

ARAPHEL;

OR,

THE FALLING STARS OF 1833:

A STORY OF EVOLUTION.

BY

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PREFACE.

Some time since a volume made its appearance in the literary world, bearing the title of "Fiery Trials; or, a Story of an Infidel's Family," which was favorably received by the reading public. Owing to its very flattering reception, the Author feels encouraged to send forth another volume as a companion to the first, discussing Christianity from another standpoint.

Many objections are now urged by unbelievers against the Bible, because of an imaginary conflict between Science and God's Word. But one cannot be opposed to the other, if the Bible is a Divine Revelation. Of course, if it can be proved that there is a palpable antagonism between what we Christians regard as the Book of God and the revelations of Geology, we will be under the necessity of renouncing it, no matter how prominent a place it may occupy in our affections. We would be foolish, indeed, to cling knowingly and wilfully to an error; nothing could possibly be gained by it. Some say that the Bible is a good thing for human society, whether it was given by Divine Inspiration or not. But we are not prepared to endorse any such proposition. Error never can be better than Truth, as is abundantly verified by all history. We do not hesitate to affirm that Truth must always be accepted, whatever it may be. The man who knowingly perpetrates error is false to himself and is an enemy to his race. "Pious frauds" can never serve any good purpose. If Moses, therefore, professing to speak authoritatively, under the guidance of the Supreme Being, can be convicted of making statements which are evidently false, then

Moses must be rejected. The great Creator can never require us to believe a falsehood. If, therefore, the Bible is nothing but a human production, we are under no obligations to believe it and waste our time, energy and money in sending it to heathen nations ; for we are only propagating error.

Unbelieving Scientists are making every possible effort to destroy the Christian's faith in the Bible. For this purpose they point with unholy glee and derisive cachinnation to the developments of geology, and claim that it demonstrates, beyond all dispute, that Moses was an impostor. Many, calling themselves Evolutionists, are endeavoring to eliminate such a God as the Christian worships from the work of Creation, and teach that the present order of things is the result of only Natural Forces.

The object of this volume is to show that there is no conflict between the Bible and Science. To make the discussion as interesting as possible, it is mingled with the incidents of a story, which we assure the reader is *founded on facts*. The Author flatters himself that, by avoiding the use of all technical scientific terms, and taking a *common-sense* view of the subject, he has made Evolution intelligible to all classes of readers. This volume, like its predecessor, is not intended for learned scientists, but for those who have not time to take up exhaustive works on scientific subjects ; also, for those who are devoted to light literature. It is believed that this story will prove as interesting to the average Novel reader as any of those *trashy* tales whose only object is to enable the idler to kill time. In conclusion, we have only to say that no person, old or young, need have the slightest fear that his morals will suffer from an attentive perusal of "Araphel." THE AUTHOR.

SARDIS, MISS., January, 1884.

ARAPHEL.

CHAPTER I.

THE ROBBERY.

"The great King of kings
Hath in the table of His law commanded
That thou shalt do no murder; wilt thou then spurn at His edict,
and fulfill a man's?"

"Halt!"

The word was uttered in a quick, sharp, and yet strangely tremulous tone, by a youth who immediately emerged from a thicket bordering the highway.

The occurrence which is now to be related transpired at an early day, in one of the wildest portions of the State of Virginia.

The road along which the "halted" traveler was leisurely pursuing his way ran through a dense forest, and wound about in vexing tortuosity; that is, to a man who might be in haste to reach his journey's end. There was no human habitation near; for the country was, as yet, sparsely settled, as no necessity had driven men to seek cheap lands in those localities which were far away from the hum of civilization. No sound disturbed the dull monotony of the wilderness, except the occasional chirp of a bird, or the wail of the breeze as it forced a passage through the serried branches of the trees. Often nothing could be heard by the solitary traveler, save the foot-fall of the animal he rode. The gloomy scenery, unbroken by a single spot beautified by the hand of art, was sufficient to engender a feeling of loneliness in any one who had to make a journey through this part of Virginia. The road was confined within narrow limits

by the tall cane that grew in spontaneous exuberance on either side, and which, in many places, formed a complete arch over it. One could not well prevent the entrance of the thought into his mind, as he slowly wended his way through the black mud and across unsightly sloughs covered with a greenish scum, that this uninhabited forest would be a suitable *rendezvous* for robbers and horse-thieves.

This thought would be stimulated to greater and more unpleasant vividness if he had ever heard the stories which were afloat in the peopled localities, in regard to several persons who had been dismounted in that same forest, and left to make the rest of their way in the capacity of pedestrians. It was also reported that some who had started through, like the foolish fly that went into the cunning spider's pretty parlor, "never came *out* again," and no trace of them had ever been discovered. Yet this was the public highway, which, however, was not in those days very frequently traveled, as people generally preferred some other route, unless it would subject them to too great inconvenience and loss of time.

The traveler to whom a brief reference has already been made may have been indulging in disagreeable reflections aroused by the stories alluded to above when his journey was so unceremoniously interrupted. He was a young man, dressed in a plain suit of black cloth, and was mounted on a noble horse, whose appearance was sufficient to tempt the cupidity of any thief that had even a cursory view of the animal. The saddle-bags on which he sat, together with the blanket and umbrella, his dress and his general air, indicated that he was a preacher of some sort. At the word "halt," so rudely breaking in upon his meditations, he promptly checked his horse, and was immediately confronted with the

youth and two other persons—one a rough-looking old man, with face almost hidden by huge, shaggy whiskers, while uncombed hair, considerably flecked with white, hung in tangled masses down to his shoulders. The other was on the “shady side” of forty, to whom the brief description of his companion will partially apply. Withal they were two such men as no unarmed person would care to encounter in such a place as that where the preacher was commanded to pause. One glance at the old man’s face especially convinced the minister that an appeal to him for mercy would be in vain, if the robber had determined upon the commission of murder. But the countenance of the youth presented a most remarkable contrast to the faces of his companions in wickedness. In his personal appearance there was not visible a single mark of the desperado or villain. The habitual expression upon his beardless face was one of benevolence and kindness. Yet he had sprung into the road, with gun in hand, and pronounced the word “halt,” so as both to startle and confuse the minister, by reason of the strange lack of congruity between the youth’s physiognomy and intonation.

“Dismount!” cried the old man, sternly, “and be quick about it, too.”

The preacher obeyed without the utterance of a word, rapidly coming to the conclusion that it would be prudent to maintain profound silence, at least, till he should ascertain the purpose of his captors. As he had no arms, he knew it would be foolish to offer resistance to three men clenching deadly weapons in their hands. He was not kept in ignorance as to their object any great length of time.

“We want your money,” said the old man, “and you may as well give it up quietly.”

Upon hearing this demand, something akin to a smile

played over the preacher's face. The idea of practicing robbery upon a man who had scarcely enough to pay for his supper, seemed to be ridiculously preposterous.

"Money!" he said, "why, gentlemen, may be you have read in your Latin readers, when you were school-boys, '*Cantabit vacuus coram latrone viator.*' I did not know what it meant when I was a boy at school. But now I find that 'I can sing in the presence of a robber,' which is the meaning of the Latin, as you know, if you have ever studied that language. But, suppose you rob me, I tell you that you will not be compensated for the violence done to your conscience, which ought to be void of offence toward God and man."

"Stop your foolishness," fiercely exclaimed the old man, "and hand over your money, or you'll be a dead man in less than no time. I mean business."

"So do I," calmly replied the preacher, thrusting his hand into his coat pocket, drawing forth a purse, which was the fashion in those days, and delivering it to the robber.

"In that purse," he said, "you will find exactly four shillings. So, I can say, in the language of a famous poet, taking it in its literal sense, 'who steals my purse, steals trash.' That is all I have."

On hearing this the old man looked at him in amazement, conjoined with wrath, and exclaimed, in fierce tones—

"Look here, I want no foolishness. Where is all them taxes you've bin collectin'? How can you tell such a lie, when you know you'll be caught in it?"

"Taxes!" exclaimed the preacher, now exhibiting astonishment in his turn.

"Yes, taxes—taxes. You understand very well what I mean. You know you're the sheriff, and've bin collectin' taxes; and now you stand up starin' at us as

if you was surprised, and declarin' that you've not got but four shillins. Fork over, or I'll blow your brains out in two minits."

At once the preacher took in the situation. Here, evidently, was a case of mistaken identity, and he thought he would soon extricate himself from a difficulty by convincing his captors of their misapprehension.

"In less than two minutes, the space of time in which you have threatened to be guilty of the effusion of human blood, you can satisfy yourselves that I am not the man you seek. I am not the sheriff of this county, as you seem to suppose; but I am an impecunious preacher in search of lost sheep; and, if I am not greatly mistaken, I have found some in the wilderness."

"You're a rare bird, I declar'," said the old man, with a horrid grin. "You ken tell the biggest lie with the boldest face, ever I seed. But 'taint no use foolin' with you. Jim," he continued, turning to the middle-aged freebooter, "take his saddle-bags and haul out that tax money."

"Certainly; take them, and search to your heart's content. You will obtain sufficient evidence to convince any intelligent and unprejudiced man that the statement I have made is as true as the gospel I preach to ruined sinners."

"You've got a mighty strange lingo," said the old man, "for a sheriff, and 'specially under sich circumstances as these is."

"I speak words of truth and soberness, and what I have stated will soon be verified by a practical and satisfactory demonstration. See for yourself."

As the minister said this, the contents of his saddle-bags lay upon the ground. Nothing had been found, except a garment or two for underwear, a pocket Bible,

and a small hymn book. At the conclusion of the search, the old man seemed to be in deep perplexity. He turned his gaze upon the preacher, and, without the least regard to the rules of etiquette, examined his face and form with the most rigid scrutiny.

"I'd've sworn you was the sheriff; but it seems as how you ain't. It won't do to stand here in the road no longer, though. We'll move a short distance in the forest."

"But, if you have discovered your error, why detain me longer," asked the preacher. "Let me pursue my journey in peace."

"Do you take me fur a fool?" asked the old man, exhibiting anger. "Do as I tell you. Take this path."

The preacher, seeing that resistance would be in vain, turned aside, as he was directed, into a narrow path that ran off at right angles from the highway. The party moved on in silence till, in a few moments, they paused on the margin of a foul-looking slough, teeming with those kinds of animals whose natures were adapted to its filthy waters. The conduct of his captors, and the dismal appearance of the spot, caused the most fearful suspicions to creep through the preacher's mind. But, presently, the silence was broken.

"Preacher," said the old man, in a firm, stern voice, "it's well you're ready to die at a minit's warnin' an' hain't got no preparations to make. But if you want to put up a pra'r before you go to hev'n, be quick about it. We hain't got no time to lose. Be quick, I say."

"In God's name," exclaimed the minister, now thoroughly awakened to a sense of the awfulness of the situation, "you certainly don't intend to murder me in cold blood!"

"Cold blood or warm blood, you've got to die. So, if you want to say your pra'rs, be at it."

"Why, in the name of my God, I ask you, what have I done to deserve death? If you want my horse, take him, and let me go."

"Your hoss is not what we're so much concerned about jist now. You've got our secret, an' it'll never do to turn you loose. If we was to do so, you'd be certain to blab and hev the whole country after us in less'n twenty-four hours. So, say your prar's, if you want to, but make 'em short."

"Oh!" cried the minister, "spare my life. Why take the life of one who has never done you harm, and whose sole business it is to preach the gospel of peace to ruined man. As you hope for mercy at the hands of a just God, show it to the humblest of His ambassadors. Do not, I pray you, imbrue your hands in the blood of an inoffensive fellow being. If you are not lost to all the better feelings of the human heart, spare my life."

"Dry up!" exclaimed the old man, seeming to be utterly impervious to this earnest appeal. "I tell you, if you want to say your pra'rs, git at it. We hain't got no time to fool away."

The preacher felt that it would be of no avail to beg for mercy at the hands of the heartless robber; therefore, he could only fall back upon his faith, and try the efficacy of prayer.

"May I pray aloud?" he asked.

"I ain't a caring, jest so you'll be quick about it. Be ready," he continued, addressing himself to the youth, "and shoot him as soon as he's through." The young man made no reply, but stood looking on the ground.

The preacher knelt down and began pleading, in a low tone, at the Throne of Grace. He had begged for his life with all the earnestness of a man who did not wish to die, notwithstanding that he may have been fully pre-

pared to meet his God. His last and only hope was now in an appeal to the great Protector above, and in that he had not lost all hope. Concentrating, as much as the awful circumstances would allow, all the powers of his soul upon the subject which would naturally arise out of his critical situation, he pleaded with the Almighty Father. He prayed for the robbers—that they might be caused to reflect upon the sinfulness of the horrid crime which they were about to perpetrate; if their consciences were not seared, “as with a hot iron,” that they might recall the days when they were as young as the boy in company with them, and when they would have shrunk back in horror from the commission of the deed of blood which they seemed determined to perform. He prayed especially for the youth, whose mother might now be alive, and at whose feet he may have knelt and offered up his evening prayer. He asked God, if it were in accordance with his will, to interfere, even at the last moment, and prevent these men from executing their awful and bloody purpose. He prayed in this way for at least ten minutes, as the robbers manifested no disposition to interrupt him. Suddenly the minister rose to his feet, and looked as though he did not expect to be put to death, at least on that occasion.

“Kneel down!” exclaimed the old man, in a tone which plainly indicated that he had not been in the least affected by the prayer. Yet this stern command did not drive hope from the preacher’s heart. He had been narrowly and eagerly watching the countenances of his three captors; but it was evident that he could hope for no mercy from the old man, whose heart appeared to be made of adamant. The preacher again fell on his knees.

“Shoot him quick,” said the old man to the youth, who appeared to be lost in thought.

"I can't do it," replied the youth, in a quivering voice.

"But you *must*," said the old man, with fierceness. "You promised that you'd do it, if it was necessary."

"You misunderstood, if you thought I promised to do any such thing. But even if I had promised, according to what you say yourself, it had to be necessary. I don't think this is necessary. Whether it is or not, I *can't* and I *won't* shoot a preacher."

"But he must be killed," said the old man, in vexation and anger, "or he'll go right straight and report on us, an' hev us all arrested, an' hung, or sent to the penitentiary." Saying which, he turned to the middle-aged robber, and said—

"Here, Jim, shoot him, and put an end to the matter. Over there in the slough he won't tell no tales."

The man addressed, without speaking, slowly raised his pistol, as if to comply with the leader's order. The preacher looked him squarely in the face, feeling that the crisis of the affair was now reached. The middle-aged man began slowly to raise his pistol, but he exhibited such plain indications of hesitation and agitation that the preacher felt very little alarm. He was not surprised, therefore, when the robber suddenly lowered his arm and exclaimed—

"I can't do it! I can't do it!"

"Git out of the way, then," cried the old man, in anger; "I'll soon fix him."

There was murder in his eye, and the preacher rapidly arrived at the conclusion that he had better make one more effort to save his life. He had every reason to believe that if the old robber were let alone, conscience, if not utterly destroyed in him, would not operate as it had done in his younger associates in crime. Thus far the hardened wretch had not manifested the first symp-

tom of mercy or sympathy. It seemed that no appeal could reach his obdurate heart. With a sudden display of an indisposition to die, certainly warranted by the criticalness of his situation, the preacher cried out, in earnest but subdued tones, sufficient to touch any heart, unless lost to all moral sensibility—

“In God’s name—in the name of your mother, young man, interfere; suffer not innocent blood to be shed. Save me! Oh, save me!”

The old robber was in the act of raising his pistol, when the youth sprang in front of him, with pistol in hand, and said—

“Oh, don’t murder him in this horrid way! Why kill a poor, peaceable preacher, in cold blood?”

At this juncture the middle-aged man spoke:—

“I agree with the boy. I don’t see any use of puttin’ this poor preacher to death. I don’t feel like we ought to do it. Besides, I’m afraid it’ll work trouble for us. You may be certain the people he preaches to will stir up the whole country, and it’ll be hard for us to escape; and, if we’re caught, then we may as well bid farewell to this world.”

“The whole country’ll be up in arms, anyhow, if we rob the sheriff.”

“Yes; but we won’t have to kill the sheriff. I’ll tell you, if we are picked up, I don’t want to be tried for murder. If we only rob we may stand a good chance to escape with our necks; but if it’s proved on us that we killed a poor preacher, whose purse was empty, we’ll hang, shore. Oh, no,” continued the middle-aged man, with emphasis, “I can’t consent to see this feller killed.”

“Well,” said the old man, rather testily, “what shall we do, then? Turn the feller loose? He’ll hev us hunted down like wile varmints jest as soon as he gits to the fust town. I wouldn’t keer fur his blabbin, if we’d

got our money ; but this feller 'll report on us before we can ketch the sheriff, an' then we'll've all our trouble fur nothin'."

"I'll tell you what we ken do," said the middle-aged man, as a happy thought seemed to strike him, which he believed would, if put into execution, solve the difficult and serious problem.

"What's that? Let's hev it."

"Let's swar 'im on his Bible, and let 'im go. It's agin his religion to tell a lie, and he looks and talks like he mout be a good Christian. I don't bl'ieve he'll blab if he takes oath on that Bible o' his that he won't do it."

"Well, Mr. Preacher," said the old man, "you've hearn what he says about you and that Bible o' yourn. What do you say? If we turn you loose, arter swarin' you on that book, will you report on us?"

"No," was the reply.

"Are you willin' to swar to it?"

"Yes."

"On that Bible o' yourn?"

"Yes."

"I know one thing fur certain," answered the old man, "and that is, dead men tell no tales. But I s'pose we'll hev to give you your liberty. Now swar on this book that you'll never report on us."

The preacher did as he was required.

"Kiss the book."

This was also done.

"Now," asked the old man, "do you bl'ieve that if you was to break your oath, you could ever go to that hev'n which you rants about on Sundays?"

"God's mercy is very great," was the answer.

"What am I to understand by that?" asked the old man, bestowing on him such a look of ferocity that the preacher perceived he could not be trifled with. "I

want no dodgin' the question. What do you mean? Do you say that you could go to hev'n arter you're guilty of perj'ry?"

"I have taken the oath which you have required of me, in good faith. It is not my intention to violate it. What more can I do?"

"If you think you ken break your oath, and go to hev'n all the same, what's the use of any oath."

"But I do not intend to break it. You have asked a difficult question, for I do not know how far a man can go in sin before he is beyond the reach of divine mercy. Some of the people to whom I preach, I suppose, are guilty of perjury. Now would you have me tell them that their salvation is impossible? I do not want to tell you a falsehood, and that is the reason why I answered your question as I did."

"I think," said the middle-aged man, "this fellow is honest; because if he did n't mind tellin' a lie, he mout her said 'yes' to your question. I ble've he'll do."

"I don't much like the thing," replied the old man, "but the rascal can out-argue us. I never wuz much at argyfyin' questions."

"Don't you see," replied the middle-aged man, "that the feller is honest, or he'd hev said 'yes' right away when you put your question?"

"Mebbe so. But see here, preacher, hev you got the slightest notion of reportin' on us when you ar' gone?"

"No; I have not. I have taken a solemn oath to that effect, and called the God whom I serve to witness. What more can you ask?"

"I'm afeerd you're a dodgin' the pint somehow or 'nother."

"I told you as plainly as I possibly could that I intend to keep the oath."

"I think," spoke up the middle-aged man, "that that's enough. Let 'im go."

"Well, be off with you, preacher, and mind you, if you report on us, and I ever lay hands on you agin, you'll be a dead man, as shore as thar's a God; you hear?"

"I understand," replied the preacher.

"Well, be off, and watch your tongue."

The minister was led back to the highway, where he mounted his horse, and rode forth from the jaws of death. As he traveled along he began to reflect upon what a strange and unfortunate position he was in. What would become of the sheriff, for whom the robbers were waiting? The question almost made him tremble. If possible, ought he not to warn the officer? From the treatment which he himself had received, there was every reason to believe that the old man would murder the sheriff, if there should be any show of resistance. Was it not his duty to make an effort to save the life of a human being? But the perplexing question was, what could he do? He had taken a solemn oath that he would not reveal the affair in which he had stood face to face with death. What must he do? The preacher was in deep trouble and anxiety, as he rode, as rapidly as possible, through the gloomy wilderness.

In a state of great perplexity he arrived at the village, which was the end of his present journey, in about three hours after he had so narrowly escaped with his life. In this village there dwelt a superannuated minister, whose white, thin hairs and wrinkled face made the impression on the observer's mind that this man of God, worn out in the Master's service, was destined soon to depart to the city of Eternal Silence. The young preacher resolved forthwith to consult this holy man, who was patiently waiting to be called up higher, in

regard to the awful dilemma in which he found himself. He determined to abide by this man's decision, whatever it might be, inasmuch as his wisdom and piety were solidified by experience; no doubt, therefore, he was qualified to solve intricate questions of ethics. Accordingly, he sought the old minister's residence, a description of which, so *very, very* humble in its general appearance and surroundings, would probably serve no other purpose than to discompose the reader's tranquillity. But the truth is, the aged soldier of the Cross, when no longer capable of service, had been turned out "on the commons," to gain a subsistence as best he could. He and his wife, both bending under the accumulated infirmities of many years, were living in a dilapidated building, which, being no longer capable of securing rent to enlarge the owner's purse, had been kindly tendered to the aged couple, as a temporary resting place, till they could depart to the Promised Land, where want and suffering are unknown. The decrepid pair were subsisting on the miserable pittance allowed by the Church, and on the precarious charities offered occasionally by those who took pity on the old couple, whose daily prayer was, "Now, Lord, let thy servant depart in peace." But why enter into the sad particulars of this man's history, across whose pathway the shadows of eternity were growing darker and darker, and on whose furrowed brow the eye of Faith could perceive the reflected coruscations from the brilliant gems sparkling in his crown of everlasting glory? He was but a true type of hundreds who drag out a wretched physical existence, in poverty, neglect and want. The consolation of these soldiers of the Cross, worn out in battles with the powers of darkness, cast off to die in some obscure corner, is derived from the reflection that their last years, embittered by sorrow arising from the

consciousness of neglect, will soon pass away, and then they will enter into the enjoyment of an eternal inheritance. Why the Church makes no better provision for the maintenance of such men, perhaps, it is useless to attempt to assign reasons. But, probably, it is time to bring this digression to a close.

The young preacher called at the humble dwelling of the old "Father in Israel," and, as soon as he could, made a hypothesis, which embraced the actual circumstances whose details have been previously given.

"Now," he said, "Father Gregg, how ought a man to act, if he were placed in just such circumstances?"

"What reason can you have, my dear young brother, for propounding such a question, and with such deep interest as you manifest? If it is only a hypothetical case, why should I trouble my old brain in order to frame a proper answer?"

"I have no desire," replied the young minister, "to engage you in a useless discussion of abstract questions. But I want you to answer me, Father Gregg, with 'the fear of God before your eyes.' I may or may not give you my reason; that depends on the nature of your answer to my question. How would *you* act if you were placed in the precise circumstances which I have only supposed?"

The young preacher waited in anxiety, which he could scarcely conceal, for the venerable father's reply.

"I will answer you candidly," said the old man, after a pause, "no matter what may be your reason for asking such a question. If I were placed in the circumstances described by you, I would go to the civil authorities, and report just what had happened. I do not think I would be obliged to keep an oath administered in such a manner. I would regard it as forced upon me."

"Do you think," interrupted the young man, "that

violating the oath would not be perjury in the sight of God?"

"I know that something can be said on both sides of the question; but my opinion is that no oath is binding when one is compelled to take it."

"Would you consider a threat to take one's life as compulsion?"

"Yes, Brother, I would, if I had sufficient reason to believe that the threat would certainly be executed."

"Since such is your opinion, Father, I will tell you that the circumstances which I supposed, actually occurred, not more than four or five hours since, and I am the unfortunate man who took the oath, in order to save my life. There was no harm in that; but if I report on the robbers I must violate an oath that I took in good faith. There was no secret evasion of mind in me whatever. Do you say, Father, that I would be acting right in the sight of God to break it?"

"I have already expressed my opinion, Brother. Suppose you keep faith with the robbers, the sheriff may lose his life, even if he has not already been murdered, and many other persons may, in the future, fall victims to the rapacity of these same villains. If I were in your place I should at once report to the civil authorities, and let those wicked men be arrested and suffer the penalties of their crimes."

"Do you think that God would forgive me if I were to follow your advice?"

"According to my opinion there is nothing to forgive, as I do not consider the oath as binding."

"Well," replied the young preacher, rising, "there is no time to be lost. I will immediately act upon your advice. But I will tell you, Father Gregg, I do not like the idea of violating my oath. The thought is, somehow, repulsive to my conscience."

"You asked for my candid opinion, Brother, and I have expressed it. I have told you how I would act; but, of course, if you take the opposite view, you can do as you please."

"No, Father; I had determined to abide by your decision before I called. You are much older than I, and are better qualified, by your long experience, to settle this question than I am. Therefore, I will go at once and notify the proper persons, and if I am wrong, may God forgive me."

No one could expect to find, in a work like this, any extended discussion of questions pertaining to the domain of moral philosophy.* Whether the young man was right in following the counsel given by the aged minister must, at present, be left with the reader to determine. At any rate, he forthwith reported the circumstances already detailed, to the proper officers. In a short time after he had told his story there was considerable commotion in the little village. Not much time elapsed before fifteen or twenty men, well mounted and heavily armed, were seen rapidly traveling toward the spot which had well-nigh been witness to an awful tragedy. The preacher, with considerable reluctance, went along, as a pilot to the *posse*. The truth was, his conscience was smiting him, notwithstanding the fact that he was acting in accordance with the advice of such a wise and pious counsellor as Father Gregg; and, it may be proper here to state that the part which he took in this transaction led to a rather lamentable

* The incidents of this chapter were related to the author, when he was a boy, as actual occurrences. They are, therefore, presented not as fictitious. Good old "Father Gregg," as we have designated him, gave the young preacher the very advice as related above. The author of this story must not, therefore, be held responsible for "Father Gregg's" opinion; for he has but detailed real events, as told to him by a truthful friend, who is now dead.

consequence, as will be shown in the progress of this story.

In about two hours the party were near to an old cabin that stood not far from the roadside, and less than a mile from the spot where the young preacher had been so unceremoniously interrupted in his journey. It had not been inhabited for several years, owing to the fact that its gloomy isolation, intensified by its proximity to the wild and fearful swamp, made such an impression on the minds of the inmates that they had concluded to move nearer to the haunts of civilization. At least so stated the former owner, who was now with the *posse*, and who resided near the village. This dilapidated building stood on a hill, one of a range that performed the important service of resisting further encroachments of the uninhabitable swamp upon the rights of civilization. Bushes had grown up around it in such rich profusion that the traveler, unless a very close observer, would not suppose that he was near a spot where human beings had once dwelt. It was now nightfall, and the party were within a few hundred yards of the abandoned cabin. The former owner suggested to the leader of the *posse* that the robbers might take shelter for the night in his former residence, and, as it was now dark, he proposed to go alone, in order to make a reconnoissance. This proposition being acceded to, the owner approached near enough to perceive a light glimmering through the gaping apertures of the residence which he had once occupied. In a few moments he reported his discovery to the leader, and a plan of attack was formed without delay. Dismounting, the party crept through the bushes, with as little noise as possible, and surrounded the cabin. They were not disappointed, for the three robbers were within, who, perceiving the numbers opposed to them, surrendered without daring to offer the least resistance.

The old robber caught sight of the preacher in the building, and looked at him with an expression of scorn ; but he said nothing, except to mutter to himself : " I mout hev know'd better."

It would serve no purpose essential to this story, to enter into any extended account of the trial of the robbers. It is sufficient to say that at the meeting of the next court the old man was sentenced to the penitentiary for life ; the middle-aged one for twenty years ; the youth, for whom there was aroused considerable sympathy in the public mind, on account of his air of sincere penitence and the preacher's testimony in the case, was sentenced for one year. But he had been found in bad company, and stern justice could not demand less punishment for this offence against her dignity.

CHAPTER II.

THE QUILTING.

"Oh, horror! horror! after this alliance,
Let tigers match with hinds, and wolves with sheep,
And every creature couple with its foe."

Some years have passed away since the occurrence of the events narrated in the preceding chapter, and attention must now be directed to scenes of a far different and less tragical character. We must transport ourselves, on the wings of imagination, to a great distance from Virginia, with its gloomy swamp. Presently we find ourselves in the State of Mississippi, in a little village, which shall be nameless, for reasons that may or may not be obvious. This town, at the time the present story occurred, was distinguished for nothing—not even a romantic situation, unless a fertile and extravagant imagination could perceive traces of beauty and grandeur on the top of a red hill that overlooked an ordinary creek bottom, such as can be found almost anywhere in Mississippi. On the loftiest peak of this hill stood the court house, towering high above all other buildings in the village. At this time a railroad runs at the foot of the hill, which has had the effect of considerably enlarging and changing the general aspect of the place. Like many other towns near which the iron horse momentarily halts for the convenience of travelers, it presents the appearance of (for want of a more appropriate simile) "a piece of new cloth sewed to an old garment." From what has just been said it must not be supposed, for a moment, that ——— was or is lacking in those elements which enter into the constitution of a respectable town.

But just now we are more concerned with a scene

which was displayed in a private house in the town, than with a geographical description of the little "city set upon a hill." Let a cottage now present itself to the eye of imagination—a cottage which once had an actual existence, but is now "numbered with the things that were"—in which some eight or ten ladies, of various ages and various conditions of life, were assembled around the four sides of a "quilt," which was stretched between the "frames," as they were then called. These females were ranged around it, as close together as convenience would allow, and were making their needles fly at a rate which would bring their work to completion before nightfall.

The present generation may not know the signification of the word "quilting." Of course, they cannot be supposed ignorant of the etymological derivation of the term; but they know nothing of the possibilities of social pleasures that were once wrapped up in the word. Enough, however, has been said in the preceding sentences to convey, at least, a faint idea of the process of "quilting."

The numerous inventions of the last thirty or forty years, and even of a shorter period, have abolished many of the customs and industrial operations of our ancestors. Steam has driven most of the latter from the abodes of civilization. The inventive genius of modern man has produced so many labor-saving machines that the industrial contrivances of forty years ago are now regarded as opposed to the revised code of domestic economy. Who can hesitate to say that society has lost something by the extinction of many of the customs of our ancestors, and the abolition of their comparatively rude machines? People now have not as much time at their own disposal as our grandfathers had. Steam, with the inventions that have accompanied it, and some of which

have doubtless proved detrimental to the interests of the poor, keeps them in a state of separation. We prefer the charge against this same tyrannical *steam*, that it is guilty of derogating from human dignity, inasmuch as it causes people to *rush* through every hour of the day, hardly pausing to speak a word of friendship or encouragement to their neighbors. It has had a tendency to make people selfish, exclusive, morosely taciturn. This powerful agent, *steam*, in modern progress and doubtful prosperity, has effected a revolution, which has totally annihilated many interesting social relations and customs. Men and women must now eat, drink, sleep, work, with undignified celerity, in order to keep pace with their severe taskmaster, as exacting as those placed over the down-trodden children of Israel. So much labor is now performed by machinery that workmen are kept in a state of partial isolation from their fellow beings. They have little time to engage in conversation ; for the indefatigable taskmaster is ever near, puffing, blowing, sissing, screeching, and thus crying out in tones louder than those of the overseers of Egypt, "*fulfill your works, your daily tasks.*" One person can now complete a "quilt," whereas it once required eight or ten to perform the same work in a longer time. But it can be said with truth that the eight or ten had more social enjoyment than the one who sits bending over his machine, with his vertebræ in a constant strain, and with eyes, hands, feet all concentrated on the task before him. Amidst the whirr, flutter, whistle, click, clack, clang of machinery any one person sits or stands, as the case may be, like a solitary hermit, though he may be surrounded by hundreds of his fellow beings. Steam grants little time for social intercourse. It was far different some years ago. Our grandmothers regarded a "quilting" more as play than work. While they really assisted a

neighbor, yet this slow process of preparing for the chilling air of winter was the occasion of much social enjoyment and pleasure.

Accordingly, the ladies in the village of ———, which has been so briefly described, were managing to derive great pleasure from the occasion which had brought them from their homes. Their conversation was not of the laborious, constrained and stilted kind; nor did it embrace a great variety of topics; but it was confined chiefly to the affairs of their own town, as they had no railroads, telegraphs, telephones, daily papers, and such like, to furnish the very latest news.

In the course of the day, the part of their conversation which concerns the present story was introduced by an old lady, who was sitting near the fire-place, and sending up volumes of smoke from her stone pipe.

"Have you all heerd about Vallie Vincent and the preacher?" she asked, with that air which indicates that the speaker is in possession of news of an interesting character.

"No;" quickly answered another of the party; "I have not heard anything of a reliable character about them. What do you know, Mrs. Briggs?"

"Well, well; they are a goin' to be married soon?"

"How do you know?" asked another.

"How do I know? Why shouldn't I know? My old man says so—that's how I know; and whatever he says ginirally turns out to be so. I s'pose there can't be no mistake about it."

"I shall never believe it, Mrs. Briggs," said pretty Mary Linden, "till I hear some preacher officiating at the wedding say, 'I now pronounce you husband and wife.' It will take that, or something similar to it, to convince me."

"He'd better take you, Mary, by a long shot, than

Vallie," said old Mrs. Briggs, who was fond of hearing herself talk, whether anybody else was or not.

"If I know myself, Mrs. Briggs," said the beautiful Mary, "I don't think he could get me. I never could be satisfied with such a bundle of solemnities as he is. So, I can assure you, I will never be a rival of Vallie's, that is, if she has really captivated our melancholy preacher; and I would feel sorry for her if she does marry him."

"And I'm sorry, too," interrupted the good old lady, as the smoke continued to curl around her head. She paused and looked over the assembly, as if waiting to be urged for an explanation of her last remark. Seeing that the old lady was disposed to say no more, without solicitation, another, who was curious to know what Mrs. Briggs' reasons were for intimating that the consummation of this marriage might add a small amount to the great ocean of human misery, said—

"Why are you sorry, Mrs. Briggs?"

"Why am I sorry? Why am I sorry?" exclaimed the old lady, in a tone and manner which clearly imported that such an event would be sufficient to arouse pity in the heart of any one who had any regard for a neighbor's welfare. "I'm sorry, because they're bound to make a miser'bl man and wife. Vallie ain't no more fittin' for a preacher's wife than I am; an' I know I ain't fittin' at all, an' never seen the day in my life that I thought I was."

"I think," said Mary Linden, with an arch smile, "that you would have made a very good wife for a preacher."

"La! child, you don't know what you're talkin' about," said the old lady, with a wise shake of the head. "You don't know what qualifications a preacher's wife ought ter have. I tell you there's mighty few women

as is fittin fur sich a station as that ; an' Vallie Vincent is as fur from bein' qualified fur it as any geerl ever I did know."

"What makes her so unfit for it?" asked another, who was listening with a considerable degree of interest to Mrs. Briggs' observations upon the absent object of their conversation.

"What makes her unfit fur it?" exclaimed the old lady, repeating the inquirer's words. "I think there's enough to make her unfittin. Why, in the fust place, she's so awf'ly extravagint, as everybody knows—so much so that she was the cause of her father's breakin' two years gone by ; an' she's bin keepin' up her extravagint ways ever sense, too. She jest keeps her father's nose to the grindstone, poor man. It 'pears he never can git started agin. Well, you all know that sich ways as them don't suit a preacher at all—no, not by a long shot. Gen'r'ly speakin', it's about all that preachers can do to live ; an' some of 'em don't half live, neither. Our preacher is a mighty poor man. He's got nothin' but his sal'ry, an' that ain't enough to support two, by a long shot. It 'ud take mighty close economy to manage on that amount ; an' Vallie, poor thing, don't know the meanin' of that word. But that ain't the wust," continued Mrs. Briggs, after having made a short pause to draw a long breath, "that ain't the wust. She's as wild as a rabbit ; an' she never has professed religion ; an' she's as proud as Lucifer, to boot ; an', in fac', I don't know of a more wicked geerl anywheres than her."

"But, Mrs. Briggs," said another, as soon as the old lady had reached a hiatus, which was rendered necessary by occasional puffing, of a vigorous character, to prevent the extinction of the fire in her pipe, "Miss Vallie may get rid of all these faults. If she marries Mr. Monard, of

course, she will join the church. Her constant association with him will naturally make her a better woman."

"Make her a better woman!" exclaimed Mrs. Briggs. "I'm afeerd of that; because, sayin' nothin' about the faults I've already mentioned, she's got a temper like a wildcat. Grashus me! I never seen the like in my born days. Why, at times she gits perfectly outrageous. I've seen her in her cotantrums myself. O, thar ain't no use talkin'," exclaimed the old lady, with great emphasis, "she won't suit Mr. Monard, never—never; an' her father ought'er not let her marry him. Mr. Vincent ought'er know, as well as I do, that Vallie can't make a good preacher's wife, even if she wanted to. Why, the two is as different as night an' day. He buckles right down to his books; an' Vallie, tho' she's bin a goin' to school a heap, an' ought ter have a good edication, ain't no fittin' companion fur a great scholar, like Mr. Monard is."

"But, Mrs. Briggs," said another of the party, who was not prepared to endorse the old lady's last remark, "you must remember that great scholars don't always want to be talking about books. They're just like other mortals, after all. My husband, you know, is considerable of a scholar, and I'm none at all. I had good opportunities tho', but I didn't improve them; consequently, my education is very limited. But in spite of this, Henry and me have led a mighty happy life ever since we've bin married; and that's nigh on to fifteen years. My man knows I don't have time to read books, even if I had the disposition, which, I acknowledge, I haven't. So we get along just about as well as if both were scholars, or both were green as geese. Henry loves gossip," she said, with a smile, "as well as I do; and when he comes home at night he never says anything about books."

"You and your husband seem to be happy," remarked a maiden lady, over whose head some forty years or more had flown. In fact, no one, with the exception of herself, knew her exact age. Some of her neighbors had made commendable efforts to gratify their curiosity in regard to this subject; but they had been defeated, whether by strategy or not, was not ascertained. "You and your husband seem to be happy; but it appears to me you might make your home more pleasant and attractive, if you could converse with your husband about something else besides chickens, pigs, ducks, and the affairs of your neighbors."

"But Henry," answered the other, who did not seem to take offence at the asperity of this remark, because the maiden lady was a "privileged character" in the village, "don't want to talk about books. He teaches school all day, and when night comes he is sick of books."

"Probably," replied the maiden lady, "he does not like to converse upon literary subjects at home, because there is no one to exchange thoughts with him. He knows that you're ignorant, according to your own confession, in that respect; and so he keeps silent."

"It don't matter," answered the teacher's wife, slightly coloring at this direct thrust, "we never run out of something to talk about, and Henry is satisfied, and I'm satisfied, and I don't think any one ought to try to make us discontented."

"La, bless you! I am not trying to do any such thing as that. I only suggested that you might render yourself more attractive to your husband by cultivating your mind, which is naturally a good one, and you would thus increase your happiness."

"That may be so," rejoined the teacher's wife, whose incipient anger was considerably appeased by the com-

plimentary clause slipped into the maiden lady's apology ; " that may be so ; but it's hard to learn an old dog new tricks, and I s'pose I'll never be any smarter than I am now."

" Vallie Vincent can't never make a good preacher's wife," abruptly interrupted Mrs. Briggs, who did not feel disposed to resign the floor for any great length of time. " She's jest too much of a spoilt child, and if she marries Mr. Monard, an' I reckon thar' ain't much doubt but what she will, I prophesy that thar' will be a miser'bl couple."

" One thing is certain," said the maiden lady, " and that is, she will be compelled to practice a system of the most rigid economy, or Mr. Monard will have to abandon the ministry and devote himself to some other calling."

" I think he ought to abandon the ministry, anyhow, whether he marries or not," said the incorrigible Mary Linden. " He is no more fittin', if you will allow me to use your expressive word, Mrs. Briggs, to preach than I am, and I'm not fittin' at all."

Upon hearing this derogatory remark, Mrs. Briggs removed her pipe from her mouth, and gazed searchingly at the young lady's face.

" Why, Moll Linden ! " she exclaimed, as if horrified, " ain't you afeerd to talk so ? "

" Afraid, Mrs. Briggs ! What am I afraid of ? Mr. Monard is a human being, and has his faults, as other mortals do."

" It's real wicked in you to talk so about Mr. Monard. He's a pious man, and preaches such good and edifyin' sermons, an' no young man could do better, I don't keer whar he comes from."

" I don't know what you call edifying," answered Miss Linden ; " if his aim is to put people to sleep, his sermons are most admirably adapted to that purpose."

At any rate, that is the invariable accompaniment of his preaching. Why, at least half the congregation go sound asleep every Sunday."

"That's because they ain't got the capacity to understand 'im," bluntly replied the old lady, as she vehemently puffed her pipe.

"Anyhow, Mrs. Briggs," said the mischievous Mary, with a certain degree of quizzical impudence, that destroyed the sharpness of her assertion, "I saw you asleep last Sunday."

"You was grievously mistakin' if you thought I was asleep; I don't go to sleep at church. You nee'n't think I was asleep jist because I had my eyes shet."

"Yes; you did have your eyes closed; but you *nodded*, Mrs. Briggs."

"I say; nodded!" exclaimed the old lady, with some manifestation of indignation. "You're a sassy geerl, Moll Linden; you know I didn't nod; but if I had, how come you to be watchin' me? That shows you warn't paying attention to the sermon yo'self."

"Oh! I plead guilty to that charge. I acknowledge that I would've gone to sleep myself, if I had n't been prevented by a sense of shame. I tried to keep awake by looking at other people; but, in spite of all I could do, I would, now and then, with my eyes wide open, lose all consciousness for a moment. Last Sunday I felt, while Mr. Monard was preaching that two-hour sermon, that I would have given worlds for a nap."

"Why, Moll Linden! How wicked you are! I'm shore it was an interesting sermon, an' I don't see why you could n't listen."

"It was as dry as dust to me, and overcharged with opium. If Vallie does marry him, which I seriously doubt, because I think she has too much sense for that; but if she does, and I were in her place, I would make

him quit preaching, or learn to preach better—one or the other. Of all the things in the world deliver me from your poky preachers.”

“Why, Moll,” exclaimed the old lady, raising her spectacles and letting them rest on her brow, and fastening an earnest gaze on Miss Linden’s face, as if to detect the latent source of all this bold wickedness, “you a member of the church, and talk that way! I’m astonished at you. I’m afeerd, child, your heart ain’t exactly right, or you couldn’t talk so.”

“I’m afraid so, too, Mrs. Briggs. I once thought I did have some religion; but since Mr. Monard came here I begin to doubt it. If loving to hear him preach is any test, I must be a backslider. It may be my fault, though; but for the life of me, I can’t feel any interest in his sermons. He has such a way-off-yonder air, and seems to me as if he were talking to the clouds. Why don’t he come down to our level, and talk right straight to us, instead of all around us? It may be, though, he is thinking so much about Vallie he can’t preach. I hope, when they are married, he will make some improvement.”

“Ah!” said the old lady, with a deep-drawn sigh, “I’m afeerd he will do a sight wuss. Vallie will be a mighty clog to the poor man. It almost makes me shudder to think about it.”

“Why, Mrs. Briggs,” remarked the maiden lady, “you talk as if Vallie were a perfect heathen and Amazon. I am sure I like her very much. She certainly is not the very embodiment of all the mean traits of human nature. I don’t think there is a more kind girl in the village. Besides, you must not forget how she has been raised. You know that her father, till two years since, was wealthy, and the consequence was, as it is in all similar cases, she was not raised up to

work. If she does not understand how to economize, it is not her fault. You say she don't know the meaning of the word. I don't think she does, either; for she has never been taught its signification, and you can't blame her for that."

The maiden lady was one who would frequently take either side of a question, for the sake of opposition. Sometimes she would adroitly change her position, if she discovered that people were disposed to agree with her.

"No; I don't blame her for that," replied Mrs. Briggs, "but sense her father broke, she ought'er've learnt something about economy. If she's a goin' to marry Mr. Monard, she'll have to practice it."

"Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof," rejoined the other. "When they are united in marriage, if such is to be the case, she will perceive the necessity of it. She is young, and, of course, she can learn."

"I don't b'leve she will learn, though," replied Mrs. Briggs, who, it seems, was determined to cling to her first opinion, so emphatically expressed. "I tell you again, she can never make a good preacher's wife. She might do very well for some rich man with bushels of money, an' could make plenty more; for it will take a mint to support Vallie, with her extravagant notions. Indeed, tho', I'd pity any man who marries her, rich or poor."

"I think all will be well, if she really loves Mr. Monard."

"But that's another difficulty," said Mrs. Briggs; "for I don't think she does love 'im."

"Why should she marry him, then?" asked Mary Linden.

"Why should she marry 'im? Jest fur the same reasons that many other silly geerls does. They don't know what they're a doin'. They think only of the time when they're to be married. It'll be so nice to

dress up in bridal garments, an' have a fine supper, an' go off somewheres on a bridal 'tower,' or whatever you call it—an' that's about as fur as they ever look ahead."

"Why, Mrs. Briggs," said Miss Linden, "do you think girls have no better sense than that?"

"You may have more sense than that, Moll, an' I b'leve you have. But I'm speakin' of the class that Vallie b'longs to—the gay, light-headed sort. Mr. Monard is a fine lookin' man, an' stands high in society, an' he's a scholar, an' all that; an' I think Vallie imagines she loves 'im."

"How can you tell that she does not love him? What do you judge by?" asked the lively Mary.

"It's impossible she can love 'im. Their dispositions is too unlike. They're no more alike than black an' white is."

"Do you b'leve he loves her?"

"Yes; I'm shore he does, from all I can larn. Mr. Briggs says he's a perfeck fool about her, an' you know he never guesses wrong. I can find out from Briggs whatever is goin' on in town; for he manages to know everybody's business, in order to carry on his own."

"I don't see, though," said Miss Linden, with a little laugh, "what connection the state of Mr. Monard's heart has with Mr. Briggs' commercial transactions."

"I don't know," said the old lady, slowly, "that I exac'ly onderstand you. What do you mean by all them big words?"

"O, nothing of any importance."

At this point, some one of the party suggested that the topic of conversation be changed, as the case of Miss Vincent and Mr. Monard had been discussed till it was no longer amusing or edifying. As this particular "quilting" can have no further interest, it will be dismissed, in order that the parties who are to figure conspicuously in this story may be introduced.

CHAPTER III.

INCOMPATIBILITIES.

"She is a woman, therefore may be woo'd ;
She is a woman, therefore may be won."

No terrestrial subject has occupied a greater share of human thought than that of marriage. The Sacred Word gives its emphatic sanction to this relation when it declares that "marriage is honorable in all." While no one will deny this scriptural proposition, yet experience and observation demonstrate the fact that this estate does not invariably prove a source of happiness to the parties concerned. Young people, especially, before marriage "see through a glass darkly." They do not often pause to consider the obstacles that would render conjugal felicity impossible. Blindly they rush into the marriage relation, impelled by a mere temporary fervor, which is soon obliterated by the stubborn realities of life; and then it is discovered that no real affection, founded on mutual respect and esteem, ever existed. Compatibility of tempers and habits, difference in rearing, incongruity of tastes, are considerations which are too often left out of the question, when there is a calculation of the chances of happiness in a prospective marriage. Often is it the case that young men and young women become foolishly and violently enamored, attracted chiefly by personal appearances, "marry in haste, repent at leisure," when repentance is all in vain. The famous "honeymoon," quickly running through a brief period of elysian glamour, comes to an end; the gloss of novelty is worn off by the ordinary flow of life; the true characters of the parties are unveiled, and there is a sad awakening to the fact that both have made a fearful mistake. Nevertheless, conscious that the union is

unhallowed by true affection, they must dwell together in a state of wretchedness, aggravated by necessary and unavoidable intimacy. Their place of abode (for the word home is not applicable), though it may be a splendid palace, is nothing more than a gilded prison, whose inmates would gladly fly from it, were they not restrained by the barriers of public opinion. They must drag out a miserable existence till the "monster, death," knocks at the door, and puts an end to the contract. While both live there is no remedy, except a resort to the civil law, which breaks the fetters, but cannot remove the disgrace consequent upon a separation. These few observations find at least a partial application in the present chapter; therefore, they may not be out of place as an advisory preface.

Two persons more opposite in tastes and habits could not be found than Valena Vincent and Eldon Monard, whose characters were freely discussed at the "quilting" described in the foregoing chapter. But some little enlargement may be necessary to a full and clear understanding of the present story.

The information has already been given that Mr. Monard was a minister; and the public generally voted him a very "dry" one. That he was an excellent scholar, was a fact assented to without controversy. His whole appearance was that of the diligent and laborious student. In his general manner there was an utter absence of levity or gayety. His features, in repose, indicated the man of stern inflexibility. It was not often that the sober expression of his face was relieved by a smile. Indeed, he seemed to be the very personification of puritanical gravity and dignity. As to personal appearance, in another respect, he was the finest specimen of physical beauty that could be found in his congregation; and some of the young ladies, who were

good judges, too, thought that the man superior to him in this regard would have to possess the external graces of David's beauteous Absalom. But Mr. Monard did not appear to be conscious of his imposing and majestic mien, to which some paid a silent tribute by looking upon him with an envious eye. As he rose in the pulpit, he impressed strangers with the idea that no ordinary minister stood before them. But, alas! when he opened his mouth and spoke, the ecclesiastical charm was dispelled, and the expectant auditor felt grievous disappointment. Mr. Monard had an unpleasant delivery. His voice was so harsh that it grated upon the auditory nerves with something of the painfulness produced by a thunder-crash, and would have sounded to greater advantage upon the battle field than in the pulpit. There was a distressing incongruity between the splendid outside appearance of the man and the disagreeable sounds that issued from his well-shaped mouth. It reminded one of Addison's dream, in which he saw mankind assemble, in accordance with a proclamation of Jupiter, and cast into a huge pile what they regarded as calamities or physical defects, and then each was permitted to draw forth whatever pleased him; if Mr. Monard was there he unfortunately drew a voice with which some poor mortal was dissatisfied and had cast away as a burden. Nobody would dare to say, though, that his sermons were of an inferior character. Indeed, they were models of elegant and eloquent composition. But issuing from his lips, they seemed to fall, like dead weights, to the floor. Mr. Monard was earnest enough, but it appeared that nothing could make atonement for his defective delivery. He was a graduate of the most respectable theological institution then to be found in this country, and was, of course, regarded as thoroughly orthodox by the members of his church.

Nevertheless, his voice, they said, "spoiled everything." His sermons, highly polished as they were, seemed to produce no effect beyond creating the impression that they were composed by a master mind. He might have been a great success as an editor ; but people said he was a decided failure as a preacher, and some said he manifested a lack of wisdom in supposing that he had been "called" to this kind of work. But this sort of comments gave Mr. Monard no trouble, if he heard of them. He did not seem to be conscious of the harsh voice, of which he was the owner, and which so seriously marred the beauty of his sermons in their delivery. Whatever observations people might be making, he "pursued the even tenor of his way," as if every one acknowledged him to be the finest orator on the face of the globe. But Mr. Monard was a true Christian, whose devoutness was conspicuous in his daily walk and conversation. He was what is called a "good *pastor*," and everybody was delighted with Mr. Monard's visits, even if his conversation was not enlivened by those scintillations of wit which are natural to some jocular ministers. Those prostrated with illness were glad when the solemn preacher entered their room. Indeed, in this department of ministerial labor he seemed to be in his proper element. When he talked with those soon to step into the cold waters of death, in regard to the things that pertain to the "unseen country," he became a different man from the preacher in the pulpit. In the sick room, and in the house of the destroying Angel, Mr. Monard was as a beam of cheering sunshine. Nobody thought, then, of the harsh voice. It was on these solemn occasions that his faith shone in its true colors, and inspired the departing soul with some of the bright hope which animated his own heart. On this account, in connection with his instructive and edifying conversa-

tion around the fireside, Mr. Monard was popular out of the pulpit. In his visits, though he was solemn, yet he was by no means gloomy. If he had succeeded as well in the capacity of preacher as in that of pastor, he would have been a most extraordinary man.

But some attention must now be paid to Miss Valena Vincent. It was a wonder to old Mrs. Briggs that Mr. Monard could be enamored of such a young lady as she was. Vallie had been reared in the lap of opulence, and was gay and thoughtless. She had no more idea of the value of a dollar than a child. How one of her disposition, temper and tastes could fancy such a grave character as Mr. Monard, furnished matter for additional wonder. But everybody said that he was decidedly the most handsome young man in all the country, and that, of course, was calculated to make a considerable impression upon any girl the least susceptible. That she should bring the great scholar to pay homage to her personal charms was certainly gratifying to her pride. It must not be omitted that she was exceedingly "fair to look upon." Indeed, her corporeal attractions were sufficient to procure her the honor of being the "belle" of the village. Whether it was her dazzling beauty that captivated the heart of Mr. Monard, or some other latent charm that had escaped the scrutinizing eyes of every one else, was never known, as he maintained a profound silence in regard to his heart history. At any rate, he did love the fair Valena with as much of his soul as his fidelity to his religion would allow. Whether she honored his attachment with corresponding reciprocity must be ascertained from her subsequent history.

Mr. Monard was a very conscientious and honorable man. Consequently, he thought it his duty to acquaint Mr. Vincent with the existence of his consuming love,

before revealing it to the young lady herself. Accordingly, he called one day to see Vallie's father, who was a man of excellent judgment, notwithstanding the fact that he had been forced into bankruptcy—a thing which sometimes happens, in spite of prudent management.

If we were to assert that Mr. Monard made his appearance before his idol's progenitor with a face more crimson than was customary, it would be nothing more than could be legitimately expected. After an embarrassing silence of a few moments, Mr. Monard, with some hesitancy in his manner, said—

"I have called to see you, Mr. Vincent, in regard to a very delicate affair."

"Indeed!" said the merchant, looking in surprise at the blushing preacher. "I hope, Mr. Monard, you are not in trouble."

"No, Sir," was the grave reply, "at least, not yet."

"I dare to hope, then, you are not about to get into trouble."

"That, Sir, I may say, depends, to a great extent, upon yourself. It is in your power, Mr. Vincent, to do me a great favor—one, too, which is of such a serious character that it must in a very great measure give shape to my temporal destiny."

"I am quite surprised, Mr. Monard, to hear you talk so; but name the favor, and if it is in my power, as you say it is, I will grant it, provided I think it right and proper."

The preacher, on hearing these words, spoken in a kind tone, felt encouraged to make known the object of his visit, without any further preliminary.

"Mr. Vincent," he said, slowly, while a blush, innocent, delicate, and almost feminine, overspread his handsome features, "you have once been in the precise condition in which I now find myself. I know, there-

fore, you can appreciate my state of mind, when I inform you that I have come to ask your permission to address your daughter."

Had a bomb-shell exploded at his feet, the merchant could not have been more surprised. He had not the slightest suspicion that such a sentiment as this had effected a lodgment in the pious heart of the solemn minister. He was no member of the church, and did not often attend divine services. True, Mr. Monard had frequently called at his house ; but it had never occurred to him that these visits were anything more than social or ministerial. The idea that Valena might be the centre of attraction had never entered his head ; because it was well known that Mr. Monard paid his visits to everybody. Consequently, Mr. Vincent was at first dumbfounded. He was not at all prepared to hear the unambiguous announcement which the preacher had so emphatically made. It was a moment or two before he could recover from his astonishment. But, seeing that the minister was becoming painfully embarrassed, he said—

"Wait a moment, Mr. Monard, till I can think. What you have said has taken me so by surprise that I must have time to reflect."

Mr. Monard, of course, complied with this reasonable request, and waited patiently till the merchant should see proper to reveal the result of his reflections. Mr. Vincent appeared to be gazing at some distant object out of doors, while the preacher sat still, in an agony of suspense. Whether the merchant was calculating what amount of "filthy lucre" there might be in this suddenly broached affair, or the chances of his daughter's earthly happiness under ministerial guidance, Mr. Monard had no means of knowing ; for he could not look up at Mr. Vincent while he was engaged in such profound medi-

tations. But presently the merchant seemed to have given the delicate subject as much thought as he deemed necessary, for he broke the silence.

"I presume, from what you have said, Mr. Monard, that you have not informed my daughter of the high regard which you profess for her?"

"The presumption is correct, Mr. Vincent. I would not pay my addresses to her without having previously obtained your permission."

"It is very considerate and noble in you, Mr. Monard, to consult with me first. I am truly glad to find you such an honorable gentleman. But I would like to ask if you have any reason to suppose that my daughter is possessed of the same regard for you as you have expressed for her?"

"I can only hope, Sir, that such deep, intense affection as mine will win the reciprocity it deserves. She has given me no reason, either by word or hint, to believe that she regards me as anything more than a friend. But from the respect with which she has invariably treated me, I am not without hope of gaining her affections. Whether I am mistaken or not, yet I fondly imagine that respect can be expanded and ripened into love sufficient to justify marriage."

"Well," said Mr. Vincent, after a short pause, "you want my honest opinion about this matter?"

"Certainly, Sir; I would thank you for a sincere expression of your views. The subject is fraught with too much importance to be treated lightly."

"Then, Mr. Monard, my advice to you is to drop the matter at once; for, while I admire your candor, and praise you for your honorable conduct, I do think, in this instance, you have consulted your fancy more than your judgment."

At the utterance of these words, that jarred very

harshly on the preacher's feelings, he turned a little pale. Probably he was not expecting such decided and bluntly-expressed opposition in the very incipency of this tender affair of the heart.

"Your last remark, Mr. Vincent, does me great injustice; for, in reflecting on the subject, I flatter myself that reason has not been ignored. It is after mature deliberation that I have opened my mind to you."

"In this case," replied Mr. Vincent, "I beg your pardon for saying that my judgment is better than yours. From what you have told me, you are looking at the subject from only one standpoint. Reason and love do not go hand-in-hand. Why, Mr. Monard, you could not select a girl in the community less qualified for a preacher's wife than my daughter. You know that I am not a member of the church; neither is Valena. She is merely a spoiled child, and thinks of nothing but dress, and fashion and amusement. Such a woman would not suit you, and you would not suit her. I am bound to believe that a marriage between you would result in unhappiness to both. But, to be plain with you, I am satisfied that she cares nothing for you as a lover."

This was very perspicuous and unpoetical language, and had a rather depressing effect on the minister's spirits. But he had no idea of following the merchant's advice.

"I think, Mr. Vincent, you do your daughter injustice. She is young, and, like all other young people, may be fond of amusements. That is perfectly natural. But in her character I discover the elements of the true woman, and I am willing to risk my judgment. You affirm that she cares nothing for me; if that be true, I only ask your permission to learn it from herself."

"Mr. Monard, I must be plain with you. My

daughter does not understand the first principle of economy. She has had unlimited command of money, and knows not its value. If she were to marry you, I suppose it is impossible that you could maintain her in the style to which she has been accustomed, and your prospects are anything but flattering. If you will excuse me for saying it, I think you have selected the poorest profession there is for making money."

"Making money!" interrupted Mr. Monard, in a tone expressive of holy horror at the very thought of accumulating wealth by preaching the gospel. "God forbid that I should ever have sought the holy ministry from any such mercenary motive. I do not regard the ministry as a profession, Mr. Vincent. You certainly would not consider an ambassador to a foreign country as a mere professional man, while discharging the duties of his high and responsible position. I am an ambassador of the Lord Jesus Christ, appointed for life, and it is my duty and privilege to lay up treasures in heaven, and not on earth."

"That is all right, Mr. Monard, from your standpoint. But this sort of talk sounds to us worldly-minded people as fine sentiment. I do not dispute that preaching is all well enough; but there is no meat and bread in it. While I might admire your self-sacrificing spirit, and your contempt of money, I should dislike very much to see my only child marry a man who could furnish her with nothing more than the bare necessities of life, even if he could always do that much, of which we have no assurance."

"I am not so poor as that, Mr. Vincent. I do not intend that my wife shall suffer for the actual necessities of life."

"You may not intend it, but I have seen too many preachers' families, Mr. Monard. I have known some,

and I suppose you have, too, to live in real want. I happen to know what I am talking about."

"I admit," replied the preacher, in a sorrowful manner, "that you have good grounds on which to base your assertions. It is true that I have witnessed the hardships and privations of many of my brethren, who, humanly speaking, deserved a better lot. While this cannot be denied, yet, all ministers are not forced to endure the ills of poverty. But even admitting that this high and holy calling does render self-denial necessary, are there not women who, for the sake of Christ, are willing to submit to it?"

"No doubt there are," replied the merchant; "but I am trying to impress on your mind that my daughter does not belong to that class. She knows nothing about self-denial."

"She could learn, though, Mr. Vincent."

"Probably she could; but I do not want her to be under the necessity of learning. If my daughter marries at all I want her to have a husband who can support her in the style to which she is accustomed. You ought not to blame me for that."

"I cannot censure you, of course, for desiring to secure the happiness of your daughter. But, Mr. Vincent, does true happiness depend upon wealth? Is it true that those who are blessed with an abundance of this world's goods are always happy? Are there not poor people who are even more contented, and more exempt from care and anxiety, than the millionaire? I should dislike very much to believe God has so constituted men that religion will not enable them to live in felicity without great possessions, which, more frequently than poverty, prove to be a source of wretchedness and ruin."

"There is no use in talking further about the matter," said Mr. Vincent, with an air of slight vexation. "I tell

you again, that Valena is the poorest selection you could possibly make. I can think of a dozen who would suit you much better. There is Maria Migland, who is a member of your church; in fact, I don't know a lady who would make a more excellent wife for a preacher. To my certain knowledge she is economical and domestic, and would know how to manage on a small salary, such as I am told is paid to you. Besides, she appears to be devoted to the church. Why, Sir, she is the very girl for you."

"What you say about Miss Maria may be very true; indeed, I know that she is a most excellent lady. But she has never aroused in my heart any sentiment save that of respect. The truth is, Mr. Vincent, that Miss Valena is the only lady I have ever met with who has inspired me with something more than warm friendship. I feel that I cannot live without her, and I believe that God has destined her for me."

"If so," said the merchant, with a smile, beneath which there lurked a slight sneer, "I am afraid the Lord has made a poor selection; for I repeat that Valena has hardly the first qualification essential to the character of a preacher's wife. It is passing strange to me that a sober, grave man, like you, ever thought of her, when you could shut your eyes and find a dozen or more who would suit you so much better."

"You ought to know, from your own experience, Mr. Vincent, that love is not subject to the will. Some persons attract us to them by some secret power that no human philosophy can explain. No effort that I could make would enable me to suppress my undying affection for your daughter."

"Oh, pshaw!" exclaimed Mr. Vincent, somewhat amused at the preacher's candor in so freely unfolding a precious secret, which most people conceal from the

world till it is brought to light by the civil law. "I am surprised to hear you talk so. Take my advice; I know Valena much better than you do. Let us drop the subject, and never allude to it again."

"Oh, Mr. Vincent!" exclaimed the preacher, manifesting intense earnestness and considerable emotion, "do not talk in this chilling manner to one who is impelled by some mysterious and irresistible power, and who is in a state of excruciating suspense. I love your daughter, and I cannot help it. Let me win her if I can."

Mr. Vincent began to feel a little sorry for the young man, whose candor and high sense of honor he could not but admire. For the reasons which he gave he was decidedly opposed to the proposed marriage; but he was tired of arguing the question, especially when he perceived that the love-smitten preacher would not be convinced of his error by the most cogent reasons that could be adduced. Besides, he did not have the slightest idea that Valena would ever tolerate Mr. Monard as a suitor for her hand. Therefore, he concluded, suddenly, that the quickest and shortest way to cure Mr. Monard of his fond but foolish preference would be to grant the permission he asked, of addressing his worldly-minded and extravagant daughter. His opinion was that Mr. Monard would never mention this delicate subject but once to the fair Valena. Having reached this conclusion, he said—

"Well, Mr. Monard, I see it is useless to give you advice on this subject. You will soon see your folly. You have my permission to call at my house as often as you wish. If I am not very much mistaken, Valena will soon cure you of this amiable weakness."

"Thank you, Mr. Vincent, thank you," exclaimed the preacher, with some warmth. "I can never repay your kindness."

"Why, as to that," answered the merchant, with coolness, "you are thanking me more than I deserve. I only gave you permission to call at my house—that is all."

"Yes; I understand. But, before I go, I hope you will make me just one promise."

"What is that?"

"That you will not try to prejudice, if you will pardon me for using the word, the mind of Miss Valena against me."

"I shall make no promise of that sort," replied the merchant, manifesting a little gruffness. "I have granted the favor that you have asked, and that is all I will do. You know that I would be opposed to my daughter's marrying you, and I have not the most remote idea that she will favor your suit. But she is my only child, and I shall give her such advice as I think best for her happiness."

Mr. Monard looked disappointed in view of this formidable opposition; but he deemed it prudent not to remonstrate with Mr. Vincent till it should be necessary. If he could win the young lady's heart he trusted that, by some means, he could gain the merchant's consent to their union.

Mr. Monard left the store of Mr. Vincent, feeling that, at least one step had been made toward the consummation of his wishes. With a lighter heart, he went back to his room, determined to begin, in his own peculiar way, those operations which he ardently hoped would culminate in changing the name of the merchant's beautiful daughter to Mrs. Valena Monard.

CHAPTER IV.

BROKEN TIES.

"The gentle pressure, and the thrilling touch,
The least glance, better understood than words,
Which still said all, and ne'er could say too much."

A preacher's love during the days of his courtship is regarded by some as a very appropriate subject for the indulgence of jocularly. It may be a very serious matter with him; but it seems to be considered in a different light by other people. Paul boldly asserted that he had as good a right to "lead about a wife" as any of his brethren. If there is any truth in the Holy Scriptures, the minister does have the right to enter into the estate of matrimony; yet it must be confessed that it is somewhat amusing to see him withdraw his thoughts temporarily from the "foolishness of preaching," and direct them to the foolishness of courtship. It is expected that his meditations shall comport with his high and sacred calling, and that he shall always appear sober and dignified. Such being the general expectation, there appears to be a laughable incongruity between proclaiming the glad tidings of salvation and whispering soft and tender words in the ears of some lovely damsel who is not averse to traveling the straight and narrow path hand-in-hand with an ambassador from the highest court of the universe. When a minister concludes to exercise the right which Paul unequivocally allows, the sooner he puts an end to his state of single blessedness the better; because it is next to impossible to make people believe that he is very deeply interested in the process of sermonizing, while they can plainly perceive that his affections are divided between things temporal and things spiritual.

It soon became evident to all that Mr. Monard was in this unenviable position, and few could feel any great interest in his preaching, when they had good reason to believe that his thoughts were fixed on the fair Valena Vincent. When this subject was mentioned, as it frequently was, the older persons of the community wisely shook their heads; but the younger and more thoughtless made it a subject of merriment, and many a jocund and witty remark was made in regard to this interesting affair. It looked strange to see the staid Mr. Monard in a state of such infatuation. Yet the sober preacher went on his way as if no one had the slightest suspicion of this cherished secret, which he had not whispered even to the winds. Mr. Monard did not seem to be really aware of the fact that the villagers noticed the frequency of his visits to the residence of Mr. Vincent. At last people began to tease the young lady about her ecclesiastical beau. But Miss Vallie had no more reliable knowledge of the actual state of the minister's heart than did any of her friends and acquaintances. Of course, she could not be blind to the marked attention which the preacher paid her at her own home; for he seemed not to notice her anywhere else. The young lady was herself in a state of perplexity in regard to his final intentions. For, though Mr. Monard asked for her when he called, yet he did not allude to the evident preference which he manifested for her society. She could not imagine why he did not reveal the delicate secret which she believed he was endeavoring to conceal from her. But week after week passed away, and he kept profoundly silent as to his heart history. Miss Vallie, though regarded as one of the most light-headed and frivolous girls of the community, yet had sufficient penetration to discover that her visitor was more than an ordinary man. Therefore,

if she had not been pleased with his attentions she would have been less than woman. Though he had not even hinted at the reason why he made such frequent visits, yet she imagined that there was deep significance in his glances, and in the pressure of his hand, when he would take his departure. Still the grave minister spoke not in those vehement accents of love which are so pleasing to the blushing maiden's heart. His silence, whether distressing or not to Miss Vallie, was at least perplexing.

If Mr. Monard had only been an orator in the pulpit, there is no telling what impression he would have made on the young lady's mind and heart. He was a profound scholar and polished gentleman, whose personal appearance, notwithstanding his grave demeanor, was such as could not be repulsive to the taste of even a fastidious lady. But everybody said that he was such a "poor preacher," and this oft-repeated assertion caused Miss Vallie to undervalue him. In addition to this undesirable ministerial defect, Mr. Monard was a very "poor" man; and, on the other hand, Valena was a rather proud girl. These disagreeable facts had no tendency to increase the fair damsel's admiration for the preacher. But notwithstanding that he was such a compound of piety, gravity, and dignity, he was possessed of colloquial powers of a high order, and these he employed with unusual energy when Vallie was the only auditor. It could be said of him what cannot be affirmed of many great talkers—he could make himself interesting without descending to silliness.

From the description which has been given of Miss Vincent it will not be supposed there was any wide range of topics upon which both could exercise their conversational powers. The young lady had read little except novels and poetry, of which she was fond. But

Mr. Monard was at no loss in this department of literature. The consequence was Miss Vallie was always entertained when the preacher spent a portion of an evening in her society. She could never say that he was a bore. While she might feel drowsy under his preaching, she could not become weary and listless in the parlor as she listened to his recitation of a poem.

Mr. Vincent, of course, noticed the frequency of Mr. Monard's visits, and he knew well what object the minister had in view. He might have supposed that his daughter was giving some encouragement to her suitor, or he would not persist in his attentions. But whatever he thought, he said nothing. Mr. Monard had every reason to believe that the merchant would use every possible means to thwart his intentions. But thus far Mr. Vincent had not mentioned the subject to any one. Whether he had changed his mind or not the minister could not ascertain.

Such was the condition of affairs, when an event transpired that produced a crisis. Mr. Vincent was attacked by a most violent and malignant disease, which was threatening in the very first stage. It became necessary to watch by his bedside, day after day and night after night. And now Mr. Monard's time had come, to exhibit one of the most lovely phases of his character. It must not be supposed, however, that he took advantage of the sad circumstance to captivate Valena by his devoted and unwearied attentions to her suffering father. He was too honorable, and pious, and conscientious to condescend to any such petty trickery as that. He did simply what he conceived to be his duty, and would have done the same if there had been no lady in the case. If he gave Mr. Vincent any more attention than duty required, he was not conscious of it. But it is natural to suppose that in this particular case,

for quite obvious reasons, the performance of duty was not at all disagreeable. At any rate, Mr. Monard was at home in the sick room.

After a few nights Mrs. Vincent regarded the preacher's presence as almost indispensable to her husband; and Valena herself seemed to feel better satisfied when she knew that he was nursing her father, for whom she had true filial affection. Therefore, Mr. Monard was not often out of Mr. Vincent's room for any length of time. Vallie would sit up as long as she well could, and her presence seemed to increase the preacher's powers of endurance. He would not, however, permit the winds to "visit her too roughly," nor would he suffer her to overtax her womanly strength; and when he thought that she had sat up late enough at night he would insist on her retiring to rest, saying that he could easily watch alone.

One night the sick man appeared to be so much better that Mrs. Vincent and her daughter both retired earlier than usual, at the suggestion of Mr. Monard, he promising to call them up if necessary. When they had reached their room Mrs. Vincent, with considerable animation, said—

"Vallie, did you ever see such a man as Mr. Monard? He seems to be made of iron. I don't know what we would have done without him. Dr. Belen says that he is one of the best nurses he ever saw. Why, he never seems to need rest."

"I am sure, Mother, we never can repay Mr. Monard for his attention to Father. He has certainly been very kind to us, and a great relief to you and me."

"Yes; indeed he has," replied Mrs. Vincent. "I am sure there is nobody else in town that would have done what he has. I wonder if he is this kind to other families."

"Yes, Mother—so I hear. Everybody loves Mr. Monard. The only objection they have to him is, that he is such a 'poor preacher.'"

"I feel ashamed of myself," answered Mrs. Vincent, in a tone indicating regret at neglected opportunities, "for never having gone to hear him preach. He has been here about two years, I think, and I have never heard him preach; but I intend to go as soon as your father gets well. It is a shame to treat such a good, kind man with disrespect."

It would seem that Mrs. Vincent had not the most distant idea of receiving any spiritual benefit from Mr. Monard's preaching; but it was her laudable intention to compliment him by her presence, as a partial payment of her debt of gratitude for his kindness. She was a fit type of an unfortunate class who attend divine services, principally because they like the preacher as a friend. He visits them during the week, and they feel under obligations to hear his sermons on Sundays. Probably the only caution that such people need is, not to mistake friendship for true devotion.

"But, Vallie," continued Mrs. Vincent, "you have heard Mr. Monard; do you think he is such a poor preacher as everybody says?"

"I don't know, Mother. The truth is, I hardly ever hear anything that Mr. Monard says in the pulpit. When I try to listen it makes me sleepy. He is a great scholar, though, and I suppose I can't comprehend him. Besides, he has such a harsh voice when he preaches, that it sounds like sawing gourds. Sometimes he really startles me when he tries to emphasize his words."

"Well, anyhow, he is a good, kind man, and I am sure he is a very pleasant companion—cheerful, though solemn."

"O, as to that," said the young lady, "I don't know

a gentleman with whom I can more pleasantly spend an evening than Mr. Monard. He never tries to display his learning, and he always makes me feel so easy in his company."

"It seems to me, Vallie, that he has been paying you very marked attention of late?" said the mother, in a half interrogative tone.

"Well, Mother," answered the daughter, with an air of indifference, "he has been calling quite frequently, for some time."

"I'm sorry that he is such a poor man, and has such a poor way of making a living. If he were only a merchant, or if he had plenty of money, he would be no bad chance for any young lady."

"If you intend that as advice for me," said Valena, "you are having your trouble for nothing. For, to say nothing about my own feelings, Mr. Monard has never even hinted that he cares more for me than for any other girl in town."

"Don't you believe that he loves you?" asked Mrs. Vincent, looking searchingly into her beautiful daughter's face.

"I imagine he does, Mother, if you want a candid answer; but he has never said so. I think he would not call so often, if he did not care a great deal for me. His eyes sometimes betray him, too."

"It might do, Vallie, if Mr. Monard were not so poor. You will never do for a poor man's wife."

"You need not give yourself any uneasiness on that account, as Mr. Monard has never proposed, and I don't know that he ever will."

At this point the subject was dropped.

The next morning there was decided improvement in the sick man's condition, and in a short time he could talk without great inconvenience. As soon as Mr.

Monard deemed it prudent, he took occasion to broach the subject of salvation to Mr. Vincent, whom he had so faithfully attended. To his surprise he found a willing and even eager listener.

"Mr. Monard," he said, in feeble tones, "I am glad you have mentioned this subject. I have been wanting to talk with you for some time, about my condition. Notwithstanding my apparent unconcern, I have been thinking a great deal about what would become of me in case of my death."

But it is unnecessary to enter into details. As might be expected, Mr. Monard, with glowing zeal, seized the opportunity of bringing another soul into the fold of his Master. Under his instruction, it was not long before Mr. Vincent became satisfied that he was a "new creature" in Christ, and was received into the church. Earnestly he also endeavored to accomplish the same desirable result in the case of the wife and daughter. But so far as Valena was concerned, his labor appeared to be entirely lost. She did not like to talk upon such solemn subjects, and the preacher soon perceived that, at present, it would be useless to press the matter. He hoped and believed that if he could induce her to enter into a closer relationship, as a husband, entitled to her confidence, he would be instrumental in her salvation.

Mrs. Vincent was not only serious, but manifested deep emotion. She promised Mr. Monard that she would, in the future, make the effort to lead a Christian life.

A few more days rolled by, and Mr. Vincent, instead of continuing to improve, began to slowly decline. He at last despaired of ever recovering his health, as he felt sure that his last hour was gradually approaching. There was one subject upon which he desired to speak before he should close his eyes forever upon all

terrestrial scenes. One day Valena alone was in the room with him, when he determined that he would talk to her while he was in a condition to do so.

"Vallie," he said, abruptly, "I want to ask you a question, and I want you to answer me candidly."

"My dear Father," she said, in some surprise, "you know that I will answer you candidly, without obligating me to do so. Have I ever deceived you about anything?"

"No, my child, never, I think; but the question I am going to ask is one of great importance; and it is in regard to a subject about which young people, especially, think they are at liberty to prevaricate."

"I will tell you the truth, Father, no matter what your question may be."

"My Daughter," said Mr. Vincent, in a solemn manner, "you must know that I am in a very precarious condition, and you can certainly perceive that I am gradually declining. I can feel that my strength is leaving me. To be plain with you, I do not believe that I can last many days longer."

"Oh, Father, don't talk so!" exclaimed the young lady, bursting into tears; "I can't think of it. You must not die; it would kill me."

"But, my child, we all must die, and even if I recover from this attack, I cannot live much longer. Now be calm, and listen to me, for what I have to say concerns you. I want you to be happy after I am taken from you." Valena was crying bitterly. "Dry your tears, child, and listen to me, while I have strength to talk."

In a moment or two Valena's tranquillity was partially restored, and the father said—

"Now, tell me, truly, has Mr. Monard addressed you? What is the relation between you?"

"He has never said one word to me on that subject," was the prompt reply.

"Indeed!" said the sick man, after a pause. "Can that be true?"

"You may rely on what I tell you, Father. I could have no motive to deceive you."

"No, no; I believe you; but it is very strange!"

"What is so strange about it, Father? I have never encouraged him to address me."

"You must know, my child, that he loves you, do you not?"

"I don't know it, Father, from anything he has ever said; for I tell you the truth, he has never, even distantly, hinted at such a subject. You know yourself that he has paid me very marked attention, and from this, of course, I have reason to suspect that he thinks about me."

"But, child, do you love him?" asked Mr. Vincent, in an earnest tone.

"Why, Father, I don't think I do. I have great respect for him, and that is all."

"Would you be willing to marry him, if he were to ask you?"

"Marry him!" exclaimed Valena. "Why, I have never thought of such a thing seriously."

"I will tell you, Vallie; Mr. Monard, unless his mind has undergone a very great change, will certainly ask you to become his wife, and I am surprised that he has not already done so, for he asked my permission to address you. But I shall not try to influence you in this matter. I only want to say to you that when he does propose, if you accept him, I approve of your choice."

The young lady gazed at her father in surprise.

"Do you want me to marry him?"

