The other girls were astonished and pale with fright. They had surmised Moulton's attachment, but Ellen had never made either of them the confidant of her feelings on her plans. It was a sad day at the Robbins'. This was the first trial that had ever cast its shadow upon the family, and it had come in a way that the Captain's nice sense of honour could ill brook. He could have laid Ellen in the grave, and, much as he loved her, returned her submissively to Him who gave; but to relinquish the brightest ornament of his house for ever, and to such a villain as Moulton, made his blood boil with indignation.

Before night, the cause of the absence of Captain Robbins' family from church, was known and commented upon through the village. Such an affair had never before taken place in C——, and petrified the people with amazement, and there was no want of blame in the affair. People said, "they were not surprised; Captain Robbins and his wife ought to have known the companions of their daughters, and brought them up differently." And Aunt Kizzy put on a long face, and went about saying, "Didn't I tell ye, that somethin' would happen?"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PARTY.

ONCE a year, a large party was always given at Sumner Place, and the time chosen was when summer wore her gayest livery, and the country was the most delightful.

Aristocrat as Gen. Sumner was in many of his notions, he was truly American in one thing. Worth of character and cultivated intellect stood higher far, in his estimation, than family rank or wealth. If a man was upright, steady and industrious, he always met him with a warm grasp. If a family were irreproachable in their character, industrious, intelligent and energetic, they were considered sufficiently on a level with his own family to enjoy their acquaintance; whereas, no matter what their pretensions, if they lacked goodness, the best ingredient of society, they were discarded. Every where in the village Gen. Sumner was regarded as a true gentleman, and a kind generous friend. A family council was held to make out the list of guests. Anna was appointed scribe. All the prominent families in C—— were noted down in the first place. Then some gentlemen from neighbouring towns, attending the court in session, were added. Several of the senior class of young ladies in the academy were named, and appended to the list. Then came all the young ladies, who particularly belonged to Maria's and Anna's circle of friends, and finally Tom repeated the names of quite a number of his friends, which were jotted down. Barlow was mentioned, and Grenville and Reynolds, to which latter name Tom objected, but it was overruled and he was added.

"Shall I put down Dr. Wilson, father?" asked Anna.

"Yes, certainly," said the General; "why not?"

Anna screwed up the corners of her mouth and said archly, "he was a doctor." But she put him down. Two or three young merchants were mentioned, but although in good business, as their morals were questionable, they were not allowed to go on the list. Tom named a Mr. Bancroft, who had lately opened a store in the village. There was some demur about him, but finally, as they knew nothing against him, his name was added.

Then came the preparation. Everything that fresh butter and cream and eggs could make was made. Like a true Yankee supper, there was no lack of variety. The guests began to come at four o'clock in the afternoon, and, in groups, they scattered about on the lawn, in the lane and the garden, viewing the thrifty orchard, and the fine harvest in prospect, and enjoying, with true zest, the view from this delightful spot of the town itself, where each family could spy its own home, as the village with its dotted farms lay at their feet. At length came the supper, carried round. This was partaken of with little of the formality of a city entertainment, and with more gay, good humour. As the shades of evening deepened, the crowd began to gather in little groups, some about the piano, and others in small circles, engaging in lively conversation, and a few in boisterous mirth. In one corner of the parlour, apart from the rest, stood Barlow, and another young lawyer from a neighbouring town, somewhat of a stranger to the circle around him. As the crowd passed and repassed, Barlow answered his many inquiries, entertaining him with remarks of his own. Johnson, for that was the stranger's name, was an old classmate and friend of Barlow, and they talked freely, as old friends do.

Fanny Robbins came sailing by, leaning on the arm of a young gentleman, and laughing in a very boisterous manner.

"How can a young lady appear in society with such a great bare neck and coarse red arms!" said Johnson. "I must set her down as decidedly vulgar."

Mr. Barlow—"I suppose young ladies have an idea that they appear more charming in such a mode of dress; but they are certainly mistaken. I can never respect a lady who sacrifices her delicacy at the shrine of such a fashion, and I believe, when I speak my own sentiments, I utter those of other gentlemen."

This mention of Miss Robbins led to an account of the runaway match that had taken place so lately in the family.

Barlow said, he understood "they were excessively mortified and distressed at the event, but had resolved to appear as if nothing had happened, and never to forgive or receive the erring one. Poor Ellen," said he, "is another victim of a mistaken education, and of parental negligence and folly."

"Well," asked Johnson, "who is that sweet, pensive girl standing alone? She is very lovely."

Barlow was just on the point of replying, that it was Miss Lamb, when Reynolds and Miss Lee floated by, and stopping where Miss Lamb stood, Reynolds made a very low bow, and congratulating her on her gay, happy looks, begged her acceptance of his other arm in a promenade. Her heart almost burst at this taunt upon her gaiety, and her chin quivered, but seeing all eyes turned upon her, to avoid farther remark she accepted his offer, and they were soon out of sight; however, a few moments only passed before the three again swept by Barlow and his companion.

"Now, tell me," said Johnson, "the name of that elegant girl who is with Reynolds. How graceful and fascinating she is!"

Barlow—"Her name is Lee; she is a stranger from the city, and is visiting Miss Marvin, the lady at the piano."

The trio seated themselves. Reynolds seemed unusually gay. Miss Lee was all attention and devotion to him, and he was evidently delighted with an opportunity to annoy Miss May by a display of gallantry on his part towards Miss Lee, and her most gratifying reception of his civilities. The most acute observer would have said they were mutually fascinated with each other.

Barlow brought his friend to introduce to the ladies; they chatted a while, and finally the conversation turned upon the late marriage, which had raised such a stir in the parish.

Reynolds said "he thought the parties had done perfectly right to run away and be married privately, knowing, as they did, the improbability of Captain Robbins's consent to the match."

Barlow insisted, "that no man of principle would propose a runaway match."

Miss Lamb thought such marriages were never happy in themselves, and that God uniformly set a curse upon them.

"Do you not think, Miss Lamb," said Barlow "we should have fewer of these inconsiderate, reckless matches, if ladies were less addicted to novel reading, where falling in love is represented as obeying fate simply, and where love is made omnipotent and invincible, and the consequences of such ill-starred, rash marriages are kept from view, or are so gilded by fancy as entirely to mislead their willing dupes?"

"I do not doubt it," replied she.

"Love is invincible, I think—don't you?" inquired Reynolds of Mary, with such a scrutinising glance as woke up the slumbering energies of her whole soul.

"No," replied she, decidedly, while she blushed excessively. "Even pride can subdue an attachment placed on an unworthy object, without the aid

either of reason or religion." She fixed her usually gentle eye upon him, while it flashed with such earnestness and decision, as made Reynolds quail under its glance.

"Can a person ever truly love one, who has been an object of dislike?" asked Miss Lee.

"Yes," replied Mr. Johnson; "I have myself known cases, where the most violent dislike has been displaced by the most sincere and ardent affection; but that dislike was founded upon a prejudice, perhaps as unjust as ungenerous, which melted away as soon as discovered.

"I do not myself believe in such a thing as falling in love at first sight. A person may admire another on account of personal beauty, grace and dignity, or on account of some supposed trait of character, but true love must be founded on an esteem and just appreciation of character, which cannot be acquired in a moment.

"There is no word, except religion, so perverted and abused, and misunderstood in its signification, as love. I mean love in the abstract. There are many persons that say, and I suppose believe, that they love God, who have no more of true love to Him, or attachment to Him, than the beasts of the field."

Quite a group began to gather around Johnson, and some one, *en passant*, inquired what was the obsorbing topic of that circle.

Julia Marvin said, she "believed they were having a disquisition on love."

"No," said Tom Sumner roguishly, "I reckon Reynolds is 'relating his experience' in love matters."

Lucy May laughed, and said "that would be exceedingly interesting to hear," and she and Julia slipped quietly into the group; but, by this time, so great an accession to their listeners arrested the conversation altogether.

"I thought, Reynolds," said Tom, as there was a dead pause, "you were entertaining the company with some of the interesting details of your experience in love, perhaps showing forth the rise and downfall of some of your courtships."

There was such a significance in his tone, though his manner was quiet and sedate, and such a suppressed tittering, and so many sly pinches among the girls, that Reynolds felt annoyed, and blushed deeply; but he replied rather carelessly, "that, so far from that, he was taking lessons from others, and striving to become rooted and grounded in love himself."

"I'm afraid you have taken too deep root already," said Tom quizzingly; while Anna gave such a tremendous pull of his coat-tail, and cast such a sweet beseeching look in his face, as prevented him from saying more.

"This seems to be the popular corner," said the minister, who now came up; "what is the attraction?"

"We have had some discussion about love matters," replied Mr. Barlow rather gaily. "Suppose, Mr. May, you give us your views on some points. What do you think of falling in love at first sight?"

"Think!" said the clergyman, "I think there is no such a thing. The very foundation of love is esteem; and esteem is founded on a knowledge of worth of character. With a previous persuasion of the true worth and lovely qualities of a person, one may be prepared to extend a warm friendship at first sight, which may ripen into love. There is a great deal of sentimentalism abroad now, called love, that is no more akin to it than morality is to religion."

"You think," replied Dr. Wilson, "that esteem is the corner-stone of love. Suppose an attachment grown up out of this esteem, founded on the full belief of the intrinsic worth of its object, and it is found at length that

the object is totally worthless and entirely destitute of the supposed traits of character which produced esteem and nourished attachment, does not love live on and grow when we are undeceived?"

"No," said Mr. May. "Convince fully a noble, honourable-minded person that the object he has loved is base and worthless, and that he has been entirely deceived, and love expires at the very moment of the discovery. Grief, disappointment, and various other sensations, may take possession of the soul, but not a particle of true love beats amid the ruins of a misplaced attachment."

"But a mother's love outlives the greatest exhibitions of depravity and worthlessness," some one replied.

"A mother's love is instinctive, and obeys no laws but Nature's," said Mr. May. "I do not believe that one-half of the marriages that take place are the result of true love for each other. Many are the consequence of a foolish, fanciful sentimentalism, that soon dies out and leaves the couple paired, but not matched—united, but not one. And many more are the result of passion simply, of circumstance, convenience, expediency, &c."

At an early hour the party broke up; and before a city assembly scarcely begins it revels, the town of C—— was buried in quietness and sleep.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DECISION.

MR. REYNOLDS'S visits at Mrs. Marvin's began to be very frequent, and his admiration of the city belle to be quite manifest. Miss Lee was always ready to sing or play for him, to chat or walk in the garden, and, as she was full of vivacity, he found her a most charming companion. She seemed so willing to listen to everything he had to say, and enjoyed all his stories and jokes with such apparent zest, that he felt quite at ease in her society. He fancied there was a perfect similarity of tastes between them, and a commingling of soul that was as delightful as it was rare. To be sure, there was a something about her manner that sometimes puzzled him, and once in a while an archness in her look, that for a moment arrested his attention, which he did not exactly understand; but he thought he detected in her an unequivocal and decided admiration of himself. She appeared to have no eyes or ears for any one but him when he was present. This flattered his vanity. But how was he affected towards her? She was one of those elegant women so accustomed to refined society in all its phases, and so conversant with its ways, that, under all circumstances and on all occasions, she seemed the personification of grace itself. She had, moreover, no small pretensions to beauty, and that nice exquisite taste in the arrangement of her dress, in the harmony of colours, and that tact in displaying her decided personal charms and in concealing whatever personal defects she had, which is acquired only by practice and thorough acquaintance with fashionable life. Reynolds was exactly the man to appreciate all this. Simple, artless beauty, he admired for a while; but when its novelty was gone, it palled upon his sight. To him "variety was the spice of life;" and personal beauty, constantly diversified by being arrayed in a new costume, or displayed in a new light, or set forth by a new study of effect, completely harmonised with and fascinated his fastidious mind. But with what feelings did he actually regard her? This was the very question he was endeavouring to solve in his own mind, as he

sat one day after dinner in his office, leaning back in a most cozy manner in his cushioned arm-chair, with his legs perched upon another in front of him. In order to arrive at the truth of the matter, he began to institute a comparison between her and the other young ladies in town, whom at different times he had thought he truly loved.

There was Mary Lamb—and she stood before his mind's eye in all the purity and simplicity of truth and beauty; but she was so confiding, so yielding, so honest, that he actually felt her love was not worth having. He could have it without asking for it, and so he did not want it. He concluded that such a passive, trusting woman, would not, on the whole, suit his taste. He did not want a wife that would twine herself about him and lean on him as a prop and support, but one that could stand alone by herself, like a beautiful evergreen, always the same amid all weathers, winter and summer; one that he could admire for her independence of thought and decision of character as well as beauty; and such seemed Angeline Lee.

And Mary Lamb passed away from his mind like a "dissolving view," and Lucy May, with her fair, noble countenance, loomed up in her place. He came to the conclusion, as he mused about her, that although in her education, temper, and habits, she was calculated to make a man both happy and respectable, still her tastes were rather too simple. Fresh flowers and birds, and the simple, every-day charms of country life, would fully satisfy her, but not him; and he began to think he needed a more refined companion, one more initiated in the luxuries and pleasures of high life to participate in and minister to his enjoyment. Angeline Lee, in all the gracefulness of her charms, and her more liberal, if not more just, views of men and things, seemed a more congenial partner in the elegant whirl of such a life as he would choose down the opening vista of time.

Ellen Brown had for a season been admired by the inconstant Reynolds. Few are as "passing fair" as she was. Her complexion was clear as alabaster. Her blue eyes were large and mild, and her hair luxuriant and beautiful. Her form was exceedingly graceful and elegant, while there was a delicacy of feeling and a gentleness about her that were very captivating; and Reynolds had often thought if he could transplant her into an Eden of his own creation she would be a second Eve. But when he contrasted the dark flashing eyes of Angeline with hers, and the varied and endless charms of her conversation and manners with the less accomplished Ellen, poor Ellen faded away from his thoughts.

Julia Marvin, Catherine Sinclair, and hosts of others in town and country, whom at various times he had thought he regarded with deep affection, but for whom his love had proved "like the morning cloud and the early dew which soon passeth away," flitted before his mental vision, only to be banished, and to recall the image of the new beauty that now filled the horizon of his mind. "Yes," said he to himself, "I think of all the ladies I have ever yet seen, she bears the palm. Such a wife, so beautiful, so graceful, so refined, so calculated to shine in any circle anywhere, is worthy of being the wife of Winthrop Reynolds, and mine she shall be;" and with a sudden jerk he jumped up with the air of one who has conceived a vast idea, which should be put in execution without loss of time.

How the matter would have ended after all I know not, if he had not at this juncture received a call from Dr. Wilson. One of Reynolds's great faults was indecision of character. He could never be trusted even for a day. Nobody could depend upon him, so changeable was his mind. First he would think "he would," and then he would think "he wouldn't," and then "he didn't know."

Dr. Wilson called with an item of business, and when it was transacted,

sat a while. As Reynolds's mind was entirely occupied with Miss Lee, it was natural that the conversation should follow the magnet of his thoughts. Dr. Wilson happened to know her family well, and was able to relate many facts and anecdotes in regard to them which were very agreeably received. But the most important was the announcement that Miss Lee was an heiress, independent of the fortune she might acquire from her father, which was news to Reynolds. An old uncle, dying a widower and childless, had bequeathed to Angeline $50,000, as she was his favourite and named for his wife. The knowledge of this circumstance "clinched the nail," or, in other words, fully and irrevocably determined him to marry Miss Lee. It never occurred to Mr. Reynolds that Angeline might not choose to wed him. It had, in fact, never entered his mind that any lady he might feel disposed to select for a wife would not, in the most joyful manner, slip her head into the matrimonial noose, and almost expire with ecstacy at the idea of jogging on through life, leaning on the arm of so desirable a companion. But vanity produces idiocy as well as blindness and madness. When Reynolds had actually and finally settled his mind on any particular object, he could pursue it with energy. And, now he had positively made up his mind to be married, and to make Miss Lee his wife, he went manfully and systematically to work. He resolved to begin courting in earnest. Hitherto he had courted the ladies for amusement, simply to pass away time, to study female character, and to "gather sentiments," as he expressed it.

He once made an experiment of "gathering sentiments" in this way: While he was studying law in a village near Boston, a great ball was to be given on some extraordinary occasion, and in a boasting way he declared that he could secure the four most prominent belles in town to go with him. He was told he could not do it. But he wagered he could. So he invited Miss A., Miss B., Miss C., and Miss D., each unknown to the other. All accepted his invitation. Miss A. prepared herself in due time, and waited and waited, like patience on a monument, for her gallant, but all in vain. Miss B. felt highly distinguished by Mr. Reynolds's invitation, and ransacked the stores for all that was elegant and fanciful for the occasion, and arranged herself at great expense and with exquisite taste. Time passed on, but he did not come. Miss C. had several invitations from other gentlemen to the same assembly, but she was previously engaged to Mr. Reynolds; she therefore declined all, and was ready in due time for him, but he came not. Miss D. had heartily regretted that she had accepted Mr. R.'s invitation, for she afterward was invited by a very distinguished man, whom she was obliged to refuse. The hour arrived and found her also waiting and listening to every sound of a carriage, and, finally, quite out of patience, and vexed with his delay; not even an apology came, and she became provoked at her disappointment, and indignant at her beau. But midnight came, and these ladies all retired to their pillows in a state of wonder and vexation which may be easily imagined. Various were the surmises of each lady at this curious and unaccountable disappointment. Each supposed that all her friends but herself were enjoying the pleasures of the evening. None but Miss D. dared to speak of the mortifying cause of the disappointment when interrogated why they were not there, till each found from Miss D. that she was not the only suffering one. When the matter was fully understood, the indignation of the ladies was without bounds. But little did he care. He was only "gathering sentiments," he said, and as he immediately left the place to establish himself in C——, he experienced no inconvenience from this heartless, unprincipled trick. It served him to talk and laugh over occasionally. But now he suddenly resolved to become wiser and better, and no longer to trifle on a subject which began to wear a serious aspect.

CHAPTER X.

THE PASTOR'S VISIT.

No sooner had Mr. May been informed of the state of affairs at the Robbins', than he hastened to express his sympathy in their unexpected and mortifying calamity. He highly esteemed both Captain Robbins and his wife. They were worthy parishioners and kind neighbours; but he and Mrs. May had often regretted the injudicious course they were pursuing in relation to their daughters, so ruinous alike to their temporal and eternal welfare. Pride, vanity, and folly, grow fast enough in young hearts without being cultivated, and with all the checks and restraints that judicious parents can bestow. In the case of these young ladies, want of care and watchfulness, and restraint on the part of parents, had given an opportunity for every noxious weed to grow on undisturbed; and the flattery of the unprincipled and vicious, as well as the indiscreet admiration of the more respectable, had fostered them into so rank a growth, as long since to have excited the attention of the neighbours, and really distressed the pastor. He hoped this event, the sacrifice of Ellen to an injudicious training, would open their eyes to see their fault, and lead to a reform in both parents and daughters.

Captain Robbins met his friend and pastor with a warm grasp of the hand, and without a word, but his quivering chin spoke the depth of his sorrow. Mrs. Robbins, who had at first been speechless with astonishment, could now find words enough to express her surprise at the strange course of her child.

"Who would have thought, Mr. May," said she, "that Ellen would have been so ungrateful and so reckless of her parents' feelings, and of family disgrace? Had we been harsh and severe, always thwarting her wishes and crossing her plans, it would not have been so strange. But she always had her way; we never opposed her in anything. She was a dear child; and it has always been our aim to make her happy, and to render home pleasant. But she has fled from her home, and deserted her parents, for a poor good-for-nothing villain!" and she burst into a flood of tears.

"That's the very reason. She had her own way always," said Captain Robbins, mournfully; "and when she found that for once our views and her own were at variance, she had not been prepared by previous submission to us, to yield to our opinion, and be guided by our judgment. We have been wrong, wife, in our management. I see it all now, and I feel it, but it is too late. Mistaken kindness and indulgence have ruined Ellen; and our carelessness and want of discipline have mingled for us a cup that we must drink, even to its bitter dregs."

Mr. May was glad to find that the Captain, at least, understood the true source of their calamity, and that nothing remained for him to do but to offer such consolation as the case admitted, and make suggestions as to the future. "Your affliction is a severe one," replied the minister, "but be thankful that it is no worse."

"It could not be worse," exclaimed the Captain, bitterly. "Has she not chosen a vile, worthless husband, who will never support her, and who will for ever be a disgrace to her and her family too? Yes, and 'let her eat of the fruit of her own way, and be filled with her own devices.' So says the Bible; and so say I," he added, indignantly and fiercely.

"Well, now," said Mr. May mildly, "a more bitter ingredient might have been mingled in your cup. She was married as soon as she crossed the State

line, the night she left you, I suppose; and although she has foolishly thrown herself away, by wedding a man totally unworthy of her, be thankful that she did not elope without the nuptial knot. She has sorrow enough in store, in just and natural retribution for her ungrateful, reckless, undutiful conduct. It will come, surely and awfully, upon her doomed head. I hope, my dear friend, you will remember the parable of the prodigal, and strive to imitate it, if your erring child should seek your forgiveness."

"No, Sir," replied the Captain hastily, as he rose; and thrusting his hands fiercely into his pockets, walked the room with rapid strides. "A child who can so abuse the goodness of the kindest of parents deserves no pity—no forgiveness—not a particle of mercy!"

Mr. May—"And yet you profess to be a follower of the meek and lowly Saviour, who not only forgave, but died to save sinners. Think how much He has forgiven you! Surely you should imitate His forbearance, His benevolence, His unquenchable love. I do not seek to extenuate Ellen's fault; but, as a Christian, I do not conceive that you can indulge an unforgiving spirit. It is contrary to the very essence of Christianity. 'Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us,' is our daily prayer. 'Lord, how many times shall a man sin against us, and we forgive him? 'Till seven times?' asked the disciple.—And what did that blessed example of meekness and love answer? 'I say not unto thee until seven times, but until seventy times seven.' If we have not the spirit of our Lord, we cannot be His children."

Captain Robbins made no reply, and Mr. May continued:

"You acknowledge that this sudden abruption of all life's dearest ties is a consequence of neglect and mistaken leniency on your part. What can you do less than forgive? If you refuse to pardon your child, think of the wretchedness that awaits her. Your kindness might melt her heart, and win her to all that is good and holy; and a stern unrelenting course may drive her into greater recklessness, obstinacy, and hardness of heart, and end in her final destruction for time and eternity. I have seen some mournful cases, where a harsh unforgiving spirit towards the erring has induced the most desperate state of feeling, and has sealed their doom, I doubt not, for eternity. No, Captain Robbins, if Ellen manifests the least sorrow, I beg you to receive her as the God-like father of the prodigal did, with open arms. 'Quench not the smoking flax, nor break the bruised reed.'"

Captain Robbins still continued silent. After a pause, Mrs. Robbins said: "I have sometimes congratulated myself that my children were daughters, because they were not the source of so much anxiety as sons, and more likely to do well. I could not imagine that one of my daughters would ever bring so much sorrow to our hearts."

Mr. May—"I have often been surprised to hear parents make the same remark. I think daughters require full as much watchfulness as sons, if not more; and that their companions should be as carefully chosen. I am filled with wonder every week of my life, to see how recklessly young ladies are sent away from home to visit and take care of themselves; how little scrutiny is exercised over their movements; and how fearlessly parents allow them to launch out and sport on the ocean of life, regardless of the perils to which their susceptibility and inexperience expose them. Had not Jacob foolishly allowed Dinah, in all her youth and inexperience, to wander away from the watchful care of home, to 'see the daughters of the land,' one of the foulest blots on his family, and the disgrace of the only daughter of his house and heart, had not taken place. We have examples of warning constantly around us, as well as those that are penned for our benefit in Holy writ. Above all, I am amazed to find how few mothers treat their daugh-

ters in so companionable a way as to win their love and confidence, and thus create the most effectual barrier to any improper attachment, or any unfortunate step."

Mrs. Robbins—"It is very difficult, Mr. May, to acquire the confidence of our daughters. Much as I have often wished to do so, I never found them disposed to be communicative. They never tell me anything about themselves or their affairs."

Mr. May—"Their confidence must be acquired in childhood. I believe such an intimate relation may exist between mother and daughter, that the most delightful interchange of thought and feeling may exist. In my own family, for instance, I do not believe Lucy has any confidant but her mother, nor does she hesitate to confide to her every thought and feeling of her heart. Where such an intimacy exists, a discreet mother can foresee all danger; and forewarned, forearmed, you know."

"But some young people are more reserved than others," remarked Mrs. Robbins. "I do not think Ellen had any confidant, not even her own sister."

Mr. May—"Well, it is worth a mother's greatest effort to obtain such an ascendancy over a daughter's mind, and such a stronghold in her heart, that she shall cordially, affectionately, freely, and voluntarily pour out her whole soul to her—her fears and her hopes, her thoughts and her feelings. Who so trustworthy as a mother? Who so capable of giving advice? Who so ready to overlook the foibles of a young, giddy girl, or throw the mantle of charity over her follies? A parent must not, however, expect to gain the confidence of a child so fully, unless she meets her half-way. Confidence begets confidence. Confide to her family matters, such as will make her feel that she is a partaker of her mother's joys and sorrows, and she will not hesitate in return to speak of her own."

"I believe you are right," said Captain Robbins, who had been listening attentively. "I think there has been far too little communion of thought and feeling between us and our children. We have not meddled with their affairs, nor they with ours. They have lived in one world, and we in another. I candidly believe that our neighbours have been better acquainted with the thoughts and feelings of our children than ourselves; that their confidants have been rather abroad than at home."

Mr. May—"For want of this family communion, I believe many fond, confiding hearts, who would most gladly have clustered all their attachments around their own fireside, have been driven by social yearnings to seek congenial spirits abroad; and with naturally amiable hearts, strong impulses, inexperience and ignorance of the world's follies and snares, have been led, first into temptation and then into sin, and, finally, have wandered to a returnless distance, both from friends and from God and heaven itself."

CHAPTER XI.

MR. SINCLAIR—DEACON BROWN—THE MEETING-HOUSE—THE FUNERAL.

ONE of the most important personages in town was Mr. Sinclair. He had kept a store on the common for twenty-five years. It was a perfect "omnium gatherum." Everything from a needle to a crow-bar, onions, oranges, soap, and honey; tow-cloth, broadcloth, satins, and lace could be found here. Mr. Sinclair was a sharp, money-making man, but withal generous and public-spirited in his way. But the most of his money was made by a special

article of trade not so openly tolerated now-a-days in the country towns of New England. I mean the article of liquor, which was sold by the glass; and, as the temperance reform had not yet reached the village of C——, it was quite liberally used by the majority of the people, and was a source of income entirely disproportionate to all others. Mr. Sinclair scarcely ever drank anything himself, which is quite unusual in such circumstances, but he had a knack in leading his customers round to that part of the store, and inducing them to run up a score there; and it was said, that several of his best customers had nearly drank up their farms. Certain it was, that he had a mortgage on five or six of the best estates in town. He was a prominent man in all the political movements of the place, and had a certain kind of influence, from his readiness always to give, and to do, and talk on all special occasions; but, though the people could not well do without him, and were many of them so completely in his power that they could not exert any direct, open influence against him, there was still an under-current of bitterness always at work, and ever ready for an outbreak. No one partook of this feeling more deeply than old Deacon Brown. Some said his own son's farm was mortgaged among others, and that James Brown was getting in a bad way; at any rate, he had a wonderful deal of business at Mr. Sinclair's store, and especially in a certain corner of it. As I said, the temperance reform was but just making a stir in the cities and prominent towns of New England. Everybody, almost, drank a little, and offered it to company. A little tippling was not a dangerous thing in anybody's eyes, because facts had not arrested the public mind, and statistics had not brought up to view the enormity of the evil that was making such inroads in all communities.

Deacon Brown was a temperance man long before temperance times; and it is not a wonder if seeing his own son in danger had aroused him to the highest point of sensitiveness on the subject, of which his nature was capable. He blamed Mr. Sinclair for stimulating his son's depraved taste for the sake of sordid gain, and forgetting, in his little pecuniary interest, old family friendship and church ties even, for Mr. Sinclair was a member of the same church of which Deacon Brown was an officer. Often did the deacon drop in at the parsonage to talk about Mr. Sinclair, and urge the pastor to disciplinary measures with this rum-selling man. But the pastor was not as fully aware of the criminality of Mr. Sinclair as the deacon, and he saw no way of bringing to punishment the seller without taking cognizance of the buyers.

Had Mr. Sinclair been an intemperate man himself, it would have altered the case, but nobody ever saw him the worse for liquor. It was a hard matter to see him stand up and quietly measure out glass after glass for a man, who he knew was beggaring his family and wasting his estate; and it was an awful thing to look on and see with what composure he counted up his gains and scraped them into the till, while the poor wretches who were filling his coffers could scarcely stagger out of his shop. No wonder Deacon Brown, who was really a good man, felt his righteous soul stirred within him from day to day as he saw men hurrying on to destruction, who might easily have been saved by the same hand that led them on to ruin. Deacon Brown was no temporiser; he dealt with men and matters promptly and perseveringly; and if he had a duty to do he did it, and would have done it if it had led him to the stake. So, although the minister did not take Mr. Sinclair in hand, nor the parish openly condemn him, Deacon Brown did his part towards him, both as a neighbour and a Christian, often warning him of the mischief his bar was doing among the people, and remonstrating with him upon the awful sin that lay at his door; but it all produced no effect; he heard all he had to say, because he could not avoid it, and then followed his business as briskly as before.

Again and again did the deacon talk with Mr. May about the duty of making an example of such a leader of iniquity. He represented him as one of the lean kine in Pharaoh's dream, who was swallowing up all the fat kine in town, and ought to be arrested before he had completely absorbed the parish in his insatiable jaws. But Mr. May could not see how he could be reached. Mr. Sinclair, if not the main spoke in the wheel of business, was a very important one, nevertheless. If the parish wanted money, Mr. Sinclair would always lend it; if any church matter lagged for want of funds, they could always be had at the store. He contrived to bring everybody under obligations to him in some way or other, while at the same time he was undermining the whole town. Mr. May, who was a thorough temperance man himself, regretted the course pursued by Mr. Sinclair, but did not see how he could touch him.

So Deacon Brown could do nothing but warn him occasionally of the awful account he was treasuring up against the day of wrath, and leave him to his own reflections. Months wore away, and the work of ruin went on. But in process of time the Lord took him in hand, and Mr. Sinclair died. The Deacon then felt that an end had come to his evil doings, but was dissatisfied, that no public remonstrance or disapprobation of his course had been shown in his life-time. The funeral took place in the meeting-house. Now the meeting-house, or as it was called by some of the old people, "the meetin'us," was a precious relic of "olden time." Like the whited sepulchres of our Saviour's period, it appeared, if not beautiful, yet respectable outwardly, but internally its architecture was quite a curiosity. There were two doors at each end of the building, one end of which opened into the burying-ground. The pulpit was perched quite out of sight of the children, who now and then strained their eyes up to catch a glimpse of the ambassador of Heaven, thereby risking their necks if they chanced to be delicately made, and over it was a sounding board, suspended from the ceiling by a sort of parasol handle, directly over the minister's head. The pews were square and large, like pens made literally for the accommodation of the flock, having seats on three sides, and a little railing around the top of the pew, with prettily carved rundles, about a foot long, by way of ornament. The pews were high, and the seats were always lifted up in prayer-time, and dropped at its close with such a deafening clatter as effectually to awaken all the dogs and children that chanced to be snoozing at the time. The deacons' seat was a sort of pen, directly under the pulpit, and they always occupied the three seats within it in front of the whole congregation. Little but the tops of their heads could be seen, especially by the children, who occasionally crawled up somewhat, and took a peep out of the pews to see how matters were going on, and whether the deacons' eyes were peering down into their pews. A most uncomfortable church it was to see or hear, but the old people would have looked upon any alteration within its sacred walls as a sort of sacrilege. Church-going in those days was less profitable, to the children at least, than it is now. The pews were so arranged that none but the back seats gave a fair view of the minister, and the parents generally took these themselves; the children therefore sat with their backs to the preacher, while the pews were so high that very little opportunity was given to see the congregation, and thus amuse them if restless, so they generally resorted to various little operations to beguile the time till meeting was done. Brother Tom and I used generally to eat up our bunches of caraway-seeds first, or smell of our pond-lilies till finally we ate them up, or made an attack upon our roses. Picking out the largest leaves, we folded them up and poped them on the backs of our hands, till finally a most unfortunate crack would set us in a giggle, and arrest mother's attention, and she would open her large black eyes

upon us in a most alarming manner. Then we were still for a few moments, when finally becoming restless, we would begin to twist about the rundles, till a startling squeak would fix all eyes upon us, and result in our being changed to the back seat. This was always a relief, because it afforded us a view for the thousandth time of that wonderful sounding-board, which Tom and I never wearied of talking about. And we gazed at it in a maze of wonder, thinking how it ever could have got up there, and whether it would break off, and if it did, whether it would fall down straight and kill only Mr. May, or bounce down on to poor Deacon Brown's bald head, and then come, ca-whack, as Tom used to say, into our pew and kill us! But winter was our most trying time, for stoves were then only just coming into fashion, and no consideration could have induced our good old deacons, the powers that then ruled over us, to have introduced a stove into the church, and so we shivered till we were numb enough to fall asleep with the cold. Steamboats and stoves were hooted at by some of the people, as never likely to come into very general use; and as for a steam-engine, I verily believe old Deacon Thompson would have thought it was concocted in the infernal regions and put in motion by the devil himself.

But excuse me, gentle reader, for indulging in this reminiscence of by-gone days, and let us hasten in to the funeral.

The coffin was brought up the broad aisle and placed exactly in front of the deacons' seat, while the mourners, of whom Catherine Sinclair, his daughter, a beautiful girl of twenty, was the principal, occupied the first pew. Mr. May preached a funeral sermon which evidently did not harmonise with Deacon Brown's mind, judging from his restlessness. While preparations for removing the body through the aisle into the burying-ground were being made, the pall-bearers, each in their places, the deacon, who always gave out the hymn, reading two lines only at a time, lined the following from Watts:—

> "Believing we rejoice
> To see the cuss (curse) removed," &c.