"I do not say that, child. You must be governed by your own judgment and feelings in the matter. Some weeks ago I would not have approved of such a thing, but I now take quite different views of life and its objects. If you could become a Christian, and be the loving wife of a faithful preacher, I could ask no greater happiness for you on this earth. Mr. Monard is one of the noblest men I ever saw, and I would be perfectly willing to trust your happiness to his keeping. If you do marry him, I want to tell you, you will have to change your mode of life, and have to practice an economy to which you have never been accustomed. Preachers are generally very poor men, and poor managers, too, and their wives are, therefore, compelled to endure hardships. As the wife of Mr. Monard, you cannot expect to go in the style in which you have been raised."

"Why, Father," interrupted the young lady, "I told you just now that I have never thought of marrying him. Your advice is, therefore, I think, a little premature."

"But hear what I have to say," said the sick man. "You know that I have been unfortunate in commercial affairs; yet you have never lacked for anything, and I have endeavored to gratify all your wishes. But in the event of my death, which I think is near at hand,——"

"Oh, Father, stop talking in this way!" exclaimed Valena, moving nearer to the bedside and rubbing his hands, while the tears trickled down her cheeks; "I can't bear to hear you talk of dying."

"Let me tell what is on my mind, while I can," said Mr. Vincent, after a short pause. "I believe I am going to die, and we may as well talk about it quietly. I want to say to you that when my estate is wound up,

you will find yourself almost penniless. I do not know what is to become of you and your poor mother. I have never said anything to either one of you about the exact state of my affairs, because I have had strong hopes of retrieving my broken fortunes. But you will be thrown upon your own resources, and it distresses me no little when I think about your condition. Whether you marry Mr. Monard or not, you will be forced to change your style of living. Do not marry him, though, unless you feel that you can be a true and loving wife. I am well aware, my dear child, of your faults. You know that you have an unlovely temper at times. But you are young yet, and can change; and I tell you, in all kindness, you will have to change if you want to retain your husband's love, no matter whom you may marry. I don't advise you to marry Mr. Monard; do as you please about it. But, in case you conclude to marry him, remember what I have said, and try to be a Christian wife, and a help to your husband. Bear patiently the ills and hardships which you will no doubt encounter. Mr. Monard is a pure-minded, good, honest man, and would make you a kind husband, and would guide your inexperienced feet in true paths; and, by God's grace, we would, I believe, all meet together in the heavenly kingdom, nevermore to be separated. I can say no more. I am becoming deathly sick."

Valena was gazing earnestly into her father's face, upon which the shadow of death had suddenly fallen. In great agitation she called her mother, who almost went into convulsions when she perceived this abrupt change. But fortunately at this moment both the Doctor and Mr. Monard made their appearance. The physician at once administered a stimulant, which caused the sufferer to revive. Mr. Vincent reached out his trembling hand to Mr. Monard, and said—

"I feel that I am dying ; I want to thank you again for your kindness to me."

"Never mind that," hastily interrupted the minister. "How is your faith ? I hope you find the Saviour precious, and that the way is clear."

"Yes ; I have no fear. Thank the Lord, I feel that my Redeemer liveth. Mr. Monard, I want you to pray with me once more."

It would be useless to attempt a description of the scene that now occurred. Mr. Monard prayed, and such a prayer never before ascended from that house. He seemed to be inspired, as the earnest words of supplication poured forth from his lips ; and the merchant listened with the intense attention of one whose feet were entering the chilling floods of death. When he arose from his knees, the dying man signified by a motion of his hand that he had something to say to the minister alone. Mr. Monard held his head down, and Mr. Vincent, in a feeble whisper, uttered a few words in his ear, which were not heard by any of those present.

In a short time after this he sank into a state of unconsciousness from which he could not be aroused, and in a few hours he was in that "undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveler returns."

The third day after this sad event there was a funeral in the village. A large congregation assembled in the church, and they heard one of the grandest sermons to which they had ever listened, notwithstanding its defective delivery. They seemed not to notice the harsh voice, but only listened to the burning words that rushed like an irresistible torrent from the preacher's lips. Indeed, on this solemn occasion, the grating tones appeared to be mellowed down into a softness that harmonized with the sad surroundings. Therefore, the

sermon had a powerful effect, and there were few dry eyes in the church.

Soon after the funeral service was ended; the corpse was removed to its final resting place; the last spadeful of earth was thrown upon the little mound, and the procession dispersed, and the people returned, to attend to the ordinary affairs of life.

CHAPTER V.

MARRIAGE.

“There is, Sir, a critical minute in
Ev’ry man’s wooing, when his mistress may
Be won, which, if he carelessly neglect
To prosecute, he may wait long enough
Before he gain the like opportunity.”

The last tribute of respect had been paid to the dead, and he who had been the prop of the house lay motionless in the dark prison of the grave. His place at the fireside was vacant. It made the heart of Valena and her mother bleed afresh to enter the dwelling from which the loved one had been torn away by the ruthless hand of death. How gloomy everything appears in that home whose circle has been recently diminished by the cruel stroke of the Destroying Angel, who turns a deaf ear to all the piteous cries and pleadings of the living! How the poor heart sinks, in the bitterness of despair, when the eye falls upon something that vividly reminds the living of some dear one whose remains were yesterday put away to rest in a new-made grave. There may be the hat, or the shoes he wore, which must now be hidden from sight. There may be the favorite chair, which, for a long time afterward, must perform an office very similar to that of a tombstone, as it sits empty, in some corner of the room, proclaiming the agonizing fact that the form which once occupied it is silently crumbling to dust. Who has not returned from the funeral to a home thus saddened by the awful visit of death? Who has not felt that bitter grief for the relief of which the comforts of earthly philosophy are but a painful, nauseating mockery? Who, at such a time, has not felt an intense desire

for the sympathy of those who know how to tender consolation?

Who, in all the village where Mr. Vincent died, was better qualified to "weep with those that weep," than was Mr. Monard? No one could utter more cheering and comforting words than he. And the preacher himself, whether he was conscious of his rare qualifications or not, felt in duty bound to visit the mother, but especially the daughter. From what has already been revealed, it will not be thought wonderful that he should pay more attention to the young lady than the old. It was but natural, under the circumstances, that he should suppose Valena was the one who needed protection. Why should it be thought strange that he was possessed of the laudable and honorable desire to take the defenceless orphan girl under his care, that he might wipe the tears from her eyes, watch over her, and make her pathway as smooth as the stormy realities of life would allow? In her loneliness, Mr. Monard felt that she ought to have some warm friend upon whom she could lean, and to whom she could look for guidance and consolation. Perhaps it was this feeling which caused him to think that it would be no impropriety to reveal to her the true state of his affections. At least his motives were pure in his intention to divulge his secret to one who was now in a condition to appreciate sympathy and love. Accordingly, a few days after the death of her father, Mr. Monard called, and with a candor that seemed to be natural to him, opened his heart to the fair, but now sorrowful, Valena.

"I hope," said he, "that you can appreciate my motives in making this declaration at this particular time. You are lonely, and you have good cause to be. Why not let me divide your sorrow by the establish-

ment of a relation between us by virtue of which I could talk more freely with you than I could do otherwise? Why not, without further delay, be my dear wife, so that we can together travel the rugged pathway of life, seeking 'a country far from mortal sight,' where no tear trickles down the cheek, and no grief mars our joy, and no death breaks in upon the family circle? With you in that capacity, I feel that my arm will be reinvigorated with new energy, religion will wear a brighter aspect, and I can discharge my ministerial duties with greater joy. I shall study to promote your temporal and eternal happiness, so that when the journey is completed through this wilderness, which is darkened by the clouds of sorrow and misfortune, we may advance to higher degrees of felicity in the glorious world of Light, where the marriage tie shall be superseded by the stronger one of brothers and sisters in Christ."

While making love in this pious style, whether it be thought strange or not, he found an attentive listener in the fair one near whom he was sitting. It appeared to her a rather novel way of dealing with this tender subject, which generally is not associated with Paul's excellent advice to "marry in the Lord." Miss Valena had not the slightest idea of the signification of such a Scriptural phrase. But, fortunately for Mr. Monard's wishes, he found her at a time when her temporary dejection of spirits could tolerate this pious talk in conjunction with a declaration of love. She sat still, listening with some degree of pleasure to the preacher's solemn unveiling of his affections. The instinct which prompts one to declare his love in a sort of "aside" tone, caused him to lower his voice to a pitch which softened its roughness, and which was not unsuited to the occasion. Indeed, his solemn but earnest declaration was well calculated to make an impression upon the mind of any lady capable

of returning the sentiment which he professed. For some length of time Valena said not a word.

"I do not know," resumed Mr. Monard, "whether your kind father gave you any advice on this subject or not. But I must tell you that, almost with his last breath, he whispered his consent in my ear. I mention this merely to remove any obstacles which might arise from the thought that our marriage would have been opposed by him. Therefore, you need not have the slightest fear that your compliance with my earnest wishes would be the least displeasing to him if he were alive."

To this ardent pleading what could Valena say? She certainly could have no objection to his moral character, for that was above reproach. He was poor—but then she was now his equal in that respect; for she had not forgotten the information given by her father, that she might soon be in a condition worse than that of her suitor. She at least cared as much for Mr. Monard as she did for any one else, and perhaps she imagined that she loved him. In her hour of bereavement she felt that he was the dearest friend she had. His solemn manner was consonant to her present feelings; for she now felt solemn herself. In fact, as already said, Mr. Monard could not have selected a time more auspicious for the accomplishment of his purpose, though it must not be supposed that he was influenced in this selection by motives of mere policy. A few months earlier, or a few months later, his serious expression of affection would have been rather repugnant to the young lady, who had no especial fondness for serious reflection. At any rate, Valena being considerably influenced by the interview with her dying father, had reached a conclusion even before Mr. Monard had broached the subject. So she was fully prepared for the scene in which she was now

playing her important part. Presently, when she perceived that Mr. Monard had spoken all that was necessary, or all he seemed inclined to say without some little encouragement, she answered—

“Mr. Monard, I feel very highly flattered by the preference you have shown for me over other young ladies in town, who are so much better qualified than I am to fill the station of a preacher’s wife. You must know that I am not religious.”

“But you can be so,” interrupted the infatuated minister—who, nevertheless, would suffer nothing to prevent his being “instant in season, out of season,” when the salvation of a human soul was concerned—“and I believe you will be. You must be, whether you disregard my wishes or not. While I promise to love and honor you, if you consent to be my wife, yet I want you to remember that you have a friend more loving than I, and who ‘sticketh closer than a brother.’ To that friend you must give your heart.”

“But you know, Mr. Monard, that I have not been trained in the practice of religion. I would be ignorant of the duties of a preacher’s wife, and I fear that I would be nothing but a hindrance to you.”

“God’s grace,” replied the minister, with a solemnity that appeared to the young lady to be somewhat out of place, “works wonderful changes in one’s views and feelings. It, indeed, makes us new creatures, and qualifies us for the performance of duties which we could not discharge without it. When your heart is filled with the Holy Ghost, you can be a helpmate for a preacher; and then what pure and sacred happiness we shall enjoy in working together for the good of our fellow beings. Nothing on earth can afford such felicity as that.”

“Are you willing, then, Mr. Monard, to take me in all my ignorance?”

"I am, if you insist upon stating your question in that form," replied Mr. Monard, placing considerable emphasis on the first two words of his answer.

"But I am ignorant, Mr. Monard, and that must be fairly understood. However that may be, I must give you another piece of information which may be equally disagreeable."

"What is that?"

"I must tell you that I am penniless. My poor father informed me that his estate would be insolvent. Now, can you take me, in both ignorance and poverty?"

"I hope," replied the preacher with warmth, "you will not, for a moment, harbor the suspicion that I have sought your hand from any worldly considerations so dishonorable and base as that. If I know my own heart, you have never been associated in my mind with the sordid trash of earth. It is nothing but yourself that I seek. I have never stopped even to consider what might be the qualifications necessary in a minister's wife ——"

"Which you ought to have done, Mr. Monard," interrupted the young lady, with a faint, sad smile, "for I do greatly fear that you are much mistaken when you think I possess such qualifications."

"Whether I am mistaken or not, I love you, and I cannot help it. I have prayed over this matter, and, as I believe, under the direction of divine providence, I am following the leadings of my heart without question. I have asked for divine guidance, and I believe that if God did not approve of our union, He would in some way prevent it. This is a matter, you see, in which religion and love are both involved. So, it does not make the slightest difference with me, if you are perfectly destitute of this world's goods. After all, none of us can be poorer than the Master, who had not a

place where to lay his head. What difference can it make, whether we are rich or poor, if we can gain the heavenly inheritance, which is worth incalculably more than a lifetime of toil and self-denial."

The pious portion of this conversation Valena did not particularly relish. But she felt sad, and could tolerate it.

"I greatly fear," she said, presently, "to undertake to fill a station of whose duties I am so ignorant; but if you can take me in my ignorance and poverty, I certainly have no reason to doubt your love."

"You have not," replied the preacher; "and may I ask whether I have any reason to doubt your love for me?"

"Why, Mr. Monard," answered the young lady, with a mournful smile, "I have the very highest respect for you."

"And is that all?"

"Well," replied Valena, slowly, "I will not try to conceal the fact longer from you, since you so urgently insist upon knowing the truth, that I can substitute the word 'love' for respect, if that is the word you desire me to employ."

Valena said this without any of that becoming and appropriate erubescence which gives the object of adoration a peculiarly interesting appearance on such occasions as those when the secret of two hearts is revealed. She spoke in a matter-of-fact sort of way, which Mr. Monard, with his limited experience in such delicate affairs, thought was perfectly right and proper. If the young lady's face had assumed the color of vermilion when she confessed her love, he probably would not have observed the change. He did not know that a deep blush would have been as a seal to the fair one's sincerity. The chief point with him was to secure the

consent of Valena to become his wife; and when she informed him that he was loved, he was satisfied. Being sincere and artless himself, he did not suspect that she might be impelled to this matrimonial measure by other considerations than those of pure, unadulterated love. Mr. Monard did not know that many a woman enters into a hymeneal alliance without that ardent, burning, deathless love which is indispensable to true connubial felicity. It had never occurred to him that there is many a poor, unfortunate daughter of Eve like Maud Muller, who dared hardly whisper to her own soul the sad words "It might have been." It is, probably, to be regretted that the rules and regulations of human society are so rigid; that so many of the fair sex have the alternative before them of living in the loneliness of protracted maidenhood or accepting a suitor who can elicit no higher, nobler, warmer sentiment than respect. Woman was formed to love, and be loved. But it is a sad fact that, in many instances, she fails to secure that husband upon whom she could lavish a vast wealth of affection, and gives her hand to some other, who is capable of arousing in her heart only a feeling of esteem. Then the pure fountain of her affections must be dried up in silence and secrecy, and she must live on and on, playing the part of a hypocrite in the capacity of a wife who endures attentions which her marriage vow will not permit her to repel. She may be and must be attentive to the wants of him to whom she is so unequally yoked, but her attentions are dictated by stubborn duty, and not by her out-gushing love. No matter now what may be the incompatibility of tastes and pursuits, she dare not complain. She must dwell under the same roof with an unloved husband, deceiving by an exhibition of affection which is only an amiable cheat, and carrying in the deep recesses of her heart a secret that

can be entrusted to no one with safety. Whether, like poor Maud Muller, she toils on from day to day in a hut, or endeavors to kill the time that hangs so heavily on her hands in a gilded palace, she has a shelter from the storms, but she has no *home*. Mr. Monard had never thought about this, and when Valena informed him, in a cool sort of way, that she loved him, in the simplicity of his heart he believed her. It may be at that particular time she herself thought so.

At any rate, a few months after the engagement was entered into there was a marriage in the village—a marriage which the older people could not understand, and which many of them predicted would prove to be a lifelong source of unhappiness and misery. They said to each other, in discussing the subject, that no two people in the world could be more dissimilar in everything than the solemn preacher and his worldly-minded bride. If any of the wiser ones had had the kind and benevolent impudence to give Mr. Monard some wholesome advice on the subject, and told him in plain language of the young lady's faults, and her want of capacity to fill the high position of a help-meet for him, it might have opened his eyes, and put him to thinking in reference to the propriety of this step. He might have crushed the promptings of the carnal heart, and avoided a marriage that every one pronounced improper. If he had thought about the matter as he ought to have done, the present story could never have been written. But he permitted his infatuation to hurry him along without proper reflection. Valena appeared perfectly lovely to him. Her light-headedness he attributed to mere exuberance of spirits—she was young, and full of life and gayety. If she was worldly-minded, he thought that divine grace could and would soon cure her of that natural defect. If he had paused to analyze the real

character of his faith, which he said was concerned in the affair, he might have come to the conclusion that it was simply blind presumption.

Mr. Monard's friends perceived his desperate infatuation, but they did not dare to remonstrate. They knew that people who interfere in such matters generally receive no thanks for their kind intentions. A man who has attained to years of discretion is supposed capable of making his own selection of a helpmate. He certainly ought to know, much better than others, what qualifications and what traits of character he desires in a wife. How did the villagers know that Mr. Monard had not discovered in the fair Miss Vincent a brilliant jewel whose beauties had escaped their notice? But they were perfectly convinced that they had estimated the young lady at her real value. But Mr. Monard did not see with their eyes, and he had advised with no one. He seemed to be hurried along on a wild tide to which he did not seem disposed to offer resistance. It appeared to him that there could be no temporal happiness for him unless he could call the beautiful Valena by the sacred name of wife. No one, therefore, could have felt happier than did Mr. Monard on that beautiful evening when he led Miss Vincent to the altar, and they were pronounced "husband and wife." Whether the poor man knew it or not, he had secured for his lifetime companion, to share his joys and sorrows, to lessen or increase his cares, one who could have very appropriately borne the name of the woman who, without intending to do a kindness, taught the old philosopher Socrates lessons of patience—*Xantippe*.

CHAPTER VI.

SEPARATION.

“We must part awhile ;

A few short months—though short, they must be long
Without thy dear society.”

If the honeymoon of Mr. Monard, or at least the earlier portion of it, could have been protracted into a period of some years, he would have been a happy man ; but, in truth, the attribute of the compound term which is so felicitously employed to describe the first stage of nuptial blessedness lost its character before the lunar body had completed a single revolution. It was not long before he discovered that his bride did not really possess all the angelic charms with which his imagination had invested her. In a few days after their marriage Valena threw off the disguise, and exhibited traits of character which Mr. Monard’s blind infatuation did not permit him to observe. She had appeared to him as a young lady of mild, gentle disposition ; but, to his sorrow and disappointment, he perceived that such was not the case.

The serious impressions produced by her father’s death soon wore off, and left her the same gay butterfly that she was before. The minister, previously to his marriage, anticipated great pleasure in reading good books to Valena, and in hearing her read to him. He was under the impression that, under his guidance, she would acquire a taste for literature of a more substantial character than novels ; but he was doomed to bitter disappointment, for she soon made manifest her aversion to entertainment of this sort.

One evening, when Mr. Monard made the proposition to read, she said, with considerable peevishness—

"You seem to think more of your books than of me. Don't you ever get tired of such stupid things?"

"Do you think they are stupid?" asked the preacher, looking up from the page of a history, whose plain, easy style he thought would be attractive.

"Yes; they are as dry as dust in August."

"I do not think they are dry," replied Mr. Monard, very mildly. "They are quite interesting to me."

"Well, then, enjoy them yourself; they don't interest me at all. But I thought you'd rather talk to me than to be always reading. You can read to yourself, though, if you wish; I am busy."

Without saying more, she gave her attention to a dress, upon which she began to work. Mr. Monard laid aside his book and sat silent, seeming to be in deep meditation.

"Oh," she said, glancing up from her work, "if you're going to sit there looking as if you were going to be hanged to-morrow, I'd rather you would read. I can enjoy my own society; I'm not dependent on anybody."

"Excuse me, my dear," said Mr. Monard, in a tone of the utmost kindness; "I deserve your reproof, for my absent-mindedness. But that is a very pretty dress you have. I do not think I ever saw you wear it?"

"No; I guess not; for it is a ball dress. I am repairing it a little to wear to the ball next Thursday night."

"To the ball!" exclaimed Mr. Monard, in the greatest amazement.

"To be sure," she said, looking at her husband as if she could imagine no reason for the manifestation of such unfeigned astonishment.

"Vallie," said the minister, deprecatingly, "you certainly do not mean to do that?"

"Of course, I am going. Why shouldn't I? All the young people will be there, and I am expected to go. I had not thought of anything else but going."

"But, Vallie," cried the minister, with agony pictured on every feature, "you must remember that I am a minister of the gospel?"

"Oh, I've no reason to forget that. But suppose you are a preacher, what of that?"

"What of it?" exclaimed Mr. Monard, in a tone indicating horror. "I, a minister, and my wife go to a ball! You will destroy my usefulness; you will—— Oh, surely, my dear, you cannot but see the impropriety of such a thing. Vallie, this must not be."

"*Must not!*" she replied. "I should like to know what impropriety there is in my attending a ball. Why, you talk about it as if it were a horrible crime. I have gone to many a one."

"Yes, that may be true, but it is not expected that ministers' wives will go to such places of amusement. You surely do not want to impair my influence in the community. You will bring ruin upon me. Oh, Vallie," he continued, manifesting anguish in his whole manner, "you must forego this pleasure."

"I shall do no such thing!" she exclaimed, with an air of determination. "You needn't think I am going to bury myself at home, just because I have married a preacher. Why didn't you tell me before we were married that I would have to give up my dancing. If you had told me, I never would——"

"It is well, my dear, not to complete the sentence which I fear you had on your tongue. I hope you will not increase my sorrow by expressing regret that you married me."

"You talk about your sorrow, Mr. Monard, as if you had some regrets yourself."

"No, Vallie—not sorry on that account. The Lord, whose eyes are over all, knows that the fervor of my love for you has not abated one particle. I speak the truth when I say that, next to my God, I love you with all the power of my soul. And now, since you have absorbed all the affections of my heart that it is lawful to bestow on a human being, will you not, can you not abandon, for my sake, your intention of going to the ball? My dear one, only think for a moment of the impropriety of it. How could I, with any consistency, ever again preach against worldly amusements of a sinful character, at least of evil tendency, when it can be cast into my teeth that my own wife goes to balls."

But this solemn, earnest pleading seemed only to add fuel to the fire of Mrs. Monard's terrible temper.

"I should like to know," said she, "what business you have to be preaching about balls anyhow. It seems to me a man of your sense could find something else to preach on. I do despise to hear a preacher always harping on that subject. I don't see any harm in dancing. But if you think there is, I shall not ask you to escort me to the ball. You can stay at home and enjoy your books, if you wish. But I will tell you, once for all, that I am going, and you needn't attempt to dissuade me. I know what I am about. You had no business to marry me if you hate dancing so. You ought to have married Maria Migland; for she never goes to balls, and looks as sober as a judge all the time. She would have suited you exactly. I tell you, Mr. Monard," she continued, changing her tone, "you are very much mistaken if you think I am going to settle down like an old woman sixty years of age, because I married a preacher."

Mr. Monard was in a state of deep and painful perplexity. For a moment he sat looking down, debating

in his own mind what course to pursue or what reply to make. It was evident that a crisis had arrived. As he had affirmed, he did really love this beautiful but worldly-minded being, who, he plainly perceived, was determined to have her own way. He had learned enough in regard to her disposition to know that it would be exceedingly perilous to his domestic happiness to resort to anything like harsh measures to secure obedience to his will, such as the Scriptures authorized him to require. Several times he had seen at least a few sparks from a temper which he dreaded to stimulate to a display of its full force. But Mr. Monard possessed a peaceable disposition, and was violently opposed to domestic discords and contentions. It might be expected, therefore, that his silent reasonings with himself would culminate in the conclusion to try moral suasion.

"Vallie, my dear," he said, in a kind and even subdued tone, "will you listen calmly to me for a moment?"

"Oh, yes," she replied, with an air that indicated persistency in her first resolution, "I can listen to you all night. But I can tell you at once that if you are going to persuade me not to go to the ball, your labor will be in vain."

"Vallie, will you go, when you know how painful it will be to my feelings? I do not desire to deprive you of any innocent recreation. But dancing, you know, or ought to know, is contrary to the rules of my Church."

"I would not belong to any such squeamish church," she replied, tartly.

"But I hope by God's grace you will belong to it, Vallie. I pray that the time is not far distant when you can cheerfully and willingly renounce all these things of the world."

"O, pshaw!" she exclaimed, in petulance, "I don't

want to hear any of your sermons to-night. I get enough of that on Sundays. You'll have Sundays sufficient to preach me to death without taking week-days for it."

These words were extremely painful to Mr. Monard, and he bit his lip, while a flush, indicating vexation, shame and disappointment, superseded his habitual expression of calmness; but, almost in an instant, it passed away, and he had full control of himself. But he had no idea that his beautiful wife could utter such cruel language to one whom she professed to love. He made no reply to Valena's last, cutting remark, and she continued with an emphasis considerably enhanced by her flashing eye—

"It is no use talking to me about it, Mr. Monard, I'm not going to be kept here in a coop, and never enjoy myself. I'll tell you, Sir, whether you like it or not, I'm going to the ball. I shall not gratify your foolish whims."

"My dear, will you go, if it ruins me? Leaving out entirely the sinfulness of the amusement, will you just deliberately destroy my moral influence in the community?"

"It is not going to ruin you, nor injure you either. Whose business is it if I go? What right have people to dictate to me? Nobody will say anything about it, except those long-faced saints, who think it a sin to laugh, and who stop their ears at the playing of a fiddle; I've got a contempt for the opinions of such people."

"My dear Vallie," replied Mr. Monard, very meekly, "as little as you think of it, your indulgence in this amusement, which I cannot but regard as sinful, may drive me from the ministry."

"Well, suppose it does. It would be doing you a

great favor ; for preaching is a poor business, anyhow. You can do better at some other profession."

"Oh, Vallie, Vallie!" cried Mr. Monard, in agony, "your words are like coals of fire. You do not know what pain you are giving me."

"Let's drop the subject, then. You force me to say what I do."

"But I do not want to drop it," he said, "until I reason with you. Will you not have the kindness to listen to me for just a moment?"

"Eldon Monard!" she exclaimed, rising to her feet, and exhibiting all the firmness of her nature, as she stood before him, "I tell you, you need'nt say another word about it. I'll go to that ball next Thursday night, if I die for it. Now you've got it."

"May the good Lord forgive you," said the preacher, without manifesting the least impatience or annoyance, "may the good Lord forgive you, and sustain me. Do not become excited, my dear ; be seated. If I can say nothing to dissuade you, we will no longer discuss the unpleasant subject. If you will go, I cannot prevent it. God knows, though, that my religion protests against my acquiescence in your decision ; but let us say no more about it. Take your seat," he continued, kindly, "and I will not utter another word on the subject."

Mrs. Monard seated herself in sullenness, though she had carried her point. The minister looked tranquil, but sorrowful. It was in vain that conversation was attempted upon other topics, and the remainder of the evening was spent in comparative silence.

No doubt, more than one opinion will be formed as to Mr. Monard's conduct in this matter. Some will affirm, without hesitation, that he ought to have firmly asserted his authority, after having reasoned with his wife, and have peremptorily forbidden her to enjoy a

recreation which he deemed improper. Others will say that Mrs. Monard's treatment of her husband was very reprehensible; and that she ought to have shown, at least, respect for him, by listening to his advice. But Mr. Monard could not have acted in any other way than he did, unless he had been a different man. He cared nothing for domestic supremacy, as such, and as to whether he or his wife should have the management of affairs at home, was a question which he had never discussed. Neither did Mrs. Monard bestow a thought upon home sovereignty, except as it might have a tendency to interfere with her pleasures and pursuits. Her husband could have as much latitude as he desired, just so he would leave the disposal of her time to herself. But, whatever opinions may be formed in regard to the deportment of both parties, their conversation has been detailed, with the foregoing result.

The next Thursday night Mr. Monard perceived, to his great distress, that his wife had not changed her mind in regard to the ball. He had hoped that her own reflections would convince her of the impropriety of persisting in a course which he so emphatically disapproved. But his hope was blasted when Mrs. Monard appeared before him arrayed in a brilliant ball dress. It would be but a feeble compliment to say that she looked beautiful or charming.

“She was like

A dream of poetry, that may not be

Written or told—exceeding beautiful.”

So thought Mr. Monard, as he gazed with undisguised admiration at this bewitching creature, whom he felt proud to call his wife. No one could censure him very severely, and none could accuse him of defective taste, whatever might be said of his want of prudence, for suffering himself to be captivated by such beaming,

glowing, dazzling beauty. He certainly could be pardoned for loving, with deep fervor, this enchanting being, notwithstanding she was so sadly lacking in those qualifications which are essential to a minister's wife. Common charity will, therefore, excuse him for saying to her, with a mournful smile—

“My dear, you remind me of some picture designed to represent an angel. If you only had wings, you would be a magnificent model for a painter. I can repeat, and apply to you the language of the poet, who said—

‘Her grace of motion and of look, the smooth
And swimming majesty of step and tread,
The symmetry of form and feature, set
The soul afloat, even like delicious airs
Of flute or harp.’

You may think me extravagant, my love, but I mean what I say.”

Mrs. Monard was delighted with this compliment, which she well knew was the utterance of an honest heart, but she made no reply. She only regretted that the noble man who had thus paid homage to her exquisite beauty could not consistently accompany her to the ball room.

“It would be wrong in me,” continued Mr. Monard, after a short pause, “to wish that you may have a pleasant evening. I have only this to say, since you are determined to go, while you are whirling in the dance, my dear Vallie, remember that I am praying for you.”

“Praying! what for?”

“That God will give you a new heart, so that you will lose all taste for these sinful amusements. There, dear,” he continued, as he observed a frown on her beautiful brow, “let us not quarrel about it. I have said as much about it, perhaps, as I ought, and we will

not discuss the disagreeable subject any further. If you will go, be it so. I shall say no more."

As he said this, Mrs. Monard's escort knocked at the door, and she had not time to reply to her husband's last remark. He was one of the "wildest" young men that could be found in the village. When he entered the parlor, Valena thought that Mr. Monard turned slightly pale. Whether she was mistaken in that or not, she could not fail to interpret aright the earnest, searching gaze which was fraught with sorrowful reproach, and which seemed to inquire if she had selected such an escort merely to wound his feelings. The look really caused Mrs. Monard to feel some slight misgiving, but she thought it was too late now to recede.

The young man spoke with a boldness which the preacher perceived was somewhat stimulated by wine; but Mr. Monard responded to his salutation with a rather formal and cool "good-evening." The situation was evidently embarrassing to all parties. Mr. Monard, too much overcome to conceal his chagrin, stood in awkward and silent perplexity. Valena could plainly perceive indications of the violent struggle and commotion in her noble husband's breast, and it occurred to her that perhaps she had gone a step too far in this matter. It flashed into her mind that she might possibly lose her husband's love, and the thought produced a feeling of unpleasant inquietude. She began to fear that she had overstepped the last limit of his forbearance. There was no mistaking that look of intense anguish and reproach. But she had declared that she would go to the ball or die, and go she must. The young man, who felt ill at ease in the presence of the preacher, intimated that it was time they were on the way, and Mrs. Monard rose to go. Her escort was standing at the hall door, but she lingered a few seconds, and stepped to her hus-

band and took his hand. She felt it tremble. She imprinted a kiss on his brow, but he returned it not. He folded his hands across his breast, and then stood as immovable as a statue.

"What is the matter?"

"May God forgive you!" he said, almost in a whisper.

"I *must* go," she replied.

"I have nothing more to say," he answered, in a low but quivering tone. "You know my opinion. But if you *must*, go—go with *him*."

This slightly provoked the lady, and she turned away and left him standing alone in the parlor.

When Valena and her escort reached the street, and proceeded a short distance from the house, he said—

"Your preacher husband don't seem to approve of your going to the ball."

"How do you know?"

"Oh, I could see it in his very looks."

"Well," replied Mrs. Monard, "he does have a foolish notion about it, to which I am determined not to yield. I can see no harm in my going to a ball," she continued, making an effort to restore her disturbed equanimity. "It is certainly an innocent amusement."

"Of course it is," replied the young man, who was under the influence of wine to a considerable extent. "Nobody but a gump would oppose dancing. Oh, I do hate these long-faced, sour-looking Christians, who want us to do nothing but read the Bible, say prayers, and go to church. I do wonder how you could ever have made up your mind to marry a preacher."

"You are not the only one who has wondered at it," replied Mrs. Monard. "There was a time when I would have wondered at my own choice. But," continued the lady, suddenly changing her tone to one indicating

vexation, "Mr. Monard is worthy of any woman's love—I don't care who she is. He is by no means a common man, and I want you to understand that he is not what you called him just now."

"What did I call him?" quickly asked the young man, as if surprised.

"You called him a 'gump,' and that I cannot stand."

"I beg your pardon," hastily answered the escort, "but I meant that he is a gump only in one thing; and that you said yourself."

"No, Sir; I said no such thing."

"Well, you said he was *foolish*, or something of that sort, which is about the same thing as gump."

"If I said 'foolish' I will take it back; for Mr. Monard is not foolish either. He is the best educated man in all the country."

"To be sure he is," replied the young man, who was at a loss to understand Valena, "but you said yourself that you don't agree with him about dancing."

"Yes, I said that; but he thinks there is sin in it, and I believe if I were to listen to him he would bring me over to his side. I do have half a mind to turn round and go back home. I feel mean and ashamed for having come off and left Mr. Monard all alone."

And she halted as if debating whether she should execute this laudable purpose. While she was talking with her feeble-brained escort she could not but recall that statue-like figure, standing in the middle of the floor, with arms folded across the breast, and the strange, pained, troubled, mortified expression. His manner and tone of voice, just before she left him, had thrown Valena into a state of perplexity. She knew that it required some great provocation to disturb his habitual tranquillity; and she plainly perceived that when she turned to leave him he was very deeply moved. There-

fore she began to fear that her conduct had exasperated him to a degree beyond endurance. To add to her discomposure, she felt that her kind and loving husband was more than half in the right. But her pause was only momentary, for her escort exclaimed, in surprise—

“Why, Miss Valena, what do you mean? Come on; we are nearly there now.”

False pride soon terminated Valena's state of indecision, and she walked on. She entered the ball-room, and ere long was whirling in the mazes of the dance. But Mrs. Monard was not as happy as she had supposed she would be. In spite of her effort to be gay, she could not banish the pale face, trembling hand, and sorrowful but reproachful look of her husband. She talked, and she laughed; but now and then the words would ring in her ears, “remember, while you are dancing, I will be *praying* for you.” As she whirled like a fairy over the floor, the image of a kneeling form offering up prayers for her would flash through her mind, and cause her to wish that she had not come to the ball. She really wanted to return home, but she felt ashamed to do so. Besides, some remarks which she overheard in the ball-room tended only to increase her feelings of uneasiness and anxiety.

“See,” exclaimed one, “how Mrs. Monard is dancing. I think she had better be at home with her husband. I'm sure, if I were to marry a preacher, I'd quit dancing.”

“But Valena don't care,” replied the young lady to whom the above remark was addressed; “she loves to dance, and loves it so much that I don't see how she ever got her own consent to marry Mr. Monard. They are as unlike as daylight and darkness, anyhow.”

“Everybody,” replied the first speaker, “predicted that they would be an unhappy couple; and so, to-night,

I suppose, we see the beginning of sorrows. Do you think that Mr. Monard consented that she should come to the ball?"

"I have no idea that he did. But Valena would come, if she desired to, in opposition to his wishes. I feel really sorry for poor Mr. Monard. He is so good and kind to everybody, and now he has a wife who has such a horrid temper that she can be nothing but a source of annoyance. I don't see how it is possible for him to live with her, unless she learns to govern herself."

Mrs. Monard overheard some of these severe remarks, and she felt vexed, angry and unhappy. She heartily wished that she had not come.

After awhile the ball came to an end, and Mrs. Monard, for one, was glad of it. She walked rapidly towards home, saying little to her escort on the way. From what has been said in regard to Valena's thoughts and feelings in the ball-room, it might be supposed that she would rush into the house, throw her arms around her husband's neck, burst into tears, weep for a while upon his manly breast, tell him how sorry she was for having disregarded his wishes, beg his pardon, and promise that in the future she would never be guilty of a similar offence. A true and loving wife would have done this, and it would have been a happy termination to a domestic difficulty. But Mrs. Monard had no idea of acting in any such way as this. She presumed upon the kindness of her husband's disposition, and thought that a few gentle words from her would calm his ruffled spirits. With this idea in her mind she opened the door, expecting Mr. Monard to rise and make his usual demonstrations of affection; but she was disappointed. He was not in the chamber. She seated herself, supposing that he would come in in a few moments. Twenty minutes elapsed, but still he did not make his

appearance. Then she arose, and went to every room in the house ; but her search ended in disappointment. Next she went to the servant's room, and inquired about her husband. But all that the servant could tell was, that a short time after Valena had left a man came to the house, and he and Mr. Monard remained in the parlor for half an hour and went out. This was all the servant knew.

"Did he leave no message for me?"

"No, ma'am."

"Did he say when he would return?"

"No, ma'am; he didn't say nary word about it."

"Who was the man with him?"

"Dun no, ma'am. I never seed him afore."

"I guess it was some of his acquaintances in town."

"Dun know, ma'am; may be 't was."

Having elicited this meagre and unsatisfactory information, Mrs. Monard returned to her own room, and sat down to think. She was now alone. Mrs. Vincent, her mother, soon after the marriage of the daughter, paid a visit to some relatives living at Jackson, Tennessee, leaving the young couple in charge of the house. Valena sat for some moments, making conjectures in regard to her husband's absence. Suddenly she appeared to reach a conclusion, for she said to herself—

"I see how it is; he has gone off, to spite me. He will stay with some friend to-night, thinking that I will grieve over his absence or run over town hunting him up. But I'll show him. I will go to bed as usual, and when he comes home to-morrow I'll make him feel ashamed of himself. I'll not say a word to him about it, but I'll act as if I had not noticed his absence. His pitiful, childish revenge shall amount to nothing. I'll show him," she continued, shaking her head and biting

her lip, in anticipation of the triumph she would enjoy over her husband's discomfiture, "I'll show him that I'm not dependent on him, either for happiness or protection."

With such thoughts as these she undressed herself and lay down to rest. But in spite of her bold resolution to brave the ills of the situation, she could not suppress the inclination to listen for his footstep at the door or in the hall. She intended, if he did come in at this late hour, to pretend that she was in a deep sleep. In this intention, however, she was thwarted; for he came not. But at last the vexed lady, burning with thoughts of revenge, fell into the unconsciousness of profound repose. She did not awake till late next morning.

Being fully aroused, she looked around, probably expecting to cast her eyes upon the form of Mr. Monard; but he was not there. Hastily dressing herself, she went to the kitchen to make inquiries. But if he had returned the servant said she had not seen him. It was with a great effort that Mrs. Monard tried to feel and to appear unconcerned. The truth was, she began to feel considerable uneasiness and anxiety. Presently she sat down to her breakfast; but her feelings were such that she could eat with no relish. She could endure it no longer. Suddenly springing to her feet and looking wildly around, she cried out—

"I'm afraid Mr. Monard is murdered. What did you let him go off for?"

"Why, Miss Vallie," said the servant, "I couldn't help it. But I don't think he's killed. I dun know what anybody'd want to kill sich a good man as he is for. I think he'll be back arter a while."

"It is very strange. Oh, I wish I had not gone to that horrid old ball. I'll be bound I'll never go to

another. That man has taken Mr. Monard off and murdered him. Oh, I know he has."

This distressing solution of the mystery caused the unhappy wife to burst into tears. After weeping violently for a few moments, she said to the servant—

"Go up town and find Mr. Monard. Don't come back till you find him or hear where he is."

"I don't think you ought'er be so oneasy, Miss Vallie; I 'spect Mr. Monard went out somewhar to see de sick."

"No; if he had done that he would have left word where he was going, and when he would return. Go, find him, or learn something about him."

Accordingly the servant departed, and was gone more than an hour, during which time Mrs. Monard's anxiety and distress may be imagined. Her state of suspense was considerably intensified when the servant returned and reported that she had gone over town but could find no one who had seen Mr. Monard since the day before. Hearing this, Valena became thoroughly alarmed. She went to some of her neighbors and made a statement of the facts, which soon created a sensation in the village. Inquiries were made in every direction, but no trace of the missing man was discovered. The day was spent in a fruitless search; night crept on, with its dark shades, and Mr. Monard was still absent.

The next morning measures were taken to institute a systematic and extended search. All who could leave the village were enlisted in the cause, and the country was scoured, for miles around, all that day; but the diligent efforts of the missing man's friends were all in vain. Not a vestige could be discovered, and the search was abandoned, in despair. What Valena's feelings were must be left to the reader's imagination.

CHAPTER VII.

THE RETURN.

"'Tis all in vain, this rage that tears thy bosom ;
Like a poor bird that flutters in its cage,
Thou beat'st thyself to death."

The wheels of time roll on, leaving human joys and sorrows far back in the past. No sublunary event can for a moment check their progress. There was, however, one notable exception, in the days of Joshua, when the length of the day was doubled, in response to the prayer of a single individual ; but since that remarkable day the heavenly bodies have performed their customary revolutions with unvarying regularity. During no battle, except that fought by the commander of Israel, have the sun and moon ever "stood still." The earth turns upon its axis every twenty-four hours with unerring precision, despite the earnest wishes and prayers of any that its motion should be stayed. So the sun would not stand still while the search for Mr. Monard continued. After he was gone, also, the days went by, and the wheels of time rolled on, till six months had elapsed. His sudden and mysterious disappearance at first created a great sensation among the inhabitants of the village in which he dwelt. These good people made every possible effort to discover some trace of their preacher, but all in vain. For some days after the search had been abandoned a cloud of gloom overshadowed the whole town ; and people talked about the distressing affair, and wondered what could have become of the missing minister. They advertised for him in the newspapers, far and wide, but no response was ever received. Some even concluded that he was a "bad man," and had wickedly deserted his young and beautiful wife ; but this

theory was rejected by the largest portion of the community, who could not believe Mr. Monard capable of such an atrocious crime. Others supposed that he had been decoyed away from the village, and, for some purpose which they could not imagine, had been murdered. Others drew the inference, from Valena's statement, that he could not endure her violent temper, and, being driven to desperation, had left, never to return. But after awhile these different conjectures and conflicting theories became stale by so much repetition, and the topic lost its power to excite interest.

The truth is, the world has not time to mourn long for any man, or to grieve over any calamity, however distressing it may once have been. Business cannot be neglected. People's thoughts will and must be recalled from the saddest events to the consideration of the constantly recurring question, "How shall we be fed, and wherewithal shall we be clothed?" So in a few weeks the villagers almost ceased to talk about Mr. Monard's strange and sad disappearance. At last they came to the conclusion that they were under obligation to no longer keep their pulpit vacant, waiting for one who might never return, and the services of another minister were secured.

But, of course, there was one who felt a deeper interest in Mr. Monard than any other person in the community, and that was the wife of the missing man. She could not forget, like other people, and direct her thoughts and energies to matters of greater importance. The strange affair occasioned something more than wonder in her mind. She was to be the principal sufferer; and it would be doing her great injustice to suppose that she did not suffer. It is said, with truth, that blessings brighten as they take their flight. When Mr. Monard was gone, Valena could appreciate his worth.

While she did not love him as she ought, and as he deserved, yet it must not be supposed, by any means, that she was entirely destitute of affection for her husband. She had respect for him, and felt proud of him, on account of his intellectual attainments. Besides, he was so gentle and so kind, that she would have been less than human if she had not become considerably attached to him.

But there was another circumstance which caused the absence of Mr. Monard to be very sensibly felt by his wife, and that was the necessity of considering and devising ways and means of prolonging existence. She had never before been compelled to bestow a thought on such a subject ; but now she had to deal with it as one of the stubborn realities of life that imperiously demands attention. Her father's estate was insolvent, and the little which had been saved from the wreck would not suffice long for the support of the mother and daughter. What they were to do, soon became a question for serious discussion. Valena, for this reason, had good cause to deplore the prolonged absence of her husband. Whatever may have been the opinions and theories of the rest of the community, in regard to the sudden disappearance and fate of Mr. Monard, she was under the impression that he was still alive, after she had given the matter mature reflection. She thought, also, that she could assign a reason why he had so abruptly taken his departure. She had set up her will in such decided and even angry opposition to his wishes in doing a thing which he conceived to be wrong, that he had taken offence, and had abandoned her as one unfit to be his companion. While this solution occurred to her as the most probable, yet it was not entirely free from objections. She would ask herself the question, could he have the meanness to desert her on so slight provoca-

tion? If it had been his intention to forsake her, why did he not inform her, in plain terms? Could she have forfeited his love simply by attending a ball? Yet she could not but think that he did have some reason to take offence. She could not forget the reproachful look which he had cast upon her when her escort called, and his last words, uttered in deep mortification, if not in anger. May be, she thought, he had become disgusted at her conduct that night, and had left on that account. But in connection with these reasonings, another question came up for consideration, which militated against the idea that Mr. Monard was guilty of willful desertion: who was the man of whom the servant had spoken? It was evident that Mr. Monard had not left alone. It was reasonable to suppose that the visit of the stranger, whoever he might be, had something to do with the preacher's disappearance. So, the more she thought about the matter, the less able was she to arrive at any satisfactory conclusion. But she did not believe that he was among the dead, and this conviction produced a state of painful suspense. Nearly every day she would discuss the subject with her mother, who had returned home as soon as she had heard of the distressing affair.

"Mother," said the unhappy wife, "do you believe that Eldon left to spite me, merely because I went to the ball?"

"No, Vallie, I cannot think that. Mr. Monard was too noble and honorable to do that."

"Then what did he mean?"

"I can form no idea. The stranger who came here that night induced him to go off for some purpose which I cannot imagine. But I do not believe he murdered Mr. Monard; because, if there had been any difficulty between them, Mr. Monard would not have

left the house." After a pause, she continued, "you ought not, my dear, to have gone to the ball, after you saw that he was so bitterly opposed to it. I think you were decidedly in the wrong."

"I wish, myself, that I had not gone. I did not enjoy it at all. Somehow I felt uneasy the whole time. Once, when I had gotten more than half-way to the Court-house, I was on the point of coming back, and now I wish I had."

As she uttered these words, to her credit be it said, the tears gathered in her eyes.

"Well, Daughter, it cannot be helped now, and what cannot be cured must be endured. You must try to bear up under your troubles."

Mrs. Vincent, in the attempt to comfort her daughter, broke down herself, and both wept together.

"Oh, Mother, do you think he will ever come back again?" She had asked this question probably a hundred times.

"I hope so, my child. If he is alive, and I think he is, my opinion is that he will return. He loves you too much to stay away."

It must not be forgotten that Mrs. Monard had two sides to her character. Frequently she would weep; but sometimes she would fly into a violent passion, and break into bitter accusations against her absent husband, which made her appear to be rather inconsistent.

"I do believe, Mother," she would say, with flashing eyes, "he left me for pure spite; and it was right mean in him, too, to desert me for such a trivial offence as going to a ball."

"I have told you, Vallie, that I think you did wrong in going, when Mr. Monard told you he was opposed to it."

"Well, if he had not said that I *must* not go I

would'nt have cared anything about it. But I was determined to show him that I would have my own way. I'm not going to give up all my liberties to any man, I don't care who he is."

"I cannot think you did right," replied Mrs. Vincent. "You ought to have some respect for your husband's opinions and wishes. But it is useless to talk about it now. I hope Mr. Monard will come back soon, and that you and he may lead a happy life."

And thus would the mother and daughter talk, repeating almost the same words, week after week, till six months had passed. During all this time Mrs. Monard had not lost the use of her intellectual powers by long-continued anxiety and grief. Neither had she pined away till she presented the aspect of a breathing skeleton. Some wives, under the circumstances that have been described, would have sunk into despair, and aroused the suspicion in the minds of friends that they were not far from the borders of insanity. But Valena did not belong to that class. It would have required a greater calamity than the mysterious disappearance of a husband to reduce her to a condition that demanded the accommodations of a lunatic asylum. She was in the enjoyment of good health, though it was observable that she had lost some of her gayety. Such was the state of affairs at the expiration of six months.

One night, after supper, when Valena and her mother had taken their seats and were about commencing work on some articles of dress, the young wife suddenly turned her head in an attitude of close listening, as if endeavoring to catch the sound of something difficult to be heard. She sat silent, breathless, straining her auricular powers to the very utmost. Mrs. Vincent, observing this, said—

What is it, Vallie?"

"Hush, was the quick reply, in a whisper.

Footsteps were heard coming along the gravel walk. Valena rose from her seat, and Mrs. Vincent noticed that her face turned a shade paler. There was a gentle rap at the door.

"It is he, Mother, I know his step. It is Eldon, Mother."

And she sprang from the room before Mrs. Vincent could speak, and hastened to the hall door. She opened it. There stood on the steps a rather strange apparition, that bore, however, a very striking resemblance to Mr. Monard. Valena was startled, as she looked at him in the light of the candle which she carried in her hand, and, drawing back a step, exclaimed—

"Oh, Eldon, is it you or not?"

"It is I, Vallie dear. A spirit has not flesh and blood, as I have."

Saying this, he advanced, and Valena, dropping the candle, threw herself into his arms with a glad cry. She wept on his bosom for a moment, without saying a word. But presently, after Mrs. Vincent had welcomed her son-in-law with such demonstrations as are allowable and proper, they went into the room. Valena held the candle close to her husband's face, and looking at him intently, exclaimed—

"Oh, how changed!"

It was true. Mr. Monard's complexion was unnaturally white; indeed, he was bleached till he appeared as delicate as a woman. He was also reduced in flesh; and his whole appearance was that of a person who had undergone hardships. The two ladies gazed at him in amazement, and continued their scrutiny so long and steadily, that Mr. Monard felt like shrinking back in confusion. He had looked sober enough before his departure; but now he appeared melancholy and sad. Not

a word did he utter while undergoing the inspection of his wife and her mother. At length, when Valena was satisfied with the physical examination of her husband, she exclaimed—

“Oh, Eldon, what does this mean? What is the matter? Where *have* you been?”

“Your questions are natural, my dear,” replied Mr. Monard, slowly, “and it would seem that you have the right to require an answer; but I am very much fatigued, and cannot to-night undertake to reply to your reasonable inquiries.”

“Oh, Eldon!” she cried, as she looked at his sad and pallid face, and took his hand in hers, “You don’t know how strange you do look. You don’t look like yourself at all. What has happened?”

“I have traveled far to-day,” answered Mr. Monard, “and am very much wearied; but I am glad to say that I am in good health. I hope, dear, that you have been well since I left?”

“Oh, yes, well enough under the circumstances; but I have been in great suspense and anxiety. How could you treat me so?” she asked, looking at him reproachfully. “Why did you not write and let me know where you were? Why did you go off without saying anything about it? We feared, at first, that you were murdered, and the whole country turned out, and searched everywhere for several days.”

“I am extremely sorry,” replied Mr. Monard, “that I was the cause of so much trouble to my kind friends, and I would have prevented it, if I could consistently have done so.”

“Consistently!” exclaimed Mrs. Monard. “What do you mean?”

“I mean consistently with the object I had in view.

But you are looking very well, my dear, and you, too, Mrs. Vincent."

"Why, Eldon, how you talk!" cried Valena. "What is the matter? Where have you been? Tell me at once. I am dying to know."

"I would gladly gratify your curiosity, my dear Vallie; but you will have to excuse me, for the present, at least. Let us talk about something else. How are all in town? And what has the church been doing?"

"Eldon," said Valena, in a beseeching tone, "I can never rest satisfied till I know why you left, and where you have been. I was tempted to think that you had deserted me."

"I am sorry you should have thought that for a moment. Nothing could induce me to desert my lawful wife, especially when she is so sweet and beautiful."

"Eldon, tell me—did you leave because I went to the ball that night?"

"O, no, dear. While I deeply regretted that you went, and did all I could to dissuade you, as you know, yet it had nothing in the world to do with my leaving. I hope you could not have so mean an opinion of me as to believe me capable of such puerile revenge as that. But, as it turned out, it was fortunate for me that you did go. If you had not gone, there would in all probability have been a different result, and we would not be sitting here to-night as we are. But I am truly glad that matters are no worse. I have come back to complete our honeymoon, dear. You cannot imagine with what deep regret I left so unceremoniously. I did not have the opportunity to give you a parting kiss. But no matter; it is all over now."

"What is all over?" asked Valena, who, with her mother, had been listening with the closest attention,

and with the expectation of hearing some explanation of his conduct.

"Why," replied Mr. Monard, "my absence and all other disagreeable circumstances connected with it. I have come back now, I hope, to be happy. Let us forget the past, at least this episode in my history, and keep silent in regard to it."

"Keep silent in regard to it!" repeated Valena, in unfeigned astonishment. "Eldon, what do you mean?"

"Just what I have said, my dear. But I feel too much fatigued to enter into an explanation to-night, even if I had the disposition."

Mrs. Vincent, who had not said a word, as yet, observed some unmistakable symptoms of fretful impatience in her daughter, and as she did not wish to witness any unpleasantness the very first hour of Mr. Monard's return, she concluded that it would be best to speak a few words of a pacific character.

"Let Mr. Monard alone for the present," she said, in a kind tone. "He looks wearied. Wait till to-morrow, and no doubt he will explain all, to your satisfaction."

As Mrs. Monard was endowed with considerable curiosity, she did not feel disposed to postpone its gratification for so long a time; but it appeared that Mr. Monard was determined, for some reason, not to enter into explanations at present, and she concluded to forbear pressing him any further upon the subject.

"Very well," she said, "I'll let you off till to-morrow; and then you must give a full account of yourself."

To this Mr. Monard neither assented nor dissented. But the topic was changed, and there was no allusion to it during the evening. The preacher himself said very little, occasionally asking a question, as if for the

purpose of furnishing subjects upon which the two ladies might exercise their colloquial powers. And so the night passed away.

After breakfast, the next morning, Mrs. Monard and her long-missing husband were seated in the parlor. He appeared to be in dread of the question or questions which he had every reason to believe would be propounded. He did not have to wait long before the silence was broken.

"Now, Eldon, I want the explanation to which I am entitled. Tell me what you left me for?"

"I thought, dear," said Mr. Monard, speaking slowly, "I made the request last night that we should all maintain profound silence in regard to the past."

"Yes; but do you suppose I can be silent with such a mystery hanging over you. I want to understand it. You did not go alone?"

"No."

"A man came here after I left, and you went off with him," said Valena, suggesting this as a proper circumstance for the commencement of what she thought would be a mysterious story.

"Well," was the laconic reply.

"That is all we could ascertain," replied Valena.

"Did nobody suspect or suggest where I had gone?" asked Mr. Monard.

"No; but some thought that you were murdered. But why did you leave?"

"I left," said Mr. Monard, with very deliberate emphasis, while Valena listened with curiosity aroused to the highest degree, "I left to save my dear wife a great deal of trouble and mortification, if not disgrace."

"How is that?" she asked, opening her eyes wide. "I don't understand it. Go on; tell me all about it."

"Vallie, my dear," said Mr. Monard, in his kindest

and most gentle tone, "can't you trust me? Your happiness is one of the great objects of my life; and I tell you plainly that if I gratify your curiosity, which in this instance is perfectly reasonable, you will be unhappy. It is all over now, and I beg you, let me carry this one secret to my grave."

"What is all over?" she asked.

"That is the very thing which I do not wish to reveal. I had the very best reasons for acting as I have done. It was chiefly for your good—to save you vexation, disappointment and trouble, that I left so secretly, and perhaps, mysteriously."

"I don't understand this, Mr. Monard (she always called him Mr. Monard when she was in bad humor, or even slightly vexed), and you are talking in riddles, just to provoke me and tantalize me."

"No, dear," replied the preacher, shaking his head, sorrowfully, "I do not want you to become angry. It is very far from my intention to give you the least offence; I want you to love me as I trust you did before this unfortunate affair. I have come back, and I hope you will be happy."

"How can I be happy, Mr. Monard, and how can you expect me to love you, when you show so plainly that you are afraid to trust me? What reason can you possibly have for treating me in this way? Here you have been gone for six months, and during that time you did not write even a line to let me know that you were alive. You might have known that I would be uneasy about you; yet you suffered me to remain in painful suspense and anxiety for half a year; and now you come back, and refuse to tell why you left and where you have been. I think it is right mean of you, Mr. Monard, to treat me so shamefully. If you loved me as you ought, you would n't do it."

"Your last charge, my dear, is entirely gratuitous. If you were deprived of the sense of sight, you could tell that I love you. If I had not loved you with such inexpressible ardor, I would not have left as I did. Now, dear, do not try to extort from me a secret which I want to be buried in the grave with me. Have confidence in me."

"How can I," she exclaimed, reproachfully, "when you have none in me? Why should you desire to withhold from your wife a secret which, you say, concerns her? I can never be happy till you give me a full explanation of this mystery. If you have one particle of respect for me, you will give it, too."

Mr. Monard buried his face in his hands, and seemed to be in a profound study. He dreaded the consequence, that is, the violent outburst of his wife's temper, when he should flatly refuse to give satisfactory reasons for his long absence. He remained in the attitude of one engaged in deep meditation for a moment or two, while Valena sat patiently waiting for him to begin the communication of what promised to be a very strange and interesting affair. She had no idea of permitting her husband to carry such a secret in his own breast. But Mr. Monard manifested no disposition to speak, and presently Valena broke the silence.

"Mr. Monard, this will be a pretty tale to tell people. When they ask me where you have been, what reply can I make?"

"Tell them, my dear," said Mr. Monard, raising up, "that you do not know, and that will be the strict truth."

"But what will you tell them when they ask you? You will have to make some sort of explanation."

"I will tell them," replied Mr. Monard, slowly, "not even so much as I have told you."

"Do you think they will be satisfied?"

"Certainly not; they will have an itching curiosity to know where I have been."

"And you will not tell them?"

"Most assuredly not. Do you suppose I would inform them in regard to a matter which I have not revealed to you? You may rest assured they will never learn from me where I have been."

"Can they learn it from any one else?"

"I do not think they can."

While Valena was propounding these inquiries, in the hope that she might gradually lead her husband to a confession, she was making a great effort to restrain her rising temper. It was with the greatest difficulty she could maintain her mental equilibrium when Mr. Monard answered with such provoking indefiniteness. She was very much vexed; but she tried to be calm as she plied her questions.

"Where is the man with whom you left?" she presently inquired.

"To tell you the strict truth, my dear, I do not know. I have, however, every reason to believe he is at home."

"Who is he?"

"That I do not wish to tell."

Suddenly springing to her feet, as if to surprise and overwhelm her husband, she said—

"Mr. Monard, I believe you murdered that man and have been hiding out."

At this grave charge Mr. Monard looked at her with a sorrowful smile.

"My dear," he said, calmly, "that would be a fearful solution of the mystery, if it were true. But I am glad to inform you that your accusation is without foundation. These hands," holding them up, "are not stained with

human blood. Believe me, your husband is not a murderer."

"Then where is that man?"

"I have no reason to doubt that he is at his home, alive and well. He was the last time I saw him. Do not distress yourself on his account, dear."

"You are so provoking, Mr. Monard," said Valena, exhibiting palpable indications of a storm of indignation and abuse. "I want to know," with a dark frown, "whether you are going to tell me or not."

"Tell you what?"

"You know very well what I have asked you. But if you are so dull of comprehension, I repeat the question, where have you been for the last six months?"

"If I tell you, will that satisfy you? I can communicate that much if you will promise to ask me no other question."

"I want to know all about it," she answered, in a rather imperious manner, thinking that Mr. Monard was beginning to yield. "Where have you been? what have you been doing? and what was the cause of your leaving?"

"These questions," replied Mr. Monard, with kindness, but firmness, "I cannot answer. I have just informed you that I have one secret which at present I cannot, and will not, impart to any human being."

"Will you ever tell it?"

"I do not know that I will. It depends entirely upon the developments of the future."

"Mr. Monard," said Valena, with flashing eyes and darkening brow, "I want to know if this is all the satisfaction you will give me?"

"It is, my dear," answered Mr. Monard, in a tone that indicated how much he dreaded the storm which he perceived must soon burst.

"Then, Mr. Monard, I can no longer live under the same roof with one who is so mysterious. You'd better return to the same place where you've been for the last six months, and stay as long as you wish. You've treated me outrageously and shamefully, and I won't stand it. I'm not going to live with a man who sneaks off at the dead hours of night and remains hidden for months, and never tells his wife where he has been. We will separate. Go, go—leave me."

And she burst into tears of anger and trembled with violent rage. Mr. Monard took her hand, as if he would make an effort at pacification. But she snatched it away, and springing from her seat again, almost shrieked out, "Touch me not, Sir, touch me not. Any man who would treat a wife as you have done me is not worthy of her. I will not stay where you are." Saying this she hastily moved away, and as she left the room, slammed the door behind her in such a way as to convey to Mr. Monard an idea of the intensity and vehemence of her feelings.

After her sudden departure the preacher sat still for a few minutes, looking, if possible, a shade more sorrowful.

"It is unfortunate," thought he, "to be in possession of a secret, which one dares not communicate to his own wife. I cannot censure her for desiring to know where I have been for the last six months. But, oh, my God! I cannot tell. It would be the ruin of us both. Were she to know, she might spurn me from her presence forever. O, it is terrible, terrible. God of Grace! help me to bear up under this trial. Is not Thy Justice satisfied? I will trust, Thee, O Lord, though Thou slay me. Men may frown upon me; but Thou hast said that the broken, contrite heart Thou wilt not despise."

With such prayerful thoughts as these Mr. Monard arose, and went into the village. He shrank from this ordeal, and would have shunned it, but he knew that it must be met sooner or later. When he appeared on the streets, his friends and acquaintances were astonished to see him, and they had many remarks to make upon his altered appearance. To these comments he had no reply to make, but suffered them to exercise their critical powers as much as they desired. The trial, however, came when they began to ply him with questions in regard to his long absence. Mr. Monard was too honest to practice evasion, or prevarication, and he politely gave his friends to understand that he did not wish to answer their inquiries. When they pressed him closely he said—

“I went away on my own private business, which concerned no one but my family. I do not see that I am obliged to enter into a full explanation of all my movements, even if they are deemed somewhat mysterious. In this particular instance my business required the strictest secrecy. It would afford me pleasure to gratify the curiosity of my good friends; but I must beg them to excuse me from divulging affairs in which they can have no interest.”

Of course, such an answer was not at all satisfactory to the preacher's friends, who thought they had a right to a better explanation of his strange conduct. Some became vexed at his refusal to give a full account of his sudden departure, and his employment during the past six months; but their interrogatories all ended in disappointment.

In the afternoon, when it was generally known that Mr. Monard had suddenly reappeared, and in a cloud of mystery, too, some of the ladies called on Valena, in order to learn something about this marvelous affair.

But she warded off their inquiries with evasive answers. She would not have it thought that she was in total ignorance of the secret; but at the same time she felt inward vexation because she knew nothing that would enlighten her polite visitors. All that she could say was, that her husband, for good reasons, did not wish it to be known where he had been. By her evasions she made the impression that she could tell something if she would. Her callers left in a state of bitter disappointment.

Mr. Monard did not return till late in the afternoon. He found his wife, as he expected, looking quite moody, as she sat gazing out of a window, and seeming to take no notice of his entrance. Presently she glanced at him, and assumed, as much as possible, an air of injured innocence. Mr. Monard seated himself near a corner of the room, and after a short silence, said—

“Vallie, my dear, I regret to inform you that we will have to leave this place.”

“*We!*” she exclaimed. “You needn’t say *we*. You can go where you please; but I am afraid to follow a man, or to be seen in his company, who is ashamed to tell where he goes. So don’t include *me*, when you say *we*.”

“Well,” said Mr. Monard, in pain and perplexity, “you know that I have no employment here; we must live somehow, and I will have to seek another field of ministerial labor. If you will not go, though, I must be about my Master’s business. To-morrow I start, to look out another place——”

“And, may be,” quickly interrupted Valena, “stay away another six months before you return.”

“No, dear,” meekly replied Mr. Monard, to this bitter taunt, “If the good Lord spares my life, I shall not be absent long. I hope I shall soon find another field, more

pleasant than this, and that you will accompany me with no reluctance."

She made no answer; but immediately left the room. The remainder of the evening she seemed to be in a state of angry silence, answering Mr. Monard's questions only in monosyllables.

The next morning the preacher rose early, to make the necessary preparations for his departure. Valena was now in a much better frame of mind than on the previous evening. The truth was, she did not desire to part from her husband in anger, or ill feeling, as had been the case six months before. So, when he was on the point of leaving, he said—

"Will you kiss me good-bye, dear?"

Valena seized his hand, and said, while tears trickled down her cheek—

"Oh, Eldon, are you going to leave me again, on another six months' journey?"

"No, dear, no," he answered, as he pressed her to his heart; "God being willing, I shall not be gone long. Do not be uneasy. If I do not return in two weeks, you shall hear from me. I will write back every two or three days, if you desire it."

"Of course I desire it."

"Very well—good-bye."

Imprinting a kiss upon her beautiful red lips, he turned and left the village. As soon as he was out of sight, Mrs. Vincent, who was standing with Valena at the hall door, said—

"Vallie, you ought not to have treated Mr. Monard as you did, yesterday. He is one of the best men I ever saw, and loves you with as much fervor as any man ever loved woman."

"Well, Mother," said Valena, with a slight frown, for she could change from one mood to another in a very

short time, "I do think it was right mean of him to go off for six months, and then refuse to tell where he has been."

"But he has some good reason for it, my child. Besides, you must remember that he is your husband, and you will have to depend upon him for your support."

This last remark of the sensible mother was very well calculated to repress Mrs. Monard's rising anger.

"What will we do, Mother?" she asked, in a tone very different from what it was a moment before; "Eldon has gone to hunt a new place, and if he finds one, I cannot think of leaving you here alone."

"No; you will not have to do that. You were in a bad humor last evening, and would not talk; but Mr. Monard and I consulted over the matter. I am going with you. I shall sell this place as soon as possible, and we will all live together."

"That will do, then," replied Valena. "I'm getting heartily tired of this town, anyhow. People are so inquisitive about Mr. Monard; and it makes me mad because I can't tell where he's been—and I have to pretend that I know, when I don't. But, Mother, I can't help it—I do get mad every time I think about Mr. Monard's conduct. He ought to tell me the secret, for he has one, and I'll get it out of him yet."

"I would advise you to let Mr. Monard alone about that. He will not tell, and his refusal to do so only arouses your bad temper. I tell you, my child, you must learn to control that temper of yours. Mr. Monard is very mild and gentle; but he cannot stand everything. You ought to try to retain your husband's love, which you can never do by abusing him. You'd better say nothing more to him about his sudden disappearance and long stay; that is my advice, and you'd better take it."

Mrs. Monard did not say whether she would follow this maternal counsel or not.

In about a fortnight Mr. Monard returned, and, to his great joy, found his wife in excellent spirits. He did not wait for her to ask questions, but at once told where he had been, and how he had succeeded. He had been employed by another church, and must move immediately. Accordingly, in a few days, he and his wife and her mother left the village, which has already been described with sufficient accuracy, but will no more be alluded to in the present story.

CHAPTER VIII.

TEMPTATION.

“Patience, my lord ! why ’tis the soul of peace ;
Of all the virtues ’tis the nearest kin to heaven ;
It makes men look like gods.”

There are few persons whose entire lives are replete with romantic incidents, not excepting even the fictitious heroes of novels. It is only occasionally that an event of thrilling and startling interest occurs in the history of any one individual. Hence, to keep attention enchained to the pages of a story, many years of the hero’s life must be passed over in silence, or with a brief notice. Patience would, no doubt, be sorely tried, if not completely exhausted, by the narration of those ordinary events which, perhaps, come under one’s observation every day. Therefore, in the present story a long period must be dismissed with only a few general remarks.

More than twenty years had passed away since Mr. Monard’s marriage—that period immediately subsequent to the completion of mature manhood in which a person performs the principal portion of life’s work. After this the energies both of body and mind begin, though it may be slowly, to decline. It is true that a man may labor on, from the force of habit, but not with the same vigor, relish and enthusiasm that characterized the preceding years. As a general thing it is during this period that men establish their reputation. At the end of middle age a person, though he is reluctant to acknowledge the fact to himself, begins the descent of his journey, the final termination of which can be predicted ; for he is apt to settle his destiny before he completes the ascent.

Mr. Monard was now on the downward slope of time.

It would be neither a profitable nor entertaining exercise to relate the monotonous events of his life during the twenty years that had so rapidly rolled away. In accordance with the observations just made he had accomplished the chief part of his work. He could never reasonably expect to rise higher in social and ministerial position. In that regard his temporal destiny was settled. So far as secular affairs were concerned, Mr. Monard was not a success. For, go where he would, he made for himself the reputation of what the world calls a "dry preacher;" and it seemed that nothing could atone for his lack of oratorical powers. He had passed the period at which he could attain to higher rank in the ministry. As the tree falleth so it lieth; and such as Mr. Monard was now, past middle age, he must remain to the end of his days. Wherever he went every one said, without hesitation, that he was a most excellent man and superior pastor; but the universal conclusion was that "he could not preach." As might be legitimately expected, he reaped the full and severe consequences of the reputation which he had established — *a salary not sufficient to supply reasonable wants*. The churches to which he ministered all seemed to act on the principle that he must be *paid* for his preaching abilities and nothing else. The consequence of their rigid adherence to this rule was, that Mr. Monard had to exercise much patience, faith and self-denial, and frequently to change his field of labor.

Another thing which contributed materially to the frequency of these ministerial peregrinations was the conduct of Mrs. Monard. During the twenty years past she had made very little, if any, improvement, morally or spiritually. Instead of being a help, she was a grievous burden to her husband in his ministerial work. In this she took no interest whatever. Besides,

she made herself generally disagreeable to her neighbors, by her violent outbursts of temper. Perhaps she might have been kinder to her husband if he had not clung with such unconquerable tenacity to his "secret." She could never forgive his obstinacy in refusing to account for his mysterious disappearance before the expiration of their honeymoon. This subject appeared to gall her pride, and arouse her deepest ire whenever it invaded her thoughts. She teased Mr. Monard with the perseverance of Delilah, and she entreated, and wept and coaxed, but her husband, unlike Samson, bravely resisted all her efforts, whether of a wheedling or threatening character, to extort his secret. She would abuse him, and apply to him very harsh names, but to her great disappointment and vexation, he was as firm as a rock, and also as silent.

Under such circumstances, Mr. Monard's place of abode could not be a very happy spot. His wife's "horrible temper," as people called it, made their home the witness of many a sad and sorrowful scene. Valena was nearly always out of humor. She had no patience with poverty; and many a severe scolding did Mr. Monard receive because he had not the ability to achieve a victory over that cruel and exacting tyrant. Sometimes, taking advantage of favorable opportunities, he tried to reason with her, and to impress upon her mind that it was not the "whole of life to live, nor all of death to die;" but it seemed that he might as well have talked to a statue. Often she reproached him for attempting to preach, and would tell him to his face that he was "no preacher at all," and that he could "never make a living in that way," and that he ought to quit, and go to farming, clerking—anything rather than follow a profession for which he was not qualified."

"If I had your education, Mr. Monard, I'd show

you whether I'd stick down in such an insignificant place as this. Here we are, almost in rags, and we have little to eat, and still you think that you are a great preacher. If you were a good one, you know you'd get a better salary. You're making a slave of yourself, and don't get a slave's wages."

Often Mr. Monard was assailed with such abuse, but he bore it with the patience of that remarkable man whose name is a proverb among all civilized nations. Sometimes Valena would become so enraged that she would threaten to leave him. But if she really had any idea of carrying this menace into execution, there was one formidable obstacle that prevented it; and that was, no convenient place offered as a refuge. During the twenty years already mentioned her mother had passed to that "undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveler ever returns." So she was forced to dwell under the same roof with a husband for whom she seemed to have little affection. Frequently, in her paroxysms of rage, she might have, at all hazards, abandoned the poor home which Mr. Monard was able to provide, had there not been a tie which no mother can easily sever. She had three children, whom it is necessary to introduce with a brief notice, since they are destined to appear in subsequent portions of this story.

The oldest was a son rapidly approaching the period of manhood—whose youth gave promise of a brilliant future, notwithstanding his lack of opportunities. The second was a girl two years younger than her brother—a shy, modest, timid creature, who appeared to be almost afraid of the sound made by her own voice. The third was a boy over whose head scarcely seven summers had passed. For these children, all of whom were handsome and lovely, Mrs. Monard could not but have a mother's

love. She was proud of them. But the greater portion of her affection was bestowed on "little Willie," who was a pale, sickly child, and on whose face, as a natural consequence, there was an expression of sad pensiveness. Him she regarded as a delicate flower that requires the most tender nursing and constant care. It was not in her heart to speak an unkind word to this poor little candidate for life. One glance at his thin and thoughtful face was sufficient to check the angry words on her tongue, that might otherwise have poured forth in a violent torrent.

The two elder children had been educated principally at home, under the tuition of their father. It may be added to this brief notice, that none of the three resembled their mother in disposition, for they derived their mental and moral inheritance from the father. Their presence frequently acted as a restraining influence upon the "mother's horrid temper," as the neighbors called it. When not too much provoked, she would feel something akin to shame, as she observed their eyes fixed upon her in sorrowful surprise. But when she broke out into one of her furious paroxysms, they would go off and remain, if they could, till the storm was over. It seemed that nothing short of paralysis or death could have subdued the storm at its height. Mr. Monard did not dare to speak to her when one of these fits of madness was upon her. It would only make matters worse. He followed the example of the children, and would get out of the way until his Xantippe had become tranquil from exhaustion. He had never but once tried the efficacy of remonstrance while the volcano of her temper was throwing lava and ashes, and on that occasion he was compelled to beat a hasty retreat at the point of a—*shovel*. Poor Mr. Monard gave it up as a hopeless task, and concluded that it was best

to keep away from the terrible eruption. He would talk to his children, and, without any allusion to their mother, show them the sin of yielding to one's savage temper. Advice, however, on this particular point was unnecessary, as the children were naturally mild and gentle. They followed him as their exemplar, and he had the satisfaction of seeing the elder two consistent members of the church. As to little Willie, he appeared to be religious by nature, and so religious, that even the father would sometimes wonder at his extraordinary devotion.

Such was the state of affairs in Mr Monard's household at the expiration of more than twenty years after his marriage. After many removals, he was now preaching to a church, respectable in point of numbers, situated in a village, not a great distance from the city of Memphis, Tennessee. It was all he could do to live on the meagre salary which he received. The members of his church could have done much better in the way of remunerating him, if they had had the disposition. Mr. Monard had been with them more than a year, and they also had discovered that he was a "dry preacher." This opinion of the congregation, whether well-founded or not, had no little influence in reducing his salary down to the minimum on which a man of family could live. But Mr. Monard did not dare to complain, if he felt that there was just ground of complaint, and people seemed to think that so long as this was the case, he was not in a state which required increased liberality on their part. They knew that he was poor, but there were many others in the same condition as the preacher, and some worse. If they lived in poverty, so could Mr. Monard. The consequence was, their minister was cramped, shackled, humbled to the very dust. How could he be expected to preach with power, when stag-

gering under a great burden of secular cares? But in spite of all the obstacles and discouragements originating from this source, Mr. Monard, with true resignation, practiced patience and perseverance.

The second year after his settlement in the village of ——— there was a vacancy in the male Academy. As soon as Mrs. Monard heard this bit of news, it occurred to her that the circumstance might be made to redound to the temporal welfare of her family. With this happy thought in her mind, she forthwith went to Mr. Monard's study, her yet beautiful face marked with an expression that indicated excellent humor.

"Eldon," she said, "I've got the thing for you now, and I've come to talk with you."

"Well, what is it, dear?" he asked, in his blandest tones, as he laid down his book, and placed her in his own rocking chair, which had been presented, before his marriage, by some kind and thoughtful friend, and which now exhibited many marks of its more than twenty years' faithful service.

Mrs. Monard seemed to think that, precedent to the communication of her project, it might not be amiss to make a few prefatory remarks, in order to render extended discussion of the subject unnecessary.

"You know," she said, "how pinched and ground down we are by poverty, and have been for the past twenty years."

"There is no disputing that proposition, my love; but there is no disgrace in being poor."

"No actual disgrace, Eldon, but there is hardship in it. You don't get near enough for your preaching to enable us to make a decent appearance in the world."

"I partly admit that, my dear, but I hope the good Lord may do better for us when He thinks it is necessary."

"Yes, that's just what you've been saying for the last twenty years. We can't live much longer on hopes. It is time you should try to help yourself some, and not rely on the Lord for everything. I think that the Lord helps those who try to help themselves. The truth is, I'm becoming sick of so much poverty. We've had more than our share of it. I've been nothing but a slave ever since I married you."

Though this proposition was stated in very forcible language, yet Mr. Monard did not feel disposed to discuss it. He merely said—

"No one can be more sorry for it than I am, my dear, and I would rejoice if I could ameliorate your condition."

"Well, Eldon, you can do it, if you will."

"How, my dear?"

"That's what I've come to talk to you about, and I want you to talk about it seriously."

"From your manner of introducing the subject," said Mr. Monard, with a slight smile, "I would infer that your plan is liable to objections."

"None whatever, that I can see."

"Let us hear it, then."

"Well, I heard just now that Mr. Hillgate yesterday resigned his position as Principal of the male Academy."

"Yes, I know that."

"The salary, I'm told, is fifteen hundred dollars a year. Has it not occurred to you that it would be a good idea for you to apply for the situation?"

"No, my dear," replied Mr. Monard, slowly, "no such thought has entered my mind, as yet. I have so much to do, you know, that I have not time to think of anything outside of my regular work."

"But I want you to take time to think about this

matter. We are in needy circumstances, and I can't see a living in your work. What is the use of sticking to this thing of preaching, when you can see that it promises nothing but suffering and starvation?"

"'Trust in the Lord, and verily thou shalt be fed.' We have never starved yet, my dear."

"If we hav'nt," replied the lady, beginning to manifest some indications of vexation, "you know that we have suffered. You know very well that sometimes we could'nt tell where the next meal was to come from."

"That may be true, my dear, but it has not been often the case. We are no better than the Master, and he frequently went hungry. The good Lord has never deserted us yet, and if we will only have faith, He never will."

"I think we've tried faith long enough, Mr. Monard, and I'm tired of it. It is time to try to help ourselves. If we don't, you may depend upon it, we haven't come to the worst. We've been gradually going down hill for the last ten years. I can see it plain enough, if you can't. Your salary, every time you move, gets smaller and smaller. At this rate, I don't see how we can keep from starvation much longer. Make one or two more moves, and we will come to that point. But it's no use to talk about it. You know it as well as I do. I want to know, if the trustees will offer you the position of Principal of the Academy, will you accept it? I myself will have you elected, if you will give your consent."

"Do you want me to quit preaching, my dear?"

"I did not say that you would have to quit preaching. You can do both if you want to."

"But I do not think that I can do both," replied Mr. Monard. "I would have to give up one or the other."

"Well, give up preaching, then; at least for a while. If you don't, I tell you we are bound to suffer. Your preaching don't pay. These people don't give you anything like a living salary. They don't appreciate you, and I just would n't labor for them unless they did pay me."

"But you forget, my dear," meekly replied Mr. Monard, "that years ago I took upon myself a solemn vow to consecrate my energies and my life to the service of the Master. I must not be false to my vow. Woe is me, if I preach not the gospel."

"O, my stars!" cried the lady, in considerable vexation, and with curling lip, "I'm heartily sick of this sort of talking. Mr. Monard, if you want my opinion (he had heard her frequently express it), I think you have certainly mistaken your calling. If the Lord called you to preach, you can't make me believe that He would allow you to suffer for the necessities of life?"

"Why should He not?" quickly asked Mr. Monard. "Temporal prosperity is no indication of divine favor, and poverty is no mark of God's displeasure. Our blessed Redeemer was even worse off than I am, for He had not a place whereon to lay His head. We cannot expect, my dear, to enjoy this world and the next too. Suffering is the lot of most of God's people. Why it is, I cannot fully explain; but it seems to be a necessary part of their discipline. The white-clad throng went up through much tribulation. If we see that the Lord requires us to tread the rugged path of hardship, suffering, poverty, we should not shrink back and murmur, but we should shoulder our cross and bear it with patience and cheerfulness.

"Must Jesus bear the cross alone,
And all the world go free?
No, there's a cross for every one,
And there's a cross for me."

"There is a cross for you, too, my dear. If God sees proper to afflict us—if you call it an affliction—with poverty, let us not murmur at this cross, but bear it with resignation. Let us say in our hearts, with gladness—

"That consecrated cross I'll bear
Till death shall set me free!
And then go home, my crown to wear,
For there's a crown for me!"

"But the cross must come before the crown."

"I did not come to hear a sermon, Mr. Monard," interrupted the wife. "I want to know if you will accept the position of Principal, if the trustees offer it to you?"

"My dear," replied Mr. Monard slowly, as if shrinking from the storm which he had good reason to believe his answer would arouse, "nothing would afford me more pleasure than to give such an answer as you desire, if I could. I would like very much to oblige you. I am sorry to see you want for anything; and I wish I had it in my power to gratify your reasonable desires; but I can do nothing that will interfere with the work to which I honestly believe I am called."

"That is to say, Mr. Monard, you will not accept the position."

"I am glad to say, my dear, that you have caught my meaning."

"Mr. Monard!"

The preacher looked toward the door, whether to see if egress were possible, in case of necessity, or whether accidentally, could not be told. He discovered the precursor of a storm.

"Mr. Monard," said she, her eyes flashing with ire, "do you say, once for all, that you will not accept the position?"

"That is the idea I have been trying to convey," meekly replied the husband.

"Then I have to say, Sir, that you show no love for your wife and children. I often think of a passage of your Bible in connection with you—I remember it, I suppose, because of its applicability to you—and that is, 'he that will not provide for his own household is worse than an infidel.' There you have it—worse than an infidel, Sir. What sort of a Christian are you, according to your own book? I can't make a decent appearance in society, and you don't seem to care a straw, Sir. You never have treated me right, any way. You went off like a sneak—Oh, you need n't try to look so angelic—I say you went off, under cover of darkness, like a sneak-thief, soon after we were married, and stayed away for six months, and you have never dared to tell where you went."

This accusation had been so often repeated that it had become stereotyped on the tablet of Mr. Monard's memory, and it now made very little impression upon him. While his wife was speaking, he thought of several passages of Scripture in regard to the "unruly member," to which he fain would have called her attention; but he dare not. He sat still, and quietly listened to the lady's abuse.

"You have time and again refused to tell," she continued. "Is that the proper way to treat a wife? I never have forgiven you, and more than that, I never will. No man has the right to keep such a secret from his wife. I'm not going to ask you any more to tell—I'm tired of asking. But I say it was a mean trick, Sir, and you must have done something terrible to make you act so. Anyhow, you've never prospered since then. You've taken notice of that fact, haven't you?"

"I acknowledge, my dear," solemnly answered Mr.

Monard, "that I deserve all the chastisement I have received."

"You do, eh? Yes, and you try to look as meek as Moses. You're a nice saint, truly, to make a perfect slave of me ever since we've been married. I've been dragged about from pillar to post for the last twenty years, having, in all that time, never had a home like anybody else. We have to live in old houses that no one else will occupy. And now you have the opportunity of bettering your condition—so that you can buy us a home, and live decently, and you won't even give the matter a thought—not a *thought*, Sir. It looks to me as if you had lost your senses. But you'll see how it will end. I do wish, from the bottom of my heart, that these people would refuse to pay you anything at all—and then you'd have to quit preaching, I guess. It would be the very best thing they could do for you, because you'd have to go at something else for which you are better qualified. Do you know, Mr. Monard, that these people here say that you are the poorest, driest, pokiest preacher they ever have had?"

"I should not be greatly surprised, my dear, if they did."

"No; I reckon not. You would let them say anything they please about you, and you'd never offer to resent it. I suppose if they were to say that your wife is a thief, you'd never deny it. You just let people say what they please, and treat you as they please. I begin to believe that you are a *coward*, Sir."

"Why, my dear, what would you have me do? Do you want me to fight?"

"Did I say fight?" asked the lady, with a look of scorn. "I said nothing about fighting. But if you've got any manhood, I think it is high time you were showing it."

"How show it, dear?"

"Don't mook me by asking. You would know how if you had any to show. You let people impose on you. They make you work week after week, and then pay you hardly enough to keep soul and body together, and you receive the wretched pittance in a way that reminds me of a whipped spaniel, that licks the hand which punishes him. You remind me of that very animal, I say. Here you are offered fifteen hundred dollars a year, and you refuse it. And what for? Why for the pleasure of standing up in the pulpit, on Sundays, and putting people to sleep. I feel ashamed for you. It makes me blush for you, to see the people look at you for a little time after you begin preaching, and then commence to nod. And there you stand and preach away like you could set the world on fire, and not many hear a word you say—sound asleep—sound asleep, Sir. Why there is old Mr. Somers, who has got positively to *snoring* in the church. You think I would be fool enough to preach to people who pay no better attention than that? Why, Sir, the more earnest you are, the louder old Mr. Somers snores."

At this point the lady laughed, in derision.

"Brother Somers, my dear," quietly replied Mr. Monard, "is an old man. He would sleep, no matter who should preach."

"And I suppose that is very consoling to you. If he were the only one, you might make some allowance for him. But I don't see how you can preach at all, when Mr. Somers snores so loud that he can be heard all over the house."

"Well, my dear," said Mr. Monard, with a sorrowful smile, "his snoring, it seems to me, might have a tendency to keep the rest awake."

"I don't see anything to laugh at," said Mrs.

Monard, more aggravated by her husband's imperturbable equanimity. "If I put people to sleep with my preaching, I'm certain I'd never go into the pulpit. What good are you doing? You never convert anybody."

"No; I hope not, my dear," said Mr. Monard.

"But you will stick to it," continued the lady, not seeming to notice the hasty remark of Mr. Monard, "till you starve. Just keep on, keep on, and it won't be long before we'll come to the dogs. We've almost got there now; and the sooner we get to the bottom the better for us. I shall not stay here any longer to talk with you. There is no reason in you. The place will soon be filled, and you will see the day when you will regret that you did not follow my advice. Now, mark what I say!"

She sprang up in a violent rage, and left Mr. Monard to the enjoyment of his own thoughts.

It might be supposed, by some, that in the foregoing discussion Mrs. Monard had justice on her side. In a domestic broil or difficulty, it is imprudent to censure either party, if the object is to effect a reconciliation—that is, one must not be justified to the disparagement of the other. Generally, both are, to some extent, in fault. Mrs. Monard, as she confessed, disliked the hardships that are the invariable accompaniments of poverty. Was she wrong? Is there any principle of the Christian religion which requires that a person shall be poor? Is poverty one of the Christian graces? Some people seem to think so, and fondly imagine that they are entitled to a heavenly inheritance simply because they have none on earth. From the fact that they cannot gather up much of this world's goods, they deduce the conclusion that they are favorites of heaven; they are filled with envy and hatred of the rich, and

mistake these evil feelings for piety. Some of the most pure-minded, devotional men that ever lived on earth were blessed with a great abundance of worldly wealth. There was Job ; there was Abraham, and many others ; proving by their godly walk and conversation that religion is not incompatible with the possession of even vast riches. If people were, in the strictest sense of the word, really *contented* with poverty, there could be no progress and no prosperity. There would be nothing to stimulate human ambition, and call forth genius and ingenuity. But men are restless, and ambitious, and have the desire to accumulate. If these dispositions are kept under proper restraint, and are regulated by the precepts of religion, there can be no sin in endeavoring to improve one's temporal condition. It must not be assumed that because a man finds himself poor God designs he shall always be so. Men are not to attribute misfortunes which could be avoided by the exercise of common prudence to the All-wise heavenly Father. God is not the author of that poverty which is the necessary fruit of indolence or mismanagement. Nature teaches us, and the Bible teaches us, to strive for at least a competency. It is not contrary to divine revelation that human beings should live in comfort, and even enjoy the luxuries which God has scattered over the earth. But all through the Word we are warned of the danger of wedding our affections to these things that can be used only during a brief lifetime.

Can we, therefore, blame Mrs. Monard for her dislike of the ills of poverty ? It is true, that she ought to have exercised Christian contentment ; but contentment does not imply that we are to sit still in the ashes and dust of poverty, and make no effort to rise from our humble position. Mrs. Monard had long endured hardships and privations, and it appeared to her right and

proper that her husband should avail himself of the present opportunity to place his family in better circumstances. Many ministers were engaged in teaching, in order to eke out their small salaries. Why could not Mr. Monard take the vacant place in the school, and preach too? Thus she reasoned, and many would pronounce it good reasoning. But Mr. Monard honestly thought that he could not follow two professions, and do justice to both; and he could not, for a moment, entertain the thought of abandoning the work to which he believed, with all his heart, that he was called. This accounts for his prompt rejection of his wife's proposition. Was it enough to arouse her angry passions? Whether it was or not, and whatever may be thought of the conduct of both parties, the facts in the case have been given.

After Mrs. Monard had left the study, her husband sat still for several moments, gazing gloomily through the window which faced the street. He was not at all surprised at the kind of reproaches to which he had just listened. So much abuse had been heaped upon him during his married life that it had ceased to disturb his tranquillity.

Here the question might very naturally arise, if Mr. Monard, exposed, as he was, to so many fulminations of female wrath, and lacerated by so many lashes of the feminine tongue, had not ceased to love his wedded companion? Could the tender affections of the human heart, under such numerous and violent shocks and outrages, retain the image of a termagant, and cling to it as worthy of esteem and love? It might seem to be more than a Herculean task. But man does not know himself. There are internal recesses upon which the light of psychology has never cast a single ray. Man is attracted mysteriously to certain individuals, like the

needle to the pole, and he is totally incapable of discovering the hidden cause which controls him. Sober reason cries out in warning tones, in vain, to break the golden fetters that bind him in a kind of pleasing bondage. He may make the effort, but it is nugatory. Probably it was the operation of this principle, which, it is safe to predict, will ever bid defiance to philosophical investigation, that caused Mr. Monard to retain a considerable portion of the freshness of his early love. His first infatuation had never become entirely blunted. No doubt his affection would have been much more lively and intense, if Mrs. Monard had been habitually gentle and lovable. Yet, it must not be thought that she was constantly unamiable and repellant. A calm must follow a storm, as well as precede it. Mrs. Monard could not, therefore, be always in a quarreling, scolding, abusing humor. Often she was ireful; often she was lovable. Thus Mr. Monard lived amid the alternations of tempest and sunshine. He possessed a meek, gentle, forgiving spirit, and he would make all possible excuses and allowances for his wife's explosions of wrath. Even if he had lost his affection, he had too much self-respect to quarrel with her.

But Mr. Monard's prospects for domestic felicity appeared to be brightening somewhat. He could not but joyfully notice that for the last year or two his wife's temper was improving. The outbursts were at least less frequent. Whether he knew it or not, the origin of this improvement could be traced to little Willie. His childish reproofs, sometimes audible, and sometimes conveyed by a strangely solemn gaze, appeared to touch her, when nothing else would.

On the day that she swept out of Mr. Monard's study with anger depicted on every feature, she saw the pale and sickly boy, sitting on the door step, looking at her

as she approached, with an expression of poignant sorrow. He had overheard some of the abusive language which she had applied to his father. She stopped when she reached the door, and stood, looking at the little fellow, whom she seemed to love above all earthly things.

"Mamma," he said, in a slightly quivering voice, "what makes you look so angry at me?"

"Why, Willie, I'm not angry with *you*," she replied, endeavoring to recover her tranquillity.

"Well, you're angry at Papa, then?"

"Yes; you know he makes me mad sometimes. I can't help it, Willie. Your Papa does provoke me till I can't hold my tongue."

"But," said the little fellow, with tears gathering in his eyes, "I heard you call him a *coward* just now, and that did hurt me *so* much. He is not a coward; he don't look like one. He is so good and so kind to us all, and he loves God, and I know God must love him. I have never heard him speak a cross word to you, and he never gets angry with you, or anybody else. Oh, Mamma, how could you call such a good man a coward!"

These words went like hot sword-blades through the mother's heart. She felt that the boy was right, and that she must make some apology, for his gratification.

"But, Willie, I didn't really mean it. I know your father is a kind, good man, and I think a great deal of him. I called him a coward without thinking, but I didn't mean it."

"Then you ought not to have said it, Mamma. For I know it must make him feel bad to be called such an ugly name."

"I ought not to have said it, Willie, I confess. But your Papa sometimes provokes me so that I can't help but call him names; but I don't mean any harm by it."

"Mamma, whenever I hear you talk so angry at my good Papa, it somehow makes me feel sick. Something," placing his hand over his heart, "seems to hurt me, here."

"Well, my little dear," she said, gently stroking his head, "if it hurts you, I'll try not to do so any more."

"That's a good Mamma," exclaimed Willie, rising up, and throwing his arms around her neck, and kissing her. "If you won't get angry any more, we'll all be so happy. Papa always looks so pleased when you're kind, and it makes me feel so much better."

Mrs. Monard returned his embrace, and as she released him, brushed a tear from her eyes, and hastened away to attend to her household duties. She had learned a lesson of wisdom from a babe.

Mrs. Monard was now rapidly approaching the borders of real trouble, not dreaming that it was near. But our story must not lose its interest by the anticipation of events which must come in their proper place.

CHAPTER IX.

POVERTY.

"How many shrink into the sordid hut
Of cheerless poverty!"

Unexpected events very frequently disturb the monotony of human life. Men cannot control circumstances as they would. "Man proposes, but God disposes." Napoleon Bonaparte once proudly said to a lady, "I propose, and I dispose." The exile of St. Helena had reason to change his opinion during his banishment and imprisonment, if not at some previous period. That swelling, arrogant "Ego," before which all Europe once trembled, was suddenly prostrated by the moving, crushing car of time, and was brought down to the dust of insignificance by one word from Him who orders all things. In the presence of the Almighty Will, how foolish in a human being to exclaim "*I dispose.*" How inexpressibly vain would be the attempt to thwart the purposes of the Sovereign endowed with omnipotence. Man cannot contend against One of whom it can be truly said—

"He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm."

He, at whose feet all the hosts of heaven cast down their glittering crowns, has only to exercise volitions, and events at once rush forth from the bosom of the future which change the current of human history. And this Almighty being controls the affairs of heaven and earth.

But whether there is any superintending providence or not, there are some inexorable laws whose operation no human being can escape. They will act in spite of all resistance. The stream of time silently flows on;

men would check it, if they could ; but it rushes along all the same, bearing them on its rapid current to the ocean of eternity. As it rolls onward, sad changes must occur in every household. The thousand ills that "human flesh is heir to" will do their appointed work. There is no possible escape from these innumerable precursors of death, except by the hand of violence. The mighty enemy of life enters upon the stage and changes gladness into mourning. In a moment he converts the laugh of joy into the wail of grief. He disrobes the king, and in scorn casts the jeweled crown to the floor. Yet, however hideous may be his form, chilling his touch, and withering his embrace, the monster is necessary. After all,

"Death's but a path that must be trod,
If man would ever pass to God."

Little Willie Monard, who had been frail and ill all his life, was suddenly prostrated by a rapid development of the disease to which he had been subject from his birth. A description of it is not necessary. Mr. Monard perceived that the services of a physician would be indispensable. There was one, whom every family in the village employed in dangerous cases. His skill and sound judgment were so conspicuous that his advice was sought by every physician for miles around. His name was John B. Huxley. His practice was so extensive that he was constantly in the saddle. This man was such a rare combination of the elements of human character, that it is impossible to present him exactly as he was. No pen portraiture can do him justice. He was a man who said whatever he pleased, and if people did not like it, it mattered not to him. Whenever people did wrong, or what he conceived to be wrong, he would give, in very plain and terse terms, his opinion of their conduct. It might be supposed that a man of

this character would have a great many difficulties with his neighbors; but not so. The Doctor was a person who commanded respect, and something more, for he was so firm, bold and positive, that people stood in awe of him. His gigantic proportions contributed no little to the awe which his imposing appearance inspired. Besides, his manner was so peculiar that he could employ very harsh language without giving offence.

There was another thing about the Doctor which language cannot describe. In conversation a strange expression would settle upon his face, which could not be interpreted. This occurred, however, only when something was said or done that strongly moved him. Before he would speak no idea could be formed, by the auditor, of what was taking place in his mind. It could not be told, by looking at him, whether his words would be gentle or abusive. It was an expression that baffled his most intimate acquaintances. To offset these properties, some of which may be considered as undesirable, it must be added that, notwithstanding his rather stern and rough exterior, there was not a more generous-hearted man in the village. Hence, Dr. Huxley was regarded by his neighbors as a kind of privileged character.

With this brief description, if such it can be called, the Doctor will be allowed to show what he was by his walk and conversation.

Mr. Monard was barely acquainted with the Doctor. It had been their misfortune to be kept apart till now, which, however, was not the preacher's fault. Dr. Huxley, holding to a form of infidelity which will be noticed in the progress of this story, was so seldom seen at church that people said he never went. Mr. Monard had called several times, but had never found the

physician at home. Consequently, their knowledge of each other was very limited.

As Mr. Monard, on the day that Willie was suddenly prostrated by illness, reached his office, the physician rode up and alighted from his horse.

"Doctor," said the preacher, after they had shaken hands, and exchanged the customary civilities, "I wish you to see my little boy, who is quite sick."

"Certainly," replied the physician, "I will go. But do you want me immediately?"

"If you can, I would like to have you go at once, as I think it is a critical case."

"Well, we will walk to your house, as it is not far." Saying this, he threw his saddle-bags across his shoulders.

"But, Doctor," said Mr. Monard, in a solemn tone, "before we start, I want us to have a distinct understanding."

"What about, Sir?" asked the Doctor, looking at him fixedly.

"I do not want to deceive you. I am very poor, and I do not know when I will be able to remunerate you for your services."

"Do you think I am a hog, Sir?" asked the Doctor, with a sort of explosive bluntness, which produced some confusion and perplexity in the preacher's mind; for he scarcely knew what construction to put upon the question.

"Sir?"

"Do you take me to be a hog? I want to know that."

"If I had thought you to be such an animal as that," replied Mr. Monard, with a sad smile, "I never would have applied to you for medical advice."

"Then, if it is your opinion that I do not belong to that class, come along, Sir. But to tell you the truth,

Mr. Monard, I have no right to deny my ancestors—neither have you, Sir. All of us originated from even a lower animal than the hog. Our forefathers may once, in ages past, all have been hogs. But there has been great improvement since then. Men have developed out of the hoggish condition.”

“I notice, however,” replied Mr. Monard, “that all hogs have not developed into men.”

“No, Sir. It is only the fittest that have emerged into a higher condition. But I have no desire just at present to discuss this subject. I only want to impress it on your mind that I am not a hog *now*. There are many beings, Sir, that have the human form, but they have not developed into the higher type of man, and they yet have all the hoggish instincts—the same gluttonous appetites—the same disposition to devour everything that comes in their way—the same inclination to seize the only ear of corn, and run off, leaving their starving fellows. A hog has not the first charitable instinct; nor are his voracity and rapacity ever put to shame by a single generous impulse. His ingratitude, you know, has passed into a proverb. It is said of him that he never looks up into the tree to see who shakes down the acorns. But I flatter myself, Mr. Monard, that I have lost at least some of these hoggish traits. Still, to be candid, I confess I can feel in my inward nature, whatever it may be, the mighty struggle of Evolution against the original swinish instincts, in her efforts to develop me into something higher. But I fear, Sir, from your puzzled look, that I have failed to make myself understood.”

“I am not certain, Doctor, that I caught the exact signification of your last remark.”

“Well, Mr. Monard, I see that you cannot take a hint. I have been trying to give you the information,

as delicately as I could, that I do not make any charge against preachers. I never charged one in my life, Sir. You may think that a little strange, when I inform you that I do not believe, as you do, in regard to religious faith. I am a believer, Sir, in the doctrine of Evolution, a subject to which, for several years, I have devoted a great deal of thought. What is to be the final destiny of man, we cannot tell. We can only base our hopes of a better and higher mode of existence upon what Evolution has already accomplished. She has certainly achieved wonders in the past, and I do not despair of her success in the future. I suppose, Sir, I indulge hopes of immortality similar to yours, but the foundation is different. But, Mr. Monard, at any rate, I believe in the brotherhood of man. As long as we do dwell on this little, insignificant globule, for comparatively it is nothing more, we ought to do all the good we can to our fellow-men. Now, the reason why I do not charge preachers for my poor services is, that they devote themselves to what they conceive to be the good of mankind. True, I think their religion is a harmless, and, perhaps, beneficial delusion ; but, nevertheless, they are honest men, and as they have no way to gain a livelihood, except by their profession, which, by the way, is a very poor one in some respects, according to my observation, and as they teach men to be honest, my opinion is they ought to be sustained. So, very few of the medical fraternity ever make charges against men of your calling."

"I am under obligations to you, Doctor, for your kind intentions ; but probably you have misunderstood me. I do not want your services without equivalent compensation. I merely want to say that I expect to pay you just as soon as I can."

"I have already told you that I am not a hog. If

you cannot take my word for it, and will give me the opportunity, I will try to demonstrate the fact."

"The fact needs no demonstration. You appear to be far removed from that genus."

"*Species*, if you please," quickly said the Doctor. "There is but one genus."

"I am sorry, Doctor, that I have to differ from you on that point."

"Differ as much as you please, Sir. Men would be of no account if they agreed in everything. I recognize your right to maintain your own opinions, if you can support them by logic and facts. But we will not have time to discuss the question. I will talk to you at some future time in regard to this matter. I have understood that you are a man of science, Sir, and I am glad of it. But even scientific men will differ—at least, they will arrive at different conclusions, though they may not be far apart as to the premises. But never mind now. We will talk about this at some time in the near future."

"If we live," solemnly said Mr. Monard.

"If one of us shuffles off this mortal coil so soon as that, then the other can hold to his own opinion without controversy. But I hope, Sir, that kind Mother Evolution will spare us for many years yet, as both of us have the appearance of beings who are fit to survive. So, I venture the prediction that we will live to engage in scientific discussion. I like to traverse the fields of science with men who do not fear to accept the results of investigation. We should always accept truth, Mr. Monard, even if we have to abandon preconceived opinions that have been fondly cherished."

"I heartily subscribe to that proposition, Doctor. We should not sacrifice truth to anything. If we do so knowingly, we are nothing more than hypocrites."

The Doctor bestowed on Mr. Monard a searching look as this last remark was made.

"I would not have the presumption," continued the preacher, after a short pause, "to assert that I am a scientist; but whether I am or not, I always cling to what I conceive to be truth, let it be what it may."

"I perceive that I will have a tough case to deal with. From the way you speak, and from your air of confidence, you seem to think that you have the truth."

"That is my opinion," quietly remarked Mr. Monard.

"And I think I have it, too, replied Dr. Huxley. "So there it is. I suppose we are as wide apart as the poles; and yet both of us cannot be in the right."

They had now reached Mr. Monard's residence. It was a dwelling that could maintain only the feeblest claims to respectability. In fact, it was the most humble in the village. The minister had been forced to occupy it on account of its comparative cheapness. For some reason the owner, who will hereafter appear, had never brought it to completion. Consequently, the building was a mere hull. The paint-brush had never been applied to it, and the outside presented marks of incipient decay. In a word, there was a general air of dilapidation about the whole place. And in this apology for a house, which wore an uncomfortable air during all the seasons of the year, lived Mr. Monard and his family. Dr. Huxley entered the lowly abode, and could not but notice the manifestations of poverty that met his eye in every direction. The few articles of furniture were of the cheapest kind. The Doctor appeared to take no notice of the surroundings, but one glance was sufficient to reveal the depth of the minister's poverty. With great kindness and tenderness he made his diagnosis, after which he measured out some medi-

cines. Having given such directions as he thought necessary, as he was about taking his leave, he said—

“Iced lemonade would be of advantage to the little boy while he is so feverish.”

Mr. Monard gave the Doctor a very sad look, which did not escape his notice. His prescription was one which was quite expensive at that day and time, and the minister had not one cent. His anguish was so keen that it could be perceived on his face. The thought was excruciating, that this poor little patient sufferer might be on the borders of eternity, and that he had it not in his power to procure a single luxury to alleviate the pangs of death. It was no wonder that he could make no reply to the physician’s suggestion. Mrs. Monard cast a reproachful look upon her husband, and asked—

“Willie, would you like to have some iced lemonade?”

“I would like it so much, but ——.” There was a pause. He observed his father’s look of agony, and divined the cause. Child as he was, he was acquainted with the humble circumstances of the family, and had early learned to practice economy and self-denial. Poverty gives even little children a premature thoughtfulness.

“Never mind,” continued Willie, “I can do without it very well.”

Mrs. Monard could plainly read his thoughts, and the tears streamed down her cheeks.

Dr. Huxley easily comprehended the whole scene, and, saying that he would return in a few hours, hastily left the house. When he reached the first store on the street, he went in.

“Good evening, Mr. Brandon,” he said.

“Good evening, Doctor,” replied the individual addressed. “I hope you are well, Sir.”

"Yes, thank you. You are in the enjoyment of health, Mr. Brandon?"

"I have no right to complain, Doctor."

"Health is the first of all blessings, and those who have it ought to sympathize with those who are afflicted."

"Certainly, Doctor—that is true."

"You belong to the church, Mr. Brandon?"

"Yes, Sir, of course, I do."

"I thought so. I suppose it will be necessary to give only a hint to a member of the church, saying nothing of common charity?"

"I don't understand you, Doctor."

"Well, I have just prescribed iced lemonade for your preacher's little boy, who is quite sick, Sir. I find that his father is in abject circumstances. Of course, you and others of your church will see to it that my prescription is filled."

"Now, Doctor, see here," exclaimed Mr. Brandon, "I have paid my subscription, and I do not see how I can do any more."

"If you do not mind telling, Mr. Brandon, I should like to know how much you pay."

"How much do I pay? Certainly I will tell you. I pay twenty dollars a year."

"Twenty dollars!" said the Doctor, in a tone to which the villagers were accustomed. "Mr. Brandon, do you believe what Mr. Monard preaches to you?"

"Certainly, I do."

"You believe there is a future place of reward and punishment?"

"Yes, Sir," replied Brandon, slightly wincing under this examination, which he feared might wind up with a personal application.

"You believe that if a member of the church does not do his duty, he will be punished?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Then, if all this is true—if there is such a hereafter as you profess to believe in; if members of the church are punished for not discharging what they acknowledge to be duties, my opinion is, you will be punished, along with the rest."

"But you are not the Judge, Doctor," replied Brandon, with a laugh.

"No; and it is fortunate for you that I am not, for I would disband your church."

"What for, Doctor?"

"For good and sufficient reasons. You believe your preacher is called of God?"

"We think so, Sir."

"And believing that, you allow him to suffer for the necessities of life. You need not shake your head in denial, Mr. Brandon. I am just from the rickety shanty where he lives, and I know whereof I speak. Everything about the miserable hut—it is nothing but a hut, Sir, which I think belongs to you—and which, I suppose, you let your preacher have without rent—but everything about it, inside and out, bears the marks of disgraceful poverty. You church people put your preacher in such a place as that, and not only that, but you allow a sick member of his family to suffer for a little delicacy, which you can easily procure, but which Mr. Monard cannot. This is religion with a vengeance, Sir."

"Doctor," replied Mr. Brandon, "you don't understand these church matters. Ministers are expected to make some sacrifices. Their business is to preach the gospel, and not to make money. They must not accustom themselves nor their families to luxuries. Our church is poor, Doctor. We're not able to pay a larger salary, and our preachers are satisfied with what they

get. Mr. Monard has never complained, and if he has suffered, we have never found it out."

"Mr. Brandon," replied the Doctor, with the strange expression upon his face which has already been referred to as indescribable, "I have studied physiology, and phrenology, and physiognomy. By the light of two of these sciences I have partially examined Mr. Monard. I have watched him as closely as etiquette would tolerate, and I have come to the conclusion that he would starve before he would make a parade of his necessities before the public. But be kind enough to inform me how much is his salary?"

"This poor church pays him all we are able to, and that is three hundred dollars a year."

Again the same strange expression, which had passed away while the Doctor was speaking, came back to his face. He fastened his large gray eyes upon Mr. Brandon, as if he were trying to penetrate the depths of his soul.

"Mr. Brandon, you do not tell me so!" said the Doctor, in such a manner that the merchant could not tell whether he was astonished at the largeness or smallness of the amount.

"Yes, Sir, we pay him that much, and we are a poor church, too."

"Poor?"

"Yes, Sir; you know we are poor."

"Mr. Brandon, you astound me!"

"Why, Doctor?"

"Do you believe that a man with three or four in family can live on three hundred dollars a year?"

"Many a one does it, Doctor."

"No one can do it, Mr. Brandon, without moving in a social circle which would be shameful for Mr. Monard. Your church would frown upon him, were he to rise in

the pulpit clad in rags. I do not see how he goes even in the style he does."

"Why, Doctor," interrupted the merchant, "I told you just now that you do not understand church affairs. It does not cost Mr. Monard as much to live as you imagine. In the first place his house-rent is small."

"House-rent, Mr. Brandon, house-rent!"

"Yes, Sir; I say his house-rent does not amount to much; the house belongs to me."

"Mr. Brandon, do you charge your preacher rent for that shadow?"

"Shadow! What do you mean, Doctor?"

"It is useless to explain, Sir, if the word is not comprehensible. You say that I do not understand church affairs. I admit it, and you are beginning to enlighten me. I learn, then, that one principle of your religion is to *starve* your preacher. He fasts, while you all feast. Sir, I pronounce it a burning shame to engage the services of an educated man, like Mr. Monard, for the wretched pittance of three hundred dollars a year. If I were in his place, I should certainly quit the business. I never knew before that this was all you pay him. Sir, from my knowledge of the circumstances of your members, you could pay Mr. Monard twelve hundred dollars annually, without feeling it a burden."

"It would be utterly impossible," exclaimed Mr. Brandon, opening his eyes in amazement, "for our church to do any such thing. Whew! I say; twelve hundred dollars! It is with the greatest difficulty we can raise even three hundred—it is all we can do."

"My opinion, Mr. Brandon, if it be as you say, is, that your church is composed of people who have no faith in their own religion. We call such people, Sir, hypocrites—a good name for them—stage actors. I am ashamed of your church. I tell you, Sir, I would not

treat a dog as your church is treating Mr. Monard. Shame! shame! Good evening."

The doctor rose abruptly, and left the store. It might create surprise that such language as he employed did not give offence. But it has already been stated that he was a very peculiar man. Few could have talked as he did without arousing feelings of bitterness and resentment. But the people of the village had become accustomed to his ways, to his manner of uttering harsh expressions—a manner that no words can describe—and they allowed him the privilege of saying what he pleased, especially since most of them were under obligations to him for favors. They had seen him working patiently, faithfully and tenderly with their sick ones. Some of them believed that they owed their lives to Dr. Huxley. How could they become angry with him? Besides, as already intimated, there was something in his manner of saying harsh things which seemed to remove the asperities from his rough language. He had to be seen and heard before this phase of his individuality could be understood and appreciated.

As soon as the Doctor had left the store, Mr. Brandon said to himself—

"He is a rough old case, I declare—right insulting sometimes; but I cannot get mad with him. He is a good meaning man, and is such a splendid physician; I do not see how we could get along without him. Besides, he is a profitable customer of mine, and it will not do to fall out with him. But he certainly knows nothing about church affairs, and is, therefore, excusable for what he says."

After this soliloquy, he dismissed the matter from his mind, and turned his attention to commercial affairs.

It may not be deemed out of place to say that there

was nothing very peculiar in the character of Mr. Brandon. He was but a type of a large and common class. It required no long or intimate acquaintance with him to discover his predominant traits. Many people called him a miser. At any rate, he was frugal and industrious. By his economy and good management he had become the owner of "great possessions." Mr. Brandon had joined the church, but he was never a very zealous Christian. As was very evident, he was deficient in the grace of liberality. However, it is useless to occupy space with any lengthy description of a man whose character can be read almost at a glance.

On the way to his office, Dr. Huxley met another man whom he knew to be a member of the church, and who also was blessed with an abundance of this world's goods. To him the Doctor made the same statement, in regard to Mr. Monard, as he had to Mr. Brandon.

"Well, Doctor," replied the man, who has not sufficient connection with the present story to require even a passing notice, "we've already paid Mr. Monard half of his salary, and it seems to me that ought to be enough. That's what we agreed to do."

"You have paid him one hundred and fifty dollars?"

"Yes, Sir—one hundred and fifty dollars. That ought to supply his wants—his reasonable wants."

"Does your family live on three hundred dollars per annum?"

"No, Sir, of course not," said the man, as if surprised at the question.

"Of course not," replied the Doctor. "You spend that much in foolishness, Sir. Your family live in extravagance, while your preacher is starving."

"No, Doctor, you must be mistaken. He is not starving."

"I say, Sir, he is starving, by inches. He is suffering every day."

"How did you find it out, Doctor? If Mr. Monard is suffering from hunger, none of us know it."

"Know it?" exclaimed the Doctor. "Why do you not know that any man must suffer who has to support his family on three hundred dollars—yes, Sir, less than three hundred dollars, for he has to pay rent for a hut which is hardly a good stable. Well, Sir, I scarcely know how to express myself on this subject. I hope nobody will ever say anything to me about joining the church. I believe it makes people meaner—internally meaner. If Evolution stops at this point of development, she is a failure. But I will not abandon the hope that nature will yet evolve a higher a nobler species of animal than the church man. According to my observation he is a kind of abortion—one of nature's capricious freaks, for her own amusement, amid severe labors, ha! ha! ha! But Evolution is a mighty power, and I do not think she can rest satisfied with such a failure as that. At her next effort to improve, I indulge the hope that she will produce something more elevated and worthy than the modern Christian."

Saying this, the Doctor broke into a loud laugh and turned away, leaving his hearer in astonishment.

He did not clearly comprehend the Doctor's last remark, as he knew not the meaning of the term evolution.

"Strange fellow, that Dr. Huxley," muttered the man, as he went on about his business, and dismissed the subject from his mind.

It was unfortunate that the Doctor at the very outset came in contact with the two worst types of piety which the church afforded. There were others who were quite

different from these men, and who would have cheerfully responded to his appeal, and have done what they could. But he did not consume time in talking to any one else in regard to Mr. Monard's necessities. At once he purchased the articles of his prescription, and sent them to the preacher's house, charging the bearer not to mention the name of the donor.

To prevent making a false impression, a few words must be said in reference to the church, all of whose members Dr. Huxley hastily and thoughtlessly pronounced hypocrites. Such they were not. There were no more hypocrites among them than can be found in any other church of the same size. But evidently the members of Mr. Monard's church, like many others, did not have correct views concerning the support of the ministry. They had not been properly trained in the grace of giving, which, it may be truly said, is the thermometer of piety. Unfortunately, they did not regard sacrificing to the Lord in this way as one of the elements of religion. It was considered a mere business affair, in which they reduced the salary down to the minimum on which it was possible for a family to live. When Dr. Huxley gave it as his opinion that they could pay a salary of twelve hundred dollars, he told the truth. But if a proposition had been made to do this, the church would have promptly rejected it as preposterous. The members were not as deficient in piety as the Doctor imagined; but they were *thoughtless*—perhaps that is the best word to employ—in regard to their minister's support. Dr. Huxley was correct in his estimate of Mr. Monard's character, for the preacher made no complaint. Probably he was afraid to do so. He might have been told, if he had dared to murmur, that, if he were not satisfied with his salary, he was at liberty to seek another field. Mr. Monard had so often

moved from one place to another, that he was acquiring some fondness for a settled abode. He had discovered, by sad experience, that there was much truth in the old saying, "Three moves are equal to one burn-out." But, whether it was through fear of being compelled to change his field of labor again, or from a natural aversion to obtruding his wants and sufferings upon his congregation, he opened not his lips in complaint at his hard lot.

It must not be thought that the church to which Mr. Monard was now ministering was *representative*, and was a fair specimen of what religion can do. Yet, it must be confessed that there are some, even in this time, which bear a striking resemblance to it. There are ministers undergoing the process, as Dr. Huxley expressed it, of starving by inches. They may not actually suffer for the necessities of life (though some few do), yet the deprivations to which they must submit are unknown to the world. The truth is, that not many receive the compensation to which they are entitled. The idea *seems* to be that the minister must leave no inheritance of a temporal nature to his family. Why he should not accumulate something for the period of old age, when he is utterly helpless—why he should not leave his family in at least comfortable circumstances, would probably puzzle any one to tell. The opinion obtains, to too great an extent, that the preacher is entitled to nothing more than a "decent support." It is by no means contended that the Church should make its ministers rich; for that would prove calamitous. But it ought to be strenuously insisted upon that the minister should have a sufficiency to free his mind from all worldly cares, either in regard to himself or family. However, this digression will no doubt be considered unnecessary, as the subject has been ventilated by

ecclesiastical courts till it has ceased to have any interest for general readers.

As soon as Dr. Huxley had left Mr. Monard's humble abode there was a painful silence for several moments; at least it was painful to the preacher. The thought was peculiarly harrowing, that he could not, without an appeal to some of his brethren, procure what the physician deemed necessary to the comfort of little Willie. Mrs. Monard was silently weeping; but presently she dried her tears, and said—

"It is hard, indeed, that my poor boy cannot have some little delicacies while he is so sick."

"Never mind, Mamma," he said, in feeble tones, "it makes no difference. Some cool water will do very well."

Was it a tear or a mote that the father brushed from his eye?

"Mr. Monard," said the mother, with some peevishness, "can't you possibly get some ice and lemons for my dear little boy?"

"I will go up town after a short time, and try. I think I can succeed. Willie must not suffer for anything, if I can prevent it."

"You needn't go Papa. I can do without the lemonade. I wouldn't have thought of it, if the Doctor hadn't mentioned it. But when he spoke of it, I did think I would like to have some. But I will forget about it presently."

"Oh, how mean these people are," exclaimed Mrs. Monard. "They have no more sympathy than a set of dogs. I despise them. They are pretty Christians, truly. There is old Brandon, the wretched old miser, who keeps us oppressed to death. If he gets to heaven, I have no fears for myself."

"My dear," interrupted Mr. Monard, "you ought

not to pronounce such wholesale condemnation upon the people, without allowing them an opportunity of defence. I think they are a kind-hearted people; and if they knew that Willie needed anything, it would be forthcoming. I am satisfied that Dr. Huxley will mention the matter to some of them, and it will not be long before Willie will have what he wants. If my prediction is not verified in the course of an hour, I have only to state the case to some of the brethren, and I know they will respond."

"I hope they may," replied the lady, "but I say they are a mean people for not paying you more. It is a shame that you have to call on your 'brethren,' " putting considerable emphasis on the word, "to aid you in buying a few lemons and a little ice. I say it is a disgrace to them. I do believe they would suffer us to live on bread and water, if they were not ashamed. We come very near it any how. I don't see how they can expect a family to live on three hundred dollars a year, and pay rent, too, for this old rat's nest? They are mean, Mr. Monard, you know they are; but you're always making excuses and apologies for them. Oh, if I were a man, I'd show them they couldn't run over me as they do you. You let them treat you any way, though. If any of them were to spit in your face, I don't believe you'd resent it in the least. No; but you'd be ready with an apology for them."

"O, Mamma, please don't talk so," said Willie, "it makes me feel worse."

This was enough, and the gentle request had the effect of subduing the mother's rising temper. She would do anything to gratify the little boy's wishes. Therefore, she at once relapsed into silence, and commenced again to fan Willie, who fell into an uneasy slumber. Mr. Monard sank into a deep reverie, which

a spectator would have judged to be not of a pleasing character. He was gazing through the door, as if at some object away in the distance, while his thoughts were roving amid mysteries which will never be unfolded in the present state of existence. These things will occasionally intrude upon the minds of those who have unbounded confidence in the wisdom, goodness and righteousness of Him whose tender mercies are over all the works of His hands. Why do the righteous go mourning all their days? Why do the wicked prosper? Jeremiah could not tell. Job could not tell. The Psalmist could not tell? And Mr. Monard could not tell.

After the lapse of a quarter of an hour this reverie was broken by the entrance of a servant, bearing several pounds of ice and a dozen lemons.

"Who sent it?" inquired Mrs. Monard.

"I'se not allowed to tell, Missus," replied the colored boy, with a grin.

"Do you belong to Dr. Huxley?" she asked.

"O, no, Missus; I waits at de saloon. I was told to bring dese things here, and go right back."

And, faithful to his instructions, he immediately turned and went off.

"My opinion is," said Mr. Monard, "that we are indebted to Brother Bell."

"And my opinion is," replied Mrs. Monard, "that we are indebted to 'Brother' Dr. Huxley. You needn't think that nobody can be kind unless they belong to the church. I believe that Dr. Huxley has as much religion as any of your members, even if he never goes to church."

"I am sure, my dear," replied Mr. Monard, "that I think Dr. Huxley is a good, kind man; and since I think about it, I would not be surprised if your conjec-

ture is correct. I had not thought of him in the matter, from the fact that we have no right to expect such favors from him. He had to go right by Brother Bell's shop, and my notion was that he mentioned it, and Brother Bell at once got the things. It is so like him. I may, however, be mistaken. But no matter; I felt sure that the good Lord would not permit our Willie to suffer."

"It is Dr. Huxley that has not permitted it."

"Yes; but the Lord used him as an instrument."

"I suppose, then," she replied, with some sharpness, "you don't thank the Doctor at all."

"You are mistaken, my dear. I do heartily thank the Doctor, if he is the donor, but at the same time I thank the Lord, who put it into the Doctor's kind heart to perform this charitable act."

Mrs. Monard felt no disposition to engage in a theological discussion, and the subject was accordingly dropped.

Dr. Huxley called late in the evening; but it is not necessary to relate what transpired.

CHAPTER X.

CHARITY.

“'Mongst all your virtues
I see not charity written, which some call
The first-born of religion; and I wonder
I cannot see it in yours.”

The next morning Dr. Huxley paid another professional visit to his little patient, in whom he was beginning to feel a very deep interest. It was but natural that his heart should glow with sympathy for this meek and uncomplaining sufferer. In some respects, Willie was an extraordinary boy, and was endowed with intelligence far beyond his years. Disease, which had clung to him with remorseless grasp since his birth, keeping him a prisoner within doors, engendered a habit of thoughtfulness rather unusual in children. It seemed that a full-grown soul had taken up its abode in this fragile structure of clay. He belonged to that class of little ones who appear to be too brilliant, too ethereal, for the rude shocks, and jars, and storms of this sin-blighted world. Such beings, so pure, so innocent, so artless, are fit only for the atmosphere of a garden of Eden, whose crystal waters, golden fruits, and leaves for the healing of the nations, would remove every taint of the curse. Even at the age of seven, Willie was a philosopher, and bore the hardships of poverty with a serenity and a resignation that brought sunshine into the humble dwelling, and taught the entire household lessons of sublime patience. One glance of the visitor at the pale face, reflecting, as it seemed, the gentle light of the eternal world, was enough to arouse emotions of sorrow in the heart. Mrs. Monard often wept in silence, as she looked at him, while he sat

pensively gazing into the glowing coals of fire during the dark days of Winter, or as he lay under the spreading tree amid the cool breezes of Summer, watching the clouds that would undergo such strange and fantastic changes. It made the sad impression upon the beholder, to look at him, that this frail child, who might be appropriately compared to some little angel that had strayed from bright realms above to the confines of earth, was ripe for translation to a better world, where the sunshine is warmer and the skies are fairer. At the very first visit, Willie completely won the heart of Dr. Huxley, who soon perceived that this was a case which would require all his skill. On the second day it was evident to him that his patient was in a worse condition than on the preceding day. However, he kept the results of his examination to himself, and, in answer to the questions of his parents, failed to reveal the whole truth. But Mr. Monard could perceive that the little fellow was in an extremely dangerous state.

It would not be very interesting to enter into minute details of the case. It is sufficient to say that for days the dark Angel hovered over the sufferer, and frequently the contest between life and death was violent and severe. During this time Dr. Huxley discharged the duties of his profession with more than faithfulness. He had determined to contest every inch of the ground with Death, for the possession of this little boy, and to fight the monster to the complete exhaustion of all the means known to the medical art. He called oftener than was necessary, for fear the cunning enemy might gain some slight advantage in his absence. To his credit be it said, that Dr. Huxley did all this without the least expectation of receiving pecuniary compensation.

Here justice demands a short pause in the story, for the observation that there is no class of men who do more

gratuitous service for the ministry than the medical fraternity. Such men, so constantly in the presence of suffering and death, it would seem, ought to be filled not only with sympathy and love, but with deep and fervent piety. But it is to be regretted that many of them are but the living embodiment of profanity and blasphemy. Nevertheless, they show their respect for God's messengers, if not for His cause, by refusing all remuneration for their faithful services in the minister's family. It may seem a slight contradiction, that profane, unbelieving physicians will visit the preacher's sick family for weeks in succession, day after day, night after night, furnishing medicines themselves, and never boasting of their generosity. This gratuitous service seems to be recognized as due to the ministry by the entire medical profession. Why they have agreed among themselves to perform this labor without pecuniary reward it would be difficult to tell, unless the reason which Dr. Huxley gave to Mr. Monard is the true one. But whether it is or not, the fact stands, that no other class of men favor the ministry to such an extent.

Dr. Huxley was very far from being a Christian. But he had great respect for Mr. Monard, whom he soon discovered to be a man of uncommon intellectual abilities and of cultivated mind. In fact, from the first day of their acquaintance he became strongly attached to the preacher, though there was an utter antagonism between their religious sentiments. But the Doctor was decidedly fond of controversy, and he had respect for a man who would differ from him and contend earnestly for a principle. When he had time, and his little patient's condition would admit it, he took great pleasure in discussing questions with Mr. Monard, whom he found to be as firm as a rock in defence of his religious faith. Several times they approached the subject of evolution,

but the circumstances would not permit any extended discussion. However, the physician promised himself much entertainment on some future occasion, when he intended to provoke the minister to attack the fortress of his favorite theory, in whose strongholds he thought he could triumphantly repel every assault.

From what has been said, it must not be inferred that Dr. Huxley was the only one in the community who was kind to Mr. Monard in his time of distress. Such a supposition would be gross injustice to the villagers. Many offered their services as nurses, and were thus a great help to the parents. In fact, every one seemed anxious to do something for little Willie; and simply a bare hint was sufficient to procure anything which could be had in the village that would gratify even childish whims. Even Mrs. Monard was touched by the kindness of her neighbors, and ventured, one day, to say to her husband that she was too hasty in calling them a "mean people."

After the lapse of two or three weeks Willie's chances for life were, or at least, seemed, very promising. There could be no doubt that he had greatly improved, so far as the superinduced illness was concerned, but his general health had not reached its former status. Dr. Huxley was a much better judge than those who joyfully expressed their belief to the father and the mother that the child would be as well as usual in a few days. They were deceived by the flattering external appearance. But it was Dr. Huxley's opinion that the insidious enemy had beat only a temporary retreat; and he came to the conclusion that Willie's chances were now reduced to one, and even that was doubtful, if not impracticable. His plan, to be of any benefit, would have to be put in operation in the next few days. Accordingly, he said to Mr. Monard, one day, when he had reason

to believe that Willie could stand the fatigues of a trip—

"If you could remove Willie to ——— Springs, I have no doubt the waters would be beneficial to him."

The Doctor said this, not in cruelty, for he well knew that Mr. Monard could come about as near doing this, unaided, as he could to performing a miracle. He was therefore prepared for the reply.

"Doctor," said the preacher, with considerable emotion, "I am in no condition to follow your advice. You are, no doubt, acquainted with my circumstances. The truth is, I am utterly unable to defray the expenses which the adoption of your suggestion would involve. I wish I had it in my power to do whatever you think necessary. But I am bound, hand and foot, by poverty."

"Do you not think, Mr. Monard, that the members of your church would come to your relief, if it were suggested to them?"

"I do not know that they *could*, Doctor, even if they were willing. They have been so kind to me, that I could not ask them. Most of them are poor, and I suppose they have done about all they can."

"Have they succeeded," replied the physician, with that curious expression on his face which no words can describe, nor painter's brush depict, "in making you believe that?"

"They have made no organized effort to do so," answered the minister with a very sad smile, "but I think they probably come up to the general standard that exists in the Church, and when they have done that, I have no right to expect more."

"Do you not think they could be induced to increase your salary?"

"I think not, Doctor. They have an idea that they are up to the measure of duty, and that is all they will

do. They do not believe in works of supererogation. I have no complaint to make, as, I suppose, they pay me what my poor services are worth."

"Sir," exclaimed the Doctor, breaking out into one of his emphatic ways of expressing himself, which frequently startled the hearer, "you are preaching to a set of hypocrites—yes, Sir, hypocrites, I say, who do not believe a word you tell them in regard to heaven and hell. I have to confess that my theory of the 'survival of the fittest' seems to have failed in this instance. I once thought that Christianity was an improvement on the old heathen mythology, but, I tell you, Sir, I begin to doubt it seriously. We can say, with truth, that the priests of that system were not compelled to suffer for the very necessities of life. Why, even the old Jewish system, with all its foolish and cumbersome ceremonies, was a better institution for the priesthood than Christianity is—pity that Julian did not succeed in restoring it. My goddess, Evolution, is beginning to puzzle me. It looks like she is making a retrograde movement in the moral world. Yet I console myself with the general reflection that she never makes a blunder. I hope that the modern Christian is merely one of her experiments, probably a mere freak, with which she is not satisfied. It is possible that in some hour of idleness she evolved him, for her own amusement. In the course of time he will be referred to as a strange but brief departure from nature's general method of doing things. I tell you, Sir, Evolution will not permit such a monstrosity to survive. In the next geological age man will, no doubt, be supplanted by some higher creature."

"I am bound," replied Mr. Monard, with great mildness, for he could not think of taking offence at Dr. Huxley, who had been such a true friend in the hour of need, "I am bound, Doctor, to enter my solemn protest

against what you have just asserted. Your evolution theory, whatever else may be said of it, will not apply to the Christian religion. Christianity is a divine system, not subject to natural laws, and not the result of mere human development. Pardon me, Doctor, when I say that I cannot believe I am preaching 'to a set of hypocrites,' as you call them. I will not deny that we have some in the church who are not what they ought to be. But you must not get your ideas of the character of true religion from the inconsistent conduct of a few professors. I know that we have members who have reached the highest state of Christian perfection that it is possible for poor, frail, human nature to attain. They can never be developed into anything higher till they are transferred to another mode of life."

"I have no doubt that such is your belief, Mr. Monard; but we have not time to argue the question. I am now going to convince myself that you are greatly mistaken in the characters of the people to whom you preach. I will have the thing demonstrated, and I may perhaps present to you an argument based on facts—yes, Sir, facts, against which it is in vain to reason. Good morning."

Immediately the Doctor hurried off, leaving Mr. Monard in total ignorance as to his intentions. He walked rapidly till he arrived at the store of Mr. Brandon. After speaking a few words to the merchant, he said—

"Mr. Brandon, I have called to see what you will do for the relief of a person in great distress—a person in whom, Sir, you ought to feel a deeper interest than I do."

"Who is it, Doctor? I have to respond to these calls of charity nearly every day, but I never refuse to do all I can."

"I am glad to hear you say so, Mr. Brandon. I suppose, in your case it will only be necessary to tell you that I fear Willie Monard will die. I can see but one chance for him, and that is rather doubtful."

"Why, I thought he was getting well," replied the merchant, in surprise.

"He is only slightly improving, Mr. Brandon. The poor little fellow is in a critical condition now, and has been all the time. He ought by all means to go to — Springs."

"I suppose that would be a good idea, Doctor. Is that the only chance for him?"

"I told you just now that even that chance is doubtful, but I can think of nothing else that would be of benefit."

"But is Mr. Monard able to take him there?"

"Of course, he is not," replied the Doctor, in a blunt way. "You know very well that Mr. Monard is in destitute circumstances; you ought to know it, as you are a member of his church. But the church is able to raise the necessary funds, and you must all do it, or the boy will die."

"Of course, Doctor, we will do all we can," replied the merchant, in a slow and calculating sort of way. "We must not let the little boy die, if we can help it;—he's a bright little fellow, Doctor."

"He is so, Sir; unusually so; and I am truly glad that you are so willing to aid in the effort to save him. If you will give me a sheet of paper, we will at once start a subscription, and see if we cannot raise the necessary funds."

"How much will it require, Doctor?" asked the merchant, as he presented the paper.

"Why, Sir, not less than one hundred and fifty dol-

lars," answered the Doctor, as he fastened his large gray eyes on Brandon's face.

"One hundred and fifty dollars!" cried the merchant, in amazement.

"Yes, Sir; that is the very least amount that will accomplish the purpose. One of the parents will have to accompany the child, and the board of both will have to be paid."

"Doctor," said the merchant, scratching his head, "I hate to tell you, but I don't believe we can possibly raise that amount."

"The boy dies, then," said the physician. "I ask you, Mr. Brandon, shall we sit still and see the bright little fellow die, for lack of proper treatment?"

"O, no," quickly answered Mr. Brandon, "I do not say that. Certainly we must do what we can to raise the amount. But I have my doubts about raising a hundred and fifty dollars. I had no idea that it would take so much, by half."

"I know something about the cost of living at — Springs. Boarding is very high there, and a hundred and fifty dollars is a small amount for two. They cannot remain longer than a month."

"Well," replied Mr. Brandon, "I suppose you know. I am willing to do my part."

"Then let us say no more about it, but go to work at once."

The Doctor took the sheet of paper, wrote a few lines on it, and said—

"Here, Mr. Brandon, head the list."

"There is no use of that, Doctor. I don't like to be so conspicuous. The Scripture says, on the subject of giving alms, 'let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth.' That is an excellent rule, too. I never like to make a parade of what I do. So I will

just put down so much *cash*, and you needn't tell who paid it."

"But I want the influence of your name, Mr. Brandon. You know how people are about such things. They will very naturally want to know why your name is not on the list. If you please, put it down."

"It is against my rule, Doctor, to make any display of my charities, but you will force me to violate it."

Mr. Brandon slowly penned his name, and paused as if calculating, dipped his pen in the inkstand, scratched his head, and wrote *two dollars*.

The Doctor looked at it, and then at the merchant, seeming to be in doubt.

"Did you not aim to put a *cipher* after the *two*, Mr. Brandon?"

"No, Sir; I meant two dollars."

That uninterpretable expression settled upon the physician's face, and he seized the pen, wrote his name, placed opposite to it the sum of twenty dollars, handed the sheet to the merchant, and burst into a boisterous laugh.

"What is the matter?" asked the merchant, in astonishment at this unexpected exhibition of explosive risibility.

Taking the paper again, the Doctor pointed at the two amounts, and said—

"Here is Evolution *versus* Religion."

"I don't understand you," replied the merchant, whose look might be properly described by the adjective sheepish.

"Do not understand me? Do not understand that, Mr. Brandon? Well, no matter. But is this all you will give?"

"Well, now, Doctor, if the rest will give in the same proportion, you will find no difficulty in raising the

amount. You must remember that I have to pay my part of the minister's salary, and of church expenses; and besides, you don't know how many calls of charity I have to respond to."

"I know this, Mr. Brandon; you are worth more than I am."

"Probably I give twenty times more to the church than you do," replied Mr. Brandon, with a smile of triumph.

"O, I do not give the church anything, so far as that is concerned. I have no confidence in the institution, which seems only to shrivel people's hearts and to blunt their sensibilities. The more I see of it, Sir, the less use I have for it. What good can there be in an institution that weakens the ties which ought to exist between man and man? You are a church man, Mr. Brandon. You profess to believe that the church is necessary—necessary to your own salvation. You ought, then, to support it with your means. You ought to esteem and love the man whom you have hired for a shamefully small salary, to explain your Bible on Sundays, and look after the interest of your 'soul,' as you call it; but when I come to you, and appeal to you as a Christian, to aid in saving your starved preacher's little boy from death, you give the tremendous amount of *two dollars*. Is this the fruit of religion? You opened wide your eyes in astonishment that I should have laughed. But such absurd incongruity, such ridiculous inconsistency is enough to make a Hottentot laugh. Ha! ha! ha!"

The Doctor continued to laugh, while Brandon gazed, as if he thought the man crazy. After a little he ceased, and said—

"But the present business, Mr. Brandon, is not exactly a church affair. This is simply a question and a matter of common humanity. But as I have in view

the good of your own preacher, I thought you would feel disposed to do something handsome. Again I ask you, is this all you will give to save the life of your preacher's child?"

It is utterly impossible to convey an idea of the manner and tone in which these cutting words were spoken. Uttered by any other man they would have no doubt provoked resentment of a troublesome character. But, owing to the Doctor's peculiarities, to which reference has been made several times, and which must be borne in mind to understand the man, Mr. Brandon did not take any offence. The only effect which the Doctor's opinion of the church had upon him, was to make him a little more dogged in his resolution to adhere to the amount which he had subscribed.

"That is all I can do just now, Doctor. Let the rest give that liberally, and I have no doubt you will succeed."

"Very well. Good-morning, Mr. Brandon."

The Doctor next called at the shop of a blacksmith, Mr. Bell, whose name has been mentioned heretofore. This man had a large family dependent for support upon his daily labor. He did not really expect a contribution from Mr. Bell, with whom it was a hard struggle to provide food and clothing for his wife and children. He was known to be a consistent, zealous member of the church, who was more liberal, as people thought, than his humble circumstances would justify. Dr. Huxley having two objects in view in the benevolent scheme which he had undertaken, at once made known the object of his visit. The poor man listened with deep emotion, and, after a short pause, said—

"I'm mighty sorry to hear that the poor little boy is so bad off, and I wish I had it in my power to do more, Doctor. Here," taking out of his pocket an old, soiled

leathern purse, "is two dollars and fifty cents. It is all I have, but that will help some."

"But if this is all you have, Mr. Bell, do you not need it?"

"Certainly, Doctor, I need it; but from what you tell me, Mr. Monard needs it more than I do. It wo'n't do to let that sweet and good child die, if we can help it. He's an uncommon boy, Doctor. Did you ever see anybody endure suffering with such patience? He's really learnt me a good lesson, and made me resolve to be more patient under my trials."

"He is, indeed, a remarkable child, Mr. Bell. I have taken a great liking to him, and I have determined to spare no effort to save him. But, Mr. Bell, you cannot afford to give this much."

"Take it, Doctor, take it. I only wish I had more to add to it. I intended, though, to buy my wife a pair of shoes with it; but she will cheerfully do without them for a short time, to help Mr. Monard in such a case as this. I know you are not a Christian, Doctor—I wish you was—but I try to be one, and I have faith to believe the Lord will help me when I get in a tight place. He never has failed me yet, and I've no doubt He'll make me able to spare this money."

"Mr. Bell," said the Doctor, with abruptness, "do you believe such stuff as that?"

"Stuff!" exclaimed the smith, in astonishment. "You may call it stuff, if you will; but I've been tryin' to serve the Lord for twenty years and up'ards, and I tell you, Sir, He's never failed me yet; but He's always proved a 'friend that sticketh closer than a brother.'"

"Do you believe, Mr. Bell, that your God will refund your two dollars and a half, if I take it?"

"Why, I believe this, Doctor, that if I get into such

a fix that I can't make the money to buy the shoes, the Lord will send it to me in some way. I've tried Him often, and He never has failed me."

"See here," said the Doctor, "I did not intend to take your money, but now I will do it, just to see whether the Lord will help you, and will return it. I want you to be certain to let me know, if he does."

"Oh, no, Doctor," quickly exclaimed the smith, "I can never agree to tempt the Lord in that way. That would be a sin of presumption. You take the money, and say no more about it. I'm not afraid to trust the Lord. I leave the matter in His hands, and let Him do accordin' to His own will. But I'm not goin' to enter into a bargain with you to put the Lord to the test. He'll help me, if it's necessary, without performin' a miracle just to gratify the curiosity of two sinful beings like me and you."

"Mr. Bell," said the Doctor, after a moment's reflection, "would you mind telling me how much you pay your preacher a year?"

"Not as much as I would like to, Doctor; but I manage to pay him twenty dollars. It might seem a large sum for a poor man like me; but the Lord somehow makes me able to pay it."

"Your hard work makes you able, Mr. Bell, that is all."

"I see it's useless to try to convince you, Doctor, that the Lord has anything to do with my affairs; but I'm willin' to trust Him. He has never failed me yet."

"We will see," replied the physician. "I am not satisfied with your proof. You must tell me if your Lord pays back this two dollars and a half."

"You mustn't be like the old Pharisees, Doctor," replied the smith, with a smile.

"How were they?"

"Why, Sir, they were always asking for a *sign* from heaven. If a man can't believe God's Word without a sign; if he can't believe Moses and the Prophets, he wouldn't believe if one rose from the dead."

"Mr. Bell," said the Doctor, "there is something about your religion that I do not understand."

"What is that, Sir? There's no difficulty about it if a man's heart is right."

"How is it that what you church people call religion has opposite effects upon different individuals?"

"I don't think it does, Doctor. It never has but one effect, and that is to make a man better than he was before."

"Well, pray tell me what good it does Mr. Brandon? Look there at his name on that paper, with only *two* dollars annexed to it, when he is worth two or three hundred thousand. He gives no more to his preacher than you do. He could easily pay the whole salary allowed to Mr. Monard, and never feel it. How is that, Mr. Bell? Ought religion to have such an effect as that? or do you believe that Mr. Brandon has any religion?"

"I'm thankful," said the smith, slowly, "that I'm not Mr. Brandon's, nor nobody else's Judge. The good Book says, 'judge not, lest ye be judged.' Every one has to settle the question for himself, whether he has religion or not. Religion don't root all the bad passions out of a man's heart. If it made men perfect at once, they could never grow in grace, and we are commanded to do that. Brother Brandon, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, may improve in liberality, and I hope he will. But you must give religion credit for what it does. 'Spose Brother Brandon had none at all, how much do you reckon he'd give?"

"Just about as much as he does now," replied the Doctor. "If he did not belong to the church, I suppose he would not pay the preacher a farthing. But he is shamed into that, Mr. Bell—shamed into it, Sir."

"Well, Doctor, give him credit for what he does. Certain, religion has not made him any worse."

"I have not time to talk longer, Mr. Bell," said the Doctor, looking at his watch. "So, I bid you good-morning."

"Let me know by to-morrow how you get along in making up the money, will you?"

"Yes, Sir, I will."

"How different from Brandon is that man," thought the Doctor, as he left the shop.

"If there is anything in religion, Bell has it. He is certainly true to his convictions. He has the honest simplicity of a child; wonder how he can have such implicit confidence in a God, whose existence he cannot prove. I say; 'the Lord help him!' Poor, simple-minded man! he helps himself, by hard blows on his anvil, and deludes himself into the belief that his Lord does it. How easily is the human mind enfeathered by superstition! Men grasp at mere straws and shadows in the vain effort to secure immortality after death. Why should we care whether there is life beyond the grave? What difference can it possibly make? Is not utter annihilation as desirable as conscious Existence? Four thousand years ago the thought occasioned this Ego in my mortal frame no trouble or uneasiness, that Huxley, the pill-maker, might never become a living being. Four thousand years hence I may be in the same condition—consciousness, life, thought, emotion, all destroyed—but I will not care. Yet I cannot divine the purposes of Evolution. I know not what this Ego may become, and it is useless to trouble myself about it."

Thus thought Dr. Huxley.

It would be an unnecessary consumption of time to follow the Doctor, as he went through the village in the accomplishment of his laudable object. The various excuses which people gave may be easily imagined. Some said they had nothing, and expressed much regret at the fact. Others were like Mr. Brandon, and claimed that they had done their duty, when they had paid their portion of the minister's salary. Some gave very sparingly. A few, who had the sublime faith of the blacksmith, gave beyond their ability, Dr. Huxley being Judge. But with all his earnest persuasions and appeals, he did not secure the promise of more than seventy-five dollars. To him, with his limited experience in such matters, it was strange that the poor gave more cheerfully and liberally than the rich. There were several in the community, members of the church too, who could have given the entire amount, without the least inconvenience; but he had more trouble with these than any other class. But at last, Dr. Huxley became thoroughly disgusted. He was so provoked at some of the members of the church that he employed language which was as much lacking in propriety as euphony. But they endured it, for reasons already given.

The next day, Dr. Huxley had not the time to devote to this purpose, as many patients demanded his attention. He called at the shop of Mr. Bell, according to promise, to acquaint him with the results of his efforts.

"I'm mighty sorry, Doctor, you've failed to raise the necessary amount; but we mustn't give it up yet. I'm glad to tell you that I can do a little more this morning than I could yesterday. Here is five dollars more you can add to what you've got."

"How is this, Mr. Bell? Has the Lord already paid

back your two dollars and a half, with ten per cent. interest by the hour?"

"Indeed He has. I told you the Lord never had failed me, and I have faith to believe He never will."

"Well, how was it, Mr. Bell? I must have the proof that the Lord did it."

"It's very easy to explain, Doctor—no miracle in it either; yet I'm satisfied it was the Lord's doing."

"How was it, then?—let us have it."

"It was just this way: about an hour after you left my shop yesterday, a man came in who had been owing me for about three years. I had despaired of ever getting the money; but he came in and paid me, without my asking for it—seven dollars and fifty cents. So there is enough to buy the shoes for my wife, and five dollars more, which I cheerfully give for the benefit of little Willie."

"Why, Mr. Bell! ha! ha! ha! Do you think the Lord had anything to do with that transaction?"

"Of course, I think the Lord had something to do with it. He put it into that man's heart to come and pay me."

"O, pshaw! Mr. Bell, I have had that to happen to me frequently. It is luck, Sir—nothing but luck."

"You may call it luck, if you will, Doctor; but I look upon it as a special providence. I had asked that man for what he owed me time and again, and he wouldn't pay me. I got tired of asking him, and had come to the conclusion just to let him alone. But the Lord made him pay me. That's what I believe."

At this the Doctor burst into a laugh, while the smith looked at him quietly, without uttering a word.

"Excuse me, Mr. Bell," he said, when his laughter had subsided, "but it is really amusing to me—the idea of the Lord's acting as a constable, and forcing people

to pay their debts. Do you not see how ridiculous it is?"

"No, Sir; I don't," replied Mr. Bell, with great solemnity, "and it's very painful to me to see a poor, puny human being make sport of my God."

"Why, Mr. Bell, seriously, I do not see how in the world you can attribute such a circumstance to a special providence, as you call it. I have had many a man to pay an old debt after I had almost ceased to think about it. Do you suppose the Lord put it into their hearts to pay me, when I do not even acknowledge his existence?"

"The Lord cares for all His creatures, Doctor, even if they are ungrateful. He sends the rain upon the unjust as well as the just. His tender mercies are over all the works of His hands. He is, according to your own account, kinder to you than you are to Him. If you'd only read His word, and pray for His Holy Spirit, you would be a better and happier man than you are, Doctor."

"I am not an unhappy man at all, Mr. Bell, and I am not lacking in reverence either. I have a god, or rather a goddess, as well as you. She is also very kind and wise."

"I don't understand you, Doctor."

"No? Well the name of my goddess, who has made this beautiful world, is Evolution."

"Evolution?"

"Yes, Evolution."

"Why, the Bible gives no account of any such divine being as that. How is a poor, ignorant man like me ever to find out anything about *her* or *him*, or whatever it may be. Acquaint now thyself with *Him*, says the Bible, but how am I to acquaint myself with *her*?"

"Just the easiest thing in the world, Mr. Bell. Open your eyes, and look around you, and you see her

works on all sides. You, yourself, are a specimen of her workmanship."

"Why, the Bible says, God made me, Doctor."

"In that you are greatly mistaken, Mr. Bell; that is, with your idea of God. Evolution made you, Sir, and as a compliment to her skill and wisdom, she had poor material to work on; for she constructed you out of a monkey."

"Oh, come, now, Doctor," said the smith, with a smile and look of incredulity, "you don't intend that I'm to believe that. I've heard that of late you'd got some peculiar notions; but I do hope that is not your idea, if I understand you. Surely you're only joking with me."

"I never was more serious in my life, Mr. Bell."

"Then, Doctor, it is my time to laugh. That's the funniest thing I ever heard in the way of religion. Oh, you can't come that over me, Doctor. Do you want me to believe that you was once a monkey?"

"You may laugh as much as you please, Mr. Bell; but I am telling you a stubborn truth, however, revolting it may be to human pride. I tell you, Sir, that all men came from the monkey."

"But where did the monkey come from, Doctor?" quickly asked the smith.

"If I had time, Mr. Bell, I could explain it, and make it as clear as a sunbeam. I will just say at present, that all things which you see, and things which you do not see, sprang from chaos. Once, away back in ages past—we know not how long—there was nothing but a promiscuous mixture, a jumbled mass; the world being a hideous conglomeration; water, mud, rocks, all thrown together in wild and terrible confusion. Then the kind Goddess, Evolution, gave shape and form to things. She made an oyster out of mud, and turned

him loose to shift for himself, and work out his own destiny. Well, Sir, in accordance with the fixed laws of Evolution, this oyster improved till he developed into some higher animal, and at last the process of development converted him into a monkey. The monkey went through various stages, and he finally developed into a man. There is the whole thing in a nutshell, Mr. Bell. Do you understand it?"

"Not a bit of it, Doctor."

"Why, Mr. Bell, a child could understand my explanation."

"Can't help it, Doctor; not a word of it do I understand. My Bible don't say a word about a monkey turnin' into a man. But it does say, that God made the first man out of the dust of the earth, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and he became a living soul. I can understand that, and so can a child. But when you begin to talk about a goddess makin' men out of oysters and monkeys—that lets me out, Doctor."

"Mr. Bell, did you never notice what a striking resemblance there is between man and the monkey?"

"Why, as to that," said the smith, with a laugh, "I've noticed that there is a powerful sight of resemblance between *some* men and some monkeys. But that proves nothing."

"It proves more than you think, Mr. Bell, as I could show you, if I had time. But come to my house some time, when I have leisure, and I will explain more fully. I must now be going. Good morning."

And the Doctor rode off, leaving Mr. Bell wondering how any sensible man could advocate such an absurd theory. If this was Dr. Huxley's religion, he concluded that he wanted no further explanation. He had heard enough.

CHAPTER XI.

THE SUPERNATURAL.

“ — Death should come

Gently to one of gentle mould, like thee,
As light winds, wandering through grooves of bloom,
Detach the delicate blossoms from the tree.
Close thy sweet eyes calmly, and without pain,
And we will trust in God to see thee yet again.”

About ten days had passed away, but the funds necessary to defray Willie's expenses to — Springs had not been raised. Dr. Huxley's efforts, in connection with those of Mr. Bell, who cheerfully gave his assistance, were unavailing. The Doctor's experience in this matter caused him to form a more unfavorable opinion of church people than he had entertained before. He well knew that the pecuniary ability of Mr. Monard's congregation was sufficient to easily furnish the required amount. But somehow they failed to appreciate the emergency. They were by no means a hard-hearted people. But Dr. Huxley was such a strange character that he did not impress them with the importance of removing his little patient to a locality where the surroundings were more favorable. Some, who congratulated themselves upon the possession of sound judgment, could not see the necessity of this step. They ventured to differ from the physician, notwithstanding his great reputation. Such persons can be found in almost any community—persons who feel not the slightest hesitation in opposing the opinion of any physician. In this instance, opposition to the Doctor's prescription was of personal advantage, for as this class of people did not think it necessary that Willie should be sent to — Springs, they would make no contribution of their worldly goods. The little boy appeared to be recover-

ing. Why, then, should he be sent off on a long and expensive journey?

There were others who seemed to take offence at Dr. Huxley's officiousness. They were under the impression that the proper officers of the church should have the management of this matter. The Doctor had no right to exercise supervision over ecclesiastical affairs. True, the matter had no direct connection with the church, but it concerned their minister, and Dr. Huxley had no business to interfere. On account of these various opinions, many people were lukewarm in the cause, and if they subscribed at all, the amount was so small that it aroused in the Doctor's mind both contempt and wonder. If he had satisfied himself that the members of the church were "hypocrites," he resolved not to add to Mr. Monard's distress by acquainting him with the fact. But at last the Doctor came to the conclusion that he would supply the deficit from his own funds—not on religious grounds, but for common humanity. This he would have done, had not an event occurred that rendered it unnecessary. Suddenly there was an unexpected change in his patient. To the Doctor's practiced eye the first impress of death was visible, and he had every reason to believe that Willie's mortal career would come to an end in a few days. He had exhausted all his forces and all the resources of medical skill in the contest, and now he could stand only as an idle spectator, watching the progress of the hideous enemy, while he was preparing to bear off the helpless captive to the grave. It was with deep sorrow that Dr. Huxley slowly retreated from the battle-ground, and allowed the merciless foe to seize the spoils—one frail, little body, pale, pinched, emaciated. His visits to the preacher's humble abode became more frequent—a circumstance which Mr. Monard could not fail to notice,

and one day he asked the Doctor if Willie were not growing rapidly worse. The physician made some evasive reply, till he was taking his leave, when he motioned to the preacher to go with him. When they had reached the gate, the Doctor said—

“It is useless to deceive you, Mr. Monard, or to withhold the knowledge of a fact which must prove very sad; but it is my duty to tell you that Willie must die. I have done all I can, and it is in vain.”

Mr. Monard's lips were firmly compressed for a moment, and he turned pale. He had his suspicions that his child, so dear to his heart, would have to wade through the dark waters of death's cold flood; but the Doctor's words destroyed the last feeble hope. No one, except those who have had actual experience, can form a correct idea of the deep, inexpressible grief, the crushing despair, which such an awful communication as that which the physician had just made to the poor preacher produces. It wounds with the painfulness of a blunted arrow, causing the heart to sink down into the ashes of hopelessness. The thought of surrendering the loved one to death, to paralyze the limbs—to destroy all sensibility—to silence the breathing—to still the pulse—in a word to ravage the powerless body till nothing is left but a lump of clay, rends the very soul. It is an agonizing reflection that there must be a long, long separation, till all shall meet in the regions of the unseen, everlasting world. It is distressing, beyond all description, to the parent, to give up the child, to gratify the insatiable appetite of death. Cast your tear-dimmed eye upon the half-crazed mother, as she approaches the little coffin within whose narrow limits repose the rigid limbs of her darling; see her stoop over to imprint the last kiss on the motionless, bloodless lips; her bitter tears fall on the cold, marble brow and on the pallid face, whose

every feature is marred by the iron fingers of the "last enemy;" see her rise up, clasping her hands in unutterable anguish; listen to the startling wail of despair, as it bursts forth from the depths of her aching, bleeding heart; and this is one of the most distressing phases of human grief. Again, the little one, whose presence, manifested in childish gayety and happiness, was like sunshine in the home, must be removed to the last resting place, to become the prey of loathsome worms and creeping things. On some dark night, when Cimmerian clouds exclude the light of the stars, and the wild tempest howls, with its pealing thunders and flashing lightnings, and the rain beats down piteously upon the little grave, how the mother weeps afresh at the thought that her beloved child sleeps alone, away out in the blackness of night. If it were possible, how gladly would she rush out, draw him forth from the cold, damp tomb, and clasp him to her breast, to shield him from the pelting storm. Then the excruciating consciousness that he is beyond her embrace and caress reopens the old wounds. We would comfort her if we could. But so far as earthly philosophy is concerned, time is the only remedy for human grief.

"Yes, gentle time, thy gradual, healing hand
Hath stolen from sorrow's grasp the envenom'd dart;
Submitting to thy skill, my passive heart
Feels that no grief can thy soft power withstand."

Reflections at least related to those just penned passed through the mind of Mr. Monard, as he stood speechless in the presence of Dr. Huxley. The Doctor paused for a moment after his communication of the awful news, and, as the minister made no reply or remark of any sort, he continued—

"I sympathize with you, Mr. Monard, in this severe trial; but the stern laws of Evolution will permit no

evasion. Our consolation is to be derived from the fact that she commits no errors, and makes no blunders. She is evidently wise and kind, though we may not understand her ways. We are bound to admit that life and death are profound mysteries, which the human mind is incapable of comprehending. We can only conjecture what will be the ultimate destiny of all living things. Whether the little boy will develop, through the process of death, into some higher and nobler being, we cannot tell. But we are so constituted that we live in hope. It is the great encourager and sustainer of man in all his troubles. We have no good reason to believe—and I have thought about it a great deal—that death puts an end to the work of Evolution. Therefore, I dare to indulge the hope that your little boy may emerge from the grave in another form of life.”

The Doctor spoke this with the utmost soberness, and with the laudable purpose of tendering comfort to the preacher.