It would be impossible to describe the effect produced as he read it in his most solemn manner and in his peculiar pronunciation. Mr. Williams, one of the pall-bearers, turned as red as a lobster, and his throat swelled up even with his chin with suppressed laughter, which he tried to conceal, by holding his hat before his face. Somebody in the back part of the church snorted out and upset the gravity of a great fat girl in the same pew, who stuffed her handkerchief into her mouth and ran out the nearest door. Mr. May was obliged to drop his head as if looking for something, while a sudden and general fit of coughing seized the congregation; but the old deacon sang on, nearly alone, keeping time by raising the book up and down, and apparently unconscious of the sudden turn he had given to the thoughts of all present, as the procession moved out to the grave.

CHAPTER XII.

CATHERINE SINCLAIR.

CATHERINE SINCLAIR was truly alone after the death of her father. Her mother died when she was ten years old, and she had been left mostly to her own guidance since that time. Her father was too much absorbed in business to attend to his daughter personally, and giving her every advantage the

academy afforded for an education, and providing a staid but stiff old housekeeper to manage the home department, he felt that all had been done which was necessary. She possessed a frank, confiding disposition, and had Mrs. Hartwell been a social, motherly woman, she could easily have won her confidence and her love. But Mrs. Hartwell moved about the house as cold and stately as an iceberg, and Catherine would as soon have fled to her for shelter and solace in her youthful troubles, as the tempest-tossed mariner would naturally steer for protection and comfort to the grim ice-island that bears down upon his vessel. Her mother had been all love and gentleness, and Catherine would lay her curly head on her shoulder, and pour out all the thoughts and feelings of her soul, while her mother listened with smiling patience to her playful, confiding child. Such dispositions, however, when brought into the frigid zone, become the most cautious, timid, and secretive in the world; and Catherine Sinclair, from the joyous little chatterbox that kept nothing to herself when her mother lived, became the most thoughtful, pensive, close-tongued being imaginable. She had no confidants. The thoughts she could have shared with her mother she locked up in her own bosom, to study upon when alone; and the emotions which would have glowed with brilliancy and intensity beneath her mother's loving eye, she smothered, or put down in the deepest and darkest recesses of her own heart, where they burned and rumbled like Ætna's fires. Oh, how she longed for some one to commune with! how her heart yearned for something to love! Her father was too busy to talk, and too practical and calculating to sentimentalise. Many a time did Catherine cry herself to sleep in the yearning for a mother's or a sister's love. She had sought among her schoolmates for some friend, on whom to bestow the wealth of her garnered affections; but she had found insincerity and heartlessness where she expected candour and love, and so her wounded affections returned to their little world again, her own heart, and there brooded in sadness and solitude. At fifteen, she became acquainted with Mr. Seaver, a young merchant in the town, in a prosperous business, and connected with one of the wealthiest families in Boston. He was evidently pleased with Catherine, and from that time had been a constant visitor at Mr. Sinclair's, and apparently a welcome one. For three years people talked as country people do of their neighbours' affairs, and pronounced their friendship an engagement; but as Miss Sinclair, at eighteen, assumed the management of her father's family, and Mrs. Hartwell left, the talk of their engagement rather died away into an improbability, for Mr. Seaver was in a thriving business, and would of course be married by this time if they were engaged. Besides, Miss Sinclair had, during the last year, received the devoted attentions, for a while, of Mr. Reynolds; that had, however, passed away, and Mr. Reynolds was now the acknowledged and constant admirer of Miss Lee. The renewed interest of Mr. Seaver in the young lady, since her affliction, revived the former reports, and it was generally supposed she must be engaged, and that it would not only be a proper, but a desirable match. Miss Sinclair was very pretty, well educated, amiable and sensible, and the only heir to her father's property, which, for a country village, was decidedly handsome.

Some time after her father's death, as Miss Sinclair was sitting, about twilight, in the summer-house in the garden, Mr. Seaver joined her, and they chatted together for hours. He then went away, and Catherine retired to her chamber. An unwonted expression rested upon her mild features, indicative of roused indignation and sorrow combined. She threw herself into an arm-chair, and gave vent to a flood of tears.

"I see it all now," she exclaimed passionately to herself, "the mist has cleared away, and I know exactly how the matter stands. Five years have I been engaged, and how has he vexed and annoyed me by his strange and

mysterious conduct; sometimes tender and affectionate, then cold, and formal, and ambiguous—holding on to our engagement with an iron grip, and yet never speaking of our marriage as immediately necessary to his happiness. He has led me often to imagine that he had not a particle of affection for me, and yet is jealous of the attention of others. He has apparently no wish to marry me himself, and positively determined that I shall never be the wife of another. And I see the reason. Oh, how ungenerous to me, how degrading to himself! He thinks I have not fathomed it, but, thank Heaven, I have. He is ashamed of the engagement, and hesitates to unite my destiny with his, because my family do not rank in wealth with his own. Never before did I dream that his hesitancy arose from such a cause. His grandfather was a fish-merchant, and my father a common store-keeper. And, because his father has inherited the hard earnings of his ancestor, he must needs plume himself on his present wealth, and look down upon us. What airs and what notions do those assume who rise from nothing themselves! Little does he dream that his careless remark this evening has discovered the secret motive of his hitherto unaccountable conduct. But I am thankful for the discovery! What if I had married into a family who would have received me with condescension simply, and no love or esteem—I, who have so long yearned for loving hearts to encircle me, and an atmosphere of true affection to breathe!" Catherine had truly discerned the feelings of him to whom for years she had been betrothed, and to whom she had been cordially attached, till farther acquaintance and ripening discernment had revealed to her that there was a difficulty in the way—a something which she could not understand, but which she felt operating as a barrier, and making his love so fitful and inconstant. For two years she had often been annoyed at his conduct, and had often determined upon dissolving the engagement, when, perhaps, a sudden change in his manner would persuade her that all was right, and lead her to feel that she could not honourably release herself. Still she wondered if the courtship would never end; if the many air-castles she had built, and dignified with the name of "her own home," would all prove like bubbles, that dance for a moment, and break and dissolve in the air. To penetrate his plans, and fathom his feelings, she had allowed the attentions of Reynolds. They evidently nettled him, but produced no other result.

Her father's death, and her consequent loneliness and desolation, awakened in him a momentary tenderness and sympathy for her, which were truly grateful and consoling to her, but in his conversation during the evening, she had satisfied herself that, however much he had regarded her, he had not decision of character enough to marry her against the wishes of his friends, who would prefer a wealthy alliance, and was too selfish to release her from a positive engagement.

She was determined no longer to remain in such galling bonds, and the next morning she despatched the following note, with an accompanying package:

MR. SEAVER,—It is not without due consideration that I ask a release from an engagement, which, I am persuaded, is no less irksome to you than annoying to myself. I claim it as a due which should long since have been granted, in justice to myself, and in honour to you. I return all your letters, and solicit a similar favour from you. Lest you should think this measure a freak simply, which I may regret, let me say that no consideration can induce a change of purpose, or allow a further renewal of acquaintance than simple friendship warrants.—Respectfully, &c., CATHERINE SINCLAIR.

All his letters were returned with the note.

He came to see her in the course of the day, but refused to relinquish the

engagement, or give up her letters. She told him, that for three years he had had her heart indisputably and entirely; but after that, she had discovered a want of affection and decision of purpose on his part, for which she had long endeavoured to find a cause. In spite of herself, her own interest in him had waned from the time of the discovery, but her sense of honour had, until now, held her to her engagement; and, not till she was convinced the union would be as unjust to herself as unsatisfactory to him and his family, did she feel at liberty to request a release. Now nothing else could satisfy her. If he would not relinquish her freely, she must dismiss him. He still persisted in his unwillingness to give her up, though he urged no intention to be married at present. He finally left her, no more determined to marry her, but fully resolved not to see her the wife of another. How seldom do we see these everlasting courtships terminate happily! Who blames her for refusing any longer to be the sport of a capricious man, to have her affections trifled with by one who was too selfish to think of anybody but himself, and so ungenerous as to be reckless of the injury inflicted upon one whose heart was the more keenly alive to every neglect from its very desolation!

Love's troubles are varied. Catherine felt herself free, and rejoiced in her freedom. She had stricken from her own soul the shackles which had bound her, and was free as a bird.

We shall see hereafter how Seaver contrived to annoy her.

CHAPTER XIII.

BLIGHTED AFFECTIONS.

ONE beautiful day, Aunt Esther concluded she would make a visit in town; so she sent word in the morning that she would take tea with her friends, the Langdons and Mary Lamb, if agreeable to them. This quite delighted Mrs. Langdon, who was old and in a feeble state of health, and was equally pleasant to Mary, for Aunt Esther was a great favourite both with the young and the old. Accordingly, the chaise was tackled as soon as dinner was over at Sumner Place, and, after making one or two calls on the way, Aunt Esther was left about four o'clock at Squire Langdon's. People visited and received visits in C —— because they wanted to do so, and not from form's sake or from necessity, as in our days. A visit was an agreeable pastime, which was received and enjoyed with a zest which city people may perhaps imagine, but of which they know little.

Mrs. Langdon was an invalid, and seldom left her room; but nothing, even a physician's call, so enlivened and benefited her as one of Aunt Esther's good old-fashioned visits, with her knitting-work and her bright cheerful face and endless stories. It was a real tonic, and so braced up Mrs. Langdon's feeble frame, that she seemed to live on in the strength of it for many days. Aunt Esther knew how to manage sick people, and to comfort them in the best way. She would listen, first, in the most patient, attentive and sympathising manner to their ailments and complaints; and then, in such a hoping, encouraging, tender way, administering soothing words and consolations, that the most nervous and distressing symptoms often disappeared under her influence like clouds at the rising of the sun. It was truly wonderful how one, who had been sick so little in her life, could know so well how to sympathise with and comfort the sufferer; but she always said those who were blessed with such health as she, prompted by gratitude at least, ought always to be ready to comfort the weak and encourage the helpless. And

kind words and looks cost little and could be bestowed by anybody, and would sometimes accomplish more than any other means. This was one of her ways of doing good. It was a mystery, too, what a magic power she had in comforting the sorrowful and broken-hearted; no one, to see her, would imagine she had ever known trouble of any kind herself, and yet few could dive deeper into the recesses of the heart than she, or knew better what consolation to offer. After talking a while with Mrs. Langdon and Squire Langdon's sister, Miss Hetty, who had the care of the invalid, Aunt Esther and Mary rambled through the garden, and after a survey of the flowers, and exhausting her admiration of the tasteful simplicity and beauty of the grounds, they wandered into the summer-house, and there seated themselves.

"This is my favourite resort," said Mary; "I spend hours here reading, thinking or sewing. I never tire of admiring the beauty of the place, and the quiet, rural aspect of nature around, while the warbling of the birds, the hum of the insects, and the gentle sigh of the zephyrs, harmonise sweetly with my pensive thoughts."

Her tone was so sad, that Aunt Esther laid down her knitting and looked up in her face. "You do not look well, dear Mary, as you used to; I have thought so some time," replied Aunt Esther.

"No," said Mary; "I am not well, and yet I cannot say that I am sick."

"Well, tell me, dear," answered Aunt Esther cheerfully, "what is the matter?"

Mary—"I cannot sleep at night. I have no interest in anything. I take take no pleasure, as I used to, in whatever I am engaged. I am so low spirited and heartless, that I am sometimes a burden to myself. I try to shake it off, Aunt Esther," said she, smiling mournfully, "but it is all in vain. Such a change has come over me within the last few months, that I can scarcely realise I am the same person I was then. You know how blithe and merry I always was; life was all sunshine and beauty, and now the world and all that is in it seem dark and worthless."

"I am sorry to hear you say so," exclaimed Aunt Esther, thoughtfully.

Mary—"Perhaps you think I do wrong to give way to such feelings, but if you knew how much I had tried to overcome them—what desperate efforts I have made to shake off the apathy I feel, and rouse myself up to energy and happiness, you would pity me. I can scarcely speak sometimes for crying; in fact," said she, "I am crying internally all the time."

Aunt Esther—"It is not your body then that is sick, merely, my dear child. You are in trouble of mind. Your heart aches, Mary."

Mary—"I feel my loneliness more than I ever did. I often think if I had parents, brothers and sisters, as others have, I should not feel so sad. I love Mrs. Langdon and Miss Hetty, but they seem as sad and forlorn as I do, and instead of overcoming my melancholy in their society, I only add to it. I have nothing to love and nothing to live for, and life, as I look down its narrow vista, looks like a dark, weary, lonesome road, which I must travel alone. I never loved anything that did not die."

"Madame Rumour has whispered about in the parish, that you were not likely to jog on through life much longer alone," replied Aunt Esther, smiling.

"Well, she was mistaken, as she often is," replied Mary, seriously.

"But there was some reason to suppose rumour was right, I think," answered Aunt Esther. "Mr. Reynolds certainly, for a time, appeared to be a warm friend of yours."

"Yes, I thought he was," said Mary, "but he was only amusing himself

at my expense, I found out. I never, for a moment, supposed he was insincere, and how could I?"

She burst into tears, and laid her head on Aunt Esther's shoulder.

"Don't cry, dear," said Aunt Esther, with a husky voice, and taking her beautiful hand; "he is not worth a thought."

"I do not care anything about him now, Aunt Esther," she replied, as she raised her head again; "but I wish I had understood him sooner. I was not so foolish as to suppose he cherished an attachment for me until a long time after I found others supposed there was an engagement between us. He offered me several very handsome presents, which I gaily refused, saying, 'I never received presents from gentlemen.' I never was coquettish, you know; I was always frank and sincere in all I said and did, and made no efforts to gain his affections. When, however, he presented me with a handsome breast-pin, which had been his mother's, and which he professed to value highly, and which he said he would rather see me wear than any one else, I thought he was in earnest, and I took it. Although he had made no proposal of marriage, still I began to indulge the idea that he loved me, or he would not have given me that precious relic. He did nothing to eradicate, but everything to deepen, the impression. Was it strange that I should think he valued my friendship?"

Aunt Esther—"No, child, you had reason to think he regarded you with more than common friendship."

Mary—"Well, he was here often. We sang and played together. He brought me music and I learned it. He was always kind and respectful and tender in every word and action. He gathered the finest bouquets, and stopped at the door to leave them. He sent me books to read, marking passages for my especial attention, certainly indicating the deepest interest and sympathy for my lonely lot. I could not conceive of any more thoughtful and delicate attentions he could have paid, had I actually been his betrothed. Still he made no verbal offer of his heart and hand. I sometimes hesitated about appearing with him so much in public, and he knew I was afraid it would excite remark; but he always laughed at my squeamishness. What need I care? let people talk, he would say. All these things I pondered on when alone. I felt that he ought to care about the remarks made of us if they were untrue, and that he would care if he did not intend to marry me, and if he did not suppose I regarded him with a favourable eye. But when my birth-day arrived, my suspicions of his intentions were more unequivocally confirmed. On that day I received a most costly and a most elegant gift from an unknown hand, which I could attribute to no other than himself.—Come, Aunt Esther," said she, drawing Miss Sumner's arm around her waist, while she encircled her with her own, "come up into my chamber and let me show it to you."

They went to Mary's room. It was a little gem of a place, fit for the abode of a fairy. The beams of the setting sun shone brightly upon everything, tinging all with a brilliancy and a beauty that dazzled Aunt Esther's eyes. Her bed, with its white muslin curtains gracefully looped up, was as neat and smooth as hands could make it. Some old pictures and rare gems of art which had been saved from the wreck of her father's fortune, a few fine engravings and some of her own paintings, adorned the walls of the chamber, while two or three statuettes and some fanciful ornaments, both beautiful and valuable, arranged tastefully in the room, gave an air of enchantment to it, which which was quite irresistible. Mary opened a drawer, and taking out a very elegant and costly box, displayed it to Aunt Esther's admiring eyes. It was very beautiful, and among other things within, contained a little casket of jewels, and also the ring he had requested her "to wear for his sake." "I

charged him with the gift," said Mary, "and he blushed, but did not deny it. This I could not forbear taking as another evidence of his affection. Still I was puzzled at the thought, that he made no open positive declaration of attachment. He consulted me about many little affairs, and my opinion seemed to decide him. As I found, however, that my own feelings were becoming more decidedly interested in him, I began to feel a growing jealousy and distrust of those attentions he occasionally bestowed upon others. I said nothing to any one, but I often tremblingly asked myself, what if all this show of friendship is false? My heart sank within me at the thought, and I was ashamed that I should for a moment harbour the idea that he could be so cruel, so heartless."

She then told Aunt Esther of her feelings after the call at General Sumner's, and of the remarks she overheard at the pic-nic; of his cold looks and taunting manner towards her since, and of his entire desertion of her at last.

"He is a most heartless and depraved fellow," said Aunt Esther, "and I am afraid you think more of him than he deserves. He is not worthy of you, and you have reason to be thankful he never asked you to marry him. He is a rascal, and could not make any woman happy."

"Do not think that I love him now, Aunt Esther," said Mary gently. "I do not, and nothing could induce me to marry him. If I ever loved him, my love died with the discovery I made at the pic-nic."

"I have told you," said she, looking sadly at Miss Sumner, "what I have told no one else. I hope you will not think me foolish."

Miss Sumner assured her of her sympathy and affection, and, as she gazed at her pale sweet face, could not but involuntarily sigh, as the fear sprang up in her bosom, that the sensitive heart of the gentle girl had been so cruelly blighted by disappointment, that no earthly power could restore it to warmth and vigour again.

The bell rang for tea, and Aunt Esther and Mary, arm in arm, obeyed its summons.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE ELOPEMENT.

WHEN Ellen Robbins yielded to the persuasions of her lover, and decided to forsake father, mother, sisters, home, and friends for him, she had not counted the cost. She had read novels, and lived on flattery and admiration, till she looked out upon the future with such dreamy eyes, that she saw none of its realities. It seemed, in the distance, like a fairy land, full of brightness and beauty; visions, as infinite in variety and brilliancy as the changing representations of the kaleidoscope, danced before her bewildered senses—Moulton always with her, his eyes full of tenderness, and the star of love ever gilding her path. He was gay and handsome; and though he had nothing but a small salary to live on, that was a matter of no consequence—they would not need much; she would be willing to live on almost nothing to have him always with her. As to her father and mother, loving and kind, they would be angry for a moment, but then love on and love ever. Her father never was really angry with her, and when he found how mistaken he was in Moulton's character, which she believed was perfection itself, whatever displeasure might be awakened for the moment at her rash step, it would soon disappear. All this Moulton had fully reasoned into her.

But, when she began to gather up such things as she needed for her wardrobe, and to see and hear the loved looks and words of her family, perhaps for the last time, a dark shadow passed over her spirit, and conscience, like a stern monitor, awoke from its lethargy, and upbraided her with meanness, ingratitude, and undutifulness; and in such a still, small, but mournful voice, whispered, "You will be sorry for this," that the cold chills crept over her and almost conquered her determination. Then she thought of Moulton. How could she give him up? He loved her so ardently, and would be so wretched without her! And she sat down and weighed, as many a foolish girl has done before her, the love of parents and friends in one scale, and then put Moulton's undying love into the other; the latter out-balanced the former, and once more determined to sacrifice all for him who could die for her, she resumed her sad and secret work of preparation. When as large a bundle was made as she could carry, she sat down and wrote the note to which we have heretofore alluded, and, with a trembling hand, placed it where it could be easily found. As soon as all was quiet, she stealthily glided out of the house unheard. Moulton was waiting at the appointed place, and jumping into a chaise, they set off full tilt for Providence, then a sort of Gretna Green to all lovers. The moon shone fitfully. Now and then a dark cloud would cover its bright face, and the same low, mournful voice would repeat the sad prophecy to her trembling heart, "You will be sorry for this, Ellen," till, catching a last view of her childhood's home, she could restrain herself no longer.

"O, Moulton, I must return—do let me go back—I cannot go on," said she; but he chirrupped the horse and laughed at her doleful face, and reminded her that her father would never consent to their union, and then appealed to her own heart—would she give him up for ever? "You know," said Moulton, "your father has somehow got a foolish prejudice against me, which could not be overcome. We will be married as soon as we get to Providence, and then the old fellow can't help himself, and, of course, like a sensible man, he will forgive and forget when we go back and show that all's right. I know," said he in a swaggering way, giving the whip a flourish and spurring up the horse a little faster, "I know just how these things work. Three months hence it will all be forgotten; your father and mother will love you just as well as ever, maybe a little better, having so near lost you as they thought; and as for us, we'll be as happy as two doves, don't you see, hey?" And he looked lovingly into her face, and humming a snatch of a gay old song, gave another snap to old Trot, who was even then doing his best to hasten matters.

"But," said Ellen sadly, "if my parents should not overlook this folly—if my dear, good father should refuse to love me again—oh, what could ever repay me for my father's love?" She gave her lover a look that might have melted a stone. "Well, supposing the worst," replied Moulton, "suppose he never forgives, you will have my love, a husband's love for ever. You may have to give up one of us; take your choice," said he, rather fiercely, and reining up the horse so short as to stop him at once. "Take your choice, I say—father or husband—now or never; so that hereafter you can never blame me, come what will. If you don't know your own mind, which I believe women never do five minutes at a time, reconsider and decide now. It is not too late to give me up yet." Giving her such a look as sent the warm blood back in a rush to her heart, he waited her decision. There was a fierce, tyrannic glance about it that woke up her indignation, and in one moment more she would have said, "Take me home;" but either he thought he had waited long enough, or, reading her purpose in her face, he wished to prevent it, and he gave Trot another series of touches with his whip, and on

they dashed. Ellen spoke not, but another cloud moved swiftly above them, and a white spirit seemed to rise up out of it, and the same low, unearthly whisper sunk into her troubled soul—"O Ellen, you'll be sorry for this." It was the blessed voice of her faithful conscience.

On and on they went, now dashing into the dark and gloomy wood, and then emerging into open space. At length Moulton spoke with his usual tenderness.

"Now, dearest Ellen," said he, "in three weeks from this time, when we have finished our wedding tour, and are once more cozily seated in that dear old parlour of yours, how we will laugh at your idle fears, and how happy we shall be! If I had not seen so many of these scenes acted over and over again, perhaps I should partake of your apprehensions; but pshaw! I know how it will be. Your father will be a little huffy at first, and then he'll think better of it, good man! and for dear little Ellen's sake, and the honour and dignity of the family, which will go a great way with that father of yours, it will be all hushed up in three months, and will be totally forgotten in a year's time. Whereas, if you had given me up, why, you know you would have been wretched for life; and as for me, I should have blown my brains out—that's the long and short of it. How do you think you would have felt then, Ellen, hey?" And he chucked her coaxingly under the chin, and Ellen tried to smile, but she couldn't. She felt to her heart's core that she had done wrong, and that low whisper, that wailed so often in her bosom, could not be stifled, nor could she forget that ugly look he had given her, nor rid herself of the conviction that his conduct was decidedly vulgar and unfeeling.

"You don't speak," said he at length, "you do not believe me, I see; but I know it will all come as I say, and it does not worry me an atom."

"I know and feel one thing," said Ellen solemnly, "that I have risked all I love and value on earth for you; and if, under any circumstances, a husband should love and cherish a wife tenderly, it seems to me he is doubly bound to do so in such a case as mine. If you should prove unkind and cruel—O, how dreadful!" She fairly quivered with horror at the thought.

"I hope," said Moulton, "you do not imagine I can ever treat you with anything but the deepest tenderness; for I solemnly swear that I love you as I never loved any other, and that thus I will love you till I die—and this moon and these stars are witnesses!" Old Trot stopped suddenly as if to listen to the solemn vow.

The serious, earnest manner of Moulton re-assured Ellen, and as the gray dawning of daylight revealed in the distance the spires of the city, her sadness subsided into cheerfulness; and just as the brilliant rays of the morning sun shone fully upon every hill and tree-top, and touched with its golden beams every object in nature around them, they drove up to the hotel, and were ushered into its common parlour.

Breakfast was ordered, and the hot coffee and smoking steak seemed to brighten up Ellen into somewhat of her former self. The next thing to be done was to find a clergyman to tie the nuptial knot. While Moulton went in pursuit of one, poor Ellen looked in the glass to brush her hair, and arrange herself for this homeless bridal. Her thoughts travelled back to those bright visions of her nuptials of which, in days gone by, she had idly dreamed. The snow-white gossamer dress, with orange flowers in her hair, the smiling faces of those dear sisters, who would lovingly have decked the bride, and the happy looks of parents, as, with pride and love, they gave up their cherished pet to an approved lover, all passed before her mental vision, and called forth a tear which she dashed quickly away. And then came the gay wedding party, that would have surrounded her in joyous mood, while they

greeted her as a bride with their merry tongues and winsome smiles; and then, over and above all, the quiet approval of her own conscience and the hope of God's blessing. These all seemed to dance before her mind as she arranged her toilet. "Instead of all this to cheer and comfort me as I stand up to take the vows upon me, which death only can break," thought Ellen, "I must feel that my friends are even now weeping in agony at my perverseness and my folly. O, my dear father, who never said aught to me but in love and kindness, and my dear mother, who never wearied in making me happy!"

"O, what a bridal!" she exclaimed mournfully. And then came up again that still, calm whisper, "You will be sorry for this, Ellen." The arrival of the clergyman put an end to these meditations. Three or four strangers, evidently persons belonging to the establishment, came hurrying in as witnesses, gazing with a careless, wondering air at the strange wedding. In a few words the ceremony was performed, and Moulton and Ellen were united for life.

CHAPTER XV.

THE BRIDE.

In three weeks Moulton returned to C—— with his bride, and put up at the only hotel in the town. A messenger was despatched with a note from Ellen to her father, and the young bride gazed thoughtfully and sadly out of the window for three days in the vain hope of seeing the well-known faces of her family friends. She saw many of her acquaintances pass and repass; but none saw her, and none called. At length the servant came up to her room to say that some person wished to see her below, but he went out without giving the name. Moulton was out. Ellen's heart beat violently. Was it her own dear father? How would he receive her? Her heart yearned to throw herself at his feet and beg his pardon, and entreat his forgiveness. She hurried down as fast as her trembling limbs would let her. But no! it was not her father. It was "the good angel of the parish," Lucy May, who never neglected the suffering or overlooked the sorrowful. Ellen was disappointed, yet Lucy's sweet face comforted her.

"You see I do not cast you off," said Lucy, smiling, and extending her hand.

"My father does," said she, sadly; "I do not hear a word from home."

"Well, dear," said Lucy, seriously but kindly, "you have taken a fearful step, you know. Your father, I am told, cannot be reconciled, and I suppose he will not allow the girls to visit you. It is painful to tell you, but you must soon learn, if not now, that your course has alienated most of your friends. My heart has ached for you. What could possess you to take such a step, Ellen? Had I even surmised your intentions, how I would have begged and entreated of you to forbear!"

"It is done now, and cannot be helped," replied Ellen, mournfully.

"Yes, I know it," said Lucy, kindly, "and I must not reproach you, for if your heart is like mine you will hear enough from within; but I am so sorry. We have been as sisters, and I have loved you so much, and I am afraid it will be a lasting sorrow to us all." She paused. "As you say, Ellen, it cannot be helped now; the only thing is, what can I do to lessen your trouble or comfort you?"

"You can see my father," said Ellen, "and plead for me. If he will not

be reconciled, let me know it at once. Suspense is worse than a dreadful certainty. You can tell him, dear Lucy," said she with animation, "that I sincerely regret the step. Tell him, however, that he is mistaken in Mr. Moulton's character; that I am persuaded he is a good man, and I know that he is a kind husband, and nothing but his blessing is necessary to render us perfectly happy. Surely," added she, "my father cannot turn a deaf ear to my confession of repentance, and to your urgent entreaties for forgiveness. He will listen to you, I am sure."

Lucy shook her head.

"I will do everything you wish," she replied. "I will see your father, and put in requisition all the powers I possess as I plead in your behalf. But do not be too sanguine of success. My father has already conversed with him, and it had no good effect."

Lucy was as good as her word. Although she felt it to be a painful and a hopeless task, she hastened immediately to Captain Robbins's, and gave Ellen's message. His countenance darkened, and he interrupted her in the midst of her appeal. "Tell her that her repentance comes too late," said he. "She should have counted the cost sooner." And with that he left the room.

Ellen received this blow to all her hopes with a flood of tears. "I could not have believed father, who was always so mild and gentle, could be so harsh and stern, so relentless and cruel," said she.

Lucy—"Your father does not manifest the temper of a Christian, and does very wrong, I allow; but you must remember your cruelty to him was unprovoked. For the years of love with which he cherished you, he has received in return ingratitude, disrespect, and deception; besides the overwhelming conviction that you have thrown yourself away and ruined your own hopes and prospects for life."

Ellen—"But all might yet be well if he would be reconciled."

Lucy—"No, he thinks not. He fully believes, and others say, you are a dupe, and must rue your folly. All you can do now is to repent of your sins in the sight of God and seek His forgiveness."

Lucy remained with her and chatted a long time, promising often to see her. Ellen's only hope now centred in her husband. She naturally turned to his love as her only solace.

She told Moulton of this last unsuccessful appeal to her father. He only whistled, and carelessly said: "Well, let the old fellow sweat it out then; who cares? I don't."

It had been with sad forebodings that Ellen had learned her husband's prospects of business as soon as he returned. The gentleman for whom he had been clerk would not receive again into his employ a man who had so unceremoniously left him for a three weeks' tour, and who had so dishonourably invaded the peace and happiness of one of the best families in town. He had, moreover, other private views of Moulton's character and principles, which led him rather to congratulate himself on his abrupt departure, as it saved him the necessity of a dismissal. And such were the feelings of the community generally towards Moulton, that he soon found it impossible to obtain business of any kind in C——. Mr. May, who was out of town when Ellen first returned, called upon her when he came home. The interview was long, solemn, and faithful. Ellen's eyes were red with weeping when her pastor departed. Mrs. May also came to see her, and, although in kindness and love, she frankly expressed her views of Ellen's wrongdoing. It was well received; for Ellen had begun to look at her conduct in its true light, and sincerely to repent of her sins.

When Sabbath arrived they went to church, and sat in the pew occupied by

the tavern-keeper. Ellen's heart was full as she saw none but the children seemed to recognise her, and even they dared not greet her as of old. Many of her friends passed her as she slowly walked out of the meeting-house, without a look, or a smile, or a word of recognition. This cut her to the heart. A few of the gentlemen who had visited at her father's deigned to bow as she walked across the common, but it was very coldly, or Ellen imagined it to be so. She did not complain; she felt it was right; and this public neglect made her feel more keenly the enormity of the offence she had committed. O how her heart yearned towards her father and mother, as they passed on their way without the slightest apparent notice of the presence of their child!

It did not affect Moulton as it did Ellen. It seemed only to rouse the worst feelings of his nature, and he gave utterance to language, when he retired to his room, that made Ellen's blood curdle, and, in spite of her, roused a suspicion that her father, after all, was right in his estimate of her husband's character. But "she communed with her own heart and was still."

The next day Moulton came in and threw himself carelessly into a chair, which he tipped back against the wall.

"Well, I don't see but we must go to New Orleans to live, Ellen," exclaimed he; "what do you say to that?"

"To New Orleans," replied Ellen, turning pale, "why do you say so?"

"Because I can't get anything to do here," he answered, "and we can't live on love altogether, I suppose. At anyrate, we are almost at the bottom of my purse now, and if we do not go soon I shall not have enough to take us there."

Ellen—Have you any prospect of business if we should go?"

Moulton—"No, of course not, none in view. But then there is no doubt that I shall find plenty to do, and I think the quicker we are off the better. Nobody here will regret our going or miss us even; there's that to comfort us."

Ellen burst into tears.

Moulton—"What, crying again! Well, I believe women are cry-babies sure enough. Your face is either as long as my arm, or else you are snivelling the whole time. Pretty doings for the honeymoon, I reckon!"

Ellen did not attempt to speak.

Moulton—"I tell you what it is now, once for all, Ellen—your crying and whining does not make matters one whit better, and it vexes me almost beyond endurance. I advise you to reserve these exhibitions of childishness to while away your solitude when I am out."

Ellen looked at him sorrowfully and reproachfully. "I do not see," said she, "how you can be so unfeeling as to blame me for symptoms of tenderness at leaving my childhood's home and all the friends of my young and happy days under the circumstances; especially, with the prospect of going amid strangers, and scenes, and trials, for which I am totally unprepared."

"O well," said he, changing his tone, "you see facts are stubborn things. My purse is getting low, and we must be looking about for the future. New Orleans is a great place to make money in, and as I am disappointed in my hopes here, I can think of no better plan than going to New Orleans to seek my fortune. Instead of mourning over the past or weeping over what we must leave, we had better be preparing to grapple with the future."

After a brief and melting interview with the pastor's family, and a letter full of penitence and grief to her parents (Moulton would not let her go to bid them farewell), Ellen and her husband left C——, and, in a few days,

found themselves strangers in the city of New York, where they stopped a short time.

Poor Ellen wept tears of bitterness in secret as she found herself a boarder in a cheap lodging-house, surrounded by all sorts of low people, and remembered the home of love and comfort from which she had so foolishly banished herself.

CHAPTER XVI.

COURTING IN EARNEST.

THE evening after Mr. Reynolds had fully made up his mind to marry Miss Lee, he bestowed unusual attention upon his toilette. He was always studiously neat and particular, but he was more fanciful and elegant in his attire that night than usual. There was an imposing dignity about his manner, too, that was extraordinary, and he seemed in his gayest and happiest mood. People never appear better than when they have just accomplished successfully a task upon which great labour and time have been bestowed, or when they are just realising their most sanguine hopes. Reynolds felt that he was precisely in this case. His mind was at ease; he was more and more satisfied with his choice the longer he thought of it. He could not doubt her regard for him, because her interest was manifest to the most careless observer. At any rate, she treated no other gentleman of her acquaintance with such marked civility and such evident admiration, for he had watched her and assured himself of this fact. Having looked in the glass to see if everything was as it should be, even to a hair—for his hair was rather curly in its disposition, and would sometimes quirk about unbecomingly—and found nothing left undone which should have been done, or done which should have been left undone, he took his gold-headed cane and departed, not on a flirtation visit as usual, but on a regular courting one. Nothing remained for him to do that he could see but to pop the great question. He walked slowly, for communion with himself was more agreeable than usual. He arranged several pretty little speeches, expressive of the most ardent affection and enthusiastic admiration; and, in imagination, watched the effect of each upon the beautiful girl to whom he addressed them. And in the mirror of his own mind he saw her deep blushes; and read in her sparkling eye, for her tongue would, of course, refuse to utter it, that he was beloved and accepted, and he indulged in a long reverie upon the delightful scenes that awaited him. "I shall be proud of her," thought he, "for she is an elegant woman;" and he contemplated her as her graceful figure moved before his mind's eye, in the dance, and in the brilliant assemblies to which he would introduce her, with about the same satisfaction and admiration as a jockey would show off a fine horse, an artist display a fine painting, or a showman exhibit an expert monkey. "We shall have $70,000 dollars between us, independent of our future expectations; that will be something handsome to start upon, especially as I am no gambler, and have no expensive habits to pamper." It was true that Reynolds had not those faults that the world terms vices. His defects of character lay deep in the soul; they were heart-sins—selfishness and vanity. "I'll dress her like a queen," continued he, and he smote down his cane upon a stone in his path, as he travelled on, with such force and determination as to strike fire, "and we'll travel for two years. I'll take her to Europe, and we will visit Italy, that land of love and song;

and I'll be bound she's as fine a woman as I shall meet, east or west, in America or Europe."