“Doctor,” replied Mr. Monard, in a tone of solemnity, “I know that your intentions are kind, but I have to tell you that such consolation as you offer is all lost upon me. I trust to a higher and better defined power than Evolution, and that is the living God, a personal Being with attributes in full perfection; a God who gives clear proofs of His existence. Besides, I have the evidence of His presence with me. Think not, Sir, that in the hour of trial and distress I am afraid to throw myself on the precious promises He has made to all who pray to Him in faith. I can say with the Psalmist, ‘The Lord is my refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.’ I feel that the refuge is sure, Doctor. It is true that Willie is very dear to my heart ———” The preacher’s voice quivered, and he was so choked with emotion that he was compelled to pause.

In a moment, however, he acquired the mastery over his feelings, and proceeded : “ But, Doctor, I can with the utmost confidence resign him into the hands of my God. Our blessed Redeemer, thank the Lord, has said, ‘ suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.’ If the Lord removes him, if I know my own heart, I can say, ‘ the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away.’ It is my firm belief, which no human philosophy or science can shake, that I will meet my dear little boy under brighter skies, and amid fairer scenes, where God shall wipe away all tears, and where they need no candle nor light of the sun. Willie is a treasure which I trust to lay up in heaven, to be kept in the shining city on high, till my earthly work is accomplished, and then, I have no doubt that I shall again clasp him in my arms in an embrace of purer love than belongs to this world.”

Mr. Monard uttered these words with deep emotion, and with an earnestness that proved his conviction of their truth. The Doctor listened respectfully, and when the preacher’s voice had ceased, replied—

“ A beautiful dream, Mr. Monard, of whose realization you appear to have no doubt. I shall not attempt to deprive you of your hope, even if I consider it but the baseless fabric of a wild speculation. In the *articulo mortis* I suppose we are justifiable in making use of any source of consolation that offers only the shadow of a hope. I will come back again, though I can be of little service. Perhaps I may be able to afford him some relief in his passing away. I never felt as much interest in any patient in my life, and I have exhausted all the resources of my art to save him.”

“ I know you have, Doctor, and may God bless you for it,” exclaimed the minister, grasping his hand with

warmth. "You have placed me under obligations which I can never discharge."

"Say nothing about that," replied the Doctor. And he turned and went his way.

When the physician had gone, Mr. Monard stood for several moments, absorbed in meditation. What was the character of his thoughts may be easily imagined. Perhaps he was also praying for strength and grace, that he might endure the trial with resignation. But he must break this awful news to his wife, who was watching at Willie's bedside with the tenderness and solicitude which only a mother can feel. For this purpose he called her to the gate, where he was still standing. A perceptible change had come over the lady during the latter days of the little boy's sickness. The violence of her temper was subdued, to some extent at least, and she had been unusually affectionate to her husband. When she reached the gate, she looked at Mr. Monard's face, and discovered the moistened track of a tear down his cheek. She also perceived that he was making a most determined effort to hold in check the tide of aroused emotion. She knew that it required something extraordinary to cause him to betray his feelings.

"What is it?" she asked, in a tremulous tone.

"Vallie, my dear," answered Mr. Monard, with forced calmness, "you must prepare yourself to hear very sorrowful news."

On hearing this sad prefatory remark, she turned deathly pale. She could not speak, but looked at Mr. Monard with an expression of anxious inquiry.

"God has been very kind to us," continued Mr. Monard, "and we have never had any serious trouble in our family. But we cannot live here always—family circles must be broken, and all of us must cross over the river of death, sooner or later. I have to tell you that

the boatman will, ere long, call for our dear little Willie."

Mrs. Monard stood stock still, with a hard, stony expression upon her handsome face. It was the calm before the storm—the prelude to a violent outburst of grief, which Mr. Monard was anticipating. Presently a subdued wail broke from her bloodless lips. She was not the kind of woman to endure in silence. It was some time before the first paroxysm passed away.

"O, Eldon," she cried, with clenched hands, "pray God to spare him. You say you have faith," grasping his arm, "now try it. Oh! I cannot give him up. God would be cruel to take my darling child. Pray, Eldon, pray God not to let him die. Why should he die? Oh! God!" she exclaimed, with such wild frantic vehemence that Mr. Monard began to feel considerable alarm, "let my poor babe die, and I will hate Thee—I will hate Thee*—yes, hate Thee as a cruel monster! I will not give up my child. What did Dr. Huxley go off for? Tell him to come back, Eldon. I know he can do something. We must drive back death. I am not going to give up my child. If you have any faith in God, Eldon, why don't you pray? O, fall on your knees, and pray as you never have done. Oh, God! spare my child, and I'll be a Christian; but let him die, and——"

"O, Vallie, quickly interrupted Mr. Monard, who appeared for a moment to be stunned by his wife's irreverence, "say no more." He took her in his arms and spoke with calmness. "Do not talk in this rebellious way against our kind Heavenly Father. He

*The author deems it just to himself to state that these rebellious words were actually uttered by a lady acquaintance, whose wild ravings show to what desperation a human soul may be driven, that has no faith in God.

knows what is best, and He will do right. I cannot pray for the recovery of our dear Willie, because I believe the good Lord will soon call him to a brighter home beyond the skies. But I will pray for you, my dear—pray that God will sanctify this sad bereavement to your everlasting good. Have faith in our blessed Saviour, be resigned to His will, and the time will come when you will understand this dark dispensation of His Providence, and you will be thankful for it. Have confidence in the Lord Jesus, give Him your heart, and He will fill you with such holy love, that you can be resigned to His will.”

“I cannot, Eldon, I cannot. Let me go—let me see if I cannot save my child.”

At once she sprang into the room, followed by Mr. Monard, who had hurriedly exclaimed, as she turned to go—

“Be calm, Vallie, be calm, or you will frighten Willie, and make him worse.”

This caution had the effect of restoring at least her external tranquillity, and in a moment she looked outwardly calm, though she felt that her heart would burst.

“Willie,” she said, with concealed anxiety, as she aroused him from an uneasy slumber, “you don’t feel worse, do you?”

“No, Mamma, I feel better. O, I had such a beautiful dream just now, and it all looked so real. I wish it could be so.”

“What was it dear?” asked Mrs. Monard, gazing into the pale face with an intensity of maternal love which would have sustained her in a struggle with death for the possession of the little sufferer, if the monster had only presented himself in visible form. If he had come in all the hideousness and unsightly deformity

with which the imagination of a Milton or Dante could invest him, Mrs. Monard would, at that moment, have faced him with the terrible energy of madness and desperation. But the silent and dreadful enemy could not be seen.

"I dreamed," answered Willie, in reply to his mother's question, "that some angels came to where I was, and they asked me to go with them. Oh, so beautiful, all dressed in white, and glittering crowns on their heads. I thought they fastened wings to me, and then we all began to fly; and we kept flying and flying, till we came to a great city. There was such a beautiful river in it, and nice fruit trees on the green grassy banks. I reached up to pluck some of the fruit, when I felt some one pulling at me—and it was you, Mamma, and it woke me. Oh, it was such a pretty dream; but I cannot tell it just as it was. I wish I had not waked up so soon, for I did so much want some of the lovely fruit."

Mr. Monard listened to this childish recital without betraying any of the emotion which he so keenly felt. The mother, quivering with bitter anguish, turned her head away, that Willie might not see the tears, which she was vainly endeavoring to restrain, flowing thick and fast down her cheek.

"Willie, my dear little boy," said Mr. Monard, very calmly and cheerfully, as he took the thin hand in his, "would you be afraid of the angels, afraid to go with them, if they were to come for you?"

"Why, no, Papa; you've often told me about them. Why should I be afraid of them?"

"But, my child, you cannot go with them unless you die. Would you be afraid to die?"

"No, Sir; I have been thinking that I would die, and I am not at all afraid. I would be glad to die, if

the Lord wants me. I'm sick here so much, and up in heaven I won't be sick any more. The only thing I hate about it, is leaving you and Mamma. I believe I am going to die, but I will go on and have a nice place for both of you, and sister and brother, when you all come. I hope my dear Mamma won't get mad any more, and will be a good Christian, like you are, Papa, and then after a while we will all be so happy in some of those lovely groves that I saw in my dream."

"Willie," said Mr. Monard, "your dream will soon be a reality. I will have to give up my little boy to God. You are not afraid to go, are you?"

"Not the least, Papa. I've thought all the time that I would die."

"I am glad that my little boy is ready. You will soon be with the bright angels, Willie. But we will not be separated long. I cannot remain much longer on the earth, and I will soon follow you."

"And you will come, too, Mamma, won't you?" asked the dying boy, as a faint smile lit up his pallid features.

"Oh, God! Oh, God!" exclaimed Mrs. Monard, trembling in every limb, "I can't stand it! I can't stand it!"

And wringing her hands, and weeping aloud, she rushed out of the room.

"I wish poor Mamma could talk about it quietly, like you do, Papa. I'm sorry she's not a Christian."

"But I believe she will be, Willie."

"It does me good, Papa, to hear you talk so calmly about my dying. It makes me feel as if death were nothing."

"Death is nothing, Willie, but a little stream that comes between you and heaven. One step, and you are over, and you are with the beautiful angels that you

saw in your dream. Let me read to you about the beautiful city," continued Mr. Monard, taking a Bible from a table in the room, and turning to the twenty-second chapter of Revelation. As he read, he would pause occasionally, and talk to the little boy about the crystal river and other things which John describes. Willie would talk, too, in regard to his departure from this world to the happy place where there is no night.

It was, indeed, a strange scene; one that does not often occur in this wilderness of sin. Father and child conversing as quietly and calmly about death as if it were really a pleasant subject. To them it seemed there was nothing disagreeable in it. After Mr. Monard had finished the chapter, Willie, said—

"How long will it be, Papa, before I can go to the golden city where Jesus is?"

"Not a great many hours, Willie" replied Mr. Monard, looking as cheerful as was possible under the circumstances.

"I am anxious to go, Papa. The only thing I hate about it, is leaving you all. But we won't be separated long, will we?"

"That is not worth a thought, Willie. A few years here on this earth will soon pass away, and then we will meet again."

But, for the present, leaving the two engaged in cheerful conversation upon the subject of eternal things, let us follow Dr. Huxley. As he was on his way home, he stopped at the store of Mr. Brandon, where several members of the church were sitting and talking. No sooner had the Doctor spoken to those present, and had taken a chair, than Mr. Brandon said—

"How is Willie Monard to-day, Doctor? I suppose you've just been to see him?"

"Little Willie, Mr. Brandon, will soon be beyond the reach of suffering."

"What! you don't mean he is dying!"

"If I am any judge in such cases, he will not live twenty-four hours."

"Why, I thought," said one, "that he was to be sent to —— Springs, for his health."

"Gentlemen," said the Doctor, with the strange expression on his face, "I hold you church people partly responsible for his death."

"What do you mean?" asked another.

"It is quite plain. I mean, Sir, if the little boy had been sent off in time, his life might have been saved. I told you all that that was his only chance. You good, sanctified members of the church ought to have met together and raised the necessary funds in a few moments. You had the pecuniary ability to do it, without putting yourselves to the least inconvenience. You never would have missed or felt the amount. But you hesitated, and tightened your purse-strings, and one gave this excuse, another that; why, I never heard the like of excuses since Evolution placed me on the stage of human activity."

"You don't say that *I* gave any excuse," interrupted Mr. Brandon. "I'm sure that I responded to your call."

"You know how liberally you responded, Mr. Brandon. But I am speaking now of your church in the aggregate. You might have given the little boy, the son of your preacher, a chance for his life. But it is too late now, too late, Sir. Such a penurious concern as the church is, I never saw. Moral Evolution did a better thing when she brought the Masonic fraternity into being. If Mr. Monard were a Mason, I could have raised the money, I think, without any great difficulty."

"But you are not a Mason yourself, Doctor," said Mr. Brandon.

"No, Sir; I am not. But from what I can see, there is among Masons a more liberal and charitable spirit, than among you Christians."

"But some of us Christians are Masons," remarked Mr. Brandon.

"Christianity and Masonry are not synonymous terms. I am speaking of the two things as separate and distinct institutions."

"But, Doctor," again interrupted Mr. Brandon, "allow me to suggest that you know nothing of the practical workings of either institution."

"I think I have had a little experience with the church."

"Not *as* a church," said Mr. Brandon quickly.

"At any rate, I called on members of the church to aid me in trying to save *their* preacher's little son, and the result was simply shameful, Sir. I tell you, Evolution has somehow got tangled upon that thing. She seems to have evolved an institution that has a strong tendency to cramp men's better impulses, and make them so cautious in the exercise of charity that they are willing to starve their preacher, and see his sick children die for the want of that thing upon which they are taught not to place their affections. Good-day, gentlemen," said the Doctor, rising and leaving the store. His auditors looked at each other, as if his words had not been clearly understood.

"That man," presently said Mr. Brandon, "I believe will go crazy about his hobby of 'Evolution,' as he calls it; he appears to think about it all the time, and brings it up on every occasion. I believe he is getting worse and worse every day of his life."

"What does he mean by 'Evolution,' Mr. Brandon?" asked one of the crowd.

"Oh, I don't know exactly—some stuff about oysters and monkeys turning to men. You may be sure there is no good in it, from the way he talks about the church."

"He *is* right hard on our church," said another, "and knows nothing about it either. He don't know what a hard struggle we have to raise Mr. Monard's salary; I think, too, we pay him every cent he is worth."

"I think so too," quickly responded Mr. Brandon. I am really sorry for the little boy, and I like Mr. Monard as a man; but truth is truth, and the plain truth is, Mr. Monard is a miserably poor preacher. I feel that I pay him more than I ought, under the circumstances. I know I don't get twenty dollars' worth of good out of his sermons. He puts me to sleep half the time."

"For the life of me," said another, with energy. I can't get interested in his sermons. He soars above me in such a way, I can't understand him. But still, brethren, I do think we ought to have tried to raise money enough to have sent little Willie off to the Springs."

"Doctor Huxley himself is to blame for the failure," quickly spoke up Mr. Brandon. "He went round talking in that strange way of his, mixing up his foolish notions of Evolution with his requests for money, till people were disgusted. It looked as if he wanted Christians especially to refuse to subscribe, so he could get to abuse them. I never saw just such a man. It seems to do him good to call religious people hypocrites. If he had given that subscription paper, at first, to some

good member of the church, and let him gone round with it, the money might have been raised, though it was a large sum for a poor church to pay. I subscribed two dollars at first, just to give the thing a start, and he laughed in my face. I would have given more, when I saw that he was about to fail, if he had come back to me. He is undoubtedly to blame for the failure, and tries now to lay it on the church."

If the Doctor had heard the words in regard to himself and his theory, those who uttered them might, for an instant, have thought that Evolution had suddenly been metamorphosed into something bearing a resemblance to a slight thunder-storm. He was under the impression that no man could have made a more faithful effort than he did, for the accomplishment of an object that, in his opinion, ought not to have required the language of persuasion. He had never had any experience in such matters, but he did not think the failure could be imputed to him. However, let the blame rest where it might, it could not be denied that there had been a failure, the consequence of which, in the Doctor's opinion, were disastrous to his little patient.

Late in the afternoon it was palpable that Willie was growing rapidly worse. The terrible enemy of all living things had commenced his horrid work in earnest, so that there could be no mistake as to his presence. After supper Dr. Huxley called, according to promise. He could do nothing even to relieve the pangs of dissolution. The little one whom he had tried so diligently and faithfully to save was quietly and gently passing away. Mrs. Monard's grief, which was frantic and heart-rending, being omitted, a phenomenon must now be briefly described, which has been witnessed more than once, and which human philosophy has never yet explained upon natural principles, and probably never will.

While Dr. Huxley and three or four friends of the family were sitting in perfect silence, awaiting the completion of death's awful task, it was noticed that the room was becoming brighter. Some of those present involuntarily turned their eyes toward the candle, which was one of the old-fashioned sort, made of tallow, but it was burning as usual, and afforded only such light as might be expected. Still it became brighter. The company with some degree of awe, looked at the little boy's face, which they perceived to be strangely illuminated.* The light became brighter and brighter till the candle paled, and seemed to be fading out. Presently it became so intense that the watchers could not gaze at the dying boy's face. They were stricken with fear.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed one of them, in terror, "what is the matter?"

To this anxious inquiry there was no reply. All held their breath, in amazement. Dr. Huxley was trying to see the child's face, but the effort was in vain. His eye could not endure the light. Mrs. Monard dried her tears, and appeared to be overwhelmed with fear. The dreadful silence was broken by Mr. Monard.

"It is the glory of God," he said. "The Shekinah has become visible to the mortal eye. My blessed child is crossing over the river in a flood of celestial light. Oh, God of Salvation! I thank Thee for this manifestation of Thy presence. Glory be to Thy holy name!"

While he was uttering these words, the light began to fade rapidly from sight, and in a few seconds it was gone. The candle burned as it did before. Dr. Huxley stepped to the bedside in time to see a smile, with the last little gasp, pass from the child's face. It was

* This occurrence is well attested. The author of this work does not pretend to account for it. The fact is given, and the reader must form his own conclusions.

observed also by one or two others of the company. The physician stood gazing at the corpse as if lost in wonder ; but whatever he may have thought he betrayed no sign of fear or amazement.

"He is gone, Doctor?" asked Mr. Monard, speaking in a wonderfully calm tone.

"He will suffer no more," replied the Doctor, half talking to himself and half answering Mr. Monard's inquiry. A loud shriek broke the silence, followed by a noise as of some one falling to the floor. It was Mrs. Monard. She had fainted. But being soon restored to consciousness, she approached the bedside, and fell by the side of the corpse. With her hand rubbing the pale cold brow, she exclaimed, in piteous tones—

"Oh, darling! my darling babe, come back! I can't give you up. Why has God treated me so cruelly? Why could he not spare my poor dear boy, who has always been so loving and obedient. Oh, come back, Willie, come back!"

"Mrs. Monard," said Dr. Huxley, "why do you want the poor child to come back? If he could come it would only be to suffer. Would you desire him to live when every respiration would be performed in pain?"

"Oh, Doctor," said the poor woman, "I don't know what I am saying. I know he is better off, but it is so hard to give him up. The thought of seeing my dear, sweet child put down in the dark, cold ground, where I can never see him again, seems as if it will kill me. Oh, God! help me!"

"Vallie, my dear," said Mr. Monard, calmly, "why should you thus grieve? Did you not observe the glorious light which the good Lord kindled, to dispel the darkness of death's stream, while Willie crossed over? I cannot weep, nor murmur, with such an

evidence before me of God's kind care. I do not want Willie to come back. His little body lies here, still and cold, but his spirit has floated off in a sea of heavenly glory. We read in the holy Scriptures that 'God is light.' We have just seen the assertion demonstrated before our eyes. I do not know what the rest of you may think, but I am satisfied that this strange manifestation was supernatural. Dr. Huxley, can you explain it? Can you tell what produced that mysterious light?"

"Well, Mr. Monard," replied the Doctor, slowly and thoughtfully, "I have been thinking about the phenomenon. I candidly confess that I have never before witnessed anything like it. It may be some new phase of Evolution, which science will be able to explain after a while. I must acknowledge, though, it was a mysterious occurrence; wonderful, Sir. Why, I imagined that I could feel the light. It seemed to possess actual tangibility, Sir. At present, I shall not try to account for it; but if you think it was supernatural, I shall not controvert your assumption, especially since you seem to derive comfort from it."

"Doctor," said Mr. Monard, with an expression of holy joy on his face, "I am glad, that I am not as incredulous as you are. Here a miracle has been performed before your eyes, and you will not believe."

"I tell you, I cannot believe anything till I am thoroughly convinced of its truth. I must have *facts*, Mr. Monard, on which to base my belief; indisputable facts, Sir."

"You had the evidence of your own senses, Doctor. What more do you want? You saw with your own eyes. Did they deceive you? Was there not an unearthly light?"

"I have already admitted, Sir," answered the Doctor,

"that I never saw anything like it before. However, I have no wish, as I told you, to deprive you of any comfort which you may draw from the circumstance; but the phenomenon does not appear to me to furnish sufficient data on which to rest a theory. Yet if it is consoling to you to think it was a supernatural manifestation, let us not discuss the question."

"Vallie," said Mr. Monard, now turning his attention to his wife, who lay on the bed with her face buried in the pillows, yet listening to the brief discussion between her husband and Dr. Huxley, "believe me, this was a manifestation of God's glory and power, and goodness. You have read how the face of Stephen shone like that of an angel, as he stood up boldly making his defence before the Jewish Court. The face of Moses shone when he came down from the mount where he had been talking with God face to face, and the children of Israel could not look upon him, for the intense brightness, and he had to veil his countenance. Why should not Willie's face shine, too, with the glory of God? If purity and innocence can render a human being fit for the reception of heavenly favors, this sweet child was the one. His short life was blameless. His piety has often put me to shame. Let us dry our tears, dear, and let us here consecrate ourselves afresh to God, and try to live so that we may meet our sainted child, where crying is no more."

Perhaps it is not improper to let the curtain fall in the very midst of this sorrowful scene. The "house of mourning" is not so uncommon that it should require lengthy description. There is a similarity in all, and every parent's grief at the everlasting departure of a darling child is the same. Who has not heard the mother's cry of despair, as she witnessed the last little, feeble gasp for life? Who has not seen and *felt* all the

awful circumstances invariably following the visits of the King of Terrors ; the last struggles of the victim ; the night of watching in the room with the corpse ; the funeral procession next day ; filling up the grave with the clods of the valley ; dispersing, and leaving the deceased to repose in unbroken sleep in the narrow prison-house, till the handful of dust shall spring up on the Resurrection morn again, a living, breathing body ; all this is too well known to need description. As it is in every instance, so it was in this.

Those who had witnessed the strange and fearful phenomenon of the light which had beamed from the dying boy's face, as might be expected, related the circumstance to others, till it became the general topic of discussion in the village. Dr. Huxley was interviewed by several persons, who were anxious to have his explanation of the affair. But he informed them that he had not come to any definite conclusion on the subject ; perhaps it was some curious freak of Evolution, which science would be able to explain in the course of time ; he had consulted his books, but the phenomenon was not mentioned ; he would admit that it was the most remarkable thing with which he had ever met in his medical experience. The truth was, Dr. Huxley was considerably staggered and deeply perplexed.

However, it is now time to dismiss this subject, and proceed to the narration of other events of quite a different character.

CHAPTER XII.

LOVE.

“ Ah, me! for aught that I could ever read,
Could ever hear by tale or history,
The course of true Love never did run smooth.”

It has already been stated that Mr. Monard was the father of a son who had attained to the first period of manhood. This youth had been educated chiefly at home, but as the parent was a man of very extensive literary acquirements, the son's education was equal to that which could be obtained at an ordinary college. The young man possessed a mind of uncommon power and brilliancy. He mastered abstruse problems with so little effort, that he could not be called a “hard student,” in one sense of the word. Study was to him more a pleasure than a task. He had quite an intimate acquaintance with several languages, but especially with the Latin and Greek. Indeed, at the age of twenty-one, it is not an unfounded assertion that he was a prodigy of learning. He read every useful book which he could secure, and, as his memory was truly wonderful, he had, with the avidity of a miser, laid up intellectual treasures which much older heads might have envied. Another thing, without which learning is of little use, he had full command of his mental wealth, and could readily apply his knowledge to practical purposes. Add to this that he was deeply pious, and it must be admitted that his parents had just reasons to feel proud of their son. Mr. Monard especially, who could appreciate his strength of mind, expected grand things from him, and indulged fond hopes of a brilliant and useful career.

Vincent Monard, for such was his name, had chosen

the law as his profession, and had received license to practice just a few weeks previous to his little brother's death. He had studied under an old lawyer in the village, during all the hours he could possibly spare from his temporary avocation. He was under the necessity of doing his reading at night. His employer allowed him one hour in the day, for recitation. A young lawyer, without means, must exercise much patience and self-denial, and frequently must follow some other calling, however disagreeable it may be, till he is in a condition to give his entire attention to his chosen profession. Vincent, as may be naturally supposed, was very poor, and his father was unable to give him the least pecuniary assistance. He had been employed as a clerk in a dry-goods store for some time, but his salary was so small that it barely sufficed to provide him with food and raiment. However, about ten days after Willie's death, Mr. Brandon, who perceived that the young man was very attentive to business, and was an excellent salesman, offered him better wages, and thus induced him to accept a clerkship in his store. The wages did not amount to a great deal more than Vincent had been receiving, but even a small increase was a consideration at the time. He determined to practice the most rigid economy till he could secure means to enable him to rely exclusively upon his profession. His friends predicted, not without reason, that he would soon achieve grand success, especially since his examination by the Court made it evident that he was far superior to the majority of young lawyers. Indeed, the Judge stated that in his long experience on the bench he had never met with a candidate who had stood a better examination. So the young man's prospects seemed to be flattering.

When the Peacock complained to Juno very bitterly

because she could not sing as sweetly as some other birds that had no beauty, the goddess gave her to understand that it would not be right to bestow all the best gifts upon the same person ; there must be an equal distribution. All will admit that there was justice in this economy. So, according to this general principle announced by ancient Juno, it could not be reasonably expected that Vincent should combine in his single person all the physical and mental accomplishments which justice demands should be distributed among several. Vincent, therefore, was not particularly handsome. Had it not been for his intellectual superiority, and one single feature, which was a bright, expressive eye, he would have been pronounced hardly *passable*. A stranger would not have taken the second look at him on account of any personal attraction. But when he spoke, his pale face beamed, and his conversation was so interesting that he appeared to better advantage than his corporeal graces justified. There was a poetic dreaminess in his eye, that certified to the existence of fine sensibilities within. It may be strange, but it is nevertheless true, that his voice was as much distinguished for sweetness as his father's was for harshness.

With such qualifications as these, it is no great wonder that Vincent Monard should not be disliked by the daughter, and only daughter, of Dr. Huxley, a young lady who had recently returned from New York as a graduate of the best school of that city. Zenie, as she was called, now eighteen years of age, blooming in all the fullness of ineffable beauty, displayed such charms as were well calculated to make a deep impression upon any young man not destitute of susceptibility. Her complexion was *very* fair—so fair that no ingenuity of art could have improved it. Her cheeks were tinged

with a rosy hue, whose delicacy would have been marred by the application of any of those pigments which are employed by ladies who imagine that nature has not done enough for them in this way. Eyes of lovely blue looked out from under a forehead seemingly as smooth as polished marble. Wo to the young man upon whom those eyes, so full of poesy, rested for a moment! Unless he were proof against all the charms of the feminine sex, he was sure to pay secret homage to her transcendental beauty, by feeling a thrilling sensation flash within his heart. Zenie, with her golden hair, that hung in thick, glossy curls down to her shoulders, reminded one of some of the nymphs or goddesses of Grecian or Roman mythology—fairy-like, ethereal beings, combining in their persons all the graces, both terrestrial and celestial, which the human imagination could possibly attribute to them—beings tripping gayly among gorgeous flowers, and sipping tiny dew-drops from blushing roses, and walking as if they touched not the polluted earth with delicate feet, which not even the gentle zephyr must too roughly visit. As Zenie moved about, it was no great task for the imagination of any sensitive youth to trace a resemblance between her and some of the fabled beings of unearthly loveliness that gave such a pleasing and charming aspect to ancient mythology. Vincent Monard, as soon as he met Zenie, at once recognized her claim to beauty of the highest type, and promptly honored it by the most sincere compliment it is in the power of man to pay—that is, by surrendering himself, with reluctance, a captive to the possessor. He was attracted to the lovely Zenie, despite the opposition of his own will. It is a well-known fact that the will cannot govern the affections. Vincent, at first, made a desperate effort to pluck out the arrow of Cupid. Under the circumstances, he thought it unwise

to nourish his wild passion. A great gulf seemed to yawn between him and the lovely object which had stirred his heart to its lowest depths. How could he dare to ask Zenie to share his poverty—poverty, the ruthless, exacting tyrant, that destroys so many beautiful dreams of happiness, and rudely overturns so many magnificent air-castles. This formidable obstacle interfered seriously with Vincent's ill-defined aspirations, whose realization he felt must be numbered with the uncertain developments of the future. The thought was chilling, that it might require long, weary years of waiting and laboring before he would be in a condition that would justify him in asking the fair Zenie to become his companion for life. It made him almost shudder to think what might happen in the meantime. He dared not reveal his deep and fervent love to her who had aroused it. If he made it known, he might be rejected; and he thought suspense was preferable to despair. The poet says—

“Our first love murder'd is the sharpest pang
A human heart can feel.”

Vincent knew this instinctively, and he dreaded it. Often he made desperate efforts to free himself from the golden fetters that bound him, but it was in vain. Every effort of this sort ended in disappointment, till at last he resolved to submit to the bewitching bondage, and madly loved, without having any settled purpose in view.

If he had had the field to himself, he might have suffered less anxiety. But it is not to be supposed for a moment that such an attractive and accomplished young lady would exact homage from only one heart. Zenie was soon besieged by admirers and lovers. One of these deserves particular notice, from the fact that he was a rival who occasioned Vincent the greatest uneasiness.

This young man was Leonard Brandon, only son of the merchant. He was very far inferior to Vincent in respect of intellectual attainments—a fact of which both were aware. As to personal appearance, Vincent could not but acknowledge to himself that his rival had greatly the advantage, for young Brandon was dangerously handsome. There was another advantage which Leonard had, and that was his pecuniary independence, for his father, as has been stated, was a man of wealth, and Leonard was evidently the heir-apparent. There was no reason, therefore, why he should not at any time make a proposal to this beautiful idol of at least two hearts. He was aware of his advantage over his rival, and, in a few weeks after Zenie's return he hastened to use it with the most vehement boldness. He revealed the secret of his heart with an ardor in which the young lady could perceive there was no deception. But, to his vexation and disappointment, Zenie did not manifest the least anxiety to surrender her liberty to any suitor. From the brief description which has been given of her physical and intellectual accomplishments, it would be natural to suppose that she was fond of admiration. Like all young ladies blessed with great beauty, she was the recipient of many compliments, and it is not a matter, therefore, to be marveled at that she should believe herself one of the favorites of fortune. Zenie did not discard the handsome young Brandon, neither did she commit herself, but said just enough to keep him in annoying suspense. What her motive was in practicing this sort of policy may, perhaps, be imagined. It would be far from the truth to suppose that Zenie was a coquette. She was somewhat eccentric, but she was not so cruel as to trample upon bleeding hearts for mere pastime. It must not, therefore, be imagined that she was disposed to trifle with the affections of Leonard

Brandon. But, as it may not be the proper course to attempt to explain her motives, she will now be permitted to speak for herself.

One evening, after one of Leonard's earnest solicitations to unite their temporal destinies, she said—

"I tell you, Mr. Brandon, if you mention this subject to me in the next six months, I will most assuredly refuse to receive any more of your attentions. I have told you repeatedly that I do not wish now to change my condition of maidenhood, and I will not do it, even if I could marry an emperor. If, therefore, you are really in earnest in your oft-repeated protestations of undying love, you had better keep severely silent on this subject during the length of time I have named."

Leonard looked at her in surprise.

"Surely, Miss Zenie, you don't mean it. You cannot be that cruel!"

"I mean just exactly what I say," she answered, with a show of firmness. "If you are at all incredulous, try me, and your doubts will soon vanish."

"You don't mean that I'm not to call for the next six months?"

"No; I did not say that; but if you mention *marriage* to me in six months, without my permission," with a mischievous smile, "I will most certainly do as I have said. Now, I hope you understand me clearly."

Leonard presented, for a moment, the appearance of a perplexed and crest-fallen young man. He was so astounded that he knew not what to say. Presently, however, he spoke—

"Miss Zenie, what possible reason can you have for acting in this cruel way?"

"Do you suppose, Mr. Brandon," she said, with a smile that signified nothing in particular, "that reasons are so scarce with me you must employ such an emphatic

‘possible?’ If I had no other, I can throw myself on that which is said to be a woman’s reason, and which often saves a multitude of troublesome explanations—‘just because.’”

“That is not satisfactory, Miss Zenie.”

“Are you trying to test my knowledge of logic, Mr. Brandon?” she asked, with a smile.

“I don’t understand you,” he said.

“You want to see what sort of reasons I can give, I suppose, and whether they may be arranged in logical order, or whether I know the difference between the premises and conclusion of a syllogism. If that is your object, I beg leave to inform you that I have stood my last examination.”

“I don’t know what you are talking about, Miss Zenie,” replied the young man, in confusion. “I merely asked what reason you could have for not allowing me to mention marriage for six months.”

“You want a good, solid reason, then?” she said, in such mock thoughtfulness, that Leonard was forced to laugh.

“O, I didn’t expect you to give a reason like a judge charging a jury.”

“Solid reasons, Mr. Brandon, are too rare, as well as grave, to be made a subject of merriment. But since you insist upon my giving reasons, sufficient and satisfactory, for my determination not to hear from you another syllable on the subject of marriage during the brief period of half a year, if you will allow me a few moments in which to collect my wandering thoughts, and arrange my reasons in philosophical order, I will make an earnest effort to comply with your request.”

The young lady paused, and her beautiful face assumed a solemn expression, as if she were engaged in the most profound meditation.

"Never mind, Miss Zenie," said Leonard, not particularly delighted with her manner, "we will dispense with the reasons, if you please. I had no idea it would put you to so much inconvenience."

"Will you really excuse me from the performance of the task, Mr. Brandon?"

"Certainly, I will."

"I am so much obliged to you," she exclaimed, "for I candidly acknowledge an aversion to searching out reasons."

"Miss Zenie," said Brandon, with seriousness, "wer 'nt you joking just now?"

"About what, Sir?"

"Forbidding me to speak to you on the subject of marriage for six months."

"I never was more sincere in my life."

"It is hard for me to think you are so cruel, Miss Zenie."

"I cannot help that. But you may depend upon it that I am in earnest."

"Will you treat your other admirers in the same manner? Do you mind answering that question?"

"If it will add anything to your happiness I will inform you that I will certainly be known as Zenie Huxley for the next six months. You may rely upon that."

"Will you permit me to ask one more question? Answer it, and I will not mention the subject which seems to be so disagreeable to you, for six months."

"Ask on, and I will answer, if I see proper."

"I hope you will give me a candid answer. Do you love any one else?"

"I shall not answer that question, or anything similar to it, just because you have no right to propound such inquiries. I entrust no one with the custody of my sentiments, Mr. Brandon."

"I did not mean to be impudent," quickly exclaimed the young man. "But I thought, since you know the secret of my heart, that if your affections are already engaged, you might do me the justice to say so. I only request that you will not allow me to entertain hopes which can never be gratified."

"Do you call this keeping silent on the forbidden subject."

"I did not intend to mention it," said Leonard, seriously. "But, if your heart is pre-occupied, what is the use of my ever mentioning it again?"

"I have told you," answered the young lady, with a bewitching smile, which had the effect of arousing Leonard's sinking hopes, "that I will be Zenie Huxley six months hence. Now let that be sufficient."

With this answer the young man had to content himself, whether he liked it or not. He thought it would be difficult to observe her eccentric, if not foolish injunction. But he would have to do so, or all his fond anticipations would be blasted. The great difficulty with Leonard was, if he had to keep silent on this subject, he had neither the disposition nor capacity to converse on any other which would prove entertaining to a young lady. He had never turned his attention to literature. The consequence was he could talk with Zenie only on the news of the village, and as this topic was soon exhausted, he was often reduced to painful silence. He soon discovered that Vincent Monard had the decided advantage of him in this respect. He could converse with Zenie, by the hour, upon those subjects which interested her, and he also had the tact to make Zenie display her own attainments. The consequence was she always enjoyed Vincent's society. If he could make no impression upon her heart, he invariably made her feel well pleased with herself. She did

not attribute her self-complacency to Vincent's discovery of what she liked. But he had found out what were her favorite books, and he never alluded to any book or subject which he thought she knew nothing about. He never tried to be more brilliant than she was, and when he really was so, it was without any effort. In this Vincent was wise, without knowing it. The truth was, he was not trying to win the young lady's heart. He could never lose sight of that great, dark gulf, which seemed to yawn between them. Besides, he felt too proud to ask *her*, whose father was almost as wealthy as Mr. Brandon, to share his abject poverty. If he made known his love, she might suppose that he was influenced by mercenary motives. He never felt poverty to be such a burden before, but now it aroused occasionally a slight disposition to rebel against the ways of divine Providence. "Why is it," the thought flashed into his mind, one evening, when he had just left Zenie, "that God has so unequally distributed temporal blessings? Why could I not make as good use of wealth as Leonard Brandon? The Lord knows I love Zenie Huxley till my heart is ready to burst with emotions to which I dare not give utterance, because I am pressed down to the very dust by hateful poverty." But he made a mighty effort, and drove the sinful thought from his mind. "God forgive me," he prayed, "for yielding to this unholy disposition to murmur at Thy ways. Thou knowest what I am suffering. Help me to tear this human idol from my heart." And Vincent prayed and struggled, and tried not to think of Zenie. Once he had more than half determined not to visit the young lady again, as it appeared best to break through the meshes which entangled him. But how vain is the effort to crush out the new-born love of a young and pure

heart! Vincent found it so, and said to himself, in the language of one of his favorite poets—

“Love is not to be reasoned down or lost
In high ambition, or a thirst for greatness:
'Tis second life; it grows into the soul,
Warms ev'ry vein, and beats in ev'ry pulse.
I feel it here: my resolution melts.’

“I must go back, if I die. To see her, to hear her voice, sweeter to me than the tones of an angel’s harp, will only increase my anguish. But this swelling, throbbing, aching heart says go. I will obey till I reach the last stage of hopelessness and misery which human nature can endure, and then there *must be* a change. It is said that violent things cannot last long. I will, therefore, increase the sufferings of this heart, till the pent-up flood shall break over, and then I shall be myself again.”

With this species of sophistry the young man deluded himself, and returned.

Zenie believed that Vincent was deeply smitten with her charms, and yet he never alluded to the subject in the most distant manner. At every call he made she confidently expected to hear a declaration of love, but at the expiration of every call she was left in a state of surprise. At last she determined that she would extort a tribute of verbal admiration from him. She had no proof that he loved her, except the frequency of his visits, and this was not sufficient. Zenie did not suppose, for a moment, that she cared anything for the young man, except for the entertainment which his society afforded. He was nothing but a poor clerk, she thought, but his conversational powers were certainly very brilliant. But Zenie felt a little vexed that he would betray no indication of any warmer sentiment than

common friendship. Why did she want the "poor clerk" to confess his love? She could not have answered the question herself. But she had resolved that he *should* do it, and then she persuaded herself she would think no more about the matter. Accordingly, she began to employ the little enticing arts which a generally admired and beautiful girl knows so well how to use. The way was adroitly left open for Vincent to give utterance to the secret of his heart; but to her surprise and mortification he did not avail himself of the splendid opportunities which strangely presented themselves. At such times he shrank back, and relapsed into the silence of melancholy meditation—so it seemed to the young lady. She could not see the violent struggle which was going on in the young man's heart. She was puzzled by his manner. It had not occurred to her that he was making a most desperate effort to cure himself of what he regarded as a hopeless passion. He was sinking deeper and deeper in the waters of bitterness, but he was acting under the impression that after a little there must be a reaction; the human heart could not be supposed able to endure for any great length of time the constant pressure of such suffering. Patiently he awaited the expected collapse. Zenie became bolder in her efforts to extort his secret, but every time he was exposed to this severe ordeal he would seem to her to sink into a deep reverie, from which, when she aroused him, he would start, as if surprised at himself, and would immediately change the subject of conversation. One evening, after she had practiced her little game, with the usual result, and Vincent was gazing abstractedly through the window at the stars, she saw the solemn expression of his face, and suddenly exclaimed—

"A penny for your thoughts."

Vincent started as usual, but quickly replied—

"Excuse me, Miss Zenie. I beg pardon for this absent-mindedness; I meant no disrespect; but your last remark threw me into a sort of day-dream, even at night."

"Building air-castles were you? Well, I can excuse you, for I am frequently guilty of that beautiful foolishness myself."

"You know, then," remarked Vincent, "that sometimes it is impossible to control one's thoughts. My imagination often assumes the reigns of government and drives my mind whither she will. Often it is as lawless as Phaeton's drive of the chariot of the Sun, but not so frightful. Fortunately she does not carry me among the dragons, bears and scorpions, but amid the most charming scenes of flowery landscapes and murmuring streams."

"Poetic, Mr. Monard, quite so; but what was your day-dream just now?"

"O, Miss Zenie," said Vincent, with an air that manifested some anxiety to get away from the subject, "it was a piece of mere foolishness, not worth the telling and hearing."

"But I want to be the judge of that."

Vincent gave her an incredulous look.

"I insist on it; because you have no right to fly off in day-dreams in the presence of a lady, Sir, and leave her on the dull earth to entertain herself as best she can. So I claim my right to know what it was."

She said this in such a way, and with such a beaming smile, that Vincent felt he would have to comply with her request, no matter how silly it might make him appear.

"Inasmuch, then," said he, "as I have unintentionally violated one of the rules of etiquette, and since you command it, I will make an effort to give definite shape

to the flitting thoughts that darted like golden sunbeams across my mind. But, Miss Zenie, I know you will only laugh at me."

"No ; go on. You have made a splendid beginning. I will not laugh."

"Well, you know such fancies cannot be arranged in any logical order, because they flash with the rapidity and vividness of lightning, and then are gone, leaving one in a state of bewilderment. But to proceed ; I have some ambition, possibly more than I ought to have, considering the small amount of talents with which Minerva has entrusted me. She seems to be a very partial goddess in the distribution of her favors."

"I do not think you have any right to complain of her neglect," interrupted Zenie, with a bright smile. Vincent bowed, and said—

"That is a very delicate compliment, Miss Zenie, and I thank you for it, though its foundation is so slender. But no matter. My ungovernable and silly imagination just now undertook to portray my future destiny. Now do not laugh, when I tell you that I saw myself making a grand and eloquent speech before a jury, while the crowd outside the bar stood on tiptoe, listening with breathless attention ; a foolish dream, which I suppose flashes often through the brain of every young pettifogger. However, that may be, I saw my innocent client sitting near me, charged with murder, while his wife and children were watching me with such eagerness, anxiety, and imploring looks, that I felt my soul burning, and reaching out after words with hooks of steel, that would capture the minds and hearts of all my auditors. I felt how poor is language when we want to clothe an argument in words whose beauty and force will both charm and convince. But my speech ended, and the jury retired with tears streaming down their

cheeks. In a few moments they returned with a verdict of 'not guilty.' Loud shouts of gladness at once burst forth from the crowd, in spite of the efforts of the officers to preserve order. I felt as if I were floating in a sea of glory; and my success from that day, I had not the slightest doubt, was assured."

"Is that all?" asked Zenie.

"Not all, Miss Zenie," replied Vincent, smiling at the young lady's serious attention. "In a little time my legal practice was so extensive that I could scarcely attend to it. Plutus, blind as he was, admitted the justness of my claims, and cheerfully opened wide his coffers, and I heard the musical jingle of that saffron metal after which the world is running wild. One day I hastened to a bower covered with flowers too resplendent and gorgeous to be described. Strains of music, as sweet and enrapturing as it is within human skill to make, were wafted from the bower, on a gentle breeze. Inside, surrounded by flowers, there reposed on a rustic seat a being whose charms and attractions could not be resisted. At her feet I submissively knelt, poured out words of burning love, and offered her my fortune, fame, and humble self. But I must hasten, as the dream is becoming too long."

"No, it is not," said Zenie, "I am deeply interested in it."

"Well, as you might expect, a grand wedding; bride radiant, blushing, and as lovely as one of the Graces; I led her to a magnificent palace, which might have vied with Aladdin's in glittering splendor; a long, happy life; and then a hiatus of darkness. But again I spring into consciousness, and find her in another sphere; youth renewed. I seize her hand, and we wander amid blooming gardens, whose atmosphere was perfumed with the richest odors; we sit under the trees laden with

luscious fruits, and we drink the crystal waters, which rippled along through the shady groves of Paradise; we sit upon a cloud glowing in the sunbeams, and we float off—off—off—. Oh, pshaw, Miss Zenie, I see you are laughing at this silly dream; but you would have me tell it.”

“If I smiled,” quickly replied Zenie, “it was with admiration of your beautiful vision. I say it is beautiful, and who knows but it may partly prove a reality. But, say, Mr. Monard, who was the lady floating off with you in the clouds?”

Here was a magnificent opportunity for Vincent Monard, and for an instant he felt sorely tempted. The question caused a shade of melancholy to pass over the young man’s face. But he quickly rallied.

“I told you, Miss Zenie, it was a nonsensical day-dream, whose features unfolded and disappeared, like dissolving views, with such swiftness that it was impossible to impress them on the memory with any distinctness.”

“Yes; but the lady appeared to be the central figure. While you were wandering in those celestial gardens, and sailing in the sunlit clouds, you do not pretend to say you did not once behold her face?”

What should he do? Let this splendid opportunity pass away unimproved? Again he had to face the strong temptation to disclose his secret to the fair one, who seemed to be urging him to make a declaration. If he were to do so, he knew not how it might be received. Somehow, he did not wish to add to his sufferings the misery of rejection. He was almost at the point of yielding in blindness to the promptings of his heart; but suddenly choking back the feverish words that were struggling for audible vent, and breaking into a laugh, intended to express a slight degree of ridicule at

the absurdity of making such nonsense a topic of discussion, he said—

“Let us change the subject, Miss Zenie. Such wild and ridiculous reveries are too irrational to be a topic of conversation.”

The young lady was perplexed and disappointed. She felt vexed with herself at the thought that Vincent might have discovered her object. Therefore, with as much indifference as possible, she said—

“These dreams show the bent of one’s mind. But the latter part of yours, I mean after what you called a hiatus of darkness, is something which surpasses my comprehension. That was an idle dream, sure enough.”

“I meant after death, Miss Zenie.”

“Yes; I understood you to mean that. But that state is one about which I dare not dream, nor think.”

“Why not?”

“Because I know nothing about it. I am an Agnostic. I believe in the beautiful theory of Evolution, which my father holds, and in whose mysteries he is every day indoctrinating me. It is wonderful, Mr. Monard.”

“Now, Miss Zenie,” said Vincent, with a laugh, “you are just trying to tease me. You do not want me to understand that you are an atheist? I should dislike to think that.”

“I do not know whether I am an atheist or not. I suppose I am, in one sense of the word, and in another, I am not. Anyhow, I believe that all things, as they now exist, are the results of Evolution. If you call Evolution God, I am not an atheist.”

“Why, Miss Zenie,” exclaimed Vincent, “do you not believe in the Bible?”

“Of course, I do not; I mean the miraculous parts.

The Bible itself, though, is a product of religious Evolution."

"Religious Evolution!" cried Vincent.

"Yes, Sir; religious Evolution. I mean that men gradually improved in morals till at last they invented the system of religion contained in the Bible."

"Miss Zenie, I am surprised and pained to hear you avow such sentiments. Because, if we do not acknowledge that book as a revelation of God's will and purposes, we have no hope for the future. We are living in Cimmerian darkness."

"I can partly agree with you in that. We have no hope for the future, except that which is furnished by Evolution. We can only judge the future by the past. For all we can tell, human beings may continue to improve after death, till they become what you call angels. But we really know nothing about it."

"If I had that sort of belief, Miss Zenie," replied Vincent, with solemn thoughtfulness, "I should be miserable."

"You must judge a doctrine, Mr. Monard, by the deportment of those who believe in it. I am not miserable by any means. I try to enjoy the present, and let the future alone."

"If this short life is all, Miss Zenie, Evolution has made a signal failure."

"Why so?"

"Because there is a palpable lack of adaptation of means to ends. Man has a horror of annihilation. The soul, or at least, something within us, earnestly craves immortality. If there is nothing beyond the grave, Evolution only tantalizes us, and mocks the hopes and aspirations which we have, and implants desires within us that can never be gratified, and fills us with fears that are really without foundation. The Bible reveals

a system of religion which is certainly better adapted to the nature of man than the theory of Evolution. It explains the present state of things, and gives a rational account of the origin of man, which Evolution does not."

"But, begging your pardon for contradicting you," quickly answered Zenie, "I must be allowed to affirm that Evolution does account for the origin of man, and in a much more satisfactory manner than the Bible does; because the theory of Evolution accords with scientific facts."

"Permit me to ask," said Vincent, with great politeness, "how did man originate, according to your theory? I candidly confess my ignorance, and will acknowledge my obligation if you will enlighten me."

"There is no difficulty in it, Mr. Monard. I can explain it in one word. Man is the development of an *oyster*."

"I do not know, Miss Zenie, that I clearly understand your explanation. Do you mean that an oyster converted himself into a man?"

"The laws of Evolution converted him. He developed, after undergoing many changes, into the species called man. But the oyster was the beginning of all animal life."

"How did the oyster originate?" inquired the young man, with thoughtfulness.

"From *mud*, of course."

"What shaped the mud, and infused life into it, Miss Zenie?"

"Why, Evolution."

"Am I to understand that Evolution is an intelligent, thinking being?"

"Certainly not. It is force—force which pervades all the universe."

"I want to understand your theory, Miss Zenie. With your permission I would like to ask, does this force of which you speak *think*?"

"Think? Why, no."

"Then I am at a loss to conceive how a mere thoughtless force can adapt means to ends. Why should not man have been formed at once out of the mud, instead of the oyster?"

"I do not know," replied Zenie, not seeming to be the least disconcerted, "but that is the way Evolution acts. Does it not seem to be more rational to begin with the lowest forms of life, and work up by gradual progression, through different stages, till the highest type is reached?"

"Admitting that it does," replied Vincent, "the word 'rational,' which you have employed, will not apply to Evolution, which you tell me is a force without intelligence. It is utterly inconceivable to me, Miss Zenie, how an unthinking power can manifest such marks of design. Adaptation of means to ends, examples of which we behold everywhere, necessarily involves thought."

"It does not devolve on the advocate of Evolution to explain that."

"Your theory, then, Miss Zenie, according to my way of thinking, does not account for the origin of animal life. It is a little illogical, if you will pardon me for saying it, when you meet with a difficulty, to fall back upon Agnosticism, which, in my humble opinion, is a very poor kind of philosophy. I would dislike, too, to think," he continued, with a laugh, "that such a one as you are has no better ancestor than a stupid oyster. I cannot see that you have any reason to feel proud of your forefathers. Why, if your theory is correct, we are all nothing more than cannibals."

"How do you make that appear?" she asked, with a look that made Vincent feel unpleasant.

"Why, whenever we eat an oyster we destroy an animal that might develop into a human being. Is it possible that we feast upon our progenitors? According to your theory, Miss Zenie, you yourself are but a refined oyster."

"Are you making sport of me, Mr. Monard?" asked the young lady, in a tone and with a look that indicated vexation.

"No, Miss Zenie," quickly answered Vincent, becoming somewhat embarrassed, "but is it not amusing to think that you, so highly accomplished, hold to a theory which makes you probably an improved monkey?"

Vincent intended this as a pacifying remark, for he perceived unmistakable indications of excited feeling. But what was his astonishment, when the young lady sprang to her feet, and said—

"I think it very unbecoming in you, Sir, to address such language to a lady. Ridicule is not argument. I shall not talk to you any more on the subject, and, if you will excuse me, I will bid you good evening."

"O, Miss Zenie," exclaimed Vincent, quickly rising, "stay, I beg you—let me explain—I meant only—"

But he did not finish the sentence, for the young lady was gone, and he was left standing in the middle of the room, wondering why Zenie should so easily take offence at what he intended as a mere pleasantry. He left the house in deep mortification, and as he walked along he muttered to himself, "This is the beginning of the reaction. I shall return no more. Peace, foolish heart, be calm! My fond dream is over. *I will be a man.*"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE STOLEN WATCH.

“ With wild surprise,
As if to marble struck, devoid of sense,
A stupid moment, motionless he stood.”

It would be a natural supposition that two young men who were candidates for the affections of the same lady would become jealous of each other. Leonard Brandon was certainly jealous of Vincent Monard. He had become more so since the fair one had enjoined it upon him not to speak of the subject which mingled with his thoughts by day and his dreams by night. He could not but perceive that Zenie did enjoy, or at least seemed to enjoy, the society of his rival more than his own, and the suspicion, which would sometimes creep into his mind, that she might entertain for Vincent a sentiment of warm regard, caused him to almost hate the preacher's son, as a person likely to interfere with the fulfillment of his hopes. His jealousy would have been greater, if he had had less pride, or more properly, vanity. He was by no means ignorant of his corporeal graces ; also, of the fact that his father was the possessor of great wealth, to all of which he must fall heir in the course of time. These considerations he thought must ultimately bias the mind of Zenie in his favor. Was it possible that she could be so foolish as to marry the penniless Vincent Monard, merely because he could talk beautifully ? Yet Leonard felt more anxiety than he was willing to acknowledge to himself, especially when he beheld the two engaged in an animated conversation, in which he could take no part. He, therefore, disliked Vincent to a greater extent than he was probably aware of. He began to treat his rival with a

coolness which Vincent could not but observe, but about which he said nothing. But if Leonard had been acquainted with the true state of Vincent's heart the morning after Zenie had treated him so rudely, his ill feelings might have been greatly softened. For Vincent had not receded from his determination to no longer cherish hopes which he thought must end in bitter disappointment. It mattered not who was to blame for the little unpleasantness which had occurred between him and Zenie, he resolved to make it a pretext for creating a feeling of indifference toward the young lady. He even felt a curious sort of gladness that she had given him good reason to *dislike* her. It was not in his nature to *hate* any one, but he had come to the conclusion to try it in this instance, thinking that, as soon as he succeeded, he could easily raise the temperature of his affections to the degree of common friendship. He considered her treatment of him as evidence that she had not the slightest regard for him. "Why then," he thought to himself, "should I render myself miserable, and destroy my prospects for happiness? I will at once wrench my affections from this beautiful being, who has already caused me to spend so many hours of precious time in vain and foolish thoughts. This day I will sacrifice upon the altar of Ambition. I shall dive deeper into my studies, and if," with an inward sort of smile, "I cannot win *golden hair*, I shall make earnest efforts to win golden opinions. Soon I will leave this village, go forth into the wildest storms of Life's battle, plunge into the thickest of the fight with my fellow men, and thus dethrone the beautiful idol which has for a time bereft me of sense and reason. Why was I ever such a simpleton as to venture near this irresistible charmer? But I will shake off the sweet dream, which has proved only an incubus

upon all my energies. I will see whether I have any manhood."

Vincent thought he had pride and independence sufficient to gain the victory over his heart. As he was a young man of great nerve and strength of will, no one can predict what would have been the final result, if Vincent had been left alone to contend against his tender sentiment. But man is the creature of circumstances. He may lay his plans with all the prudence which human wisdom can suggest, but it is impossible to make provision against all emergencies and contingencies that may arise in the impenetrable future. Events of the most tremendous importance to the world have sometimes hinged upon circumstances so trivial, in themselves considered, that they are ridiculous.

The cackling of an insignificant goose once saved the proud city of Rome. It is stated by Victor Hugo that one or two little words, uttered by either an ignorant or treacherous guide, on the battlefield of Waterloo, forever settled the temporal destiny of Napoleon Bonaparte. The omission of the letter *h* in the pronunciation of the word *Shibboleth* cost forty-two thousand men their lives. The conversion of an *o* into an *i* divided the ecclesiastical Roman Empire into two hostile parties, and was the cause of bitter internal wars for many years. A *yes* or a *no* has frequently thrown kingdoms into wild and disastrous confusion. Had it not been for the rapid industry of a *spider*, that stretched a web across the mouth of a certain cave, half the world to-day would not be the deluded followers of an impostor. If a certain preacher, Rev. Solomon Spaulding, had not written a purely fictitious story, for the amusement of himself and friends, the world would never have heard of the Latter-day-saints, who, it seems, from the present aspect of affairs, are destined to bring bloody

trouble upon the people of these United States. These apparently trifling events are constantly occurring, changing the current of human history, and shaping the destinies of individuals.

If Zenie, at the very time Vincent was so stoutly bracing himself up against his own heart, and forming such brave resolutions, had not penned a few lines, the probability is that some portions of this story would never have been written. But she sent a short note to Vincent, containing the following words:—

“MR. MONARD: I owe you an apology for my conduct yesterday evening. After reflection, I feel ashamed for having left you so abruptly. Will you forgive me? Z.”

These two or three sentences instantly produced a violent commotion in the young man's breast. They might mean a great deal or nothing. While the servant stood waiting for an answer a rapid discussion was taking place in his mind as to the course to be adopted. Judging from the expression of his face, there was a terrible internal struggle. But he soon came to a conclusion, as was shown by his seizing a pen and writing this reply—

“MISS ZENIE: Will you grant me permission to call this evening at 8 o'clock? I desire to offer an explanation. V. M.”

In a short time this answer was received—

“MR. MONARD: You have permission to call, since you do not say I am forgiven. I wanted merely to apologize for my rudeness. Z.”

Was the young man wavering in his determination to break the golden fetters, or not? But it is useless to conjecture what were his feelings during the remainder of the day. Instead of pausing to moralize or comment, it will perhaps be best to hasten on to the narration of events.

When Vincent that evening, at the appointed hour,

reached the residence of Dr. Huxley, he found that he had been preceded by Leonard Brandon, only a few moments, however, and the encounter was a little embarrassing to both rivals. The meeting seemed to be unexpected. Whether Leonard had dropped in accidentally, or was there by the written permission of the young lady, he did not know. But in a moment he recovered his self-possession, and betrayed neither emotion nor vexation. Not so with Leonard, whose jealousy was so aroused by the unexpected appearance of his rival, that he could not conceal it. He looked at Vincent with a frown upon his handsome face, and relapsed into a moody silence, as if to show the young lady that he heartily disapproved of this call from one whom he regarded at that moment as his very worst enemy. Vincent said pleasantly—

“Good evening, Leonard. I did not know that you would be here. But the presence of three will make it the more lively.”

To this salutation Leonard replied with a sullen “good-evening,” and immediately turned his head, as if to ignore the very existence of his rival. But Vincent was not to be thrust into the back-ground by this sort of manœuvring; and at once entered into a lively conversation with the young lady, while Leonard sat still, in moody silence.

“I am extremely sorry, Miss Zenie,” he said “that I gave you just cause of offence by my thoughtless impudence. To make amends, I now do the only thing in my power, and that is to offer an apology and ask your pardon.”

“You cannot forestall me in that way, Mr. Monard. You shall not deprive me of the laurels of magnanimity, which I have fairly won, by making the first advances and humble overtures for peace. I ought not to have

been so hasty, and I sincerely regret it, and beg you to forgive me."

"It would be a reflection upon my intellectual powers, Miss Zenie, were I to suffer you to out-general me in this contest for the crown of magnanimity. I do admire your skill in the disposition of your forces, and the method of your attack. But your whole army must be routed in confusion, when I tell you that, if you had not retreated, I intended to apologize yesterday evening."

"But you did not follow up your victory this morning," replied Zenie, "and I had the honor of resuming hostilities, by arousing you from your bivouac with the boom of the first gun."

"Well," said Vincent, with a laugh, "let us call it a drawn battle, withdraw our forces, bury the hatchet, and smoke the calumet of peace. I assure you, I shall not again be guilty of such rudeness, say what you will in regard to the last and best product of Evolution. You may say that I have been recently metamorphosed from an oyster, if you wish, and I shall not dispute it. Indeed, I often feel that I deserve no better a progenitor than that very animal. I certainly have inherited enough stupidity to establish my claim to that line of descent."

"Peace being established on an honorable basis," replied Zenie, "we will quarrel no more."

"Have you had a quarrel, Miss Zenie?" asked Leonard, with a forced laugh. He had listened to this little game of raillery in great surprise. He understood nothing of it till Zenie made the last remark, when the word "quarrel" impressed him with the idea that a serious difficulty had arisen between herself and Vincent.

"O, not much," she replied, turning to the speaker. "Mr. Monard and I had a short discussion on the sub-

ject of Evolution, and he tried to claim a nobler origin than scientific truth will justify."

"How is that? I do not understand."

"You have studied the theory of Evolution, I suppose, Mr. Brandon?" she asked.

"Theory of *what*?" asked the young man, blushing, in confusion.

"Evolution," answered Zenie, seeing that he did not understand it. "The theory which teaches that all animals, including man, originated from the oyster. What do you think about it."

"O, yes," replied Leonard, trying to conceal his ignorance, "I have read something about that, and I don't know what to think. I believe, though, I am inclined to your opinion on the subject."

"You have not heard me express any opinion," said Zenie, with a laugh.

"I don't care," answered Leonard, joining in the laugh. "I believe just as you do."

"Well, are you prepared to believe that the oyster, by some strange process of Evolution, was transformed into a human being?"

"If you say that it is so, I will believe it, though I've seen a great many oysters, and I've never met with one yet that was on the point of turning to any other being."

"There, Miss Zenie," interrupted Vincent, who really desired to make Leonard feel at ease, "is an argument against your theory; for not a single oyster has ever been discovered in the transition state. As Mr. Brandon says, he has never seen one turning, and I will venture the assertion that nobody else ever has."

And this remark of Vincent's had a tendency to put Leonard in a better humor; for he felt that he was really not so ignorant as he imagined himself to be. He

had, without having the slightest idea of its force, stumbled upon one of the most insuperable objections that can be urged against the theory of Evolution. Leonard, however, so far from thinking that he had made a fortunate blunder, attributed his argument to his own "good common sense." Foolish men have sometimes blundered into undeserved fame and glory, like Finch did, at a critical moment in English affairs, by proposing measures which have resulted in public blessings, when they had not the most remote idea that such tremendous effects would follow. Indeed, if the time could be spared here to indulge in moral reflections, it might be established that the grandest successes of the most brilliant lives are but "lucky blunders," so far as the human aspect of the question is involved. But Vincent continued—

"In all the fossils which have been discovered, not a single specimen of any being in the transitional state between the different genera has ever been found. How will you account for that, Miss Zenie?"

"Of course," replied the young lady, "there are some things about Evolution that cannot be explained, at least, while the theory is in the infancy of investigation. The time will come, though, when science will make all clear, and when objections that now seem insurmountable can be removed by the merest tyro."

"That is a good way, Miss Zenie," replied Vincent very pleasantly, "to cut the Gordian knot, and I candidly acknowledge my inability to meet the *argument* you have just advanced."

The young lady did not appear to be well pleased at this remark, and something unpleasant might have occurred, had not Leonard, who was anxious to take part in the conversation, but did not know what to say, immediately after Vincent's remark, added—

"I think this theory is perfectly absurd."

This rude observation caused Zenie to break into a laugh, because she knew that Leonard could not have pointed out the "absurdity," if his life had depended upon it.

"Did you not say just now," inquired Zenie, "that you would hold to my theory?"

"Yes; so I will, even if I think it absurd."

"I command you, then, to believe with all your heart that your forefathers were oysters. Can you do it?"

"If you say it is the truth, I will admit it, though I can't prove it."

"You cannot prove that they were *not* oysters."

"No; I don't believe I can."

"If you cannot, you may as easily believe one as the other—it makes no difference. But, Mr. Monard, I see you are about to go off into another one of your day-dreams. I cannot suffer that again in my presence. You must not be so selfish."

"I was only thinking of an amusing dream which I had last night, Miss Zenie."

"Let us hear it, then, if it was amusing."

"I hardly think it would prove entertaining to the present company—or at least to you, Miss Zenie; because it was connected with the subject which we have just been discussing."

"That does not matter," replied Zenie, with playfulness of manner. "I want to hear it, and you must relate it."

"You impose a hard task upon me, Miss Zenie, and one which I do not like to undertake, from the fact it may result in my having to make another apology to you."

"I promise you I shall take no offence."

"Well, if you insist upon it, I must obey, though you

must remember, Miss Zenie, that I comply with your request under protest."

"Proceed, Mr. Monard, for I have determined to be amused. For the present I am like people who go to the circus to laugh at the clown; so they roar at everything he says, whether there is any point to his wit or not."

"If that is your present happy frame of mind, Miss Zenie," replied Vincent, with assumed gravity, "I do not despair of affording you great entertainment. But you must not confuse me by laughing at the wrong place."

"To prevent such a misfortune as that," said Zenie, playfully, "you must give a sign, by allowing a feeble smile to flit over your visage, and Mr. Brandon and I, taking the hint, will break into boisterous laughter."

"Very well," replied Vincent, "that important point being satisfactorily settled, I will proceed without delay. Dreams, you know—so it is said by mental philosophers—are but the prolongation or continuation of our waking thoughts. My experience of last evening adds a small degree of confirmation to their theory. For last night I fell asleep, and I dreamed that I was a piece of mud, about the size of a goose-egg, though not half so well shaped."

At this Leonard and Zenie both laughed outright.

"Respected friends," said Vincent, in a tone and manner of mock solemnity, "I am sure I did not give the sign upon which we agreed. You have laughed at the wrong time. I beg you, be quiet, and pay strict attention to what I am going to say. I affirm, then, most emphatically, that if Euclid himself had been there he could not have brought me within the range of the most irregular of his geometrical figures. But all at once it occurred to me that I ought to make some sort

of effort to put myself in a more presentable condition. Somehow I got tired of being humble and homely mud. My slumbering ambition was aroused, and I found myself possessed of a strong desire to *evolve*. So I began to shake and tremble, trying powerfully to wriggle myself into some form; I did not care what, just so it was a form. Soon success, which engendered a curious feeling of hilarity, crowned my amazing exertions to evolve. I twisted, and squirmed, and wriggled, till I discovered that I was becoming extremely lubricous, and in a short time I felt that I was a living, sentient creature. You cannot imagine what delightful sensations I experienced when I took my first sip of salt water. I was a corpulent oyster, and I will venture to affirm that no oyster, before or since, ever felt prouder of his fine appearance than I did. But in the course of time—I could not tell how long, as I had no watch, nor any other chronological appliance by which to measure the flight of days—I discovered that I was a fish, and I was performing all the functions of that animal. O, with what buoyant spirits did I sport amid the flashing waves. When the storm swept over the surface of the great deep, lashing it into mountain billows, I sank down to those depths where the waters are never disturbed, and there I reposed in safety and calmness till the commotion above had subsided. But I developed still more, and found that I had a mouth of awful dimensions, filled with very formidable teeth, and I realized that I was a belligerent shark. I was in perpetual warfare. I cannot recount all the interesting adventures of which I was the hero, as many of them have slipped my memory. But I recollect that one day I was following, with a most ravenous appetite, in the wake of a ship that was skimming like a bird over the waves. Presently I heard a loud shriek and then a

splash. I saw a man struggling in the waves, and when I rushed to him his face presented such a picture of agony and despair that it was enough to melt even the heart of a shark to tenderness."

"You nobly spared him?" asked Zenie.

"I was half-famished," continued Vincent. "Besides, I was bound by the stubborn Laws of Evolution to follow the instincts and propensities of my sharkish nature. I had no more mercy on him than I would now have on a fried oyster, after a whole day's fast."

At this point Zenie laughed.

"I did not give the signal, did I?" asked Vincent, with a look of deep solemnity.

"No; but I was not laughing at anything you said, but at your grave looks."

"Never mind my looks," replied Vincent. "Attend unto what I am saying. I do not see how you could laugh in the midst of such a fearful adventure. I seized the poor fellow, and sank down into the calm waters, and greedily devoured him. Ugh! what a meal! I cannot undertake to mention all the curious and wonderful metamorphoses which I underwent. But I changed from one animal to another, in a way which I could not understand, for you know, Miss Zenie, there are some things about Evolution which it is impossible to explain. But one day I discovered that I was a flying-fish, and then by some mysterious process I became a bird. Of all the different states through which I passed, this was the most delightful. O, it was ineffably glorious, beyond all fancy."

"What sort of bird were you?" asked Zenie.

"Bald Eagle," replied Vincent, "and this may account for the fact, if none of your Evolutionists can explain it, that some men are bald-headed. They come down through that line of development. Anyhow, I had a happy

time in bathing in the pure mists of the clouds, and soaring above them, and gazing down at the scenes far below. My sensations, when I was gyrating away up in the air were exquisite; just beyond all conception. But, alas! this happy state was destined to come to a sorrowfully amusing end, for one day I found that I had been strangely converted into a monkey. I was full of life, merriment, and gayety. O, how I did chatter and giggle in the tree tops."

"What did you find so funny?" asked Zenie.

"O, everything. I had such a keen sense of the ridiculous that I just laughed at my own capers. Of all the animals into which I was transformed, the monkey was the only one that was blessed with fully developed risibility. But I must hasten on. I was forced by the inexorable Laws of Evolution to part with my fellow monkeys. It seemed that I was the 'fittest' for higher development. One day I found that I was a full-grown man, and I continued in this state for a great many years. At last a being, whose unearthly beauty no words of which I am in command can describe, burst upon my enraptured vision."

"The same one you saw in your day-dream, I presume?" said Zenie.

"Entirely different, Miss Zenie," replied Vincent. "For her hair was as fine as silk, jet-black, and hung down to her waist in thick curls. She was dressed in a robe whiter, if possible, than the snows of the frigid zone, and of a texture finer than any fabric I have ever seen, and a belt that out-glittered diamonds encircled her waist, and golden slippers encased her delicate feet, and around her head was a wreath of flowers, which I knew could not have been gathered from the soil of this world. It is utterly useless to speak of her face and features, as there are no words in human lan-

guage that can convey anything like an adequate idea of their absolute indefectibility—*mirabile dictu!*” He paused, as if lost in admiration and contemplation of the creature he had described. Yet his face wore an expression of droll solemnity.

“Proceed,” said Zenie, “before the unearthly paragon vanishes into thin air.”

“I was taking a rapid inventory of my stock of words,” replied Vincent, “to see if I could not improve my imperfect description, but I believe I will have to give it up, as a hopeless undertaking. So I will hand her over to the tender mercies of your brilliant imaginations. This lovely nondescript opened her mouth, and spoke, in tones as soft as the breath of a calm summer morn, and said—

“‘Mortal! thou must now prepare for a state of higher development. Thy origin is very humble, but if thou art *fit to survive*, thou shalt evolve into something nobler. But if thou art not *fit*, thou shalt fall by the wayside and become nutriment for others that have the ability to overcome in the struggle for existence.’

“‘Lovely denizen of heaven,’ I exclaimed, in rapture, ‘develop me to thy state, or, if thou can’st remain on this terrestrial ball, where I have already undergone sufficient transmigrations to satisfy any reasonable creature with the process of *evolving*, be my companion. I ask no greater felicity.’

“‘Foolish mortal! thou knowest not what thou askest. I am the goddess of Evolution. Thou hast but one choice in this matter; no more have I. I am but the creature of Necessity. Therefore, *develop*, or *perish!*’

“‘Celestial goddess! I prefer to develop, then. What wouldst thou have me do?’

“‘Follow me.’

“ ‘Follow thee! Yes, I will follow thee till we reach the last star that glitters on the outskirts of the universe.’

“ ‘Now, lead on :

In me is no delay ; with thee to go,
Is to stay here ; with thee here to stay,
Is to go hence, unwilling : thou to me
Art all things under heaven, all places, thou.’

“The goddess looked at me sternly, and exclaimed—

“ ‘Peace, silly babbler !’

“She moved off, and seemed to trip along on the air. I soon found that this power of pleasant locomotion was communicated to me. So we traveled, in silence, though in this delightful way, till we reached the gate through which Phœbus was preparing to drive his fire-breathing steeds, that were harnessed to the chariot of the sun. The god started off on his daily journey, leaving us on the rosy horizon of the east. But soon a large shell, which must have belonged to some animal of the mastodon age, floated up, with four swan-like birds attached to it, and stopped at our feet. Inside this shell were two seats, cushioned with something finer than velvet and softer than down. The outside, I noticed, was colored with all the hues of the rainbow. Taking our seats, the birds unfolded their snow-white pinions, and away we flew, with the most astonishing celerity. We glided noiselessly through the thin ether, till the earth looked like a star twinkling away back in the distance. Omitting all mention of the strange scenery through which we passed, I perceived that we were rapidly approaching the confines of another world. After awhile it lost its star character. Presently I could distinctly see mountains, oceans, and, soon, trees of most enormous size. Ere long the birds folded their wings, and our beautiful vehicle was resting on the green grass. We got out, and my lovely pilot said—

“ ‘Mortal ! thou art now in the world which is called Jupiter. On the earth thou didst not have sufficient room to develop. But in this beautiful world there is scarcely any limit to expansion.’

“ ‘And what must I do here?’

“ ‘*Develop ! develop !* but be cautious, or great will be the disaster.’

“Saying this, she spoke a word of command to the birds, and soon all were out of sight, and there I stood, alone, a stranger in a strange land. But I had no time to indulge in melancholy reflections, because I perceived that I was rapidly developing. I grew taller, I grew wider, I grew all over. I grew, and I grew, and I grew, and I kept on growing, till all at once I laughed outright at my wonderful expansion. Awful consequences ! The laugh roared like the report of a cannon ; terrible explosion ! I felt an indescribable sensation, and I found myself scattered for miles around, in the shape of millions of fragments that looked like *mashed pumpkins*.”

Vincent paused, and assumed such a wo-begone expression, on account of the disaster which had brought his development to such an unhappy termination, that Leonard and Zenie both burst into a hearty laugh.

Want of time requires that further details of the young people’s conversation during the remainder of the evening shall be omitted. Vincent was so unusually brilliant, that Zenie would occasionally look at him in surprise and wonder ; and Leonard, in envy. The two young men left at a late hour. On the way, Leonard, who appeared to have more friendly feelings toward his rival, said—

“It is so late, Vincent, I’ll not go home, if you will allow me to take lodging with you.”

Vincent roomed in Mr. Brandon’s store, on the second

floor, and until recently, Leonard often shared his bed. They had been fast friends till Zenie returned home from school, when he permitted his violent love to arouse feelings of envy and malice, perhaps hatred.

"Certainly, Leonard," replied Vincent, "I will be glad to have you. You have not been my bedfellow in a long time."

"It hasn't been convenient exactly," was the reply. "We have had a pleasant visit this evening, though, and I propose that we call frequently, together, at the Doctor's."

"With all my heart, if you desire it," replied Vincent, wondering why Leonard had thus suddenly become so friendly. But he met young Brandon's advances with a warmth of feeling which was by no means assumed. So the two spent the night together very pleasantly. It was agreed that in three or four nights they would call together at Dr. Huxley's.

Early the next morning, the young men arose, and Leonard, leaving the store, went immediately to the residence of Dr. Huxley. The physician had just risen from his couch, and invited Leonard into the parlor, upon the young man's signifying a desire to see him in private. No sooner were the two seated than Leonard with a face expressive of great sorrow, said—

"Doctor, I have something to tell you which is very painful to me, and must be to you, but I must tell it, in self-defence. You must promise, however, to conceal my name."

"I do not like to be forestalled in any affair of importance," replied the Doctor, "and I would rather be my own judge of what I shall keep secret. I have not the most remote idea of the nature of your communication; but if you have anything of importance to say, let me hear it, if it concerns me, and I will

then inform you what I will do. You might have some confidence in my judgment and discretion."

"Of course, I have, Doctor; but this is a very delicate business."

"Well, let us have it, then."

"Have you missed your watch?"

"No; but why do you ask?"

"There was a watch on the mantle-board, there, last night, when Vincent Monard and I called on Miss Zenie. Doctor, you don't know—you can't imagine how I dislike to tell it."

"Tell it, if you are going to," said Dr. Huxley, with his usual bluntness.

"Vincent took that watch, Doctor."

"Can you prove that?" asked the physician, in painful surprise.

"I saw him, with my own eyes," answered Leonard. "I thought you would miss the watch to-day, and I believed you would suspect one of us; but whether you would or not, it is my duty to tell you."

"This is hard to believe, Leonard," said the Doctor, after a short pause. "I do not know a young man in whom I have had more confidence. Is it not possible that you are mistaken?" continued the Doctor, rising and looking on the mantel.

"You need not look for it, Doctor. I am certain that I saw him take it. My eyes could not have so deceived me. I was perfectly amazed, and I never did hate anything so much in my life."

"What do you suppose he has done with it?"

"I think you can recover it," replied Leonard, "if you will be in haste. I slept with him last night, on purpose, and I watched him as closely as I could. I noticed that he blew out the candle just before retiring, and I thought I heard him open his trunk

before he came to bed. My opinion is, that it is in his trunk. He may, however, hide it somewhere else to-day."

"I will be forced to have his room searched at once. That watch cost me five hundred dollars, and I do not want to lose it."

"I'll tell you what, Doctor," said Leonard, "I don't want it known, of course, that I reported this thing to you. That is the secret I desired you to keep. Now, I'll go back to the store, just as if nothing had happened, and keep my eye on Vincent. You come to the store in an hour or so, and accuse both of us, and propose a search. Then Vincent will never suspect that I knew anything about it."

"But suppose I prosecute him for theft," said the Doctor. "I will want your testimony. It will take that to convict him."

"But, Doctor," quickly responded Leonard, "I hope you'll not prosecute him, on his family's account. For his father's sake, I would hate to be a witness against his son. Still, if you are determined upon it, you can have me as your witness."

"Probably you are right, Leonard. I would dislike to injure his father. But we are too fast, as the theft is not proved yet. Go back to your store, and leave the matter in my hands."

Accordingly, Leonard returned to the store, after he had gone home and breakfasted. In the course of an hour Dr. Huxley made his appearance, and walked into the store, looking as if nothing unusual had transpired. Vincent was attending to his duties with more cheerfulness than he had manifested for some time. The Doctor entered into conversation with him, and narrowly watched him, but the only thing which he thought suspicious in the young man's manner

was, that Vincent avoided looking him in the face. But while they were talking Mr. Brandon came in. • The Doctor at once requested all three to walk back to the counting-room, which being done, he said—

“I have a very unpleasant duty to perform, Mr. Brandon, but, in justice to myself, it must be done.”

“Well, Sir, what is it?”

“To make a long story short, then, these two young gentlemen were at my house last evening. I left my watch on the mantel, in the parlor. This morning my watch was missing; and now, Sir, I am forced to charge one or both of them with theft.”

“What reason have you,” asked Mr. Brandon, turning pale, “to suspect them?”

“Reason enough, Sir; the watch was in the parlor last night. When the young men retired, my daughter tells me that she locked the door, and carried the key to her own room. She gave me the key this morning, and I was the first to open the door. No one else could have taken it. All the circumstances, you see, point to them—circumstances as regular, Sir, as the developments of Evolution. One of them is guilty, or both of them.”

Leonard affected to become very indignant.

“Doctor,” he said, in as angry a manner as he could possibly assume, “you’ve got to prove this slanderous charge, or suffer for it. No man shall accuse me of such a crime as that.”

Vincent looked amazed. His appearance, in the Doctor’s opinion, betrayed his guilt.

“I will never be satisfied, gentlemen, till I have had a search. I have taken out no search-warrant, because I do not want to make the matter public. But if you are honest, that will make no difference. Are you both willing to submit?”

"I'm more than willing," quickly exclaimed Leonard.
"I even *demand* it."

"Of course, I am willing," answered Vincent, in shamefacedness at the thought of being even suspected of such a crime.

"Now, Doctor," said Leonard, still manifesting a considerable degree of indignation, "if your watch is not found with one of us, and this thing should leak out, I will be compelled to sue you for slander."

"We will discuss that question after the search," calmly replied Dr. Huxley. "I am satisfied that my watch is with one of you. It is useless, I think, to search your persons, as you would not be apt to wear it. Suppose we begin with your room?"

"I have no room here," replied Leonard. "Mine is at home; you're perfectly welcome to search it."

"Where is *your* room?" asked the Doctor, turning to Vincent.

"Up stairs, Sir."

"We will begin with your room, then," said the Doctor, "if you have no objection."

"None at all, Sir," replied Vincent.

Accordingly, all four ascended the stairway to Vincent's room, in which there was scarcely any furniture.

"Suppose," said the Doctor, "we try your trunk first."

"Certainly," replied Vincent, who had not yet recovered from the shock produced by this unexpected impeachment of his honesty. He took the key from his pocket, unlocked the trunk, and told the Doctor to search. The physician, accordingly, took out the few articles of clothing, till he reached the bottom. But in one corner, wrapped in a pocket handkerchief, he found the watch. When the Doctor held it up, and pointed to his name, carved in the case, all present were, for a

moment, silent. Vincent stood speechless, while the pallor of death spread over his features. After a little, however, the hot blood rushed to his face, which burned with indignation. He looked searchingly at Leonard, who turned away, as if deeply pained at this exposure of a friend.

Suddenly he exclaimed—

“Doctor Huxley, that watch was not deposited in my trunk by this hand.” He stood with lips compressed, and boldly looked the physician in the face, who, after the lapse of a few seconds, burst into a laugh of derision.

“You may laugh, if you will,” said Vincent, swelling with fierce indignation, “but I tell you, Sir, I never had your watch in my hand in my life.”

“Vincent,” replied the Doctor, quietly, “the thing is too plain to be denied.”

The young man, exasperated by the Doctor’s incredulity, goaded on to desperation and madness, his eyes flashing forth anger, and hardly aware of what he was doing, seized a chair, and in an instant raised it aloft. The consequences might have been terrible, had not Mr. Brandon and Leonard both seized the chair and prevented the blow.

“Vincent,” said the Doctor, with the utmost calmness, “I admire your courage, but it is useless, my boy. Suppose you had killed me with that chair, you would only have added one crime to another.”

“O, Doctor,” exclaimed Vincent, bursting into tears, “I did not intend to kill you. My senses are in a whirl; I don’t know what I am saying or doing. Let me have time to reflect.”

And he sat down, and wept bitterly. But in a few moments he gained the mastery over his angry passions.

“Vincent,” said Dr. Huxley, in a kinder tone, “if

you can possibly explain this affair, you can have the opportunity. Now, how came my watch in your trunk?"

"I do not know, Sir."

"You do not know!" said Dr. Huxley, who was convinced of the young man's guilt. "Your defence is hardly respectable. It is no use to talk. I see plainly that Evolution has not finished her work. It will never do for her to stop at this stage of development. She must eliminate from the human heart all these evil passions that necessitate the erection of jails and penitentiaries."

"Your Evolution," exclaimed Vincent, in bitterness, "seems to be working my ruin. But in this instance, it is an Evolution in the hands of some human being. I tell you, Sir, this is a diabolical piece of wickedness; a villainous scheme to destroy my character."

"Keep cool, Vincent," said the Doctor. "Evolution is a good, kind creature. She aims at grand results, but her processes are exceedingly slow. She should not, however, be abused by the work of her own hands. But you have no defence to make?"

"All I can do, at present," answered Vincent, "is to emphatically deny that I am guilty. The thing is a deliberately concocted scheme to destroy my character. I acknowledge, you have the advantage of me, in a legal point of view——"

"An advantage," interrupted the Doctor, "of which I propose to make no use whatever. I shall not interfere with the work of Evolution. Your passions were born with you, and you are no more responsible for that, than I am. The human family will have to bear with such crimes as circumstances seem to justify me in saying you have committed, till a better animal than the present man shall appear on the stage."

"Doctor," exclaimed Vincent, with indications of returning indignation, "this mockery of yours is unbearable——"

"Keep cool, lad, keep cool. Your charge of mockery is utterly gratuitous. I mean what I say. I have not a particle of ill-will toward you, Vincent. I am not thinking so much about this particular affair, as I am wondering at the strange processes of Evolution. Sometimes I think she might as well have made men honest as to make them rogues."

"Doctor Huxley," exclaimed Vincent, with flashing eyes and clenched hand, "do you apply the epithet of 'rogue' to me?"

"I am only talking on general principles at present," replied the Doctor, disregarding the young man's threatening attitude. "I did not call you nor any other particular person a rogue; but it cannot be denied that there are rogues somewhere. Why Evolution should have produced them is the puzzling question. But I shall not quarrel with her, nor with you either, Vincent. Mr. Brandon," he continued, turning to the merchant, "I suppose only we three know anything about this affair. I have no disposition to prosecute Vincent. Now, let us agree to say nothing about it. We will investigate no further."

"If you think the matter will stop at this," exclaimed Vincent, with tears of anger rolling down his cheeks, "you are very much mistaken."

"O, well," said the Doctor, "you can pursue whatever course you please, but I shall have nothing more to do with it. My opinion, though, is, you had better keep silent, unless you want to get yourself into trouble. I shall never mention the matter to even a member of my own family. Mr. Brandon, will you and Leonard promise the same thing?"

"I promise," said Leonard, as if grieved at his friend's misfortune, "on my word and honor, I'll never mention it."

"You promise!" exclaimed Vincent, grinding his teeth, as he looked at Leonard.

"Certainly, I promise."

Whatever Vincent had on his tongue, he suddenly checked himself, and said nothing.

"I promise, too," joined in Mr. Brandon, "but, of course, I can no longer keep Vincent in my employ."

"No, Sir," exclaimed Vincent, "you are not wealthy enough to keep me. I do not agree to any such adjustment of this affair. Prosecute, if you will—keep silent, if you will, but I am going to investigate till I unmask the villain who has concocted this fiendish scheme. God knows I am innocent, and I believe He will enable me to establish the fact, however much appearances may seem to be against me."

"You may come to a different conclusion," replied Dr. Huxley, "after you give the subject more thought. But I have nothing to do with that. We three have agreed to say nothing about it. So, good morning."

And the Doctor left. As soon as he had gone, Mr. Brandon said—

"I will settle with you, Vincent, at once, and you can seek employment elsewhere."

"I do not wish to remain with you a moment longer," replied Vincent, "but I tell you, Sir, I am not guilty."

"I don't care to discuss that question with you or any one else," replied Mr. Brandon, coldly. "I can dispense with your services."

"Do not understand me," said Vincent, "as expressing any wish to remain in your employ. I will leave at once, but it is hard to have my integrity impeached

in this way, when I am as innocent of having stolen Dr. Huxley's watch as you are."

"I have nothing to say about it," replied Mr. Brandon, as he looked over a page of his Journal. "Here is the amount due you," he continued, taking some money from his safe, "Is it correct?"

"It is, Sir," replied Vincent, as he put the money in his pocket. "Mr. Brandon," he added, as he turned to leave, while tears again rushed to his eyes, "I can see that you are disposed to believe me guilty, but may God forgive the cruelty with which you are treating me."

Saying this, he turned and left the store, with emotions that can better be imagined than described.

CHAPTER XIV.

EXILE.

“Home, kindred, friends, and country—these
Are ties with which we never part ;
From clime to clime, o'er land and seas,
We bear them with us in our heart :
But, oh ! 'tis hard to feel resign'd,
When these must all be left behind !”

As Vincent was rapidly walking towards his father's humble dwelling, he was thinking what course it would be advisable to pursue. To his sensitive nature and pious disposition, the thought that he had been accused of theft was peculiarly harrowing. He could think of no way to disprove the accusation. True, he had his suspicion, but he could prove nothing. He believed that Leonard Brandon had deposited the watch in his trunk, for the purpose of removing what he conceived to be an obstacle intervening between him and Zenie Huxley. But supposing his suspicion to be correct, how could he possibly prove it ? If he should accuse Leonard of this shameful trick, it would be indignantly denied, and the affair would be made public. Besides, there was something in Leonard's manner that made him feel a little doubtful, and that was his well-feigned indignation in the presence of Dr. Huxley. Leonard appeared to be as much surprised as he was at the accusation. Was Leonard really capable of such meanness ? He disliked to think so. But who else in the village had greater cause to destroy him ? Who would profit by the defamation of his character ? Reason answered, Leonard Brandon. It was evident that he was now in Leonard's power. If he even had the disposition to address Zenie Huxley, a whisper from Leonard would, in an instant, blast his prospects. How could he make

her believe in his innocence, when her own father was convinced of his guilt?"

With such perplexing and distressing thoughts, he arrived at home. He went immediately to his father's study, and opening the door, found his parent engaged in writing.

"Oh, Father! Father!" cried the young man, in anguish of soul, and sank into a chair, unable to speak another word.

"Why, Vincent," exclaimed Mr. Monard, dropping his pen, in amazement, "what is the matter?"

But it was several moments before Vincent could speak. He wept so violently that Mr. Monard knew that something terrible had occurred. But he waited patiently till Vincent's paroxysm had subsided to such an extent that he could enter into an explanation.

"What is it, Vincent?"

"Father, I am ruined."

"Vincent, be quiet, and tell me what it is," said Mr. Monard, with forced calmness.

In a few words he acquainted his parent with the distressing circumstances which have already been fully detailed.

Mr. Monard listened to this recital with the most painful attention. When the young man had completed his sad story, Mr. Monard spoke not a word, but in his heart he said—

"O, Lord, thou knowest I have repented in dust and ashes. Bitter, bitter has been the penance which I have done. Why, then, this misfortune upon my innocent son? Is it not enough yet? Why visit the iniquity of the father upon the child? But I will trust Thee. As Judge of all the earth, Thou wilt do right. O, Lord, sustain my innocent boy in this trial, that his faith fail not."

After this brief internal prayer, he said—

“Vincent have you no idea how the watch found its way to your trunk?”

“I have a suspicion, Father—that is all. I can prove nothing. I believe I will have to abandon my intention of investigating the matter. I cannot investigate, anyhow, without injuring you.”

“How is that?”

“Father, it is useless to say anything more about it, or to name the person I suspect.”

“But, my son, I am willing to be injured, or to make any sacrifice consistent with honor and religion, if it will relieve your character of this grave imputation.”

“Nothing that you can do, Father, will be of any avail. Circumstances are against me, considered from a legal point of view.”

“What will you do, then? Will you take no steps to discover the perpetrator?”

“I know nothing I can do now. I think it will be best for me to leave this country immediately.”

“Leave the country? What for?”

“For the reason that if I remain here I think the affair will be divulged. But if I leave, I am satisfied nothing more will be said about it. An hour ago I had fully determined to investigate the matter, and try to expose the villain; but I now see it is impracticable. There is no help for it; I will have to go. Probably it may be best for me, anyhow. I think I can find a better place than this for the practice of my profession.”

“But what makes you think that the matter will be made public if you remain?”

“I have good reason to think so, Father. The intention of the perpetrator of this villainous scheme is merely to procure my removal from this place. If I stay, I fear he will be tempted to disgrace me. I will

be completely in his power, and he can ruin me whenever he desires. I think, under present circumstances, I had better leave."

"Do you mind telling me who you think is the party trying to ruin you?"

"Father, I have no disposition to keep anything a secret from you; but I do not think it would do any good to tell you whom I suspect. I may possibly be mistaken, and I do not want you to think hard of people who may be innocent. I do not want to do anything that will clog you in your ministerial work. Besides, you have often told me never to accuse people on mere suspicion."

"You are right in that," said Mr. Monard, after a brief pause, during which he seemed to be in a deep and gloomy study. "Always have clear proof on which to ground your accusations. I shall not, therefore, ask you to name the person you suspect. If it is as you say, I think you are right in your determination to leave this place. We will have to let the matter rest in God's hands. Go; and may the Lord bless you. I know you are innocent, and I believe that the Lord in His own good time will make it manifest to the world that you are honest. It is painful to my feelings to part with you under such circumstances. But cheer up, and be brave in the battle, and you will come off conqueror. Trust in God, my son, do right, and I predict for you a career of usefulness, if not happiness. Remember that God brings good out of evil. Your prospects just now are not very flattering, but do not be despondent. Have faith in God, and you will find in Him a 'friend that sticketh closer than a brother.' You know the beautiful history of Joseph; how he was torn from his home and sold into slavery. Jacob thought that all this was against him, and his heart was filled with grief. You,

it seems, are forced to leave your parents and go forth into the world alone. But who knows God's purposes? Who knows that you may not be the temporal salvation of your parents? I feel satisfied that the Lord is not cruel in His dealings with those who love Him."

Vincent listened to such words of advice and encouragement from his father, and promised to be true to his religious faith. When they had talked sufficiently on this subject, Mr. Monard said—

"When do you wish to leave?"

"To-morrow, Father; the sooner, the better."

"Very well. I suppose we had better say nothing to your mother about the cause of your sudden departure. It will only add to her grief."

"As you think best, Father."

"Well, let us see her at once, that she may prepare your clothing."

Accordingly the two left the study, and went immediately to Mrs. Monard's room.

"My dear," said Mr. Monard, with as much cheerfulness as possible, "Vincent has concluded to leave us for awhile, in order to seek his fortune."

"Why should he leave us?" she quickly asked, gazing searchingly into her husband's face, and then at her son. "Vincent," she suddenly exclaimed, in a changed tone, "you have been *crying*. What is the matter?"

"My dear," answered Mr. Monard, "it is best that Vincent should leave us——"

"But what has *happened*?" she interrupted. "I know it is something dreadful. I can see it, from Vincent's looks. Tell me what it is."

"It is no use, Mother, to tell anything, except that I can do nothing here. I think I can find a better location than this."

A shade of disappointment and sorrow passed over her fair face, and Mr. Monard could perceive some slight indication of the kind of storms to which he had been accustomed all his wedded life. But since the death of little Willie she had considerably changed. Often she had been upon the point of breaking out into a violent paroxysm of anger, but the memory of the little one sleeping quietly in the tomb would come stealing into her mind, and she would suddenly check herself and relapse into silence. Mr. Monard could not tell how she would act on the present occasion, when, with womanly instinct, she had discovered that something of a secret character was withheld from her. He, therefore, waited with anxiety for her next words. She turned to him, and said, in a tone of sorrow, and with an air of injured innocence—

“Mr. Monard, why is it that you think me unworthy of confidence? And why have you taught Vincent to think so, too? Why is it that you persist in keeping from me important secrets that concern my own family? Vincent,” she continued, now beginning to exhibit a little of the old spirit, “your father left me one night soon after our marriage, and remained away for six months, and all that time I never heard one word from him. When he returned he refused to tell where he had been, and he has never told from that day to this. And now it seems that you are going to do something of the kind. I don’t understand it. Why not tell me the whole truth? I have the right to know.”

Mr. Monard made no reply. He seemed to think that Vincent might manage his mother better than he could. So he nodded to his son to reply.

“My dear Mother,” answered Vincent, with emotion, “you know that I have confidence in you. It is true, as you have surmised, that something has happened

which makes it necessary that I should leave. If I were to tell you what it is, it would only make you unhappy. Your advice and your sympathy can be of no service. So, my dear Mother, be content with what I tell you. The time will come, I hope, when you shall know all. But, for the present, I beg you to ask me no questions."

When Vincent had said this, Mrs. Monard seemed to be studying whether she should fly into a rage, or sink into frowning and pouting silence, or assume that touching air of subdued, humble, but discontented acquiescence which few tender-hearted men can successfully resist. Judging by what followed she decided in favor of the last mentioned method of manifesting her dissatisfaction with the explanation her son had made.

"So I must submit," she said, with a sad and sorrowful air, "and bear it as best I can. Father and son have both agreed, so it seems, to deceive me——"

"Not to deceive you, Mother," interrupted Vincent, "but to withhold a circumstance which, if known, would only make you uneasy and unhappy. Why can you not believe and trust me, Mother?"

"That is just the way your father talked when he returned, after his absence of six months. But you can do as you please. If you want to keep me in the dark, you can do so. I must say, though, Vincent, I do feel hurt at your want of confidence in me, after I have done so much for you."

The young man could no longer restrain his tears. He loved his mother, and it was painful to hear her accuse him of a lack of confidence.

"I will submit, though, in silence. I dislike so much mystery to surround my family, but I will say no more."

"Father," said Vincent, still weeping, "tell her. I

would rather she should know all than think I am wanting in filial affection."

"Well, my dear, since Vincent desires it, and you insist on knowing, I will tell you; yet I thought it best, for your happiness, that you should be kept in ignorance."

"Don't talk in that style to me," exclaimed Mrs. Monard, somewhat peevishly. "I have the right to know what it is that forces my son to leave his home so suddenly. I know it is trouble of some kind, and I can sympathize with him, if I can do nothing more."

"Tell it, Father, tell it. I can never leave home, with my dear Mother thinking that I was afraid to trust her."

"Very well," replied Mr. Monard; and in a few words he revealed the secret which she desired so much to know. Of course, this was the proper course to pursue. Every wife has the right to an acquaintance with her husband's and family's affairs. But Mr. Monard was acting from principles of kindness, if he was mistaken in his notions, and he really thought it was best that she should be kept in ignorance of the real cause of Vincent's leaving. Mrs. Monard listened with intense painfulness, and became very pale, but did not give away to the outburst that Mr. Monard dreaded. For several moments she uttered not a word; but presently she spoke, in a way that surprised both the hearers.

"Now, my dear Son, what was the use of keeping this secret from me? I can sympathize with you, and I can let you go more cheerfully, if there is any necessity of your going. I think, though, you ought to expose the villain before you do go."

"How can I, Mother, when I do not know who he is?"

"If you don't know, I can tell you. I saw into that at once. It was Leonard Brandon."

"I cannot prove it, Mother."

"I tell you, the black-hearted villain put that watch in your trunk—the low-down dog that he is, and reported to Dr. Huxley that you had stolen it."

"But why should Leonard do such a disgraceful thing?" asked Mr. Monard.

"I am surprised at your dullness of comprehension," said the lady, with a toss of her head. "He's jealous of Vincent—that's why he did it. It is very easy to see into that—the mean puppy."

"I thought," said Mr. Monard, "that Leonard had too much moral principle and too high a sense of honor to be guilty of such shameful trickery as that."

"That is just like you, Eldon. You think that all people are saints who make any pretensions to be. You take their word for it. Old Brandon and his son are both hypocrites. But I'll get even with them, for I am going to tell Dr. Huxley——"

"Now, come, Mother," said Vincent, "do not give me reason to regret that I have reposed confidence in you. By rashness you may get me into a serious difficulty."

"Are you going to leave the country, and let Dr. Huxley and Zenie believe that you are a common thief?" asked Mrs. Monard, her eyes flashing indignation.

"Miss Zenie," replied Vincent, turning his head, "knows nothing about it, and even if she did, it would make no difference. But, Mother, you must keep silent on this subject. You will only make matters worse. I hope to return to this village at some future time, and possibly I will be in a better condition to explain the matter to Dr. Huxley. If I do not succeed, however, in my profession, and if the Doctor never does believe

my statement, a day will come when the truth will be known to all the universe. Father and I have discussed the subject, and we have come to the conclusion that I had better leave. So, you must promise to keep my secret."

"If you think that you ought to go off in this way, Vincent, I promise you that I will keep silent. I can keep a secret."

With a cheerfulness which, however, was assumed, she went to work in order to prepare the young man's wearing apparel. It deeply grieved her to think of the parting, but she made a great effort to conceal her emotions.

Late that evening Vincent saw Dr. Huxley ride past his father's house, out of town. The thought occurred to him that the Doctor would be gone probably for some hours, and something in his heart whispered that he might now call with safety, take leave of Zenie, and explain as well as he could the cause of his sudden departure. He did not deem it prudent to call while the Doctor was at home. The consequences might have been of an unpleasant character if the eccentric physician had again encountered in his own house a young man whom he was now disposed to regard as an imperfect specimen produced by his Goddess of Evolution. But believing that he would be absent a sufficient length of time for the accomplishment of his purpose, Vincent forthwith walked to his residence, and sent in his card to Miss Zenie. She was considerably surprised, but at once made her way to the parlor. One glance at his face convinced her that the young man was in deep trouble. But the thought flashed through her mind that he might have called to make the long-expected declaration.

"I have come rather uncereemoniously, Miss Zenie,"

he said, when they were seated, "but I have good reason for it. I can stay only a few moments. I have called merely to bid you adieu."

"What do you mean, Mr. Monard?" she asked, in surprise. "You talk as if you never expected to return."

"I do not know that I ever shall, Miss Zenie. I leave in the morning."

If Vincent's eyes did not deceive him, he was certain that the blood receded from the young lady's face, and left her pale and embarrassed. But in a moment she recovered her self-possession, and tried to appear even indifferent.

"This is a rather sudden movement, is it not?" she asked.

"Rather," he answered, "but have you heard nothing as to the cause of my going?" he inquired, in a way that proved he dreaded to hear her reply.

"Not a word; but I hope it is nothing serious, Mr. Monard."

"After I am gone, Miss Zenie," he said, with a painfulness difficult to conceal, "you may hear something that may tend to prejudice you against me—as a friend I mean. I do not want to lose your friendship, and your respect; so I have one favor to ask of you."

"What is that?"

"I ask that whatever you may hear derogatory to my character, you will not believe it without clear proof. I will be absent, and, of course, cannot defend myself. You may hear something that seems very plausible, but I think you will discover that there is room for doubt, and I ask you, as a friend, to give me the benefit of the doubt."

"What you are saying, Mr. Monard," replied Zenie, in surprise, "is a perfect enigma to me."

"Certainly it is, Miss Zenie."

"I *hate* mystery," she said, with emphasis.

"I am not trying to be mysterious, Miss Zenie, but I cannot now speak more plainly. I regret the necessity that compels me to talk in riddles. But never mind. I have a very good reason for going," continued Vincent, trying to assume an air of cheerfulness. "I think I can find a better place than this for a pettifogger. I fear I have too much ambition; it makes me dissatisfied with so small a village as this. The fires of this unwarrantable ambition have suddenly burst forth, and I am burning with the desire to make the world hear from me. I want to see my name in great, blazing letters on the scroll of fame. If you are ever passing through a certain city which I have in my imagination, you will see at the door of an office, *Vincent Monard, Attorney-at-Law*. I do not believe," continued the young man, laughing at the pleasantry in which he was endeavoring to indulge, "I can ever muster up sufficient courage to hang out such an imposing sign as that in this village. So you see the necessity for my departure. I regret, beyond all expression, to leave my friends. But, Miss Zenie, you made me relate one of my day-dreams not long since, and I am going, Don Quixote-like, to endeavor to make it a reality."

"Yes," replied Zenie, laughing, "I remember you had a lady in it. I suppose you are going in search of your Dulcinea del Toboso, are you?"

"That part of the dream was toward the last, Miss Zenie. My Dulcinea may have to wait a long time. I must first hunt up clients with honest cases which I can defend with a clear conscience. I must first try to make the world feel that there is such an important person in it as my humble self. I tell you, Miss Zenie, I am going

to work in earnest, and I will be heard from. Do not laugh at me."

"I am not thinking of laughing at you, Mr. Monard. I believe you will not fail, and you have my best wishes for your success. I agree with you, that this little town is too small for the theatre of your ambition. But really do you think," said Zenie, with some timidity of manner, which Vincent noticed, "that you will never return?"

"I do not know, Miss Zenie," replied Vincent, slowly and sorrowfully, "that I will ever come back. There is no particular reason why I should return."

"I should think you would want to see your parents, if no one else."

"Yes, certainly ; not only parents, but other kind friends. I do not say that I will never return. That must depend entirely upon circumstances. It causes me great pain to think of leaving them. And, Miss Zenie," he continued, in a way that caused the young lady to blush, "I do not know that I will ever meet with another young lady whose society I can enjoy as I have yours. Most of the young ladies are very uninteresting to me, as they will talk nothing but nonsense. But you are quite different ; and I can never forget the pleasant hours which it has been my privilege to spend in your society. No matter what may be my fortunes or misfortunes, these happy hours will ever rise up, amid the wastes of memory, as a green oasis in a burning desert. I hope, when I am gone, you will sometimes think of me as a friend who, however humble may be his lot, can appreciate those high and noble qualities that elevate you so much above others of your sex."

He paused. "Is this all ?" thought Zenie. "Why does he speak so coldly ? Have I not already betrayed the feelings of my heart ? But I can be as indifferent as he."

"I place a high estimate upon your compliment, Mr. Monard, though there may be slight grounds for it, and I make bold to tell you that I will not soon forget those hours of my life which your visits have rendered both bright and useful."

And thus talked these young people. Zenie had thought that Vincent entertained a regard for her warmer than ordinary friendship; but now she was indeed perplexed. The young man did not, by even an innuendo, allude to the burning love which he had to make an effort to conceal. He thought it would be useless to reveal it. Even if Zenie was not indifferent toward him, a yawning chasm, now intervened between them. Certainly, he thought, Dr. Huxley would not permit his only daughter to wed with one whom he believed to be a thief. He came to the conclusion that it would be sinful in him to arouse, if he could, sentiments in her heart which might be productive only of sorrow and disappointment. Possibly she might be the affianced of Leonard Brandon, and if she were, it would be in vain—it would be foolish in him to try to interfere. Yet it was difficult for him to believe that Leonard could win the affections of such an intelligent and accomplished young lady as Zenie was. It was evident to him that their tastes and pursuits and aspirations were perfectly incongruous. At any rate, wisely or unwisely, he determined that he would be profoundly silent in regard to the state of his own heart. So he took his leave of Zenie that evening without having made the declaration which, it must be told, she was now anxious to hear. If she was not greatly deceived, he was deeply enamored, but why he so obstinately persisted in keeping silent was the question which she could not answer. Zenie felt vexed at the young man, and she determined that she would manifest as much *nonchalance* as he did. Self-respect demanded

this. He betrayed no emotion at parting, except such as could be attributed to friendship. Vincent repeated a few lines of beautiful poetry ; they shook hands, and in a moment he was gone ; and Zenie was left standing in the parlor, in great perplexity, wondering at herself. "I will never see him more," she thought, biting her lip, "but why do I care?"

* * * * *

The supposition that Zenie was destitute of all curiosity would be a great mistake. While she had too much politeness and modesty to cross-question Vincent in regard to the chief cause of his sudden and somewhat mysterious departure, at which he had vaguely hinted, yet she resolved to ask her father. A good opportunity presented itself the next morning, immediately after breakfast. The Doctor was quietly enjoying his pipe, and Zenie at once approached him, and as carelessly as possible, said—

"Father, what is it that makes Vincent Maud leave town so suddenly?"

"I did not know he was going to leave," replied the Doctor, in a tone which indicated that he thought it a matter in which he had no interest.

"Yes, Sir; he is going, and says that he does not know that he will ever return."

"When did you see him?"

"After noon, yesterday."

"He came here, did he?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Will you see him again?" asked the Doctor, giving her such a searching look that the blood rushed to her face.

"I suppose not, if he is going away never to return."

"Then what is the use of asking any more questions about him?"

"But, Father, what has the young man done, that he must leave in such haste?"

"Why are you so deeply interested in his welfare?" asked the physician.

"I do not think I am so *deeply* interested, Father. But he intimated that I might possibly hear something to his disparagement. Certainly I have curiosity enough to ask a few civil questions about an acquaintance."

The Doctor did not think this an unreasonable curiosity, and said—

"Did he tell you nothing as to the cause of his leaving?"

"He said that he thought he could find a better place to practice his profession. But there seemed to be something which he desired to keep back."

"The young man is right about that," said the Doctor, carelessly. "This is a poor place to start in his profession."

"But why is it that he will never return?"

"What is that to you? Suppose he never does return, why do you care?"

"It does not matter to me particularly. But why should I not ask about an acquaintance—a friend, when there seems to be a mystery in regard to his movements? It is but natural I should ask."

"I suppose," said the Doctor, thinking Zenie had assigned a very good reason for the interest she manifested, "that he wants to find a better place than this, and I do not blame him. There is no mystery in that."

"No, Sir, not in that; but he hinted that I might hear something derogatory to his character after he was gone."

"If he did he was the proper person to explain. I am no police detective, Zenie, and it is not my business to ferret out the mischief that people do, nor to unravel

mysteries pertaining to their movements. I have made no inquiry in regard to Vincent Monard's plans. If, therefore, you are solicitous to know his reasons for leaving, you will have to ascertain from some one else. But it seems to me that you are manifesting unusual interest in the young man."

"I do not think I am, Father," said Zenie, with a laugh. "You know that he has often called, and I have found him an entertaining young man. I make no more inquiries concerning him than I would in regard to any other friend."

"You are not aware," said the Doctor, bluntly, "how you have betrayed yourself. I would advise you to dismiss this subject from your mind. If Vincent Monard never does return, what have you to do with it?"

"Nothing, Father."

"Let us drop the subject, then."

Zenie was not satisfied with the Doctor's answers, but she saw that it would not be advisable to press the matter, as she would lead her father to believe that she was indeed manifesting an interest in the young man which she could perceive would not meet with his approval. But she did not abandon the idea of seeking information in order to gratify her curiosity, if not to relieve anxiety.

While Zenie was holding this conversation with her father, Vincent was taking leave of his parents. His mother tried to be cheerful, but when he turned, to imprint the filial kiss, it was impossible longer to control her feelings. She threw her arms around his neck and burst into a flood of tears, and in a choking voice, as she pressed him to her breast, said—

"O, Vincent, Vincent! it is so hard to see you leave. It seems as if I can't stand it."

"Cheer up, dear Mother," he answered, making a great effort to be calm. "It is best that I should go. I hope to return before the lapse of many years, under very different circumstances. I am going to be studious and sober, and lead a Christian life, and I believe the Lord will bless me in my honest efforts to rise in the world. Try to be cheerful. I will write to you every week."

She released him, and Vincent said—

"Your blessing once more, Father."

He knelt down, and Mr. Monard, placing both his hands on his son's head, prayed God to sustain him and prosper him. Then he rose from his knees, and turned away from the parental roof, with an aching heart. As he was passing by Mr. Brandon's store, he concluded that he would stop in and bid adieu to that gentleman and his son. Neither of them had ever given him any great reason to love them, but Mr. Brandon was a member of his father's church, and he deemed it best to be as friendly as possible, on that account. Leonard seemed to be affected with sincere sorrow at the parting, and said—

"Vincent, I cannot bring myself to believe you are guilty of that crime. There is something strange about it, and I was in hopes you would investigate, and get at the truth."

"I am as innocent as an angel, Leonard, but unfortunately I cannot get the slightest clue at present. I will have to leave the matter in the hands of a just God, who will not suffer the guilty to escape. I see no way to discover the villain who put that watch in my trunk. But the Lord knows who he is, and I have faith to think will yet bring him to justice."

"I hope so," replied Leonard, with a warmth that surprised and perplexed Vincent. "But whether you

are guilty or not, so far as I am concerned, you may rely on it that the affair will be kept secret."

"I am much obliged to you, Leonard. Of course, it can do no good to tell it. I want it kept secret, for my Father's sake, leaving selfish considerations out of the question."

Vincent offered his hand to Mr. Brandon, who bade him farewell with cold politeness. Leonard, however, gave him a warm grasp. Vincent immediately set out on foot, with his clothing in a satchel, which was on his back, suspended from a stick across his shoulders. He was forced to this method of traveling by the meagre contents of his purse. With a heavy heart he turned his back upon the little village which contained persons so dear to him. At the top of a high hill, which commanded a view of the entire town, he stopped for a few moments, and gazed earnestly at some of the dwellings, at least two, and the tears rushed to his eyes. But presently, hastily brushing them away, he turned, and began to trudge upon his lonely and weary journey.

CHAPTER XV.

EVOLUTION.

“From nature’s constant or eccentric laws
The thoughtful soul this general inference draws,
That an effect must presuppose a cause.”

Several weeks elapsed before anything occurred, in the unfolding of our story, worthy of narration. As it would not be very interesting to enter into minute details of family histories, it is thought necessary to record only those prominent events that disturb the monotonous flow of every-day affairs. It may not be amiss to state that for a few days there was some little wonder in the village at the sudden departure of Vincent Monard. There were various surmises, but at last the general conclusion became fixed that the young man had gone to seek his fortunes in some place that afforded better opportunities; and thus the veil was drawn over one event of his life. The three outside of his own family who were acquainted with the primary cause of his rather unceremonious exit were true to their promise of silence in regard to it. Leonard was the only one of the trio who could have any possible interest in revealing the scandal, but as his rival could no longer interfere with his matrimonial designs upon Zenie Huxley, he faithfully kept his lips sealed, and not even a vague innuendo escaped him. Indeed, he tried to ignore the very existence of Vincent, especially in the presence of Zenie, never alluding to him in any way. Zenie questioned him the first time he called after the young man had left, but he replied that Vincent went off in search of a locality where he might practice his profession. So, there the matter had to rest, so far as Zenie was concerned. While she was not satisfied with

what she had ascertained, she could learn nothing more.

The sickness of Dr. Huxley's little boy again brought him and Mr. Monard in contact. It has already been stated that Mr. Monard seemed to be in his proper element when visiting the sick; and as he was a most excellent nurse, he was often in demand. He had spent so much time around sick beds, that he had acquired a considerable amount of medical knowledge. In cases of emergency, if the services of a regular practitioner could not be secured, he could act in the capacity of physician himself. The first time he called at Dr. Huxley's to see the sick boy, his experience enabled him to perceive that a nurse would be needed. Accordingly he remarked—

"I see, Doctor, that you will need help in this case, and I offer you my services. I will cheerfully come to your relief. To say nothing of duty, I owe you a debt, which I feel I can never pay."

"Not a cent," replied the physician, in his blunt way, "not a cent, Sir, and you will oblige me by never alluding to it again; but as I know you to be no ordinary nurse, I will have to accept your kind offer. A good nurse, Mr. Monard, should have some judgment of his own, especially when the physician's prescriptions and directions depend upon conditional changes in the patient. Anybody with a thimbleful of common sense can administer medicine, when it is dosed; but to give it upon certain conditions requires considerable knowledge of symptomatology, such as few people have. I am glad to know that you can be trusted, even in difficult cases. As I will have to be absent frequently, I will take advantage of your occasional services."

"Gladly will I do what I can, Doctor."

Accordingly the preacher was installed as nurse.

After what has been observed in regard to Mr. Monard's qualifications for this office, it needs scarcely be added that the Doctor found his services invaluable. He watched by the bedside, while the physician went off to attend to other patients. By this arrangement his regular practice did not suffer detriment. To this it may be added, that the Doctor and his family became very much attached to Mr. Monard, on account of his kindness, cheerfulness, and his very agreeable and instructive conversation. Zenie, especially, seemed to be delighted in his company, and would talk with him by the hour. One day she ventured to ask him where Vincent was.

"He is in Louisville, Ky.," replied Mr. Monard, in a tone of sadness which she noticed. Seeing, however, that this subject might be embarrassing to both, she at once changed it.

When the crisis was passed with the little patient, and he began slowly to improve, the Doctor could no longer refrain from introducing his favorite hobby. One evening, after supper, when the little boy was doing well, and the Doctor was in excellent humor, he said—

"I have tried several times, Mr. Monard, to draw you out on Evolution, but it would seem that you are afraid to approach it."

"Father," said Zenie, who, together with her mother, was in the room, "I think you are rather discourteous to Mr. Monard."

"Not at all," quickly answered the preacher. "I understand the Doctor."

"Of course, you do," said Dr. Huxley. "But have you ever made Evolution a study?"

"Why, yes, Doctor; I could hardly avoid it, and I confess I have given considerable attention and thought to it."

"Well, what do you think about it? Do you not find it a great foe to your religious creed and faith?"

"Not at all, Doctor, with my views of the theory."

"Do you not find that it is in direct antagonism with your Bible?"

"I suppose, Sir, that some phases of the theory, as presented by some scientists, are in conflict with revealed truth; but I hold that any theory which contradicts God's Word must be false. I have not a single doubt as to the divine authenticity of the Bible, and I cannot give up that book for some of the uncertain teachings of science, falsely so-called."

"Uncertain!" exclaimed the Doctor. "How can you say that, Sir, when you know that science is founded on indisputable facts. It is the Bible which is uncertain. Science is built on a foundation more solid and firm than the rock of Gibraltar."

"Well, Doctor," said Mr. Monard, pleasantly, seeing that he would be almost compelled to accept the physician's challenge, "I see that we are in for it. If we must have a discussion, let us begin right. I would like to know precisely what you believe, before I differ from you. It is useless to dispute till we understand each other. Will you be so kind as to inform me to what sort of evolution you hold?"

"Certainly," quickly responded the physician. "Nothing affords me more pleasure than to state my belief, in regard to the correctness of which I have as full confidence as you have in yours. The kind of evolution to which I hold, I do not hesitate to say, is of a materialistic character. My opinion is that the present order of things has been evolved from chaos. I do not believe at all in what is called a *creational* evolution. In different language, I do not believe that such a God as the one whose existence you preach ever created things, or even

directed the process. They are all the offspring of simple Evolution."

"Is Evolution an intelligence?" asked the minister. "You speak of it as if you had the idea of a personal being in your mind."

"No, Sir; Evolution is not an intelligence. True, I speak of it as a goddess, and apply to it the terms 'she' and 'her,' but you must understand that that is merely a poetic fancy. I have no idea of any personal being in my mind. Evolution is the combination of natural laws that have coöperated to bring about the present state of things, and if I refer to the process as under the control of any being, you will understand that I am employing a mere figure of speech."

"I think I understand you clearly, Doctor. When you speak of Evolution as producing results, you have reference to natural laws."

"You are correct, Sir."

"Very well," replied Mr. Monard, "accepting your definition, will you now be so kind as to inform me how Evolution produced the first animal?"

"Yes, Sir," replied the Doctor, with emphasis. "The first animal was nothing but an *oyster*. His parent was Evolution."

"Your answer seems to me rather vague, Doctor. For even in such a low form of organized animal life as the oyster, there is palpable evidence of design. The oyster must have been created by *something*, as he could not have created himself. What a poet has said in reference to man will apply to any other animal—

" 'Nature

Never did bring forth a man without a man;
Nor could the first man, being but
The passive subject, not the active mover,
Be the maker of himself; so of necessity
There must be a superior pow'r to nature.' "

You say that Evolution is the parent of the oyster, and you thus admit that the oyster did not create himself. *Something* did it, then, and that something, whatever you may call it, evidently had an idea, a purpose. If so, purpose necessarily implies *thought* in the designer."

"But I can deny," quickly said the Doctor, "that there was any such purpose as you are hinting at. I can very easily perceive the drift of your reasoning."

"Well, Doctor, if there was no purpose, then Evolution *accidentally* created the oyster. You are bound to admit one or the other."

"But I am not bound to do any such thing," exclaimed the physician, with characteristic bluntness. "What binds me?"

"Why, of course, Doctor, you will not just ignore all reason. I think you are bound by the laws of logic and sound philosophy. You say that science is based on facts. If so, surely facts can stand the test of reason."

"You cannot expect me," replied the Doctor, "to explain every step in the process of development. There are some things about it, that surpass human comprehension. I do not propose to speculate outside of facts."

"You just simply assume the *fact*, as you call it, that Evolution was the oyster's parent."

"I assume it," quickly answered the Doctor, "on the very same principle that you assume a personal God created him. There is as much proof in the one case as the other."

"I beg leave to differ from you there, Doctor. But never mind that at present. You start with the fact that the oyster somehow became a living animal, through the incomprehensible process of evolution. Your theory is, so I understand, that this oyster developed into some

other being, of a higher order, and so on, through successive stages, till the animal man is the result."

"That is it, exactly," replied the Doctor.

"I am glad we understand each other so well," answered Mr. Monard. "But it occurs to me that there are some objections to your theory which I would be under obligations if you would remove."

"State them, Sir."

"I would like you," answered Mr. Monard, "to tell me why your thoughtless Goddess of Evolution does not *repeat* the original process? I mean why does not the oyster at this day develop into some other animal. Millions of them are captured every year; yet they all are precisely alike, presenting the very same physical conformation. There is no difference whatever, except in size. Why is it that not one is ever found in any stage of development, between the original oyster and the animal into which you say he is evolved? Why is it that there is such a chasm between the oyster and the next genus into which it might be supposed he has been transformed? Do you suppose the oyster is *suddenly*, or *was* suddenly metamorphosed into some other better organized animal?"

"No, Sir I think the process was gradual. As to a repetition of the process, there was no necessity, because the oyster could produce his own species."

"But, Doctor, is Evolution still producing oysters?"

"I should think she is not, Sir, for the reason that there is no necessity for it."

"Can you tell me," asked Mr. Monard, "what was there to terminate the process, if Evolution has not the faculty of thought?"

"Why should the process be kept up after the animal has been formed, and fairly started in his career?"

"Certainly there is no *necessity* for a repetition; but

that is not the question, Doctor. It is this: how could Evolution put a stop to the process after it had once begun? What was there to suggest the thought that the oyster could propagate his own kind? Or what was to suggest the idea of forming him so that he could do it?"

"O, pshaw! Mr. Monard, your questions are not at all relevant to the main points at issue. We take facts just as they exist. Science has nothing to do with such questions as 'who,' or 'what' suggested this or that. It deals simply with facts."

"Doctor," said Mr. Monard, with a smile, "you seem to me to stagger at the very threshold. Good logic will not suffer you, when a serious difficulty presents itself, to take shelter behind Agnosticism."

"It is precisely what you and all other Christians do. Because, if I ask you what is the origin, you say you do not know. So if you ask me what is the origin of Evolution, on your own principle, I answer that I do not know. When we reach a certain point, all of us must take refuge in Agnosticism. You say that God is eternal; I say that Evolution is eternal; and one is just as incomprehensible as the other. So, Mr. Monard," with a triumphant air, "you must not require me to remove objections which apply with as much force to your doctrine as they do to mine—you see, eh?"

"I am not trying to do that," replied Mr. Monard, shaking his head. "Most certainly, all that we can say as to the origin of God is that He is eternal. I have not asked you to explain how Evolution can be eternal. But I will try to make myself clearly understood. Here is the law of gravitation; has it not operated in just one way, without any change in its mode of action?"

"Yes, Sir."

"It stands to reason to suppose that it has," replied Mr. Monard. "Now, any law of Evolution ought to act with the same invariableness. Because, according to your definition of Evolution, there is nothing of which I can conceive to change its action. So, when Evolution formed one oyster, '*she*' ought to have formed another and another, and the process ought to be going on to this day. But such is not the case. All the scientists of earth, with all their skill and wisdom, cannot make a single oyster. They can take a piece of mud, and give it the proper shape, and bring the forces of Evolution to operate upon it, but they can never infuse life into it. Now, for the life of me, I cannot conceive why Evolution should have stopped with making one or two oysters, or even a million. You are bound to admit, Doctor, that Evolution has changed its way of operating."

"Certainly; she has been changing for ages, and becoming better."

"It occurs to me that you involve yourself in contradictions, Doctor. The law of gravitation never changes, but Evolution does change, and that, too, without intelligence, thought or design. You may understand it, Sir, but I confess I cannot. But you have just employed a word that suggests another difficulty to my mind. You say that Evolution is becoming better; by which I suppose you mean that '*her*' works are arriving at a greater degree of perfection."

"That is my meaning."

"Well, in all this improvement no one can fail to perceive that there is a wonderful adaptation of means to ends."

"Beautiful," replied the Doctor.

"To say nothing," continued the preacher, "of the

fact that this necessitates an intelligent designer, how will you account for it that Evolution has left 'her' work so imperfect so incomplete?

"Evolution is aiming at perfection, and she will reach it after awhile."

"But I cannot see why 'she' has made such egregious blunders in some respects, and devised such fine arrangements in other respects. When we turn our eyes in all directions there are innumerable indications of benevolence. But if Evolution is such a good, kind Goddess, why has she marred her work with so many blemishes?"

"What kind of blemishes?" asked the Doctor.

"It would seem, Doctor, that some being, or *something* designed that man should be happy."

"Evolution," answered the Doctor, "is striving for his happiness more and more."

"Then, why did she not make greater conveniences for him?"

"What do you mean, Mr. Monard?"

"To illustrate, Doctor; in some countries men, in the pursuit of their vocations, have to travel on stilts, to keep out of the water. Why could not Evolution have developed those stilts into a boat?"

"Why, what are you talking about, Mr. Monard? A boat is a product of art."

"But that is the very question, Doctor. Why should it have been a work of art? Surely, if Evolution could change an oyster into a man, she ought to be able to convert a pair of stilts into even a steamboat, for it is not half as complicated a piece of machinery as the human frame. At any rate, it seems to me that she might have caused trees to become wagons and other vehicles, with their wheels and other appliances ready for use."

"You certainly are not serious, Mr. Monard."

"I never was more so in my life, Doctor. Because, if Evolution is striving for the happiness of her intelligent creatures, she could just as easily have caused a bush to develop into a buggy, as to cause an oyster to develop into a man. Why could she not have caused a house to grow for him, with chairs, beds, tables, and other conveniences?"

"Why, this is foolishness, Mr. Monard," said the Doctor, manifesting some degree of disgust at this sort of reasoning.

"I cannot see in what the foolishness consists, Doctor. So, there is another difficulty which you cannot overcome; that is, Evolution shows great wisdom in some things, and in others, an unaccountable lack of it. But, Doctor, that is not all."

"Go on, Sir. I will listen patiently to your statement of puerile objections.

"They appear to me," said the preacher, mildly, "to be insuperable objections to your theory, instead of being puerile. I notice that you do not pretend to remove them."

"Because they are not worth it, Sir," said the Doctor, with great bluntness.

"Very well, Doctor; but with your permission I will ask you another question."

"Proceed, Sir."

"Tell me, then, if Evolution is so kind, and considerate, and benevolent, why is it that man has to labor so hard to live?"

"Why, that is very easily explained," replied the Doctor. "Among all things there is a struggle for existence. On the principle of natural selection, Evolution chooses those which are fittest to survive. That is a well established law."

"You use the phrase, 'fittest to survive,' Doctor; be kind enough to explain what you mean by it."

"I mean 'fittest' for the purpose of Evolution. The strongest overcome the weakest in the struggle for life; and, as a natural consequence, they survive. That is plain."

"Yes, Sir; but, Doctor, you have said that Evolution has worked up through all grades of animals to produce man. It seems that the world was formed for him. Now, it is plain to my mind that the things 'fittest' for his comfort and happiness do not survive, on the principle of natural selection. They require the most diligent cultivation and the most constant care and vigilance to prevent their utter destruction. I fail to see that a noxious weed is more fit for man than a stalk of corn, or a fruit tree."

"Why," said the Doctor, "the noxious weed is the stronger of the two; therefore, it survives."

"No doubt, it is the stronger," replied Mr. Monard, "but the question is, why should it be so, when it is less useful to man? If Evolution is so mindful of the welfare of her intelligent children, why should she not endow those vegetables with the greater strength that are necessary to man? It seems that those very things which are indispensable to his existence have to be obtained by the severest kind of labor. Why is this, Doctor?"

"Plain enough, Mr. Monard, plain enough. Evolution has given man the strength, instead of giving it to the vegetables which he needs. They survive by his strength and care."

"I cannot understand, though, why those vegetables which are of little use should be so much stronger than those that are essential to human existence. It appears to me that in this instance Evolution has made a poor selection."

"I cannot say that I understand this, either," replied

the Doctor. "All that I can affirm is, that it is in accordance with the laws of Evolution to work up from the lowest to the highest forms. But what her reason was for giving some weeds greater strength than the stalk of corn, I do not know."

"Then," said Mr. Monard, "there is another objection which you confess you cannot remove. But, Doctor, this law of the 'survival of the fittest' does not hold good when you apply it to the human race. According to your theory, the strongest ought to survive; but we find that this is not the case. It is just as common for well-organized human beings to be stricken down in the battle, as for the weakest. You have seen healthy, strong men yield to death, and you have seen the puniest live to a good old age."

"They were only apparently the stronger; not so in reality," said the Doctor. "It is often the case that a constitution, though naturally marred by disease, is actually stronger than another which appears to us to be deficient in nothing."

"But is not that just an assumption, Doctor? You assume that the weaker being dies in every instance. If we can trust our senses and powers of discernment at all, this is not true. Your theory of Evolution is not true when applied to other animals besides man, for some of the strongest animals, according to history, have entirely disappeared; they have become totally extinct."

"They were not fit for the ultimate purpose of Evolution," quickly responded the Doctor. "That is the reason; plain enough, Sir."

"What is the purpose of Evolution, Doctor?"

"I can very easily answer that question, Mr. Monard, and I confess my surprise that you should have asked it. The purpose of Evolution is to effect, in the course of time, the highest possible results."

"And to do this," replied the minister, "you say that 'she' causes the strongest and fittest to survive. This is the general law. But, unfortunately for your theory, we have too many instances in which the law does not hold good. How will you account for these departures from the law, when you admit that Evolution is not an intelligence, has no thought, no judgment, and therefore cannot study adaptations of means to end?"

"I have already told you, Mr. Monard, that there are many things in the Evolution process which we do not understand. There are just as many things in your religion that you do not understand."

"While this may be true, to a certain extent," replied Mr. Monard, "yet the Bible does rationally explain some of the most formidable and perplexing difficulties for which the advocates of Evolution cannot account."

"Well, Sir," interrupted the Doctor, "if your God is so kind and benevolent, why did he create those hurtful weeds of which you spoke?"

"The Bible makes that point very clear, Doctor. The earth was cursed on account of man's transgression. When he fell from his high and holy state, the Lord said to him, 'in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread.' It was also said that the earth should not put forth her strength, even when cultivated. Man's lot in this world is to toil. The hurtful weeds come forth as an effect of the curse. So, upon this point, the explanation given by the Bible is in exact harmony with the facts that come under our observation. The objections which apply with so much force to the doctrine of Evolution at once disappear in the face of the Biblical explanation. On the hypothesis that a personal, intelligent God is concerned in the processes of what we call nature, we can understand them. But from the Evolution standpoint, we have to take refuge in the blindest

Agnosticism. But I am not quite done with the theory yet, Doctor. With your consent, I will call your attention to another objection or two."

"Go on," replied the Doctor. "I am willing to hear all that can be urged against plain facts. If a man is determined, Mr. Monard, to argue against stubborn facts, there is no help for it. So, go on, Sir."

"You are so wrapped up in your theory, Doctor," said Mr. Monard, pleasantly, "that you may not see the objections which another person can, who is opposed to your theory. *Ab hos'e doceri licet*, you know. It may be of some advantage to you to reflect upon the difficulties of your system. Of course, you ought to examine your theory from every possible point of view."

"Certainly," answered the Doctor, "my theory does not shrink from the most rigid investigation. Evolution can stand the test, Sir. So, proceed with your objections."

"I would like to ask you, then, since Evolution is a natural process, and one kind of animals is evolved from another kind, why is it that an animal which has become extinct, like the dodo and many others, cannot be reproduced?"

"Because the conditions necessary to their reproduction do not exist."

"But, Doctor, it has not been a great while since the dodo disappeared, and if it had not been destroyed by man, it would doubtless be alive to-day. So the conditions necessary to its mode of life do exist. Your explanation, therefore, is not at all satisfactory; and if you can assign no better reason than that, you will have to admit that you cannot tell why the bird cannot be reproduced."

"Even if I cannot tell," replied the Doctor, "my

ignorance does not destroy the laws of Evolution. I cannot explain everything."

"Certainly not. But you say that science, which proposes to explain the origin and *rationale* of things, is based on solid facts. Now it seems to me that these facts, according to your own admissions, are rather doubtful. Many of them, you must concede, are assumptions, rendered necessary, perhaps, by logical deduction."

"That is a good way to reason," said the Doctor.

"Yes, Sir; but assumptions which cannot be clearly and fully established must not be made to militate against the Bible. What you call a fact, must be an actual, indisputable fact, in the proper sense of the word, before we can allow it to invalidate the truth of Divine history. But, if you please, I should like to suggest another difficulty, which occurs to me as an objection against your theory."

"Let us have it," answered the Doctor. "I am patiently listening to everything you can say in opposition to the theory."

"Thank you," replied Mr. Monard. "I want nothing but the truth, and if your view of evolution is true, I am willing to accept it. But I cannot do so till my objections are shown to be without foundation. You will not blame me for that, I hope."

"Certainly not, Mr. Monard. You are entitled to all the explanations science can give; but you must not require too much."

"I shall try to be reasonable, Doctor. I would like to ask if you think that all animals have a common origin?"

"Undoubtedly; all have come from the oyster. I think I have told you that."

"Very well. When we look into the animal kingdom we find different genera and species. True, it may

be difficult to draw an exact line between them ; but, nevertheless, between the genera the lines can be sharply drawn. Indeed, they are well defined. Here is the horse kind and here is the bird kind. They certainly belong to different races. The same may be said of fishes and any land animal. Now these genera have the power to continue their own kind ; but it is impossible, at the present time, by any law of Evolution, to convert an animal of one genus into an animal of a different genus."

"No ; we cannot do that, but we can produce varieties that never before existed."

"That is true, to a limited extent, but when you reach that extent, the process comes to an end."

"Well, what do you make of that?"

"Why, I do not see what there is in Evolution to end the process, and I do not understand why Evolution could *once* change an oyster into a fox, but cannot do it now."

"Is your own theory free from all these objections?" asked the Doctor.

"It is certainly free from the last one I have mentioned. We Christians believe that God created all things. With His own hand, so to speak, He formed the first animals of each distinctive genus. His law is that each race shall perpetuate itself. There may be species and varieties without number, but Evolution cannot cross the line established by Divine Wisdom, that separates one genus from another. By no sort of process, natural or artificial, can the fish kind or the bird kind ever be transformed into the horse kind, and *vice versa*."

"I grant that," replied the Doctor, "but could not the laws of Evolution have established the lines between different genera just as easily as a personal deity."

“Why, of course; if Evolution possesses thought, intelligence, and wisdom; but that you deny, and you deny with consistency, too. Because if Evolution is endowed with such attributes, it comes within our definition of God.”

“But I am not prepared to admit the existence of the Christian’s God, because I have no proof of it.”

“If you are not, Doctor, then you have to admit something which is still harder to believe. You have to admit that a blind force wrought out the present beautiful order and arrangement of the material universe. It is utterly impossible to account for the phenomena, both physical and mental, that come under our observation, by the hypothesis that a mass of blind and thoughtless molecules acted together according to mechanical laws. There is no proof whatever that the original atom possessed life, or that the molecule formed of atoms was animated by the living principle. How did life originate when the first plant—and there must have been a first one—revealed itself? Was there sensation in the first molecule? If not, what produced it when the first animal became conscious of pleasure or of pain? Was there mind in the first molecule—that is, the power to perceive objects external to itself? Was there even consciousness in the first monad? Was there the power of comparing, analyzing and noting resemblances and differences? Had molecules the power of reasoning, of deducing the invisible from the visible, and of the future from the past? Were there emotions in the primordial forms, like a hope of continued existence, or a fear of death? Is it possible to demonstrate that mind can be produced from matter, that mechanical action can beget thought, that chemical action can, by any natural process, produce consciousness, that electricity understands logic and philosophy, and that dead matter

could, by going through various stages of development, finally work out a nice, beautiful and intricate system of ethics? But, if your theory of evolution is correct, you must assume that blind forces have done all this and much more, or you must entrench yourself within the walls of an Agnosticism that recognizes no reason, and peremptorily forbids all speculation. So, of the two, it is much more in accordance with the dictates of sound reason to assume that the present phenomena which confront us on all sides are results effected by Divine Wisdom. You cannot possibly answer the questions which I have just propounded. Your evolution theory stands dumb in their presence."

Here there was a brief pause.

"I cannot see, Doctor," continued Mr. Monard, "why men are so anxious to eliminate the idea of the Christian's God out of the formation of the universe, when the admission of the idea saves us so much confusion and perplexity. It is certainly more reasonable to suppose that all things were created by a living Intelligence than by a blind, thoughtless force."

The Doctor made no immediate reply, but seemed to be in profound meditation. Notwithstanding his great volubility and fluency ordinarily, it appeared that he was forced into silence, so far as defending his theory was concerned. There was one present, however, who had been listening with the most anxious interest to this discussion, and that was Zenie. It was evident that Mr. Monard's argument had made a deep impression on her mind. Probably the Doctor would have ventured some reply to what the preacher had last said, if she had not spoken soon after Mr. Monard came to a pause.

"Do you reject the theory of evolution entirely, Mr. Monard?" she asked.

"Certainly not," he answered. "I believe in what I call Christian evolution."

"What is that?"

"I admit that there is some truth in the theory to which your father holds. There is a restricted evolution. But the process is under the control and direction of a personal, living God. The different orders or genera of animals were produced by special acts of divine creation. After this, I admit that nature, as it is called, has the power to produce species; yet the whole process, from beginning to end, is under the immediate supervision of the Supreme Being. Undoubtedly there are active forces in nature, but they cannot in themselves accomplish intelligent results. You may place a horse, a sheep and a goose in the same pasture, where they will have the same kind of grass and water; yet a portion of their food is converted into hair, wool, and feathers. How could a mere force, without the least thought, produce these different results from the very same material? The sap may rise through the pores of the tree by a natural law, but there must be thought and purpose to convert it into leaves and fruits. A tornado may heap together a pile of bricks, but can never arrange them in the form of a house. It seems as clear to me as a self-evident proposition, that the forces of nature must be determined and directed by a thinking power. You understand me, I hope?"

"I think I do, Sir; but, to tell the truth, either theory bewilders me."

"Study the Bible," said Mr. Monard, "learn your duty, and discharge it faithfully. That is all the Lord requires of you."

At this point the Doctor spoke—

"Mr. Monard, candor compels me to say that there are difficulties in the theory of evolution. But, at

some future time, I desire to show you that your system is by no means free from objections. I am not ready just now, for I see that I must be fully armed and equipped to meet such a foe as you are."

"Very well, Doctor. I try to be always prepared to give a reason for the hope which is in me. Therefore, whenever you feel that you are ready with your objections, I will do all in my power to meet them, and to give a satisfactory explanation of Christian belief. If the Bible does not give a more rational account of the present order of things than does the theory of evolution, I confess my inability to reason."

At this juncture the discussion was dropped, by mutual consent. The next day there was such decided improvement in the little patient that he no longer required nocturnal attention, or at least only such as could be given by the Doctor's own family without inconvenience. As Mr. Monard was taking his leave next morning, Mrs. Huxley said—

"I hope you will visit us as often as you can, Mr. Monard. You have placed us all under lasting obligations. We have been so highly entertained by you, that I must request the pleasure of your company again."

And Mr. Monard returned home, feeling happy. Alas! on what a slender thread hang human hopes and happiness!

CHAPTER XVI.

THE ACCUSED PREACHER.

"I pray, Sir, deal with men in misery
Like one that may himself be miserable."

"Many are the afflictions of the righteous," says the Psalmist. Even careless observation abundantly verifies the proposition. If we are not convinced by our individual experience that it is true, a glance at the condition of our Christian neighbors will no doubt satisfy us that the inspired singer announced a sad and solemn verity. One of the most perplexing subjects with which the believer meets is God's moral government of the world. "Why do the wicked live?" asks the sacred writer. Who can satisfactorily answer the question? Who can give a rational explanation of God's dealings with those who are the most zealous, earnest advocates of His cause? Many of them—probably the large majority—are not permitted to obtain and enjoy the luxuries and comforts which opulence affords. Why is this? We may answer, if we will, that affliction is favorable to spiritual development, and is an efficient factor in the process of sanctification; but why should it be so? Why does the merciful Father often suffer misfortunes to crush those who have consecrated all their energies to His service? We may assign a reason; but, after all, it is fanciful. In its application to particular cases, we cannot say it is correct. The wisest and best men that have ever lived, men who were inspired to teach their fellow beings, have been sorely confused and troubled by the sorrowful scenes which the moral world presents. Who can comprehend the divine dispensations? Did Jeremiah? Hear him: "Righteous art Thou, O Lord, when I plead with Thee:

yet let me talk with Thee of Thy judgments : Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper ? Wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously ? Thou hast planted them, yea they have taken root : they grow, yea, they bring forth fruit : Thou art near in their mouth, and far from their reins." But the Lord did not explain his judgments to the inspired penman ; yet he gave this answer : " If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses ? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan ? " Indeed, we now see through a glass darkly. But whether we can understand the mysterious ways of divine Providence, or not, we stand face to face with facts of a melancholy character. Generally, it is the wicked that have control of the sources of physical happiness. Plutus selects them as favorites, and with an unsparing hand opens the coffers of wealth, and pours out upon them showers of gold. Religion is driven in disgust from their splendid palaces, and hideous vice usurps her place ; and yet the godless dwell in the sunshine of temporal prosperity. The righteous witness this unequal distribution of earthly favors, and stagger on under an oppressive burden of poverty, glad often to feed upon the crumbs which the rich cast to the dogs. Spendthrifts, who know no higher pleasures than the gratification of sensual desires, and whose only mental exercise is the study to procure the means by which to satiate the grossest carnal appetites, are blessed with health, wealth, strength, leisure, while men of gigantic intellects, capable of grand purposes, and of increasing the sum of human knowledge, and of elevating the human race by the execution of noble enterprises, are cramped and paralyzed by the want of means to put

their ideas in practical operation. These observations are made in no spirit of complaint; but they are warranted by melancholy facts, which every day obtrude themselves upon the notice of even the thoughtless. It is a fact that the Lord does permit the righteous frequently to fall into sloughs of trouble, which it would seem to us poor short-sighted mortals He might have enabled them to avoid.

The foregoing remarks may be considered as a fit preface to an event now to be related, which actually occurred.

A few days after Mr. Monard had the discussion with Dr. Huxley upon the theory of evolution, Mr. Bell was walking down the street, in the direction of the preacher's lowly abode. As he was passing by the store of Mr. Brandon, he was accosted by the owner thereof, who was standing in the door.

"Good morning, Mr. Bell," he said, pleasantly. "I have not seen you in this part of town for some time."

"No, Sir; I have so much work to do, and it's so necessary that it should be done, I really don't have time to leave my shop, except on business. I'm just going to Mr. Monard's. I have collected some money for him, and as I know he needs it, I thought I'd take it to him at once."

"These preachers cost us a great deal of money, Mr. Bell, don't they?"

"I don't think Mr. Monard costs us any very great amount, Mr. Brandon. I don't know a man anywhere who is so poorly paid for his labor. I can't see how he lives on it."

"Why, as to that," replied Mr. Brandon, "he gets as much as he is worth. It seems he does live on it; but if it is not sufficient, he had better quit, and go at something else. He is a poor preacher, Mr. Bell, and you

know the old saying, 'poor preach, poor pay.' I don't know a worse preacher anywhere."

"I've heard better preachers, in some respects, Mr. Brandon, that's true. But Mr. Monard is one of the best pastors I've ever seen, and he's such a godly, pure-hearted man, and so kind to our sick families. But certainly, Mr. Brandon, you can't expect a first-class minister to work for us a whole year for three or four hundred dollars."

"No, we can't expect that; but I believe we could get a better one than Mr. Monard for the amount we pay him. I have nothing against him, Mr. Bell; but everybody knows he is a poor preacher. There is one thing about him, though, that I do not like, and that is, he is n't prompt in the payment of his debts; and you know, Mr. Bell, it always brings a preacher in bad odor when he doesn't meet his pecuniary obligations."

"I don't see how he can do it, Mr. Brandon, on such a small salary. Mr. Monard is an honest man, and would pay his debts if he could. But we are to blame, more than he is."

To this Mr. Brandon made no reply. Not seeming even to have heard Mr. Bell's remark last made, he said, as if half-talking to himself—

"He owes me now for house-rent. But I suppose he thinks because I'm a member of the church I ought to give it to him, or wait till he gets ready to pay me. But I can't afford to do this, Mr. Bell. I want what is due me, and I must have it. Charity is one thing, and business is another thing. How much have you got for him?"

"Fifty dollars."

"Well, he owes me more than that, and I've half a notion to go with you, and see if I can't get him to pay me."

"O, Mr. Brandon," said the smith, deprecatingly, "I do hope you won't trouble Mr. Monard just now. He really needs this money, and more too. Many of our members are not prompt in paying what they have promised, and some, you know, don't pay at all, and the preacher has to bear the loss."

"But, Mr. Bell, I have use for my money. Mr. Monard might just as well pay my house-rent as to pay any other debt. Business is business, and has nothing to do with charity. I let him have the house just for his accommodation, when I think I could have rented it to better advantage to another party. I have already shown charity enough, and I think he ought to pay me."

"If he does, Mr. Brandon, it will certainly put him to great inconvenience."

"I cannot help that. He has already kept me out of the use of my money for some time. I am not disposed to be hard on him; but I promptly pay my part of his salary, and I have the right to expect him to be as prompt as anybody else. The fact that he is a preacher doesn't release him from his debts. He must do business just on the same principles that other people do. So, if you have no objection, I'll go with you, and see if I cannot induce him to pay me."

"It does seem to me, Mr. Brandon, you might fall upon a more delicate way than this."

"I don't take that view of the matter," replied the merchant. "He might get rid of the money before I could see him."

"It looks to me like you have very little confidence in Mr. Monard," said the blacksmith, with a sigh.

"I cannot help how it looks, Mr. Bell. Business is business."

The smith returned no answer. It was useless. Yet Mr. Brandon was not regarded as a bad man or a mean

man, in the community. In fact, he was a good man in some respects, and it is to be regretted that only the darker side of his character appears in the present story. If digressions were allowable, other transactions, disconnected with our narrative, would present him in a different and better light. But it needs hardly be said that he belonged to that class of persons who ought frequently to hear sermons from the truthful text, "the love of money is the root of all evil." Mr. Brandon did love money; loved it with a fervid intensity that caused him to make war with the better feelings of his nature. He would contend earnestly for the last cent which was due to him, regardless of the inconvenience and trouble to which payment might subject the debtor. This disposition made him appear to be a more cruel and merciless man than he really was. He acted purely upon business principles, and would grant a pecuniary favor to no one as a matter of accommodation. He asked none for himself, and therefore did not feel the necessity of granting indulgence to others. In his commercial dealings he discharged his monetary obligations to the letter, and no one could complain of his lack of punctuality and promptness. But he would let no opportunity slip of collecting what was due, from saint or sinner. Another trait in his character deserving notice was, that he was strictly honest in his dealings, and though people sometimes said he was lacking in this principle, yet it was not strictly true. But Mr. Brandon could not see why he should extend pecuniary favors to his pastor more than to other people. So Mr. Bell was not overwhelmed with astonishment when the merchant proposed to accompany him, in order to secure an honest debt due from the preacher. True, Mr. Bell, who was a most excellent Christian, as his conduct has already demonstrated, was deeply pained at Mr.

Brandon's proposition, but he knew it was useless to argue the question when the merchant had once made up his mind. Accordingly the two went to the rented hut in which Mr. Monard was pretending to live, and found him at home. When they had exchanged the customary salutations, Mr. Bell paid to the preacher five ten-dollar notes. No sooner was this done, than Mr. Brandon addressed him:—

“Mr. Monard, I accidentally learned from Mr. Bell that he would pay you some funds to-day, and as you have not yet paid me any rent, I thought I would call and see if it would suit you to pay at least a portion of what you owe me.”

On hearing this, an expression of pain passed over the minister's face. The language of the merchant sounded so cruel that it was chilling to the sensitive nature of Mr. Monard. But he said—

“It would be a great accommodation, Mr. Brandon, if you could possibly indulge me a little longer. I have particular use for this money.”

“I have use for all that is due me,” replied Mr. Brandon. “I think I have already exercised great forbearance and patience toward you. But I need every cent I can get, to carry on my business. I have a note to meet in a few days, and I must have money, or my credit will suffer.”

“Must you have all of this fifty dollars?”

“You owe it, Mr. Monard, and I need it. That ought to be sufficient.”

“Well, Mr. Brandon,” said the preacher, with a sigh, “if you need it worse than I do, take it. Here is your money. I am sorry that I have not been able to pay you anything before now, but you are acquainted with my situation, and I hope you will bear with me. I do the very best I can.”

Mr. Monard had unfolded the money in the presence of the other parties, and Mr. Brandon saw that it amounted to fifty dollars. It so happened that one of the bills was rolled up by itself, and the four were wrapped around it, and in this order the minister gave it to Mr. Brandon, who put it hastily into his vest pocket, without counting it. He was satisfied that he had secured fifty dollars. Perhaps there was a slight twinge of conscience as he suddenly thrust the money in his pocket, as if he were ashamed to look at it. But no sooner had he done so, than he said, in a more softened tone—

“I wish our church could pay you more, Mr. Monard; but you know how it is. We are a poor people, and it gives us trouble to raise your salary. However, I cheerfully do my part.”

While Mr. Brandon was speaking these words, Mr. Bell was looking at him, and thinking that the merchant could easily quadruple his subscription without being subjected to the slightest inconvenience. Mr. Brandon was a wealthy man, for that country, and there were several others belonging to the church who were in almost as equally prosperous condition. Mr. Bell was well aware that the salary could be raised to twelve hundred dollars, if the members had only felt so disposed. But they did not seem to have proper ideas upon the subject of ministerial support. They appeared to be under the impression that they were doing wonders to raise the amount which had been promised to the preacher. It brought into requisition all the persuasive and begging powers of the ecclesiastical officers, and then frequently they failed to raise the bare salary. The members were not, by any means, a hard-hearted people, nor very wofully lacking in true piety. Perhaps it was carelessness, or thoughtlessness. They

saw that their preacher was *alive*, and did not present any visible marks of starvation, and the hypothesis flashed vaguely through their minds that he could not be in a very deplorable condition. So they bestowed little thought upon the subject. Some, who were hard laborers, like Mr. Bell, deeply sympathized with the poor preacher, and contributed to his necessities out of their poverty, as liberally as was possible. The truth is, the great bulk of the salary was raised among the poor. Is this considered strange? If so, there are some churches now in existence that are an exact counterpart to that whose spiritual interests were presided over by Mr. Monard.

It is difficult to imagine why people should expect the minister to make sacrifices which are not necessary, and which are a hindrance to his work. How can it be expected that he will produce interesting and instructive sermons on the Sabbath, when he has been harassed all the week by secular cares? Yet public sentiment requires it. If the poor minister exhibits indications of want of preparation he is probably accused of indolence, or something else which is far removed from the true cause. People do not seem to make any allowance for, or even to take into consideration, those stinging, grinding, mortifying anxieties which prey upon his mind, and which are engendered by the necessary recurrence of the perplexing question, "What shall we eat, and wherewithal shall we be clothed?" It is a fact that few churches come up to the measure of their duty in regard to ministerial support. Many allow their minister to suffer, and to an extent of which they are not aware. For we can say with truth, that most ministers bear their hard lot without complaint. They are afraid of furnishing grounds for the accusation of worldly-mindedness, if they show any disposition to

secure that "filthy lucre" against the undue accumulation of which it is their solemn duty to preach. They must keep silent—at least it is prudent to do so—on the subject of the promised salary. In common charity it must be supposed that the members of some churches do not really know to what straits their pastor is reduced. If they did, it does seem they would have religion enough, and justice enough, to make strenuous efforts to place him in such a condition that he could discharge his duties without being hampered by temporal cares.

Let it not be supposed that the preceding observations apply to *all* churches. But probably this digression, which it is hoped will not be considered very inappropriate, is long enough.

Mr. Brandon and Mr. Bell both left the minister's house at the same time. Few words were exchanged on the way, for Mr. Bell was greatly pained at the merchant's treatment of Mr. Monard, and was thinking what could be done for the preacher's relief. It was evident to him that Mr. Monard was in trouble, and no one in the community had more sympathy for him than the poor, hard-working blacksmith. He felt like making an appeal to the merchant, but, believing it would be a mere waste of words, said nothing,

When the two reached the store, just as they were at the door, Mr. Brandon took the money from his pocket and unrolled it. To his surprise and horror he could find only *four* ten-dollar notes.

"Hold, Mr. Bell," he exclaimed, in some agitation, as that gentleman was about to walk on, "I believe Mr. Monard has made a mistake, or is trying to cheat me."

"I can't think he'd try to cheat, Mr. Brandon. Feel in your pocket again—may be one of the bills has worked out."

"It is not here," hastily turning his pocket the wrong

side out, "you can see for yourself—and one of the bills could n't have worked out. I don't believe Mr. Monard gave me the five notes. I did not recount it when he handed it to me. You heard him say it was fifty dollars, Mr. Bell?"

"Yes, Sir; and I thought he gave you the money. He did not put it in his pocket, but counted it, and rolled it up just like it was at first, and handed it to you. There was one of the notes wrapped up separately and the others were rolled around it. I expect that separate note has worked out of your pocket, somehow."

"No, Sir," exclaimed Mr. Brandon, emphatically, "the pocket is too deep for that; and besides, if one had worked out all would have done the same thing. If I had lost one I would have lost all. I'll tell you what, Mr. Bell, I have the horrible suspicion—I hate to say it—that Mr. Monard kept back one of the bills. Come on, let's go right back, and I'll see him. I want you for a witness."

"But there's no use for any witness, Mr. Brandon. I don't suppose Mr. Monard will deny anything which will have to be proved. I think, Sir, he'll tell the truth."

"Well, you see for yourself that I hav'n't got but forty dollars."

"I'm satisfied of that," was the answer.

"You know, Mr. Bell, I wouldn't try to wrong a poor man like Mr. Monard?"

"I don't believe you would, Mr. Brandon."

"Well, then, I want you to go back with me, and be a witness to what takes place."

"What are you goin' to do, Mr. Brandon?"

"I don't know, till I see Mr. Monard, and hear what he says."

"Come on, then," said Mr. Bell, "I've no time to lose. As we go back, we'll look for the money. May be you dropped it somewhere."

"We will look," replied Mr. Brandon, "but I am certain I have not lost it."

Accordingly, the two returned, and looked closely for the missing note, as they walked along, but the search was fruitless. Mr. Monard was a little surprised to see his visitors, especially when they wore such a serious expression on their faces, but he waited till they should reveal the object of their mission. He was not long kept in suspense, for Mr. Brandon, without the least ceremony said—

"Mr. Monard, you have probably made a mistake as to the amount you paid me."

"I think not, Mr. Brandon," answered the preacher mildly. "I paid you the fifty dollars which Mr. Bell brought me."

"But you are mistaken, Mr. Monard," replied the merchant, with considerable emphasis. "It was only forty dollars."

"Mr. Brandon," rejoined the minister, in a decided, firm tone, "I am just as sure that I gave you fifty dollars as I can be of anything that comes within the cognizance of my senses."

"You are certainly mistaken," replied the merchant, energetically shaking his head, as if for the purpose of italicizing his language. "I wouldn't try to wrong you, for anything in the world, Sir; but here is the money, just as I took it out of my pocket, and Mr. Bell is a witness—he saw me do it."

Mr. Monard looked inquiringly in the face of the blacksmith, in whom he had unlimited confidence.

"He had only four notes when we reached the store," said Mr. Bell, gently.

"Mr. Bell," said the minister, "did you not see me hand him the money—the five notes?"

"I certainly thought so."

"You may have lost one on the way, Mr. Brandon, especially the one which was rolled up separately."

"Impossible, impossible," exclaimed the merchant; "utterly impossible. I am not so careless as that. Besides, if I had lost one, I would have lost all."

"Mr. Brandon," said the minister, in a very firm manner, "I gave you fifty dollars. Of that I am absolutely certain, and although you are so positive, yet there is a strong probability that you did lose one of the notes. Now, let us return, follow your tracks, and search for it."

"Very well," answered Mr. Brandon, "come on. I looked closely as we came along; but I want you to be perfectly satisfied. Heaven forbid that I should try to defraud you out of one cent. I would rather give you ten dollars, than to unjustly take from you a single picayune."

"I believe you would, Mr. Brandon," replied the minister; "but come on, and let us search carefully for the missing note."

Accordingly the trio returned, and narrowly examined every inch of the ground in the vicinity of the merchant's former footsteps, that intervened between the minister's dwelling and the store; but this rigid investigation resulted in disappointment. When they arrived near the store, Mr. Brandon paused, and said—

"Here is the very spot where I took the money out of my pocket, in the presence of Mr. Bell. So, you see, I did not have fifty dollars."

"I cannot account for the disappearance of the note, Mr. Brandon, but justice to myself demands a reiteration

of what I said at first, and that is, I paid you fifty dollars."

The idea of losing ten dollars in this way was too unbearable for a man of the merchant's disposition. It was just out of the question to entertain it a moment. So he replied, with decided indications of impatience—

"And justice to myself demands that I should say I did not receive fifty dollars from you. Do you suppose, Sir, I would try to cheat you out of ten dollars? Do you believe I would lie about it?"

"No, Sir; I do not think that, Mr. Brandon; but I do think you have lost the money, in some way."

"O, pshaw!" exclaimed Mr. Brandon, "it won't do to repeat that, because I'm certain I did not lose it. You must make up the loss."

"I cannot do it, Mr. Brandon."

"If you don't, Mr. Monard, I give you notice now, that I'll have you up before the church."

On hearing this threat, Mr. Monard turned pale; but he said—

"Mr. Brandon, do you believe that I would *steal*? That seems to be your conclusion."

"I have made no charge of that sort. I only demand that you pay the ten dollars justly due, that is all, Sir."

"I cannot do it, Mr. Brandon, even if I felt so inclined. I have not a cent on earth. But, I cannot admit your claim. If I had the money, and were to pay you the missing ten dollars, it would be equivalent to an acknowledgment of dishonesty on my part, and I shall not do anything to give room even for the suspicion that I have wronged you."

"But pay me my ten dollars, or agree to do it, and not another word shall be said about it. We'll dry the matter up instantly."

"I do not propose, Mr. Brandon, to resort to bribery when my conscience tells me I am in the right."