As he found himself in sight of the common, and in view of his lady-love's temporary residence, his thoughts turned to the sensation that would soon be produced among his acquaintances in town. How he would be envied by Barlow and some of the other young fellows, if he should be successful in carrying off such a prize in beauty and fortune. He thought also with fiendish delight of the annoyance and jealousy with which his successful attentions would be viewed by Mary Lamb, and sundry other ladies of his quondam acquaintance. As he waited at the door for the servant to answer the bell, he contrasted mentally the emotions with which he entered the house, and those with which he should leave it. "Then I shall know I am an accepted lover," said he. With this thought arose a but in his mind, the first that had obtruded itself upon him in the consideration of this whole matter; he routed it, however, and the feeling that accompanied it, as he would have brushed away an impertinent fly from his face, and inquired for Miss Lee.

As the girl ushered him into the parlour, he turned again to her, saying, with some emphasis, "It is Miss Lee that I wish to see."

Angeline was at the head of the stairs, and heard the message. She came gaily down, and received him with all the dignity of a queen, and the grace of a fairy. The room was deliciously perfumed with the odour of flowers, and she opened the blinds to admit just light enough to give every thing a mellow and beautiful tinge, and display her own charms to the best advantage.

With the keen glance of a woman she read in Reynolds's manner a new purpose, and as soon as propriety would allow she excused herself for a moment, and, gliding out of the room, she sought Julia's chamber.

Julia was busily engaged with a book, holding a beautiful rose in one hand.

"Julia," said Angeline, in a low, hurried voice, "Mr. Reynolds is here, and you must come down. Come soon, and don't leave the parlour while he is here."

"Why, what's to pay?" replied Julia, looking up.

"O never mind," answered Angeline, smiling and smelling her fragrant rose. "Remember your vow of obedience," said she, with the dignity and authority of a lady superior, and flew out of the room.

She tripped lightly into the parlour again, and seating herself in a rocking-chair near Reynolds, gaily renewed the conversation. The weather, the news, and the health of the town were all discussed, as is usual, especially where any embarrassment exists, for Reynolds was beginning to feel the awkwardness of his situation, as he meditated on the special object of his visit, and was contriving how he should introduce the subject that lay so near his heart. He could not recall any of his set speeches; he could not lay hold of one either by head or tail; they had all slipped entirely from his memory.

To add to his embarrassment, that awful little word of three letters, but, was constantly darting in again among his thoughts, creating something of the fearful apprehension that Belshazzar experienced when he read the writing on the wall.

Reynolds was in love, and there was no mistake about it. He had simply admired Miss Lee at first. But her superior qualities of mind and person, her apparent partiality for him, and, above all, her fortune, had gradually awakened a deeper interest and filled his thoughts, till he actually regarded her with a stronger attachment than any woman he had ever known. He felt that to lose her would be a death-blow to his happiness.

So he began to lead the conversation along toward the great question of life and death. He alluded to Ellen Robbins's return as a bride, to Moulton's unsuccessful attempt to obtain business, and his consequent removal to New Orleans. And then, as there is but a step between love and marriage, he began to speak of strong and ardent attachments in a general way, and would, no doubt, have very soon proceeded to a personal application of the subject, had not Julia Marvin, apparently in the most quiet and accidental way, unfortunately obtruded herself, and snapped the thread of discourse. Mr. Reynolds rose and bowed very graciously as he shook hands with her, while he secretly wished she was in Guinea, or some other remote part of the earth. Julia perceived the conversation had received a shock, and made an effort to revive it. She began to surmise that the time had arrived for an open declaration, and was in quite a puzzle to know why Angeline wished to dodge it. But she did not know Angeline's plans. The evening passed as usual. Julia obeyed instructions, and kept her post. Reynolds fidgeted about the room, occasionally gazing with a very decided air of abstraction upon the pictures, which he had looked at and examined fifty times before. He was evidently uneasy in body or mind. It would have been difficult for an observer to divine whether his clothes did not fit him, or his society did not suit, or some great idea was working about in his mind which could not find utterance. He stayed late, and then, finding the chance of an opportunity to relieve his burthened heart altogether hopeless, he very reluctantly took his leave.

"What did you call me down for, Angeline?" said Julia, when they had retired to their chamber. "I think Reynolds wished to see you alone."

Angeline—"I expect he did. He seemed rather different in his manner, I thought; and I was terribly afraid he would 'pop' before he left, and that would just spoil my plan."

Julia—"Why, don't you intend to let him make proposals of marriage, and then box his ears, and send him off to court somebody else? I would."

Angeline—"No, not as long as I can help it. I intend to keep him in a good 'popping' condition for about six weeks or so at least, and till the tenth of December, if I can. But on no account would I give him a chance to make proposals now."

Julia laughed outright. She understood the allusion to the tenth of December.

"No," continued Angeline, "I have been watching for some time the progress of matters, and I have been expecting he would soon be ready to pop. But," said she, "I don't intend he shall do so till the tenth of December, and then I mean to give him a chance."

Julia burst into such an uproarious fit of laughter, that her mother, who was in the next room, came in to see what was the matter.

Julia told the cause, and Mrs. Marvin could not help laughing herself at the idea of choosing the tenth of December to listen to his proposals; there was something so incongruous about it to her mind.

When Mrs. Marvin had retired to her own room again, Angeline said, "The fact is, Julia, I think we have got along about as far in this matter as we can go without a man to help us."

This set Julia off into another fit of laughter, which it seemed would never end.

"A man!" she exclaimed, as soon as she recovered herself. "What on earth can you find for a man to do?" and Julia started off on another galloping laugh, and they both laughed till they cried. People laughed loud in those days, especially in the country; they did not laugh inside altogether as they do now, exhibiting no marks of risibility, except a little convulsive

twitching at the corners of the mouth, or an almost imperceptible shaking of the sides. This new mode would not have been considered healthy in those days, if it was polite.

It was finally agreed that Tom Sumner was a suitable person to be admitted into the secret, and to lend a helping hand occasionally. So a message was despatched on the morrow requesting a call. Tom obeyed the summons, and when the whole plan was fully revealed to him, and the part he was requested to act in the matter was laid before him, he agreed to it cheerfully, as Angeline required nothing of him inconsistent with his character as a gentleman.

CHAPTER XVII.

MORE LOVE TROUBLES.

THE poet says, "the course of true love never did run smooth;" it certainly did not in C——, at the time to which I allude. Cupid was making mischief in General Sumner's family; there was another "storm brewin'," as Aunt Kizzy said, at Captain Robbins's; and poor Lucy May, the pet of the parish, was in "a peck o' trouble." All this Aunt Kizzy knew for a fact. She did not choose, she said, to tell "the perticulars," but she prophesied, that nobody had "seen the beginnin' o' the end yet." Listen, gentle reader, while I tell you what was really the state of affairs in these several families.

The day after the party I have mentioned, Maria Sumner was seated, about twilight, in the summer-house, thoughtfully and anxiously gazing at the retreating form of a young gentleman, as she caught glimpses of him occasionally, in the lane, on his way back to town. Just as he passed the last winding, and was hidden entirely from her view, the servant came down to say that her father wished to see her in the "Library," as the room in which he spent most of his leisure hours was termed. She obeyed the summons more like one that dreaded than craved an interview. Her father was walking the room when she entered—his cheek was flushed, and his brow clouded.

"Be seated, my daughter," said he, coldly.

"So it seems you have stolen a march upon me, Maria. I learn from Dr. Wilson that, having talked over matters between yourselves, you now consider it time to consult the wishes of your father—a thing which should have been done at the outset."

The tone in which her father, usually so gentle, addressed her, seemed to deprive her of speech, and she sat before him, silent and pale.

"In such matters," continued General Sumner, "a gentleman would have consulted me before he presumed to address my daughter."

This remark brought a flush to her face; and, fixing her calm blue eye upon him, she replied, with candour and dignity, "Father, Dr. Wilson has never exchanged a word with me upon the subject of his attachment but once, and that was last evening, before dark, as we were wandering in the garden, rather aside from the rest of the company; he requested permission to ask me one question. I, of course, gave him liberty; and, in the fewest possible words, he expressed for me a strong and unconquerable attachment, and begged I would regard his declaration in so favourable a light as to allow him to ask permission of you to visit me hereafter as a lover, and not as a mere friend. I gave my consent; company joined us, and not another word

of any description has passed between us since. He had no means of knowing whether I would permit his addresses, even were you willing, and I suppose he intended simply to ascertain that fact before he mentioned the subject to you. I am persuaded, father, that he intended no disrespect, and would not be guilty of anything that he considered dishonourable or ungentlemanly."

The frankness, simplicity, and honesty with which Maria addressed her father, softened his feelings somewhat—for General Sumner was truly an affectionate, if he was a whimsical man. He made no reply for a moment to her frank avowal, but drew up a chair, and sat down before her.

"I suppose, then, I am to understand," said he, at length, "that you have no objections to uniting yourself in marriage with Dr. Wilson?"

Maria (blushing)—"I cannot say, father, that I have thought so far ahead as that. I am willing to say to you, that I esteem Dr. Wilson—nay, more, I admire him more than any other gentleman I know. I would have no objection to a more intimate acquaintance. Perhaps I might, at some future time, be willing to marry him—I cannot say."

"Well," said he, with some determination and earnestness of manner, "I am prepared to say that you never can marry him with my consent, and I have told him so. You shall never marry a doctor or a minister."

Just then Anna opened the door to come in, but seeing her father and Maria in conversation, she turned to go out again, when her father called her back. "You may stay, Anna, and hear also what I have to say. What I mean for one, I mean for both. You shall never, either of you, marry a doctor or a minister with my consent;" and turning to Anna, "if that young embryo minister, Mr. Colman, ever presumes to press such inquiries upon you, as Dr. Wilson has upon Maria, you will know what answer to give. Has he ever said anything to you about love, matrimony, or any of that sort o' thing?" added he, looking so hard at her that she felt he had looked her through.

Anna—"No, father, he has never said anything," and she coloured deeply.

Father—"But he has looked unutterable things, I dare say. Well, one is about as bad as the other. I hope he has too much honour and good sense, however, to go to you first; but if he should not know any better, you can tell him at once, if he asks, and save him the trouble of coming to me, for he never will get anything but no for an answer."

Maria—"May I ask what objections you have to Dr. Wilson?"

Father—"Two very great ones—he is a doctor, and has no money."

Maria—"But he is a very respectable man, and popular as a professional one. I never heard a word against his character, and I have no doubt, if he lives long enough, he will have plenty of money. I have heard you say, father, that you had very little property when you were married. I have often heard you say, too, that you thought very meanly of a person who would marry for money. I am sure I would a thousand times sooner marry a man as respectable as Dr. Wilson, with a good profession only, than a lazy, dissipated aristocrat, if he were as rich as Crœsus."

"Well, well, no more of this," said the General, rising, and pushing back his chair. "You talk just like all girls, as if you could live on love and honey. It's all nonsense from beginning to end. If you had your own way, you would, every soul of you, run away with some great fool or other, just as Ellen Robbins has done, and take a lifetime to repent in, just as she will. No, you are not one of you fit to choose for yourselves, and therefore you ought to let your parents do it for you, as all sensible girls will. If a gentle-

man wishes to marry either of you, and is a real gentleman, he will come to me first; and if your mother and I think he is a suitable person in every respect for you, and calculated to make you happy, and is agreeable to us, and has something to live on, we shall do all to promote your best good, and in that, of course, your greatest happiness. But you know my mind sufficiently now, and it is needless to say any more." And he rose to leave the room.

"Father," said Maria, gently, "do not leave us yet. Let me say a few words more."

"Well, say on, then," exclaimed the General, "and be short, for I am in a hurry."

Maria—"It does seem to me, father, that in such an important matter as the choice of a companion for life, the persons interested should be allowed full liberty in that choice, restricted only by advice and counsel. Such a man as you would choose for me might not be such a husband as I should want, or such an one as would make me happy. I mean no disrespect to your judgment, father, but I do think you might have some regard to my fancy."

The General interrupted her by saying she did "not know what she was talking about; she had not cut her wisdom teeth yet," and rose again to go.

Maria—"Just let me say one word more, father, and I have done. Suppose Grandfather Ellison had turned you off, as you have Dr. Wilson, and refused to allow my mother to marry you, because he did not fancy you, and yet without any objection to your character, would it have been right or generous in him?"

The General made no answer to the query, but turned towards the door, saying in a very dignified manner, "his daughter had forgotten to speak in a manner becoming her years and her relationship," and left the girls alone.

Maria went to her room, and gave vent to a flood of tears, and then sought Aunt Esther's chamber, and poured into her willing ears a full account of all that had transpired. Aunt Esther listened to the whole. She felt that her brother had erroneous views and feelings on this vital subject, but, not wishing injudiciously to condemn them, she told Maria it was possible her father might have some objections altogether sufficient for refusing his consent, which he did not like to name; he might know something of the Doctor's character.

"Well, then," replied Maria, "it was right that he should have given me the reasons—if he had any that were satisfactory to his own mind. If he knows anything against him, I have a right to be informed of it. I have dealt frankly with him—he should do so with me. When he finds a husband for me that suits him, does he think that, to please him, I must take the man of his choice, whether I fancy him or not? Neither the laws of nature, nor of grace, require it of anybody. I never can be forced to marry a man to please father, or anybody else."

Aunt Esther—"Your father never will force you to marry any one against your will, Maria, you may depend on that."

Maria—"If he would force me to give up one to whom there was no reasonable objection, I see not why he might not force me to marry against my will one whom I would not choose. One is as unjust as the other. The two reasons father gave for his opposition are no reasons at all to my mind; in fact, they are altogether absurd, perfectly ridiculous, and I am astonished that a man of father's sense should indulge such a foolish prejudice against a man, simply because he happens to be a doctor. What can be the reason; do you know, Aunt Esther?"

"I never heard him say," replied her aunt, "but I have always supposed it was owing to a difficulty, in which he was once involved, with a physician and a minister, and he has transferred his prejudices against them to the whole class of those professions."

CHAPTER XVIII.

AUNT KIZZY'S DISCIPLINE.

AUNT KIZZY lived nearly a mile from the Common, in a small but very neat gray house, in which her grandfather lived before her. This, with a nice garden and wood-lot adjoining, he had bequeathed to her, in consideration of her care and kindness during the last few years of his life, in which he was almost helpless. The only members of her family were Jane Willey, her sister's child, whom she had adopted when her sister died, and a great yellow cat, that Aunt Kizzy loved almost as well as she did her niece.

"Jenny Willey," as she was called in the neighbourhood, was a mild, sweet-looking girl of sixteen, naturally full of fun and frolic.

Aunt Kizzy had no sympathy with such a temperament as hers, and misjudged entirely in its management.—The frolicsomeness of youth, and the natural ebullitions of a gay-spirited girl, who enjoyed perfect health, were looked upon by Aunt Kizzy with the greatest jealousy and distrust, and regarded by her only as symptoms of the natural depravity of which we are all partakers.

Aunt Kizzy was shrewd and sensible on most subjects, but she had never lived among young people much, and never had been young herself. She was of a cold, phlegmatic temperament, and had no charity for others differently constituted. In the education of her niece, she committed as great errors in a rigid and severe discipline, as Mrs. Robbins did by following the opposite course. Jenny's girlish follies and freaks were all sins of deep dye, in Aunt Kizzy's view, and were visited with unmitigated displeasure. If she pulled the cat's tail and elicited a most emphatic and prolonged "meyow," and then laughed at it, or if, in hunting eggs in the barn, she put the hens to a general rout and they set up a great cackle, these were only so many proofs of her vicious propensities to Aunt Kizzy's mind, although Jenny solemnly declared she only did it to vary the monotony of her life, and create evidence to her own senses, that she lived among other living things—that she was occasionally so tired and lonesome, that any noise was agreeable, and that she wanted to laugh so, sometimes, it seemed as if she should die if she didn't, and really wished Aunt Kizzy would let her go up to the garret or out in the woods, where she could laugh, for once, till she was tired,—all this did not convince Aunt Kizzy that her propensities arose from anything but "total depravity." If she laughed out in meeting, as she did several times in her life when something comical occurred, and she declared she could not help it, Aunt Kizzy said it was because she was "orful wicked," and she assured her, with no assumed gravity, that she did not know what would "finally become of her." Poor Jenny began to look upon herself as an "orful critter," sure enough, as Aunt Kizzy had told her she was, times without number, and she tried to *do* better and *be* better, but all to no purpose. And now she was blooming up into womanhood and just as full of fun as ever. Aunt Kizzy's responsibilites increased, and the difficulty of training her up in the way in which she should go rose mountain-high before her. She had walked home from school one day with Mr. Herbert, a young

clerk in Mr. Sinclair's store; this had alarmed Aunt Kizzy somewhat, and, in a week or more after, she happened to see him one morning, standing at the gate and talking with Jenny, who actually plucked a beautiful bunch of roses, which she was presenting to him, when Aunt Kizzy, in a sharp voice, called her into the house. She remonstrated with her upon the impropriety of such forwardness, while Jenny could not see or feel that she had done anything improper; she thought it was far better they should bloom in the button-hole of Herbert's roundabout, than "waste their sweetness on the desert air." All this only increased Aunt Kizzy's scrutiny and severity, and, finally, induced her to visit her pastor's wife for counsel in such an important case. Aunt Kizzy had no partiality for the other sex, and never had, perhaps because they had never shown any for her. Be that as it may, she seemed to hate the whole race, and to think they were all leagued together with the devil to destroy the female part of humanity throughout the world. Such were her feelings towards them as a class, that some of her neighbours used to think if any man had made proposals of marriage to her, her first impulse would have led her to knock him down. She put on her bonnet and shawl, and, giving Jenny a task to do while she was gone, locked her up in the house, as she always did, for fear something would happen her, and then, feeling she had acted a wise and judicious part, she pursued her way to the personage.

"I'll do my duty, anyhow," she mused by the way, "and take good care on her; and then if she don't do well, *I* shan't have nothing to 'flect on."

Aunt Kizzy had sent her to the academy, and given her a very good education; she had not, moreover, neglected the domestic part of it. Jane was really a very smart and pretty girl, and her Aunt loved her, and looked upon her with great satisfaction, and no little pride; and had it not been for sundry developments of inbred sin, exhibiting a giggling propensity, which was truly alarming to Aunt Kizzy's mind, and, moreover, had she not begun to show a feeling of toleration towards the other sex, which Aunt Kizzy had never either felt or manifested herself, she would have been all that her aunt desired.

Aunt Kizzy prefaced her own troubles, when she had reached Mrs. May's, by an allusion to the state of affairs among some of her neighbours.

"I reckon you've hearn that Captin Robbins is a goin' to lose another darter soon, Miss May?"

"Why, no," said Mrs. May, in some surprise, "I have heard nothing of the kind."

"Well," replied Aunt Kizzy, "they say Martha, the one that's next to her that run away, is goin' to marry Mr. Smith, the storekeeper. Those gals 'll all tarn out bad. I ollers knowed it. They sot out wrong."

Mrs. May—"I hope you are mistaken, Aunt Kizzy, about Martha. Mr. Smith is quite a dissipated man, I have been told."

Aunt Kizzy—"Yes he's come home tipsy from one weddin' and two parties that I knows on, and I reckon when a man's got along so far as that, he's a gone case. If any gal's such a goose as to marry a man that's even got drunk onc't, she may do't for all me, but I can tell her she'll rue the day. For my part, I never had any hankerin' for any on 'em, good nor bad." Aunt Kizzy then went on to tell her troubles about Jenny. "Jenny is a good gal," said she, "if it wern't she's so oneasy and fidgety, and ollers a laughin' at nothin' an' showing so much depravity. Bein' strict with her, don't do her no good."

"I'm afraid," said Mrs. May, "you are too strict in some things; that you make too little allowance for her youth and her volatile disposition. Instead of mourning over her gay, overflowing spirits, which are only the

natural result of good health and happiness, I should rejoice rather, and allow her all the innocent expressions of mirthfulness and hilarity which her nature craves. Depend upon it, she will be less likely to break away from restraint, if she has such recreations and indulgencies as are innocent in their tendency, and they will satisfy her. Young people could no more live without amusement of some kind than fish can live without water. Let her laugh if she wants to; it will do her good. And let her pull the cat's tail, or chase the chickens, or go out in the woods and scream till her lungs ache; it will not hurt her or them either. Above all, pull down the walls of partition between yourself and her, and encourage her to tell you all she thinks and feels and knows; it will benefit her, and give you an opportunity to study her character, her foibles and her temptations, and you will then know better what to do for her and how to advise her."

Aunt Kizzy—"O la! she never told me any of her thoughts; I don't know as she ever had any. What kind o' worries me most is her knowin' that feller. If I could only stop her seein' on him, I should be glad."

Mrs. May—"Well, she will have acquaintances among the other sex, and it is well she should have; only see to it, that they are respectable and suitable. In order to acquire her confidence, you must sometimes consult her judgment and taste. Trust her, and she will try to show herself worthy of your confidence. I do not believe," added Mrs. May, shaking her head, "that locking her up or forcing her to do right will operate well. It will make her sly and deceitful. I see no harm in Mr. Herbert calling on her occasionally. I know him, and he is fine young man. If they are disposed to make acquaintance, let them be acquainted, but let it be under your eye; and you must unbend a little, Aunt Kizzy, and remember your young days, and live over your early life in Jenny. That's the way I do with Lucy. Why, Lucy is never satisfied when she has company in the parlour if I am not there with her; she has no desire to receive company alone, and have a parlour to herself, as some girls do most foolishly. I think if you pursue a different course with Jenny, you will find she will be happier, and that it will have a better effect upon her. She is amiable, and if she sees you reasonably indulgent to her in her youthful wishes, she will be more anxious to please you and do what is right herself. When girls reach the age of sixteen, they are no longer children, and we should gradually and judiciously let them act for themselves, and teach them to lean upon their own resources, always keeping at hand to counsel and assist, when necessity requires."

CHAPTER XIX.

CUPID AT THE PARSONAGE.

About six weeks after the pic-nic, Barlow called on Mr. May, and was alone with him in the study for some time. Neither his visit nor the object of it was a matter of surprise to the pastor, for Barlow had become a constant and rather unceremonious visitor in the family. With great embarrassment and evident anxiety for the result, Barlow declared his admiration of Miss Lucy, and requested permission to pay his addresses. Mr. May inquired if his daughter was aware of his attachment. "No, Sir," said he, "I have never broached the subject to her. I felt it my duty to make known my wishes to you first, as I frankly confess that I thought perhaps my difference in religious sentiments from yourself might be to your mind an insurmountable objection to our union." (Barlow was an infidel.)

Mr. May—"I admire your candour, and will as frankly say that, so far as your family, your own position in society, private character, and business habits, are concerned, I would ask or wish nothing more for my daughter. Your religious views are a very serious objection. But I give you full liberty to consult my daughter in regard to the subject. I really believe Lucy is a true Christian, and she is old enough and capable to decide in such a matter for herself. In affairs of the heart, my doctrine is that parents should allow their children who are old enough, to use their own judgment and fancy. Parents have no right to interfere beyond the limits of wholesome counsel and advice. I leave the matter with my daughter altogether."

Barlow could almost have embraced the minister, religion and all, in the ecstacy of the moment. He thanked him, grasped his hand most ferociously, and made his exit without shutting the door after him. He had not expected such a *carte-blanche* as this; his knees had actually smote together, in fear of a flat refusal, all the way from the gate to the house. He went to the parlour, and was so unusually glad to see Mrs. May that she looked up at him in a quiet sort of wonder, and left the room to find Lucy, for whom he had inquired.

Lucy did not keep him waiting a full hour "to fix" herself, as many young ladies of the present day do, who have nothing else to occupy them from morning till night but to dress themselves, but in a very few moments made her appearance. The joyousness and gaiety of his manner were so unlike his usual calm dignity, that she looked at him for a moment bewildered and embarrassed. While opening a blind, and finding a seat on the sofa, she at length recovered her self-possession, and, after a few common-place remarks, the great question was introduced.

I will not undertake to repeat, word for word, what Barlow said, for the very good reason that nobody knows what it was, and I doubt whether the parties themselves, five minutes afterwards, could have remembered exactly what passed on the occasion; but, in words wanting neither warmth nor earnestness, he made known his regard for her, and stated the result of his conversation with her father.

Lucy became so excessively pale and agitated that Barlow was alarmed, and could not imagine the cause. As she made no reply immediately, he begged her to tell him "if his hopes of her favourable reception of him had deceived him; if she was altogether indifferent towards him." Lucy assured him that she was "by no means indifferent to his regard; that she had ever viewed him with the greatest esteem and the most sincere friendship; but she could not choose a companion for life who was not a religious man, much less one who was a disbeliever in Christianity."

He begged she would not give him a decisive answer immediately. He wanted her to think of it and decide deliberately. If she had no objection to him personally, his religion, or rather his want of it, need be no barrier to their happiness. He promised never to interfere with her religious views or habits. She should be as free to act, in all her religious and benevolent affairs, as she had been under her father's control. Far be it from him to trouble or annoy her in such matters. He could not believe in such things himself, but he should think no less of her for her religious belief; in fact, he thought it no harm for a woman to have some religion. It made them better wives, and he thought, on the whole, it made their lives happier. He ended by saying, nothing should be wanting on his part to promote her happiness. He pleaded like a lover and a lawyer.

Lucy told him she had "not a doubt of his sincerity, and that he would do all in his power to promote her happiness. She did not distrust him."

"Well," said Barlow, "do not give me an answer to-day. Think before you decide."

Lucy looked at him and smiled. "I dare not think of it," said she. "When I know my duty I never allow myself to parley with it. I am sufficiently acquainted with my own heart to know that, with all possible help from Christian friends, and all the holy influences I can bring around me, I shall find it a difficult work to keep in the straight and narrow way, and live in a manner pleasing to God and best for the interests of my own soul. I know that, with a companion who had no religion, my worldly and selfish heart would wander far away, and I am afraid I should forget that a heaven of joy or a world of woe awaited me at last. No, Mr. Barlow, I would not dare to marry an irreligious man. I gave this subject a most serious and thorough investigation more than a year ago, and I came to the solemn conviction, that it was at the peril of one's eternal interests for a Christian to marry an impenitent person, and I made a resolution at that time, from which I can never swerve, that whatever advantages might be offered in a settlement for life without religion, the most important requisite of all, I should invariably decline them."

Lucy said this with so decided an air, that all hope died in Barlow's heart. He did not feel angry with her, but a most profound regret and sorrow took possession of his soul. He urged nothing more. He was not a man to offer himself half a dozen times to a woman, who had once refused him, and he read in Lucy May's manner that she was not a woman who could be teased or coaxed into what her judgment and her sense of duty decided was wrong. He did not attempt to say another word, but fixed his eyes, thoughtfully and sorrowfully, on the carpet.

After a pause Lucy said, "I should not do justice to you or my own heart, Mr. Barlow, did I not say that this decision costs me as much as it does you. But I believe I have done right."

Barlow rose to go. "Farewell, Miss May," said he, grasping her hand, "I hope I may never forfeit your friendship and esteem, if I deserve nothing more." Lucy's chin quivered as she assured him that he would ever have both, and, she mentally added, her heart too. He ventured to raise her hand to his lips, and, imprinting on it his first and last kiss, departed. Poor Lucy hastened to her chamber, and, throwing herself on her bed, she gave vent to a flood of tears. The dinner-bell rang, but did not bring Lucy. Her mother opened the parlour door to speak to her and Mr. Barlow, who she supposed was still there, but found neither. Mr. May came in and told his wife Barlow's errand, and expressed some anxiety to know the result.

Mrs. May went up to Lucy's room, and found her sobbing as if her heart would break. She sat down by her. "What is the matter, my dear child?" asked Mrs. May, tenderly.

Lucy threw her arms around her mother's neck. "I have had such a trial, mother."

"You have refused him, then?" asked her mother.

"Yes," said Lucy; "but it has almost killed me and him too."

"Well, darling," replied her mother, "Jesus Himself has said, 'Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive an hundred-fold, and shall inherit everlasting life.'"

"I give him up for Christ's sake simply," said Lucy. "He is noble, and generous, and honourable—everything I would ask; only he lacks 'the one thing needful,' and that I know I must have in a companion, if I would be truly happy here, and if I would have God's blessing for time and eternity.

I know and feel that I have done right, mother; but oh, you know not what a trial it has been."

"Yes, child," said her mother kindly, "I know it has been, I can fully understand it; but God can do more for you than any earthly friend. His smile and favour are above all price; and I do not believe He will forget to reward you for this sacrifice you have made for His sake."

While Lucy was thus overwhelmed, how did it fare with Barlow? He might have been angry with Miss May, or sneeringly said, she was a great fool to throw away such an opportunity to settle herself handsomely in the world for the sake of religion, as most worldly people *do* say of such things, when they express their opinions at all; but Barlow neither said so, nor indulged in such thoughts. He had been religiously educated in his early days. Although he had read infidel works in college and associated with scoffers, till he had gradually cast off all fear of God and a world to come, and avowed infidel opinions, still there was an enlightened conscience within him, not dead, but asleep, which awoke, and whispered that Lucy was consistent, and that, while she acknowledged she did violence to her own inclinations, in obedience to her views of duty, she exhibited a moral uprightness and courage in her conduct, and a loftiness of character, which only led him to admire her the more.

Moreover, in his inmost soul he believed there was such a thing as religion after all, and that his father and mother, and Lucy, were all in possession of a principle of conduct to which he was an utter stranger. Instead of making an enemy of Barlow by her refusal, as often happens in such cases, Lucy's candour and firmness, united with the tenderness of her manner, had only converted him into a more ardent and adoring admirer. Barlow could not forget her, or banish her image from his thoughts even for an hour. She haunted him in his dreams as well as in his waking moments. The more he thought of her, the more he regretted his loss, and the more unhappy he became.

It was a matter of great surprise and no small speculation throughout the town of C——, two weeks after, when Barlow departed for Boston, to sail for Europe, where he intended to stay and travel one or two years.

No one seemed to arrive at any satisfactory solution of the mystery of his sudden and abrupt departure except Aunt Kizzy, who whispered to a few friends that she "guessed Lucy May had gi'n him the mitten, because he had been goin' there every day, and all at once he stopped right short off."

CHAPTER XX.

ANOTHER TRIAL.

It is not to be supposed that Captain Robbins's family were as insensible to their recent calamity as appearance would warrant. The Captain's feelings on the subject were intense. He fully comprehended the cause of his daughter's strange departure from propriety and duty, and mourned over the errors he and his wife had unwittingly committed in their injudicious course with their children; but his repentance was not of the right kind, for it did not lead him to cherish a forgiving spirit, and to strive, as far as possible, to avert the consequences of his mistake. His heart yearned towards Ellen as he saw her, pale and subdued, crossing the common from church; but he would not bow to her nor allow his family to visit her. He longed in his

nmost soul to see her once happy face again at his table, and hear her blithe step in the hall, but his pride would not allow him to send for her or permit her to return. How could he speak even to the base intruder upon his peace? How could he look upon him as a son? His whole soul revolted from it. "No," he reasoned with himself, "Ellen had better be punished for her folly by reaping as she sowed;" and he resolved to be doubly strict and watchful in regard to the others.

The number of parlour visitors had considerably decreased and changed. One, however, remained a constant attendant upon the nightly levees, and at length completely astounded Captain Robbins by requesting a private interview, and very unexpectedly demanding his daughter Martha's hand in marriage. It was Mr. Smith, of the firm of "Smith and Snubbs." The perplexity and distress depicted on the Captain's countenance were indescribable. He had a most contemptuous opinion of this man; not so much from what he knew of him personally, as from the thousand-and-one nameless little things floating about concerning him, so decidedly mean and dishonourable, as to prejudice him exceedingly.

Mr. Smith did not augur a very favourable issue to his application from the Captain's manner, and the long pause which followed his introductory speech. The Captain knew not what to say. As he had made a respectful and formal application, he was entitled to a civil reply.

"I am not sufficiently acquainted with your family, character, and habits," replied he at length, "to be enabled to give you a prompt and decided answer. If, on inquiry, I should find you stand honourably as a business man, and respectably as a gentleman, I shall, of course, throw no obstacles in the way of your union with my daughter. Character and industry," said Captain Robbins, looking very earnestly and seriously at the young man, "are the only points at which I shall look with uncompromising scrutiny in the choice of a companion for my daughters. My youngest child's unfortunate marriage will make me, perhaps, even more scrupulous in these respects than ever."

"That is all right, Captain," said Smith, who could not, however, stand his severe gaze without quailing—"When may I expect an answer? I hope soon," added the young man, "for suspense in such matters is anything but agreeable, as perhaps, Sir, you well know."

The Captain promised an answer the next evening.

Early in the morning, the Captain prepared to go out, and make such inquiries in regard to the young man as would fully satisfy his own mind. Just before he was ready to leave the house, Aunt Kizzy came in for an early call, and it occurred to him, as she always knew so much of the present, past, and future, that he might perhaps pick up a crumb of information from her knowledge. So, in due time, he very carelessly made some inquiries about sundry persons in town, and, among others, of Smith.

"He's as slippery as an eel," said Aunt Kizzy; "folks that trades with him, orter have eyes all round. I went in there onc't to buy a collar (that was afore I knowed him). I told him to show me one of the most fashionablest kind. Wal, he tuk down some, and I looked on 'em. He thought I didn't know nothin', I s'pose, but I did know that them collars was made afore the flood, and so I picked up my duds, and without doin' nothin' but turnin' my nose up at him, I walked out. Old Mrs. Knight, she went in onc't, afore she knowed him, to buy some linen. She looked at one piece; she put on her specs and found 'twas not fine enough, and she asked for some that was better. Wal, do you think, he jest whapped the piece over and tucked on a half a dollar a yard more, and showed her t'other eend of the same piece, and she tuk it, and never found out till she got home how he

cheated her. Now you see he's got no principle, and when folks finds him out, they wont go near him. I've often hearn storekeepers, and clerks too, a wonderin' why folks wouldn't trade with 'em. Umph!" continued Aunt Kizzy, "I could tell 'em fast enough. Wimmen's afeard on 'em, when they've been tuk in onc't. I've hearn o' lots o' sich things as he's up to. Besides, he don't pay his washerwoman; an' I think, when a man's got to that, he's got e'en a'most to the eend of his principles. Laws me! Mrs. Wilson that lives in the woods, she does his washin'; an' for all she's poor as poverty, an' got lots o' children, an' one on 'em's dying o' consumption, an' he knows it, she has to beg, as she would beg her Maker, for what he owes her, and he won't pay then, till she can't stan' it no longer, an' she threatens not to do no more for him. Then he'll pay her part on't, to get rid on her, 'cause he knows he can't get no one else to wash for him. I call sich things mean and wicked too. Maybe, Captain Robbins, you men would call 'em little things, that 'an't worth mindin', but I reckon we can find out folks' character by small doin's as well as big ones.

"Now I'll tell you on his big faults. He's a drunkard; the world don't call him so, but I does. When a man gets so at a weddin' or party that he can't get home alone by hisself, and don't know what he's about, I call him drunk. I s'pose folks down here in town jest call Mr. Smith nothin' but gay and wild, but there's no use in callin' things only by their right names. He drinks jest as much as he can, and keeps his head up, an' one o' these days he'll come out a right down, reg'lar, and teetotal drunkard, now mind."

Martha Robbins was in the room all the time, and she heard all Aunt Kizzy had to say.

Captain Robbins was not sorry. Martha said nothing. She was knitting, and she only knit faster; her needles cracked so you could have heard them anywhere in the room, while her face and neck were as red as scarlet.

The Captain went out, and after such inquiries as fully satisfied his own mind, he returned and sought a private interview with Martha. She had referred Mr. Smith to her father, as a dutiful child should do, but she was greatly shocked and vexed at Aunt Kizzy's account of Mr. Smith, and still more so, that her father's inquiries elicited such information as only corroborated it. What was to be done?

"Well, Martha," said the Captain, "I feel that your prospect of happiness and respectability, as the wife of such a man, would be very small, or rather positively impossible. My own mind is quite decided in the matter, and I suppose yours is."

Martha looked as if she did not view matters in the same light as her father did. "Perhaps," said she, "Mr. Smith has been misrepresented. I cannot believe him to be guilty of such faults."

Captain Robbins—"I have been very particular in my inquiries, and fear that I know too little rather than too much about him. If so much that is wrong lies on the surface, and is visible to common inspection, who can say how much that is evil is hid from view? I hear, moreover, that he gambles."

Martha—"Even if it is so, father, he may reform."

Captain Robbins—"Promises of amendment, under such circumstances as he is in at present, I am afraid would prove vain and delusive. Be assured they would be like a spider's web. The first blast of temptation would break his good resolutions and ruin your prospects for ever."

Martha—"I do not feel so sure, father. I am willing to risk it, if he solemnly promises to refrain from intemperance and gambling. I think we should encourage him, not cast him off."

"Yes, child," replied the father, "if encouragement can be given without

too great a sacrifice. But is it wise to throw yourself away, when the prospect is ten to one that you will not save him, and that you will destroy yourself? No, my child, I cannot give my consent to such an unpromising union. The time will come, Martha, when I am persuaded you will be satisfied with my judgment, even if now your heart does not approve."

Martha left her father, disappointed and sad. O how bitterly did Captain Robbins reproach himself with the thought, that all this pain and trial would have been prevented, had he nipped this acquaintance in the very bud.

When Mr. Smith came for his answer he received a decided refusal from the father, with the reasons in full. Captain Robbins added, however, on his promise of amendment, that if, at the end of two years, it could be proved that he had not once fallen into his besetting sins, this decision should be reconsidered.

CHAPTER XXI.

PLANS MATURED.

TOM SUMNER was own cousin to Angeline Lee, and as they had always been on the most familiar terms, Angeline felt no delicacy about revealing to him her plans in regard to Reynolds; and, as he abominated the coquettish and unprincipled course Reynolds had pursued to the ladies, ever since his first arrival at C——, he most heartily and zealously entered into his cousin's plans, and assisted her in making her arrangements. When he was gone, and the girls had retired to the privacy of their own room, they talked the matter all over again.

"Now," said Angeline, "I believe I have arranged matters to suit me. Three things you see I must not do. I must not ride with him—I must not correspond with him—nor allow him to make proposals of marriage."

"And if you keep him six weeks in good 'popping' condition, as you say," replied Julia, laughing, "I don't see, for my part, how you can avoid one or the other."

Angeline—"I expect I shall be at my wits' end sometimes to manage the matter; but if you will only do your part, which is simply never to leave me alone with him, Tom and I can see to the rest."

Julia—"So when Mr. Reynolds calls for you, I am always to run too. If he takes a notion to walk in the garden, I must follow, trailing along after you both, up and down the walks, and if he goes into the arbour, must I come in or stand outside? I suppose I must always be near enough to hear all that passes between you." And the very idea of her duties set her off into one of her broad laughs.

"Of course," answered Angeline, "you must be near enough to prevent his popping the question; and provided you only do that, I care not how you accomplish it."

"Well," said Julia, laughing, "I will do anything that will teach that man a lesson upon women in general, and himself in particular, which he never can forget; but I'm afraid I shall die of laughing before he has learned his lesson."

In two days after Reynolds's first courting visit, he attempted another. It was late in the afternoon, and he found only Julia at home; Angeline had gone to ride with Tom Sumner. This so disconcerted him, that instead of going in at all to Mrs. Marvin's, he returned quite chagrined to his office, saying to himself, "If there is danger of my loosing her in that quarter, the quicker

I get my own destiny settled the better." He concluded, thereupon, to call early the next afternoon, and take her to ride himself. "In that way," thought he, "I shall get rid of the presence of Miss Marvin, who is a fine girl enough, but very particularly in my way just at this time." Again Reynolds arrayed himself with extreme punctiliousness, put on a white vest, adjusted his collar, and tied his cravat over and over again till it looked just right, put to flight every stray hair that was trespassing on his fair and ample brow, pulled down the snow-white tips of his wristbands, put on his gloves, and started off to see his lady-love. He concluded on the whole, to save time and give him a longer interview with the mistress of his heart, to stop at the tavern and take a carriage to the door.

"There, Angeline," said Julia, as she espied Reynolds driving up to the house, "you are caught now, sure enough; there's no escape. Here comes Reynolds, 'all saddled and bridled and fit for the chase,' as the children say."

Angeline smiled. "I'm ready for every emergency," said she, as the servant came up to say Mr. Reynolds was below.

"Must I follow on in the wake of your ladyship on this occasion?" asked Julia, facetiously.

"Yes," replied she, as she turned back, smiling at her manner, "yes, come on—not as 'the horse rushing into the battle' though, but quietly and slily, like my shadow at a respectable distance."

Julia lingered a little and then dropped into the parlour, just as Reynolds, with quite a disappointed look, was retreating towards the hall. Angeline turned to Julia and said, gaily, "Here is Julia, she is disengaged; she can go with you, Mr. Reynolds, and Mr. Sumner and I will meet you at the next village, and we can all return together. He will be here by four o'clock."

Of course politeness required him to extend the invitation, declined by Miss Lee, to Miss Marvin, and it was unhesitatingly accepted. But there was such a twinkling about her eyes, and such a convulsive movement of the muscles about her mouth, that Angeline dared not venture to look at her. While Julia ran up stairs for her bonnet, Angeline stepped out and despatched the servant, Jerry, with a line, hastily scratched with her pencil, to Tom Sumner, saying, "I shall be ready to ride precisely at four."

Tom was at hand at the time appointed, and away they merrily rode. It had been agreed between them, that whenever Reynolds invited her to a ride, she should be previously engaged to go with Sumner, and should immediately let him know, when horse, carriage, and beau, should be at her service.

Julia strove to make herself agreeable to Reynolds, and he tried to be civil, but it was a great effort on both sides. He was vexed almost beyond endurance, at this repeated disappointment, and almost jealous enough of Sumner to fight him. He was piqued at Angeline's indifferent manner towards him in regard to this ride, and the complete nonchalance with which she saw Julia take the seat beside him in the carriage, that he would have supposed Angelina would prefer to take herself. And then Tom Sumner's interference with his plans and intentions was intolerable. Did not Tom know, that he had devoted himself almost exclusively to Miss Lee for the last few weeks? He certainly could not help knowing it, and he could not be a gentleman to step in between them, especially at this juncture. He would call Tom to account for it. He should think Miss Lee might have read his devotion, his deep attachment, by this time. She ought to have understood it, at any rate, and it was astonishing she would permit

Tom Sumner to pay her such marked attentions as the civilities of the last few days.

All these thoughts passed through his mind in the gaps and pauses of conversation, and he became so excited, that, as he gave his whip a tremendous crack, which echoed through the woods, he only wished it was the crack of his rifle at Tom Sumner, who ought to be about his own business and not interfering with him.

Julia felt as if she could read his thoughts from his looks and actions, and she only wished that Tom and Angeline would hurry on and join them, so that an occasional glance of sympathy and understanding could pass between them, and add to the interest of the occasion. She was ready to burst with laughter at her own thoughts, and the contrast between her own feelings and Reynolds's; and she enjoyed the idea, that some of the very emotions and thoughts were probably annoying him and drinking up his spirits, that he had so often awakened, recklessly, in the bosoms of others.

"Mr. Sumner seems to have taken a very sudden fancy to Miss Lee," said Reynolds, after a long pause in the conversation. "I wonder how it happens."

Julia replied, that, "They had always been on the best of terms."

Reynolds—"O, yes; on terms of common friendship, of course. But his visits the last few days look rather ominous. Rather too frequent, I should say, unless the gentleman contemplates matrimony."

"I don't know as to that, Mr. Reynolds," said Julia. "Such attentions are entirely unmeaning in these times, I suppose, and should be looked upon only as harmless and fashionable flirtations. If they afford pleasure to the gentleman, it is such a simple gratification, and costs so little, the ladies ought not to make any objection; at least the theory and practice of some agree with that supposition."

Before Reynolds replied, the sound of wheels behind excited their attention, and Sumner and Angeline, merry as birds, nodded and smiled. Their gaiety of manner only increased Reynolds's annoyance, and the rest of the way he was sulky and barely civil.

When he returned, he threw himself into his arm-chair, vexed and unhappy. Never before had he been so thwarted, and so truly wretched. Everything seemed to go wrong. What could Angeline mean! He would soon know. He could not rest without knowing. He would visit her again, and would request to see her alone, if necessary. He wondered again and again that she could not surmise the state of his feelings toward her, and he was sure he had seen too indisputable proofs of her preference for him to allow him to suppose that these sudden and recent attentions of Sumner could wean her from him.

He was excessively annoyed, too, at the thought that he had boasted among his companions in town of Miss Lee's interest in him, and that, whenever he chose to make proposals of marriage, they would instantaneously be accepted. Grenville had ventured a bet on the matter. He had wagered a fine horse that Reynolds could not get her. And Reynolds had wagered that both lady and horse would eventually be his. His pride would not allow him tamely to give her up, to say nothing of his affections. He resolved to make another visit at once; and, if foiled again, another way was open. He would write to her, and her pen should send him an answer of peace.

CHAPTER XXII.

PERPLEXITIES.

THE very next evening, Reynolds, perfumed and primed, paid another visit to the mistress of his heart. He had passed a sleepless night, and was wrought up to the highest state of excitement and determination of which his nature was capable. He was keenly alive to ridicule, and fully aware, as he had boasted of his partiality for Miss Lee and his certainty of making her his wife, among his companions, that a failure would subject him to a mortification which he could not possibly abide. So, throwing all embarrassment, and awkwardness, and apprehension, to the winds, he determined that he would not leave the house till he had secured Miss Lee's consent to become his wife. If he could only have an interview alone with her, he did not fear the result; and he determined he would see her, in some way, by herself, and have the question on which his destiny hung settled.

To his great joy, he found Angeline in the parlour alone, and she seemed, as she sat by the window half enveloped in the folds of the curtain, to be in a deep reverie, the subject of which, no doubt, was himself. He imagined she received him with a tenderness and a suppressed delight he had rarely seen her manifest. He could ask no better opportunity to declare himself than the present afforded, and he would hasten to the subject. First, however, he wished to find out how she was disposed towards Tom Sumner, for, in spite of him, he could not regard Tom with the slightest patience or forbearance.

"How did you enjoy your ride yesterday, Miss Lee?" said he; "I hope better than I did mine," he added in a low, but very significant tone.

"O," said Angeline, "it was delightful. The weather was so very fine, and Mr. Sumner is the best company in the world. His conversation is always so sensible, spirited, and spicy, I think him a charming companion."

Reynolds did not relish this encomium at all. "Are you much acquainted with him?" asked he.

"O yes," said she gaily, "quite intimately. Our families have always been on friendly terms, and Tom was always a great favourite of mine."

"O, ah, indeed!" replied Reynolds, rather awkwardly. "I supposed he was only a recent acquaintance."

"O no, quite the contrary," answered Angeline; "he's an old friend."

Reynolds paused. He was annoyed by the thought that, after all, there might be more in this acquaintance than he would relish; and, while arranging his thoughts for making further inquiries, the roguish face of Julia peeped in at the window, and, with the most mischievous air, she handed Angeline a nosegay, consisting simply of several bachelor's-buttons, and two or three small twigs of locust. Angeline laughed, and then, with a most provoking air, she gave it to Reynolds, remarking it was so beautiful a bouquet she would prefer to see him wear it to wearing it herself. Reynolds understood the language of flowers. It was a favourite mode with him of expressing his sentiments to ladies, and he had adopted it because in it he did not commit himself as by words. But, as he read the signification of these flowers, "hope even in misery," and "sorrow endeth not when it is done," he coloured and looked excessively annoyed—whether it was an intentional or accidental arrangement he could not tell. It, however, disconcerted him completely, and before he was fairly ready to resume conversation again, that tormenting Witch of Endor, Julia, glided into the room, with the utmost gaiety and simplicity, as if she had a perfect right to sit in her own parlour, and did not

harbour the shadow of an idea that her presence would not be truly acceptable. The ladies were as sprightly and voluble as usual, but Reynolds, from sheer vexation and disappointment, found it difficult to take any part in the conversation at all. He fidgeted about the room, and then gazed out of the window, and finally declaring it a most superb moonlight evening, suggested to Miss Lee that she should walk a while with him in the garden. Angeline, of course, consented, and, giving a sort of masonic sign to Julia, followed Reynolds out of doors. Drawing her arm within his own, when fairly out of hearing of those within the house, he seemed to breathe more freely, and began to arrange his thoughts for introducing the all-absorbing topic of his mind, when Julia joined them in a glow of admiration at the beauty of the evening, declaring it a thousand times more pleasant out-doors than in the house. Angeline agreed with her. Reynolds scarcely spoke. All three sauntered along for a while, the ladies carrying on a spirited discourse, and Reynolds almost bursting with vexation at this new intrusion. To his great joy, however, Julia soon dived into another path, and he hurried Angeline into the summer-house, where they seated themselves. It was one of those delightful evenings when the sky is cloudless and the moon and stars are shining in their greatest brilliancy and glory. Everything was green and beautiful, and the air was literally perfumed with the multitude of flowers in bloom. The calm river that flowed within sight, shone like a sea of silver, while the moon and stars, that were reflected upon its still waters, glittered upon its bosom like the richest gems. It was such a night as lovers choose for rambling. Even Reynolds's tortured mind was soothed by its beauty and quietude, into something like his usual cheerful mood, and the consciousness of the favourable moment for his proposals, as well as the delightful scenery around, inspired him with ardour and courage to pour forth the swelling emotions of his soul.

He ventured to take Angeline's hand and imprinted on it an ardent kiss. She gently withdrew it, but not in apparent displeasure.

"Miss Lee," said he, "I have long been wishing—" and in bounced the sylph-like form of the ever-present Julia, declaring, with a merry laugh, that she had found them at last, and that she believed, after all, they had a better view of all the scenery around from the summer-house than from any other place; and so she seated herself beside Reynolds, pointing out new beauties in the bright moonlight, which she feared had escaped his observation. But he saw nothing, heard nothing, and knew nothing, only that he was boiling with rage at this intolerable interruption, and that, if he could do what his own provoked feelings prompted him at the moment, he would soon transplant her into some scenery so walled in, that she could not have an opportunity to cross his path again for one while.

As for Julia herself, she was almost bursting with merriment at the ridiculous doggedness with which she was pursuing the poor fellow, and disturbing his thoughts, provoking his temper, and breaking the thread of his discourse.

Angeline looked the picture of patience and submission, except, now and then, as her eye caught Julia's, a glance of drollery gave token of what passed within.

Reynolds waited, hoping another freak would take Julia out of sight and hearing a while, but he waited in vain. She seemed riveted to her seat by his side, and wholly intent upon performing her mission, and striving to render herself entertaining and agreeable to his lordship; nor did she for a moment appear to perceive that she totally failed in doing so.

Vexed, thwarted, disappointed, Reynolds sat, till, in utter hopelessness of accomplishing the purpose of his heart by his tongue, he rose, and they finally retired to the parlour again.

"May I have the pleasure of your company in a ride to-morrow?" inquired Reynolds, as he prepared to leave.

Angeline replied, that "Mr. Sumner would call for her in the afternoon to go with him."

So Reynolds bid her "good evening," scarcely deigning to look at Julia, and, in no very enviable mood, returned to his office.

He walked the room till midnight, sometimes vowing vengeance on Tom Sumner, sometimes wishing all manner of misfortunes on Miss Marvin, and contriving plan after plan, which he no sooner formed than he discarded, of seeing Miss Lee, and disclosing the real state of his heart. Finally, he concluded that the surest and quickest way to reach her would be to write to her.

Full of this new purpose he sat down, not to the task, but to enjoy the delightful privilege of pouring out his whole soul in unrestrained admiration and adoration of her ladyship.

"Blessings be on the head of him that invented this mode of transmitting the glowing thoughts of the soul," said he, mentally, as his pen galloped on, untrammelled by the restraint of his beloved's presence and the everlasting interruptions of her omnipresent cousin. He wondered that he had not resorted to this mode of explaining himself to her before. How many hours of agony could he have saved himself! What had he not suffered the last few days, which he might have been spared by the simple process of epistolary correspondence! He told her, in no measured terms, of the profound admiration with which he first met her—of the increasing interest which her personal and mental charms had awakened in him, and that the sun of his existence would set in eternal darkness, if he was not so fortunate as to gain her undivided affections. He told her with what agonising earnestness he had, day after day, sought, unsuccessfully, an interview with her, to proffer her his heart and hand for time and eternity, and so on. It was like all love letters, only, perhaps, "a little more so" than the generality. Having finished and perfumed it, he sealed it, ready for the post-office on the morrow, and sought repose in the land of dreams for his troubled mind.

CHAPTER XXIII.

ANOTHER COLLOQUY IN THE OFFICE.

THE first business of the succeeding day was to deposit safely in the post-office the letter, whose reply was to bring a blissful certainty to Reynolds. He felt satisfied that a speedy answer would soon render him the happiest man imaginable; and, with more real cheerfulness than he had felt for many days, he dropped in at a neighbour's office. Here he found several friends, among whom were Dr. Wilson and Grenville.

"We were just speaking of you, Reynolds," said Grenville.

"Well," replied he, "it is pleasant to be remembered when absent."

Grenville—"We were expressing our sentiments of sympathy and condolence in your probable loss."

"Loss of what?" retorted Reynolds, earnestly.

Grenville—"We are all afraid you will lose your bet. Tom Sumner has surely got the upper hand."

Reynolds—"What makes you think so?"

Grenville—"Why, does he not ride with her nearly every day, and spend hours with her? Does she not receive him with all the pleasure and gratifi-

cation it is possible for any person to manifest in the society of another? I was in there the other night, and am convinced that there is something extraordinary between them. They sat up in a corner for an hour, and talked in the lowest tone imaginable; and Miss Lee's eyes shone like diamonds, and smiles of delight were constantly gliding over her face, like shadows across the fields when clouds steal over the sun. Her whole face was lit up with an animation and a glow of pleasure that rendered her truly beautiful. I declare, when she is animated, she is the handsomest woman I have ever seen yet, I don't care where. But this private conversation was not all. She followed him as far as the gate, and there they held another parley that perfectly absorbed them both for half an hour more. I know when girls are in love. I'm a pretty good judge. I can read their faces and their hearts as fast as a lawyer can his briefs; and depend upon it, Reynolds, you have no more chance of getting Miss Lee than I have of marrying Miss Lamb, and I wouldn't give that," said he, snapping his fingers, "for my chance in that quarter. You have not got Miss Lee's heart yet, for I have watched her, and you too, when you have been walking together, and I know you have not got even a foothold in her affections; but you've got Mary Lamb's altogether, and I'm plaguy sorry for it."

Reynolds was so vexed he could not speak.

"Miss Lamb will never marry anybody, if I'm any judge," said Dr. Wilson.

"What do you mean?" asked Grenville.

Dr. Wilson—"She'll die in less than six months."

Grenville—"Why, is she sick?"

Dr. Wilson—"She has been under my care for some weeks, and I have very little hope that she will ever be any better. She is able to walk about, to be sure; but there is a general prostration of the system, and a gradual and constant failure from week to week, that is very alarming. She belongs to a consumptive race, and would probably have died of consumption eventually, but a morbid melancholy seems to have taken a sudden and fatal possession of her, and is developing disease prematurely, I think. Some sudden blight has come upon her; some great sorrow is drinking up her spirits. I cannot find out what, but it will surely bring her to the grave."

Grenville—"I can tell you, and so can Reynolds, what is the matter with her. Disappointment has blighted her, that's it. Reynolds has killed her, and he ought to be hung for it."

Reynolds was walking the room with his hands in his pockets, rumbling within like a pent-up volcano. He turned suddenly about.

"If you were anybody on the face of the earth but Charles Grenville," said he, shaking his fist, "I would not stand your provoking insinuations; and it is only out of respect to your sister, and in consideration of your rattle-headed good-for-nothingness, that I don't give you what you deserve, and that is a good cow-hiding."

"We shall all of us get our deserts, I dare say, first or last," said Grenville, very coolly. "If I didn't think there was a Power above to arrange matters, I reckon I should have taken you in hand long since for your unprincipled treatment of the ladies, especially of Miss Lamb; but I will leave you to get your deserts from the Great Master, and I shall get the bet for mine, I guess, from appearances." And with that he walked out.

Reynolds was almost choked with rage; he paced the room in silence.

"So Barlow has gone to Europe," said Dr. Wilson, after a pause. "People say here that he offered himself to Lucy May, and was flatly refused, and that it was so unexpected it almost upset him. I wonder if it is true?"

Reynolds—"What on earth could the girl refuse him for? He is a hand-

some man, has a fine business, good connections, a tolerable fortune, and an unblemished character. I should like to know what a woman could ask for more?"

Dr. Wilson—"Well, they say she, or her father, I don't know which, refused him because he had no religion. So the world goes. One man is thrown overboard because he has no money, another because he has no religion, and another because he was born in a hovel instead of a palace—neither of which is a man's fault, but his misfortune, according to my thinking."

Reynolds—"Well, if Lucy May has actually rejected Barlow, she is a great fool, and she will never have another such a chance, I can tell her."

Colman—"Instead of being a fool, I think she must be nearer an angel to reject such a tempting offer; and I respect her more than ever, if it is actually a fact."

Reynolds—"Why, Barlow is a sensible man. He would not meddle with her religion, I dare say. Lucy May has got enough for her and him too, I'll warrant."

Colman—"I think she has done right, and will be blessed in her decision. We are told not to be 'unequally yoked with unbelievers,' and that those who marry without regard to religion 'shall have trouble in the flesh,' to say nothing of the threatenings and curses that rest upon 'a family that call not upon the name of the Lord.' And I am sure, if we look about us, we see trouble enough of one kind or another, in those families where only one is a believer. There are almost always jars, and contentions, and troubles, especially where the children are growing up. Some incline to father's mode of thinking, and some to mother's; and others, seeing a difference in the views of their parents, are headstrong, and break away from all restraint. If there is no open disagreement, no perceptible outbreak, there is a want of that sweet union of feeling, that harmony and love, and perfect confidence, which renders the family circle a little heaven below. A family so constituted always reminds me of a yoke of oxen that will not draw together, one pulling one way, and the other another way. It is difficult for them to get along anyhow, and sometimes it requires a prodigious number of stripes and threats to get them along at all; or like a span of horses, one of which wishes to go any way but the right, and is constantly rearing, and backing, and kicking, and exhibiting such antics as to keep the traveller in constant expectation that if he gets to his journey's end, perchance without breaking his neck, it will, at least, be without any comfort or enjoyment, or real peace and satisfaction on the way."

Dr. Wilson—"Of course there are some such cases, but there are others where family matters seem to jog on about as well without religion in one of the parties, as with it in both."

Colman—"Depend upon it, though calm and unruffled as the surface may be, there is an under-current boiling and surging, and threatening the family peace and happiness, which the pious husband or wife, if they should speak the sincere breathing of their souls, would tell you was far from a blissful state of things. 'How can two walk together, except they be agreed?' If they do, it is generally in surly silence, not in such harmonious intercourse that their hearts burn within them as they talk. How is it in politics? Take two men who are deeply interested in opposite parties. Their only hope of peace is in holding their tongues, and conversing about everything else but the absorbing topics of their souls. So is it in religion. There must either be no religion at all in the parties, or, in all important points, they must agree, in order to have that free-and-easy and delightful interchange of sentiment and feeling which makes matrimony the dearest, sweetest state of society humanity knows."

"Well done, Colman," said the Doctor, laughing; "I don't see but you can go ahead like a steam-engine, in matrimony, religion, and everything else. I guess you'll come out of the hopper a pretty regular sort of a parson one of these days. But, for all that, I'm not convinced yet. There's Mrs. Slocom, one of the most pious of women, and her husband a confirmed infidel, and their little domestic bark moves on smoothly over the sea of life, without even a ripple on the surface; as smoothly as any of your missionaries, or even the Apostle Paul and Drusilla his wife, which the Bible tells of."

Colman laughed heartily at the Doctor's knowledge of Scripture, and begged him to "remember that Paul was an old bachelor, and that Drusilla was anybody but a Christian's wife."

Dr. Wilson—"Well, maybe I don't quote Scripture like a minister; but, at any rate, I, as a looker-on, do not see any real difficulty in the way that should deter a professor of religion from marrying an impenitent person."

Colman—"I would not wish any more evidence of the truth of my opinion than reading the face of that same friend of yours, Mrs. Slocom. I can read anything but perfect happiness and pure enjoyment in her furrowed features. I believe that in all respects but on the subject of religion they are united and harmonious; but I know, for I have heard her most intimate friends say, that her attachment for her husband is of the most ardent kind, and just in proportion to her love for him is her anxiety for his soul's welfare; and the fear that their separation at death may be eternal is sometimes so insupportable, as actually to confine her to her room for days. Then her children, although amiable and respectable in the eyes of the world, are regardless of religion; that is, her sons are, and they are also a source of extreme anxiety. No, Doctor, I do not believe a Christian can be truly happy in the connection, or really and constantly enjoy religion, when united for life with an irreligious companion. Then, look on the other side. What blessedness, when their hearts are one on all subjects, especially on the subject of eternal moment! Who can imagine the bliss of that friendship, where every thought and feeling is in unison? Where, instead of being retarded in preparation for usefulness here, and happiness hereafter, they are sweetly drawn on by influence and example to higher attainments in holiness, and a greater fitness for Heaven—this life being only the prelude to the eternity of bliss that awaits them."

CHAPTER XXIV.

MYSTERIOUS EVENTS.

REYNOLDS listened eagerly for Jerry's tap at the office-door, announcing the longed-for letter, and then went to the post-office the last minute before it closed, but no letter came. The next day was spent in similar anxious expectation, and so was the third. He then concluded to go over to Mrs. Marvin's to pass the evening, and ascertain what it all meant. It was possible the letter had not reached her; and yet how could that be? He put it into the office himself, and he knew Jerry always went for letters every day. Surely she would not keep him in suspense three days, especially if she knew his anxiety, which, if she loved him, she could easily imagine. Suspense was torture, misery intense, such as he never before had realised. She must have written, he thought; but why had he not received it?

Again he bent his steps to the beautiful residence of the late Dr. Marvin. Everything looked as bright as ever, only variegated by autumnal hues, as

he walked up the long avenue to the house. The birds sang in the old forest trees, and flowers bloomed along his pathway; the windows were closed, but the same air of comfort and happiness reigned about the place that always charmed him. But Reynolds's heart was out of tune, and Angeline's merry laugh, which he distinctly heard as he touched the bell, was anything but music to his ear. "She is happy," thought he, "while I am wretchedness itself; she can laugh and be merry while my heart aches with agony. How could she be gay and he so sad; it was heartless in her to laugh when he would fain cry. And yet," he continued, "if she has not received my letter, of course she cannot know my despair."

The servant ushered Reynolds into the parlour, and there sat Angeline, the picture of bliss and merriment, and beside her was Tom Sumner! The colour came and went in Reynolds's face so rapidly, and he himself was so constrained and embarrassed in his manners, that had they been in any other mood than one of the gayest excitement, it would have been an exceedingly painful meeting. But they did not seem to see or feel Reynolds's strange manner. Jealousy was burning like fire in his bosom, and his eyes glowed with such an intensity as almost to emit sparks, as he strove to reply civilly to Tom's inquiries.

With the utmost nonchalance, Angeline said to Mr. Reynolds that he "had been quite a stranger for several days; that she began to think he had cut her acquaintance."

"Well," replied he, in a tone of sadness, "if you really thought so, I am afraid it has caused you little sorrow, for you certainly look as blissful as an angel, as if no sorrow had ever yet crossed your path."

"O, well," replied she gaily, "I hoped, of course, that only a press of business or unavoidable engagements deprived us of your society so long. But really, Mr. Reynolds," continued she, looking at him earnestly, "you do not look as well as usual. Have you been ill?"

"Sure enough," added Sumner, with a mischievous air, "you look as if you were recovering from a fit of sickness. I thought you were always well, and the happiest man on record."

"That has always been my lot heretofore," replied Reynolds, "and I was not aware that I appeared otherwise now."

Just at this moment Julia called Tom to look at something, and as he rose to go, Mr. Reynolds turned to Angeline, and said in a low tone, "If my appearance is different from my usual one, you, Miss Lee, know very well the cause."

"I do not understand you, Mr. Reynolds," she replied.

"You are cruel," he answered, "to keep me so long waiting an answer to my letter."

Angeline—"What letter! I do not comprehend you at all."

Reynolds—"Have you not received a letter from me?"

"Not a word," replied Angeline honestly; "I have not received a line from your pen."

"That is strange," said Reynolds thoughtfully. "I wrote you three days ago."

Angeline—"I have received no letter, except from my father, during that time, and Jerry has been to the office every day."

Sumner and Julia at this instant joined them, and the colloquy ceased.

In vain did Reynolds watch for another opportunity to renew his inquiries or introduce the subject which absorbed every thought and feeling of his soul. He joined in the general conversation, but he knew not what he said. Never did he appear to so little advantage. He was absent-minded, asking the same question twice, and not hearing what was said by others to him,

unless repeated. And then he looked so forlorn, so wretched, that even Julia, mischievous as she was, pitied him. On the whole, however, she felt that he was learning a lesson he would never forget. How often had he awakened in others the same anxiety he now felt! How often had he inflicted upon others the same harrowing suspense that now tortured him! "As ye sow so shall ye reap." Those who sow deception and falsehood and cruelty in their love affairs, generally reap dissimulation, flirtations, and jilts in return. Turn where you will, you can see it in every-day life and in all circles. It seems to be a law of retribution that even he "who runs may read."

To complete Reynolds's discomfort and annoyance, Grenville called in to spend the evening, and as he passed around the group and grasped Reynolds's hand, his very look and manner seemed to say, most provokingly and triumphantly, "There, you see I shall win my bet." Reynolds could only look daggers at him, while he tried to smother within his bosom the bursting rage and jealousy that almost consumed him.

Had not Reynolds been a man who had never been thwarted in his plans, who had never been denied what his will craved, and who had always been able to triumph over every female heart he sought to conquer, his disappointment and vexation would not have been so uncontrollable. He had never yet seen the maiden that he could not marry, if he chose, as he thought. He had never sought to woo that he had not won; and as soon as he was beloved, his heart sighed for other conquests, totally regardless of the desolation and misery he spread in his path. He knew his power, and he used it, while many a heart sighed in utter silence and in the secrecy of its own depths, without being able to avenge the wrong. How utterly defenceless is a woman's heart! How contemptible and wicked the soul that would win it in mockery to throw away!

"I have heard," said Grenville, after a while, turning to Miss Lee, "I have heard some news about you."

"Have you indeed," replied Angeline, "what is it?"

Grenville—"I cannot tell. I presume it is a profound secret; it was told to me as such, and so I must keep it." He gave a sly glance at Reynolds.

"Well, now," said Sumner, "it is provoking to arouse our curiosity, and then refuse to gratify it. Suppose we all set to and guess it out," continued he, looking at Reynolds. "You shall have the first chance, Reynolds."

Grenville—"I cannot tell, even if you guess right. It will all come out in due time. It's a secret that will not need keeping more than two months, I reckon."

Angeline blushed excessively, and looked annoyed, yet joined in the laugh. Tom and Julia looked too as if he had flashed light enough upon them to reveal it, and they laughed and did not say anything. Reynolds was in agony as he saw the matter was to die away without any explanation. It was fresh fuel to the flame that was already burning like a volcano. His curiosity was so roused that he could not hold his tongue. "Is it a secret that involves any but herself?" asked he.

"O yes, I can tell as much as that," replied Grenville. "It involves several, and will be the destruction of some that I know."

Reynolds wished he had kept still, for Grenville's look troubled him, and made him feel worse than he did before.

Tom Sumner seemed to want to change the subject, for he said, "Well, Grenville, now tell us something about this queer kind of a Frenchman with his new doctrines, that is setting the girls in the academy 'all by the ears,' and stirring up a hornet's nest in his own family."