"I can't help what your conscience tells you," exclaimed the merchant, angrily. "I give you fair warning. I ask you, will you agree to pay me ten dollars or not?"

"I have already answered your question, Mr. Brandon, more than once; but if you think there is any necessity of repetition, I tell you plainly, and once for all, that I cannot and will not."

"Very well, Sir. You must then take the consequences. I shall report the matter to the proper church authorities."

"So be it," replied Mr. Monard, mildly, but firmly. "I shall assert before any court, even with my dying breath, that I paid you fifty dollars. God judge between us."

Having made this solemn asseveration, the minister turned, and went back home.

Mr. Bell listened to this conversation in profound mortification and pain. He believed that both the men were strictly honest. He could not think for a moment that Mr. Monard had knowingly and willfully kept back any part of the money; yet it was evident that one of the notes had disappeared. He had just as much confidence in the integrity of Mr. Brandon as in that of the preacher. So Mr. Bell was in perplexity and trouble. From the attitude of the two men, he saw that there must be a serious disturbance in the church, if something were not done to effect an amicable adjustment of the difficulty.

"You see how stubborn he is," said Mr. Brandon, after the minister had gone. "It seems he is determined to cheat me out of ten dollars; but I'll show him. I'm not going to be run over in that style."

"I hope," said Mr. Bell, "you'll not carry out the threat you made. You certainly don't intend to disgrace Mr. Monard by making the matter public, and having him up before the church."

"I have determined to do it, Mr. Bell."

"Why, you don't really think that Mr. Monard has acted dishonestly, do you?"

"I think he has," replied Mr. Brandon. "At first I was not disposed to think so; but you saw how he faced me down, when the thing was too plain to be denied. He wouldn't admit the possibility of his being mistaken, but just contended to the last that I lost the money. I know that I did n't."

"I can't believe that Mr. Monard is a dishonest man, and I will make this proposition: I'll pay the ten dollars myself, as soon as I can, if you will agree to say no more about the affair. What say you?"

Mr. Brandon seemed to consider for a moment. If the proposition had been made before his quarrel, possibly he might have accepted it; but now he had said too much, and his evil passions were aroused.

"I cannot compromise in any such way, Mr. Bell. It is too late. Besides, it is not your debt, and it is not right and just that you should pay another man's debt."

"But, for the sake of peace and harmony, and to avoid scandal in the church, I'm willing to pay this debt."

"It is too late now for a compromise, Mr. Bell. We can't afford to have a dishonest preacher anyhow. If you knew as much as I do about his family, I think you'd agree with me. But I am bound to secrecy. I have good reason to believe that Mr. Monard is not disposed to do what is right."

"Mr. Brandon, let me beg you not to disgrace the

man. Wait awhile, anyhow, till you are more certain that he is not honest. Possibly the missing bill may yet be found, somehow, and then you'd hate it that you'd injured him."

"I'm not going to wait at all, Mr. Bell. I firmly believe that he kept the money, and is trying cheat me; but I tell you he shall not do it. I'll earn him a lesson."

"But, Mr. Brandon, you haven't got enough proof to make it appear that Mr. Monard is guilty of dishonest intentions. I'm a witness of the whole transaction, and I can't see that he's acted dishonestly."

"Do you think that I have?" asked the merchant, proudly erecting himself. "Do you believe I would try to defraud any man? Do I have such a reputation as that in this community?"

"No, Sir; your reputation for fair dealing is good. But all are liable to err, Mr. Brandon. I'm perfectly satisfied that Mr. Monard believes he paid you fifty dollars, and I'm perfectly satisfied you think he did not. The bill has somehow strangely disappeared. But I beg you don't be too hasty. You would hate it very much, Mr. Brandon, if you were to accuse the preacher of theft, and it should afterward be found out that he was innocent. It takes very little, anyhow, to destroy a preacher's character, and to ruin him forever. I don't know why it is that so many people are ready to believe any sort of scandalous report that may be started on a minister. But I've noticed that nothing affords some people more pleasure than to hear of the downfall of a preacher. You know that, Mr. Brandon. They seem to think that his disgrace is some excuse for their own sins in the sight of God. I have known several ministers to be ruined by false reports. They were tried before the church, and their innocence was clearly

established ; but nothing could stop the tongue of slander, and their influence was so impaired that they could no more be useful. You have not forgotten Mr. Iredell, who, some years ago, was arrested and tried for a hog-thief. He proved clearly that he was not guilty ; but he was so mortified that he left the country. But the report followed him wherever he went. When he would go to church to preach, people would point him out to strangers, and say, 'that's the man who was tried for a hog thief.' The poor, innocent preacher could not make it the whole business of his life to defend his character, and the upshot of it was he had to quit preaching. So, Mr. Brandon, don't be too hasty. You may ruin Mr. Monard."

"Well, he had no business to defy me, as he did, and stand me down that I was wrong. You heard what he said. He is just determined to brave it out. There is a question of veracity between us, and I'm not going to be put down by his stout denial. There are some things which, if you knew, Mr. Bell, you would not blame me, but I think you would heartily approve of the course I intend to pursue. The truth is, he don't suit us anyhow, and I, for one, would just as soon be rid of him as not."

"But I think, Mr. Brandon, you ought to take the proper and right steps to get rid of him. If the church don't like Mr. Monard, let them honestly say so, and dismiss him. I don't think it's right to use underhanded means to put him out."

"I scorn to use underhanded means, Mr. Bell," answered the merchant, proudly. "You never knew me to be guilty of any trickery, did you?"

"No, Sir ; I did not mean that. But I think if we don't like our preacher, we ought to tell him so plainly, and let him go, that's my idea."

"And mine, too, as far as that is concerned," replied Mr. Brandon. "In this case, getting rid of the preacher is not the first consideration. I believe he is guilty of a crime, Mr. Bell, and I shall resort to no underhanded means to have him silenced. I shall take a bold stand, and what I do shall be done openly and aboveboard."

It was in vain that the honest blacksmith sought to dissuade him from his purpose. The merchant's bad feelings were aroused, and he determined to have revenge. He could not endure the thought of being cheated out of what belonged to him. He was a good trader and an excellent financier, especially in his own estimation, and he would not suffer himself to be overreached by any one. If he believed that a man was trying to defraud him, he made no more of crushing that person, than of bruising the head of a poisonous reptile. Poor Mr. Monard knew not with what a merciless adversary he had to contend. He had thoroughly provoked Mr. Brandon, and the consequence was, it was not long before he found himself in a very unpleasant situation.

CHAPTER XVII.

AN ANGRY WOMAN.

"A woman mov'd is like a fountain troubled
Muddy, ill-seeming, thick, bereft of beauty."

It was on Tuesday that the deplorable circumstance related in the preceding chapter occurred. The following Sabbath Mr. Monard preached, as usual, but to a much smaller audience than generally assembled. He could not but notice the absence of Mr. Brandon and some other members of the church who were distinguished for regular attendance upon divine services. At once the suspicion seized upon the minister's mind that the merchant had commenced hostile proceedings against him. This conjecture was not without foundation; for Mr. Brandon had told it through the village that Mr. Monard had shamefully defrauded him, to the extent of ten dollars, and had added to this awful crime the sin of falsehood. These were indeed very grave charges to be preferred against any one, much less a minister of the gospel; yet Mr. Brandon's known character for honesty and fair dealing gained credence to his plausible version of the affair. Besides, the man of wealth has no herculean task to crush another who is reeling under the burden of poverty. There seems to be a bewitching charm in riches to which men willingly yield, and it is not difficult to persuade themselves that the respectable, wealthy contestant, in any case, is in the right, especially if they are under obligations to him. The man of money wields a tremendous influence, and he can generally accomplish his purposes. He wins people to his cause by the jingle of his gold and silver, which falls upon the auditory apparatus with all the softness and melody of a well-tuned harp. They hear the pleasant

sound, and almost involuntarily begin to calculate the possibilities of self-aggrandizement to be secured in the friendship of the owner of the dazzling and musical metal. They are hardly aware to what an extent they are influenced by the man of monetary power. Mr. Brandon, being a man of this sort, and a man of social respectability, certainly occupied the vantage ground in the contest between himself and the penniless preacher. Many in the community considered themselves under obligations to Mr. Brandon for favors which they did not take time to reflect he incurred no risk in granting. These persons did not dare to give him offence by attempting to throw discredit upon what he affirmed in regard to his difficulty with the minister. Whether they believed it or not, they thought they could not put their own interest in jeopardy by meeting the merchant with contradiction. So some maintained silence. Others were ready to roll under their tongue, as a sweet morsel, this choice bit of scandal, which Mr. Brandon was industriously circulating through the community. He did not perform this ungracious work with any secrecy, either, because he was acting under the conviction that he was in the right. The bold and positive way in which Mr. Brandon told his story had the effect of gathering around him forces whose opposition to the minister must culminate in his overthrow.

When the service was concluded Mr. Monard approached Mr. Bell and said—

“Why is it that so many of the congregation are absent to-day?”

“Do you really have no idea as to the cause?” asked the smith, pityingly.

“I fear I do, Mr. Bell, and I suspect that the developments of to-day are but the foreshadowing of Mr. Brandon’s intentions towards me. His aim is to crush me.”

"He'll make trouble for you, Mr. Monard, and you may as well prepare for it. As you can see for yourself, he has already begun. I think you ought to know the truth, and how matters stand, and I'll keep you posted. I suppose you've heard that he's been telling it last week that you cheated him out of ten dollars, and lied about it too."

"I have heard nothing, Mr. Bell," replied the minister, while the color mounted to his face. "This accusation, my brother, is hard to bear, and I fear the consequences of speaking again to Mr. Brandon on this subject. I try hard to control my evil passions; but sometimes they get the upper-hand of us. It requires much grace to turn the other cheek to the smiter. If Mr. Brandon tells me to my face that I cheated and lied, I do not know whether I can bear it or not. I do not want to be subjected to the trial."

"It is hard to take," replied the smith, "and I don't believe the old Adam in me could stand it. But you've got more religion than I have, Mr. Monard, and I know you'll act as a Christian gentleman."

"Nothing but the grace of God can enable me to do my duty in reference to this unpleasant affair," replied the minister. After a short pause he continued. "Do you believe he is really in earnest, and will try to displace me? Or is he merely trying to force me to pay him ten dollars?"

"If you'd paid him ten dollars at first, that would've silenced him. But now he says there's a question of veracity between you; and my opinion is that he'll never rest satisfied till he causes you to feel the weight of his displeasure."

"Well," answered Mr. Monard, "I leave the matter in the hands of the good Lord, and He will do right. God knows I paid Mr. Brandon fifty dollars, unless my

senses deceived me. I am so certain of it that I will not compromise. I cannot do such injustice to my conscience, and commit such an outrage upon my self-respect. I cannot resort to anything akin to blackmail, in order to purchase a guilty silence from Mr. Brandon."

"You may as well prepare for a disturbance, then," replied the smith, "because Mr. Brandon is a very determined man, and he certainly thinks that he's right in this unfortunate affair."

"I can only wait in silence till the worst comes," said Mr. Monard. "I shall act strictly on the defensive."

"You may prepare for the worst, Mr. Monard. Mr. Brandon, you know, has a mighty influence in the community. To be plain with you, though I hate to say it, he's already turned the tide against you. I've been thinking it might be a good idea for you to resign, before he puts you out by church authority. If you'd do that, I think Mr. Brandon would drop the matter."

"Mr. Bell," said the minister, in a sorrowful tone, "have you, too, turned against me? If so, I know not who will befriend me."

"The Lord forbid," exclaimed the smith, "that I should turn against you, unless I've got better evidence of your guilt than I have now. The only reason why I made the suggestion was to get ahead of Mr. Brandon. You may be sure he'll make every possible effort to oust you, and from what I can see, though I hate to say it, I fear he'll succeed."

"I cannot help what he does, Mr. Bell. I shall not resign, and thus confess guilt, merely to ward off what I fear may prove to be a grievous misfortune. If he succeeds in accomplishing what you say is his intention, and I think you are correct, I can only say the Lord's will be done."

Mr. Bell said nothing more, for he perceived that the minister had determined not to yield an inch. While he could not but admire Mr. Monard's fidelity to principle and duty; yet he pitied him. He had every reason to believe that the poor minister would be involved in trouble of quite a serious character. An adjustment of the difficulty appeared now to be out of the question. He foresaw that Mr. Monard would be crushed by the storm which Mr. Brandon would raise—the mutterings of which could already be heard. His sympathies were with the preacher, though he felt that his friendship could be of little avail in the contest which he was convinced would terminate in Mr. Monard's downfall.

The next day a committee of three members of the church called on the minister, and stated the object of their visit.

"Mr. Monard," said the chairman, "our object is to secure peace and unity in the church. Mr. Brandon does not wish to bring this unfortunate affair before an ecclesiastical court, and he has no desire to injure you by a trial. If you would only resign, Mr. Brandon would be satisfied, and would let the matter drop. We do not presume to give you advice upon the subject; but this will be a quick way to settle the difficulty."

"Why, brethren," replied Mr. Monard, very quietly, "I must confess my surprise at this proposition from Mr. Brandon; because I give him credit for devotion to religious principle, and for zeal in carrying out his convictions of duty. If he really believes I am guilty of the charges which I understand he prefers against me, his conscience ought not to be satisfied with my resignation. That would not be a sufficient expiation of the alleged offence. If I have cheated him, as he says, and lied about it, I am not fit to preach, and I ought to be deposed from the ministry. If he thinks

I am a thief, I am surprised that he would be willing that I should quietly resign, and move off to impose on some other congregation. Brethren," said Mr. Monard, in a more emphatic tone, "I cannot consent to leave this church with such an imputation resting upon my character. If I were to resign, as Mr. Brandon demands, it would no doubt be construed into an acknowledgment on my part, that there is some foundation for his charge. You certainly can see that. Mr. Brandon's accusation is based on a perfectly gratuitous assumption, and I shall not do or say one thing that would seem as the slightest approximation to an admission of guilt. I shall not recede one inch from the repeated declarations of my innocence which I have made. If Mr. Brandon believes that I am guilty of theft and falsehood, let him demonstrate the fact before the proper authority. He cannot frighten me into measures by threats. I leave my case in the hands of God, and Mr. Brandon may pursue whatever course his conscience and judgment may dictate."

"Well," said the chairman of the committee, "we are not here to argue the question, nor to advise. We are to understand, then, that you will not resign?"

"I have so said."

"I suppose we must regard your answer as final?"

"You may, brethren; and nothing you could say, if you see proper to persuade, could induce me to change my determination. I do not wish to appear obstinate and defiant. I do not say that Mr. Brandon and his friends have not sufficient influence to displace me. They may succeed, and if they do, God's will be done. You can say to him that it is useless to propose any mode of adjustment which would be the least disparaging to my honor as a Christian gentleman and minister."

With this answer the committee departed.

It seemed that Mr. Monard would be compelled to fight his battle alone. His warmest friend, Mr. Bell, appeared to be somewhat cool toward him. But the truth was, the honest blacksmith perceived that both the contestants were disposed to cling to their respective notions, and to make no concessions, and so long as this was the case, it would be impossible to effect a reconciliation. He believed that both were sincere. Therefore he thought it best not to side with either party.

Matters grew gradually worse, Sabbath after Sabbath, till Mr. Monard's congregation was reduced to a number which he could almost estimate at one glance. Mr. Brandon had come to the conclusion that he would show Mr. Monard it would be useless to try to hold his position. The minister, be it said to his honor, and to the power of divine grace, had gained the mastery over himself, and he exercised as much charity toward his adversary as could be expected under the circumstances. In humility, and pain and mortification, he resolved to do what he conceived to be his duty, to the last. His condition, however, soon became extremely distressing. The members refused to pay what they had subscribed—at least so many did that the preacher had to put in practice a system of domestic economy utterly incompatible with comfort and health. The larder began to exhibit alarming symptoms of depletion, and at last Mrs. Monard startled her husband with the information that the place could not afford one thing to sustain the physical man. The evil day had come at last, and something must be done. What to do was the question which perplexed Mr. Monard no little. But his wife did not possess the patience and tranquillity of spirit, in the midst of difficulties, which distinguished him.

When she had informed him that the last morsel had been cooked, she said, with tears in her eyes—

“If you had listened to me, we would never have been reduced to this shameful and disgraceful state of poverty. You know I wanted you long ago to quit preaching, and follow something else for which you are better qualified; but you wouldn’t pay any attention to me, and now you’ll be forced to quit. I told you that that old skin-flint of a Brandon would ruin you. The merciless brute—I wish he was hung!”

“O, Vallie,” said the minister, in a deprecating manner, “do not speak evil of your neighbors, and wish them harm. Mr. Brandon is honest in what he is doing, though I think he has treated me unjustly.”

“If I were a man,” exclaimed Mrs. Monard, almost convulsed with rage, “I’d thrash him till he couldn’t walk. Just to think how he has slandered you, and how that scapegrace son of his has driven Vincent from home—it is just too much. I’ve half a notion to go right straight to his old store, and tell him to his face what I think of him. If he fools with me I’ll tear his very eyes out. I’m just in the right humor to talk to him, and I believe I will do it. He deserves killing. He is starving us to death, and I’ll not stand it another minute.”

And Mrs. Monard sprang to her feet, while tears of indignation and wrath were rolling down her cheeks. She hastily seized her bonnet, and was on the point of starting out, when Mr. Monard, in astonishment and alarm, cried—

“Why, Vallie, what in the world do you mean! Come back.”

“I’ll show you what I mean, in a few minutes,” she answered, with eyes glaring like those of an aroused tigress, still looking like a beautiful fury, if such a

creation be within the range of possibilities. "I'll bear it no longer, in silence. If you haven't spirit enough to meet the old, hard-hearted miser, I have. I'm not going to be run over in this way, and starved literally to death. I'll show you."

"O, Vallie, come back, come back!" exclaimed Mr. Monard, who had good reason to believe that she would do something desperate or shameful. He had lived with her long enough to discover the terrible violence of her temper, when she yielded to it. It seemed that she was possessed of some hidden demon, when she was fully aroused. True, a very perceptible change had come over her since little Willie had died, and for a long time she made efforts to be mild and gentle, and she was at least partially successful—a fact which caused the fond husband to hope that she would finally gain the victory over her furious habit. To his glad surprise she had borne Vincent's sudden misfortune with some degree of philosophy and resignation. But the present situation, in connection with the dark prospect, caused the cup of wrath to overflow, and the lady could no longer control herself. The volcanic fires of her temper were suddenly rekindled, and they burst forth with a fury that betokened temporary insanity. This plea must be urged as an apology for her conduct in the scene now to be described. Mrs. Monard, in her normal state of mind, would have blushed at the thought of so demeaning herself. But it has been truly said by some poet—

"Not ev 'n the soldier's fury rais'd in war,
The rage of tyrants, when defiance stings 'em!
The pride of priests, so bloody when in power!
Are half so dreadful as a woman's vengeance."

Due allowance, therefore, must be made for a woman who is driven to desperation by either real or supposed wrongs, especially one endowed by nature with un-

usually strong passions. And Mrs. Monard, being a woman of this character, when her husband begged her to come back, shrieked out—

“Stay here, spiritless man, till I return. I’m not going to sit still and starve. O, I just burn to lay my hands on that mean dog. He has told it that you stole ten dollars from him, and if you can bear that, I will not. I won’t stand it.”

Before Mr. Monard could offer any further expostulation, she was out, and gone. He sat stone-still for a short time, not knowing what to do. It seemed that he was paralyzed by this sudden outburst. But while he was wavering, and studying what course it would be proper to pursue, his wife, without any well-settled purpose, was moving with undignified and unlady-like celerity toward the store of Mr. Brandon, which was at no great distance from her own place of abode. Her rapid pace soon brought her into the presence of the man the thought of whose supposed meanness had aroused her fearful ire.

“Mr. Brandon,” she cried, in a tone so loud that it attracted the attention of persons outside, “I’ve come to tell you to your face that you are the grandest villain that ever breathed.”

“Madam——”

“Silence, Sir,” she cried, stamping with her foot, “hear me, Sir, or I will be driven to do—I know not what. You’ve slandered my husband, you infamous miser, you robber of widows and orphans. You talk about stealing! You’d steal the money from the eyes of a corpse, if you had the chance.”

“Madam,” interrupted Mr. Brandon, who was thrown into utter confusion by this unexpected onslaught, “go back home. This is no way for a lady to act.”

"Don't talk to me!" she fairly shrieked. "You've slandered my innocent husband, and've persuaded people not to go to church. I reckon you're satisfied now, you've brought us to starvation. If it will do any good to know, I'll tell you, we've not a mouthful in the house. When we die at your very doors, for the want of bread, you'll be delighted to go to the funeral of the victims you have murdered. Yes, Sir, you are murdering us. We are slowly starving to death."

"I'm not responsible for it, Madam," quickly responded the merchant.

"You *are* responsible, Sir, you, and nobody else," she rejoined, with increasing rage. "You're at the bottom of it all, you unprincipled scoundrel. You told that my husband stole ten dollars from you. My opinion is, you stole it yourself. You hid it, Sir, to make him pay ten dollars more than he owes you. You're a sweet-scented saint, to be sure. Not satisfied with robbing widows and orphans, and grinding the poor under your heel, you must try to ruin and murder the man who is endeavoring to save your miserly soul, if you've got any to save. But I don't think you've got any soul, or heart either—no more than a brute. You have 'nt got any more religion than a horse, you old hypocrite, sneaking like a vile thief through town, and slandering the man whose religion makes him keep silent."

"Madam, remember your son," said Brandon, in a suppressed tone. He thought that the allusion might have a tendency to recall her to her senses, and reduce her to silence; but it was like pouring oil on the flames.

"Yes, Sir; I remember my son, whom you, by your diabolical trickery, drove from his mother; and now you're trying to kill his parents and his sister. O, I

despise you ! I could kill you ; and I tell you, when suffering and hunger drive me to desperation, you'd better look out ; for I'll make you suffer before I die. If I have strength enough left to crawl to this store of yours, I'll burn it over your head."

While uttering these abusive words, she quivered with indignation, and her eyes glowed with rage. Mr. Brandon had risen from his seat, but he stood pale and speechless, wishing heartily that the violent woman were a thousand miles away. But violent things cannot last long. Mrs. Monard's feelings were wrought up to the explosive pitch. The tension was too great upon her nerves, and the consequence was, as she uttered the threat in regard to burning the merchant's storehouse, she fell senseless to the floor at Mr. Brandon's feet. A considerable crowd, as might be expected, had collected at the door, among whom was Dr. Huxley. On the outside he stood, listening to the feminine tirade of abuse, with the indescribable expression upon his face, which every few seconds would assume a phase indicative of amusement. When he heard the fall of the body to the floor, he at once pushed his way through the alarmed audience, followed by Mr. Monard, who had just arrived.

"Stand back," cried the Doctor, to the persons who were crowding the doorway. "Here Mr. Monard, let us move her to the outside."

Accordingly this was quickly done.

"She has only fainted," said the physician, as he was doing what is necessary in such cases. "She will recover presently."

The Doctor's prediction was soon verified, and Mrs. Monard regained consciousness. But she was in such a state of exhaustion that she could not return home without assistance. This was afforded by Mr. Monard and

Dr. Huxley. When they arrived at the house, Mr. Monard said not a word, but preserved a sorrowful silence, engendered by extreme mortification. Dr. Huxley, however, appeared to be in an unusually good humor, and he talked in such an amusing strain, that Mrs. Monard became lively herself, after the lapse of a short time.

"I tell you, Mr. Monard," said the Doctor, with a laugh, "although you look so moody, you have one of the pluckiest wives that I ever saw in my life. I never saw Brandon so completely nonplused, and I was glad of it, too. It is the best thing that ever happened in this town. Brandon has been talking about you; but I guess his experience of to-day will be a lesson to him, and make him chary of spreading malicious reports."

"I'm really sorry, Doctor," said Mrs. Monard, "that I've acted so foolishly. I was hardly aware of what I was doing and saying. I'm heartily ashamed of myself, and may be I ought to apologize to Mr. Brandon."

"Madam," said the Doctor, with the curious expression of countenance, "it was one of the most sublime exhibitions of human wrath that it was ever my fortune to witness. Indignation at wrong, rebellion caused by oppression, towering passion aroused by outrage, are characteristics which it has required Evolution a long series of ages to develop. There is nothing more sublime than a proud spirit goaded to resistance by the stings of unjust oppression. Mr. Brandon will not soon forget the lesson which has been inculcated to-day. It will do him good, and if I am not much mistaken, will be of service to you."

"I do not understand you, Doctor," said Mr. Monard, who had been looking at the physician, while he was talking, as if he were in doubt about the Doctor's sanity.

"I want to know," said the physician, not offering to explain his last remarks, "if it is a fact that you are entirely out of provisions? I think," turning to the lady, "that you said so."

"She ought not to have made any such statement," replied Mr. Monard.

"But it is true, nevertheless," she quickly answered. "We haven't a thing for the next meal, and this is why I was provoked at Mr. Brandon, beyond all endurance. It seemed to me that I would die if I could not get to tell him what I thought of him."

"Well, Madam, you expressed yourself with fluency, emphasis, and perspicuity too. He will not have to refer to a dictionary to ascertain the signification of the forcible terms which you employed."

And the physician burst into one of those boisterous laughs with which he frequently startled his hearers.

"You have had enough to provoke you, Madam, and I cannot blame you. But you are out of danger now, and I must be going. But I want to say a word, by way of caution, if you will permit me."

"Certainly, Doctor," replied Mrs. Monard, "say what you please."

"I just want to say that persons of your peculiar temperament, and your delicately strung nerves, have great need to watch. If you yield too much to the noble spirit of anger with which the kind Goddess of Evolution has endowed you so abundantly, you may rupture a blood vessel some time, and that may result in your return to a state of obstupefaction from which Evolution has, as yet, made no provision for a resurrection. Good day."

The Doctor suddenly wheeled around, walked rapidly away, leaving Mrs. Monard looking after him in astonishment.

"What a strange man," she said. "He talks sometimes like a lunatic. What did he mean by that last rigmarole?"

"He meant, my dear, that if you give way to your temper too much, it may be the cause of your death, and I hope you will profit by what he has told you. It is really dangerous, my dear, to indulge in such violent outbreaks, and I entreat you, hereafter to try to control yourself."

To this the lady made no reply. Her anger had found vent, and she was now calm, really feeling a sense of shame on account of the public exhibition which she had made of her terrible temper.

When Dr. Huxley returned to Mr. Brandon's store he found quite a crowd, who were discussing the recent occurrence from more than one standpoint. Some were deeply mortified, and others regarded it as a most excellent joke. The Doctor walked up to Mr. Brandon, and looking at him with an expression of quizzical seriousness, said—

"Do you need a surgeon?"

"No, Sir;" replied Mr. Branson, in a half-angry tone.

"You have made a narrow escape," remarked the Doctor. "If that fit had not arrested the lady, she might have put marks upon you whose effacement would have been a task for the fingers of time."

"I hope you don't call her a *lady*," said Mr. Brandon, peevishly. "I never saw such a virago in all my life. Why she looked like a hyena."

"She certainly has qualities," replied the Doctor, "that would have made her a fit leader of the Amazons; but nevertheless, Sir, she is a perfect lady. She has had enough, though, to excite anybody to desperation. If you were in her condition, you too would be aroused."

The prospect of starvation is sufficient to render most people furious."

"She says they are starving," replied Mr. Brandon, sulkily, "but that needs proof."

"The statement can very soon be verified," answered the Doctor, "if you think it requires to be demonstrated. A nice church, truly, gentlemen, that suffers its preacher's family to die for the want of bread. I am glad that there are so many of the members here now. I want to see if you will let your preacher actually starve."

"I have repudiated him," replied Mr. Brandon, "so far as I am concerned. If he starves, I disclaim all responsibility in the matter. I have no more to do with him."

"But I deny your right," said the Doctor, with great bluntness, "to repudiate in any such way. Did you and your church not make a contract with Mr. Monard to pay him so much money for so much service?"

"Yes, Sir; but we are not bound to carry it out unless he fulfills his part of it."

"Well, has he done what he agreed to?"

"It was not in the contract that he should defraud any member of the congregation," answered the merchant.

"Look here, Mr. Brandon," said the physician, energetically, "I do not believe that Mr. Monard is guilty of what you accuse him."

"Do you think, Dr. Huxley," said the merchant, manifesting signs of resentment, "that I would tell a falsehood about it?"

"I did not say that," replied the Doctor, quietly. "I have no doubt you think so, but you have not proved Mr. Monard's guilt."

"Doctor," said the merchant, lowering his tone, "you are the last man that ought to doubt, knowing what you do. Hereditary——"

"Come, Mr. Brandon," quickly interrupted the Doctor. "Your promise, Sir."

"I am aware of that. But one circumstance, you know, has a tendency to confirm another."

"What you are hinting at, Mr. Brandon, by no means, follows. I think you are greatly mistaken in that. But are you going to violate your promise?"

"No, Sir ; but I am sorry that I ever made it. I would not do so again."

"We will say no more about it, then. But I ask you good Christians here," turning to the crowd, "if you will let your preacher die of absolute starvation, when you have obligated yourselves to pay him for his labor? If you will, just say so, and I will see if there are any Evolutionists in town who will come to the rescue. Why, gentlemen, the more I see of the practical workings of your church, the more I am confirmed in my theory. I have good reason to believe, from my own personal observation, that natural Evolution develops more charity in the human heart, than this religion does, about which you make so much noise. It seems to me to make its professors indifferent to the sufferings of those who are set apart as priests, with the assurance that their necessary wants shall be supplied. I want to know if this church is really a fair specimen of what religion does?"

"No, Doctor," replied one in the crowd, "it is not, I am glad to say."

"Well, I am glad to hear it," answered the Doctor, "for if they are all like this, I never could make up my mind to join any institution that deliberately repudiates its obligations."

Of course, the Doctor was entirely correct in his opinion of the character of this particular church. Whether he was in earnest, could not be told, and some

thought he was talking merely to provoke the members to good works. At any rate, what he said was not without effect; for those present agreed to take immediate steps for the relief of the minister's necessities. So, in the course of two hours several wheelbarrows were slowly and heavily rolling toward the preacher's abode, loaded down with such articles as are necessary to sustain human existence. When the things were emptied, Mrs. Monard surveyed the stores, and said—

"I knew I could stir them up."

"I regret the way you did it, though," replied her husband. "It furnishes grounds for scandal, I am sorry to say."

"I regret it, too," she answered. "But something had to be done, and that quick. We could not just sit down and starve."

"We would not have starved, my dear. Can you not have some faith in the promises of the Master? He has said 'trust in the Lord, and verily thou shalt be fed.' Can you not believe it?"

"I've heard you quote that often," was the wife's rejoinder, "but the Lord helps them that help themselves. That's what I believe. The Lord helps no one that sits still in idleness and laziness."

"Of course not," replied Mr. Monard. But he did not finish what he intended to say, as the lady left him, in order to attend to her domestic affairs. As much as he disliked the unlady-like conduct of his wife, he had no reason to be dissatisfied with its immediate results. Enough had been sent to support his family for several weeks to come.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE SILENCED PREACHER.

Heaven may awhile correct the virtuous,
Yet it will wipe their eyes again, and make
Their faces whiter with their tears."

Such a state of things as existed in Mr. Monard's church could not continue long without finding a culmination of some kind. Many of the members did not attend church at all, and the consequence was, the minister's audience was small. He had some friends who could not draw the inference from the circumstances, as related by Mr. Brandon himself, that the preacher had acted dishonestly. It was evident to them that the report which Mr. Brandon had spread was based upon a deduction which did not necessarily follow from the premises. Yet every one believed that the merchant was honest in what he did.

In a few weeks from the time at which the disturbance originated, there was a meeting of the ecclesiastical court which had jurisdiction over Mr. Monard, and to this all the parties concerned were looking forward with great interest. Mr. Brandon made his appearance before this court, and preferred charges against the pastor of his church. The minister had no witness, and made no attempt to establish any fact. He was willing to take even Mr. Brandon's own statement of the circumstances. Mr. Bell, however, was brought forward as a witness by the merchant; but he was acceptable to both parties. Mr. Monard made a short speech in his own defence, in which he advanced the theory that the merchant had in some manner lost one of the notes. He was very mild, and said not a disrespectful word in regard to his opponent. Indeed, he was so gentle, and so full of

charity, that this very circumstance itself proved prejudicial to his case. While he seemed almost to hesitate, Mr. Brandon was very out-spoken and positive. He affirmed that it was impossible that he could have lost one of the bills; if he had lost one, he would have lost all. To make the matter clear, he had worn the vest which he had on at the time the circumstance occurred, and he turned the pocket out in the presence of the court, to show them that it was a deep one. He then produced five ten-dollar notes, and folded them up just in the order that Mr. Monard himself had stated, and put them in the vest-pocket, and thus demonstrated the fact that he could not have lost one of the notes without losing all.

"Might not your pocket have a hole in it," asked one of the members, "through which the bill could have worked?"

"You can see for yourself," replied the merchant, turning the pocket out. No one, however, examined it closely.

Mr. Brandon went on further to state that Mr. Monard's influence was now utterly destroyed; people believed so strongly in his guilt, that they had ceased to attend his services; that his congregation scarcely amounted to a corporal's guard. Mr. Bell partially confirmed the merchant's statement, yet without intending to do Mr. Monard any injury. Indeed, the preacher himself could not object to the smith's testimony, for it was strictly in accordance with the facts. Mr. Monard did not ask either Mr. Bell or Mr. Brandon a single question.

The court was somewhat puzzled; but finally they came to the conclusion that it would not do to depose Mr. Monard from the ministry, as the evidence hardly would warrant so severe a sentence as that; yet with

the statements which Messrs. Brandon and Bell had made, they could not suffer him to continue in the work of the ministry. They, therefore, determined that he must cease to preach till the court should see proper to grant him permission to resume ministerial labor.

This decision was unexpected to Mr. Monard, and was very grievous, but he was powerless, and must submit.

"Brethren," he said, when the final decision was announced, "I, of course, acquiesce in your sentence. But in justice to myself, I must say it is undeserved, and it is not just. If I am guilty at all, I deserve expulsion from your ranks; but if I am innocent, I ought to be sustained."

Here he was interrupted by the presiding officer of the court, who said—

"Brother Monard, the court has not decided that you are guilty of the charges preferred against you, but that under present circumstances, it is best you should cease preaching, at least for awhile."

"I understand that, Sir," replied Mr. Monard. "But the decision, as anybody can see, is tantamount to a condemnation. You do not, it is true, in so many words say that I am guilty, but your action certainly furnishes strong grounds for the suspicion for which I am accused. People will not put themselves to the trouble to ascertain the precise nature of your action, but will consider only the fact that you have *silenced* me, and they will naturally suppose that you had good reasons for the decision you have reached. But, brethren, it is useless to say more. The large majority is against me, and I must submit. I pray God that my innocence may yet be established, to the satisfaction of every one of you, and I believe it will. But if it is never made manifest in this world, when all of us stand before the

tribunal of Eternal Justice, where no error can possibly be made, then it will be known that you have deeply injured a man who is incapable of the crime charged against him."

The court adjourned, and Mr. Monard returned home. His wife was not affected with any very great grief at the misfortune which had befallen her husband. From her standpoint she had no very cogent reasons for being delighted with the ministry as a profession, and it was only in this light she considered it. In her mind, only thoughts of suffering and poverty were associated with it. Its spiritual aspect she totally disregarded. When Mr. Monard, therefore, gave her the information that the court had silenced him, she secretly rejoiced that he would be forced to engage in some other avocation, which would afford more certain means of securing a respectable livelihood. With more kindness and affection than she had ever shown during her married life, she said—

"Never mind, Eldon, I wouldn't care. I never did think you were cut out for a preacher, anyhow, and I've often told you so. Your sermons are well composed, but your delivery spoils them; you know that."

"You are not the judge, my dear, as to my call to the ministry. That comes from God, and not from men. You regard it as nothing but a mere profession, while I take a very different view. I feel that I am called of God to this holy work."

"Why has God put you out of it, then?" quickly asked Mrs. Monard.

Whether the answer which Mr. Monard returned was altogether satisfactory to himself, or not, he said slowly—

"I hope it is only a temporary suspension. It is hard for me to believe that my heavenly Father will suffer

this stigma to rest upon my character any great length of time. But I deserve it, and I therefore submit cheerfully to the chastisement which God inflicts."

"Chastisement?" she said.

"Call it punishment, then, if you will. I submit without murmuring against God."

"But why do you deserve it, Eldon? What have you done to deserve punishment?"

"You cannot understand it, dear; but I do. It is the hand of divine retribution."

"Indeed, I don't understand you, Eldon. You talk about deserving punishment, or chastisement, and all that, as if you were a criminal. Have you ever murdered any one?"

"No, no," he hastily replied, "and you do not think so, dear."

"What have you done, then? You've been a mystery to me for more than twenty years. I can never forget that six months' absence which you have so long and so persistently refused to explain. Was it at that time you did something for which you've been sorry ever since?"

"No, dear; I did nothing then that demands special punishment."

"No man ever lived," she said, as if deeply grieved, "who treated a wife as you have treated me about that thing. I've suffered patiently with you for over twenty long years. I've worked for you, and done all I possibly could to make you happy; but you have shown that you don't love me."

"You know, my dear," replied Mr. Monard, with emphasis, "that I do love you, and I have never given you reason to think otherwise. In my opinion, so many years of devotion on my part ought to convince you of my undying affection for you. I affirm with

candor that I love you as much now as I did the day I led you blushing to the altar. You cannot doubt it, dear?"

"I admit, Eldon, that you've been loving and kind to me in every way but one. Why is it, if you have have any confidence in me, that you won't tell me where you were during that long six months."

"Because, my dear, I fear you would love me less if I were to gratify your curiosity in that respect."

"But you have no reason to fear any such thing," she said, quickly. "It has made me love you less not to tell me, because you seem to be afraid to trust me. I will never reveal it, if you ask me not to. Why not tell me now, and end the suspense which I have endured for so many years."

"Because, my dear, the reasons for secrecy seem to me to be as imperative as they have ever been."

"Will you never tell me?"

"I do not know, my dear," he answered, slowly. "Possibly the time may come when I can gain my own consent to give you the history of my whole life. But for good and sufficient reasons, I must keep silent at present."

"Mr. Monard," she answered, with perceptible indications of rising temper, "I have sometimes thought of applying for a divorce, and if you continue to provoke me, I don't know what I may be tempted to do yet."

"But," replied Mr. Monard, quietly, "you have no grounds, my dear, upon which to file your application. I have never mistreated you, and never used even a harsh word in speaking to you. In fact, no man ever loved woman more than I do you. It seems to me, Vallie dear, that I could not live without you. Sometimes, dear, you know you apply language to me which is anything but pleasant; but I have learned to make

allowance for human infirmities. I think you do not mean what you say when you are provoked. So you cannot destroy my affection for you. If you were to leave me, where could you ever find another to love you as I do?"

"You are the strangest person ever I saw," replied the lady, who could not but be delighted with her husband's cordial expressions of affection. "You say that you love me, and I believe you do; and yet you show that you have little confidence in me; that is what I don't understand."

"You would not say that, my dear, if you knew all."

"Well, there must be something terrible in your history, or you'd tell me; that's the way I put it up."

"I cannot blame you, my love, for taking that very view of the subject, for that is the way in which people ordinarily draw conclusions. So I beg you not to insist upon my revealing a portion of my history which I have good reasons to conceal."

"I've watched you twenty years," answered Mrs. Monard, "and during all that time, I've never known you to do anything which I thought was wrong. You're as strict as a Pharisee ——"

"I hope, though," interrupted Mr. Monard, "not altogether as formal."

"No; but you are as strict, and you seem to be honest and sincere. Now, the question that puzzles me is, how can you preach, when, according to your own admission, you're guilty of something too dreadful to be revealed to your own wife; how is that?"

"If," said Mr. Monard, deliberately, "there is, by any possibility merit in repentance, I deserve to be forgiven. For the good Lord knows I have repented in sackcloth and ashes. But He is compassionate, and

gracious and merciful, and I believe, with all my heart, that He has pardoned all my past sins. Of that I have no doubt. And yet ——”

The minister paused.

“And yet, what?” asked Mrs. Monard, not yet despairing of inducing him to divulge the long-kept secret.

“Well, the Lord punishes sin, no matter who commits it. It is inherently evil, and ought to be punished. Paul was a zealous servant of the Lord Jesus; but he persecuted the Church, and assisted at the stoning of Stephen. Not a great while after this he himself was stoned, and left lying on the ground as a dead man. He had repented of his sin with godly sorrow; but as he had done, so God requited him. I believe God punishes sin, in some way, in every instance. I am, therefore, persuaded that, on account of some things in my early history, the Lord permits calamities to come upon me. It is, therefore, no evidence that I am not called to preach because I am reduced to silence by a human court. At the proper time, I have faith to believe, the good Lord will show to the world that the sentence of the court was unjust in one sense, and every stain will be removed from my character, and I will again preach, probably with better success. I cannot believe that God ever does wrong. It is just in His sight that I should suffer, and I submit to His chastising hand with resignation. You will see, my dear, in the course of time, that my faith is not in vain. But even if you never see it, and I am never permitted to preach again, my confidence in the Lord will never be shaken. Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him. My conscience is clear.”

“But how can your conscience be clear,” asked Mrs. Monard, “when you admit that you’ve done something which you dare not reveal, even to your wife?”

"I have already told you, my dear, that I have repented, and am pardoned, and in that sense my conscience is clear. Paul affirmed that of himself, though he confessed with shame that he had persecuted the Church. But, my dear, I have not admitted that I have done anything which is too *heinous* to be divulged to you."

"Well, you've made that impression upon my mind, anyhow, and I shall always think you have committed some dreadful crime, if you do n't tell me what it is. I would have been a different woman, if you had trusted me."

"I am very sorry to hear that, my dear; but you might have some confidence in me. However, let us say no more about it."

Thus, again, though Mr. Monard gave his wife to understand that there was something remarkable in his early history, yet he refused, with what she regarded as unjustifiable obstinacy, to reveal it. It will not be here contended that Mr. Monard's course was altogether warrantable; but he thought he was right in withholding this much-desired knowledge from his wife and every one else. He acted upon the principle that it is best for a person to reveal his secrets to no human being, if he wants the world never to know them. Ordinarily, this is a safe course.

Often and often had Mrs. Monard endeavored, with all the arts of woman, to extort the coveted secret from him. She had tried the plan of Delilah upon him; but she found that Mr. Monard possessed more stubbornness than Samson. He set his face like flint against all her persuasions, whether presented in coaxing affection or storms of wrath. So it seemed that unless something extraordinary should occur, that six months' absence would never be explained to any human being. If Mr.

Monard had candidly explained it to his wife when he first returned, possibly it might have had a different effect from what he anticipated. In the case of Vincent she had displayed good sense and prudence, and she might have done the same if the husband had revealed his secret. However, this subject will come up again in the progress of this story. For the present, it must be dismissed.

After the conversation which has just been recorded between Mr. and Mrs. Monard, the minister immediately went to the shop of Mr. Bell, whom he still regarded as his friend. When the customary exchange of civilities had taken place, Mr. Bell said—

“I’m mighty disappointed with the result of the trial, Mr. Monard. I deeply sympathize with you in this trouble, and I hope it may work for your good. It’s a very comforting passage, that which says, ‘all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to His purpose.’ I have n’t the slightest doubt that you love Him, even if things don’t go just as you’d like ’em to do.”

“If I know my own heart,” replied the minister, “I love the Master whom I serve, with my spirit. At present, it is true, my prospects seem dark and gloomy, and black clouds hover over me; yet I have not lost confidence in God. He brings the blind by a way they know not. Therefore, I have no complaint against Him whose tender mercies are over all the works of His hands, nor against the court which has pronounced an unjust sentence. I pray God that my ministerial brethren may live to see the necessity of repealing this part of their proceedings. It bears rather hard upon me at my time of life. For now I know not where to turn nor what to do.”

“Let us hope,” answered Mr. Bell, “that God will

open some way for you, and raise up friends in time of need."

"I must find some employment," replied the minister. "I cannot rely upon friends, if I have any to rely on. I suppose that most of the congregation believe me to be guilty of the crime which Mr. Brandon has preferred against me, and since the court has sustained him, I suppose they will have no doubt of it."

"I don't believe you're guilty, Mr. Monard; but it would be false to tell you that others don't—at least a good many. Mr. Brandon has made them believe it. People are always ready to believe any slanderous report about a preacher."

Unfortunately there is too much truth in this last remark of Mr. Bell's. In fact, it requires a very little, trivial thing to blight a minister's character forever. It might be supposed by some that the previous description of Mr. Monard's difficulty is exaggerated, and that the ecclesiastical court which tried the case dealt with him in a very harsh and unjustifiable manner. But let it be remembered that this trial of Mr. Monard is not a mere imaginary incident, brought in to serve the purposes of a story. Certainly, something more thrilling could have been fancied, without any heavy tax upon the faculty of imagination. But *facts* have been detailed, and this trial did occur, with the result already stated. But whatever may be thought of this particular case, we will not have to go far to find a verification of Mr. Bell's observation in regard to people's proneness to give credence to any piece of calumny that has the slightest appearance of truth. It seems that the Church cannot bear with a minister against whom there is any ground for suspicion, and if, when accused, he cannot demonstrate, almost beyond the possibility of doubt, the fact of his innocence, he is sure to suffer. His minis-

terial brethren cannot endure the thought that the world shall point at them the finger of scorn, and exclaim, "See how they connive at sin." They shrink from this thought. Hence, a reference to the records of ecclesiastical courts will show that sometimes a minister has been *gagged*, as it were, and suspended, before he had a fair opportunity to explain and vindicate his conduct. It appeared at the first blush that he had been unfaithful to his ministerial vows, and the court hastily acted upon the mere *appearance*. Then, from the fact that he had in this irregular way been condemned, the world at once believed him to be guilty of a serious crime. Such a case as this can be readily cited. So, many people really believed that Mr. Monard had endeavored to defraud Mr. Brandon, just because the ecclesiastical court had passed sentence of suspension.

"It is very painful to my feelings that they should think so," said Mr. Monard, in reply to Mr. Bell's last remark, and which remark suggested the foregoing digression. "It is very painful, Mr. Bell, when I am so conscious of my innocence. To be pointed at as a thief or a swindler is anything but pleasant. But I have come to the determination to stay right here, in this town, if I possibly can, till the good Lord shows to the world that I am not guilty of the charge that Mr. Brandon has made. I shall not fly, as if I were trying to hide from disgrace. I can look people in the face, as an honest man, and I intend to do it. It may seem, just as matters now are, that my innocence can never be established. But God has ways of producing results, of which men never think. He can bring forth grand effects through seemingly very insignificant instrumentalities, and He can easily turn darkness into light. I feel as if I will come out of this difficulty with my character unstained. So right here I intend to remain."

"I believe you're right, Mr. Monard," replied the honest smith, "and you may rely on me as one of your friends. I'm mighty poor, as you can see for yourself; but still I'll help you all I can. What have you an idea of doing?"

"I have settled upon nothing as yet," answered the minister. "But I will try to find some sort of employment by which I can gain an honest living. I intend to ask the good Lord to aid and direct me, and I have no doubt but that He will answer my prayer. Religion certainly is a great comfort," said Mr. Monard, after a short pause, "especially when one is going through fiery trials, or wading through deep waters."

"There's nothing on earth that can be compared with it," exclaimed Mr. Bell, fervently. "I know, by my own personal experience, I could not do without it. When I am hammering away on my old anvil, day after day, I'm thinking that I'll soon be done with this kind of work, and then I think of the kingdom which the blessed Lord has promised me. Do you know, Mr. Monard, it puzzles me to think how I'll manage my kingdom when it's given to me? How will I, a poor, ignorant blacksmith, know how to govern a kingdom, when I manage my earthly affairs so bad?"

"Why, if you have a literal kingdom," replied the minister, "you will be endowed with the wisdom to govern it. But we do not know that the promised kingdom will be like those which belong to this world. Many things of that sort mentioned in God's Word I take in a figurative sense."

"But I don't like to take that view of things," replied the smith. "The Bible says, 'in my Father's house are many mansions.' I take it that our Lord meant exactly what He said. So, there may be a sure enough kingdom for me. It does me good to think

that I'll go to it after a while, and take my family with me. Won't it be a mighty change, from a dirty old blacksmith shop to a palace built by the Lord's own hand! My faith can hardly make a reality of it. It seems like good news—too good to be true. Then sometimes it makes me smile to think what a figure I'll cut in a mansion. How will a sceptre look in this rough, black hand of mine? What'ud I appear like clothed in a royal robe? Ah, Sir, it seems to me I won't know how to behave myself."

"But you will be changed," answered the minister. "This body of yours on the resurrection morn will be raised a spiritual body, a glorious body, perfectly free from all the blemishes which now mar it so sadly. Every trace of the curse will be removed, and 'this vile body,' as the Apostle terms it, shall put on the habiliments of immortality. Disease and death will be remembered only as awful monsters that pertained to this world. In your kingdom, my brother, none of the inhabitants will ever say, 'I am sick,' and you will hear no more crying and witness no more sorrow. Every face will be lit up with the radiance and glory of heaven, and every eye will beam with Divine love, and every heart will throb with that charity whose exercise is wolfully impeded on earth by the infirmities of human flesh. Blessed thought! we shall then know as we are known. We shall then love our Redeemer with an ardor of which our sin-tainted natures are now utterly incapable. The Christian does have glorious prospects. They are bright enough, even in the darkest hours of trial and temptation, to stimulate his faith, revive his hopes, and inspire him with renewed courage in fighting the battle with the powers of darkness. I never tire of thinking about the blessedness which awaits all that love our Saviour. But we have stubborn duties

to perform on earth. We must bestow many thoughts upon the things of time and sense. Even now, as I see I am trespassing upon your time, I will have to break off from this glorious subject, and ask you about a worldly matter."

"What is that, Sir? Of course, we're bound to think and talk about worldly things."

"Not to detain you longer, do you think the members of the church can be induced to pay me for the time I have served them the present year? They have already paid some; but there is a balance justly due, I think. What they owe is no great amount; but it would be a considerable help to me, when I have not a cent in the world."

"I think they ought to do it, Mr. Monard. That would be nothing but right and fair. I'll see them about it, and try to get them to pay up. If I can't succeed," he added, with a laugh, "I'll get Dr. Huxley after 'em. It seems he can do more with 'em than anybody else can. They can't stand his ridicule and sarcasm. He's got a curious way of looking at people, you know, and it has a powerful effect on 'em, somehow. When he compares 'Evolution,' as he calls it, and religion, and tries to show how much better it makes people than the Church does, they get ashamed of themselves. The Doctor is a good, kind-hearted man, though he has a mighty rough way of talking sometimes."

"He has been a great friend to me, Mr. Bell, and I hope will continue to be. But I will be under obligations if you will attend to this matter at once, for I am in need."

"I will see about it in the morning," replied the smith.

"I will detain you no longer, then," said the preacher, as he bade Mr. Bell good-day.

The pious blacksmith did not forget his promise. So, the next day he assembled all the officers of the church he could find, and together they went to the store of Mr. Brandon, who also was an officer. When Mr. Bell stated the object of the meeting, there was dead silence for a few moments. All eyes were turned to Mr. Brandon, as if soliciting his opinion. Seeing this, Mr. Bell said—

“What do you say, Mr. Brandon?”

The merchant's feelings of revenge were now fully gratified. He had carried his point and gained the victory. He could, therefore, well afford to be generous, when he saw his foe crushed and humbled. Mr. Brandon was beginning to soften down considerably. The minister, throughout the whole difficulty, had manifested no feelings of ill-will, and had not uttered a harsh expression in regard to Mr. Brandon. After the trial there was such an air of subduedness about the silenced preacher that Mr. Brandon's better feelings were touched. He felt like a magnanimous combatant, who sees his foe wounded, prostrate, helpless, in the dust at his feet. He was in a condition that would admit of a display of generosity. Mr. Monard, being now utterly helpless, presented a pitiful appearance. But Mr. Brandon had no idea of showing any signs of commiseration that might induce the belief that he was repenting of the course which he had pursued. Therefore, disguising his actual feelings, he replied to Mr. Bell's question—

“Oh, I suppose it is nothing but just that he should be paid for the full time he has served the church. Besides, I don't want him to go off and give us a bad name, which he would do if we refuse to pay him. I really think, though, he has forfeited his salary by his conduct.”

"That's not my way of thinking," replied Mr. Bell. "He was in good standing till he was tried, and I do think we ought to pay him for the whole time he's preached to us. If the members would not attend services, that did'nt make him any the less pastor of the church."

"Well, we'll not argue the question," said Mr. Brandon. "I owe him a small amount, and here it is," handing to Mr. Bell a few dollars.

The officers then went through the community, begging, in order to raise the remainder. They succeeded, however, in collecting the entire amount due, which was placed in the minister's hands, and which was sufficient to supply his necessary wants for two or three months.

In a short time another minister was secured to fill the pulpit vacated by Mr. Monard. As this new preacher is not connected with our story, no pause shall be made here to give even his name.

CHAPTER XIX.

ARAPHEL.

“ Our portion is not large, indeed ;
But then how little do we need,
For nature's calls are few ;
In this the art of living lies,
To want no more than may suffice
And make that little do.”

A large class of ministers, if not all, have acquired the reputation of being lacking in that attribute which the economy of practical life denominates “common sense.” But may not this sad defect be more apparent than real? Even if this opinion in regard to the minister's intellectual machinery is not without some foundation, is he to blame? The nature of his peculiar vocation should be taken into consideration. About all the business that he can exercise is the management of his secular affairs in such a way as to make one dollar perform the functions of two or three, and to do this certainly requires sound judgment, great ingenuity, *uncommon* sense, and a wise, well-regulated system of economy. If the minister have not the tact to make one dollar perform a great deal more than its proper duty, forthwith he is charged with bad management and a lack of “common sense.” It must be remembered that he cannot engage in trade, traffic and speculation, as others do. He has no intercourse with the commercial world, except such as may be necessary in procuring food and raiment. His business is to look after the souls of his fellow-men, while they are exercising their “common sense” in gathering up those things which his holy calling does not permit him to accumulate. His thoughts must necessarily be taken up with subjects which have no connection with this world. His “com-

mon sense" must not, therefore, be measured by his management of monetary affairs, but by the manner in which he discharges the duties of his vocation. Let a lawyer or a physician be restrained, by misfortune or otherwise, from following his profession, and he would be as much at a loss what to do as would a minister who is silenced by a decree of interdiction.

Mr. Monard could no longer pursue his calling, which barely supplied him with the necessities of life. He was now out of employment. Is it any proof of a want of "common sense" that he was greatly perplexed by the situation, and knew not what to do? Nearly a week had passed away, and he had not determined upon any course of action. He had thought of various things, but he had done nothing all his life except to preach, and he knew not how to do anything else. He was now, he thought, too far advanced in years to study law or medicine. True, he was well qualified to teach a school; but he could not secure a position without leaving the village, and to this he was very much opposed. However, the difficult problem was soon solved in quite an unexpected way. For, one day, toward the end of the week, Dr. Huxley met Mr. Monard, and invited him to go to his office. As soon as they were seated, the Doctor said—

"I am sorry to hear that your church has treated you so shamefully. From what I can learn, they have displaced you on insufficient grounds."

"I think myself, Doctor, that my brethren acted very hastily. But I shall not complain. I believe that God will bring good out of it yet. He orders all for the best."

"So you think that God had something to do with the affair?"

"Certainly, Sir. The Lord has promised to guide His

children. I do not see why I should not recognize His hand in adversity as well as prosperity. These earthly misfortunes are often blessings in disguise, and I believe they are always intended to accomplish some wise purpose. We do not understand God's ways; they are not as our ways. However dark may be the dispensations that concern His people, He designs their good."

"That is a very easy way to get out of a difficulty, Mr. Monard—just to assume that your God is good and kind, and intends to do you a service, no matter how heavy and grievous the calamities He sends upon you."

"Temporal prosperity, Doctor, is nothing, compared with eternal blessedness. We are not to gauge God's kindness and goodness by the mere amount of earthly blessings He bestows upon those who serve Him, because the gratification of carnal desires is not the end of life. The Lord considers chiefly that which will promote the everlasting welfare of His people, and if it can be secured by misfortunes and afflictions, we ought to cheerfully submit. He is wiser than we are, and knows what is best to be done."

"You have wonderful faith, Mr. Monard—as much as I have in the goddess of Evolution. But no matter now. I suppose you are not in the right humor to engage in a theological or scientific discussion. I have been thinking about you a good deal in the last two or three days. You will not attempt to preach, will you?"

"No, Sir. I shall respect the sentence of my brethren. Besides, I could not, under present circumstances, find a congregation that would employ me."

"I did not know but that you could get up a church of your own—an independent institution."

"I would not attempt that, Doctor, even if I thought I could succeed. No, Sir; I shall acquiesce in the decision of my brethren."

"You will have to follow some other pursuit, then?"

"Yes, Sir, at least for a while, till the sentence of suspension shall be removed, and I know not when that will be."

"Have you determined what you will do?"

"Not yet, Sir; and it is a puzzling question what a man at my age, thrown out of the vocation to which he has been accustomed from his youth, can do. Under present circumstances, it would be folly, I think, to attempt to learn another profession."

"Yes," replied the Doctor, "you have not time for that. You want employment that will prove remunerative at once."

"Yes, Sir."

"How would you like to farm, Mr. Monard?"

"I have thought of that," replied the minister, "but I have no land, nor any of the necessary agricultural implements."

"I think it would be an advantage to you to farm for a while," said the Doctor. "You need exercise, Sir. So, if you can make up your mind to farm, I think I can make suitable arrangements for you."

"I would certainly be under obligation to you, Doctor, if you could. What arrangement do you propose?"

"Well, I have a small farm not half a mile from town—a very good one, too. The land is quite productive. I had to take it for a debt, but as I have more places now than I can well look after, I would be glad to get this one off my hands. I will sell it to you very cheap."

"But, Doctor," said the minister, with a sad smile, "you seem to forget that I am not able to buy anything. How could I ever pay you for a farm?"

"I will not require the first payment till you make a

crop," answered the Doctor. "You can hire help, and I am under the impression that you will succeed. I think you will make an excellent farmer, if you will give your attention to it. I will give you as much time as you want to pay for the place. If you feel disposed to try this plan, I will show you that there is nothing in the religion of Evolution to make one human being oppress another. I shall not give you any trouble about the matter. In this way you may be able to get you a nice home, and render yourself independent of that institution you call the Church."

"I am certainly obliged to you, Doctor, for your very kind offer, and I would accept it, if I could see how I am to run the farm. But I have no utensils, and am not able to purchase any."

"As to farming implements," said the physician, "you need not give yourself any trouble, as there are enough on the place to do at least for one crop. In fact, the place is tolerably well furnished. I had rented it last year to a man whom I expected to remain on it this year; but last week he put out for Arkansas. So you will have nothing to do but step in and take possession. You can pay me a little something for the tools whenever you can. What say you?"

"You are too kind to me, Doctor," said Mr. Monard. "I have no right to impose upon your generosity to such an extent as you propose."

"That is my business," answered the Doctor, bluntly. "You may call it generosity, if you wish; but probably I may have another name for it. You need not suppose that your system of religion is the only one that can cultivate the finer sensibilities of the heart. There is nothing in my doctrine of Evolution to make men selfish."

The suspicion flashed into Mr. Monard's mind that

Dr. Huxley was a monomaniac. He was at a loss to conceive how a sane man could possibly delude himself into the belief that there was any principle in the theory of Evolution which had the slightest connection with morality or religion. He therefore looked at the physician, as if in doubt, and said—

“Do you attribute to Evolution the goodness of heart with which you are endowed by nature?”

“If *nature* gave me ‘goodness of heart,’ as you are pleased to call it,” replied the Doctor, “that is the same thing as Evolution giving it to me, for the two words are often synonymous.”

“Do you think, Doctor, that Evolution, or nature, whichever term you may prefer, teaches such principles as brotherly love?”

“Why, as to that,” replied the Doctor, “the goddess of Evolution has not given us any printed Bible; but we learn the principle to which you allude by inductive reasoning, and almost as easily as if it had been revealed in written form by a living god. The very first lesson that the goddess of Evolution teaches us is humility. Your Bible says that man was formed from dust; in that we are agreed, though we may differ as to the *modus operandi*. We should remember our lowly origin, and we should remember, also, that we have the same origin. All men are, therefore, related by the strongest kind of ties of consanguinity. This being the case, what is easier than to infer that we should be charitable towards each other?”

Mr. Monard made no reply, as he did not wish to give offence to his noble benefactor. After a brief pause, the Doctor continued—

“I suppose you do not agree with me. Well, I try to exercise charity to such an extent that I can bear very composedly with those whose reason leads to con-

clusions different from mine. The Church of Evolution, Mr. Monard, has never taken the sword in one hand, and her creed in the other, and waded through the blood of human beings who saw proper to reject it. I know a certain religious institution which has done that very thing." And the Doctor burst into a loud laugh.

"But come, Mr. Monard," he said, when his laughter had subsided, "we won't quarrel about it. I intend, some of these days, to call your attention to the inconsistencies and absurdities of your Bible. If you will explain them, I confess you will stagger my belief. But just now we will attend to business. What do you say to my proposition?"

"State your terms, Doctor."

The physician did so; but as the details of this transaction would not be of any great interest, they shall be omitted. As soon as the Doctor had concluded, Mr. Monard said—

"Your terms are so very reasonable that I can accept, and I do so with gratitude."

"Enough said, then. Come back in the morning, and I will have the necessary papers ready for your signature. You will have to move at once."

"Yes, Sir; it will not take long to do that. I must begin operations immediately."

Accordingly, Mr. Monard returned home with a light heart. The sky was brightening, and he felt that the Lord had raised him up a friend in the blunt Dr. Huxley.

Mrs. Monard was perfectly delighted with the prospect of having a home of her own, though ever so humble. She had been wandering around the world for more than twenty years, and during all this time she had been sojourning in the cheapest rented houses. When,

therefore, the husband told her that he had actually purchased a home, she seemed to change to a different woman. Tears of joy rushed to her eyes, and she kissed her husband, with so much affection, that he was surprised and gladdened.

"Oh, I just know I can make a good farmer," she said, with almost childish glee. "We will have a nice orchard, and plenty of excellent fruit; and we'll have some good cows, and I'll make butter to sell; and I'll raise chickens and ducks and turkeys, and we'll live like other people. I'm tired of towns, anyhow, and I want to go to the country. I know we'll starve if we stay here. But we'll be so close to town, too, that we'll have all the advantages of town and country. When can we go, Eldon? I wish we could leave this hateful old rat den to-morrow. I'm sick of it."

"I think we can go the day after, my dear, and I am truly glad that you are so well pleased with my purchase. But we will have to practice a very rigid economy till we get the place paid for."

"Not more rigid, Eldon," interrupted Mrs. Monard, "than we've been accustomed to all our married life. I don't need to take lessons in the science of economy. I have learned it practically and thoroughly."

"I know that, my love, and it has been a source of constant pain to me to see you subjected to such hardships as you have so long endured. But ministers and their families have to make many sacrifices. You are not the only preacher's wife who is forced to undergo trials and endure suffering. I do not know why it is that people expect their preacher to live on such a small salary. But probably he can exercise greater influence than if he were rich."

"For my life, Eldon, I can't see it that way. I've heard you say that it is no sin to be rich. Why, then,

should not a preacher have as much wealth as anybody else? I'm certain if you were rich you could do more good. You could aid the poor; but you're so poor yourself that you can't do it. I've heard you wish that you could get certain books that would be useful to you; but you've had to do without them. I can't see how a minister is any better qualified to preach by being poor. Is poverty one of the virtues?"

"No, my dear. I do not say that it is; and there is no merit in it at all. But there is great danger in the possession of riches. I do not think a rich minister can do as much good, or at least will, as a poor one. True, he might contribute to the relief of his suffering neighbors, but he would be apt to lose moral influence with the masses. They can never regard him as one of themselves; but they will consider his sphere as very different from theirs. It must sound like solemn mockery to those who toil for their daily bread, to hear their wealthy pastor preach or talk to them about unmurmuring submission to their hard lot. They know that he does not speak from experience. They cannot say of him as of the Master, 'He was tempted in all points as we are.' How can he talk earnestly to those who know not one day that they will not be pinched by hunger the next about the uselessness and sinfulness of anxiety, when he cannot feel it himself? People will think that he has no right to be rich, and his conduct will be misconstrued, no matter how good a man he may be. Some will dislike him for no other reason in the world, than that he has 'great possessions.' He may be liberal and charitable, but they will think him parsimonious, or he would not be wealthy. If he preach on the love of money as the root of all evil, they will think that his sermon is more applicable to himself than to them. Thus the minister who has wealth, or is even lifted far

above want and suffering; is restricted in his influence. He cannot fully identify himself with the poorer classes, and the necessary consequence is there can be no congeniality of feeling between them. Whether he desires it or not, the poor people, in their own minds, will place him in a sphere far removed from their own. So, of the two, my dear, I would prefer not to be the rich preacher."

"I confess, Eldon, I had never thought of it in that light. But, still, I don't think the people ought to allow their minister to suffer for the very necessities of life."

"No; I do not think so, either," replied Mr. Monard. "They ought to make his salary sufficient to free his mind from all secular cares. Under the Mosaic dispensation, the Lord made ample provision for the support of His priests, and there is no good reason why it should not be done yet."

"Well, it is no use," replied Mrs. Monard, "to talk any more about it now. We've got to look to some other source for our living."

So Mrs. Monard, the remainder of the day, could talk about nothing else but the place which was to be her own home. Her head was full of new ideas and schemes, which she intended to execute as soon as possible. The fond husband was really glad to see her in such high spirits, and with a sense of happiness to which he had long been a stranger, entered into the discussion of her little plans. It was the most delightful evening he had spent in her society for many long years. It seemed that the heavenly Father was blessing him, and showing him the way out of his difficulties and troubles.

Early the next morning, Mr. Monard again called at the office of Dr. Huxley, who had the legal papers

ready, to which the minister immediately attached his signature. By so doing, he acquired a title to a home, the only one to whose possession he had ever aspired in his life. Dr. Huxley had sold the little farm for less than its real value. But he had formed a strong attachment for Mr. Monard, and he now had an opportunity of manifesting his friendship in a practical way. The physician, to his credit be it spoken, when he was a friend to a person, was one in whom reliance and confidence could be placed. He had formed a high opinion of the minister's intellectual abilities, and of his integrity, and regarded him as a noble man, worthy in every way of respect and esteem. There was another strange thing about the Doctor, which it may not be improper to mention; it afforded him pleasure to demonstrate the superiority of the Evolutionist over the Christian in the practice of the moral virtues. People thought him a little cranky in regard to his hobby; but all could bear testimony to the fact that he was a good citizen and a kind-hearted, benevolent man, notwithstanding his exterior rudeness and bluntness.

The next day Mr. Monard moved to his new home. It did not require any great length of time to effect the transfer of his household furniture from one place to the other, as he had, in the course of his life, accumulated scarcely any of this world's goods. The place which he had bought on such favorable terms from his Evolution friend was a small farm, containing not more than forty acres of tillable land. The dwelling was of the humbler kind, consisting of only three rooms and a kitchen. But it was situated in a beautiful grove of forest trees, which considerably relieved the poverty-stricken appearance of the cottage, which had been erected several years before. Fortunately for the

minister and his wife, they had been accustomed, for a fifth of a century, to the most ordinary residences, and had occupied several that were far inferior, both in external and internal appearance. It was a much more desirable dwelling than the one which they had just left. At any rate, the minister and his small family occupied ground which they could feel was their own. Mrs. Monard and her daughter, influenced by this consideration, could take great interest and pleasure in beautifying their home in those numberless little ways which a woman of good taste so well understands. In the evening, the two ladies were busily employed in making such arrangements as they conceived would secure comfort and convenience. As Mrs. Monard was going from one place to another, arranging the little furniture that belonged to them, she paused for a moment where her husband was standing in the gallery, and, with a face bright with smiles, said—

“Eldon, name our place. It is the first house we ever could call our own, and it must be christened before we sleep.”

Mr. Monard looked thoughtful and solemn for a short time, and replied—

“Yes, my dear, it must. I do not see why our humble home should not be honored with a name as well as the palaces of the rich and great. Will you pledge yourself to abide by my choice of names?”

“Yes, I will trust to your taste in that.”

“I will then give it a name which is more characteristic of our lives, especially mine, than of the appearance of these beautiful surroundings. No one would ever think the name applicable to this lovely spot. But we need never explain its meaning.”

“Very well, what is it?”

“ARAPHEL.”

"That sounds well," replied the lady, "but what is its meaning? Or does it have any?"

"Yes, indeed. It has a deep significance which I do not want everybody to know. Not many can ascertain it, unless you or I tell it. But, if you consent, we will keep the meaning a profound secret."

"I consent; what is it?"

Mr. Monard looked around, as if he were afraid of being overheard by his daughter, and whispered in his wife's ear.

"Why, that is not suitable, Eldon," she said.

"No; but the name applies to the place, and its signification, to us. With that view, I think it is appropriate in some respects. You need not explain the meaning to any, if they should have curiosity enough to ask."

"They can look in a dictionary."

"If they examine an English dictionary," replied Mr. Monard, "they will never find it, because it belongs to a language which no one about here understands."

"You are an eccentric man, Eldon. But have your own way. It is a pretty name, anyhow. So, let it be Araphel. I hope, though, we may have reason to change it some day. I'm going to be industrious and economical, and I hope that after awhile we can make a more genteel appearance in society. I'm so glad that you've quit preaching. I do believe we would have almost starved to death, if you had kept it up."

These last remarks caused Mr. Monard to heave a deep sigh, for two reasons. One was that his wife seemed to feel so little interest in the most important of all subjects that concern the destiny of human beings. The other reason was, that he believed with all his heart in his divine call to the work of the ministry. Whether

he could, or could not, account for the particular dispensation of Providence which had deprived him of ecclesiastical employment, he was resigned to God's will, as he, at least, regarded it. As to his wife, he did not give up in despair. He noticed that since the death of little Willie she had made vigorous efforts to control her violent temper, and he yet entertained hopes of her conversion. At times, however, her unfortunate disposition would become decidedly manifest; yet the husband would maintain a dignified silence till the storm had passed away. She knew that Mr. Monard loved her in spite of this serious fault, and sometimes she appeared to be ashamed of her deportment, since she could not provoke her meek husband to offer opposition. She would occasionally become disgusted with herself, when she perceived that she was the only actor in the scene. Nothing so soon checks the angry passions of man or woman, as the lack of antagonism. Mr. Monard displayed great wisdom, therefore, when his wife would break out into one of her fearful paroxysms of wrath, by either absenting himself, or not appearing to notice it. If he had condescended to engage in domestic quarrels, the consequences would have been fatal to conjugal happiness. Though her last remark, expressive of gladness at the thought that he could no longer follow his high calling, caused him to sigh, yet he said not a word. But he indulged the hope that, under the new circumstances, there might be a still greater change in her disposition.

All parties went to work with energy to improve their new home. They were determined that Araphel should present an appearance as attractive as their skill, ingenuity and limited means could give it. The consequence was, that in a short time it looked like a different place, and Mrs. Monard looked like a different woman. She

was now so constantly employed that she did not have time to indulge in her mad fits. Mr. Monard went to work on his farm with cheerfulness. He soon became deeply interested in his agricultural operations, and worked hard. In the fall his industry was rewarded with an abundant crop, and he was able easily to make the first payment on his place.

So the little family at Araphel appeared to be prosperous and happy, in spite of the evil predictions which some persons had made.

CHAPTER XX.

DISHONESTY.

“The man who pauses on his honesty,
Wants little of the villain.”

Human nature presents for the exercise of our philosophy some strange features. The greatest and most perplexing problem connected with simply earthly affairs which man has ever tried to solve, is man. He is fearfully and wonderfully made. No one can understand in what way the physical organs operate so as to sustain life. What causes the blood to circulate through the body? The most skillful anatomist cannot tell. What is animal heat? Why is it that the lungs perform their proper functions with such regularity during the hours of repose, when the sleeper cannot put forth a volition? Scientific men endeavor to explain these and similar things; yet, after all, the information which they give amounts to nothing more than the statement of the fact that *man breathes and lives*.

But if we cannot understand the mysteries of the tangible body, how can we possibly understand the intangible mind? Who can explain the process of thought? What is the soul? Why is there such an astounding difference between men? Yet there is a difference in intellect and in morals. Some individuals of our race seem to rise above even native depravity, and display a beneficent disinterestedness that makes them stand, like Saul, a head and shoulders above all the Israelites. We have men like John Howard, risking health and life in the herculean task of diminishing the mighty ocean of human suffering and sorrow. Such seem to constitute the connecting link between men and angels. There are others who stand as the

antipodes of the Howard class, and might be regarded as the connecting link between men and demons. Between these two wide extremes there is to be found every possible variety of characters of which the genus, man, is capable. There are men who have some noble qualities, yet marred by traits so despicable, that it baffles human philosophy to explain how such incongruities can find a habitation in the same heart. But it cannot be denied that there is this strange mixture in some natures, an instance of which will now be given.

It was in December, and the freezing winds whistled among the leafless branches of the trees. A heavy snow, fit symbol of purity, lay on the ground, concealing nearly all objects, so that the earth looked as if a vast sheet of unearthly whiteness were spread over all sublunary things. The intense cold had forced man and beast to seek shelter from the cutting blasts that swept with wintry music from those regions which have never felt the genial influence of tropical heat. Toward nightfall a few men could be seen slowly and laboriously making their way along the roads and paths leading from the business houses, which were situated around the public square of the village. Among these was Mr. Brandon. The day had been one which was called in mercantile circles, "dull." There had been few business transactions, as most people had been kept in-doors by the inclemency of the weather. Mr. Brandon trudged through the deep snow till he reached his elegant residence. Stopping in the hall, he doffed his comfortable overcoat, hung it up, together with his hat, took off his overshoes, and entered his room, where sat his wife before a bright, blazing fire, whose grateful warmth was enough to put a man of moderate moral sensibility and gratitude in a good humor with himself and the rest of the world.

"What sort of day have you had?" asked Mrs. Brandon, as her husband sat down in his easy chair at a comfortable distance from the fire.

"Dull enough, dull enough," was the response, in a somewhat churlish tone; "have n't sold goods enough to pay for our supper."

"No? But you could n't expect people to buy goods such a day as this," answered Mrs. Brandon, who was a cheerful, pleasant and pious woman. She belonged to that happy class of people who are disposed to always "look on the bright side of things," and she tried to instill some of her own cheerfulness into the heart of her husband whenever she perceived that he was in a sullen mood. Mr. Brandon was generally out of humor when he was not adding to his store of worldly wealth. But when he made large sales he was happy enough for that day, at least. His thoughts were almost constantly occupied with trade and traffic, and he had to make an effort to wrench his reflections from that subject when any other would demand his attention. In answer to his wife's last remark, he said—

"No; but to-morrow bids fair to be no better, from the looks of things out-of-doors. Even if it clears off, it will take several days of sunshine to melt the snow, and then the ground will be muddy and sloppy. So, in any case, it must be some time before there will be much business."

"Well, never mind, love; it will be all right. I am in hopes that, in a few days at most, the weather will be nice and pleasant, and then trade may be better than ever."

"I hope so," replied Mr. Brandon, dryly. "But let's have supper as soon as you can, for I'm as hungry as a wolf. I never could enjoy a cold dinner, and I didn't eat much of what you sent to-day."

"I told John to walk as fast as he could, to the store," replied the lady. "I was afraid your dinner would get cold."

"So it did. But please hurry up with your supper, for I'm suffering."

"It will be ready in twenty minutes," answered Mrs. Brandon, as she hastened to the dining room, in order to see that everything should be arranged to suit her husband's fastidious taste. In due time Mr. Brandon was seated at the table, with its snow-white cloth and shining ware. The smoking delicacies were arranged in such a way as to provoke his appetite, and tempt him to do violence to his physical organs.

"Where is Leonard?" asked Mrs. Brandon, after her husband had invoked the divine blessing, and while she was pouring out a cup of coffee, whose rich aroma diffused itself throughout the room.

"I suppose he will be along presently; I left him at the store."

"The poor boy," said Mrs. Brandon, with a sigh, "seems to be nearly crazy about Zenie Huxley. I notice that he is losing his appetite. Haven't you observed how pale he is?"

"No; he appears to me as he has always done. It is only your imagination."

"It is not a fancy, my love," replied Mrs. Brandon. "Leonard is not looking well at all, and I know that Zenie is the cause of it. I wish she would not tantalize him so. Leonard is a good boy, and deserves a nice wife. I'm certain she could n't do better than to marry him."

"I think not," replied Mr. Brandon.

"Zenie is a nice girl, too."

"Not quite domestic enough, though," suggested the merchant. "She thinks too much about books, so I've

heard. But I suppose she will get over that when she gets to housekeeping for herself. To tell the truth, though, I believe she thought more of Vincent Monard than she does of Leonard."

"I think you are mistaken, my love," said Mrs. Brandon, who, like nearly all mothers, thought her own child had no equal. "I do not see how she could. Leonard is undoubtedly the handsomer of the two, and has such bright prospects before him."

"But the other was very much inclined to be bookish, like herself, and these young girls only look at the present. They do not think how they are to live in the future. But Leonard will make a business man, and if Zenie will marry him, I guess I and the Doctor will give the young couple a first-rate start in life."

"I don't see why Zenie does not consent to marry Leonard. Vincent Monard is not in the way now. He has gone off, nobody knows where. Have you ever heard from him since he left?"

"Not a word," replied Mr. Brandon.

"Do you have any idea where he is?"

"Not the least."

"I was asking Mrs. Huxley about him the other day," continued Mrs. Brandon. "I suspected that he might be corresponding with Zenie. But Mrs. Huxley says she is certain that he has not written to Zenie."

"I don't believe," said Mr. Brandon, "that Dr. Huxley would ever give his consent to such a marriage as that?"

"Why not?"

"Because the Doctor is a proud man, and would not like to be connected with a disgraced family."

"No, I reckon not."

"I wish," said the merchant, "that Leonard would hurry up, and bring matters to a conclusion, if he

intends to marry at all. He is not so attentive to business as he has been."

"From the way," said Mrs. Brandon, "that Mrs. Huxley talks, I'm satisfied that she and the Doctor would be in favor of the match."

"But what about the young lady?" asked Mr. Brandon.

"I can't find out what she thinks," answered Mrs. Brandon. "It is natural to suppose, though, that she encourages Leonard, or he would n't keep going."