Grenville confessed that he knew nothing about that, and begged Tom to

enlighten them. But Tom did not know enough to make out a very intelligible story. He had only heard that the French teacher had avowed some very strange notions, and that the girls were half of them in a sort of bewitchment, and had sent some of their number privately down to Lynn, post-haste, to consult old Moll Pitcher, the fortune-teller, and that strange noises were heard in the seminary, and tables walked about without hands, and chairs danced jigs; and sundry other phenomena, which had never been heard of before in the old Puritanic town of C——, were being exhibited, and had caused no little disturbance and distress among other teachers. He said he believed Mr. May was a good deal alarmed, and Deacon Brown was afraid the devil had actually come to town to make his head-quarters in the academy.

Julia said she had heard they had some very curious experiments tried by this same French teacher—that the Professor was a believer in mesmerism, and had put several of the girls to sleep, and they could not wake up till he chose, and if he willed that they should stand still, they could not move, and if they stretched out their hands, they could not drop them without his leave. "He believes, also," continued she, "in holding communication with the spirits of the dead, and has already found several 'mediums,' as he calls them, in the academy. The introduction of these theories, which he has imported from the Continent, and of which New England has known little as yet, is really doing immense harm among the young people, and bids fair to break up the academy."

CHAPTER XXV.

THE SOUL-MATE.

SOME weeks after the events of the last chapter, Maria Sumner and Anna, with Sarah Sanborn, their cousin, who was on a visit, were engaged in a most deeply interesting conversation in Aunt Esther's chamber at Sumner Place. Aunt Esther's room was a sort of "sanctum sanctorum" to the girls—a refuge in all their troubles, and a resort when in any kind of quandary or dilemma. Aunt Esther herself was an oracle that was always consulted on occasions of interest, doubt, or difficulty; and the group, that were now absorbed in some most interesting account from the lips of Maria, would have been a study for a painter. All three of the girls were seated around Aunt Esther, who had dropped her knitting in her eagerness to listen, had taken off her specs, and actually untied her cap-strings, as if she doubted whether her ears were reporting Maria's talk faithfully. Indignation and astonishment were strongly depicted in her countenance. Anna's arm leaned on Aunt Esther, as she sat on a low chair beside her, and she turned occasionally with a look of wonder from Maria to her aunt, as if to read her opinion. On Sarah Sanborn's honest, amiable face were impressed emotions of pity and shame. Maria's features were in a perfect glow of excitement from the narrative she was relating. She was speaking of Miss Farley, one of the teachers in the academy. She had stated a fact, of which she now commenced the particulars. I will relate it, as nearly as I can recollect, in her own words. "I do not know how Miss Farley happened to go to Professor La Fontaine's to board, but one other lady-teacher and several of the pupils were there also. She says he was always talking about mesmerism and clairvoyance and the odic force, some of the strange foreign theories in which he believes. He mesmerised Miss Farley, till, finally, she seemed to obey his will rather than

her own. If he ooked at her steadily for any length of time, she would gradually fall into a mesmeric sleep, from which no one but himself could awaken her. She told me that he exercised a power over her that was irresistible, and that made her actually shun his presence. Sometimes, when she raised her arm she could not move it again, if he was in the room, and she found, by his smiling, that he knew the cause. In fact, he told her that he did not choose she should move it."

"Why, I'm afraid," said Aunt Esther, solemnly, "that he is the devil himself."

"I would as soon be with the devil," added Sarah, "as to stay where he was. Why did she remain in the family?"

Maria—"Why, he charmed her like a snake. She became deeply interested in the theories he advanced, and in the experiments he performed, and she felt she was acquiring knowledge that was as desirable as it was strange; besides, she was very much interested in Mrs. La Fontaine, who is a very lovely and amiable lady. You know Miss Farley is one of those credulous, enthusiastic persons, that can be easily infatuated, and would run after a jack-o'-lantern about as quick if she knew it would lead her into a swamp, as if it did not, just for the novelty of the thing. She never thinks about consequences. She has more sensibility than sense, as is the case with some ladies; can take up any new thing, and run away from reason and common sense, just as well as if she had not been deceived and befooled a thousand times before. She can go off into hysterics on all important occasions, and faint away simply when that will answer her purpose as well, and awaken as much sympathy as she deems necessary for the time being. After a while, Miss Farley began to believe in consulting the spirits of the departed, and she has now become a medium.

"One day, she said, she was sitting in the parlour reading, and the Professor came and sat down by her. He looked pale and agitated. 'You know, Miss Farley,' said he, 'that everybody has a soul-mate, don't you?' Miss Farley did not know it before, but she was prepared to believe anything that Professor L. advanced.

"*Prof. La Fontaine*—'Well, everybody has. I did not know it when I became engaged to my wife; but a few months after, I found my soul-mate for the first time—the beautiful Alice P. I knew it—I felt it in my inmost soul. I found I did not love my betrothed at all, and told her so, and begged to be released from my engagement. But she would not release me; neither would her father. I told her frankly that I had found my soul-mate, and could be happy with no other, and that, if I wedded her, she would have my hand without my heart. But it was all of no avail. I was perfectly wretched, and put off my marriage. Soon after, Alice died, and I then married; but I have never loved my wife, and she knows it. Well, now, Miss Farley, I have hesitated about telling you what I am going to say, but I shall die if I don't, so you must excuse me. You look exactly like Alice P., and it has been revealed to me by the spirits, that you are my soul-mate.'"

Here Aunt Esther's eyes flashed fire, and she involuntarily clutched her parasol, that stood by her in the corner. Anna lifted up both hands, exclaiming, "Mercy, Aunt Esther, I hope you are not going to thrash me!" This set the girls into a broad laugh, and Aunt Esther smiled when she found her arm raised, but she declared she wished she could get at that villain of a Professor. "Did Miss Farley sit still and hear such rigmarole from a married man?" she exclaimed. "Yes," answered Maria; "she said she was half frightened out of her wits—she did not know what to do, and she does not think she could have moved, if she had tried."

"It is horrid," said Aunt Esther, drawing a sigh; "I don't want you to tell me any more, Maria."

Maria—"Oh yes, Aunt Esther, you must hear me through, because I want to ask your opinion about something."

"Well," replied Aunt Esther, throwing herself back in her chair resignedly.

"And did not Miss Farley say anything to La Fontaine? Did she allow him to go on?" saked Sarah.

Maria—"She said she was looking on the floor and could neither speak nor move."

"Nonsense," exclaimed Aunt Esther, "she ought to have looked him into annihilation, if he had mesmerised her so she could not leave the room."

Maria—"He went on to tell her how wretched this discovery had made him, that he tried to forget her, not to think of her, but he could not banish her from his thought; that his only consolation was, they should be mated in heaven, if not here.

"Miss Farley after a while recovered the use of her tongue, and reproved him for such a declaration. She told him 'it was improper and wicked; he should have kept it to himself and dismissed it.'

"He 'begged her pardon for the disclosure, but he did it to alleviate his wretchedness. He had told his wife,' he said; 'she knew it all.'

"Miss Farley then told him seriously 'never to mention such a subject to her again, to banish her from his thoughts, and to conquer his feelings.'"

"Did she not leave the house at once?" inquired Aunt Esther.

"No, she stayed some weeks, and then left; but she has brooded over what he has said, till she is half crazy. She has consulted a medium, and the spirit of the departed soul-mate has been called up, and asked if she will ever be mated in this life, and Alice's spirit has replied, she will be in five years."

"I am shocked beyond measure," said Aunt Esther, "that such things should be countenanced, and transpire under our eyes in this Christian land and among cultivated people. You have made me heart-sick, Maria."

Maria—"I have not told you all yet. She has been down to Lynn to see Moll Pitcher and have her fortune told, and Moll says, she will be married in a few years, and that her future husband will be a widower, and that he loves her now. All this together has almost upset Miss Farley, and I do think she fully believes it will come to pass, so she begins to like him because she is fated to, and actually receives letters from him twice a-week and answers them, so completely has she become infatuated. She calls their regard for each other 'Platonic love.'"

"Platonic deviltry, more like," said Aunt Esther, contemptuously.

Sarah—"Do you suppose he knows what the spirit has revealed, and what Moll Pitcher has prophesied?"

Maria—"Yes, for he was present when the revelation was made through 'the medium.' And I guess they expect Mrs. La Fontaine will die before the five years are out."

Aunt Esther—"They will kill her, I dare say."

Anna—"Why, aunt, you frighten me."

Aunt Esther—"If the devil has led them on so far, it is not likely he will leave them yet. Both of them ought to be turned out of the academy. Such people are not fit to be the educators of young minds."

Maria—"Miss Farley is going to leave of her own accord, and go to Boston. She says she is so unhappy she cannot stay here. I should not wonder,

at all, if her mind should soon become so unhinged and bewildered, that she would have to go to an insane asylum."

Anna—"Well, what good, after all, are these sciences or theories, or whatever you call them, doing?"

Maria—"I don't see that they do any. I believe they are doing immense evil in the academy. The girls are getting their heads full of nonsense, and sighing after soul-mates, and getting notions into their heads, that will disqualify them for this life, and I don't know but the next too, besides injuring their constitutions by being mesmerised so frequently."

Sarah—"Do you suppose, really, that Mrs. La Fontaine knows about this?"

Maria—"Yes, her husband has told her that Miss Farley is his soul-mate, and that it has been revealed to him. But it is said, she declares that she won't die, and they must mate in the other world, if they do anywhere."

Anna—"Don't you think it is wrong to consult fortune-tellers?"

Aunt Esther—"Yes, undoubtedly. The Scriptures say so. I know of cases, myself, where it has been the ruin of those who have done it. I know of one young lady, who declined a very advantageous offer of marriage, because Moll Pitcher told her, that her future husband would have red hair, and this man had black hair; and so she waited, and married the first red-headed scamp that came along, and had to court him at that, so as to accomplish her destiny. She finally died in the poor-house. I should expect the curse of God to settle down upon me, if I went near a fortune-teller."

Maria—"Don't you think, Aunt Esther, Mr. May ought to preach against some of these delusions, when so many heads are being turned? Don't you think he might prevent some of the young people from listening to such things?"

Aunt Esther said she did, and she went down that day and asked Mr. May to preach from the text—"Giving heed to doctrines of devils," &c.

He did so, accordingly, on the following Sunday.

CHAPTER XXVI.

ANOTHER REFUSAL.

"O DEAR," said Sarah Sanborn, one day, as she came in from a walk, which she had taken alone to town to see Angeline, "I am caught at last, and what shall I do?"

"Caught! how?" exclaimed Maria, eagerly.

Sarah—"Why, you know I have avoided Mr. Bancroft these six weeks, lest he should have an opportunity to make proposals of marriage. I cannot possibly marry him, and I had hoped he would have saved himself, and me too, the pain of an interview. He met me on the common this afternoon, and said he should leave town to-morrow, and must see and converse with me for half an hour; he wished me to name the time. So I have appointed eleven o'clock to-morrow to receive him here. Oh, how I dread it!"

"Why, cousin," said Anna, "I do not see why you cannot marry him! He is a handsome, gay young merchant, of good family, and everybody speaks well of him."

"I cannot, I must not, and it will be as painful to me to say no, as for

him to hear it," replied Sarah, as she went to her chamber to take off her things.

Precisely at eleven, the next day, the lover came. He inquired only for Miss Sanborn, and they spent an hour in the parlour alone.

As soon as he had gone, and Sarah had retired to her room, the girls hastened in to hear about the matter. She was seated in a low chair, and her eyes were red with weeping. The girls knelt down before her in true girlish fashion, and looking like earnest worshippers at the shrine of a favourite divinity, they begged her to tell them all about the interview.

"I hope you altered your mind, Sarah, dear," said Anna, gaily, "and sent him off as happy as a king."

Sarah—"No, I did not. I could not possibly do it. I said no, gently as possible, and could not help crying all the time he was here."

Anna—"How could you be so cruel as to say no, Sarah? What good reason could you give for refusing him? If forty of them should come to me, and tell me they loved me better than all the world beside, and ask me to marry them, I would say yes to every one of them."

Maria boxed her ears, and told her she was a great goose.

Sarah—"I did not give him my reason for my refusal; it was a reason I could not tell him."

"Well, tell us all he said,—do," said Anna.

Sarah—"He told me he had regarded me with interest and affection ever since our first acquaintance; and that, although he never could assure himself from my reception of his civilities, from my looks or manner in any respect, that his love was returned, still he could not give up all hope that he might be accepted. When I told him that I could never regard him in any other light than that of friendship, he turned pale, and was silent for some moments. He was not angry, and said finally he was not much surprised at my decision. He supposed he ought to have inferred it from my conduct. He was aware that I had never given him any encouragement by look or action, and he had sometimes thought I avoided him—still he was not sure. He said he would rather leave C—— with a positive refusal, than a lingering hope that I might have been induced to marry him if he had offered himself. He parted from me, not in anger, but in sorrow, while I assured him of my esteem and continued friendship. Oh, what an hour of suffering I endured! And yet the gentlemen pretend they think we rejoice in our conquests, and take pleasure in their rejection. I would not wish the greatest enemy I have in the world a more acute agony than this refusal has cost me."

Anna—"I am dying to know your reason for refusing a man, while you suffer so much on his account."

Sarah—"Well, my reason is, that he belongs to a consumptive family, and that he will probably die of consumption before he is thirty, as every one of his family have done before him. Of course I could not give him the reason. It is his misfortune, not his fault."

Anna never looked ahead further than the next moment, and she lifted up her hands in utter astonishment at refusing to marry a man for such a reason.

"Pray, do you expect to get a husband that will live for ever?" she exclaimed.

"Well," said Sarah, laughing, "I am descended from a long-lived race myself. One of my grandfathers lived to be more than a hundred years old, and my grandmother on the other side of the house lived to the age of ninety-nine years. So I expect, in the common course of events, to live to a good old age myself. Now, would it not be a piece of folly and thoughtlessness in me

to marry a man with whom I could not reasonably expect to live more than five years? And I have scarce a doubt that, in five years from the present day, Mr. Bancroft will be in his grave. Now, mark my words—I think when a young lady selects a partner for life, one of her first subjects of inquiry should be in regard to his constitution and his health. If he belongs to a scrofulous, cancerous, consumptive, or deranged family, does she give evidence of wisdom or prudence in her choice, if she marries one who she knows must be an invalid himself always, and entail upon his posterity diseases which will always be a source of sorrow, and distress, and premature death? No, I think a woman who marries without regard to health is foolish in the extreme; and a man who marries a sickly, diseased wife, whom he might know, if he would give the subject a thought, that he should have to carry in his arms to the grave, or be annoyed with a peevish, histericky, helpless companion, and a set of puny, whining, fretful children, gives little evidence of good sense or good judgment."

Anna—"Well, of all the young calculating, scheming Yankees I ever met with, I think you are the queen. Why, I never should have thought of such a thing. I never should ask a man what his father or mother died of, or whether they were dead at all. If I loved him, I would marry him, and let the Lord take us all in His own good time to Himself, and let Him take care of our posterity, if we had any. I don't think we have any business to meddle with futurity, or that it is any mark of wisdom to be all the time contriving to upset the great schemes and plans of the Maker of us all. For my part, I expect my husband, that is to be, is somewhere in the world, and at the appointed time he will come along and claim me as his wife, and I shall say yes, and go with him wherever he takes me, nothing doubting, and ask no questions for conscience' sake."

Sarah—"Yes, that was the way Ellen Robbins did. If she had looked into matters a little more, and taken less upon trust, I guess it would have been better all round. As I do not expect ever to be married but once, I intend to look out sharp, and get a good husband the first time. I mean, he shall have good health, good morals, good sense, and a good business of some sort or other, and belong to a good family. By that, I do not mean an aristocratic or wealthy family. I care nothing about rank or money. If I find a man whose parents were respectable, honest, upright, and of strict integrity, with the other qualifications, I shall not pause upon minor points. Whether he has black hair or red, is slim or stout, wears whiskers or not, carries a cane and wears gloves, or puts his hands in his pockets, provided he holds his head up straight, and knows what he is about, will be matters of small moment when I take the great question into consideration."

"Well, what of tobacco?" added Anna, gaily.

"Oh, la!" said Sarah, "I almost forgot that. He must not chew, or smoke, or snuff. I never could kiss him, if I loved him ever so much, if he chewed; and if he was always spitting about on my carpets, I should die of a galloping consumption in six weeks. I feel as Paul did about charity. He says, 'Though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.' So I say, if my intended had all the qualifications of health, morality, good sense, and industry—if he had houses, and lands, and titles, and great expectations from wealthy relations when they were dead and gone, it would all avail nothing with me, if he used tobacco!"

Anna—"I guess you will have to wait some time before you will find all

you desire. Most likely you will have to embrace some of Professor La Fontaine's spiritual theories, and wait till you can mate with Gabriel or some of those distinguished characters in the better land."

Sarah—"I am in no hurry to be married. I can wait very patiently. There are other spheres of happiness and usefulness in the world besides the married life. I have a good home and kind friends—every earthly comfort and enjoyment I crave. I am well off, and know it, and I never intend to change my situation till I can move into a better one."

Anna—"What would you do if you married a man who should become sickly, and develop some terrible malady, that could not have been foreseen? Worry yourself to death because you had married him?"

Sarah—"Oh, no, of course not; I would nurse him most kindly and faithfully, and with true resignation. Having made all inquiries, and satisfied myself as far as possible that, by prudent forethought, I had not omitted any arrangement that could tend to my happiness, or knowingly rushed into any calamity that would embitter my life, I should sit down quietly, waiting the developments of Providence, and take all He chose to send upon me in a humble and quiet spirit, I hope. But I would not do as you would, run blind-fold into a situation where every day's developments would startle me, and awaken anguish at the thought, that I might have known and prevented my troubles by a little wise and prudent forethought."

CHAPTER XXVII.

MISCHIEF-MAKING.

BARLOW'S friend, Johnson, had removed to C—— about the time he went to Europe, and taken possession of his office and attended to his business. Being a young man of fine talents, of irreproachable character, and of pleasing manners, he soon rendered himself extremely popular, especially among the young ladies in town. He was not a lady's man by any means, for he was very cautious in his attentions, but he was so social and interesting in conversation, as well as sensible, that he soon became a great favourite. A smile from him was more valued among the ladies than a whole galaxy of the most pointed compliments from most men, and an approving glance of his eye sank deeper into the hearts of most of his female friends, than all the admiration and adulation that emanated from others. Johnson had made up his mind to become a married man as soon as he could suit himself to a wife, and his eyes wandered over the lovely group of girls in C——, with the deepest and severest scrutiny. The ladies in the academy, even, did not escape the ordeal. His choice finally centred on Miss Sinclair; and, so quiet and unobtrusive were all his movements and arrangements in the matter, that, before even rumour had time to gossip, the village was startled by the fact that Mr. Johnson and Miss Sinclair were positively engaged. Mr. Johnson found in Miss Sinclair a most lovely and amiable girl, for whom every day's acquaintance deepened his interest and attachment, and she found in him just what her heart craved—one whom she could love and admire, respect and esteem. Every day brought fresh happiness to her once desolate heart. The void was filled; earth became bright and beautiful as in her mother's days, and life had a charm. She had never told Mr. Johnson of her former engagement to Mr. Seaver, and of the circumstances and reasons of its abrupt termination. It would have been better if she had. But she did not think it necessary. It is always best to disclose all such previous

heart-affairs frankly, at first. It promotes mutual confidence, and prevents often the most unfortunate and fatal misunderstanding and distrust. Seaver's refusal to give up her former letters had been a source of constant annoyance and grief to her at the outset. His want of generosity and his obstinacy in the affair, had awakened apprehensions that sometimes preyed upon her mind. It was so provoking and so ungentlemanly, when she had returned to him every line from his pen! Not that she had written anything she really had reason to regret, but many of her letters were the effusion of her girlish, almost childish days. She scarcely knew what they contained. They were written for one who, she supposed at the time, regarded her with unalterable affection, and, now she was convinced he had no true regard for her, they could have no value for him; and, as long as they were not the transcript of her mind now, and wore not the impress of her present emotions, she would gladly commit them to the flames. She determined no longer to rest without them. They truly belonged to her, and, if he had not destroyed them, should be restored to her possession. Immediately after her engagement she wrote a letter to Mr. Seaver, simply containing a brief but respectful demand of all the letters she had ever written him. The note was dropped into the office and was received, but days passed, and it called forth no reply. After waiting till her patience was exhausted, she wrote to Seaver again, repeating her demand, and simply adding a merited reproach for his former inattention to her reasonable and just request. This letter met with the same fate as the former—was not noticed. Meantime Mr. Johnson was making all necessary arrangements for the proposed union. Miss Sinclair looked forward to it with all the quiet delight of her trusting, affectionate nature. There was but one dark spot in her horizon. That bundle of letters would often float before her, and cloud the future ominously. She often wished she had talked with Mr. Johnson about this ill-starred engagement, and about Seaver's ungenerous conduct in regard to her letters; sometimes she resolved she would do it, and then she forgot it, or waited for a more convenient opportunity, and time sped on without the intended revelation. Johnson had made arrangements to build a fine house, as a cage for his beautiful bird. The contract was signed, the lot paid for, and the materials were all collecting on the proposed site.

As Johnson sat one day in his office contrasting his own bright and happy future with the clouded prospect of his friend Barlow, from whom he had just received a letter, his reverie was disturbed by the entrance of Seaver, who called on a little business.

Mr. Johnson knew him very slightly. When their business was completed, Seaver mentioned that he had understood he was expecting shortly to marry Miss Sinclair. Mr. Johnson was not pleased with the manner of his allusion to the fact, and felt that a stranger had no business to meddle with his private affairs, and therefore made no reply to his remark.

Seaver—"Perhaps you are not aware that she is already engaged to another person."

This roused Johnson's attention, and he asked him for an explanation.

"I mean," said Seaver, "that she is engaged to me, and has been ever since she was fifteen years of age. All this I can prove, and have never released her from it."

Johnson coloured, but looked incredulous.

"I see you doubt my word," exclaimed Mr. Seaver, "but, nevertheless, I am stating the truth, and I can produce a bushel of letters or less, that will prove to you that she voluntarily affianced herself to me, and that, if there is any truth in woman, her heart is wholly and for ever mine. Did she never speak of me?"

Johnson—"Never. I am at a loss how to understand you."

Seaver—"Well, I can assure you, Sir, that if you marry that girl, you get her hand and her fortune, and not her heart. And a wife without a heart, I reckon, would not be worth having."

Mr. Johnson was puzzled and annoyed excessively, but he could not believe Miss Sinclair was false-hearted and deceitful. He was slow to believe that her candid, frank manner, covered a treacherous heart.

"Well, your statements are certainly very remarkable," exclaimed Mr. Johnson, "and are somewhat perplexing, I allow. I will endeavour to gain an explanation of the matter from Miss Sinclair to-day. I certainly shall not marry a woman without a heart, nor a woman that will deceive me so grossly as you would insinuate she has done. If she had been formerly engaged to you, and had dismissed you, the matter would wear a different aspect. But you say you have her letters, and that you are still engaged; if you can prove this"—

Seaver—"She corresponds with me now. What do you say to that?"

Johnson (reddening violently)—"I do not believe it; I do not believe she has written to you for several months at least. Further than that, I will not say till I know more."

"Well, Sir," said Seaver, drawing a letter from his pocket and holding it up, "do you know that handwriting? Do you believe now? That letter was written four weeks ago."

Johnson recognised the handwriting, and was filled with agony. He did not say a word. Seaver returned the letter to his pocket, and, waiting a moment, he drew out yet another, which he placed before him, and, with the most provoking coolness, said, "This one I received from her yesterday." Johnson turned deadly pale, as he glanced at the well-known and beautiful writing of Catherine, which he had often so much admired. He attempted to take the letter, but Seaver, hastily, and with a determined air, withdrew it, and put it in his pocket-book. "I cannot let you read it," said he, "but I felt it my duty to let you know that I have claims on Miss Sinclair still, and I thought that, perhaps, you were not aware she still corresponded with me. Are you satisfied that it is her handwriting? If you are not, I am ready to swear to it."

"It is her handwriting," said Johnson, quietly.

"Well," said Seaver, after a pause, "I've done my duty. I have told you how matters stand. And I can assure you, most solemnly, that if you ever obtain her hand in marriage, her heart will be mine still. I was her first love. She loved me ardently and truly, and she never can make any other man happy." With that, he stepped out of the office, and closed the door after him.

It would be vain for me to attempt to describe the mingled emotions that took possession of Johnson's heart. One hour before, Catherine was the idol of his soul, the centre around which clustered all his thoughts; his love for her was the mainspring of his actions and the object of his plans. Now, he thought of her with anger, with distrust, with contempt, and indignation. Had it not been for the letters, the handwriting of which he knew perfectly well, he would at least have given her a chance to explain and defend herself; but he was satisfied of her treachery, and he concluded he could not trust himself in her presence. He could not restrain his expressions of horror and indignation at her disingenuous treatment of him, he feared, and should say what would be unworthy of him and what he might regret. So he concluded to write to her, and never again to see or speak to her, who was the cause of such disappointment and mortification. He sat down and wrote her such a letter as filled her with perfect astonishment. She read again and

again the first page, without being able to comprehend its meaning. Was he crazy? She read on, and, finally, when he assured her he was aware of her continuing a correspondence with Seaver, and fully understood her false-heartedness and perfidy, she surmised that, in some way, Seaver had been making an ungenerous use of her former engagement; and, fully believing that she could at once disabuse his mind of his error, she wrote him a long, faithful and candid account of her engagement to Seaver; of his provoking and heartless treatment of her; and explained that, for months, no letters had been written by her to him, except those in which she had demanded her former letters. This she hastily despatched. It was returned to her the next day, unopened. She then sent him a verbal message, requesting an interview. He positively declined it. Chagrined, and mortified, and grieved almost beyond endurance, she had no alternative, but to treasure up this fresh calamity among the garnered sorrows of other years, and the singular developments of her sad destiny. She buried it in the darkness and silence of her bursting heart.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

IMPRUDENCES.

"I SHALL have a serious talk with Amelia Randolph when she comes here on Thursday," said Aunt Esther to the girls, as they sat sewing one day in her chamber. "She ought to know what occasion she gives for severe remark by her imprudent conduct, especially her frequent walks and rides with Mr. Seymour. She has received his attentions for two years; he is wealthy, and, if he intended to marry her, would have done so long ago, in my opinion. Every lady should be extremely careful that her conduct should not give occasion for censure; but a young lady like herself, without friends or fortune, has nothing but her character to build her hopes for the future upon—and she should cherish it as a pearl of great price."

Anna—"She has beauty and talent, as well as an irreproachable character."

Aunt Esther—"Beauty and talent are both dangerous attractions in a young lady left alone, and dependent upon her own exertions. It is because she is so lovely, so beautiful and impulsive, that I feel so anxious about her. If she had been brought up under the control of a judicious mother, she would not exhibit such a want of propriety in her conduct as she often does, by her giggling, boisterous, and hoydenish manners; there is a lack of that intuitive sense of what is right and expedient, and becoming; the natural consequences of being left in childhood without a monitor or guide, that alarms me for her."

Miss Randolph was a teacher in the Academy. She was left, in early life, with a friend of her mother, and the little that was bequeathed her, had all been expended in her early support and qualification as a teacher, especially of music. She was an accomplished and a truly beautiful woman; but she was giddy, reckless, and imprudent, and had almost lost caste among the soberer inhabitants of C—— by her thoughtlessness and folly.

Aunt Esther improved an early opportunity after dinner, on the day to which I have alluded, to draw her aside for a private interview. She took her into her own chamber, and told her she had long been wishing to see her

alone, and have a little friendly chat with her upon her own private affairs. "I suppose you have no objection," added Aunt Esther, "for you know I always take a special interest in all the motherless ones."

Amelia assured her she should be happy to have a confidential interview with her. "I feel that I need advice and council often, and really would feel obliged for your opinion on some things," said she.

Aunt Esther then told her she had "felt considerably annoyed at the remarks afloat about her long and intimate acquaintance with Mr. Seymour, knowing, as she did, that he denied there was any engagement between them. I think you cannot be too careful about receiving his attentions. I advise you to decline them, hereafter, altogether."

Amelia—"How can I tell him I cannot receive his calls?"

Aunt Esther—"You need not do that; you can decline these late evening walks, that cause so many remarks, and refuse to ride with him. You can decline his presents of jewellery and fanciful ornaments. All this you can do without being impolite or giving any just cause of offence. If I were a young lady, I would not receive costly gifts and gew-gaws from any man to whom I was not engaged. It is not proper. You lay yourself under obligations, by receiving such things, which it is out of your power to cancel. You cannot be so independent in your treatment of gentlemen, either, as if you were indebted for no favours. And where a young lady's fingers are adorned with rings received from this one, and that one, and the other, and she appears every day with a new set of ear-rings, or a new breast-pin, people, who know she has not the means to purchase them, will be inquisitive enough to wonder where they came from; and when they ascertain that they were presents from gentlemen, they will make ill-natured remarks."

Amelia—"I believe, Aunt Esther, you are more than half right; I often feel embarrassed and perplexed when I receive such costly gifts, but they are so temptingly beautiful and dazzling, and are presented often with such gracefulness and such perfect good-will, that I cannot resist the desire to possess them; yet, I confess, I have often been annoyed by the obligations I have felt to treat their donors with more attention and civility than my heart inclined to yield them."

Aunt Esther—"Well, dear, take my advice, and never receive anything more of the kind from any man you are not willing to marry."

Amelia—"I will do as you say. In regard to Mr. Seymour, I will tell you precisely how matters stand, and shall be heartily glad of advice in regard to him. His attentions have been particular and unremitting for two years. He often expresses the greatest admiration of my person, of my talents, and acquirements. His compliments and flattery are sometimes profuse. He seems to feel the greatest sympathy and interest in my friendless, lonely lot. He has often expressed the most exalted and strongest friendship for me. He has often alluded to matrimony as desirable, and assured me that he had lived a bachelor too long; but he never asked me to marry him. Yet he visits me constantly, and as if he had a right to. He knows that I am dependent on my own exertions for every penny I spend, and that, were I deprived of my health, I should be penniless, and suffer, actually, if charity did not provide for me, and I have often thought if he intended marriage, he would certainly make proposals at once on this account, at least; but he does no such thing. He knows that his constant and peculiar attentions must prevent me from receiving an offer from any one else; but he does not seem to think of it, or if so, he does not care. He often asks me to walk with him by moonlight, and ride with him; but he never invites me to go with him to parties, or takes me to any picnics, or

other public gatherings. These civilities he reserves for other ladies. This fact has been a puzzle that I cannot solve, a riddle that I cannot read. I know not how to treat him sometimes."

Aunt Esther—"It would not take me long to decide upon the course I should pursue. I should ship him at once—give him his walking papers in a language he could easily decipher. I have no patience with men who are so ungenerous and ambiguous, and entirely indifferent to a lady's interest. You can keep out of his way, surely."

Amelia—"If I disliked him, I could easily rid myself of his company, I dare say; but I will confess to you that I prefer him to any other gentleman of my acquaintance, and therefore I cannot make up my mind to be uncivil or unkind, or cast him off altogether. Besides, strange and unaccountable as his conduct is, he says so many strange things that I am unable to account for, on any other supposition than an attachment, which, from some inexplicable reason that I cannot divine, he seems not yet prepared to avow, that I have permitted his visits and accepted his gifts, because I have supposed the declaration would eventually come."

Aunt Esther—"For your own sake, Amelia, I would hesitate no longer. I would not be trifled with. His character is not above reproach, I am told; and though rumour does not always speak the truth, it behoves you to look out for yourself; and, losing sight entirely of all regard to his feelings, or the dictates of civility even, to break off at once all cause for gossip by withdrawing yourself quietly from his notice, and declining all those demonstrations on his part which subject your conduct to the animadversion of others. How can he wish to see you happy, and feel the tender regard for your interest, which a man who intends to marry will evince for the lady of his choice, and see you toil for your daily bread, as you do, while he lives in luxury and ease, having a superfluity of this world's goods! I distrust his motives altogether, and I say again, I would not be trifled with, nor would I allow rumour to trifle with me; and therefore, I think I should avoid him altogether."

Amelia—"But suppose he intends, at some future time, to make a proposal of marriage, and it may be that he has sufficient reasons for delay, I might, by the course you suggest, alienate his affections and alter his purpose."

Aunt Esther—"I see no reason why, if his determination is made to marry you at all, he should delay to secure your consent for some future period now. Then all would be right. Your mind would be settled, and your plans made. This everlasting courting, without any mutual understanding, is harassing and improper every way. As to his being prevented from a declaration, if he intended to make one, I do not think it would operate that way at all. Gentlemen are not easily discouraged in their matrimonial intentions. If he is a reasonable man, he would be led to see that he had been dealing unfairly with you, and would be reminded that, if he intended to secure you, he must be prompt and take measures immediately. I think it would be the surest and most expeditious way of bringing him to an explanation. If any other motive than a desire to marry you has prompted his attentions, why, the quicker you drop his acquaintance the better, don't you see?"

Amelia could not see the matter in the light in which Aunt Esther viewed it. It was evident that Seymour had won her heart, and that she was loath to give him up.

CHAPTER XXIX.

ANOTHER PARTY—STRANGE DOINGS.

ABOUT this time, Julia Marvin, in compliment to her city guest, and her other friend, Miss Sanborn, who was visiting at General Sumner's, gave a great party. Everybody in town was there, and a few choice spirits from the neighbouring villages. It was a perfect jam. All Julia's acquaintances were invited, without discrimination of character or distinction of rank. Several gentlemen were present, who, from their known abandoned character, had no right to be received into respectable society. Among these were a Mr. Welbourne and a Mr. Irving. But Julia did, as many other ladies do—most unaccountably invited some of whose acquaintance she was ashamed, and of whom she had a most contemptuous opinion, for no other reason than because others did so, and she had not the moral courage and independence to make a selection, and run the risk of offending some whom she occasionally met at other places. If the vile are received into the society of ladies on the same terms, and as unhesitatingly as the virtuous, what can they think? Certainly not as they should be made to feel, that their vices degrade them, and that, if they would preserve a foot-hold in respectable society, they must conduct themselves so as to deserve it. So long as the drunkard, the debauchee, and the gambler, are honoured with the same notice, and welcomed with the same sweet smiles and honeyed words by the ladies as those who are irreproachably correct, so long will vice stalk abroad in our midst unblushingly, and man will "smile, and smile, and be a villain still." But when ladies discard the society and acquaintance of those who are known to be profligate, and avoid them as they would shun the plague, so pointedly and unequivocally as to make them understand the cause, there will be a reform, and not till then. What lady would admit a vicious woman to her select parties? And how many men, not only of doubtful character, but of known immorality, does she honour with an invitation to visit her? Why should there be a difference?