"That is a reasonable supposition; but I wish he'd marry, if he is going to."

At this moment the young man who had formed the subject of their conversation came in, and their talk was immediately changed to another channel.

After supper Mr. and Mrs. Brandon were again seated in their room, in pleasant proximity to a roaring fire.

"I wish you would take off your vest, my love," said Mrs. Brandon. "I have been wanting to repair it for some time. Only a part of the lining is worn, which I can easily replace, and it will be as good as new."

"Certainly," replied the merchant, who carried his economy into every department which involved money. "It is excellent cloth, and I've worn it two years, winter and summer, and it will do for a long time yet."

Accordingly, Mrs. Brandon took the vest and began work. The merchant sat smoking his pipe, and looking at his wife, as her fingers deftly removed the defective lining.

"Why, what is this?" she presently exclaimed. "A ten-dollar note, I declare! Why, my love, how careless you are."

"Let me see it," eagerly cried the merchant, reaching

out his hand. He examined it closely and thoughtfully for a moment, and said—

“See if there is a hole in the pocket of that vest; Sallie.”

“Yes,” replied the wife, as she turned the pocket, “here is one, in the corner. You’re too careless, my love.”

“Good gracious!” exclaimed the merchant, in an excited tone, and turning pale, “that is the very note that Monard paid me, and I thought he stole it.”

“Oh, heavens!” cried the lady, dropping the vest; “and you have ruined him!”

There was not a word spoken after this for several moments. Both parties seemed to be paralyzed with horror at the thought of the deep injury which had been inflicted upon the poor, uncomplaining minister. Presently the lady asked—

“Are you sure that it is the very note?”

“I am absolutely certain of it. Because I have put no money in that pocket since he paid me. I was in a hurry that day, and did not have my pocket-book with me. As sure as you live that note worked through the hole, and got into the corner of the vest. Isn’t it strange that I did not see that hole, when I examined the pocket too?”

“But if you will notice,” said Mrs. Brandon, “you can’t see the hole when the pocket is turned, unless you examine very closely.”

“That is so,” replied the merchant, as he gazed at the pocket. “How unfortunate!”

“Poor Mr. Monard!” said the kind lady, as the tears rushed to her eyes. “My love, how you have injured him!”

“Yes; but I did it innocently and honestly. I was certain that he stole it.”

"Oh, I'm so glad we've found the note," said Mrs. Brandon, who was thinking only of repairing the awful mischief which had been done. "I know you will go right straight to Mr. Monard in the morning, and tell him all about it, and beg his pardon, and have him restored to the ministry as soon as possible. I'm sure he will forgive you. Oh, dear husband, it is too bad that he has been suspended, when he was innocent of any crime. I thought it very strange that he would do such a thing, and I would not have believed it if anybody else had said so but you. But you must not let another day pass without letting him know all about it. How glad he'll be, poor man!"

This was certainly good counsel, and proceeded from an honest woman's heart. While she was talking, the merchant was absorbed in his own thoughts, and heard scarcely a word which she had uttered. What to do under the newly-developed circumstances was the perplexing question which he was rapidly discussing in his own mind. Of course, there ought to have been no discussion at all, and the merchant should not have hesitated in regard to the course to be pursued. In the presence of temptation it will not do to tamper with the conscience. If there be any "halting between two opinions," the evil spirit will enter into the heart, and be apt to silence the gentle pleadings of the secret monitor. Mr. Brandon paused on the brink of dishonesty. There was a terrible struggle in his breast. He became confused by the clamors of the two voices, one of which cried, "do right," and the other, "do wrong." He was not a dishonest man in the ordinary sense of the word; and he had no wish and no intention to wrong Mr. Monard. In what he had done, he had acted conscientiously. But how he ought to proceed, since he had just ascertained what a grievous, un-

deserved misfortune he had brought upon the poor minister, was a question which bewildered him. How his soul recoiled at the thought of doing a thing which his conscience emphatically and loudly condemned! How his pride revolted at the idea of publicly acknowledging his rash error, and bearing the odium of having crushed an innocent minister of the gospel, who had never manifested the slightest indication of malice toward the defamer of his character! But the violent contest between opposite principles soon came to an end, and the devil, Pride, had gained the victory.

He did not make any reply to his wife's proposition, till she repeated it.

"You will go in the morning and tell Mr. Monard all about it, won't you?"

"Sallie," replied Mr. Brandon, with an air that surprised her, "no one feels more sorry than I do that this unfortunate blunder has occurred. I have the consciousness, however, that I was trying to do right. The Lord knows that I would not have intentionally wronged Mr. Monard for anything on earth, and I have been studying how I can repair the injury."

"Why, that is very easily done," replied the honest woman. "Of course, the first thing you will do, will be to tell Mr. Monard right away just how it was, and how sorry you are."

"No, no," said the merchant, shaking his head, emphatically, "that will not do, because it would ruin me in the community."

"Surely, my love, you don't think of keeping Mr. Monard's ten dollars?"

"You know I don't, Sallie," answered the merchant, showing impatience. "I wouldn't defraud any man, much less a preacher."

"No," quickly answered the wife, "I know you are too honest for that."

"But I can't tell this thing, Sallie," continued the merchant, "because it would ruin me forever."

"What are you going to do, then?" she asked, looking at him in surprise.

"I will manage to pay back Mr. Monard's money without his knowing it."

"Why, William Brandon; you!"

"Oh, don't stare at me in that way," he said, fretfully. "I know what I'm doing. I will also pay him good interest for the whole time I've had it. It would be mine, anyhow, if I had not made it back in trade."

"I don't understand you."

"Why, I charged him enough extra on the goods he bought till I got back the ten dollars which I thought he had stolen."

"Has Mr. Monard really traded with you since your difficulty with him?"

"Certainly he has. We are perfectly friendly. In fact, we have never had any sharp words since the day the difficulty occurred."

"Noble man!" exclaimed Mrs. Brandon, while tears trickled down her cheek; "what a forgiving spirit he has shown! Oh, my love, outdo him in magnanimity. Do your duty, like a brave and honest man."

"You know I am an honest man, Sallie," replied the merchant, peevishly. "Did you ever know me to cheat anybody? I tell you that Mr. Monard shall have his money, every cent of it, and interest, too. He is a better man than I thought he was. He has never got mad with me, and has done most of his trading with me, and has never said a word about our difficulty. But he shall have his money."

"Poor, innocent man," said Mrs. Brandon, as she

wiped the tears from her eyes, "how he must suffer! He goes to prayer-meeting every Wednesday night, and to preaching every Sunday, and they never call on him to pray, nor to take any part in the service; and yet he never murmurs. He takes all the interest in the church they will allow, and tries not to notice the slights they offer. I confess he has more religion than I have. I never could be as meek and humble as he is, after they had turned me out without just cause. Oh, my love, have him reinstated. It will never do to let people treat him as they have done, when it is in your power to restore him at once."

"But, Sallie, what can I do?"

"Oh, go and tell him, at once; and tell everybody else," she said, with energy.

"But that will ruin me, as I have already told you. I'm going to let him get his money back in trade. I will reduce the price of what he buys, so that he shall receive his ten dollars and interest."

"But," said the wife, looking pained and mortified, "that doesn't restore his lost character. You don't want to destroy the poor man's character, do you? What is ten dollars, compared with his loss in that way?"

"But I'll pay handsome interest, and if that is not enough, I'll give him something besides."

"But I'm satisfied that Mr. Monard, poor man, would not give his character for all the money you have got."

"Well, now," said Mr. Brandon, doggedly, "I think my character is something. Self-preservation is the first law of nature. He might just as well lose his character as for me to lose mine. If I go and tell this thing, people will say that I have acted like a fool, and that I've been dishonest. Mr. Monard's friends will

hate me, and Dr. Huxley will be forever referring to it in connection with his theory of Evolution, as he calls it. I believe he is going crazy on that foolish thing, anyhow, and he would say that this was another curious freak of Evolution, and he'd have the whole town laughing at me."

"I don't see," answered Mrs. Brandon, "how he could connect Evolution with such an affair as this is."

"I know you don't; but I do. He is the strangest man I ever saw. He brings his Evolution into every other church matter, and he will do it in this, too, and I'll never hear the last of it."

"I think Dr. Huxley has more sense than that," replied the lady, who was surprised to hear her husband advance such silly reasons in justification of his proposed course of conduct.

"You don't know anything about him," exclaimed Mr. Brandon. "I tell you he is half crazy. So I think I might just as well save my character as Mr. Monard's."

"People will think more of you," answered the lady, "if you will just honestly and boldly confess your mistake. You will never lose anything by doing what is right. But if you do, I'm sure I would rather suffer in that way than to have a burden on my conscience. If people ridicule, as you fear (though I don't see why they can), I wouldn't care. I'd do right, at all hazards. You are a professed Christian, my love, and you know very well what religion requires. If you injure your neighbor, you ought to make restitution."

"So I will, I tell you," said Mr. Brandon, somewhat testily, "but I'm not going to ruin myself to do it. Mr. Monard is a very good man, and I shall help him all I can in his new calling. You know that he is not qualified to preach, anyhow. He's been a failure in that

respect, and always will be. It was the best thing that could have happened to him, when he was forced to quit. He has made a good crop this year, and made one payment on his place, and in a year or two he will have a nice home. But if he is restored to the ministry, he will try to preach again, and will starve to death at it. He can never be a success at it, any way, with that termagant wife of his. People will not put up with her awful temper. Why, she's as fierce as a bloodhound. I don't see how Mr. Monard can live with such a woman. I never can forgive her for acting the fool as she did in my store. I do believe she would have actually struck me if she had not fainted."

"But, my love, she was driven to desperation. None of us can tell how we would act if we were situated as she was. She was about to suffer from hunger."

"I don't care if she was," interrupted Mr. Brandon, angrily, "she had no business to come to my own house and almost curse me for a thing for which I was not responsible. She had no right to do that."

"No, certainly not. She was guilty of very unlady-like conduct; but we must make allowance for people's weaknesses. If we cannot do this, we certainly ought to hold each one responsible for his own sins. It is not right to punish Mr. Monard for what his wife has done."

"I don't propose to do that," answered the merchant, "but I say that Mr. Monard can never do any good as a preacher with such a wife as he has. I think it will be doing him a great favor to keep him out of the ministry, for which he is unqualified, even if he had a good wife. He ought not to preach any more."

"Is it really, then, your intention," asked Mrs. Brandon, whose heart ached at the expressed determination of her husband to perpetrate such a great wrong, "to

keep silent, and let the poor, innocent preacher pass for a *thief* ? ”

“ No,” he answered, “ I shall tell the people that I believe Mr. Monard is an honest man.”

“ But how can you do that, when you accused him of dishonesty so publicly, and had him suspended ? ”

“ Why, I can say that I’ve found him strictly honest ever since, which is the truth.”

“ No doubt of that,” she replied, “ but is that the *whole* truth ? and how can you reconcile it to your conscience to let Mr. Monard’s character rest under such an imputation, when you can remove all suspicion by speaking a word ? ”

“ Why, he don’t seem to care for it, and he is doing better than he ever did in his life.”

“ Just put yourself in his place, and him in yours, and how would you want him to act ? There is the golden rule, my love.”

“ See here, Sallie,” exclaimed Mr. Brandon, with a considerable degree of tartness, “ I have made up my mind on the subject, and I want you to keep your mouth closed, unless you want to ruin me.”

“ Of course, love,” said Mrs. Brandon, sorrowfully, “ I won’t breathe it, if you tell me not to ; but it will be a burden on my conscience which will be hard to bear. It will make me cry when I go to church, and see poor Mr. Monard looking so solemn and subdued. How can I see him treated as a thief, when I know he is innocent ? I don’t see how you can stand it yourself.”

“ But I will stand it, though,” he answered, with sulken firmness, “ and you must stand it too, if you do not wish to incur my everlasting displeasure.”

“ I will keep silent if you say so.” And she heaved a sigh, as she went to work on the garment which had so unexpectedly testified to the integrity of the preacher.

It would have been far better for Mr. Brandon if he had unhesitatingly followed the advice of his honest wife, as will be seen by the sequel. But he did carry the annoying secret in his heart, despite the whisperings of his conscience. He prided himself on his honesty, and deeply, therefore, regretted the necessity which compelled him to play such a shameful part. But he was impressed with the firm conviction that the course which he had determined to adopt in regard to his treatment of Mr. Monard was necessary to his temporal salvation. True, the reasons which he assigned for his shuffling disloyalty to truth appeared trivial to his wife; but to him, they seemed sufficient. Mrs. Brandon contemplated the subject from a standpoint quite opposite to that of her husband, and the consequence was, she suffered torturing anguish. Every Sabbath, at church, where she met Mr. Monard, she manifested as much friendship as she dared to, under the distressing circumstances. She spoke to him very kindly; but when he met these unaccountable advances on her part with genuine cordiality, thus showing that he had no feeling of malice toward herself and family, she sometimes had to turn her head or hasten away, to conceal her tears. His manners, his kind words, his innocent expression of countenance—all was like heaping coals of fire upon her head. It was a terrible secret for this pious woman to keep. She trembled, she wept, she agonized. How could she ask blessings upon her family from Him who said, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm"? How could she dare to approach the throne of grace and implore divine mercy, when she would not reach forth a hand to raise one of God's ministers from the dust of unmerited degradation? The poor woman felt that she was now a party to her husband's crime, and the excruciating

thought kept her in a state of pitiable wretchedness. To speak would be temporal ruin ; to keep silent would be eternal ruin. What must she do ?

Unfortunately, for her spiritual comfort, Mr. Brandon did not seem to be discomposed. He went to church as he had ever done, and no one could discover in his manner or look the slightest symptoms of remorse. He determined, however, to preserve his commercial honesty, and he paid back to Mr. Monard the ten dollars and legal interest, by reducing the price of the goods which the forgiving minister purchased from him. And thus the merchant sought to silence the clamors of that noiseless monitor which God has implanted in the soul to warn mortal beings of the danger of wrong doing. But can this heaven-given guide be bribed to silence, or be flattered and deceived by sophistry, till man may travel the path of unrighteousness without disquiet ? No doubt she may be bound, hand and foot, and kept as a prisoner in darkness ; but she cannot be confined there forever. The hour will and must come when the prison door shall be opened, and then it will be found that though fettered with the chains of sophism, yet she was not idle.

“ See, from behind her secret stand
The sly informer minutes ev’ry fault,
And her dread diary with horror fills.”

CHAPTER XXI.

SUSPICION.

“ Aye, free, off han', your story tell
When wi' a bosom crony ;
But still keep something to yoursel'
Ye scarcely tell to ony.”

Nothing occurred in the history of the inmates of Araphel worthy of narration, for several months. It was the same old routine of farm life, that goes on, day after day, in a manner so utterly uneventful that no pen could make it interesting, unless a reader could be entertained with a description of plowing and sowing in the fields, and attending to ordinary household duties. But an incident occurred during the latter days of March which, if of no importance considered in itself, affected the destinies, to a great extent, of one or two individuals. After all, it is the little and apparently insignificant events that direct the current of human history. When we review our lives, we find that the programme which we had arranged for our guidance in the battle of life was changed by what seem to be the merest accidents. We met with a certain person, who caused us to abandon some favorite theory which we had supposed stood on a solid foundation. In middle age, we probably find ourselves following a profession or pursuit which, in earlier years, we never had the most remote idea of adopting. We are not masters of our temporal destinies, and are governed more by necessity than choice. We map out a course of policy, but are driven from it by the force of circumstances which human foresight could not bring into our calculations. So a word uttered by a friend, or an enemy, perhaps, has made us pursue a line of action very different from what we had intended.

Thousands of persons can attribute their prospects for eternal happiness to a few words spoken by a minister, who did not even dream that such tremendous results would be the consequence. Many a one has been brought into the kingdom of grace by a *fever*, or some other slight attack of disease, which had no significance in itself. God's ways are not as our ways, and His thoughts are not as our thoughts.

The event which has given rise to the above digressive remarks was the illness of Mrs. Monard. She was in such a critical condition that Dr. Huxley had to be called in at once. He attended the sick lady for several days; but as she grew no better, he informed Mr. Monard of her imminent danger, and asked that he might call in another physician with whom he desired to consult.

"Do whatever you think best, Doctor," replied the minister, "but if the peril is so extreme, there is another thing to be done, which is of vital importance."

"What is that, Sir?"

"I want to say to you, and I say it with sorrow, that my wife has never made a profession of religion. She may die, from what you tell me. If you have no objection, I want to talk to her about her spiritual interest, before it is too late."

Dr. Huxley looked at Mr. Monard with that strange expression which defied interpretation. Thinking for a moment, he said—

"I suppose that the form of religion which you advocate is the best thing, or at least, as good as any that moral Evolution has yet produced. I hope and believe that she will reach something more tangible and substantial. Your religion is too shadowy, Mr. Monard. But I have not time, even if it were proper, to discuss this question. If you talk with your wife on

this subject, the result may be bad. I tell you candidly, you may so excite and alarm her as to cause her death. That is my opinion. So, if you do it, you must be responsible for the consequences."

"With your views, Doctor, in regard to human destiny, you know nothing of the comforts of religion. But I have enjoyed the life and power of divine grace for many years, and I speak that which I do know. You saw my little Willie die, and you were a witness of the supernatural circumstance attending his death—a circumstance which no principle of Evolution can explain. Doctor, if my beloved wife could depart from the shores of time amid such manifestations of celestial glory, I could bid her adieu even with rejoicing. For I know the separation will be brief. My wife is the only one of my family who is out of the ark of safety. True, as you know, poor Vincent and myself are just now under a cloud, and people may look upon us with suspicion, and even worse than suspicion; but I am just as thoroughly convinced of his innocence as I am conscious of my own. My daughter, I have no doubt, is a true Christian. My wife is the only one for whom I have any fears. If it please God to regenerate her heart, my whole family will at last stand before the eternal throne with the palms of victory in their hands. You must, therefore, allow me to have my way in this instance. I will shoulder all the responsibility. I am not afraid to trust my God in this matter. I know He will do right. I cannot permit my dear wife to go into eternity without talking to her about it."

Mr. Monard was right. Many a transgressor has been suffered to die without having his attention called to the issues of eternity. Too many physicians are like Dr. Huxley—afraid of exciting the patient, and the matter of salvation is consequently postponed till the

sick one is perceived to be in an actually dying condition. Mr. Monard determined that his wife should not be treated in this cruel manner, but should be at once acquainted with the true situation. When Dr. Huxley saw that any opposition on his part would be in vain, he said—

“Very well, Mr. Monard, you can do as you please; but I give you to understand that I will not be answerable for the final result. I will return as soon as I can. Good morning.”

When the physician had gone, Mr. Monard went to the bedside of his suffering wife. In a way which he conceived to be the least calculated to produce alarm, he directed her attention to that subject which is the most important of all earthly concerns. He said—

“My dear Vallie, it is a good time now to talk with you about your spiritual state.”

She roused up, and looked at him rather wildly, and said—

“Why, am I going to die, Eldon?”

“I am not talking to you about religion because I think you will die. You are very sick, and when we get sick, none of us know that we will ever rise from our beds again. You are in no immediate danger of death; but I want you to think about the interests of your soul, anyhow. Religion is necessary to the well and the sick. But I believe that God frequently sends sickness upon us to make us think about the things which are not seen. I hope, therefore, you will learn a lesson from your present illness and profit by it. Can you talk without discomfort?”

“I’m too sick to talk, Eldon,” she answered, in a feeble tone, “but I’ll try to think. I can listen to you, though.”

Mr. Monard read portions of the Scriptures, and

prayed with his wife, and made the way to Christ as plain as a mortal man could. But the truth was, Mrs. Monard was too much prostrate to give the important subject the thought which is essential. She was in no condition to exercise justifying faith. Her sufferings were so acute that she could not concentrate her mind upon any subject. Alas! it will not do to postpone this matter, fraught with such awful interests, and expect to crowd the whole preparation for eternity into one short hour—an hour, too, in which the attention must be distracted by the sharp pangs of disease. With truth does the poet solemnly say—

“ Procrastination is the thief of time :
Year after year it steals, till all are fled,
And to the mercies of a moment leaves
The vast concerns of an eternal scene.”

Late that evening Dr. Huxley returned, in company with a gentleman, whom he introduced to the preacher as Dr. Gurdone. This physician, it may here be properly stated, lived a few miles from the village, and occupied an enviable rank in the medical fraternity. He and Dr. Huxley were great friends, and often met in medical consultation. No sooner had the parties introduced shaken hands, than Dr. Gurdone gazed earnestly at Mr. Monard's face, as if he were trying to recall memories which had been almost erased by the effacing fingers of time. But he suddenly seemed to conclude that they had never met before, and both physicians at once went into the sick room. Dr. Gurdone made his diagnosis, after which the two went out into the yard to hold a consultation. In a short time they reëntered the house, and acquainted Mr. Monard, who was in the gallery, with the result; they expressed themselves hopeful of the final recovery of his wife. While Dr. Huxley went back into the sick room to measure out some

more medicines, Dr. Gurdone engaged Mr. Monard in conversation. Again he gazed in the preacher's face, with an inquiring inspection that seemed to end only in bewilderment. The tones of the minister's voice appeared to revive some indistinct reminiscence that lay buried deep amid the rubbish of memory. At last he said—

"It seems to me, Mr. Monard, that I have met you, somewhere, years ago. If you were ever one of my school-fellows, I ought to remember your name. But I am certain I have never heard it before."

"It is possible, Doctor," replied Mr. Monard, not seeming to take much interest in the subject, "that we have met before. However, it must have been long since, as your face is not very familiar to me. If we have met, you have changed considerably since. Probably I may resemble some one whom you knew long ago. We are often mistaken in that way."

"Yes, that is true sometimes. But I must have met you in earlier years. Your face seems very familiar. Maybe we went to school together. Where were you educated?"

"Harvard University."

"Did you ever live in Virginia?"

"Yes, Sir, for a while, when I was a mere boy," answered Mr. Monard, in a way which indicated that he did not particularly relish this catechetical process. The Doctor, seeing that the minister manifested so little interest in reviving any acquaintance that might once possibly have existed, said—

"I suppose I must be mistaken; but it does seem to me that we have met before."

"If we have not," answered Mr. Monard, rather carelessly, "it does not matter; we are now acquainted, and I hope I may have reason to feel

grateful to you and Dr. Huxley for the recovery of my wife."

Dr. Gurdone was thus balked in his efforts to ascertain the preacher's history. It was evident to him that Mr. Monard had no desire to discuss the subject, and had shown some little anxiety to eschew it, and this only served to arouse the physician's curiosity. But at present he had to content himself with the information which had been elicited, as he could not press the matter without impoliteness.

It is not necessary to enter into details. Both physicians continued to visit the patient till she was thought to be out of danger. Mr. Monard did not give Dr. Gurdone an opportunity to renew the subject of their former acquaintance. The conversation was so managed, whether intentionally or not the physician could not determine, that he could not allude to it without a breach of gentility.

One day, after their visit, Dr. Huxley said to his companion—

"It is not necessary for us to come back any more professionally; but I want you to come with me tomorrow, if you possibly can."

"Why so?" asked Dr. Gurdone.

"Some time ago I had a discussion with Mr. Monard on the subject of Evolution, and, to tell you the truth, he got me rather perplexed, as he adduced some arguments which I was not exactly prepared to meet. I told him that I would read up some, and show him the inconsistencies and absurdities of the Mosaic account of creation. If you can come back tomorrow, we will have the discussion, and I think I will turn the tables. I am anxious that you shall be present, as you seem to be hesitating about what to believe."

"I will come, Doctor, if I possibly can. I have

become interested in Mr. Monard. The more I see of him, the more I am impressed with the idea that he was once an acquaintance of mine. But he seems to be disposed to keep silent in regard to his early history."

"I have never had curiosity enough to ask him about it," replied Dr. Huxley. "But he is one of the most honest, conscientious men I ever met. He is a thorough scholar, too, and I really like him. You never saw a person more loyal to his principles. He is so thoroughly convinced of the truth of the Bible, that if he had lived in the days of persecution he would have been a stubborn martyr."

"Indeed," said Dr. Gurdone. "That is strange when ——." But checking himself, he continued, "But I must become better acquainted with him. I want to hear your discussion, too, for, as I have told you, I am in doubt."

"Be sure, then, to come back to-morrow, and you will be convinced that the Bible cannot stand the test."

"I will be on hand."

Accordingly, the next day, early in the afternoon, the two physicians were again seen at Araphel. As Dr. Huxley had said, there was no necessity for this visit as a professional one, for Mrs. Monard's improvement was very perceptible. Dr. Huxley informed the minister that his wife would be up in a few days.

"And now, Mr. Monard," he continued, "you remember, when you helped me to nurse my sick child we had a little discussion on Evolution?"

"I have not forgotten it, Doctor."

"I told you that at some future time I would call your attention to the inconsistencies of your theory. I do not know that we will ever have a better opportunity to settle our controversy than now. Here is Dr. Gur-

done, who can serve as umpire, as I think he does not hold exactly to the views of either one of us."

"I am perfectly willing, Doctor," replied Mr. Monard. "If the Bible cannot stand the test of sound reason, I feel no hesitation in giving it up. If it really conflicts with plain, evident truth, it is not entitled to credit as a divine revelation, and, of course, ought to be rejected by every person of sense. All my hopes are staked upon it; but, nevertheless, if you can show clearly that it contradicts well established principles of science, I will promptly abandon it. A man would be very foolish and dishonest to hold knowingly and willfully to error. All I want is the truth, whatever it may be."

"I am glad to hear you say that, Mr. Monard, and I believe you have honesty enough to renounce a system which comes in direct antagonism to science. I will be as honest as you are, and if you can convince me that I am in error, I will embrace the truth, let it be what it may."

"Gentlemen," spoke up Dr. Gurdone, "before you begin your discussion, I want you to know where I stand. I will have to give you a brief portion of my early history."

"Proceed," said Dr. Huxley. "We give you the floor for a few moments."

After a short pause, Dr. Gurdone said—

"I will candidly inform you that I was once a preacher."

"You were!" exclaimed Dr. Huxley, in surprise.

"Yes, Sir, I was."

"Why, you never told me that before," remarked Dr. Huxley.

"No; I have never told it to any one, because there was no particular necessity for it. But a rather strange

incident caused me to abandon the calling. Yet I have never been satisfied since." And the Doctor sighed, and paused.

"Go on," said Dr. Huxley, bluntly. "Let us hear it."

"When I relate the circumstance, I want to ask Mr. Monard a question."

The minister nodded assent.

"I will be brief," continued Dr. Gurdone. "One day I was traveling to one of my appointments, and I had to go through a gloomy swamp, where there were no human habitations. As I was riding along leisurely I was suddenly halted by three robbers, one a youth, one about forty years of age, and the third about sixty. I at first felt very little alarm, because I had no money of any consequence, and I supposed the worst they would do to me would be to take my horse. But I was very much mistaken. They took me for the Sheriff, who was out collecting taxes, and whom, it seems, I resembled. To prevent my reporting to the civil authorities, they determined to kill me on the spot. I pleaded with them with all the earnestness of a man who dreaded death. The old man was bent upon taking my life, and he asked the youth to shoot me, but he refused, and, to abbreviate my story, finally prevailed upon the other two to spare me. It was agreed that I should be set at liberty if I would take an oath never to mention to any one the circumstance which had occurred. I took the oath, and was told to go."

"What did you do, then?" asked Dr. Huxley, as Dr. Gurdone paused, and seemed to be sinking into a reverie.

"I went on till I reached the nearest town, where I talked with an old minister in whom I had the utmost confidence. He advised me to report at once to the

civil authorities, so that the robbers might be prevented, if possible, from capturing the Sheriff, if not from murdering him. I took his advice, and a company of men was immediately raised, and I returned with them to the place where I had made such a narrow escape. It is sufficient to say that the three robbers were arrested and punished. All were sent to the penitentiary for different lengths of time. The young man, whose connection with the two older robbers seemed to me rather strange, saved my life, and I and others used our influence to have his sentence as lenient as the law would allow, and he was sentenced for only one year. I have often wondered what ever became of him."

Dr. Gurdone paused again.

"Well," said Dr. Huxley, "where is the point?"

"I want to ask you, Mr. Monard," said Dr. Gurdone, "if I did right in breaking faith with the robbers, or what would you have done under the same circumstances?"

Mr. Monard did not reply for a moment. But the two physicians gave him a look which he construed as a request to answer. At last he said, with deliberation—

"If you want to know how I would have acted under those circumstances, I will tell you, and I believe that was your question, Doctor?"

"Yes, Sir; what would you have done?"

"Then I say, with my present views and feelings, I would have refused to take the oath."

"I believe, Doctor," said Dr. Huxley, "that that is just exactly what he would have done. It is in keeping with his character."

"Would you really have sacrificed your life rather than take the oath?" asked Dr. Gurdone, eyeing him closely.

"From your account of the matter," replied the preacher, "I do not think that I would have lost my life. I believe I would have trusted to the young man as an instrument in God's hands to save me. At any rate, I think I should have refused, and taken the consequences. If they had killed me, I would have exclaimed before the fatal blow was struck, 'Father, thy will be done.' I am not afraid, if I know my own heart, to trust my life in God's hands."

"But suppose," said Dr. Gurdone, "you had taken it, would you have violated it as I did?"

"But, Doctor," replied Mr. Monard, "I cannot make any such supposition as applicable to myself; because I have never seen the day since I began to preach, and that was when I was a young man, that I would have taken the oath. I believe I would have died first, that is my notion."

"I think you would, too," replied Dr. Huxley.

"Well," said Dr. Gurdone, "I took the oath honestly, and broke it honestly. But, gentlemen, to tell you the truth, my conscience so troubled me that I lost all interest in ministerial work, and I came to the conclusion that I had mistaken my calling. So I abandoned the profession and studied medicine. I have become a skeptic. I doubt the divine origin of the Bible. And yet I am afraid to take a bold stand and affirm that it is not a revelation from God. My conscience makes me a coward, I confess."

"That is a miserable condition to be in, Doctor," replied Mr. Monard. "But from what you say, I am inclined to the opinion that you are not as much of a skeptic as you imagine. You strayed from the path of duty; that is the difficulty in your case."

"If it can be any comfort to you, Doctor," said Dr. Huxley, "my opinion is that you did right, Mr.

Monard to the contrary, notwithstanding, in violating the oath which you took ; and further, I think you did right in taking it, to save your life. Suppose you had refused, and they had killed you, the probability is the robbers would not have been captured, and they might also have murdered the Sheriff, to say nothing of others."

"That was precisely my view of the matter," answered Dr. Gurdone. "I took the oath to save my own life, and I violated it for the public good."

"But," replied Mr. Monard, "we are not to do evil that good may come. My opinion is that we ought to do right under all circumstances, and leave the results with the Lord. I do not think any considerations of self-interest or public interest can justify us in doing wrong. God commands us to obey His Word, and He makes us no promise of protection when we depart from the path of strict rectitude, which he has plainly marked out for us."

"You think I did wrong, then?" asked Dr. Gurdone.

"You are to determine that," replied Mr. Monard. "I tell you only what I think I would have done under the circumstances you have mentioned."

"Well," said Dr. Gurdone, "I have honestly told you how it is with me. You can see, from my statement, that I am open to conviction in this discussion which you gentlemen are to have."

While the Doctor was telling his story, he was watching the face of Mr. Monard with as close scrutiny as common etiquette would allow. But if either Dr. Huxley or Mr. Monard had any suspicion as to his motives in telling it, neither gave the slightest indication of it, by word or look. The minister listened with deep interest, but he betrayed no more anxiety than did

Dr. Huxley, and was as apparently unconcerned. Dr. Gurdone was perplexed. But having said all that was proper in regard to his own case, he added—

“I beg your pardon, Mr. Monard, for having caused this delay, and I will listen with eagerness to what you and Dr. Huxley have to say. I am satisfied that both are well posted, and your discussion may have some effect in forcing me to come to some sort of conclusion. So, I pray you, begin at once.”

CHAPTER XXII.

MOSES.

“And can, then, true philosophy reject,
As false, a book which the same sterling truths
As reason, following closely, brings to light,
Maintains with such corroborations?”

“I am ready,” said Mr. Monard, in response to the request of Dr. Gurdone, at the close of the last chapter.

“So am I,” answered Dr. Huxley.

“I believe it is incumbent upon you, Doctor,” said the minister, “to state your objections to the Bible account of the creation, if I understood you correctly.”

“You are right, Sir,” responded the Doctor. “I will not detain you with any preliminary remarks. I have been reading the Mosaic account of creation recently, and it seems to be in diametric opposition to the teachings of science, and even inconsistent with itself. Indeed, I will go so far as to say that some of the statements of Moses, just granting that there was such a man, are perfectly preposterous. In the first place, he says that the work of creation was performed in six days of twenty-four hours each. Such an idea is utterly contrary to the facts obtained by science. Geology plainly shows that ages were required to produce the present order of things by the process of evolution. According to Biblical chronology, it has been not six thousand years since the creation of the world. Now, science estimates that ten thousand years, or more, were necessary to produce Niagara Falls.”

“But, Doctor,” interrupted Mr. Monard, “science pretends to be based on solid *facts*. I cannot allow you, therefore, to *assume* the very thing in dispute. It is impossible to prove that ten thousand years must have

been occupied in forming Niagara Falls, even by the process of evolution. You cannot prove that the laws of nature have always operated precisely as they do now, and with the same degree of slowness. You must also establish the fact that the channel of the Niagara river has always preserved its present hardness. How do you know that three or four thousand years ago the bottom and banks of the river were not much softer than they are at the present time?"

"Now, I hope, Mr. Monard," said the Doctor, with considerable bluntness, "that you are not going to resort to such quibbles as that."

"I cannot," said Mr. Monard, with firmness, "take your assertion unsupported by proper proof. If I am forced to accept mere assumptions as facts, I must give up the question without further discussion. You must remember that Geology, to which you appeal with so much confidence, is in its infancy, and that it is an inductive science. It can produce no testimony except that of fossils and similar sorts of evidence. Geology assumes, in the very outset, that matter has always been of its present consistency. That, Doctor, I must insist, needs proof."

"I think, Doctor," said Doctor Gurdone, "that Mr. Monard is right on that point, if I am to be umpire. While the Niagara Falls may have required ten thousand, or even a hundred thousand years to form, you cannot demonstrate the fact."

"Very well," replied Dr. Huxley. "I yield the point, but on the condition that neither party must offer an argument based on an assumption; I am willing to that."

"But, Doctor," answered Mr. Monard, "you must not lose sight of the object of our discussion, and the task which you have assigned to me. I do not propose to

show from the Bible in what manner the creation was performed. You affirm that it contradicts science. All I have to do is to show that there is no conflict between them. You must understand my position clearly. I do not assert that there is no truth whatever in Evolution. Indeed, with proper modifications, and to a certain extent, I accept the theory. You attempt to array the Bible and Science against each other as mortal enemies. My position is, that they are friends."

"Very well, then," answered Dr. Huxley, "just show, if you please, that there is any agreement or friendship between them, and I will be satisfied. I now ask you, do you believe that the work of creation was performed in six days of twenty-four hours each?"

"There are several ways," replied Mr. Monard, "of reconciling the Bible with Geology and Evolution. Some Christians hold that the creation was accomplished in six days of twenty-four hours each. Supposing it was, the fact can be made to harmonize with the teachings of Geology. Let us then first take that hypothesis."

"But you objected," quickly interrupted Dr. Huxley, "to my assumptions, as you called them. We are to discard all assumptions, and I hold you to the rule. You must not make a hypothesis. Either the creation was achieved in six days, or it was not—one or the other."

"That is correct, Doctor," mildly replied Mr. Monard. "I told you that we have several theories, and I will, if you object to a hypothesis, affirm that the present order of things occupied exactly six days. While I do not say that I hold to this theory, yet I will undertake to speak for those who do advocate it. In six days, then, God created the heavens and the earth. Now, tell me, what is your objection to that view?"

"I have a very serious objection," quickly responded the Doctor; "because the earth is composed of *strata*

plainly marked, each of which shows clearly that it must have been long years in forming."

"How does it show that so clearly, Doctor?" asked the minister.

"Why, Sir, the bones of animals, and full-grown animals at that, have been discovered in some of the strata, in vast quantities. Do you believe, will your reason, Sir, suffer you to believe, that they were born, attained to maturity, and died—all in twenty-four hours? Do you think that the God you worship, and who you say is so kind and good, would be guilty of such a reckless, wholesale destruction of life?"

"Your error, Doctor," quietly answered Mr. Monard, "consists in the supposition that it requires *time* for an all-wise God to create things, and accomplish His designs. I cannot admit that time is a factor of any force in your argument. A thousand years are, to God, but as a day. Time is a mere relative element, anyhow, and depends entirely upon circumstances whether it is to be called long or short. There are some races of animals now, that attain to their full growth in what we call a very short period, that is, compared with the number of days allotted to man. The existence of some species of insects is comprised within the space of a few days, and others live only a few months. Now, if this is the work of Evolution, is it, or 'she,' as I have heard you call the process, guilty of a reckless destruction of life. If one of these little animals could be made to understand that man lives to the age of a century and sometimes longer, it would call that a long time. But, for all we know, the inhabitants of the planet Jupiter may live for a hundred thousand years. Do you not suppose that they would call it a reckless destruction of life, in God, or Evolution either, to sweep away three generations of human beings in a hundred years. You

call a day a short period, and so it is, comparatively. But to a being who never dies, the difference between a day and a few thousand years would be scarcely appreciable. God does not take the same view of time as we finite mortals do. Time is nothing with Him, and it does not enter into His calculations. He is not at all restricted by the conditions of space and time, of which mortal beings cannot rid themselves. Why, then, must it be supposed that an all-wise and all-powerful being must have ages in which to achieve His purposes?"

"Do you pretend to say, Mr. Monard," asked Dr. Huxley, "that the immense coal beds which are found in the earth were formed in twenty-four hours? Is it possible that the Bible taxes your credulity to such an extent as that?"

"I do not see, Doctor, why they could not have been formed by an Omnipotent being in twenty-four hours, or even in one moment, as well as in twenty-four millions of years? Why could he not have said, 'let there be coal,' just as he said, 'let there be light'? Why could he not have created it out of nothing? Or why could he not have caused the trees to spring up in a moment, and be changed to coal in the same length of time? We have an illustration of this point in the New Testament, where Christ changed water into wine in an instant. Ordinarily it required a whole season to produce the same result, according to the operation of the laws of nature, as we call them. Jesus merely abbreviated the process. Water is turned into wine by man after nature has done its part in producing the grape; but it takes months to do this. But our Lord effected the transformation independently of the laws of nature. God is not bound by any necessity to operate in accordance with these laws, of which He is the author. If He had chosen, He could have caused the

vine to attain its growth and to produce the grape in twenty-four hours. So, I think, Doctor, you make an error when you suppose God must necessarily have ages in which to complete the coal formation."

"I think, Dr. Huxley," spoke up Dr. Gurdone, with a smile, "that Mr. Monard has got you on that point."

"No, Sir," answered Dr. Huxley, bluntly, "I deny that he has. Mr. Monard's argument is founded on an assumption, for he has not proved that the work of creation was finished in six days."

"I beg your pardon," said Mr. Monard, "but you must not misunderstand me. There is no assumption in the case. I have tried only to show you that ages of time were not necessary to produce the material universe. All creation could have been performed in one minute, even, as well as in countless ages, and there is nothing in Geology to prove that it could not. You can prove that there is a conflict between Science and the Bible only by assuming that the laws of nature have always acted just as they do now, and it is utterly impossible, Doctor, to prove that."

"It is my opinion," again spoke up Dr. Gurdone, "that you will have to give up that point, Dr. Huxley."

"I will not," replied Dr. Huxley, "unless you force me to admit the existence of such a God as Mr. Monard contends for."

"I am merely contrasting your theory with mine," replied the minister. "I am showing you, from my point of view, that Geology and the Bible are in harmony, or, at any rate, that there is no necessary antagonism between them. But allow me to say, right here, Doctor, that the Bible does not teach that the entire work of creation was performed in six days. In the first chapter of Genesis we read that in the beginning

God created the heavens and the earth, and the earth was without form, and void. 'In the beginning' does not necessarily mean the beginning of time as reckoned by us. God called forth the earth from the depths of nothingness itself. It may have lain for millions of years 'without form.' We Christians can afford to grant you as much time as the necessities of your science may demand. You can say that all the different strata, up to the last, were countless ages in forming, if you will. We can concede that the coal formations of which you spoke required a hundred billions of years, if you want that much, according to the laws of nature, and the Bible does not oppose your demands. We may conceive that Moses begins his history with the creation of man, and what immediately pertained to him. It is evident that the production of man was the great object aimed at—the masterpiece of the Divine Workman. At any rate, he was the crowning glory of creation, whether it was performed by an intelligent God or the 'Goddess of Evolution,' as you are pleased to designate the process. We can say that Moses does not pretend to give any account of what transpired anterior to creation. He says that God created the earth, and that it was without form, and then he goes on to give the history of man and things connected with him. It is only the creation week that Moses deals with."

"Do I understand you to mean," asked Dr. Huxley, "that this creation week, as you call it, embraces a period of six days of twenty-four hours each. Is that your meaning, or not? It is difficult, Mr. Monard, to get you to face the issue squarely. You speak vaguely, Sir, and do not seem to be settled in your views."

"I am trying hard, Doctor, to make myself understood. But in answer to your question, I would say, as I have already told you, that this is one theory, advocated

by some Christians, and I think I have sufficiently explained how the whole creation could have been completed in that length of time. It is on the supposition that God is not bound by the laws of time."

"Well, if you are going to suppose," said Dr. Huxley, "let me have a word. I will not suppose, but I affirm positively, that there are inconsistencies in the Mosaic narrative—palpable absurdities, Sir, so glaring that a child can see them; say nothing about the question of time; and he is guilty of blunders in his statements. I cannot imagine how Moses himself could have failed to perceive inconsistencies that are an outrage upon 'common sense.'"

"I hope you will not be too hard upon Moses," replied Mr. Monard, "till you point out some of his palpable absurdities."

"I can do that very readily," quickly responded Dr. Huxley. "Moses says that the sun was created on the fourth day, and yet he speaks of a *first* day before the sun was created. Such a statement seems to me perfectly preposterous. Is it not contrary to all reason and common sense?"

"I think not, Doctor, when properly understood. It is not reasonable to suppose that a man capable of writing a history of creation would be guilty of the blunder you impute so positively to Moses. Surely, he must have had some sense, and did not expect his readers to believe there was a day caused by the sun before there was any sun. We cannot suppose, Doctor, that an intelligent man, writing a history for future generations, would deliberately make statements so utterly absurd that they can be reconciled by no process. Instead, therefore, of taking it for granted that Moses was destitute of all sense, I think we had better try to ascertain his meaning."

"Very well," answered Dr. Huxley. "Just tell us what he did mean."

"We are told," replied the minister, "that God said 'let there be light, and there was light.' That light was scattered. The earth began to perform its revolutions on the first day, which was caused by the scattered light. On the fourth day this light was gathered into the great body which we call the sun. So, with this explanation, you see that there could have been day and night without the sun, at least in its present form. But ——"

Before Mr. Monard had time to proceed with the sentence which he had commenced, Dr. Huxley burst into one of his loud laughs, which the minister at once construed as an expression of ridicule. However, he remained calm, and not the least disconcerted, till the Doctor's risibilities had subsided.

"Well, Mr. Monard," said the Doctor, presently, "that is the flimsiest explanation of the Mosaic absurdity I ever did hear. Why surely you can do better than that. You are just trying to quiz me."

"I never was more serious and sincere in my life, Doctor. But I was going on to add another remark when you interrupted me. You must understand that I am giving you the several theories to which different classes of Christians hold. There is another explanation of what you are pleased to call a 'Mosaic absurdity.' It is not necessary to suppose that the sun was actually *created* on the fourth day. We can say that it was created millions of years previous to that time; but on the fourth day it was merely *ordained* or appointed to its office of ruler and regulator of the seasons."

"Then what was the use," quickly asked Dr. Huxley, "in God's uttering that command, which Longinus foolishly refers to as an illustration of sublimity of

language, 'let there be light,' if the sun was already furnishing light?"

"Why the sun may not have been giving light on the earth. It was without form and void, and was simply a chaotic mass. A great mist covered the earth, so that the sun could not be seen through it. There is now light, you know, in everything, in the form of electricity. We can say it was this to which Moses refers."

"But what was the use of any such light?" asked Dr. Huxley.

"It serves the same purpose now that it did then, and you know its uses."

"Well," said Dr. Huxley, with a laugh, "there are two theories on the subject. Have you any other? Possibly you may reach one after a while that can stand the test of reason."

"Yes, Sir, I have another," said Mr. Monard, "which I will offer you. It is set forth by a recent writer in a manner much better than I could do it. If you will excuse me for a moment, I will get the work, and read his explanation; it is short."

The preacher went to his bookcase, and immediately returned with a volume, which he opened, and read as follows:—

"Man was not created till the close of this period, when the earth was made ready to be his habitation; so much the chapter tells us. Then it follows that no man could have witnessed these acts of creation or transformation, and, of course, no man could describe them as an eye-witness. How, then, could it have been described so accurately and vividly, and in so few words? There were two ways in which it might have been done. God could have dictated the precise words of this description to Moses, or whoever of his servants it was who first wrote it out, so that, although they knew nothing of it,

they would yet write down the words which God dictated to them, just as if I were to ask you to write down what I dictated to you, and should then describe to you some very beautiful painting which I had seen, and you would write down my words, though you could not understand very perfectly about the picture.

“ ‘ But though, as we have said, God might have done this, it was not His usual way of communicating to men what He had done, or was about to do. All through the Old Testament, we find that when He revealed to His servants what had already been done, or was to be done in the future, He did so by means of visions, or as some would say, trances. And it is altogether probable that the communication of this wonderful event (creation) was made in the same way.

“ ‘ You have seen those views of landscapes and buildings which are thrown upon a white surface by means of the magic-lantern, and have noticed how, as one fades away, another takes its place. This will illustrate, though imperfectly, what we mean by a vision or trance. If, as we believe, God adopted this method of showing to his servant the way in which this earth was made fit for the habitation of the human race, which he was about to create, he would most naturally, and with a view to the clearer comprehension of the subject, exhibit the progress of his work, in several successive stages, each of which would be represented in a distinct vision, and as it commenced, progressed and was completed, it would seem to the seer, or person who was in the trance, to complete a day. The original act of creation or transformation may have occupied a day, a month, a year or a century ; its representation in this vision may have been accomplished in five or fifty minutes, yet to the person in a trance it would seem a complete day.’ ”

"Doctor," said Mr. Monard, as he closed the volume, "this book was written for young people; but the old can learn something from it. Now, there is another theory for you."

"Yes, Sir," answered the Doctor, "you certainly have theories enough; but they are all somehow very vague to me. Evolution has but one theory. Why can't you settle down on some clear-cut, well-defined theory, and adhere to it? You go from one to another so fast that it is impossible to hold you to anything. You are governed by no fixed rules, as the scientist is. I would like to know to which one of the theories you have mentioned do you hold yourself?"

"As to that," answered Mr. Monard, "I am no stickler for any of them, and I have no zeal for one more than another. I only desired to show you that Geology does not conflict with the Bible, whichever Christian theory may be adopted. I care not which may be taken. God's Word, when properly interpreted, and Science are in harmony. I have an old Bible, Doctor, lying on my table, which was given to me by my mother, who has long since gone to the glory land. When I was a boy she read that Holy Book to me, and I have seen the tears trickle down her cheek, and fall on the sacred pages. Those tear stains are there to this day. I gaze at them, and think of the thrilling hopes with which her sweetly-accented words of counsel inspired me. It is, and has ever been, since her death, the great object of my life to meet her again in those blessed regions of light and love where no more tears of sorrow will moisten the cheek. Would you have me give up this glorious, precious hope, which my sainted mother early infused into my heart, just because the Book, whose only object is to show poor, sinful man the way to God

and Heaven, may not be perfectly clear in regard to geological theories?"

As he uttered these sentences, Mr. Monard's voice slightly quivered. Dr. Gurdone tried to look at his face, but a tear seemed to obstruct his vision, and he turned his head. Probably he may have thought of his own mother. At any rate, Dr. Gurdone was deeply perplexed. He had come to the conclusion that Mr. Monard was the youth who, years before, had halted him on the highway for the purpose of robbery. How could his conduct, or at least his evident relation to the robbers, be reconciled with what he had just said. Could he be mistaken?

"Mr. Monard," said Dr. Huxley, with seriousness, when the minister had paused, "I have no desire to deprive you of any hope which you may have. But, Sir, truth is stern and stubborn. I would ask you if you would have me to lay aside my reason, and believe a thing which appears to me absurd?"

"No, Sir, certainly not. No man is required to believe an absurdity. But, Doctor, you ought to be sure that you can prove Christian belief to be an absurdity."

"Why, Mr. Monard, the Bible and Geology contradict each other."

"Prove it, Doctor—that is all I ask."

"I can do it, Sir. Bible chronology dates the creation of man about six thousand years ago. Geology proves that man was in existence long prior to that time."

"How do you prove that, Doctor? I was not aware that such a fact could be demonstrated."

"Why, Sir, by the excavations that have been made in the earth. There was a boring in the Valley of the Nile, to the depth of ninety feet, and at that great

distance pottery was found and burnt brick, thus showing clearly that man in a state of at least rude civilization dwelt on the earth long before the creation of Adam. Also, human bones, with manufactured articles, have been found in the strata with the fossil species of a race of elephants long since extinct. Geology points with triumph to the lake dwellings of Switzerland, which demonstrate an antiquity for man far anterior to that of Biblical chronology. I could refer to many other cases which go to establish this point. But these are enough to show the character of the proof which science can furnish, and which I regard as sufficient to overthrow any of the theories which you have advanced. Now, how can you reconcile your theories with the facts just stated?"

"What you call 'Bible chronology,'" replied Mr. Monard, "is a system which men have agreed upon. Moses nowhere states the age of the world. So, if science even should prove, beyond all dispute, that the human race is considerably older than six thousand years, it merely shows that men have made a mistake in chronology, and it would not at all affect the authenticity of the Bible. But from the best information we can get, the present chronological system appears to be correct. Adhering to it, therefore, for the present, I must have proof of what you have stated. I do not mean that the articles which you have mentioned were not found in the Valley of the Nile. But the question is how they came there, and when?"

"Why, evidently," replied Dr. Huxley, quickly, "human beings manufactured them, and left them where they were discovered, ages before Adam was thought of."

"Begging your pardon, Doctor, I must again charge you with assuming the very thing in dispute. I will

cheerfully concede that human beings made them. But that they were made before Adam, requires proof."

"How do you account for their being found at that depth?" asked Dr. Huxley.

"Why, Sir, I have just as good a right to say that Noah's deluge put them there, as you have to say that they were made by human beings that lived before Adam. We read in the Bible that the foundations of the great deep were broken up; the earth was covered with water for many months. At that time there may have been only a few feet of soil above the pottery to which you refer, or it may have been on the very surface of the earth."

"Do you pretend to say," quickly asked Dr. Huxley, "that this deposit of ninety feet accumulated in two or three thousand years?"

"No, Sir," answered Mr. Monard, "I do not affirm that it did. But an immense portion of it may have been deposited by the flood. It is impossible to fix a date from the circumstance mentioned by you. You simply infer that this pottery was made by human beings before Adam, because it was discovered ninety feet below the present surface of the earth. An inference, however, is not proof. You seem to leave the effects of the flood entirely out of your calculations. Besides, it will not do to establish a theory on the discovery of a few domestic utensils in some unusual place. To illustrate, I read about a man, the other day, who was crossing a bridged creek. His horse became frightened, and backed off the bridge into the creek, giving the man barely time to escape. But the horse and buggy fell into the quicksand and disappeared. The man procured the assistance of others, and they tried to find the buggy. With the longest poles they could secure, they searched the creek for some distance,

but they never felt the buggy nor the horse. There was no telling to what depth they sank. It occurred to me that this buggy might become encased and be preserved for ages. The creek may change its channel, which may fill up with earth that may displace the quicksand. In a few hundred years from now somebody may dig a well right over the spot where this misfortune happened, and may find the buggy seventy-five or a hundred feet below the surface of the earth. Then, some geologist may examine the vehicle, and come to the wise conclusion that it was manufactured before Adam was created. How do you know, Doctor, that the pottery of which you speak was not thrown into the Nile, which may have changed its course during the flood, and the old channel may have been filled up, leaving the pottery ninety feet below the present surface?"

"Why, Mr. Monard," exclaimed Dr. Huxley, in seeming astonishment, "that is the most far-fetched explanation I ever heard in my life."

"I do not offer it as a positive explanation," replied the minister. "But I cannot renounce the Bible on account of circumstances which seem to oppose its statements, so long as I can make even a plausible conjecture in the way of explanation. Yours is a conjecture, and so is mine; so nothing is proved. You assert that the pottery must have been made by pre-historic man. I only show that some geologists jump to conclusions too quick. They find a few human bones in some unusual place—maybe a cave, in company with the bones of extinct animals, and at once draw the inference that there lived on the earth men before the creation of Adam. I protest against any such logical, or rather illogical, process of reasoning. They never seem to give the opinion the least consideration that the bones of men might have been, and no doubt were, washed into caves

and many other strange places by the waters of Noah's flood. And now, Doctor, I will, in a few words, lay down a proposition, in the form of a logical syllogism, upon which you may reflect at your leisure. If you can discover any fallacy in it, I would be obliged to you if you would point it out."

"Let us have it, Sir."

"Man has lived on the earth during the period of superficial accumulations.

"This period of superficial accumulations already numbers nearly six thousand years, as well as can be ascertained.

"The fossil remains of an animal are found in the strata of the age in which that animal lived.

"The fossil remains of man are found in historical strata, alluvial bottoms, coral coasts and caverns.

"The fossil remains of man are not found in the old formations, the secondary or the tertiary strata.

"Therefore, during the ages, long or short, when these strata were deposited, man did not exist."

For a moment, Dr. Huxley said nothing, though the minister gave him an inquiring look. But presently he said—

"In regard to your conclusion, what have you to say about the lake-dwellers? I desire to know if you will contend that their residences on the water were erected at any time during the last six thousand years."

"I contend," replied Mr. Monard, "that I have just as good reason to suppose that they were built during the last six thousand years as you have to suppose that they were built ages before the creation of Adam. It is not at all surprising that savage nations, two or three or four thousand years ago, should have built their rude huts on the lakes for protection. Herodotus, you know, who wrote several centuries B.C., tells us that the

Pæonians built on platforms in lake Præsius. Why, Sir, dwellings of this sort are found now among barbarous tribes in some parts of the world. So, Doctor, I cannot see that Geology has a single positive, undeniable fact to show that there were men before the creation of Adam. You can find fossils of great antiquity; I grant that; but you can find none which clearly and indisputably show that there is a conflict between the Bible and Science."

Dr. Huxley was silent.

"I would like to ask you, Doctor," continued Mr. Monard, "how Moses obtained his knowledge of Geology?"

"Pshaw, Sir; Moses was no geologist at all. I do not suppose that he had any clearer idea as to what stratum the trilobite belongs than a two-year old child has."

"And yet," said Mr. Monard, "if you read the first chapter of Genesis carefully, you must have noticed that his statements are in accordance with the teachings of Geology."

"I noticed nothing of the kind," answered Dr. Huxley, with bluntness.

"I think, Doctor, it is a fact worthy of notice that the Mosaic narrative and the revelations of Geology agree so well as to the *order* in which the creation was performed. To illustrate: Moses says, first, that the earth was without form and void. In the lowest strata you find no fossils of any breathing creatures. Next, Moses says, there was vegetation; next, water animals; next, land animals; and last, man. Geology proves this statement to be correct. Suppose Moses had said that land animals were created first; then he would have contradicted Geology, because no fossils of such animals are found in the first strata."

"What are you trying to make out of that, Mr. Monard?" asked Dr. Huxley.

"Just this: if Moses had not been directed by supernatural wisdom, he would have made some geological blunder, as he knew nothing about that science. We are justifiable in drawing that conclusion. Certainly a man would be a great simpleton to undertake to tell in what *order* creation was performed if he knew not a thing about it."

"Well," said Dr. Huxley, who saw the force of this argument, "if Moses has not made a blunder, the Bible has."

"How, Doctor," asked Mr. Monard.

"Why, not long ago I read an article in one of my papers in which the author asserted that death was unknown till after Adam ate that apple which you preachers talk so much about as 'forbidden fruit.' He went so far as to say that no animal had ever died before this awful occurrence. A man of your information, Mr. Monard, would not hold to such a theory as that."

"I do not hold to it, Doctor, whether I am a man of information or not, and I do not think the Bible says that no animal ever died before Adam's fall."

"But in the article, to which I referred, the author quoted the Bible to sustain his assertion."

"What portion, Doctor, did he quote?"

"I do not remember the exact words. But the substance was, that as one man died, so death came upon all; you recollect it."

"Yes, Sir; and it is as plain as anything can be, for the passage says that death came upon all *men*, not upon animals. A great many people, including some preachers, are opposed to Geology, because they imagine it contradicts the Bible. They put erroneous constructions upon

the Scriptures ; but, of course, Doctor, you will not be so unfair as to take their misconstructions of God's Word, and compare them with the revelations of Geology. My opinion is, if you would only try to make the Bible and Science harmonize, instead of antagonize, you would meet with no difficulties. But that is the objection to irreligious scientists; they make every possible effort to disprove the truth of the Bible. They seem to be anxious to get rid of it. But I can never give up my Bible till Science proves clearly, conclusively, beyond all possibility of doubt, that it is no Divine Revelation."

"Mr. Monard," said Dr. Huxley, with a rather puzzled air, "it is no use to argue with you. You will have your way about it in spite of all I can do or say."

"I have tried only to answer your objections fairly, Doctor. If I have not done so in a manner satisfactory to you, I would be glad if you would point out the fallacies of my answers."

"Well, well," said Dr. Huxley, "we will not talk about it any more at present."

"Have you no more objections, Doctor?" politely and gently asked Mr. Monard.

"Yes, Sir ; I have many more, but I have not time now to mention them. Besides, you have such a strange way of answering, that a discussion would be useless. I must read up a little more, anyhow. Come, Dr. Gurdone, let us be going. Good evening, Mr. Monard. We will have this subject up again at some future time, when I get better posted."

"Whenever you please, Doctor."

When the two physicians had mounted their steeds, and had ridden a short distance, Dr. Gurdone said, with a laugh—

"I think the preacher rather laid it on to you, Doctor, in your discussion."

"Oh, he gets me confused," replied Dr. Huxley, in a tone indicative of vexation. "When I propose what I conceive to be a puzzler, he has some answer which I had never thought about, and which I am not prepared to meet without further investigation. The truth is, I ought to study his side of the question as closely as he does mine. But I have failed to do this. It occurred to me, that one or two absurdities in the Mosaic account would be sufficient to confound him. But I have found out my mistake. Yet, as an honest man, I must confess that Mr. Monard has thrown some light on the subject."

"I think he has," answered Dr. Gurdone, "and your discussion with him to-day will cause me, I believe, to return to my first principles."

"Do as you please," answered Dr. Huxley, dryly.

Nothing more was said by either on the subject; but both rode along occupied with their own thoughts. Dr. Gurdone, being a prudent man, did not breathe to Dr. Huxley his suspicion of Mr. Monard's identity with the youthful robber. In fact, he was in great perplexity, and in this state he must be left for the present.

CHAPTER XXIII.

RECONCILIATION.

“Methinks I feel this youth’s perfections
Steal with an invisible and subtle stealth,
To creep in at mine eyes.”

In the divine management of human affairs there is no such element as *accident*, in the usual acceptation of the word. Men speak of *accidents*; but it is a mere convenient term which they apply to events whose cause and relations they do not understand. It is disrespectful, to say the least, to divine Omnipotence and Omniscience, to pronounce any occurrence an accident, as the signification of the word is generally understood; because it implies that something has happened as a sort of episode which has no particular connection with the ordinary flow of events, and is out of the range of divine Providence. The truth is, everything that transpires is designed to accomplish some wise purpose. What the purpose is, mortals may never know till they pass into that eternal state in which the mysterious events of this life will be seen in their true light. But these so-called accidents frequently lead to the most beneficial results.

We might be disposed to call the severe illness of Mrs. Monard an accident. She perhaps violated some law of nature, and as a necessary consequence she must pay the penalty. She was brought to death’s door, and in this fearful situation she felt that lack of preparation which would enable her to stand unabashed before the everlasting throne. The death of little Willie, it is true, had made a deep and permanent impression upon her mind; but it seemed that this was not sufficient to lead her to proper repentance. Her own life must be

threatened, in order to arouse her to a sense of the danger of living in a state of unpreparedness to meet the Judge of all the earth. So, the hand of affliction was laid heavily upon her physical frame. When Mr. Monard spoke to her in regard to the salvation of her soul, during the crisis of her disease, she was not in a condition that would suffer her to give proper attention to the subject. One day, while she was convalescent, and her husband was sitting in the room, she said—

“Eldon, I have an indistinct recollection that, while I was so sick, you said something to me about meeting God; or may be I was dreaming.”

“No; you were not dreaming, my dear. I informed you of your danger, and tried to urge upon you the necessity of making preparation for the eternal world.”

“I thought so, and I endeavored to give the subject proper attention; but I was so sick I couldn’t do so.”

“I hope, then, my dear, since you are in a fair way to recover, you will no longer postpone this important matter. We should always be ready for the hour of death, my dear, for we know not when it may come upon us. God has in great mercy spared your life, and after such an experience as you have had—after you have been on the very borders of the eternal world, you ought to take the warning our heavenly Father designed. The next time you are attacked by disease it may be your last illness, and you should, therefore, be prepared for it. I urge you, my dear Vallie, delay not another hour.”

“I’ve determined,” she replied, “to lead a different life. Some time during my sickness I had such a horrible dream. It seemed to me that I saw our little Willie. He was in a beautiful garden, and I opened the gate, which appeared to be made of pearl. It was

the most magnificent scene that I ever beheld. There were the most gorgeous, fragrant flowers, scattering delightful odors all around, and trees laden down with unearthly fruits. But I was so much interested in meeting Willie, that I merely glanced at the lovely scenes that burst upon my eyes on all sides. He seemed to be surrounded by that light which we saw when he died, but it was so mellowed that I could see through it without the least difficulty. Oh, he did look so bright and beautiful! I hastened toward him, with my arms outstretched, to clasp him to my breast. How bitterly disappointed I was! He looked at me with an expression of sorrow, and unfolded his glittering wings. I called to him; but he paid no attention to me. He sprang into the air, and was soon lost to view. I sat down, and commenced to weep; but presently I heard near me a soft voice, which said—

“Go back, daughter of earth! thou art not prepared for this place.”

“I awoke, and ever since I have felt so distressed. I must be a Christian!”

Saying this, Mrs. Monard was seized with a violent paroxysm of weeping, and tears streamed down her pallid cheeks.

“Dry your tears, my dear Vallie,” said Mr. Monard, taking her pale, thin hand in his. “Your dream is quite easy to interpret. It is a plain warning from the good Lord, and you ought to feel thankful that he has aroused you from spiritual lethargy in time to be saved. You have already lost many years of usefulness, and been deprived of the sweet consolations of religion; but I hope in the future you will be a true Christian. I have prayed earnestly for more than twenty long years that God, in mercy, would bring you into His fold, and I have trembled for you, but, praise to His holy name, I believe my prayers are answered at last.”

After the lapse of a few moments, in which Mrs. Monard was endeavoring to recover her tranquillity, she said, in trembling tones—

“Oh, Eldon, I’ve been so mean to you since we were married; can you forgive me, and will you?”

“God knows, my dear Vallie, if there is anything to forgive, I do so with all my heart.”

“Oh, you don’t know, you can’t imagine, what bitter thoughts I’ve had. I feel heartily ashamed of myself. I did not love you when I married you. I have scolded you and abused you, and you have been so patient and kind, never returning a harsh word, and never becoming angry with me when you had such just cause to. How can you forgive me?”

Mr. Monard was not given to the “melting mood,” but these remarks of his wife did force a tear to his eye, which, however, he quickly brushed away, and said—

“By God’s grace, dear Vallie, I am enabled to do many things which, without it, I could not do. True, you have sometimes been violent and harsh, and applied bitter language to me; but let the past be forgotten, and let us commence a new life.”

“You don’t know,” continued the lady, “how I have almost hated you because you would not tell me where you were during that six months’ absence.”

“My dear Vallie, you shall never have cause to dislike me any more on that account. I shall remove the grounds of your hatred. For in a few days, when you are entirely well, I shall tell you all.”

“I did not mention it,” she quickly exclaimed, “to get you to tell me. You can do just as you please. If you never do tell it, I shall never refer to it again. I acknowledge that I have been in the wrong, for I ought to have known that you had some good reason for

withholding the secret from me. But, you may depend upon it, I shall never again get angry about it."

"I did have a good reason," replied Mr. Monard, "or at least, I thought I did. Perhaps I may have been wrong in keeping you ignorant of that mysterious circumstance of my history, but I thought it was best for the happiness of both of us. I promise you, though, that there shall no longer be any secret between us. I believe that God has already changed you, and you are now a new creature in Christ Jesus."

"I somehow feel," answered Mrs. Monard, "that I am different from what I once was, and I am going to be a different woman. Oh, how foolish I have been! How was it that I never loved you before? I see now that marrying you was the most sensible thing I ever did. We've had a hard struggle with poverty, and I've cursed you in my heart. Oh, Eldon, my dear husband, I've been such a fool as I never will be again. I ought to have loved you as a true wife should love a good, kind husband. You have ever been so kind to me, and your example has been so beautiful. Often it has had a tendency to restrain me in those shameful and horrid mad fits of mine. Oh, Eldon, will the blessed God help me to overcome this awful temper?"

"Certainly, my dear, and by His grace you can do anything. Whenever you feel your anger rising, just ask God to help you suppress it, and you will be calm."

"Do you believe that, Eldon?"

"To be sure I do, with all my heart. It is not a matter of belief; I know it. I have naturally a high temper myself; but the good Lord has enabled me to conquer it."

"For your sake, Eldon, as well as my own, I'm going to be different. I have just learned to love you, as I never did before. How strange that I should

have been so blind for so many weary years ! I feel that I want to live for your sake. Kiss me, Eldon, as a token that we are now married in the Lord. From this day, with God's help and grace, I'll be a true and loving wife."

Mr. Monard made a mighty effort to be calm ; but his wife's words of affection, which came forth from her lips so strangely and sweetly, stirred his feelings to the profoundest depths. He had never heard such delightful and thrilling expressions before. The consequence was, he was suddenly intoxicated with happiness. When he arose, and imprinted the kiss of reconciliation growing out of divine grace, she felt his tears on her face, and she clasped him to her heart.

Would it be superstitious to say that, as this simple ceremony was performed, the angels of heaven looked on and smiled ? If they ever do come to earth (and what Christian doubts it ?), they would be apt to witness such a solemnly beautiful scene as this, and would rejoice in silence at such a lovely display of the power of the religion which Jesus gave to men. We judge the tree by its fruits. Let us wait, and see what will be the result.

We come now to another occurrence which was destined to eventuate in astonishing effects—effects which short-sighted man could not foresee, and which he would, therefore, call *accidents*. But it must be remembered that God's designs are far-reaching, and embrace many circumstances, which may seem to bear slight or perhaps no relation to the cause to which they owe their origin.

The wife of Dr. Huxley was afflicted with cancer of the breast—that terrible disease which mocks the surgeon's knife, and bids defiance to all the appliances of the medical art. For several years it had presented

the appearance of only a small pimple. When she first called the attention of Dr. Huxley to it, he affected to believe that it was a light matter, though he did have his suspicions and fears. At last, however, the spot assumed such an enlarged and malignant appearance that he could no longer deceive either himself or his wife. She one day said to him—

“I am satisfied that this is a cancer, and it will kill me.”

“It is useless,” replied the Doctor, in his blunt and candid way, “to attempt to deceive you. I am fearful it is what you say. It possibly may prove not to be a cancer of the incurable kind, and we will try to have it destroyed. But even if it should be a true cancer, it may be a long time before there will be any serious result. I do wonder,” continued the physician, changing his tone to one of slight vexation, “why Evolution does not eliminate these fearful afflictions. I confess I can see no use in such a long continuance of them, when she is striving to reach perfection.”

“Dr. Huxley,” interrupted the wife, with tenderness, but with solemnity, “I am tired of hearing you talk about Evolution. I have tried to believe it. I heard you and Mr. Monard discuss that question, and I have been thinking about it ever since. Now, I know I cannot live a great while, and I feel that I am in constant peril. Will you tell me what comfort there is in Evolution to one who must soon bid adieu to all the scenes of earth? Just show me the shadow of a hope. I have a horror of slumbering in the grave forever. Can you promise me that your ‘goddess’ will at last raise me to renewed life? Please offer me something firm to which I may cling—something which will be a relief to despondent feelings while I live, and will sustain me in my last hour on the shore of time. Can you do it?”

You are silent," after a short pause, "and you can offer me nothing but dry, lifeless abstractions. Whether Mr. Monard's religion is true or false, it seems to be more rational, and has more power to cheer a dying mortal, than does your system of Evolution, from which I can derive no more consolation than from the science of Botany. You may trust to Evolution, if you will, but I cannot. I have no time to lose. I want you to tell Mr. Monard to visit me at once. You may laugh, if you will; but I am going to be a Christian."

"I am not laughing, dear wife, and I do not ask you to believe my doctrine. I want you to be satisfied. You may believe whatever you please, and I shall not oppose you. It is all the same, any how, to the Goddess of Evolution. She is no jealous bigot, and persecutes no one for opinion's sake."

"Thank you for your liberality and toleration. Be so kind as to tell Mr. Monard to come to see me right away. I shall no longer live as I have been living. May Mr. Monard's God help me."

"You shall have your wish," answered Dr. Huxley, kindly, as he saw the tears beginning to follow each other down the cheeks of his wife, whom he dearly loved.

Accordingly, the next day after this conversation, Mr. Monard called at the residence of Dr. Huxley. He knew not for what purpose he had been sent for, but he did not hesitate to comply with the physician's written request to come. He was shown into the parlor, where Zenie soon joined him, as her mother was not ready to appear. She conversed with the preacher for a few moments, upon the ordinary topics of the day; but presently she said, in apparent carelessness, as if she knew not what else to talk about—

"Where is Mr. Vincent, now? I have never heard

to what place he went when he left us so suddenly. I suppose you hear from him frequently?"

"Yes, Miss Zenie, we hear from him nearly every week. He is now in Louisville, Kentucky."

"Louisville?"

"Yes."

"I had no idea he had gone so far. I hope he is prospering."

"I am glad to say that he is, Miss Zenie. The poor boy had a hard struggle at first. But I felt certain that he would succeed."

"I should think, then, that he would visit you before long? He must certainly want to see his parents."

"Yes; he writes that he is very anxious to see us; but he says that he will have to forego that pleasure for some time, as he is crowded with business. I suspect, however, that he is very well satisfied, as he incidentally remarked in his last letter that his partner was the father of a very beautiful daughter, who had just returned home from school."

Just as he said this, Mrs. Huxley entered the parlor. It was a fortunate circumstance for Zenie. In spite of her effort to be calm and indifferent, she turned deathly pale. It would no doubt have been better for her happiness, and that of Vincent, if Mr. Monard had observed her painful embarrassment, for he could have written to his son in regard to the young lady's betrayal of her feelings, and the "course of true love" might have been made to run smooth. But the minister did not notice her confusion, as she left the parlor, even before her mother was seated. She at once hastened to her own room, closed and locked the door, and sat down to think—

"How foolish I am for cherishing the memory of one who cares nothing for me! If he had loved me, he

would have written to me. My beautiful dream of happiness must be dispelled. I think I can love Leonard Brandon, and I will. He is devoted to me, and is rich and handsome; what more is necessary? I did feel certain that Vincent loved me. He never suspected how much pain he gave me that evening when we parted. I tried hard to draw forth a declaration from him, but I could not. Why was he so blind that he could not see I loved him? I went as far as I dared to, without telling him. If he had only written to me, I would have kept up a correspondence with him, and it would have been such a pleasure to me to write cheering words while he was battling with hardships. Besides, I could have helped him, and would have done so, without his knowing the name of his benefactor. How gladly would I have given him the money which my father allows me! Oh, Vincent, how foolish he is, if he does love me! But he has now found another, and is lost to me. He cares nothing for me, and I will quit thinking about him. Oh, Vincent, Vincent! it is hard to give thee up, but it must and shall be done."

The foregoing random thoughts are sufficient to reveal the real state of Zenie's heart. She felt for the absent Vincent the true sentiment that justifies marriage. Why should she be disappointed? Why should she not be permitted to marry the only man with whom she believed she could find true conjugal happiness? She felt vexed at herself for allowing her love to overcome her reason. But Zenie was a proud woman, and she resolved to call this passion into requisition to enable her to give her heart and hand to Leonard Brandon. Perhaps it was foolish to come to this determination without knowing more of Vincent's history since his departure; nevertheless, she did it. There is something in human nature which demands sympathy for any

woman in Zenie's condition. It is painful to wrench the affections from the heart's one idol, and transfer them, lacerated, bleeding, to another, around which they can cling with only healthless vigor. Yet it has been done in a thousand instances, and will continue to be done, till that world is reached in which there is no marrying nor giving in marriage.

As Zenie was leaving the parlor, Mrs. Huxley was welcoming Mr. Monard, with great cordiality and friendship.

"You have not called to see us in a long time, Mr. Monard," she said.

"No ma'am," he replied, "we farmers do not have much time for visiting our friends. But recently, you perhaps know, I could not leave my sick wife. Her illness, though, has proved a great blessing to her, for which I am truly thankful."

"What is that, Mr. Monard?"

"Why, she has become a Christian, and you never saw such a change in any one. You know she had a most violent temper, which was a source of great trouble to me, and also to herself. But now she is as docile and meek as it is possible for any human creature to be. I tell you, Mrs. Huxley," he continued, with warmth of feeling, "God's grace is wonderful—it is miraculous."

"I am ready to believe it, Mr. Monard, and I am anxious to know how to secure this grace myself. This is the reason why I took the liberty to send for you."

"Why did you not send for Bro. Hale, the pastor of the church? You know that I am now under a cloud, and the church has forbidden me to preach."

"Do not mention that, Mr. Monard," she quickly said. "Of course, I know all about the difficulty; but I have never, for a single moment, thought you guilty of the charge. If I did not have full confidence in

you, I would not have sent for you. I think the church has treated you shamefully."

"I am glad to know, Mrs. Huxley, that you have confidence in my integrity. I would not talk with any one on the subject of religion who has a doubt-as to my innocence. I would not bring God's cause into disrepute by letting a supposed hypocrite give religious counsel. Since, therefore, you have confidence in the sincerity of my professions, I am glad of an opportunity of conversing with you."

"I have not a doubt, Mr. Monard, that you are a true Christian, and I know you can tell me what to do."

"That can be told in a few words," replied the minister. "Do you heartily repent of your sins? Are you sorry that you have not given your heart to Jesus years ago?"

"God knows I am," answered the lady, with earnestness.

"Have you read your Bible with care?"

"Yes, Sir; for a year and more I have read it constantly."

"If so, you have learned from it the plan of salvation, which is plain and simple. All you have to do is to put yourself completely in the hands of Jesus. He is the one and only Saviour."

"But how am I to do that?"

"You are sorry that you have sinned, and you desire to be saved?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Then can you not believe that the Lord Jesus will save you?"

"Yes, Sir, if I do my duty."

"But you must not have any 'ifs' about it. God does not save any one for the reason that he discharges

his duty, but because he trusts to Christ. You must not rely upon your own righteousness, nor think to bring the Lord under obligations to save you by anything you can do. Do not suppose that there is any actual merit in your repentance, or in the strict performance of your duty, but cast yourself, just as you are, upon Jesus; trust solely to the merits of His atoning blood. This is so simple that it is difficult for many people to believe. The only thing for the penitent sinner to do, so far as regeneration is concerned, is to place himself unreservedly in the hands of Christ."

"Is it, indeed, that simple? I have been under the impression that I would have to exercise a mysterious sort of faith, and do some kind of penance, and that I must hear something like a voice."

"That is a great mistake," replied Mr. Monard, "which men have made ever since the days of the Apostles. Do you remember the history of Naaman, the leper?"

"Yes, Sir."

"He thought the prophet would require him to do some great thing; and that is the way with many people to this day. They do not seem to appreciate the freeness of salvation, and they do not want it as a gift. They think they must deserve it by their own work, and hence, they try to perform some kind of penance, in order to prepare themselves for the reception of God's grace. You are just as well prepared now as you will ever be. Just say, in the language of the good old hymn—

'Here, Lord, I give myself away,
'Tis' all that I can do.'

And that is all the Lord requires at your hands. When you do this—make a full surrender of yourself—you are saved."

• “I am glad to hear this, Mr. Monard, for it does appear plain and easy to do. But how am I to know that God has pardoned my sins, whenever it is done? It seems to me that there must be some way of knowing.”

“The good Lord furnishes us with tests, to prevent any mistake on our part. John gives us one of the best, when he says, ‘We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.’ Another is, you will love the things which you once hated, and hate the things which you once loved.”

“I already do that, Mr. Monard. Why, then, am I not a Christian?”

“If you love righteousness and hate sin, you are a Christian; for none but a child of God can do that.”

“But, somehow, I am afraid to believe that I am a Christian so suddenly.”

“Why, it may not have been so sudden as you seem to think. The work of grace has no doubt been going on in your heart for some time. Besides, time does not enter into the question. God can regenerate the heart in the twinkling of an eye as well as in a year.”

“Oh, Mr. Monard, I would be so happy if I could believe that I am a Christian.”

“I do not see what there is to prevent your believing it, if you can submit to the tests which I have just mentioned. But, after all, you must be the judge. I would not dare to tell you that your heart has been regenerated by the Holy Spirit. It is my opinion, however, that it will not be long before all your doubts will be scattered, and you can perceive, with the eye of faith, the beams of heavenly light pouring upon you from the blessed Sun of Righteousness. If you are in earnest, which I cannot doubt, God will not suffer you to be deceived; but He will give you sufficient evidence

to satisfy you in regard to the genuineness of your conversion. But I have said enough, for the present, at least. I do not want to confuse your mind by giving too much advice. I think that you understand the subject, and you have nothing to do at present but to convert your knowledge into wisdom."