Reynolds was there, doing his best to show off to his friends the sway he held over Miss Lee. His devotions were extraordinary, and her reception of his gallantries all that he could desire; of course he was triumphant and happy. He followed her like a shadow, or led her about like a bride. Every now and then he cast a triumphant glance at Grenville, as much as to say, "I hope you are satisfied how the case stands now;" but Grenville stood with his arms folded, and returned his look with such a defiant glance and such a provoking smile, as seemed to say, "I know more than you after all." Reynolds could not ask more of Miss Lee than the smiles and graceful reception of his attentions she saw fit to bestow. She seemed to hang with delight upon every word, and while perfectly civil and courteous to every one else, reserved her peculiar devotions for him. He hoped to find a favourable moment to seek and receive the explanation he desired about his letter, and perhaps to settle the great question on the spot. Elated with hope, and happy in his prospects, he began to have more gracious words and looks to bestow on others; and while Angeline was politely chatting with a spruce widower, he ventured to leave her for a few moments to wander about and act the agreeable to other ladies. During his ramble, some lady presented him with a superb bouquet. With this he retired to a corner near Angeline, where he could watch her movements, and keep an eye on Tom Sumner, who seemed hovering about as if intent on mischief. After untying his bouquet, and arranging it to suit his feelings and wishes, reserving for himself those flowers which were

not necessary to the expression of his sentiments, and leaving only those which were a type of the most ardent, undying love and devotion, he stepped forward and presented them, silently and gracefully, to Miss Lee. She received them with smiles of approbation and delight, and he sallied off till she was disengaged again. While in conversation, a few moments after, with a group of ladies, what was his dismay at seeing Tom Sumner saunter near him, purposely to excite his attention, with the identical bouquet in his hand which he had just presented to Miss Lee. This completely upset him. Had Angeline given that away? And given it, too, to the man of all others he hated most? The thought tormented him, and he hastened back to ascertain the truth.

While this little agonising scene was being enacted, one more remarkable was passing in another corner. Mr. Welbourne and Miss Susan Robbins were carrying on quite a brisk flirtation. Mr. Welbourne at length took a book from the centre-table, at which they stood, and began to turn over the leaves, and read a few lines occasionally.

Susan had a hand that would be a model for a statue, and it fairly glistened with rings. She had almost jewellery enough in her possession, the gifts of her male acquaintances, to have set up a jeweller's shop on a small scale. Suddenly she laid her fair hand over the page he was reading—and, spreading out her tiny, white, beautiful fingers, covered every word, as much as to say, "Don't read—talk to me."

Welbourne was dazzled with the brilliancy of its jewels, and captivated by the sudden display of its bewitching beauty. "By Jove," exclaimed he, "I wish that hand were mine!"

"Do you?" said she, laughing. "Well, you can have it, if you want it."

He looked up to see if she was in earnest, as her tone seemed to imply.

"You think I am joking," added she, "but I am not."

"Well, then, Miss Robbins, it's a bargain—is it? It is truly an engagement on my part."

"And on mine too," she added.

And so an engagement for life, never thought of five minutes before, was actually entered into, and ratified by promise, in that horrid, thoughtless manner.

There was still another group, remote from them, in which the parties seemed quite merry and earnest. Mr. Irving and Miss Randolph were the principal actors. Somebody had been rallying Irving because he did not get a wife. Irving declared it was not his fault. The only reason why he did not marry was because nobody would have him.

"O nonsense," said the imprudent Miss Randolph, laughing, "I would have you in a minute."

"You would," exclaimed Irving; "well, let's be married then, forthwith." And he ran over to Welbourne and Susan Robbins, telling them slily that there was to be a wedding up in his corner, and he wanted them for groomsman and bridesmaid. They listened doubtingly, but followed him. By this time several thought it would be a fine joke, and Seaver promised to find somebody to marry them. In a few minutes there was quite a bustle, and the young people were delighted at the idea of such a funny joke as having a sham wedding; and Amelia Randolph, impulsive and frolicsome, seeing no impropriety in the thing, felt so too.

Lucy May heard the whisper that there was to be a wedding; and she, in a state of wonder, hastened to see what it meant.

Meantime, Seaver found the gentleman he was in pursuit of, a Mr. Shaw, from the next town, and told him he was sent for to marry a couple.

"Are you in earnest?" asked Mr. Shaw.

"Certainly," said Seaver; "and they are all now in readiness."

"I am afraid you are joking, Seaver," replied Mr. Shaw. "It's a solemn business, you know; and I would not like to get into a scrape."

"The bridegroom himself sent me," said Seaver, laughing. "Come along; they are all waiting, don't you see?"

So Mr. Shaw slowly and seriously followed his companion. He found the couple actually waiting, attended by a groomsman and bridesmaid.

There seemed to be a lurking merriment in the company; and Mr. Shaw hesitated, as he looked about on the faces around him, till Seaver said, "Proceed, Mr. Shaw."

Mr. Shaw then, with great gravity, said:—

"We are gathered together, in the sight of God, and in the face of this company, to join together this man and this woman in holy matrimony, which is commended by St. Paul to be honourable among all men; and, therefore, is not by any to be entered into unadvisedly or lightly, but reverently, discreetly, advisedly, soberly, and in the fear of God. Into this holy estate these two persons present come now to be joined. If any man can show just cause why they may not lawfully be joined let him now speak, or else, hereafter, hold his peace."

No one spoke a word. Miss Randolph turned pale. Lucy May, who stood near, caught her eye, and, looking most imploringly at her, shook her head.

But Mr. Shaw went on:

"George, wilt thou have this woman to be thy wedded wife, to live together after God's ordinance, in the holy estate of matrimony? Wilt thou love her, comfort her, honour and keep her in sickness and in health; and, forsaking all others, keep thee only unto her, so long as ye both shall live?"

Irving said, "I will."

Then, continued Mr. Shaw, turning to the lady: "Amelia, wilt thou have this man to be thy wedded husband, to live together after God's ordinance in the holy estate of matrimony? Wilt thou obey him and serve him; love honour, and keep him in sickness and in health; and, forsaking all others, keep thee only unto him, so long as ye both shall live?"

Lucy May had slipped around the bride, and whispered to her, "O, Amelia, don't speak it;" but she did. She faintly said, "I will."

Mr. Shaw then added:—

"By the authority then vested in me by the laws of God and by this Commonwealth, I do pronounce you man and wife. 'What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.'"

Such an uproarious shout went up as he closed the service, that Mr. Shaw turned deadly pale, and said, "I hope I have not been deceived in this affair." The solemnity of his tone, and the gravity of his manner, hushed the tumult, and he repeated, so that all could hear, "I hope I have not been deceived in this matter; if so, the fault is your own. You are legally married for life, and no power but the Commonwealth can undo what I have done."

The effect of this speech, as displayed in the surrounding group, would have been a study for a painter. No one but Lucy May had seemed to realise what a mockery was being performed; and even she supposed the ceremony was illegally transacted, but she felt a horror at seeing so serious a subject desecrated.

The bride coloured as deep as scarlet as she began to comprehend the awfulness of her situation, and the madness of her folly and imprudence. Most of the others, however, continued to laugh and enjoy the joke, as they called it, and saluted the bride, and passed the compliments of the occasion

as usual. The noise, however, soon collected the older part of the company, who were in the other parlour, and no tongue can describe or pen portray the emotions experienced at the disclosure of the cause—this strange, this awful joke. All expressed their surprise that they should dare to trifle in matters of such serious import; and Aunt Esther said to Mrs. Marvin that "it seemed as if some girls had no sense of decorum, and all the advice and counsel of friends would not prevent them from sacrificing themselves irrevocably in the flights of their folly and madness."

Reynolds had, in the meanwhile, sought out Miss Lee, and expressed his regret that she had transferred his bouquet to another. Angeline could not help laughing, as she declared she did not give it to him; but he had come while she was talking, and snatched it away.

CHAPTER XXX.

A SAD INTERVIEW.

METHINKS I hear the reader say, we have lost sight of Mary Lamb. Was she at the party? No; she had mingled with the gay circles of her loved companions for the last time. She was slowly, but surely, approaching that land from whose bourne no traveller returns.

The morning after the party, Lucy May paid her a visit. She often ran in to comfort and cheer the lonely hours of her failing friend. Mary was sitting in an easy chair, opposite the window, robed in a pale pink dressing-gown, her eyes brilliantly beautiful, and her cheeks burning with a hectic glow. She stretched out her pale, wasted hand to Lucy, as she entered, and greeted her with a loving smile and a warm kiss.

"Lucy, how kind you are to come and see me so often," she exclaimed. "I am so lonely, and your visits seem almost like those of an angel—so cheering, so consoling. Friendship is a blessed thing, after all, though I have often thought, with Goldsmith, there was little in it but the name."

"Earthly friendships are dying things like ourselves; like gourds, they wither oftenest when their comforting, sheltering shadow is most needed," replied Lucy; "like annuals, they bloom a summer and are gone; but Christian friendships are heavenly plants—they bloom sweetly even here, but will flourish better and live for ever in the happy land. How many pleasant hours, think you, dear Mary," said she, with animation, "may we sit on yonder everlasting hills, and talk lovingly, and cheerfully, and gratefully even, of the sorrows and trials that so deeply afflicted us here below!"

"O, I don't know," said Mary, her eyes filling with tears. "To me the past has nothing but sadness, and the future is a dark uncertainty, from which I turn shrinkingly away. I see no such bright visions of bliss, and love, and beauty at my journey's end, as you do. I would give anything if I could look at death and into eternity with the same trusting, hopeful, delightful anticipations that you can."

"You may, dearest," said Lucy, kissing her thin, pale hand, which she held. "There is nothing to hinder you from looking forward, not only with a sweet, calm hope of better things than was ever your lot here, but even a joyful longing to be gone. A thrilling delight at your prospect of happiness may cheer your entrance into the dark valley, like the blazing sun at noonday, gilding your path, till, as your feet touch the dark waters, you can say joyfully: 'I fear no evil; His rod and His staff they support and comfort me.' Our friend Harriet died thus. I shall never forget the expression of

her face when, turning her beaming eye upon me in her last agony, she exclaimed with ecstacy, 'O joy unspeakable and full of glory!' as she seemed to catch a glimpse of the other world."

Mary—"I have lived for myself; my pleasures, my hopes, my desires, have all centered in this life; my treasures, my idols have all been here; I have never looked forward to an early grave, and have made no preparation for another world. Do tell me, Lucy, how you ever became a Christian."

"Well, I will," said Lucy, untying her bonnet and laying it on the bed. "I will tell you all about it, as near as I can recollect."

She drew up a chair near Mary, and, placing her feverish hand within her own, began:—

"I was not led to the consideration of religious subjects by any sickness, sorrow, or disappointment. I have often rejoiced that I sat down calmly, and dispassionately, and seriously to review the past and look into the future. It was on a beautiful day in summer, when the sky was cloudless, and the great old elm tree waved gracefully and soothingly by my window, in all the freshness and beauty of its verdure, as if to fan me with the calm breezes floating among its branches, that I sat down to gaze on the most beautiful sunset I ever beheld. I was just sixteen—life was all before me, with its hopes and promises of happiness—the past was full of pleasant memories—no bitterness had been mingled with my past joys, and no dark, foreboding visions threatened the future—my friends all lived—none of my cherished friendships had been blasted in the bud, or chilled by the damps of the grave,—so that no fears for the future, or mournful hues of the past, saddened my thoughts or gave a colouring to the life that was in prospect. But as I gazed at that splendid sunset, my heart glowed with gladness, and I felt that earth was beautiful indeed, and life had endless charms. Who had a brighter prospect or more flattering hopes than I? I felt that none could have. And yet, thought I, life is short; and if all that earth can give should be mine, and death should find me unprepared for the future, what would it all avail? I knew that my heart was not in unison with the requirements of God's holy law, and that my chief object in life was to please myself, and not my Maker. I must be changed in heart before I died, if I would dwell in heaven; then why not seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness! Earth would be none the less bright, life would be none the less happy; and thus time and eternity's happiness would both be secured. This view of the subject looked rational and proper, and I at once decided to seek religion now—at once to use faithful, earnest, and persevering efforts to become in heart what God would approve. A doubt arose, that I might not be successful. This for a time staggered me, and my resolution wavered. But I finally resolved to try faithfully to become a Christian, pleading, in Christ's name, for the Holy Spirit to enlighten my mind and renew my heart; and resolved, if I failed, I would perish suing for mercy. Then came to my mind God's promises—'Ye shall find Me when ye search for Me with all your hearts,' 'Seek and ye shall find,' 'None that cometh to Me will I in any wise cast out.' God, who cannot lie, had thus said. I was then convinced that, if I did not become a Christian, it was my own fault. Everything on God's part had already been done. For three days I did nothing but think, and read, and weep over my sinful, selfish, useless life, and pray that God, for Christ's sake, would forgive and sanctify me."

Mary—"And did you at the end of that time think you were a Christian?"

Lucy—"No, not for some time after. But at the end of those three days and nights, during two of which I did not retire to rest, I felt that I was willing to do all that God required of me, and that I would begin to do right

so far as I knew. I felt that all God's requirements were holy and just and true, and because they were so, and because He had commanded me to do them, I would obey, whether I ever knew in this life that I was His child or not. Whether He would receive me to heaven or not, I was sure He would do right, and that He could do no wrong. For days I went about in this trusting, confiding state of heart, with a peace of mind that was blessedness itself. I asked not whence it came, nor why those tears were stayed, nor those distressing fears had departed. I was willing to come unto Christ and do His will, and He had said, 'He that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out.' That was enough. I was satisfied. I went on my way rejoicing—doing duty and enjoying life as I never had done before. At last the thought flashed upon me—this is religion—doing the will of God, with a penitent, believing heart, is religion—this is all God requires of us—this is becoming a Christian."

Mary—"And is that all? Were you not sensible of some great and wonderful change, some incomprehensible, unaccountable transformation, so sudden and violent as to fill you with surprise and admiration?"

Lucy—"No, nothing of the kind. It was a wonderful change, but I was sensible of no shock, no uncontrollable joy, which, perhaps, persons of some peculiar temperament may feel, but such a quiet sweet submission of my will to God's will as the obstinate but finally subdued and sobbing child feels to a parent's will, when it really repents and resolves to do right."

Mary—"And do you now think that was the change of heart of which the Bible speaks, and which we must all have to prepare us for heaven?"

Lucy—"Yes, dear, I do. Three years have passed over me since, and though I come short in all things, and am conscious that I sin in thought, word and deed, still I do feel that I prevailingly desire to please God, and I strive to do it; and I have no more doubt that I have complied with the terms of salvation, and that I shall finally dwell with the blessed for whom God has gone to prepare a kingdom, than that I sit here, talking with you now."

Mary—"O, that I had such a comforting assurance, that I was prepared for my great and last change! I know, Lucy, I feel that I am passing away. The sorrows of my short life have been many. They have drank up my spirits. They have eaten into my very soul, as the canker-worm feeds on the vitality of the rose. But, then, I often think, what is life, after all? It is but a moment, compared with the endless being that opens upon us, as death shuts up the portals of existence here. O! that I were prepared for that endless state of being! O! that the sorrows of this present time could be forgotten, as I contemplate the never-ending, deathless sorrows of the life beyond the grave. I have thought much of these things, and I have so longed for some young person like myself, who hoped she had experienced a true change, to talk with me."

Lucy—"Well, Mary, do not delay one moment longer to seek the kingdom of God. Time is precious to us all—especially to you. Nothing is wanting but your own heart's consent, to become one of God's dear children—one of the lambs of His blessed fold. We shall yet wander together, I trust, on the green banks of the New Jerusalem, and, beside the fountain of living waters, review the scenes of our earthly pilgrimage. Blessed thought!"

Lucy rose to go.

"Don't," said she to Mary, "don't put off this subject. Meditate on it day and night. Investigate it with the same earnestness and willingness to be taught, that you have applied yourself to other studies. The Bible must be your text-book, and the Holy Spirit, if you seek Him by prayer, will lead you into all truth. Don't procrastinate. The reason so many souls are lost,

is because they put off and put off that serious reflection and attention to religion, which they know they ought to give, and purpose to give to it before they die; and death often comes upon them unexpectedly, and they are lost for ever."

Mary—"Well, I solemnly promise you, that I will this day begin in earnest to attend to the concerns of my soul, and I will give no rest to my troubled heart, till I make my peace with God."

Lucy was rejoiced to hear her speak thus, for she saw by her looks that she was in earnest, and she knew when an honest heart could solemnly say or write such a purpose, that it was not far from the kingdom of God. While Lucy was putting on her bonnet, Mary went to her bureau, and, taking out a package neatly and carefully done up, she said to her, "Lucy, I have one earthly request to make of you, and then I have done with the world for ever." Lucy sat down beside her to listen.

"I want," said Mary, "when I am gone, that you should give this package to Reynolds." Her eyes filled with tears, and she paused.

"Shall I deliver any message with it?" asked Lucy.

Mary—"Not a word. These treasures will speak for themselves. They may awaken remembrances, that are not only painful, but salutary. These are all that I can return to him. The looks, and words, and acts, and faded bouquets, whose scented lying memories poisoned my life, have been the barbed arrows in my heart that have destroyed me—the gall and worm-wood that I have drank. They have nearly finished their work. I have done with him and the world for ever. Henceforth, my dearest Lucy, all my thoughts shall be turned to the great subject of life—'the one and only thing needful.'"

Lucy kissed her in silence, and, with a warm pressure of the hand, departed.

Mr. May, like a faithful pastor, often visited, prayed with, and counselled the dying girl, and at length was satisfied that her early death would only introduce her to a more blissful life.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE THREE LOVERS.

In the afternoon of the same day in which Lucy called upon Mary, she walked over to the gray house to see Ellen Brown. Ellen was one of Lucy's favourite companions; she was an amiable, pure-minded, affectionate, sensible girl, just such a woman as always makes a good wife. She was not such a lady as receives most public attentions, and whose society is apparently most courted; not such a girl as the gentlemen like to trifle and flirt with—she was scarcely bold enough—but such an one as they choose to marry. Ellen saw her as she entered the gate, and met her with a joyful greeting. "I was just wishing to see you, above all others, for one hour," said she. "How glad I am that you have come!"

"For any special reason?" inquired Lucy.

"Yes," replied Ellen. "I am about deciding a most important question, and would be truly glad to have your opinion. Come down to the summer-house, where we can talk without interruption."

So they walked, arm-in-arm, to a delightful arbour in the garden, completely covered with grape-vines, whose ripe clusters hung in the greatest luxuriance most temptingly around. There they snugly ensconced them-

selves, and Ellen began to disclose the subject that absorbed her mind. "Lucy," said Ellen, "I will come to the point at once without any preamble. I have three offers of marriage on hand, and know not how to dispose of them. Now I will sketch my lovers as well as I can without giving their names, and you must tell me what you think of each. One is a handsome, agreeable man, of good education, and of a wealthy family. He has been brought up with great tenderness and delicacy; has never been crossed in his wishes, or thwarted in his plans. He is affable, social and refined. His father has set him up handsomely in business, and he seems to be doing well, though it is said that his affairs are managed more by his clerks than himself. The ladies all admire him, and he is extravagantly fond of their society. There is nothing detrimental to his private character, except that he is not on very good terms with his family, and he occasionally, but very seldom, drinks wine too freely, and is out late at night, nobody knows where. Probably he is at some social club, political or masonic meeting. Nobody can see him without admiring him, and being prepossessed in his favour. Now, what do you think of him, Lucy?"

"Nothing would tempt me to marry such a man," replied she, decidedly. Ellen looked somewhat surprised, and asked her to explain her reasons.

"From your account, I should draw this synopsis of his present character," said Lucy. "He is a vain, self-willed, selfish man, and negligent in business; and, if you marry him, I predict that, ten years hence, you will tell me he is a drinking, unkind, unfaithful husband, and incapable of making any woman happy."

Ellen looked at Lucy with unfeigned astonishment. "What did I say, Lucy, that could lead you to take such a view of his character?"

Lucy—"Did you ever know a boy, or a girl either, born in affluence, handsome, indulged, and ungoverned, that did not grow up vain, obstinate, and selfish?

"Did you ever know a man that did not attend diligently to his business himself, but lazily transferred it to his employés, who was successful and made a handsome support for his family? Did you ever know a man, or woman either, at sword's points with their own kindred, that ever made a kind, loving spouse?

"Did you ever know a man, given to feasting and club-going, that did not, in time, become a confirmed drunkard and debauchee? I have heard old people say, that not one such man in ten ever turns out well."

"Well," said Ellen, smiling, "now I will sketch another portrait. Tell me just what you think; don't be afraid to speak your mind."

"If I speak at all, Ellen," said Lucy, "you know I never mince matters, or dodge a question; I say just as I really feel and think, bad or good."

"My second lover," said Ellen, "is a tall, thin, intellectual man; he has been two years only in college. It is said he is a perfect book-worm. I cannot say much, now, in favour of his external appearance, and of course less can be said when he gets through with his studies; for, with all such men, as the inward men grows, the outward decays—the mind absorbs the body—till they look ready for the grave long before they die. I cannot say anything in praise of his beauty. But his character is irreproachable. He is said to be not only sensible, but kind, generous, and energetic. His family is respectable and amiable. He will, however, be dependent entirely upon his profession, whatever it be, for his support. What do you think of him?" said Ellen, laughing.

"I would not have him on any account," replied Lucy, gravely.

"Well, I declare," said Ellen, as she smilingly shook her head, "what, in the name of common sense, can you have against him?"

Lucy—"I do not object to the man, but to his circumstances. I would not engage myself to him for a very important reason—the length of time before you will marry. It will be six years at least before he will be through his studies, have chosen his profession, and be in a condition to be married. Long courtships are dangerous and most trying experiments. Very few end well, so people say. You are twenty years of age now, and when he comes to claim the hand that has been promised him for so many years, ten to one, not having seen you for a long, long time, he will look at you from head to foot, and say, mentally, 'This surely is not the same pretty girl to whom I gave my young heart, and who has been the star of my being these many years! That was a fair, slight, retiring, blushing maiden, shy as a partridge, whom I had to seek in order to find. This is a beautiful, dignified, self-possessed woman—fair, indeed, and pleasant, agreeable company, but not the girl I wooed.' And, without any reasonable prejudice, he may unconsciously withdraw those affections from you which would be your due. I have heard of such cases. No gentleman who is pursuing an education, ought, during his early studies at least, to think seriously of selecting a wife; and it would be the part of wisdom and prudence in him to defer altogether, till his profession is selected and his location settled, the choice of a companion for life. He would often choose a very different woman then from what he would have done before. He is not the same man when he leaves the halls of science, that he was when he entered their portals. His feelings, his views, his tastes, have changed. Very likely he would, from absence and a variety of causes, become tired of his engagement, and break it off, perhaps, just before the time he had intended marriage.

"I would by no means engage myself to such a man, any more than I would to the veriest school-boy. Who would ever marry you after you had been engaged for years to another? Such an engagement would be attended with too many risks and contingencies for me to give it one deliberate thought."

"Well, I declare," said Ellen, laughing, "you are a real, cold, calculating Yankee; I am almost afraid to present another portrait for your keen scrutiny. The poor fellow, I know, will have no chance. You are more particular than I thought. I really believe you will die an old maid yourself. We country girls cannot expect great matches, you know. Brought up in obscurity, without wealth or rank, or opportunity 'to make a splash in the world,' as Tom Sumner would say, we should not aim above the stars, or lay any plan to conquer the archangels." Lucy laughed in her turn.

"We should aim at good matches and suitable ones; that is all I ever look for," she answered; "but, as you say, very likely I shall die an old maid. I don't know that I should cry, if I did; for old maids, I believe, are about as useful as anybody, after all. But one thing I know, as I do not expect to be married but once, I intend to look out sharp and suit myself in a husband, or go without any. I must have a man in every sense of the word—a gentleman and a Christian. Nothing short will suit me. But, as you say, such wild-wood flowers as we are, cannot expect to bloom in any Paradise on earth; I shall be satisfied if I may be transplanted into the remotest corner of the Paradise above," added Lucy, looking up. "I expect we shall be happy enough there, without any husbands."

"Don't you wish we could choose husbands for ourselves?" exclaimed Ellen, gaily.

"No," replied Lucy, smiling, "I don't know that I do. I am afraid, short-sighted as we are, we should make a poor choice. I prefer that my Heavenly Father should choose for me. I have given the matter altogether into His hands, and feel no responsibility about it. If He has got one for me, I expect

He will send him along one of these days. But bring your other man on the carpet," added Lucy, "I want to see him. I am not difficult, Ellen, I would not have you think; only reasonably particular."

So Ellen began to sketch her third lover:—

"He is rather above the middle size," said she, "dignified in his manner, not talkative, or especially agreeable; rather diffident, perhaps; but very warm-hearted, just, and generous. What he says is always sensible and to the purpose. He is in a good, lucrative business, and has already laid up something, perhaps enough to buy him a place and build a house; for I have often heard him say that 'no man should think of matrimony till he has money enough to buy a cage for his bird, and business enough to support her.' He is one of the kindest of sons and brothers. It would really make you smile to see his mother look at him. She does it so earnestly, as if to read his wishes or feelings, and with such evident admiration and satisfaction, as if she thought no other mother ever had such a child, or ever would have. His sisters, too, all worship him. His character for morality, honesty, piety, and attention to his business is equal, perhaps, to that of any other young man in C——. But he is far from handsome; and, Lucy, I am sorry to say, for I know you will just throw him overboard with all the rest if I do—he has got one fault."

"What is that?" asked Lucy, eagerly, for Ellen looked so grave as to excite her curiosity. "Out with it."

"Why," said Ellen, "he has unfortunately got red hair."

Lucy laughed most immoderately at this awful calamity.

"Well, now, what have you got to say about him?" asked Ellen, at length.

"Why, I like him well," answered Lucy. "No matter about his hair," added she, laughing, "you can colour it, you know, black, green, or yellow, to suit yourself. He will make a good husband. If a man's mother and sisters worship him, and he has all the other good qualifications you have named, you need not be afraid to take him 'for better or for worse.' But, pray, who is he? Do I know him?"

"Yes," said Ellen, "it is Mr. Grenville."

CHAPTER XXXII.

INTOLERABLE SUSPENSE.

REYNOLDS watched most anxiously, on the eve of the party, for an opportunity to converse with Miss Lee, but it was absolutely impossible. He left her side but a few moments at a time; but, as the party was given expressly as a compliment to herself and Miss Sanborn, she was bound, in propriety and courtesy, not to be as exclusive in her civilities to him as he would have liked. She, however, flattered him by a decided preference, which satisfied him as far as it went. But so well guarded was Angeline during the whole evening, by Julia, Lucy May, and Tom Sumner, that a private word with her was out of the question. In a sort of desperation, he determined to broach the subject of the letter, no matter who heard him. So, when the affair of the bouquet was explained to satisfy him, he took advantage of a time, when Lucy May only could necessarily hear his question, to ask Miss Lee if she had never received that letter yet? She looked up innocently into his face, and inquired "what letter he meant?"

"The one," said he, colouring, "that I alluded to the other evening when I was here."

"I have received but one of any kind," she answered honestly, "for ten days, and that was from my father."

"That is very singular," replied he, thoughtfully; "I must look into the matter."

Tom Sumner came up at this moment, and said he protested against such an evident effort to monopolise the ear and the eyes of the belle of the evening, as Mr. Reynolds manifested; and added, "Great inquiries are made for you, Miss Lee, in the other parlour. Take my arm, and let me present you to the circle." Angeline smiled and said, "Certainly, she was ready to obey any summons; and floated away gracefully, leaning on the arm of Tom, with an apologising look to Reynolds, who seated himself sulkily near Miss May. He did not seem to observe her, and entered into conversation with no one; his whole thoughts were engrossed with the mystery which shrouded his letter. Days and days had passed, and still he was no nearer finding a clue to its strange detention than ever. Never had anything deposited by him before in the post-office failed of its destination. He puzzled over it till he became almost beside himself. It seemed as if everything was against him. He had made every effort he could imagine to obtain a private conversation with Miss Lee, but to no purpose. He was strangely foiled in every attempt, and yet it seemed attributable to nothing but a most thoughtless obtrusion or unexpected and unforeseen interruption on Miss Marvin's part.

As for Tom Sumner, he had little doubt that Tom fully intended to win the prize from him, if possible; but if he could read woman's heart, and he was a pretty keen observer, and, as he supposed, deeply experienced in love-affairs, he could not doubt that her preference was for him. For the thousandth time he ran over their interviews in his memory. He could not remember that she had ever shunned him, or avoided his attentions at all. In all the interruptions that had so vexed him, she seemed passively to resign herself to circumstances, without the slightest emotions of pleasure, though he could not recall any exhibition of displeasure or resentment under it like what he himself felt. She had not exhibited the disappointment and regret at her engagements to ride with Tom, when he invited her, which he would have been glad to see. This remembrance gave him some uneasiness. But was it not unaccountable that he could not, with all his watchfulness and ingenuity, find an opportunity to ask her that one question to which she must say yes? He blamed himself for not improving better the three short seasons in which he began to think he might have popped the question, if it had not been that he was too particular in his phrases, or employed too much time in his preambles. Never before had he met a woman to whom he could not, if he had been desirous, have found abundant opportunities for making proposals of marriage. But he had never asked a lady to marry him. He had never before seen one that he did not waver about. When he had made up his mind to marry, as he had done forty times in his life, he always got sight of a fresh beauty before he had committed himself, or changed his mind, and concluded he might do better, perhaps, somewhere else.

He sometimes thought, as he had money enough, it would be worth while to travel, and visit other countries, and look the world over, thoroughly, before he made his choice of a wife, because, as he could have but one, he was anxious she should be *the* woman of all others that he should always prefer. It would be an awful thing to get married, and find out, that after all, there was another lady, unappropriated, who was more beautiful, or better calculated to shine like a glow-worm abroad, or, like a beautiful bird,

fill his home with melody and happiness. He would like, above all things, to marry a woman that would be the admiration and envy of everybody around him, and yet save all her sweetest smiles and fondest charms for him. Angeline was the very one that could be and do all this. All the other beauties that, like fair, blooming bouquets, he had gathered and admired, and sported with for a day and then thrown carelessly away, he had fancied he could fashion and mould by his will, and by the aid of dress and artificial adornments, to be the admiration of himself and the world at large. But Angeline needed no remodelling or foreign aid to transmogrify her. She was all he could ask or wish, just as she was. Her eyes were such brilliant, fascinating black eyes, as, if looked at once, could never be forgotten. The luxuriance of her hair and its gloss and beauty were remarkable. Her features, for regularity and expression, were models, while her person and manners, her grace and elegance, were the most exquisite of all. Her mind had been cultivated highly, and it was susceptible, naturally, of the greatest refinement. The best masters had superintended her musical education, and an indefinite amount of money had been expended in training her voice and fingers to the greatest artistic skill. She could warble you into a state of bewitchment, so that you could scarcely tell whether you were in the body or out.

Thoughts of this nature passed through Reynolds's mind, as he sat, totally unconscious of his abstraction from the scenes around him, or the departure of most of the guests, till Angeline herself, accompanied by Tom, returned and found him thus intensely absorbed. Reynolds was not sorry that Angeline found him in this state of unconsciousness to all around him; perhaps it would open her eyes, if she was still blind, to the state of his heart, and awaken a deeper sympathy for him than she had ever felt. He fancied she looked tenderly, almost tearfully at him, as he rose and gracefully took his leave, hopeful but yet wretched.

He walked his room for hours, considering what course he should take. He concluded he would call on the postmaster in the morning and inquire about his letter. And, before nightfall, he would make another visit to Angeline and unhesitatingly ask for a private interview. He resolved that another day should not pass over him without some decisive result. "If she should *refuse* me," thought Reynolds, "what shall I do?" The thought was agony, almost insupportable; but he solemnly resolved, in that case, he would not outlive the disappointment longer than to call Tom Sumner to account, as the cause of his misery, and be killed himself in the duel, or kill Tom, and blow his own brains out afterwards. Thus settling matters, he went to bed.

"What an eventful day to me this will be," thought Reynolds on the morrow, as he prepared himself for its duties. "A day of joyful life or honourable death!"

No sooner had he fortified himself for its disclosures by a fragrant cup of coffee, than he went to the postmaster and demanded some explanation about the letter he had mailed two weeks before.

The postmaster looked up in a sort of wonder at the question and its earnestness.

"What letter do you refer to?" said the postmaster. Of course he was obliged to say, it was directed to Miss Lee. The postmaster scratched his head, but could not wake up any recollection of the event as to time or circumstances.

"It has been lost, and very strangely, too," said Reynolds, tartly.

"I know nothing about it," retorted the postmaster, quickly; "if you brought it or sent it, I suppose it went where it was to go."

"Don't you remember," urged Reynolds, "my coming early one morning and depositing a letter for Miss Angeline Lee?"

But the postmaster recollected nothing about it. "Jerry," he said, "always took the letters for Mrs. Marvin's family, and perhaps he could tell." He resolved to question Jerry that very afternoon.

Time seemed to move on leaden wings that day to Reynolds, but at length the hours passed by, and at five o'clock he pulled again, with hopeful energy, the door-bell at Mrs. Marvin's.

A deadly paleness came over Reynolds, as, in answer to his inquiry for Miss Lee, the servant said "she had gone to Boston in the stage only an hour before."

He called for Miss Marvin, and learned that news had arrived that morning of her mother's illness, and that she had thus unexpectedly shortened her visit and just left. Reynolds looked the picture of despair.

"Will she not return?" inquired he.

"No," said Julia; "she had intended to return home in two weeks at any rate. She left many kind adieus to you, Mr. Reynolds, and wished me to say that she intended to give a great party on her birth-day, if her mother recovered sufficiently, and should send an express invitation for you and me both; and she begged me to say that you must not fail to come."

Reynolds asked to see Jerry at the gate a moment, and he questioned and cross-questioned him about the letter; but Jerry declared he had not seen or brought but one letter to Miss Angeline for two weeks, till the letter that morning which had called her home.

So Reynolds returned as empty as he came. He sat down at once and wrote an agonising letter; and having done that, waited impatiently for a reply. He waited in vain two weeks, and then, finding himself unable to attend to business, and desperately determined to know his fate, took the stage one bright morning and went to Boston.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

RIDE TO BOSTON—THE CALL.

JUST before Reynolds left for Boston, he stepped into Grenville's store, to buy a pair of gloves. Bitter as he felt toward Grenville, he would have gone anywhere else to make the purchase, but no one in town kept such a choice and excellent assortment of goods for fashionables as our friend Grenville. So, smothering his resentment, he began to tumble over his variety of gloves. Dr. Wilson, at nearly the same moment, dropped in to buy some silk handkerchiefs. As if to stab Reynolds under the fifth rib, Grenville inquired of the Doctor about his fair patient, Miss Lamb.

"She is gradually wasting away," said the Doctor; "I can see daily that she grows weaker and weaker, and she cannot live long. Her mind, however, seems to have undergone a wonderful change lately. She used to be absent-minded, and to sigh so constantly and sadly, that it was painful to sit with her long. She reminded me of a child that had grieved itself into quietness, broken occasionally by a dying sob. Now she is bright and cheerful, even happy. The past life seems to have been forgotten in her delightful visions of the future. I begin to believe, Grenville, there is something, after all, in some people, that others have not got; but there is a kind of freemasonry about it—a sort of mystery, that I cannot understand." He paused. "I never was more interested in a patient in my life. I am more and more

convinced that her death is prematurely brought on by some terrible mental shock."

Grenville had the prudence to keep silent for once in his life, though his tongue ached to tell the Doctor it was plain enough she was dying of a broken heart.

"I'll take this pair," said Reynolds, in a hurry to be off.

Grenville took them to do up.

"So you are really going to Boston," said he quizzingly, looking at Reynolds. "I suppose, of course, you will see our friend, Miss Lee? By the way," added he, most provokingly, "if you get me that horse we were speaking of, I hope you will get me a dappled gray, to match my other one, for I intend to have a carriage and a fine span of horses this fall; and, maybe, a wife too, one of the fairest of Eve's daughters, a perfect likeness of the old lady, of Adam's wife I mean—that is," added he, as he made the change, "if I can get her, for there is always some doubt about these things, after all. The ladies have a choice as well as we. It would be funny, wouldn't it, if I should get married before you, seeing I never have set out in the matrimonial chase till now?"

Reynolds gathered up his change and walked out, without replying to Grenville's torturing remarks, though he inwardly resolved he would never have any more dealings with the impudent scamp again.

Reynolds bundled himself into the best corner of the stage, on the back seat, although he saw an elderly woman standing on the door-step waiting her turn. It was always his maxim to take good care of number one, no matter what became of the rest of the numerals. Having fidgeted about till he was tolerably comfortable, so far as his physical man was concerned, the driver at length cracked his whip, and the stage rolled on. Reynolds looked about him, and seeing nobody—that is, no one suitable as a companion—he shut his eyes upon his fellow travellers, and upon the world around, and retired into the little *sanctum sanctorum* of his own soul, to hold a little converse with his idol—self.

What a blessed thing it is that there is a little heart-world within us, where we can retire when we choose—where nobody can follow us to intrude upon the privacy of our thoughts and feelings, or even peep in and get a distinct, positive view of the state of things as it exists there.

How wretched should we be if we had to live out-doors all the time, with all our thoughts exposed to the gaze of the rabble, and all our heart's treasures, joys, hopes, and buried griefs, which are garnered up so carefully or watered with so many tears, were, at all times, liable to the rude scrutiny or mockery of a cold, heartless world! Reynolds did not enjoy as much as usual in the "inner" man. He was extremely sensitive to ridicule and sarcasm. Grenville's irony entered into his very soul; it consisted, not so much in what he said, as in his manner and look, which spoke even more than his words. Grenville always felt so deeply what he said himself, his words came so warm from the heart, that they always fell like molten lead wherever they did fall; like bullets, they whizzed into and sank in the very innermost recesses of the heart. The Doctor's remarks about Mary Lamb he could not banish from his memory; they haunted him. Her pale, thin face, with its one little scarlet beauty-spot, as he lately caught a glimpse of her at her chamber-window, stood up before him like a living portrait, which he could not put aside. How changed from the first bright vision he had of her innocent, beautiful face, which had entranced him by its purity and wealth of affectionate sympathies, portrayed in its sweet expression. His own consciousness told him that his thoughtlessness, heartlessness, vanity and cruelty had made her what she was. He remembered the delicacy with which she

received his early attentions—the shrinking sensitiveness with which she listened to the first flatteries, and looked earnestly into his face to see whether she understood them, fearful lest she should receive impressions stronger than were intended to be given; and how he had drawn her on, knowingly to himself and unconsciously to her, till he felt that all her heart's treasures were freely laid at his feet. He remembered that call in which she denied herself to him, and he knew it was because she had discovered, at length, what he had known before, that her heart was gone, and must be recalled. He remembered her pale, trembling look at the pic-nic, and her burning cheek at his taunt at the party, and the look of injured innocence with which she answered his insulting query also. He began to imagine what torture she had endured, from what he had suffered in his suspense and uncertainty of requited affection from Angeline. His conscience awaked, and whispered that he had fearfully wronged that innocent girl, and "a shadow, such as coming events often cast before them," fell upon his soul and darkened his spirit by its sombreness, and he quailed, as he remembered, that "God was the father of the fatherless," and especially espoused their cause.

Reynolds strove to shake off these ugly feelings and impressions, as we vainly, for a while, struggle with the nightmare; and it was some time, with all his efforts, before he could rally any cheerful thoughts in their place.

At length the stage stopped at the Tremont House, and Reynolds alighted. After an elegant supper, and an elaborate preparation for a call upon Miss Lee, he proceeded on his way to her residence. He walked down the Mall a little distance, and then threaded his way across the common to one of those beautiful residences in Beacon Street, where Angeline lived. Never had he passed a more wretched day in his life. His days were all wretchedness lately, to be sure, but there are degrees in misery as well as in bliss, and to-day was a day of superlative misery. Never had he so many doubts and fears, and harrowing apprehensions of his acceptance with Angeline, as on this day. The fact that his second letter had met with the fate of the first, had justly awakened his anxiety. Yet he could not reconcile, possibly a real indifference to him, and a shameful neglect of his professions of attachment, with her apparent pleasure in his personal attentions. How could any woman be so cruel? "How could she?" seemed to echo in the chambers of his soul. And then conscience took up the thought and pressed it home to his guilty heart. "How could you lavish on Mary Lamb those smiles and looks, and tokens of regard, which were a mockery to her honest, trusting heart? How could you torture with suspense and fear and hope delayed, that pure, loving, gentle spirit, that never erred toward man save in loving such a heartless wretch as you?" And conscience thundered and growled, like a coming storm, in his startled bosom, as conscience only can, till he looked about him unwittingly to see what insolent fiend was dogging his every step.

O, Reynolds! I would rather be the dying, lonely, deserted orphan Mary, with no mother's love to wipe my damp forehead in my last agony, than the handsome, fascinating man on whom the curse of the avenger of the fatherless brooded with its horrible shadow! Reynolds looked up and down for the right place some time before he found it, but, at length, in mingled gladness and trepidation, he read on a silver plate the name of Anthony Lee, and, noiselessly mounting the stone steps of the splendid mansion before him, he touched the bell; before he had time to collect his disturbed thoughts, it was answered by a stylish waiter, who seemed to have risen out of the earth, so sudden was his appearance, and, bowing low, was waiting Reynolds's commands. "Is Miss Lee at home?" inquired the palpitating, faint-hearted visitor. "She is," said the servant. Reynolds gave his name, and in a moment of time he was ushered into a splendid apartment and his name

announced. The only object in the universe in which, at this instant, he had any interest, arose and came forward to meet him—Miss Lee herself. Her colour brightened as she heard his name, but, with her never-failing self-possession of manner, and inexpressible grace, she met him cordially and with a smile. Her greeting was not rapturous, as Reynolds wished it had been, but perhaps it was all he ought to expect, for another visitor was there beside himself, a splendid looking man, whom Reynolds eyed uneasily, but to whom Angeline did not introduce him. Reynolds's heart thrilled with one more emotion of joy as the gentleman rose to go, and he found himself actually alone in the presence of his divinity. Now, thought Reynolds, as Angeline politely bowed out the other visitor, for once I will despatch business; and though he felt his heart was in his throat, and every time he spoke he had to swallow it afresh, still, after a very few words of inquiry, he ventured to express his tormenting anxiety at having received no answer to the letter he had written since she left.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

POPPING THE QUESTION.

REYNOLDS was thrown into the most profound bewilderment when Angeline assured him that she had never received a single line from his pen. He declared that it was a most mysterious affair, and that the devil himself, or somebody akin to him, must meddle with his concerns.

He then told her, with a faltering voice, that she could not be ignorant of the subject of his communications—of the intense admiration and affection with which he regarded her.

Angeline did not speak. She sat in the shadow of the curtains that enveloped the window, and Reynolds could not even catch the expression of her countenance.

"I have written to you twice," he continued, "and explained all, but some unaccountable fate has befallen both of my letters; and unable to live any longer in such tormenting suspense as I have done, I have come down on purpose to see you. I have imagined that you were not indifferent to my attachment. Is it so? May I hope at no very distant day to be so happy as to call you mine?"

Angeline assured him that she "had regarded him with no ordinary interest from her first introduction to him."

"Well, I thought so," interrupted Reynolds. "Say then, at once, dearest Angeline, that you will unite your destiny with mine, and thus make me, from this blessed moment, the happiest of men."

Angeline's face lighted up for a moment with a smile; but, before it could be analyzed, it was gone.

"Of course," said she, at length, "you do not expect an immediate answer to such an important inquiry."

"Yes," said Reynolds, "if possible, tell me now. I have lived in purgatory for weeks. If you knew the agony I have endured on your account, you would relieve me at once. You say you have regarded me with interest. Why not say that you will be mine, some day? I care not when, if you will only give me the positive assurance that you will be the 'light of my eyes' and 'the joy of my life'—that 'where I live you will live, where I die you will die, and there you will be buried.'" He paused for an answer, but she did not reply.

At length she said: "I certainly am flattered by your regard, but I cannot

give you a decisive answer now. My mother has been very ill and is still a great invalid. My father has been from home a few weeks, and will not return for some time to come. I cannot give you any reply till after his return."

"Do say," interrupted Reynolds, with earnestness, "what will lead me to anticipate a favourable answer. Let one ray of hope beam on my path, if no more."

"I will say this," said Angeline, after a moment's pause: "I intend to give a great party immediately after my father's return, at which all my friends will be invited. It will afford me the greatest pleasure to see yourself and Julia, and a few of my country friends, at that time. On that evening I shall give you a decisive, and I presume it will be a satisfactory, answer."

"Bless you," said Reynolds, seizing her hand eagerly, and putting it to his lips. "I bless you a thousand times for that word satisfactory; yet if you knew the intensity of my feelings, the very agony of my heart, you would say more; you could not use so tame a word—you would choose one of deeper meaning. But if you cannot say further now, I will even live as well as I may, on the delightful anticipations that inspires. Meantime you will write to me."

"I cannot promise that," said Angeline. "Every moment of my time is occupied with my mother and other engagements, which completely absorb me after my long absence. I will not, however, forget you. I shall think much of you, and though I will not promise to write to you or Julia either, I will be prepared to say all you desire after the party is over."

"Well," said Reynolds, looking her earnestly in the face, "tell me one thing more. Say you will not write to Tom Sumner either."

Angeline laughed. "I will not write one word to Tom Sumner either," said she, "nor shall I see his face before that time; and, moreover, I will add, if it will be any satisfaction to you, that you need have no fears in relation to Mr. Sumner. He can never be anything more to me than he is now."

"Bless the Lord for that!" exclaimed Reynolds enthusiastically. "I know it is unreasonable for me to expect you will give me a full, decisive answer at once. And yet I was so foolish as to hope you would free my aching heart from every doubt and every fear in this interview."

A call now interrupted them, and Reynolds soon took his leave. When alone, he recalled every word and every look, as far as possible, during his visit. He felt that he ought to be thankful for the encouragement she had given him, and yet, when he contemplated the state of his own glowing emotions, he wondered, if she loved him, how she could say so little.

His sleep, however, was sweet, his dreams pleasant, and he awoke on the following day a happier and a more hopeful man than he had been for many weeks.

Amid the many new theories and spiritualities that, in rather a stealthy way, Professor La Fontaine had introduced among the teachers and young ladies in the Seminary, it was not to be supposed that the inhabitants of C——, especially the young men, would escape indoctrination. Reynolds had heard enough to awaken a desire to know more, and, like many others, he had been led to look into the mysticisms of Swedenborg, the theories of Mesmer, and many of those wild and vain speculations, which lead astray so many impulsive, imaginative persons into foolish vagaries and the most profound absurdities.

He longed to look into futurity, and as he could not learn directly from the fair arbiter of his destiny what she willed to do, he made up his mind to seek some person familiar with spiritual and unseen things, and skilled in the

arts of divination, to look ahead a few weeks and read a page or two in his future life, which he could not get at himself. He could go to Professor La Fontaine and get him by his clairvoyant art to look into Angeline and read her heart for him, but that would imply a doubt of her purpose, rather interfering with his present plan, which was, as she had given such encouragement to his suit, to stop Grenville's mouth and arrest the unbelief of others, by insinuating that he was even now engaged to Miss Lee. After some consideration he concluded he would ride over to Lynn, and get Moll Pitcher to take father Time by the forelock, and arrest him in his course long enough to ask the old fellow whether Angeline would certainly marry him or not. Because, if he could find out in this way what was to happen, he could not see why it would not answer as well to anticipate his positive engagement a little in the way of enjoying the idea, and circulating the fact, as to sit down in a dreamy uncertainty, a prey to occasional doubts and fears. After some search, he found the abode of this modern old "witch of Endor." It was a very old, gray house—more gray than any of its neighbours, almost black, as if it had taken its hue somewhat from the "black art" practised within, or, perchance, had been somewhat smoked by sulphureous emissions from the very mouth of the "pit" itself, over which many of the Puritan inhabitants supposed it was directly built to accommodate his Satanic lordship, from whom old Moll was supposed to have frequent visits. Be that as it may, it was a dark, repulsive-looking place, fit for any apparently but Christian people to visit; and when a cracked, old voice answered his knock, and said, "Come in," and he had opened it, and found the place blacker inside than it was out, even Reynolds's heart almost failed him, and he began to doubt whether it was best to proceed.

In a dim corner he discovered a little, short, wizened old woman, dressed in black, who stepped forward to meet him. Her face resembled a baked sweet apple, so puckered and shrunken had it become; her eyes had retired so far into their sockets, that, without more light, it would be difficult to tell what their colour was, but they had been eyes evidently in their day of some definite colour, and were eyes still, from their twinkling, restless motion. In one dark corner of the room sat a great black cat, whose large yellow eyes glared on him out of the darkness like two balls of fire and brimstone. He wished the cat would look the other way, but she didn't; she seemed as if ready to spring on her victim. Reynolds did not say a word for some time, for he really did not know whether to inquire for Mrs. or Moll Pitcher, as he had never heard her called by anything but the latter appellation.

At length he inquired, in a kind of awe-stricken manner, if she were the renowned fortune-teller of Lynn.

On her replying that she was, he asked her if she could read his fortune for him.

She replied that she could—it was her business; for forty years she had lived more in the future than in the present, and, in fact, was really, she did not doubt, more conversant with the mysteries and developments of future years than with the realities of the world about her; and, provided he would first lay a silver dollar on the palm of her hand as a fee, she would speedily unlock futurity and show up its mysteries. This was accordingly done, and then the old hag began to bustle about. She darkened the windows still more; and then, lighting a black lamp in a remote part of the room, which burned so dimly as only to reveal shadows and objects so indistinctly that you could not possibly tell what they were in reality, she opened a cupboard, and, taking down a pack of cards, began to shuffle them in a very mysterious manner, fixing on him a scrutinising look, which wandered over him from head to foot.

"Few gentlemen," added she at length, "have been and are as much admired by the ladies as yourself. O! what havoc," added she, "have you made among their gentle, tender hearts!" She said this in a low, solemn tone, while she still continued the shuffling process. "I suppose you would like to know," said she, "whom you are to marry."

"I wish to know," said Reynolds, "whether the lady I love returns it; and whether, if I make proposals of marriage, I shall be accepted."

"Is that all?" asked the old witch, still looking at him.

He replied, that if he learned that he should be satisfied.

"I will soon tell you," said Moll Pitcher, shaking the cards together, and arranging them again into an entire pack. She threw a few beside her on the table in one pile, and then a few in another; and looking down intently upon their faces, as if to read the mysteries they contained, she replied:

"You are beloved, adoringly. The lady is fair and beautiful; but, I am sorry to add, there seems to be a cloud upon your prospects, an uncertainty about your marriage."

She paused, and then proceeded: "Another is bent upon winning the prize you seek, and will leave no means untried to wrest it from your grasp. He has already plotted against and annoyed you."

"That's a fact," exclaimed Reynolds, unconsciously.

The old woman looked up at him with a twinkle. "Watch him closely," said she; "be more in earnest than ever; and remember that 'a faint heart never won a fair lady.' O! what a storm impends," said she at length, as she continued to shuffle off into one of the piles card after card. "It is as black as midnight—you will nearly be driven mad!"

"Shall I marry at last?" asked Reynolds, impatiently.

"Yes," said Moll, after a pause, "you will marry at last, and go to a foreign land."

"That's it!" exclaimed Reynolds, rising; "I am glad to hear so much that is good. What else!"

"Nothing of importance," said the old woman, shuffling the rest of the cards over hastily. "Never man married a fairer bride, but she will not make you happy. That is all the fates reveal now."

"I'll venture that," said Reynolds. "If I only get her—that's the rub."

CHAPTER XXXV.

A PEEP AT THE WANDERER.

WHILE these varied scenes were passing in the obscure village of C——, where was our quondam friend, Barlow? He was wandering in foreign climes, in quest of happiness; or, rather, in the hope of burying in oblivion the great and only sorrow of his life, he had fled to other shores, and was roaming amid other scenes.

However interesting it might be to follow him, as he lingered in England and Scotland, and then sailed for Marseilles, intending to spend the autumn and winter in Italy, we have no time to detail the scenes through which he passed.

A beautiful day in October—as beautiful as any in our June—after gazing at those works of art and forms of beauty which are to be found in the Imperial Gallery, and in the Pitti Palace at Florence, where he had spent a week, enraptured, bewildered, and entranced, he wandered into the Boboli Gardens, adjoining the Palace, to refresh himself. His eyes ached with

gazing at beauty, and his mind had fainted within him, in his efforts to study and appreciate the skill and productions of ages. It was a blessed relief to turn away from man's works, and look upon God's, not that the one could be compared to the other—but, when the mind is wearied with its contemplations, on any subject, how blessed is a change of scene and of thought! He walked through the leafy bowers of this earthly paradise, and finding a shady nook, on elevated ground, where he could look out quietly upon the beauties that surrounded him, he threw himself down on a seat provided for the weary.

Glimpses of palaces could be seen through the foliage, while the distant peaks of the Apennines, like turrets, shot up beyond them into the clouds. Statues, beautiful as angels, seemed to gaze upon him out of the thicket, while, in another direction, images of the shrouded dead seemed to beckon him from the world to the darkness in which they were partly concealed. Flowers bloomed and shed their rich perfumes around him. Birds sang sweetly, either for their own amusement or his, no matter which, and fountains played to refresh him, and the melody of falling water soothed his spirits.

Barlow was alone. No eye gazed on him, no heart sympathised with him, no soul within thousands of miles thought of him or cared for him. He imagined he felt as Adam did in Paradise before Eve was created to share in his joys. He was alone in a world of beauty, and felt as truly alone as Adam did when placed in Eden after his creation. His thoughts wandered to the only being who really lived in his world of imagination, and he felt that were she with him to enjoy all this beauty and loveliness, a halo of glory would surround everything his vision embraced.

But her company he could never enjoy. Why? Simply because he had no religion. O that he had! O that he could find that pearl of great price! He took out a little pocket Testament which had been his study ever since he launched out upon the great ocean that separated him from all his heart's treasures. There he read of the New Jerusalem, of the heavenly paradise of which this spot of beauty, redeemed from earth's barrenness and earth's curse, was merely a dim shadow, with all its apparent loveliness—of its streets of gold and gates of pearl—its musicians—its purity, its endless ages, and its blessed companions; and he sighed, as he remembered that he should be shut out from that vast assembly, that glorious inheritance, that infinite bliss, for the same reason that he was denied the love and presence of Lucy—his want of religion. He resolved anew that he would seek religion, as he had done many times during his voyage, when the winds howled and the waves dashed and the ship groaned—and that never again would he return to the home of his youth without that treasure, if it was to be had—that, henceforth, it should be the first and the absorbing idea of his life. All else, even the splendour of wealth and rank, and all the pleasures of earth, faded away into nothingness, as he contemplated death and eternal life.

Now no matter what motive first calls a man's attention to the subject of religion, and rivets upon it his concentrated thoughts, if it convinces him of his danger, and leads him to look into himself and up to Christ, and to a final escape from the wrath of God. No matter what arouses a man from sleep in his burning dwelling, whether it be affection's call, a falling timber, a smell of smoke, or a sight of flame, if it lead him to such efforts for his safety as finally secure it.

Lucy's declaration, solemn and full of emotion, with her sweet, convincing, trembling look, that she would not dare to marry an irreligious man, had sunk like molten lead into Barlow's soul. It oppressed him. It had awakened thought. It had turned his eye in upon himself to see what there was

in him that was so fearful. And nobody can look long into his own heart with a sincere desire to know himself, before he will find out, that, however amiable, and upright, and plausible he may appear before men, his heart is full of gall and bitterness, a den of unclean beasts. Barlow began to realise the perverseness of his will, that would gladly have its own way in spite of God or anybody else—he began to see his selfishness, his want of holiness and fitness for either the service or enjoyment of a holy God. He had lived for himself, picking up and appropriating to his own use the few paltry objects which he desired and could attain, and entirely forgetful of everything save what selfishness and policy urged. Like the Muck-rake of Bunyan, he had always looked to the earth and toiled, and never looked up to heaven. He prayed that he might be taught better.

Then his thoughts wandered to Lucy. He looked upon matrimony differently from what he had done before. He had spoken of it lightly, and thought of it as the world generally do, as a gay scene; a tie that could not be broken, to be sure, but then, who ever thought of marriage as a really solemn service, he asked himself.

Who would think, as he listens to the trifling, heartless talk of young people, that it was anything of more moment than choosing a partner for a dance or a sleigh-ride? It is often as thoughtlessly. How often is a partner for life chosen in a ball-room on short acquaintance, and without any knowledge of her actual qualifications for home-life! Her gay smile and happy manner, or her pretty foot and graceful step, or sylph-like form, charms him, and he foolishly dreams that the gay butterfly that dazzled him by candle-light, would be transformed into the careful and busy bee, if he only placed her in his own little hive. Vain hope! When the dream is over, and a life-time of care and toil and sorrow "drags its slow length along," what an awful remediless mistake appears! To be sure, Barlow could not reproach himself with thoughtlessness in his choice. He had looked over the world of ladies that whirled around him with the careful, scrutinising glance of an experienced eye when searching amid a blooming garden for a choice flower, and he had selected, not the most gaudy, the fairest, most exquisite that could be found, but a hardy, healthy, beautiful perennial, not likely to be blasted by the winds of adversity, or wilted by the scorching sun of a hot day, or destroyed by a secret, inexplicable decay. And he had done well. But Lucy, more wise even than he, had gone further; she was not satisfied to choose only for time. She looked on through the interminable existence of another life. And why should she not? This life's a moment—a mere probation—a stepping-stone into the great, the endless life that lies beyond us.

How foolish to live only on the enjoyment of the present, without a thought of the future! Who puts off the cultivation of the mind to mature life? Youth is the time to prepare for rich mental enjoyment in middle life.

Who builds a house for summer merely, regardless of the rains and snows and storms and cold of the coming winter that surely await him? None but a madman or a fool.

Why should we not show as much wisdom and discrimination in our matrimonial matters as in the common affairs of life? Why should not a man "count the cost" before he commits his own destinies, in a measure, and the destinies, perhaps, of millions of others, into a partner's hands?

Why should he not sit down carefully, when making up his mind to marry, to consider what traits of character he must have in a wife—what qualifications are necessary to his happiness, and what he can do just as well without! When the knot is tied, it is altogether too late to think. The mistake of a moment cannot be remedied in a life-time, nor in an eternity.

These and similar thoughts occupied Barlow's mind, as he sat amid fairy

scenes in a land of strangers, speaking an unknown tongue, unheeded altogether by the passer-by, who, perchance, took him for a petrifaction or a statue.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A SAD STATE OF AFFAIRS.

"WHAT do you think about Reynolds?" said Dr. Wilson to Grenville, the day after the former returned from Boston. "He seems to insinuate that he is, at length, an accepted lover, and is, consequently, in better spirits than I have known him for some time."

Grenville replied that he was "at a loss how to understand him. I have never for a moment believed," said he, "that Miss Lee would marry him, nor do I yet. I cannot believe that she would engage to wed him when she did not intend to do so. But it is possible that in this flirtation, for I can call it by no better name, Angeline's heart has actually become ensnared with his flatteries and fooleries after all. Yet I do not believe this, either. The only thing that puzzle me is the belief that he would not dare pretend he was successful, unless he really had some ground to think so; for he knows how soon he would be found out."

Dr. Wilson—"He certainly has been to see her, was well received, and acts and looks as if the matter were finally and favourably settled."

"However affairs look, I cannot believe I shall lose my bet," said Grenville. "But we shall see shortly. We are in an awful state here in our village in our love matters, and no mistake. There's been a terrible squall that has upset us all nearly, and the young folks seem to be in a very melancholy plight. Some are thrown overboard, and have as much as they can do to keep their heads above water, struggling between life and death; some are gone to the bottom, lost entirely; some have been washed away upon desert islands, from which there is little hope of escape, and they will probably die in despair. I reckon, I am about the only happy man in the group, unless it's you, Doctor."

The last was accented in such a way as to imply a question, and the look that accompanied it suggested that he half suspected the trouble through which the Doctor had passed.

"However few or many troubles I have of my own," replied the Doctor, after a pause, "I am called upon to sympathise with so many in one way or other, that I feel sad enough sometimes."

Grenville—"Yes, I dare say. Johnson, I hear, has had a very melancholy letter from Barlow, who is now in Italy, and his own flare-up with Miss Sinclair makes him wretched enough. Poor Mary Lamb's life is wasting away like a candle, nearly extinguished. Bancroft, it is said, has been refused by Miss Sanborn; and I guess it's a fact, for he looks so pale and dejected. And then Miss Farley is deranged, don't you think so, Doctor, from being in love with a married man?"

"She will be deranged enough soon to send to the insane hospital, from some cause or other," replied the Doctor, evidently not wishing to commit himself too much.

"Yes," said Grenville, "the Professor has actually bewitched and bejuggled her with his abominable theories, as he calls them, but his divinations and devilries I say, and his poor wife is floundering about in the slough of despond in consequence. And Miss Randolph, she has got into a fine

mess by that mock-wedding the other night. She says, she was only in sport—and Irving says he was too, but since he has found out that the marriage is legal, he declares that he will hold on to it and not give her up."

"Why, you don't say so?" said the Doctor, in surprise. "What will she do?"

"I don't know," answered Grenville. "It seems Mr. Shaw is legally authorised to solemnise marriage, and he 'did it all up brown' in real legal style, never dreaming it was a joke, though I believe Seaver knew well enough what he was about. I think Seaver is a mean fellow, from some things I have learned, and it is my own opinion, from a word he dropped the other day, that he has been busy, out of spite, in breaking up the match between Johnson and Miss Sinclair. I have had half a mind to tell Johnson that Seaver, for some reason, owed the lady a grudge, and that he had better hear both sides of the story before he had done."

"I would do it," replied the Doctor. "I have thought whether or no that matter could be straightened up by some explanations. It's a pity that lovers are so like gunpowder, which the veriest spark can blow up. Suppose you find out something about the matter, Grenville, and see Johnson? He is one of the best of men, and we all know that Catherine is a lovely true-hearted girl, and no father or brother to speak a word for her. If we can heal up some of these broken hearts, before it is too late," added the Doctor, sadly, "it will be a good work."

Grenville said he would call on Johnson, and see if he could, in any way, act the part of mediator. The Doctor seemed to sink into a sad reverie after his last remark. He was thinking of a fair patient, Mary, whom no earthly power could save, and also of another, who, from a father's mistaken and perverse notions, looked to his eye, as if sinking into the winding-sheet—Maria Sumner. He did not see her ever now, save at a distance, but he had heard from others, and he could read a sad tale himself in Maria's face, that she was low-spirited, took no interest in anything, and had already pined away from no perceptible cause, and with no special complaint. It was not too late to save her, but who could do it? He dwelt upon this subject often, till he was in the most feverish excitement, and could only smother his own sorrow in his more careful attentions to and sympathy with others. Grenville's heart was always in a glow at the remotest probability that he could benefit any mortal, and so he wandered into Johnson's office. Johnson liked Grenville because he was a frank, honest, good-hearted man, and he seemed glad to see him—glad as if he had been waked out of an ugly dream.

"You have had a letter from our friend Barlow, I understand," said Grenville.

Johnson replied that he had, and he drew it out of his pocket and read some parts of it, relating to his journey, which he thought would gratify him to hear. "He seems," said Johnson, as he closed the letter, "to be investigating the subject of religion somewhat, I think, from the tone of his letter. I am glad of it; he is a fine fellow, and if he could only get his mind settled on some points about which he has seemed to be afloat, I know of no fault that he will have."

"Do you know Seaver?" interrupted Grenville, aiming at his purpose.

A dark cloud gathered on Johnson's brow, as he replied that he knew him slightly.

"Well," said Grenville, "he has been instrumental in getting Miss Randolph into a pretty serious scrape, which I am afraid you lawyers will have to help her out of."

"Why, what has he done?" asked Johnson, the cloud on his brow breaking away somewhat.

Grenville told him of the mock-wedding, and that Seaver had brought, knowingly, a legally authorised person to perform the ceremony, out of mischief. The fact is," added Grenville, "he's a mischievous fellow, and would as soon assert as deny a thing, if it suited his purpose, whether it were the truth or not."

"What makes you think so?" asked Johnson, with deep interest.

Grenville told him several little things, which he knew to be facts, which showed him to be a mean, lying scoundrel.

Johnson listened intently, and said nothing, as he whittled away upon a pencil, till he cut it nearly up, except uttering an occasional noise, expressive of contempt and surprise.

"He was once engaged to a young lady that I know in the village," continued Grenville, "and he often spoke in the most disparaging way of her, and sometimes positively denied the engagement, which you know no man of honour does, or even will do. I think denials on such points are the meanest lies a person can well tell."

"Many do it, though," returned Johnson, "and think it is no harm, saying it is a matter on which people are privileged to lie, for nobody has any business to pry into or know about their matrimonial affairs."

Grenville—"Well, many people do a great many mean things, because their neighbours do the same.—Any person has a right to be silent altogether on their matrimonial matters, or use ambiguous phrases; but a man or a woman that will openly and unblushingly deny a positive matrimonial engagement, is so mean that he would not scruple to do almost any other mean thing."

"Who was the lady?" asked Johnson.

Grenville—"It was Miss Sinclair. Their engagement, I suppose, has been at an end some time, but I believe he owes her a spite, that would lead him to injure her in any way he could, if he could find a way mean enough to suit his purpose. Do you ever have any business to transact with him?" continued Grenville. Johnson replied that he had occasionally.

"Well, then," said Grenville, "look out sharp for him. Never believe his side of a story till you have heard the side of the other party." Having said this, Grenville got up and walked out.

Johnson thought over this conversation again and again. He began to feel that he had been hasty in his feelings toward the lovely Catherine, and wished he had read her letter instead of insulting her by sending it back unopened. But what could he do now? His pride would not let him, as things now stood, make any advances toward a reconciliation. Grenville's conversation had done good thing, if no more. It had led him to see and feel his injustice toward Miss Sinclair, and had opened his eyes so that he would see further developments in a different light.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A SORROWFUL SCENE.

THE wind whistled and howled as it swept around the corner of the house, and, having spent its wrath, commenced a fresh and fiercer gust than ever. It was a cold, bleak night in November; and it seemed, from the moans and

the shrieks of the blast, which occasionally broke on the ear, that evil spirits were chasing their fellows in the wildest fury, and muttering curses upon each other. Sad, indeed, were the watchers by Mary Lamb's bedside, on whose ears these wild and gloomy sounds fell, deepening still more the mournful aspect of the sick chamber. They were Aunt Esther and Lucy May. A lamp burnt dimly in the corner, making fearful moving shadows on the wall, as fresh gusts of winds varied the unsteady flame. The dying girl, whose sands had nearly all run out, was in a dose, as she sat, half-reclining, bolstered up in the bed. Her fair brow was fairer than ever, and the glow of her cheeks and lips grew brighter as life ebbed away. A bouquet of the sweetest flowers, which some kind friend had sent in as a token of love, had fallen from her pale, wasted fingers, and lay wilting, like herself, on the white counterpane. She breathed more easily than she had done, and slept more quietly. Perhaps it would do her good. Lucy May gazed at her thoughtfully till the tears came unbidden, and she laid her head on the bedside to hide them.

"How melancholy," thought she, "to see one so young and lovely passing away! Having escaped the ills of childhood and bloomed into womanhood, just prepared for usefulness, and ready to enter upon life's pleasures, enjoyments, and duties, with eager delight, to be called to lie down in the grave! How strange to bloom only to wither—to live only to die!" The sleeper stirred, she moved her lips, and her watchful friends listened to catch every word. She was repeating this beautiful hymn:—

"When languor and disease invade
This trembling house of clay,
'Tis sweet to look beyond my pains,
And long to fly away.

"Sweet to look inward, and attend
The whispers of His love;
Sweet to look upward to the place
Where Jesus pleads above.

"Sweet to reflect how grace divine
My sins on Jesus laid;
Sweet to remember that His blood
My debt of suffering paid.

"Sweet on His faithfulness to rest,
Whose love can never end;
Sweet on His covenant of grace
For all things to depend.

"Sweet in the confidence of faith,
To trust His firm decrees;
Sweet to lie passive in His hand,
And know no will but His.

"If such the sweetness of the streams,
What must the fountain be,
Where saints and angels draw their bliss
Immediately from Thee!"

A sweet smile played on her features, as a token of the happiness that glowed in her bosom. Her eyes opened, and she extended her hands, looking on each side to see if her dear ones were there. She smiled lovingly upon them.

"What a blessing it is to have friends, and such true, dear friends as you are," said she. "Aunt Esther, you have always been kind and motherly to me, gentle in listening to my foolish thoughts and feelings, ready to cheer me up when all seemed dark around. You have been a blessed comforter in many a lonesome hour, when I have needed a friend. May God bless you

for all your kindness, all your love! And you, Lucy, dearest of all earthly objects, whose friendship has been the sweetest of all my treasures—no gall in it—no thorn about it—you, who have healed my earthly maladies, by pointing me to the great Physician; who led me to look away from this dark, stormy wilderness, to that Paradise where I shall live in bliss for ever, and to that 'friend who sticketh closer than a brother,' no tongue can tell how I love you, how I thank you. I have not heart enough to do it here, nor time enough, nor words that can begin to speak my gratitude. But we shall know each other in Heaven. We will talk of it there; and our hearts will be larger, our love stronger, our capacities nobler, and our bliss will be complete; and it will never, never, never end," she added, closing her eyes, and seeming for a moment lost in the immensity of the thought.

"I have sometimes felt," continued she, after a pause, "it was a sad thing to die so young; but I do not now. I bless God now that He sends for me early; that I need not buffet the storms any longer; that I need not feel the chilling, withering sense of loneliness any longer (and her frame quivered at her thoughts); that I may go home, where purity and love reign, where my adorable, loving Jesus will be my companion for ever; and where I may praise God for His goodness, as I ought, and as I would be glad to. It is a privilege to be sent for early—to have so little of earth, and so much of heaven. I have not deserved an early dismissal from earthly fetters, for I have been a mourning, complaining, fretful child."

Here she shut her eyes, and did not speak for some time.

"Aunt Esther," said she, at length, "ever since I could remember, I have only wished for two things. My heart has never yearned but for two things. I cannot remember the time, when, if I had my choice of all the world has to give, I should ever have chosen but those two things. All the wealth of the Indies could not have satisfied me. Beauty and fame could not have charmed me from my purpose; nothing could have answered in their stead. They were simple things, too, such as almost everybody, rich and poor, has, but I never had—a home, and somebody to love. I have had a home in name here, and a good one it has been, and may the Lord bless them all for their kindness to me; but it was never my home—it was theirs. I have had friendship, and kindness, and love, often in my pilgrimage; but I had no claim on it—it was not my right—it was charity. If I felt gratitude for it, as I always have done, I felt also dependence. I never felt that I could give what I received—that I could confer what I had taken."

She turned to Lucy. "Many a time, in my girlhood, have I been to the hill behind the village, and sat down on a large flat rock, and looked over at your house, and Deacon Brown's, and General Sumner's, and cried, till it seemed as if my heart would break. Not that you and Ellen, and Maria, and Anna were all so happy; but because I had no father to smile on me—no mother to love me—no brother to protect me—no sister to play with. And I wondered why it was that everybody was so blest but me. How I have gazed, till my heart has ached, at the pleasant homes which other children could call their own—where every stone was charmed, and every tree and shrub had a history interwoven with its life—where, in all the gathering storms of future days, they could flee as to an ark of refuge, if friends failed, if sorrow blighted, if misfortune scowled, or care, like a grim demon, sat by their pillow and scared their dreams—where loving hearts always gathered—where, in summer and winter, in sunshine and storm, on occasions of great sorrow or extraordinary happiness, they would not be forgotten, but talked of and dreamed of—above all, where prayer to the good Shepherd always went up, day by day, to keep the wandering lambs from

harm! What blazing pictures of life and beauty have I hung from time to time in the chambers of my soul! They were always spectacles of the one great object that filled my vision—varied in scenery, in light and shade, taken from different points of view; but always warm in the colouring—home without, and love within." She said this at intervals, in a faint voice; and then, clasping her hands and closing her eyes, she remained silent.

At length she spoke again. "But I have a home in a better land. I have a Friend there, who will never leave me nor forsake me, whose love will never change; who has gone to fit up a mansion for me, in which I may dwell for ever—where no sorrow enters, and no impunity dwells—where Jesus Himself wipes away all tears, and owns us as His, and loves us for ever. I do not deserve it, for I have been a poor sinner—a selfish, thoughtless sinner; but Christ has died to save all those who put their trust in Him. I believe it, and will love and trust Him for ever."

She was seized with a fit of coughing that lasted a long time, and seemed to exhaust her. Turning herself, with the watchers' help, a change seemed to come over her that startled them. Lucy put the lamp on the table, and ran for Miss Hetty. She choked and struggled, then sank away, as if fainting and unconscious; and after a few short sobs, Mary Lamb was no more!

* * * * *

The morning sun was bright as ever. The black clouds that robed the sky at night had disappeared; the winds that howled so mournfully and wildly, like demoniac spirits, about the dying chamber, were hushed; and all nature seemed the same as ever. The busy hum in C—— commenced as usual, when all were startled by the death-knell, which, from time immemorial, always gave token in the New England towns that another of its inhabitants had gone to the spirit-land. At length it stopped, and every noise was hushed to hear the age tolled, that they might guess who had departed. After a pause of two or three minutes, the bell struck mournfully eighteen times, and everybody exclaimed, "Mary Lamb is dead!" while many a tear fell, and many a heart mourned, that one so beautiful and young, so lovely and lonely, had stepped out of their circle to be loved on earth no more.

In three days, the friends of the departed met at Esquire Langdon's, to pay the last tribute of affection to the lovely Mary. It seemed as if all the village came, with slow and mournful steps, to testify their sorrow at her early departure.

As Reynolds had been a particular friend, he, of course, was there. Grenville wondered how he could show himself that day; and thought if he was in Reynolds's place, he should have taken a horse, and rode out of town on the occasion, instead. Somebody, in selecting pall-bearers, thoughtlessly named Reynolds; but such a scowl of indignation met the announcement from Grenville and Sumner, and others who stood by, that he who proposed it felt, for a moment after, as if he had been struck with lightning.

Reynolds mingled with the crowd, and actually elbowed his way up, with others, to gaze, for the last time, on all that remained of the once loved and loving Mary!

"Oh, impudence!" thought Grenville, who was standing on the other side; "he carries out his mockery to the very last."

What were Reynolds's emotions as he gazed upon the marble features before him, no one knew; but the same thought and the same feeling possessed the bosoms of those who looked at him—"The murderer is gazing on his victim."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

ANGELINE'S PARTY.

TIME passed, and Reynolds began to count the days and the hours. He had his moments of anxiety, as every one has whose interests are involved in an unsettled question, but they were infrequent and easily dispelled by a reference to his call in Beacon Street, and, above all, to the "Witch of Endor." It was astonishing with what unquestioning credulity he received her revelation. Had she not said he was universally admired by the ladies? That was true as the Gospel, but if she were not a witch, how could she know it? She had said he was beloved. He hoped it, and, in fact, he believed it. Why should he doubt it? The lady was fair and beautiful,—all that was true. And then the cloud, the uncertainty, the rival; what could be more in accordance with the fact than it? The storm ahead that would nearly drive him mad, he did not understand; but provided he only got her at last, which she assured him he would, he would be willing to encounter a storm, or a shipwreck, or a fire—anything that would leave him alive at last and Angeline beside him. "How could the old witch know that I ever thought of going to a foreign land?" said he to himself. "That prediction of itself is enough to show that she knows what she knows, and can see into futurity. And as to our being happy together"—he turned up his nose at the improbability that when the very sight of her was life and happiness, the possession of her would not be bliss divine.

At length the long-wished-for invitation arrived. It was for the tenth of December. He was rather surprised that she did not accompany the invitation with a single line or word. She might have done it, and she ought to have done it. He was vexed at her neglect, but was pacified when he found that Julia Marvin, even, had not received a single word from her beside the simple invitation.

Tom Sumner and his sisters, Lucy May, Julia Marvin, and himself, were the only persons that he could learn were invited guests from C——. He learned from Julia that Mrs. Lee had entirely recovered her health, the father had returned, and that this party was designed to be a splendid affair. It was to be on Angeline's twenty-first birth-day, the day she would legally come into full possession of her fortune. It now became a study with Reynolds how he should dress on this magnificent occasion. He never could be accused of inattention to this important point, at any time, but it was now a more momentous matter. He had in fact, while last in Boston, in anticipation of this party, stepped into the most fashionable tailors' shops in the city to make inquiries, to look at different styles and materials, and consult as to the most becoming and genteel cut, and the most harmonious blending of colours; and had actually left his measure, so that when his own mind, after due consideration, was fully decided, he could send down to Boston and have a suit made. He determined to have the most costly and elegant materials—no expense should be spared. He attitudinised hour after hour in his office when alone, and practised bows and flourishes before the glass till he was actually the admiration of—himself. He had been struck with the splendid style in which Angeline lived, and the costliness and elegance of everything that surrounded her at home. He would fain be a fitting guest for such a mansion, and a fitting lover for such a belle.

Meantime, unprecedented preparations were being made at Hon. Anthony Lee's, in Beacon Street. The house was newly papered and painted. The carpets, beautiful as they were, were ripped up and taken up stairs. The

curtains, costly and fresh still, were transferred elsewhere; and all the furniture that adorned the parlours disappeared, to make room for the newest and most costly carpets, the most elegant curtains, and everything else to match. New paintings, fresh from Italy, were added to those which had already been the admiration of all; the chandeliers and mirrors vanished, and more splendid and modern ones supplied their place. The mansion underwent a general and complete metamorphose, and when finished, its beauty was imposing as a palace.

Nor was Angeline herself making less preparation for her own adornment on the coming day. She declared that, for once, she would look like a queen. And the Hon. Anthony Lee, who was so proud of nothing in the world as he was of his eldest daughter, said it was perfectly proper she should. And he gave her a *carte blanche* in regard to her dress.

Now Angeline was an acknowledged belle, even in Boston. She was an uncommon belle. She had not some positive beauties with glaring defects to counterbalance; but her beauty was of a style that could be analyzed, and lose nothing by the process. Her form was elegant, wanting nothing; her hand and arm were exquisite as any studied production in an artist's studio; her complexion was faultless, and every feature regular. She would have been pronounced a beauty with her eyes shut; but the greatest wealth of her charms was hid under her long, dark eyelashes. Her eye was her crowning perfection: if you saw it once, you saw it for ever, for its expression could not be forgotten.

Her portrait was to be seen at no less than three studios in the city, and many declared she was the belle of Boston. Angeline chose for her dress an elegant silver tissue, embroidered and spotted with gold—a superb and costly article, that had been imported from Paris, rather hesitatingly, and more as a show than a commodity for sale—the ultimatum of dress fabrics—a thing which Barnaby, Bragg, & Co., exhibited occasionally to the wondering and admiring eyes of their favourite female customers, more to see and hear their exclamations of surprise and admiration, and to give a deep impression of the tastefulness and splendour of their stock, than with the hope of finding a purchaser. As soon as Angeline saw it held up in its glittering folds in the sunlight, she decided at once that it was *the* dress, and the only dress that she could wear; and she took it—the price was of no consequence. Then came the white satin slippers, embroidered and spotted with gold to match; and the fan, and handkerchief, and bouquet-holder, each exquisite of its kind, and in keeping with the dress. Montefleuri, the most celebrated hair-dresser in Christendom, was engaged to arrange her hair. Her father, to crown all, presented her with a diamond necklace, bracelets, and head ornament, which he said was a suitable accompaniment to the "freedom suit," as she called her dress; and, patting her lovingly on the cheek, asked her, archly, "how long she expected her freedom to last?" Alice Lee, Angeline's pretty and only sister of thirteen, was in an ecstacy of delight at the glittering beauty of her sister's dress, which, no doubt, lost nothing of its intensity by the expectation that, when she too was of age, a similar outfit awaited her.

The day before the party, the favoured few at C—— took the stage for Boston together. They were all in great glee. The young ladies expected to spend some time in Boston after the party, and Reynolds thought he should also remain two weeks at least, to do up his courting. The Sumners and Julia all went to Hon. Anthony Lee's; Lucy May to her aunt's, in Sumner-street; and Reynolds to the Tremont House.

Early in the morning Reynolds was astir. "This day certainly will decide my destiny," thought he; "there's no mistake this time."

The forenoon passed rather slowly. He was a stranger in the city, and

had no friends to call upon. He did not like to saunter about town, lest he should weary himself, and look jaded when he ought, if ever, to look fresh and bright. He could not read, for he had no interest just now in other men's thoughts, the world at large, or anything but his own private affairs. The afternoon was busily employed in preparatory exercises. He put himself into the barber's and hairdresser's hands, with many charges to do their best, and "outdo themselves;" and he was satisfied, as he surveyed himself after the operation was over, that, so far as his head and face were concerned, Adonis himself could not look better. When he was attired completely for this eventful party, he had full two hours, after he was ready, to look at himself in the glass, and practise over, for the last time, the airs, and bows, and flourishes, and smiles, and smirks, which he had either invented or perfected for the occasion. At a genteel hour, Reynolds, having freshly perfumed himself, took a carriage to the Hon. Anthony Lee's. He did not order a carriage for his return till a late hour, for he probably should linger till the last guest had departed. He touched the bell, and the door flew open noiselessly; and the same stylish servant, that mysteriously arose out of the earth before, appeared now to usher him in. He recognised the visitor of a former evening at once, and, regarding him with a very gracious look, he placed in his hand a letter from Miss Lee. Reynolds grasped it with a trembling hand and a beating heart, and took it beneath the hall lamp, and read, in Angeline's own hand, his address, and the additional inscription on one side, "Please not open till you leave."

O! how he longed to break the seal. It was cruel to keep him one moment longer in suspense. How much more should he enjoy the evening if assured that she would finally be his. But her word was law—at any rate, the hall where so many were passing and re-passing was no place to read a love-letter; and so he put it carefully in his pocket, mentally resolving to retire earlier than he had at first intended. He entered the magnificent parlour, bright as noonday, hoping to see Angeline instantly; but he did not see her. How could he in such a crowd? Mr. or Mrs. Lee he did not know at all, so he mingled in the buzz and looked around for Julia. Even her he could not find; but his eye at length rested joyfully on Lucy, and he made his way hastily to her.

"Where is Miss Lee?" asked Reynolds. "I have not yet paid my respects to her."

"I have not yet seen her myself," replied Lucy, smiling; "but the crowd will bring her this way soon, I think." Reynolds felt in his pocket to see if his letter was safe, and then began to move off in a fresh pursuit; but Lucy begged him to wait a moment, for she presumed that Angeline would be there shortly. The crowd seemed to grow more dense, and press closer upon them; and Reynolds, with Lucy, concluded finally, to work their way out to a better view. There was a sudden movement to the right and left near them, and immediately a lady appeared, leaning on a gentleman's arm. It was Julia and Tom Sumner. Then came another, and another. The second couple, as he strained his eyes to catch a glimpse, were—did his eyes deceive him?—Angeline and the same tall gentleman whom he had met the evening he called. Before he had time to recover from his surprise, these couples had filed off, and exactly in front of him stood Angeline herself, in queenly magnificence; while the startling, overwhelming idea took possession of his brain at once—this is Angeline's bridal! Her arm leaned on that stranger. Her eyes were raised, and met his. She blushed, and looked down—a smile flitted over Tom Sumner's face, and Julia Marvin's eye had that strange glimmer he had seen before.

The clergyman stepped up to perform the ceremony. Every word fell upon

Reynolds's ear with horrid distinctness. No pen can portray his emotions as he heard the closing words of the speaker—"In virtue of these promises, I therefore pronounce you husband and wife. Whom God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." Reynolds stood with his hands folded, like a statue, and almost as pale. He felt as poor Mary did behind the bushes at the picnic—heart-stricken. He was petrified, immoveable—as suddenly transfixed as Lot's wife when she turned to look on her burning treasures in Sodom.

So let us leave him for the present, to look back on the past, and to look forward into the future.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE LETTER.

ONE after another greeted the bride, and the busy hum of voices again commenced. Reynolds disappeared in the crowd, not even looking at Lucy who stood at his side. He was not seen again that evening. He slipped out of the house cautiously, unobserved by any but the servant at the door, and crossing over the Common, he hurried to the Tremont House, looking back only once to catch a glimpse of the place he had left. The house was illuminated from top to bottom. What a scene he had witnessed! It would live in his memory forever. In the solitude and silence of his chamber, with his elbows on the centre-table and his head buried in his hands, he thought of this awful humiliation, this grievous disappointment, this cruel deception. And although he was filled with malice, and rage, and despair, he could not but feel, as he thought of Mary Lamb in all the true and gentle love she bore him, which he had so wickedly spurned, that he had met a just and awful retribution. He thought of the letter in his pocket, and taking it out, as if it was tainted with the plague, he hurled it in his wrath against the wall. As this did not relieve his feelings, he rose and clutched it with the intention of tearing it into a thousand pieces. He could not read it—no, not he—he wished there was a fire in the room, and he would hurl it into the flames. But as he turned it over, curiosity was excited, and he wondered what the deceitful, heartless coquet could say for herself, and he broke the seal to see.

The letter ran thus:—

Boston, ——— —, ——.

MR. REYNOLDS,—At our late interview, I promised on this evening to "give you a decisive, and I presumed it would be a satisfactory answer." This you have received in effect, it is to be presumed, before you peruse these pages. At the word satisfactory, which I use, you may demur; but in so far as "relieving your mind from doubt and uncertainty" is concerned, which is one of the significations of the word, I have redeemed my promise.

Whatever opinion others may have formed of the propriety of my conduct, and the honourable manner in which I have received your attentions, *you* can never express any disapprobation, or find any ground of complaint. I have only, in an humble manner, adopted your own views, and followed your own course. Whatever I may say, therefore, I say not by way of apology. I feel that none is necessary; but for your satisfaction, and in justice to my own feelings, I feel disposed to make some explanations.

Upon my first arrival at C—— I was made acquainted with your character as a male-flirt, and the unhappy consequences of your conduct to some of its innocent victims. I was told by the young ladies themselves, and was

warned that I, as a new comer, would also become your prey. I therefore resolved, if you turned the battery of your fascinations towards me, to meet you on your own ground, and fight the battle through like a good soldier. Under other circumstances than really existed, I should not have attempted so dangerous a warfare. I should not have dared to parley with temptation, and risk my own peace and happiness in such a flirtation, had I not been positively engaged to Colonel Washington, the gentleman to whom you have witnessed my marriage to-night—had not my heart been wholly devoted to him, and my wedding-day actually appointed, I would not have dared to enter the lists against you, lest I should have fallen another victim to your irresistible fascinations.

But I felt that I was proof against all your charms, and having time enough, and being naughty enough to carry on some scheme of depravity, I prepared myself to enter the lists as an avenger of my sex. So much for our first acquaintance.

During our early interviews, I had every reason to suppose that your civilities to me were as heartless and as unmeaning as they had been to others. They cost you nothing—they did me no harm. When, however, I perceived that your heart had become deeply interested, I grew more cautious and more reserved. I laid no toils for you—I spread no snares—I simply allowed you to weave a net for yourself, and when you became fast in its meshes, I did nothing to help you out. I declined every invitation to ride with you. I wrote you no poetry, no letters, and received none. I commissioned Tom Sumner to take out any letters from the post-office directed to me in your handwriting. Whether he ever found any, I know not; I never asked him, and he never told me. If he found any, I presume it remains, seal unbroken, in his care. Your letter to Boston never reached me, nor do I know any reason why it should have failed to find me. It was probably Uncle Sam's fault.

Did I ever present you with any little testimonial of my friendship, calculated to beguile you into the belief of an attachment on my part? How many have you lavished on those whom you knew would be encouraged to regard them as evidences of your deep affection! Did I ever seek your society? I simply did not shun it. Your compliments and flatteries I received passively, allowing you to deceive yourself in their result upon me. Do not imagine that I conceive that evasion and ambiguity and false dealings in affairs of the heart are justifiable and without guilt. Far from it. But I knew that your views were different, and that you could not disapprove in others what you practised yourself; therefore I dealt with you in a different manner from what I would do with others. There was a lesson for you to learn, and no teacher like experience—I simply introduced you to her teachings. You intimated to me that uncertainty, and doubt, and suspense, had rendered you miserable lately. Then you have learned the bitterness of your inflictions upon others. Think you not that uncertainty of requited affection fills the sensitive heart of woman with as great disquietude as that of man? Is not doubt to the trusting, confiding soul of woman as annoying, as torturing, as it is to man?

If "hope deferred maketh the heart of man sick," will the frail nature of woman enable her to bear it better?

Woman has more leisure for reflection, her susceptibilities are keener, her affections stronger; and hence sorrow preys far more deeply on her spirits than on her more active, bustling, energetic companion, man, who soon forgets his woes.

Perhaps, in the present state of your mind, you will feel, as you have never yet done, your injustice to the dear departed Mary.

Look at her as you first saw her—an exceedingly amiable, warm-hearted, innocent girl. Did she seek your favour? Did she ask your love? Did she not rather shrink away from your admiring gaze? Did you not follow her, and in the most artful and insinuating manner, by your frankness and politeness, by your look of admiration and tenderness, your repeated visits and gifts, and your flattering compliments, seek to impress her with the idea that you admired and esteemed her above all other women? Was it strange that one so lonely, so friendless, so alive to every affectionate impulse, should listen to your syren song; and, in the truthfulness of her own heart, believe every word you said, every sentiment you expressed, in look or deed? Was it not strange that you could find it in your heart to deceive one so sincere and simple-hearted, so truthful and loving, so lonely and friendless? Methinks such a blooming flower in the pathway through life's desert, should, by its beauty and solitariness simply, awaken sympathy, and a desire to see it transplanted into a more genial soil, rather than rudely to tramp upon it because it chanced to be in your path.

Was it a crime deserving such a harsh requital, such a cruel rebuff, that she should dwell on your looks of love, and your acts of kindness with fond emotion, till she unconsciously, but spontaneously, yielded up the affections of a heart shared by no other mortal? But the sorrows and disappointments of her brief life are over. He who watches over the fatherless with a careful, jealous eye, has transplanted her into His own home of love and peace, where "the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest." Peace to her memory. You, Mr. Reynolds, know better than I can tell, how many others—less sensitive, perhaps, and better fitted to outlive disappointment and trouble than Mary—have sorrowed in secret over your heartless demonstrations of attachment, which, perhaps, almost against their will, and certainly against their better judgment, beguiled them into a temporary devotion to you. May the Lord forgive you all!

Be sure you "will reap as you have sowed." Will it not be a fearful harvest?

I can imagine that I hear you utter a philippic against our whole sex—denouncing us as more heartless coquets than yourself. But let me assure you that when man ceases to trifle with woman's affections, woman will cease her coquettish ways.

You made me a flirt for the time being. May you never make another. Farewell.

ANGELINE LEE.

Reynolds tore the letter into a thousand pieces, and again buried his face in his hands in deep thought.

CHAPTER XL.

THE PROFLIGATE'S WIFE—CONCLUSION.

FIVE years passed away, and changes unthought of, sorrows unlooked for, and joys unexpected, sprung up in the pathway of time.

In an old and forlorn house, in an upper chamber, in the First Municipality of New Orleans, sat a fair but faded and sorrowful woman. Every room in the crazy building was tenanted; some of them by foreigners from various countries, speaking different tongues, noisy, quarrelsome, drinking, vicious, loathsome people. O, how did this poor woman's crushed heart often recoil within itself, as she was compelled to listen to the blasphemy and vulgarity

which fell on her ears, as she wearily toiled up the many dark, crooked stairs that led to her home!

It was not pride that bolted her door daily from access to those women about her, who wished to pry into her concerns,—it was not a sulky, morose disposition that kept her aloof from all the world; but it was shame. A sense of shame had well nigh killed her. Reader, you know her; it was Ellen Moulton.

Ellen had come to New Orleans soon after she left home; and, almost in a state of destitution, her husband and herself, sought employment of some kind.

Still respectable in appearance, he made an effort to obtain a situation as clerk in some mercantile house, but who would engage him without any knowledge of his character or any letters of introduction? They hired a decent room and commenced housekeeping; but weeks passed away and Moulton was still unemployed, the rent became due, and they were compelled to seek another abode. After walking the streets for days and weeks in the hopeless search of business to suit him, he was obliged to get jobs by the day, to do anything rather than starve, and Ellen occasionally obtained employment from the slop-shops. But poorly paid, and jobs scarce, they could seldom meet their rent, and they moved as often as once a month. Discouraged and despairing, Moulton began to give himself up openly to those vices which he had formerly practised in secret, and Ellen began to receive very little aid from her husband in supporting them; he kept most of the little money he made for his nightly debaucheries. It was as much as Ellen could do, with her utmost diligence, to keep from starvation, never meeting the rent. Thus things went on for three years. At length, Moulton became a newspaper carrier, and, little as it brought in, it served to pay his rent, and, with his wife's earnings, it kept them and the children alive; and he rather liked it, for he was dependent on no master, could buy as many or as few papers at the office as he choose to sell again, and provided he could pay his rent, he could earn enough to supply him with drink, and make him a welcome frequenter of some groggery.

Ellen's chamber was neat and everything bore the marks of a tidy housekeeper. She had ceased to love her husband, for who could love a beast, and she poured out the yearning tenderness of her heart on her little Fanny and Lizzie. Fanny was now four years old, and one of the fairest and most beautiful of children. Ellen was no longer sorrowful as she had been, for Fanny and grown to be such a fond and loving little chatterbox; in her smile was a charm, and every tone of her voice fell on the mother's ear like music. To be sure her husband often came tumbling up stairs drunk, in the dead of the night, but her heart was becoming callous to all the mortifications and taunts he put upon her, and she lived in and for her children. Sometimes she thought of home and would talk of it to Fanny; but she never wrote to her father or heard from him, except through Lucy May. How many times did hope and joy spring up anew in Ellen's heart, as she listened to Fanny's prattle. Earth was no longer a rude wilderness. The sun beamed cheerfully into her windows, and when Fanny's bright laughing face and blue eyes looked up trustingly and lovingly to her, and she shook her golden tresses in her gambols about the room, the mother's heart warmed with tenderness, and she felt that, with all her sorrows, she was happy.

One day Ellen's heart was running over with gladness. She felt she had such cause for happiness in these children. What could she do without them! She thought of the first three years of her marriage—years of sorrow and suffering, before Fanny was old enough to be such a comfort, and she blessed God that He had given her these darlings to keep her from despair, to nerve her to ply the needle, and keep hope alive in her heart. O what a cheerless

world this would be without Fanny and Lizzie—no father to love or speak to her, forgotten by her mother and sisters, cruelly neglected and uncared for by her selfish, beastly husband.

"Mother, do you love me?" said little Fanny, breaking in upon her thoughts, in a mournful voice, as she was sitting on a stool near her: "I love you!" "Why, yes," answered her mother, looking up at her; "What made you ask?" How beautiful she is, thought Ellen, as she gazed at her. What a precious treasure. "What made you ask such a question, Fanny?" repeated her mother. "O," said she, with a languid smile, "I only want to know if you love me. I love you *so* much."

"Do you feel sick, Fanny?" asked her mother, looking at her anxiously, and putting her hand on her face, to see if she were feverish, for her cheeks were flushed. "My head aches," the child replied; "will you hold me, mother?" Ellen took her in her arms, and laid her on the bed. While thinking what was the matter, and what she could do for her, as she stood looking out of the window, she heard a noise, and, turning round, found her precious child in a fit. O, with what agony and terror did the frantic mother run to her, and then run wildly to her next-door neighbour, to go for the doctor. He came, but no earthly hope could avail.

Little Fanny came out of one convulsion only to go into another, and before night, the child on whom the mother had gazed with such a glow of thankfulness in the morning, lay cold and still on a little board on two chairs in the corner of the room, never more to soothe the sorrows of the desolate mother, or to gladden her heart with her smiles and love.

Ellen could not send for her husband, for she knew not where to find him. She sat up, almost heart-broken, to await his return; but midnight came and brought no husband. Just before the dawn of day, she heard his tramp on the stairs, and he came staggering into the room. He saw nothing unusual, and as she perceived he was drunk, it was of no use to tell him, and he finally threw himself on the bed to sleep away his drunkenness. When he came to himself, and learned their calamity, he seemed to gaze stupidly about him, and only made the remark: "Well, I never expected we should raise either of 'em;" and, without a tear or look upon the darling who was in her death-sleep, he ate what his wife had prepared for him, and sauntered out.

The second day after the child's death, the mother inquired if he had made any arrangements for Fanny's burial. "No," snarled he; "I've got nothing to bury her with. The city must do it." "O, Fanny," said the agonised mother, "must your dear, little form be laid in a rough, pine box, and you be huddled off to a lonely place among the vilest of the vile, where none can ever find your grave!"

"It 'll affect her little, I reckon," said the husband in reply; "she'll sleep as well among the poor and the vile as in a marble tomb. It matters little what becomes of the body."

"Don't say anything more," said Ellen, shuddering, and covering her face with her hands; and she wept and kissed the dear, unconscious child who had been such a blessing to her, and wished she could die and be buried with her, and shield her by her arms in the grave.

But there was no alternative. Moulton had no money, and, although Ellen mourned in shame and mortification, the city were applied to for a burial.

At the appointed time the hearse, a mere cart, drove up, and the rough coffin was taken out. Ellen burst into a fresh flood of tears as she saw this rough receptacle for all that was left of Fanny. The man who was sent by the city was a rough, unfeeling man, and half-drunk.

"I wish you'd hurry the gal into the coffin," said he; "I've got three or four more to bury to-night, and have no time to waste."

The neighbour laid a little roll of cotton cloth at the head of the coffin, and then gently and carefully lifted up the dead child, with its golden curls falling around, and stooped to the floor, where the man had placed the coffin, to lay it in.

The coffin was nailed up and put into the cart, and the man took his seat to drive off.

"Wait," said Mrs. Moulton, authoritatively, "till I put on my bonnet, that I may go with you."

"It's too far for a woman to walk," said the man; "it's three miles in the hot sun. Where's your husband?"

"He went out," replied Ellen, blushing, "and he said he would be here when you came; can't you wait?"

"No, not another minute," said the impatient man; "I've been hindered too long already. Here, jump in."

Ellen told him she would walk and keep up.—He told her she could not, but she refused to ride. He drove on, and Ellen kept near on the side-walk, with difficulty. The neighbour took Lizzie, and the sorrowful mourner, the unfeeling driver, and the dead child went on. It was with the greatest effort that Ellen kept within sight of the cart. She sometimes almost ran. The driver whipped up and rattled along, unmindful of that pale, gentle mother, and the clattering of the jolted coffin, till, finally, nearly losing sight of her, he stopped a moment, and told her when she came up, "she'd better go back or get into the cart." She told him decidedly, she would know where her child was buried and would see it done; and, becoming convinced that she never could walk, she got into the cart, and pulling her veil over her face, and putting one arm over the coffin to steady it, they went on in silence.

O how the tears flowed down Ellen's cheeks! O how conscience brought up to her memory that whisper that warned her against marrying an unprincipled man. "O Ellen, you'll be sorry for this!"

They reached the place. The grave was dug, and a man was there waiting to cover it up. Through carelessness, the driver let the coffin fall as he was taking it out, and, nearer dead than alive, after seeing the grave covered, and putting up a board she found near to mark it, Ellen seated herself again in the cart and was driven toward home. When within half a mile, she alighted and walked. Her husband had not returned, nor did he come till near morning. He seemed to have given himself up to the Evil One. The next day he was taken down with yellow fever, and died in a week's time.

Ellen wrote to Lucy, and when Captain Robbins heard of her troubles, he relented, and the whole family insisted that he should go after her and bring her home. He did so, and in due time Ellen Robbins, sorrowful but wiser than when she left home, returned again to the bosom of her friends, with her little Lizzie.

* * * * * * * *

After a retrospective glance at a few of the characters to whom you have been introduced, gentle reader, I must bid you farewell. Little was seen of Reynolds in C——, after the scene of the tenth of December. He left shortly after for parts unknown.

At the end of two years, Mr. Barlow returned from Europe, an altered man in his religious views and feelings. Mr. May and Lucy were both satisfied of the reality of a change in him, and, in about six months after his return, the village of C—— turned out *en masse* one lovely morning to witness the bridal of the favourite of the parish in the old meeting-house. Lucy married with the blessing of God and man upon her.

"Whose house," said I, as I wandered through the village five years after

I had left it for the South, "is that sweet little new cottage peeping out from the trees—a model of taste and refinement?"

"Tom Sumner lives there," said my informant. "He married Julia Marvin four years ago."

"And what became of his two sisters?" I inquired.

"Why, the old General," said my companion, "consented to Maria's marriage with the Doctor, when he found that either Death or the Doctor must have her. But he consented almost too late. She was in a consumption when she married, and died in a year after. And Anna," added my friend, laughing, "married a minister after all. The old General became so alarmed at Maria's early death, which he attributed to his refusal to sanction their union, that he allowed her to marry the clergyman of a neighbouring town."

"Is Grenville married?" I asked.

"O yes," replied he; "he committed matrimony, I should think, nearly five years ago. Ellen Brown makes him a noble wife."

"Well," said I, with animation, "what became of the three Robbins girls?"

"Fanny and Martha are old maids," replied my friend, "fishing for husbands yet, in fear and trembling, lest their harvest is past, and they—shall not be married. They have some glorious nibbles, occasionally, I believe. Susan married Mr. Welbourne, a dissipated, worthless man, of whom she was heartily ashamed, and whom she most thoroughly despised a year after her marriage."

"Did Mr. Johnson marry Miss Sinclair?" I inquired.

"Yes, long ago, and they make a very happy couple."

"Well, pray tell me," continued I, "whether Professor La Fontaine is here yet?"

"O no," my friend remarked. "The Trustees of the Academy soon dismissed him, and put in his place a man with 'fewer maggots' in his head. Miss Farley, whom you knew, became entirely deranged, and is now in the Insane Asylum in Worcester. Her derangement was occasioned entirely by listening to and imbibing some of his monstrous absurdities. Amelia Randolph married quite a respectable man about a year after her thoughtless mock-marriage to Irving. But Irving has never allowed her to live in peace. He declares they were legally married, as I suppose they truly were, and is constantly threatening to sue her for a breach of the seventh commandment. Her frolicsome wedding has been an unending source of mortification and vexation. I don't know how the case will end."

"Is Aunt Kizzy alive yet?" I asked.

"O, yes," said he, "and as lively as ever. She is always in the 'meetin' 'us' by the time the first bell has done ringing—a most devout worshipper. She busies herself about parish and family matters as much as ever, and her prophecies all come to pass—so people say."

THE END.