After praying with the lady, Mr. Monard took his leave, believing that she was already a true child of God, though afraid to acknowledge the fact to herself.

A few days after this visit Mr. Monard received a short note from Mrs. Huxley, stating that she was better satisfied with her progress in divine knowledge, but she desired to talk with him again. She disliked, she said, to trespass upon his time, but if he could pay her another visit, she would be much obliged. Of course, the minister complied with her request, and after this he called frequently, till the lady could say, with rejoicing, "I know that my Redeemer liveth."

Mrs. Huxley was not the only one whom he visited for the purpose of giving religious instruction. Thus, while laboring for the support of his own family, he did all he could for the spiritual good of others. If any thought him a hypocrite, it mattered not. With characteristic earnestness he pressed forward to the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A STRANGE SITUATION.

“What dangerous action, stood it next to death,
Would I not undergo, for one calm look?
O, 'tis the curse of love, and still approv'd,
When women cannot love, where they're belov'd.”

The passion of love is one which is difficult, if not incapable, of analysis. Who can understand it? What is it that causes a person to prefer one being to another, when both present the same or equivalent traits of character? No one can tell. Why did Leonard Brandon idolize Zenie Huxley in preference to others who were equal, if not superior, to her in point of external accomplishments and intellectual attainments? If he had been asked the reason of his choice, he could not have assigned one. But the fact that he was most deeply enamored could not be denied. Since the departure of Vincent Monard, by which all the obstacles occasioned by a formidable rivalry had been apparently removed, he had visited the young lady just as often as etiquette would allow. So desperately smitten was he, and so eager to secure the object of his intense affections, that sometimes he had violated some of the conventional rules and regulations of refined society. Frequently he called at unseasonable hours, and remained longer than the laws of “good raising” would tolerate. Indeed, he was a vehement lover. As soon as the six months had expired in which he was forbidden to speak of the subject which absorbed all his thoughts, he renewed his love-making with a vigor which seemed to have gained strength by the restraint placed upon him. But notwithstanding his unwearied assiduity and his hope of ultimate success, he was becoming somewhat tired of so

much urgent solicitation, which was productive of such meagre fruits. Zenie had given him some encouragement to persevere, yet keeping him in a state of annoying suspense. On his last call, preceding the first interview between Mrs. Huxley and Mr. Monard, Leonard had said—

“Miss Zenie, I am about to give up my suit in despair. I have told you repeatedly of my inexpressible love for you ; but it seems to be all in vain. You have asked time to consider, which I cheerfully allowed. How much more time do you want? You have had time enough, for now it can be counted by years, to write out a whole volume of thoughts upon the subject. Now please tell me,” he said, vexatiously, “how many years more you desire.”

“‘Faint heart never won fair lady,’ you know,” replied the young lady, archly.

“I think I have shown the heart of a giant,” replied Leonard, as if vexed.

“Why, what have you done, Mr. Brandon, to prove your claim to great-heartedness? I have never assigned you any herculean task to perform. You have never strangled a serpent, killed a Nemean lion, destroyed a many-headed hydra, nor, Perseus-like, slain a sea-monster to release some beautiful Andromeda. In fact, you have never performed any great and wonderful exploit to win your lady love, at the risk of your own life. Why do you not manifest some chivalry, like the knights of olden times?”

“Chivalry?” asked Leonard, in surprise. “What do you mean?”

“Yes, chivalry. I wish sometimes that I had lived in the days of knight-errantry. You have read about the noble knights of long ago, who went roving over the world in quest of adventures?”

"I read about one poor fool," said Leonard, not relishing this kind of playful talk, "who went about attacking sheep and wind-mills. Do you want me to make a gump of myself in that way? Chivalry? Do you want me to shiver myself to pieces among a flock of goats, or fight a lion in the next circus that comes along? Is that what you call chivalry?"

At this Zenie burst into a hearty laugh, in which Leonard did not join.

"Is that all the book you have ever read on the subject of knight-errantry?"

"Yes; and that appeared to me nonsense and tomfoolery. There was not a word of truth in it, from beginning to end."

When he said this, in apparent earnestness, Zenie again laughed immoderately; but perceiving that Leonard was not enjoying it at all, she checked herself, and said—

"Well, Mr. Brandon, I see that you are not a romantic young man at all. Indeed, it would be difficult to originate anything romantic in a country village like this insignificant one of ours."

"I am too busy, Miss Zenie, to think about romantic things. I am trying to gather up gold to lay at your feet."

"Do you suppose, Mr. Brandon, that I am to be won by the glitter and jingle of gold and silver? Is there not something nobler to be sought and found in life, than such pleasures as money can procure. I would be unworthy of your love, if I could be induced to wed you from such motives and considerations as that."

"Of course, I do not want you to marry me simply for gold, and nothing else. But still it is a very nice and convenient metal to own. If you marry me, I never desire to see you want for anything. It shall be

my aim to gratify every wish of yours ; but this I cannot do without that very gold which you seem to despise. We cannot live on roses and poetry and tales of chivalry about interesting fights with sheep and windmills. Gold will enable us to live in splendor, and that beats living in a leaky cottage."

"I would rather," replied Zenie, with seriousness, "dwell in a cottage with one whom I love, than live in a palace, constructed even of diamonds, with one for whom I have no affection."

"That may be true," replied Leonard. "But why should there not be love in the palace as well as in the cottage? Is love confined to the poor? Some people talk as if there can be no affection with the rich. I am certain that poverty in itself is not preferable to wealth. Certainly there is no merit in being poor. Love in a cottage does very well ; but love in a palace does better. Must a man be poor to win your love?"

"I did not say that, Mr. Brandon. Do you think I am destitute of all sense?"

"I did not mean to give offence," quickly exclaimed Leonard. "But you know that some young ladies are always talking about love in a cottage, just as if there could be love nowhere else."

"Do you place me in that class?"

"By no means, Miss Zenie."

"Very well. I give you to understand that the man whom I marry must possess other qualifications than those of a *metallic* character. He must be able to inspire me with the spirit of a slave."

"I don't understand you, Miss Zenie."

"It is useless to explain myself," she replied, "even if I dared to do it."

Leonard looked at her in surprise.

"Let us change the subject," said Zenie, suddenly.

"If you please," said Leonard, "let us return to the subject which directly concerns us both. I can love you in any sort of dwelling. The next question is, do you love me? Why will you not tell me? Why do you want to tantalize me? If you love me not, just say so, and I will try to crush the inexpressible affection I have for you. It is useless for me to pay my addresses to you any longer if you care nothing for me. If you cannot give me an answer right now, just name the day when you can do it, and if at that time you say that my feelings toward you are not reciprocated, I will never again trouble you with my presence."

"I cannot answer now, Mr. Brandon. But if you will call two weeks from this day, I promise you I will give a final answer."

"Very well," he replied, "you love to postpone; but I'll be patient."

As soon as Leonard had gone, Zenie began to reflect upon the subject, with more seriousness than she had ever done. She must now come to some conclusion. That night she dreamed about the matter, and in her dream she was led to the altar by Vincent Monard, with his bright, intelligent face and flashing eye, while Leonard stood looking on with scowling brow, and she felt happy. When she awoke, and her true situation suddenly presented itself among conscious thoughts, and the beautiful scene faded into the darkness of mocking, tantalizing nothingness, she began to cry. The thought of marrying Leonard was somewhat repulsive after such a sweet dream, so life-like, and so in accordance with the inclinations of her heart.

The day appointed by Miss Zenie at which she had promised to give Leonard an answer soon was reached by the ever-rolling wheels of time, and the young man promptly made his appearance. Zenie assumed an air

of cheerfulness; but Leonard thought he detected an expression of slight sadness on her beautiful face.

As soon as possible he introduced the subject which had been so long lying like a lump of gold upon his heart. It was precious, but it was heavy.

"I almost dread to ask you if you have come to any conclusion," said Leonard, whose manner plainly indicated that he had spoken the truth.

"I told you," she replied, "that I would give you a final answer at this time."

"Yes, Miss Zenie, that was the understanding."

"Well, I am prepared to answer. I have arrived at a definite conclusion," she said, with such an air that Leonard almost trembled with fear to hear it announced.

"What is it, Miss Zenie."

"I will marry you," she replied, bluntly, and without any of that delicate and charming blushing which spreads over the features of a maiden when she reveals the secret of her heart to the man of her choice. The words were uttered with such unexpected suddenness that Leonard was completely amazed. For a moment he sat dumbfounded. In fact, he remained speechless so long that Zenie herself broke the silence—

"My conclusion, Mr. Brandon, does not seem to be satisfactory; but if you do not like it I will at once retract."

"No, no, not for the world," he eagerly cried; "do n't retract! I will explain. Your decision caused my heart to leap into my throat, so that I could not speak. The truth is, I was expecting an unfavorable answer, and when you spoke your conclusion, it came upon me like a clap of thunder. Will you forgive me?"

"I suppose so."

"Zenie, my darling—will you let me call you such? What makes you talk so indifferently and coldly?"

"I was not aware that I was exhibiting any more indifference than is becoming. What more could I say?"

"It was not so much what you said, as the manner in which you said it."

"You are not well acquainted with me."

"Let us become better acquainted, then. Let us seal the contract with a kiss," he continued, as he quickly rose from his chair to execute this joyful part of the engagement.

"No further, Mr. Brandon!" exclaimed Zenie, assuming a threatening attitude; "not a step nearer!"

"What do you mean, Zenie?"

"Just what I say," she quickly replied; "you can take no such liberty as that till you have the legal right. Touch me at your peril."

Leonard gazed at her in amazement, as she stood before him with an air of defiance, while a faint smile played over her reddened countenance. He took his seat, looking the very picture of bewildered disappointment. Presently he said—

"Zenie, I don't understand you."

"I cannot see what prevents you. What I have said, is as plain as the first axiom of geometry."

"Well, will you suffer me to place this ring on your finger, as a token of our engagement?" he asked.

"No, Sir."

"Why not? It is the fashion."

"It may be," she replied, "but no man's jewelry, even if it come from Golconda's mine, shall ever glitter on my fingers, till he can call me his own."

"You are squeamish—beg pardon—I mean, too modest, Zenie."

"Can you not, to use the language of a poet, appreciate 'the blushing beauties of a modest maid,' Mr. Brandon?"

"But you don't blush any," said Leonard.

"I don't blush? Well, I will answer you in the language of another poet—

'True modesty is a discerning grace,
And only blushes in the proper place.'

And that is a fit reply, Mr. Brandon."

"But I should think," said Leonard, with a laugh, "that this would be a proper place and time to blush."

"I can perceive no necessity for the exhibition of such an amiable weakness," replied the young lady. "In fact, I have tried to educate myself so as not to yield to that treacherous process. I have done this for the reason that there is nothing so foolish as blushing. Some persons blush if you merely point your finger at them; others, who are really innocent, blush at an accusation of some light offence, and their reddened faces have a tendency to produce the impression that they are guilty. This proves that it is best never to blush under any circumstances."

"That may be so," replied Leonard, "if you can help it."

"There is nothing like self-possession, Mr. Brandon. I think, by the proper schooling of ourselves, and by disciplining our hearts, we may acquire such control of our natures, that we can make our faces express any emotion, whether we feel it or not. So it is useless to say to you—

'Confound me not with shame, nor call up all
The blood that warms my trembling heart,
To fill my cheeks with blushes.'

Do you like poetry, Mr. Brandon? I love to illustrate my ideas and give expression to my feeling in poetic language."

"I hardly ever read poetry," answered Leonard, "and I never do memorize it, as you do. But never mind about poetry now, nor blushes either. You have said plainly that you will marry me. Will you be so kind as to appoint the day? Please make it as early as possible."

"I cannot do that."

"Why not?" asked Leonard, in surprise.

"I am not ready," she said, with a little laugh, "to surrender my feminine liberties yet, nor will I be, for some time to come."

A shade of vexation and disappointment passed over Leonard's face.

"Why do you want to postpone it for so long a time?"

"I think I have good reasons," she answered, carelessly.

"Have you not tried me sufficiently, Zenie? Do you doubt my love for you?"

"Not at all. You have given me no grounds to suspect you of fickle-mindedness, and I fully believe you will prove true."

"Then, why not let our marriage take place in the next two or three weeks?"

"Oh, Mr. Brandon!" exclaimed Zenie, opening wide her eyes, "I cannot think of such a thing. I could not possibly prepare for it in that length of time."

"Well, can you give me some idea when you will be ready?"

"I suppose so," she answered, thoughtfully; "I think I can be ready some time in the next eighteen months."

"Eighteen months!" cried Leonard.

"Yes, Sir; eighteen months."

"Why, my stars, Miss Zenie, you don't expect me to wait that long? Surely you don't mean it?"

"That is exactly what I mean."

"Why, in the name of reason, what do you want to put it off so long for?"

"If I must give you a reason, Mr. Brandon, I will tell you that I take time, not to test you, but myself."

"I don't understand you. Are you not satisfied as to your own feelings?"

"This is a very serious and important matter, Mr. Brandon, and I do not want to make a mistake. If I do, and if I marry one for whom I have not proper affection, nothing will be left for me the remainder of my life, except the most exquisite misery. Where there is no love, there can be no happiness. To woman this is a step of more vital importance than to man. For, as Byron says—

'Man's love is of man's life a thing, a part;
'Tis woman's whole existence; man may range
The court, the camp, church, vessel, and the mart,
Sword, gown, gain, glory, offer in exchange;
Pride, fame, ambition, to fill up his heart;
And few there are whom these cannot estrange.'

But it is far otherwise with woman, Mr. Brandon. If her hand is given without the heart, she is undone forever. She may dwell in a palace, but it is only a gilded prison, where she must remain till death puts an end to her sufferings."

"I am to understand, then, by what you say, that you doubt whether you love me?"

"If you want me to be candid," replied Zenie, thoughtfully, "I like you well enough to make the promise to marry you at some future time. But I ask you to allow me sufficient time to see whether my sentiments may change. In this respect we cannot govern our own hearts. As another one of my poets says, if you will excuse me for quoting so much poetry—

‘ Love is not in our power,
Nay, what seems stranger still, is not in our choice.
We only love where fate ordains we should,
And, blindly fond, oft slight superior merit.’

If my sentiments toward you should change, you certainly would not want me to marry you. But I do not say that I will postpone it for eighteen months. I may appoint a time in the next six months, and perhaps much earlier. A year and a half shall be the longest time, and that will soon expire. You must let me have my way in this.”

Leonard saw that it would be useless to urge the young lady to change her determination, and he, with great reluctance, however, consented to the arrangement. He thought he had reason to congratulate himself on having elicited from the young lady as much as he had. So he could do nothing more than wait with patience till Zenie should name the day that would place him among the happiest of mortals.

The conduct of Zenie may be thought by some to be strange and eccentric. However this may be, it has been as faithfully described as language could portray it. Only those who have been in a similar situation can appreciate the difficulties with which she was surrounded. If the foregoing scene makes the impression that Zenie cared nothing for Leonard, it is an erroneous conclusion. To say that she really and truly loved him would be equally false. To say that she loved two persons at the same time, we suppose would be also false. If Zenie had never met Vincent Monard, she would have loved the handsome Leonard Brandon with sufficient ardor to have been a happy wife. She wanted time to drive the memory of Vincent from her mind, and to cultivate, if possible, greater affection for Leonard. The question might arise, why marry young Brandon at all, if there

was any risk of happiness? Mental philosophers may answer the question. There are some phases of woman's nature that baffle analysis. Many marriages among our neighbors take place, at which we are astonished. Therefore, it is not too unreasonable for belief that Zenie should promise to wed a man whom she feared she might not truly love.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE SECRET.

"A prison is a house of care,
A place where none can thrive,
A touchstone true to try a friend,
A grave for one alive;
Sometimes a place of right,
Sometimes a place of wrong,
Sometimes a place of rogues and thieves,
And honest men among."

It is often the case that a circumstance of no importance greatly aggravates our curiosity. We may have no personal interest in it, yet we desire to sift it thoroughly, and we cannot rest satisfied till we have done so. Thus it was with Dr. Gurdone. He could not eradicate the impression from his mind that he had met Mr. Monard somewhere in his early days, under peculiar circumstances. He kept revolving this matter in his thoughts till it assumed the magnitude of a vexatious problem. What difference did it really make whether he had ever met the minister or not in boyhood, since their acquaintance could not have been very intimate? But the Doctor had his suspicions, and he determined that he would make another effort, whenever the next favorable opportunity presented itself, to induce the minister to enter into a fuller explanation as to how and where he had spent the earlier years of his life. There was something about Mr. Monard which sorely puzzled the Doctor. From the preacher's manner in reply to his civil questions, it appeared clear to him that the subject was disagreeable to Mr. Monard. This increased the Doctor's curiosity to such an extent that it clamored loudly for gratification.

Not long after the discussion between Mr. Monard and

Dr. Huxley, at which he was present, Dr. Gurdone had occasion to pass by Araphel, and he came to the conclusion that he would call, and have a private interview with Mr. Monard. Accordingly, he dismounted, and was met by the preacher at the door, and welcomed very cordially. After they had talked for a short time upon common-place topics, the Doctor requested Mr. Monard to walk a brief distance from the house—to which proposition there was unhesitating assent. When they had reached a convenient distance, the Doctor said—

“Mr. Monard, you remember the last time I was here with Dr. Huxley, I related a certain incident of my early life?”

“About the robbers?”

“Yes, Sir; and I would like to ask if you did not know something about that affair before I told you?”

“Why do you ask me such a question?” said the minister, not the least disconcerted.

“Mr. Monard, I believe you to be an honest man, and a truthful man. I think you ought to give me a candid answer. I have an object in view in asking you the question.”

“What is your object, Doctor?”

“One is the gratification of my curiosity, and another I may tell you after awhile. I have learned a portion of your history from Dr. Huxley, and what I have heard has made quite a favorable impression upon me. I have formed a high opinion of your piety, and I sympathize with you in your troubles. I have no wish to injure you. In whatever way you may answer, you may rest assured that I shall not make it public without your consent.”

“Make what public?”

“Mr. Monard, I do not think you would prevaricate, nor avoid a plain question.”

"I do not think I would, Sir; but I do not know any principle of religion which requires a person to confess all the indiscretions and follies of his youth to his fellow-men. Yet I fear not to relate any portion of my history, if I have the opportunity to explain all the circumstances. Some things, I confess, I keep secret, because I could accomplish no good by telling them, and because people would misconstrue them, and thereby do me a gross injustice. People deal with a scandalous report as schoolboys do with a ball of snow—they keep it rolling, and the larger it becomes. But what is your question, Doctor?"

"I will put it," replied the physician, "in as delicate a form as possible. If I am mistaken, I beg your pardon. Did you not once save my life?"

"Why did you not ask me, Doctor, if I was not the boy who was with the robbers on the occasion when your life was threatened?"

"Were you, Mr. Monard?"

"I am that boy, Doctor."

"I thought so. I knew I was not mistaken."

"I am glad of the opportunity of explaining my connection with that affair. But let us return to the house. My own wife knows nothing of some of the circumstances which have diversified my early career. I shall not conceal a thing."

"No; I don't believe you will, Mr. Monard. I thought, at the time, that there was something strange and mysterious in regard to your connection with those two men."

Mr. Monard said nothing; but both immediately went back to the house. The Doctor was asked to be seated, while the minister left the room in search of Mrs. Monard, who was out attending to household duties.

In a few moments all three were seated, and Mr. Monard broke the silence—

“Vallie, I told you, not long since, that I would soon reveal the secret which has been such a source of annoyance to us for between twenty and twenty-five years.”

At this she glanced quickly and inquiringly at Dr. Gurdone. Mr. Monard interpreted her look aright, and continued—

“I must relate what I have to tell in the presence of Dr. Gurdone, who can bear witness to some of my statements. God knows,” continued Mr. Monard, after a short pause, “that I heartily wish some of the scenes of my youthful days had never been realities. But, alas! the past cannot be recalled. That which has been done is fixed forever. And yet, after all, if I were called the next minute to stand before the Judgment seat of Christ, I could do so without fear. I feel that I am reconciled to God, and my conscience whispers that he loves his erring child; for, like the Apostle, I can say that I have endeavored to live so as to have a conscience void of offence toward God and men. But to begin: My father died when I was only five years of age, leaving my poor mother in destitute circumstances. She was, I thank the Lord, a woman of deep and solid piety, and endeavored to lead me in the paths of truth and righteousness, and I loved her with so much fervor that I tried to obey her instructions. Oh, what happy hours I spent in her society, when I would sit at her feet, and listen to her stories from the Bible. But my childish happiness was destined soon to end. For after a hard struggle with the ills of life for five years, she yielded to the ravages of consumption. I was ten years old when, one day, she called me to the bedside, and in a feeble, quivering voice, said—

“‘My poor, dear boy, I will soon be taken from you, for God has called me.’

“‘Oh, Mamma,’ I cried, ‘you shan’t leave me. Where are you going?’

“‘To heaven, I hope.’

“‘I’ll go with you, Mamma ; I can’t stay here alone. I don’t want to stay.’

“‘But you must, Eldon dear, till God calls you. Now, be quiet, and listen to me, while I can talk. I have tried to train you up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. You know right from wrong, and wherever you may live—and I leave you in God’s hands, who will, I have faith to believe, find you a home and friends—I want you always to do right. Don’t forget the prayers I have taught you. Poor boy, you will have no mother at whose feet you can kneel and say your prayers at night ; but don’t neglect them. I don’t know what is to become of you, my son, or with whom you will live. I have no relatives in this world ; neither had your father. You are alone. I can make no provision for you ; but I have prayed God to take care of you, and I know He’ll do it, if you will have faith in Him, and do your duty. Be a good boy, Eldon, and a useful man, and lead a Christian life, and meet your father and mother in heaven.’

“Saying this, she told me to kneel at the bedside. I did so, with a bleeding heart, and she placed her emaciated hands upon my head, and offered up an earnest prayer for me. The words of that prayer, uttered in weak, trembling tones, have rung in my ears ever since. Oftentimes when I have been tempted to go astray, the dying words of my mother would seem to come out of the very winds, in the sweetest accents of love, and I could hear her say, ‘meet your father and mother in heaven.’ In a short time after this she

died, and they laid her away in the cold ground, and I stood bitterly crying by her new-made grave, without a friend in the world. When the people were dispersing from the graveyard, I threw myself on the little hillock that rose above the remains of my mother, and in the anguish of my boyish heart I cried aloud. Some of the people came back, and they also wept."

Mr. Monard glanced at his wife, and he saw the tears streaming down her cheeks. But, in a calm voice, he went on—

"There is a great deal of genuine sympathy in the human heart, notwithstanding its depravity. While I was lying there on the grave, a man came to me and took me by the hand, spoke very kindly, and asked me to go home with him. Having nowhere else to go, I gladly consented. His name was Stendon."

"And that was the name you went by, if I remember correctly," said Dr. Gurdone. "For I heard no such name as Monard."

"You are correct, Doctor," replied the minister. "I passed for his son, though he had no family except his wife. This gentleman was a farmer, and I assisted him, and was a considerable help to him. I could not complain of his treatment, nor that of his wife, as both were kind to me. He sent me to school when he could spare me, and I took great interest in my books. I studied at nights all through the winter, and read every book I could borrow. By diligence and close application I was tolerably well educated by the time I was eighteen years of age. I had no companion of my own age, and owing to this circumstance, I gave every moment of my spare time to my books.

"About the time I was fully eighteen, a man of perhaps sixty years came to Mr. Stendon's, and frequently

remained all night. Sometimes he would remain as long as a week."

"What was his name?" asked Dr. Gurdone.

"Burley."

"Yes, that was it," replied Dr. Gurdone. "I remember it distinctly."

"He seemed to be engaged in buying and selling horses," continued Mr. Monard. "Somehow I did not like his looks, and I took a decided aversion to him, notwithstanding that he appeared to take great interest in me, and did everything he could to win my esteem. I tried to like the man, for his kindness to me, but I could not do it."

"He did have a villainous face," said Dr. Gurdone. "I can never forget his cold, stony look on that memorable occasion when I came near losing my life."

"You are talking in riddles," said Mrs. Monard, looking searchingly at her husband.

"You shall soon understand all," answered Mr. Monard. "One day Stendon and Burley asked me to walk with them a short distance from the house. We all sat down on a log, when we were out of sight of the dwelling, and Stendon said—

"Well, Eldon, I've been thinking what I could do for you. You know I'm poor, and've had to work hard all my life. You'll soon be a man, and I hate to see you start out in the world without a cent. Wouldn't you like to have your purse full when you leave me? Or if you choose to stay with me, wouldn't you like to have plenty of money, anyhow?"

"I told him I would.

"Money's a great thing to have," said Burley. "You can buy just as many books as you want, and a fine horse, and plenty of good clothes. Don't you want to make some?"

"I candidly told him I did.

"'Well, now, Eldon,' said Stendon, 'we'll make you rich, if you'll follow our advice, and go with us. We've got a plan on foot that'll make us all rich; but it takes several to carry it out. Now, if you'll go with us, and do what we tell you, without asking any questions, you shall have a share, and you'll be rich. Will you do it?'

"At that time I had great confidence in Mr. Stendon, and I answered promptly that I would do as he desired.

"'I know'd he would, Stendon,' exclaimed Burley. 'He looks like a plucky boy, and in two or three days he'll be rich.'

"They told me that we would start next morning, in order to execute this plan by which wealth was to be suddenly acquired. I had not the most remote idea of the character of their enterprise, but being utterly unsuspecting, I asked no questions. Accordingly, the next day Stendon mounted me on one of the farm horses, and all three of us traveled for a few miles till we came to an ugly and dismal swamp, which you, Doctor, no doubt, remember?"

"Indeed, do I," replied the Doctor, who was listening, with breathless interest.

"Well, we dismounted," continued Mr. Monard, "and fastened our horses at some distance from the main road. As soon as we had done this, Stendon, who had a pair of pistols, handed me one of them, and told me to load it. And now, for the first time, the suspicion seized me that all was not right; but still I said nothing. I do not know what put the thought into my head, but I concluded I would put no ball in my pistol. Stendon and I had often practiced with these weapons, and he knew that I was an excellent shot. Burley was armed

only with a huge knife. Why he carried no pistol I know not. Neither one observed that I had not loaded my weapon with a ball.

"We then went to a spot which you have reason to remember, Doctor, where we could see along the road both ways, for some distance. Burley told me to watch the road, and if I saw any one coming, to give notice. We had not remained there any great length of time before a man made his appearance, coming in a direction opposite to that which we had been traveling. I observed that Burley whispered to Stendon, but I could not hear what was said. Presently the man rode up, and Burley stepped before him, and pointing Stendon's pistol at him, exclaimed 'Dismount.' The man turned deathly pale, but he obeyed without hesitation. The traveler seemed to have no arms, except a dirk, which Burley took from him. His person and saddle-bags were next searched. Several hundred dollars were found. After this, Burley ordered him to walk out into the forest before him.

"'In God's name,' cried the man, 'don't murder me. You've got all my money. O do n't take my life.'

"His words and manner, Doctor, made my very blood run cold. But Burley spoke up quickly, and said—

"'I'm not goin' to murder you. I jist want you to git out o' the road. I'm goin' to make you take an oath that ye'll never tell this little circumstance, and then you ken go. So, jist take that ar' path, and if you try to run, you're a dead man.'

"The poor fellow did as he was directed, and went off, followed by Burley, with the pistol drawn. I thought that Burley was telling the truth, because I was young and inexperienced, and I did not know at that time that there was a man on earth so lost to all moral principle as to commit cold-blooded murder, especially when there

seemed to be no necessity for it. In about ten or fifteen minutes Burley returned alone. I was surprised at this, and said to him—

“ ‘Where is the man?’ ”

“ ‘Oh, he’s gone off on another road,’ was the careless reply.

“ ‘But he has left his horse,’ said I.

“ ‘Yes; he might travel too fast, and report on us. The feller was rich, anyhow. He ken buy another horse, when he gits to whar thar is any to sell; and he’ll never miss the little money he paid to us. And now we’ll divide. Here’s fifty dollars in gold—that’s your share. I had to do all the work in this case, and its right that I orter have the biggest share. You must halt the next man that comes along, and you shall have half of what he’s got, providin’ it’s not the man we’ve come here specially to see.’ ”

“ I took the fifty dollars tendered me; I confess it with shame. Oh, the human heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. None of us know the deep, dark depravity of our natures. Even when we would do good, evil is present with us. It is not to be wondered at, then, that I should have for a moment yielded to strong temptation. So I took the shining pieces. It was an exceedingly large sum, in my eyes, and I thought at once of the many nice books which I could buy and call my own.”

Mr. Monard glanced at his wife, and perceived that she was very pale.

“The devil had entered into me, Vallie. Like a foolish boy I listened to the false reasoning of old Burley, who had no more conscience than a brute. He said that rich people had no right to all the money, and that they were mean, and stole from the poor, and that it was right to make them divide. While, of

course, I knew it was wrong to steal, Burley said this was not stealing. We were taking from the rich what they had taken from the poor. I was confused, for there seemed to me to be plausibility in what he said. The truth is, I was thinking more in regard to the grand possibilities in the shining metal, than the mode in which it had been obtained. Burley appeared to be watching the workings of my face, and he seemed to be satisfied, as I coolly put the money in my pocket.

“‘Now,’ he continued, ‘you must make the next man plank down the rhino, and if it’s not the main one we’re lookin’ for, you shall have half of what he’s got—that’s the rule.’

“He then informed me that they had come here to rob the Sheriff, who was out collecting taxes, and who must come this road in order to reach home. He did not, however, use the word ‘rob’; but he said we’d get back the money which the Government was taking from the people. The officer would have a large amount of the public funds, and I should have a liberal share. But he said that several more men might come along before the Sheriff arrived, and I must ‘try my hand on some of them,’ to use his language.”

Mr. Monard paused for a moment.

“Oh, Eldon, Eldon!” said Mrs. Monard.

“I was completely bewildered,” continued the minister, not seeming to notice his wife’s ejaculation. “My senses were in a whirl. I feel glad that no other person appeared, till you, Doctor, came in sight.

“‘That’s the Sheriff,’ said Burley, in a low tone; ‘you must halt him, and your fortune’s made. Be brave.’

“You rode up, Doctor, and I was the wicked, foolish boy that halted you.”

“Oh, Eldon!” exclaimed Mrs. Monard, turning as

pale as death, "You! How can I believe it? You, a robber! Great heavens!" And she raised her hands in horror.

"Be calm, my dear," replied Mr. Monard, very gently, "and hear all. Burley told me that if I failed he would kill me, and I had every reason to believe that this was no mere idle threat. I obeyed with trembling; my heart was trembling; my soul was trembling. I cannot describe my feelings. I exclaimed 'Halt!' and you know, Doctor, what then occurred."

Again Mr. Monard paused, and looked at his wife, upon whose face there was an expression of anguish and mortification. After a moment, however, he resumed his story—

"I must now give my wife an account of what happened."

In a few words Mr. Monard related the events given in the first chapter of this volume. However, before he mentioned the arrest and trial of himself and accomplices, Dr. Gurdone said—

"There is one thing about the affair, Mr. Monard, which I do not understand."

"What is that, Doctor?"

"At what time did you determine to save my life? Was it before I appealed to you so earnestly, or did my appeal induce you to form that determination?"

"I never entertained the thought for a moment, of seeing you murdered without doing everything in my power to prevent it. When you mentioned the word 'mother,' that dying prayer of my own mother flashed into my mind, and I could hear her words, so it seemed, in a gentle whisper, 'meet your father and mother in heaven.'"

"But did you not allow me to run great risk, when that old man was raising his arm to shoot me? What

made you so slow about interfering. You made no move till I appealed to you."

"You were in no danger, Doctor."

"Why was I not?"

"Because the pistol which Burley had was loaded only with powder. It was hard for me to believe that he would shoot. I was only a boy, you know, and greatly excited, and perhaps did not act with the prudence of an older person. I did the best I could. If he had fired, I would then have had the advantage, and I believe, Doctor, I would have killed him before I would have seen him murder you."

"You exchanged the pistols, did you?"

"Yes, Sir. I asked Stendon to exchange, giving as a reason for my request that I was accustomed to the one he had. And this he knew was the truth, for I had slightly altered one of the sights."

"That makes it all clear, Mr. Monard. Still I thought I was in great danger."

"No more, perhaps, than I was, Doctor. I thought I would be risking my life in the attempt to save yours."

"Any how," said Mrs. Monard, "you saved Dr. Gurdone's life."

"No doubt of that," replied the Doctor.

"Go on with your story, Eldon," she said.

"Well, Doctor, you were released, and we remained at that same place till sunset. No other person passed along the road, and I was sincerely glad of it. My conscience, which for a short time was benumbed, recovered its activity. No language can express the mental anguish I suffered. The thought that I was a robber went like a red-hot knife through my heart. Was this the way to meet my mother in heaven? I felt that her God was frowning upon me, and my soul

recoiled in horror. I was on the road to eternal woe and despair, where I could never see my dear father and mother. My head seemed to swim. I came to the conclusion to desert my two companions in crime, under cover of darkness. The gold which Burley had given me seemed to blister my fingers every time I touched it. I could hear the voice of the murdered owner—for I believed, and do yet, that Burley did murder him—crying from the ground to God, and calling for vengeance. As we were riding away from that awful spot, my conscience was stinging me with the fierceness of a scorpion. I took the gold from my pocket, and cast it into the darkness. Oh, that few hours' experience in the path of crime has been a mighty burden upon my memory ever since! Long ago the merciful Father has pardoned my sin; but oftentimes I feel that I ought to loathe and despise myself for having yielded to the suggestion of the devil for even a moment. I will not plead my youth as an excuse, because I had received proper training and instruction from my mother. I knew that it was wrong, but grievously have I been punished for that sin which I have kept concealed so long from my fellow-men. For, like Paul, I stood by and saw a man robbed, and I consented to it; and now, I suppose, it is generally believed that I stole ten dollars from Mr. Brandon. Thus am I punished."

"I do not take that view of the matter, at all," remarked Dr. Gurdone. "But go on with your story."

"God always punishes sin, Doctor. So I am not disposed to murmur at what I deserve. I believe, however, that, sooner or later, the good Lord will make my innocence in the Brandon affair manifest to this community. But to proceed. You know, Doctor, how we were arrested. I intended to desert those men that night, as soon as they both got fast to sleep. Your

party, however, came up before I could carry out my determination. You were present at the trial, and heard," Mr. Monard said, slowly, looking at his wife, "the sentence which consigned me to the *penitentiary*."

"Oh, my God!" cried Mrs. Monard, springing up from her chair, and wringing her hands, "help me! help me!"

"Vallie," said the minister, calmly, "sit down, and hear me through. Do not judge me too harshly. I deserved it, I suppose."

"That, Sir, I must deny," said Dr. Gurdone, emphatically. "Mrs. Monard, I say, for your comfort, that Mr. Monard is too hard upon himself. Some of us tried at the time to have him acquitted. He was punished for being found in bad company. Why did you not tell all this before you were tried, Mr. Monard? If you had, it would have gone lighter with you, perhaps."

"I was not allowed, you know, Doctor, to appear as a witness in my own case. Besides, I was young, and did not fully appreciate my situation. I knew nothing about courts. Even then I committed the matter to the hands of God, for my dear mother had taught me to go to Him with all my troubles. I believed that He would do right, whatever men might think."

"According to your own story, Mr. Monard," said the Doctor, "you have been more unfortunate than sinful. I do think, Sir, you ought not to accuse yourself so bitterly. It was only *once* you sinned."

"David sinned once, Doctor, and he was punished for it the remainder of his life. I sinned, in consenting to receive the murdered man's gold."

"Well, if you will allow no defence of yourself, proceed with your story," said the Doctor. "I never

heard of you after you left, and I suppose your subsequent history is also strange."

"Yes, it is somewhat remarkable," replied Mr. Monard, "and I will relate it as quickly as I can, for it affords me no pleasure to dwell upon it. When I had been in the penitentiary about six months, I one day made my escape, in company with several others. I need not enter into the particulars of that escape. But that was another foolish thing on my part. I ought to have remained, like an honest man, and served my time out. But the keeper of the prison was a cruel man, and, I thought, punished me more than I deserved. At any rate, whether it was right or wrong, I availed myself of the opportunity to escape. It would not be interesting to either of you to hear all the details of my history. Suffice it to say that I made my way through forests, living on berries and such food as I dared to beg, till I reached the State of Connecticut. There, one day, I met a boy in the woods, with whom I exchanged clothing. Mine was a good suit, though it was the penitentiary uniform, and his was ragged. I felt that I would be doing him no harm, as he could not well be mistaken for myself. After this I was not afraid to travel by day, and to meet people. But fearing pursuit, I went on for three days further, and hired to a farmer. If I ever was pursued, I did not know it. The gentleman with whom I was living was a very pious man, and I attended church with him every Sabbath, and I took great interest in the Sunday-school. Without giving the particulars of my religious experience, I will say that it was not long before I was received into the church. The pastor, who was a most excellent and learned man, frequently called at the house where I was living, and I was delighted with his conversation. He noticed with what eagerness I listened to him. One day

he asked me if I did not think it my duty to preach? I told him that I did, and that I intended to do so as soon as I could qualify myself. He talked with me for some time in regard to the motives by which I was actuated. He seemed satisfied with my answers, and informed me that if I would give my consent, he would endeavor to have me educated. To make my story as short as possible, I was taken under the care of the church, and sent to school at Harvard, where I remained till I received my diploma. In due time I was licensed to preach. After several years, in which nothing remarkable occurred in my history, I found myself, it matters not how I came there, in charge of the church at——. There I met a young lady by the name of Valena Vincent, and my heart at once told me that she would make me a good wife."

"Your heart deceived you that time," said Mrs. Monard, sorrowfully.

"I beg leave to differ from you," replied the minister. "We were married, and a short time after our marriage my youthful bride—I would not tell it, Vallie, if it were not necessary to my story."

"Go on," she said. "Tell it, if you want to."

"I have now come to the secret which has been such a source of annoyance and trouble to us for so long a time."

"Tell it all," said the lady. "Don't mind me."

"Well, Doctor, she attended a—a party, one night before our honeymoon expired. I did not accompany her, for reasons which it is not necessary to mention. When she returned, though I know not what time it was, I was gone. I did not tell any one where I was going, nor did I write a word to my beloved wife, though I was absent for six long months, suffering such suspense and anxiety as you may imagine, but I cannot

describe. I thought I was acting for the best, though I may have been wrong in my opinions. I will now leave it to you, Vallie, to say."

"Where did you go?" asked she, gazing at him with intense and painful interest.

"Some time after you left," answered Mr. Monard, "a man called at the house to make inquiries in regard to a place where he might secure lodging for the night. I had carried a candle to the gate, where he was sitting on his horse. One glance at his face convinced me that he was the cruel keeper of the penitentiary from which I had escaped."

"Oh, heavens!" exclaimed Mrs. Monard.

"He also recognized me," continued the minister, "and exclaimed, in surprise—

"'You, Stendon! Is it possible?'

"I was very much embarrassed—in fact, almost stupefied, for a few moments. But I asked him to alight and come in, as I had no idea of trying to escape. He at once dismounted, and drew a pistol, which he carried in his hand till we reached my room, keeping his eyes fixed upon me. I informed him that it was useless to draw a weapon on me, as I was now a minister, and had no disposition to resist an officer of the law. I then briefly gave him my history since I had made my escape from the gloomy institution over whose affairs he presided. When I had finished, he said—

"'If what you tell me is true—and I have no reason to doubt it—you are very unfortunate; for it is my duty to arrest you, and carry you back to the penitentiary.'"

"Oh, Eldon, Eldon!" cried Mrs. Monard.

"I was dumbfounded," continued the minister. "What could I say or do? Could I persuade the man to neglect his duty? My conscience would not

suffer me to do so. Besides, I thought it would be useless to make an appeal to one whose heart appeared to be made of adamant. But my resolution was quickly formed, and I said—

“‘It will bring disgrace upon my wife and her family, and upon myself, to give publicity to this matter. No one here knows a word of my history. I will go with you, and serve my time out. I ask you only to keep the affair secret, and I will take it as a favor if you will start with me, at once, under cover of darkness. When my time is out, I can return, and no one will know where I have been. It can be of no advantage to you to disgrace me forever, and destroy the happiness of two human beings.’”

“His heart seemed to be touched by my appeal; at any rate, he agreed to my proposition, and we left immediately. In due time we reached the penitentiary, and I remained till my time was out. When I was taking my leave, the keeper said to me—

“‘You are now a free man, and can go where you please, without fear. I shall never tell your history to any human being. You have behaved like a gentleman and an honest man. I’ve tried you; for I gave you opportunities to escape, but you seemed to disregard them. I’m now convinced that your story is all true. You’ve done the convicts good by preaching to them on Sundays, and some have made a profession of religion. We’ve had little trouble with them since you began your preaching to them. The fact is, they pay more attention to you than to our Chaplain. They, no doubt, think you can sympathize with them. Anyhow, you’ve done them good. Here is a hundred dollars which the Chaplain begs you to accept; and here is a new suit of clothes from myself. No one here knows your history, but the Chaplain and myself, and

we've agreed never to tell it as long as we live. I will say further, that your conduct has done more to convince me of the truth of religion than all else. Now, go. Good-bye.'

"I left the prison with the hope that even there I had done something for the Master. I reached home as soon as I possibly could, and, Vallie, you know the rest. This is the long-kept secret. Will you forgive me?"

Mrs. Monard rose from her seat, a flood of tears streaming down her cheeks, and throwing her arms around his neck, said—

"Yes, yes. God knows I do."

Dr. Gurdone would have been hard-hearted, indeed, if he could have listened to the recital of this story, and witnessed the last scene, without emotion. His feelings overcame him, and he, too, wept. Presently he rose up, hastily, and with upraised hand, said—

"Mr. Monard, I here vow, before high heaven, that I will never mention your history to any human being, as long as I live on the earth. It would do no good, but perhaps much harm, to tell it. You may, therefore, trust me, with implicit confidence. I want to talk with you more, but I cannot do it now. If you will allow me, I'll come back soon, in order to talk with you about a burden on my own conscience. But you have so stirred up my feelings that I can't do it now."

"Come again, Doctor, whenever you feel like it," said Mr. Monard, as the physician shook hands with the two. He went out, mounted his horse, and rode away.

As soon as he was gone, Mr. Monard turned to his wife, and said—

"I am glad that you now know all."

"But why would you never tell me before?"

"Because, if I had told you immediately after my return, I was afraid you would leave me."

After thinking for a moment, she replied—

"I expect you did right, Eldon. I was so foolish then, the probability is I would have left you. I confess I did not love you at that time as I do now."

"Would you leave me now?"

"Never, never!" she exclaimed, with energy. "I'm just beginning to love you as a wife ought to love her husband. I used to make sport of your preaching—God forgive me!—and you bore all my ridicule and abuse so patiently and meekly. Oh, I can never forgive myself. You have saved me, Eldon, saved me. If your preaching has not effected it, your noble, godly example has."

"If," replied Mr. Monard, joyfully, "by my ministerial labor no one else has ever been saved, it would be worth a lifetime's work to save you."

"Oh, Eldon, how noble it was in you to keep that secret from me. I can see into it all, now. You wanted to spare my feelings; you didn't want me to feel any sense of disgrace. Wasn't that it?"

"That was one of my reasons, dear. I thought you could not bear it till the good Lord should change your heart."

"God has indeed changed me, wonderfully," she remarked.

And here Mr. Monard and his wife must be left for awhile, talking about God and rejoicing together. It must not be supposed that religion immediately destroys every evil tendency of the human heart. Some of the nations of Canaan were left to try the Israelites. So some of the evil inclinations of the heart are left to try the believer. Mrs. Monard's violent temper could not be cured in a moment; but whenever Mr. Monard

observed the foreshadowings of its rise, he would say, "Remember your dream," and that was sufficient. She was a different woman, and the consequence was, if Araphel was not a palace, it was a happy home, which was better.

CHAPTER XXVI.

SURPRISE.

“Dost thou deem
It such an easy task from the fond breast
To root affection out?”

It is impossible to enter into minute details of the affairs of all the parties concerned with the present story without expanding it to wearisome dimensions. Hence many events that are of no particular interest, and even some which would prove entertaining, must be omitted.

Mr. Brandon was still in a prosperous condition, and eagerly adding to his store of worldly wealth. Externally, he did not present the appearance of an unhappy man, whatever may have been his inward struggles with conscience. With a kind of honesty peculiar to the class to which he belonged, he had refunded Mr. Monard's ten dollars, with legal interest rigidly calculated, without the preacher's knowing how it was done. Thus the accusations of the secret monitor were silenced to such an extent that they did not prove very troublesome. Mr. Monard had noticed that the merchant had suddenly become “wondrous kind,” and apparently much more friendly than he had ever been; but, of course, he knew not the cause of this unexpected renewal of brotherly love. Mr. Brandon, as he had said to his wife, consoled himself for the necessity of having to practice trickery, with the reflection that the poor minister had lost nothing, except his character. Whatever might be his reputation, it did not interfere with the duties of his present avocation. He could plow, and sow and reap, no matter what opinion people might entertain in regard to his honesty. He was much better off, in a

temporal sense, than he was while engaged in preaching. The consequence of this kind of reasoning was, Mr. Brandon did not suffer any great anguish from the sting of remorse.

The year during which Mrs. Monard's illness had occurred proved to be unfavorable, so far as the crops were concerned. The harvest was so meagre that Mr. Monard could not have made the payment which was due on the little property of Araphel; but, fortunately, he received a remittance of five hundred dollars from Vincent. His son stated that the Lord was still blessing him, and that he could spare this amount, and even more, if his father needed it. But this sum was amply sufficient, and he was in easy circumstances.

Dr. Gurdone did not again visit the minister, as he had promised, till late in the fall of that year. But one bright day in November he made his appearance at Araphel, and found Mr. Monard at home. Not to consume time with the details of their conversation upon ordinary topics, Dr. Gurdone said, as soon as there was that pause which invariably quickly follows the discussion of such common subjects as weather and health—

“I would have called to see you at an earlier day, but I have been quite busy since I last saw you. I have also been in trouble and perplexity, and have come to talk to you about it; I want your advice.”

“If I can be of the least service to you, Doctor, you have only to speak your commands. You have been so kind in attending my wife during her severe sickness, that I do wish you would let me pay you in some way.”

“Say nothing about it, Mr. Monard. It was a pleasure to me; and the more so after I learned from Dr. Huxley how badly your church treated you. I desire to say to you that your candid recital of the facts

of your early life has greatly increased my appreciation of your honesty and sincerity. I have confidence in the piety and judgment of one who has such unbounded faith in the Supreme Being as you have."

"I do not deserve praise, Doctor, for I have not done anything more than duty, even if I have done that. But I thank you for your good opinion of me. As to my candor in giving you my early history, I should not object to the whole world's knowing it, if people would only believe my statement. But you know what malice there is in a great many people's hearts. The defamation of a minister's character, particularly, seems to afford them delight. If it can be proved that he is guilty of a deviation from the path of righteousness, they appear to regard it as a palliation of their own misdoings. For this reason I have kept this portion of my individual history a profound secret from the world."

"I don't blame you in the least, Mr. Monard, and I would have acted just as you have. There was no necessity that you should reveal it; you were under no moral obligation, in my opinion, to do so. If you had told it, people would have magnified it, and your influence and usefulness would have been impaired, if not destroyed."

"I am glad that you agree with me, Doctor. But we have talked enough about my affairs. We will proceed to the particular business to which I am indebted for the honor of this visit. How can I serve you?"

"Well, Mr. Monard, I've come to what some would consider, perhaps, a strange conclusion; but probably you may not differ from me. I've thought a great deal about that awful scene in which you and I were such prominent actors. If it had not been for you, there is no doubt in my mind that that old man would

have murdered me. Oh, the picture of that cold, pitiless, stony face, with the merciless eyes, it seems never will fade from my memory."

"He certainly did have a diabolical face," replied Mr. Monard, "if the science of Physiognomy can be relied on."

"But, Mr. Monard, the circumstances by which I was surrounded, to say nothing of what nature has done for you, made your face appear to me like that of an angel."

"I have no doubt of it, Doctor. Anybody's face, it matters not whose, if he was trying to save you, would have looked angelic."

"Mr. Monard, I did want to throw my arms around you and thank you; but you can make allowance for my perturbation of mind."

"I did only my duty, Doctor."

"Whether you did or not, I came to the conclusion that a kind Providence sent you with those two men to save my life. Some people would say that it was an accident; but it don't look that way to me."

"Why should the good Lord not have sent me, Doctor, for that purpose, or at least for that as one of His purposes? I think your conclusion is in accordance with the teachings of the Holy Scriptures. God has many ways of operating, and of bringing good out of evil. The Lord does not lead men into temptation in order to induce them to commit sin. He may try them, to bring about certain results for their own good and the good of other people. In that fearful scene to which you have alluded, I learned the enormity of sin and crime, from a brief experience, too. It resulted in my making preparation for the ministry, and in saving your life, and possibly that of the Sheriff, and in securing the punishment of two wicked wretches. In this instance, at least, the Lord brought good out of evil."

"That is now plain to be seen," replied Dr. Gurdone. "But the good growing out of it has not yet ceased, I trust. I informed you that I abandoned the ministry because my conscience troubled me so about breaking my oath. For twenty years I have been trying to keep my mind off that subject. I have tried to be an infidel. I have tried to believe Dr. Huxley's 'Evolution Theory,' and I thought I was succeeding till I heard your discussion with him. I told him that, in my opinion, you had fairly answered his objections. So, my faith in the Bible began to revive, and at the same time my conscience began to reproach me. I am tormented, Mr. Monard. I feel that I ought to commence preaching again, and yet I do not feel that I am worthy. What shall I do?"

"I told you, Doctor, that I would not have taken any such obligation; but that is not the question. The act cannot be undone. But your duty, judging from what you say, seems plain to me. You once preached the necessity of repentance. If you think you did wrong in breaking your oath ——."

"Don't you think so?" interrupted the Doctor.

"What I may think has nothing to do with the question," replied Mr. Monard. "It is your conscience, not mine, that must be satisfied. You seem to think that you did wrong. If so, is it not your duty to repent? There is no sin that God will not pardon, except the sin against the Holy Ghost. Whatever that may be, you are not guilty of it."

"Why may I not be?"

"Because, if you were, you would feel no compunctions of conscience. Why can you not, then, just put yourself in the hands of our merciful heavenly Father, and ask Him to forgive you and to point out plainly the path of duty. If He wants you to return to the ministry,

He will make such an impression on your mind that you cannot mistake it. Is your feeling like that of Paul, 'Woe is me if I preach not the gospel?'"

"I have just that feeling."

"I do not see how you can hesitate, then. Your conscience rebukes you, you say; satisfy its clamors by following its dictates. It is the guide which God has given us, and we can never be happy so long as we disobey its voice."

"But, Mr. Monard, I feel that I am under the frowns of God. I do not enjoy the peace which I once felt. I am trying to get back on the right track, but the harder I try, the deeper I seem to plunge in the fog."

"Doctor," said Mr. Monard, slowly, "it appears to me that you must have forgotten some phases of Christian experience. Are you not trying to make some sort of bargain and contract with the Lord? Are you not expecting Him to forgive you, if you agree to do what He requires of you? You would be willing to preach again, would you not, if you felt that your sins were pardoned, and if you enjoyed a sense of your acceptance with Him?"

"Yes, Sir," replied the Doctor, "I would do anything to have the feelings I once had."

"Well, then, Doctor, allow me to suggest that you reverse the terms of your attempted contract with God. Resolve that you will first begin the work of preaching."

"While I am under such clouds of darkness, Mr. Monard?"

"Yes, Sir. You say that you can adopt the language of Paul, 'Woe is me if I preach not the gospel.' That feeling I would regard as a call, or rather, in your case, a recall to the ministry. Just say to the Lord that you will, by His grace, return to the path of duty, and I

have no doubt that the sacred feelings you once had will return."

"I believe you are right, Mr. Monard," said the Doctor, thoughtfully, after a pause, "and I will, without delay, act upon your advice."

As the physician rose to go, Mr. Monard said, "Let us pray together before you leave."

"With all my heart. Pray for me, my brother."

The two knelt down, and Mr. Monard offered up an earnest prayer. After which, with a hearty shake of the hand, and without saying anything more than "Good-bye," the physician mounted his horse and rode home.

It is necessary to hasten on to another event, which aroused considerable feeling in at least two families. This event will be explained by a conversation that occurred between Dr. Huxley and Zenie. As his wife was in feeble health, the Doctor did not care to disturb her with any sort of financial troubles. But he thought he ought to acquaint Zenie with circumstances which concerned herself. He said—

"Zenie, I have noticed that Leonard Brandon has been visiting you a long time, and, of course, I guess at his intentions. You have never told me what relation subsists between you, and I have not asked you, because you are of age, and as far as marrying is concerned you can do as you please. If Leonard has proposed to you, I shall offer no objection, though I have seen young men whom I like better. Nevertheless, he is rich, handsome, and respectable. To tell you the truth, I once thought a great deal more of Vincent Monard than I do of Leonard; but I have good reason to change my mind."

"What reason, Father?"

"It does not matter now. If he had remained here I would have objected strongly to your marrying him."

"There is no use of talking about that, Father. He never asked me to marry him, nor ever even hinted at such a thing."

"Well, we will say nothing more about it. I want to tell you about something else. You remember my Alcott farm?"

"Yes, Sir; certainly."

"I intended to give that to you when you marry, as your dowry. But don't you think that Brandon has set up a claim to it, in his wife's name, and is going to bring suit at next court to recover it?"

"He has?"

"Yes; and if he succeeds, he says that his wife intends to present it to Leonard whenever he marries."

"If that is all," replied Zenie, "it makes no difference how the suit may terminate, for I am engaged to Leonard. So I will get the farm, any way."

The young lady said this so carelessly that the Doctor looked at her, searchingly.

"Zenie," said he, "do you think enough of Leonard Brandon to marry him?"

"Yes, Sir;" she answered, in the same tone of indifference.

"I do not think—I know he is not your equal; but if you have come to the conclusion to be his wife, as I told you, I will not interpose any objection. This is a matter which you must settle for yourself. No woman, though, in my opinion, ought to marry a man unless she loves him."

"I like him, I suppose, Father, as well as I will ever like anybody."

"Marry him, if you will," replied the Doctor, "but I am not going to give up my claim to the Alcott plantation without a lawsuit. Under present circumstances we might compromise very easily; but I tell you I shall

do no such thing. That farm, at the lowest calculation, is worth fifty thousand dollars, though I bought it for forty thousand. Brandon shall not have the pleasure of giving it to you if I can prevent it. You are superior to Leonard in intellectual endowments, and must be something like his equal in point of property. Those Brandons are perfect money worshipers, and they shall not throw it up to you that you were poor when you married Leonard—that is, if you do marry him.”

“That point is settled, Father. I have been engaged to Leonard for some time, and I will, before a great while, appoint the day for our marriage. Probably you had better compromise the matter. You may create hard feelings between our families.”

“I don’t care if I do,” replied the Doctor, with bluntness. “Mr. Brandon must legally establish his claim to the farm before I ever give it up. The offer to compromise would be an acknowledgment on my part of the justness of his claim. I do not think he can win, and I am not going to surrender a single right, nor tamely submit to Brandon. I confess to you that I have not more respect for him, any how, than I ought to have.”

“But Leonard is not like his father in all respects,” suggested Zenie.

“No; I hope not.”

After a short pause, the Doctor continued—

“To tell you the truth, Zenie, I wish you could marry some one who is more worthy of you—some one who is at least your equal in intellectual accomplishments. This proposed marriage is contrary to the laws of Evolution. She is striving to reach perfection, and we must suffer if we try to thwart her efforts. There must be no mixture of unequals. The Goddess abhors incongruities. Disagreeable consequences invariably

follow the attempt to harmonize incompatibilities. If we disregard the laws of affinity between things, and also between persons, we commit errors, which will prove destructive to our happiness."

"I wish the Goddess," said Zenie, with a little, sad smile, "would do something more for us than to lay down inexorable laws, and then punish us so unmercifully for every infraction of them."

"I do not see what more she could do," answered the Doctor. "But, giving a practical application of my remarks to the subject of our talk, I say that Leonard can never be a companion for you, so far as intellectual pursuits are concerned. That path you will have to travel alone. I do not think he can appreciate your accomplishments. He knows no more about Evolution than does the monkey from which he was originally evolved."

"But we can be happy, Father, if we discard Evolution as a topic of discussion. Leonard loves me with all his heart, and will make me a good, kind husband. I have no doubt of that. I wish, myself, that he possessed more intellectual brilliancy. But we must not expect to find perfection in any man."

"If you are going to marry him, I would cheerfully give twenty thousand dollars, if he only had the natural abilities and the education of Vincent Monard. But, my child, do as you please."

The Doctor immediately set about preparing for his lawsuit. He addressed a letter, together with the papers relating to the Alcott farm, to J. M. Hackett & Co., Louisville, Ky. He had known Hackett in earlier days, who had attained to great eminence in the legal profession.

It was with great impatience that Dr. Huxley waited for the answer to his communication. He had to endure

suspense for several weeks. But at last the long-looked for reply arrived, and the seal was eagerly broken. The letter was short, stating that they had examined the papers in the case, and they believed they could gain it. It was difficult, however, and would require a great deal of hard work. Yet they saw no reason to despair of final success. The letter bore the signature of J. M. Hackett & Co. But at the bottom there was a postscript, in a different hand, stating, "I will attend to this case in person." It was signed, J. M. H.

When the Doctor returned home, he showed this letter to Zenie, remarking, with great glee, as he did so—

"I'll show Brandon whether he will get my plantation or not. Hackett is one of the best lawyers in the United States, and you can see what he says."

While the Doctor was saying this, Zenie appeared to be deeply absorbed in the letter. He noticed that her face became slightly pale, and she seemed to sink into a state of sad thoughtfulness, which the contents of the letter did not justify.

"What do you find so very interesting in that letter, Zenie, that you gaze at it so long and earnestly, and with such a pale face?"

"My face pale! No, Sir; you are mistaken. I was merely trying to recognize the handwriting. It is Vincent Monard's."

"Good gracious!" exclaimed the Doctor. "Let me see it. But I have no acquaintance with his chirography. Are you sure?"

"I am certain of it, Father."

She at once went to the parlor, and returned with a note which she took from her card-basket on the centre-table. Placing the two documents side by side, she said—

"Here is his handwriting. You can compare the two. They are just alike."

"Well, I see they are. But I suppose Vincent is Hackett's clerk, that's all."

"But look there, Father; I have just noticed it; do you not see the two printed names in the corner of this letter, one under the other, J. M. Hackett, Vincent Monard?"

"That is so. How strange!"

"What is strange?" asked Zenie.

"That Vincent should be a partner of the best lawyer in Louisville."

"I see nothing very strange in it, Father. I felt confident that when he left the village it would not be long before the world would hear from him. A young man of his intellectual culture, sobriety, energy and ambition, cannot be kept down by ordinary obstacles. He will win," continued the young lady, displaying more enthusiasm than she was aware of, "in spite of all difficulties. I predict for him a brilliant career. Who knows that he may not some day occupy the highest position in the government which it is in the power of the people to bestow?"

The Doctor was intently watching the expression of her face, while he himself felt sorrowful and disappointed.

"Zenie," he said, "you cannot deceive me, nor yourself. You are not giving to Leonard your heart with your hand. But that you may not distress yourself, I will say that if you knew as much about Vincent Monard as I do, you would not honor him with another thought. Knowing what I do, if he were even to address you, you would discard him with scorn."

"What is it you know, Father?"

"Unfortunately, I am bound to secrecy. But has

Leonard never said anything to you about Vincent since he left?"

"Not a syllable, Father."

"I am glad that he has not," remarked the Doctor. "It gives me a better opinion of Leonard. But I begin to suspect in what direction your heart is leaning. If you are hesitating between the two young men, give your love to Leonard at once. I admit that Vincent Monard is brilliant, and may make a great man; but I believe I would rather see you dead than see you his wife. Don't ask me to give you the reasons, for I cannot."

"Father," said Zenie, "you are talking entirely too fast. I have told you that I shall marry Leonard. Your caution, therefore, is altogether unnecessary. Vincent has never addressed me, and it would seem that he never will."

"No, I think not. You will never see him in this town again. You may be certain of that; for he would be afraid to come back."

"It does not matter to me," replied Zenie, "whether he ever returns or not."

"Very well. Say no more about it." And he rose and left the room.

"Oh, my foolish, foolish heart!" thought Zenie, to herself; "why am I forced to think of Vincent Monard by some secret power? I have promised to marry Leonard Brandon, and I think I love him. Even if I do not, Vincent shows that he is not coming back. It is hard for me to believe that he is guilty of anything disreputable. I wish I knew what it is that Father alludes to. But why do I care? It is nothing to me. I will, I *must*, quit thinking about him. My self-respect demands it. Oh, it is so painful to give up all the sweet dreams and air-castles of girlhood's days!

Foolishness ! foolishness ! Farewell to thee, Vincent ! Of thee must I dream no more forever ! Thou art, my father says, unworthy of me, and I will believe it. Come, modesty and honor, to the rescue. Henceforth I will love only Leonard, who is so true and faithful, and more handsome than Vincent, if he cannot converse so well."

Another circumstance soon occurred which had a tendency to strengthen Zenie's resolution to love only Leonard Brandon. It was a great relief to her feelings ; for the event fixed a great gulf between herself and Vincent Monard, which it seemed nothing could remove, except death.

One day, not long after the Doctor and Zenie had talked about the Alcott plantation and other matters connected with it, he was sitting in the front gallery of his residence reading a newspaper. Suddenly he called Zenie, and when she approached, he handed her the paper, and pointed to a short notice, which the young lady read as follows—

"Married, on the 24th inst., at the residence of the bride's father, by the Rev. H. L. Brentford, Col. V. Monard and Miss Stella May Hackett, all of this city."

"It is no more than I expected," she said, as she returned the paper. The Doctor made no remark, and Zenie went to her room.

"Indeed," she said, to herself, "it is now all over. The only man whom I could love with all the fullness of my heart is lost to me forever. I cannot understand it. Vincent did love me. This separation is the work of some evil destiny. Two beings are now forever estranged that seemed to be formed for each other. Why should there be this disappointment ? I perceived the obstacles in the way, and could have removed them by the utterance of a word. Why did I

not request him to write to me? I could have done so that evening he bade me adieu, without any breach of modesty. But I was too proud. Now it is *too late*. Oh, cruel, cruel fate, to work such irreparable mischief! But, simpleton that I am! he loves another, and is happy. How is it that men can transfer their affections with such facility? Why can I not bestow my love upon Leonard Brandon as easily as he bestows his on Stella May Hackett? Vain! vain! I can only accept the destiny of many a disappointed daughter of Eve, as the Bible calls her, and live with a man whom I can only *respect*! At any rate, all suspense is now ended."

From that moment she determined that she would no longer hesitate to marry Leonard Brandon.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE FALLING STARS.

"And stars did fall from the sky
As folks to the church drew nigh,
And shouts went up from the crowd,
Some low, some deep, and some loud."

The year 1833 at last dawned upon the world—a year which is celebrated in scientific history. Among all the phenomena that have bewildered the astronomer, none probably ever surpassed in startling sublimity the magnificent pyrotechnical display which met his astonished gaze during the year 1833. With its origin and management proud man had nothing to do. The controlling hand was hidden in the blue depths of the skies. Dr. Huxley said it was "an entertainment which the Goddess of Evolution had kindly provided for her children." Impotent man looked on at the brilliant shower of "falling stars," not knowing whence they came, nor why they were produced. While he gazed in stupid wonder, with open mouth and staring eyes, they fell in silence from the heavens, as thick as snow-flakes. There were no explosions, no noise. The operator, not the slightest trace of whose presence could be detected, scattered the bright gems from the zenith to every portion of the horizon. There have been, in modern times, four remarkable exhibitions of this celestial phenomenon; in 1797, 1831, 1832 and 1833; but the shower of 1833 was the grandest display that was ever witnessed. Turn his eye in whatever direction he might, the fortunate spectator of the star-storm of 1833 beheld the glittering flakes coming down, flying horizontally, crossing and recrossing, and chasing each other in harmonious confusion—harmonious, on the principle that "all discord

is harmony not understood." For hours the shower continued, without cessation or intermission, till it seemed that the divine pyrotechnist must soon exhaust the supply of sidereal flakes, and till the ignorant observer thought that the last star in the heavens must soon fall to the earth ; but the real stars shone on in undiminished numbers, notwithstanding that many persons were ready to make affidavit to the fact that they saw the actual constellations all start at once from the places which they had occupied for ages. And so it did seem. To form anything like a correct idea of this magnificent display, just imagine that in a snow-storm every flake is a small star. If these so-called "stars" of 1833 had been a solid substance, the earth would soon have been covered with a sheet of glowing fire ; but they appeared to the beholder to strike the ground and to become instantly extinguished. Let him examine as rigidly as he might for scattered fragments ; but not a vestige could be discovered. No such fireworks had ever before been seen by that generation.

It may not be out of place to remark that this strange phenomenon never has been satisfactorily explained, and probably never will be. Some ingenious and plausible theories have been advanced ; yet they are but the conjectures of speculation. The truth is, the astronomical philosopher knows no more in regard to the cause of the "shooting stars" than did those observers in 1833, who firmly believed them to be precursors of the awful day in which the angel shall plant one foot on the land and the other on the sea, and declare that time shall be no more. But the facts in the case cannot be disputed ; the "stars" did fall in the year 1833, and produced different effects on different minds ; all of which will be seen in the progress of the present chapter.

About the first of October, 1833, Leonard Brandon

was again seen at the residence of Dr. Huxley; and this was only a day or two after Zenie had read the notice of Vincent Monard's marriage. Since the young lady had promised to unite her destiny with his, he had called with a frequency which betokened unusual ardor and depth of affection. It seemed that he was miserable, except when in company with his affianced. She did not object to the frequency of his visits, as she regarded him as her future husband. She was under the impression that she now loved him with more fervor than she ever believed she could, and she flattered herself with the idea that her affection would continue to increase after the voice of the civil law should make it illegal ever to bestow affection upon any one else, or to think of any one else, except as a friend. Thoughts of Vincent were no longer legitimate. So when Leonard again asked her, that October evening, if she were not yet ready to appoint the day for their marriage, she was prepared to return a positive and definite answer.

"The eighteen months," said Leonard, "which you promised should not pass away without the completion of our marriage, are nearly gone."

"I know it," replied Zenie, "and I will now appoint the time."

"When shall it be?" asked Leonard, with eagerness, and with pulsations of the heart greatly quickened.

"I will appoint the 12th of November."

"At what hour?"

"I will give you the programme which I have arranged," replied Zenie. "The stage arrives here about midnight. We will have the ceremony performed at the church, as the stage drives up, and we will immediately start off on our bridal tour."

"That will do," replied Leonard, "if you will be certain to carry out the programme."

"Have you no confidence in me?" asked Zenie.

"Certainly I have," he replied, "but you have postponed so long, that I do not know what notion you might take. May you not want to postpone again?"

"Oh, no," she replied, with a laugh. "I will not disappoint you. I never have deceived you, have I?"

"I cannot say that you have deceived me. But you have put me off from time to time, so long, that I can hardly realize that you have really appointed the day which is to make me the happiest of men, and, can I say, make you the happiest of women?"

"Before I could answer that question I would have to know how happy other women are," replied the young lady.

"I don't care how happy other men are," answered Leonard, "I will be happier than any of them when I can call you my own dear wife. Oh, Zenie, I don't believe I could live without you."

"Yes you could. If I were to marry some one else, you would soon forget me."

"Never, never!" he exclaimed, with energy. "I can't bear the thought of you marrying any one else. It maddens me."

"There is not the slightest probability of my marrying any one else," she replied, thoughtfully. "And yet we are creatures of fate. We can predict nothing with certainty. As Shakspeare says, 'there's a divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we will.' Who knows but that you may not be the husband of another in a year or two from now?"

"It chills my heart to hear you even hint such a thing," exclaimed Leonard. "It cannot—it shall not be!"

"Stranger things than that have happened," replied Zenie. "We may lay out our plans with care, and use

every effort to execute them, and stubborn fate mocks us, and scatters all our projects and hopes to the winds."

"Unless you back out," said Leonard, "we will marry, in spite of fate."

"It is my intention," replied Zenie, with firmly compressed lips, "to be faithful."

They continued to talk in this way for some length of time. When Leonard was taking his leave, at a late hour, he said—

"It will seem to me an age before the twelfth of next month."

"It will be only five or six weeks," replied Zenie, "and I am sure that is not long."

"If you had half the love for me that I have for you," said Leonard, in a tone of sorrow, "it would appear to be long."

"I cannot undertake," replied the young lady, with a laugh, "to measure the exact quantity of my love. So I cannot say whether it is a half or a fourth as much as yours. I have promised to marry you the twelfth of next month, and after that we will exchange views on the subject. But I think I have said enough for the present."

Leonard left, feeling as if no happier man could be found on the face of the earth. The next morning he broke the joyful news to his parents, and there was general rejoicing in the Brandon family. The old gentleman, with great glee, said—

"So it don't matter how the suit may end, the Alcott farm will be in the family. I wish, however, we could compromise, so as to avoid an unnecessary expense; but Dr. Huxley is a strange man, and seems determined to go on with it. But I don't care," rubbing his hands for very joy, "it will be all right."

At last the appointed day arrived, and Zenie was making preparations for the ceremony to be performed that night. Dr. Huxley was at home all that day, and seemed to be satisfied with the prospects of his daughter. In the course of the day, he said to Zenie—

“I wish you would get my broadcloth coat, which I have not had on for several years. I only wear it on state occasions. So I will brush it up, and wear it to-night.”

Zenie obeyed, and brought forth the desired garment. The Doctor took it, and without seeming to have any particular object in view, was searching the pockets. Presently he drew out a letter from the side-pocket, and in surprise said to his daughter—

“Why, Zenie, I declare, here is one of your letters in my pocket, and the seal has never been broken. How is this?”

“Father, I do wonder if you have been so careless as to carry one of my letters in your pocket for several years, and never think of giving it to me.”

“I have not worn the coat but once I believe in three years, and I must have taken this letter from the post-office on that very day, and have never thought of it since. Here, take it,” he continued, handing it to her, without looking at the post-mark to see where it was from.

Zenie saw at a glance that the handwriting was that of Vincent Monard. She hastened to her room, threw herself in a chair, and with a trembling hand and violently fluttering heart broke the seal, and read the following—

“MISS ZENIE:—Do you remember the evening I bade you adieu? It was the saddest day of my life. When I took your hand in mine, as I was leaving, my heart was almost bursting with emotions to which I could not give utterance. I *dared* not. A great, fiery gulf seemed to intervene, and to horribly yawn between

us, which it appeared to me I never could cross. I had not the heart to ask you to share my poverty. Besides, there was another circumstance which I could not explain to you. Possibly you may have heard of it before now. If you have, I can only declare to you, before God, that I am innocent. I confess that I did not want you to hear of this circumstance, and if I had endeavored to explain it, I might not have done so to your satisfaction. So I left with closed lips, while my heart was torn and wrung with indescribable anguish. I fear even now to write: but it seems I can no longer suppress my wild emotions. I have suffered in silence for months. But I have labored on, exercising as much patience as I possibly could, hoping and praying that the time would soon come when I could with safety speak to you of the unfathomable love which I have cherished for you so long in silent suspense and trembling anxiety. I am thankful that my financial prospects are becoming brighter every day. Poverty need no longer constitute a barrier in the way of our union, if you can favor my suit. I have sometimes had the presumption to think that, as I gazed into the depths of your eyes while we talked of poetry, I could detect an expression which signified something more than friendship. Forgive me for saying this. Granting that I was deceived, it was a delusion which has all along kept me from sinking into despair, and stimulated me to greater efforts. I believed that I had met my spirit's mate. I fondly believed that I could lead you safely along life's pathway, removing the thorns before you, and not suffering even the winds to visit you too roughly. Many a time I felt like throwing myself at your feet, and declaring the sentiments which were ready to leap from my heart. But the hideous spectre, poverty, would spring up before me, and the sight of his gaunt form instantly sealed my lips. But, by the help and grace of the Lord, I can now place my foot on the tyrant's neck. I no longer have the slightest fear, from that source, to ask you to be mine. If I only had the light of your sweet face to dispel the clouds of gloom that lower over my pathway, I could and would redouble my diligence. I told you, as I left you, on that never-to-be-forgotten evening, that I would make the world feel that I was living in it. I have ascended the ladder of fame only a few rounds, but I am going higher. Nothing but my Creator can keep me down. Oh, Miss Zenie, if you were only mine, your encouraging smiles would inspire me with the strength of Hercules, and I could slay a dragon. Your words of cheer would so invigorate my mental faculties that no man could cope with me. All this may sound as foolishness to you; but I know you can build air-castles as well as I. If I could only claim your

hand and heart, I believe that our united lives would pass away more like a beautiful dream of fairy-land than a reality. But I must pause. I have written enough. If you answer this favorably, you will gladden my heart beyond the power of words to express. But if you do not reply, I shall never trouble you again. With the greatest impatience, I await your reply.

"VINCENT MONARD."

Poor Zenie looked blank, when she had finished this missive. She felt a choking sensation. Paternal carelessness had wrought a mischief which nothing could repair. She imagined with what heart-aching suspense and anxiety he had awaited her reply; week after week passed away, and he heard nothing; so, in despair, he turned to Stella May Hackett; and they were married, and now it was *too late*!

Zenie pressed her hand to her heart for a moment, and then rose from her seat, with a feeling of vexation toward her father, whom she sought immediately.

"Father," she said, in tones of vexatious despair, "why, in the name of reason, did you neglect to give me this letter?"

"Why, Zenie," he exclaimed, in surprise, "what in the world is the matter?"

"Read, read!" she managed to say, in a voice choking with the bitterness of a disappointment too deep and poignant to be concealed.

The Doctor hastily read the letter through, and, looking solemnly at his daughter, said—

"Zenie, I am truly sorry that you are surrounded with such difficulties. I see plainly that you do not love Leonard Brandon."

"But you are mistaken, Father," interrupted the young lady, "for I do, or I would not marry him. Yet I can say, candidly, if I had received this letter when it was first written, I would never have promised to marry Leonard. You told me that Vincent had disgraced

himself, and I believed you, and I had quit thinking about him, only as an acquaintance with whom I had spent some pleasant hours. But, in spite of me, this letter, which is so full of affection, so accords with my own feelings, that the thought of marrying Leonard is, I confess, a little repulsive."

"Well, don't marry him, then; you are not compelled to. Tell him that you do not love him, and end the matter."

"But that would not be true exactly, for I do love him. Yet, Father, I feel miserable. If it had not been for your carelessness, 'it might have been,' and would have been."

"Zenie, you do not understand yourself. What are you talking about? Vincent Monard is married. But even if he were not, I could never give my consent to your union with him."

"Why not, Father?"

"I informed you that I was, and yet am, bound to secrecy. But would you like to be the wife of a *thief*?"

"Thief!" cried Zenie, while her eyes expanded with indignation. "You know that I have too much pride and self-respect to marry such a character. But what am I to understand by your insinuation?"

"It does not matter. But that you may form the proper estimate of Vincent Monard's character, whether he is married or single, I suppose it will not be a violation of my obligation to inform you that he is a *thief*."

"Father, if anybody but you were to say such a thing as that, with this letter in my hand, I would deny it."

"Possibly you might. I am bound not to reveal the circumstances which justify me in making the assertion, but I have the proof that he is a sneak-thief."

"The proof would have to be very plain before I could believe it," replied Zenie. "But what is the use of talking about it? It is now too late. Vincent is married."

"Suppose he were not married," said Dr. Huxley, "what then?"

"What then? It is useless to say."

"Zenie," said the Doctor, seriously, "child, you do not know your own heart. My advice to you, even yet, is not to marry Leonard. I fear you will repent it, if you do."

"Begging your pardon, Father, I think I do know my own heart. I have promised to marry Leonard, and I will not deceive and disappoint him." And immediately she turned away, and went on with her preparations.

Night came, and the sky overhead was studded with thousands of glittering, twinkling stars. Everything looked bright and beautiful and cheerful, and there was not a single indication of the star-storm which was brewing thousands of miles away in the depths of space. But that night was to be famous in history. About ten o'clock some brilliant forerunners of the approaching sidereal tempest could be seen; but they attracted no particular attention. Everybody in the village turned out to witness the marriage of the "belle," and by ten o'clock the church was crowded to its fullest capacity.

It was after eleven o'clock when Leonard and Zenie got into their carriage to start to the sacred sanctuary, to be made husband and wife.

By this time the star-shower had just commenced. When they had made a little more than half the distance, the negro driver was heard to exclaim, in a trembling voice—

"Bress God, I b'leve the world's come to an eend. Oh, Lord a' mercy!"

The two young people looked out, and beheld a scene which was well calculated to inspire the stoutest heart with deep awe, if not fear.

The "stars" were falling as thick as hailstones, and the whole heavens seemed to be in a wild, fiery commotion. Every star in the blue dome seemed to drop, like ripe apples from the shaken tree, and descend with terrible velocity to this terrestrial globe. The awful sight was too much for the superstitious negro, and again he cried—

"'Fore God, Mas' Leonard, de judgment day's done come dis time, an' no mistake! I'se been 'spectin' it, I has. Oh, good Lordy, hab mercy on dis poor nigger!"

"Drive on!" exclaimed Leonard, in a husky voice, which indicated that he had caught at least a portion of the negro's fear.

"Oh, Mas' Leonard, what am de use ob drivin' on? Dis aint no time to be gittin' married. Better be thinkin' 'bout de meetin' wid de Saviour. I is lookin' fur de bressed Lord to come down ebry minit, wid all de holy angels. Oh, Mas' Leonard, 'twas me dat stole dem shoes from yer par's sto' las' week. I was de wiked nigger what done dat. But I is a gwine to meet de good Lord wid a clean conscience, I is. Forgive me, Mas' Leonard, an' de Lord will. He's done said, if we poor sinners 'll 'fess our sins, He jest to forgive. I've 'fessed, Mas' Leonard. But I mus' pra some." And he sprang from his seat, and fell upon his knees, which were smiting together like Belshazzar's. At this moment the stage was heard, on another road, roaring and thundering along in the direction of the church. This seemed to frighten the negro out of his wits, and he cried—

"Dar, now, dar comes de Mas' Lord's chariot. You hear it? 'Fore God, dar it is, Oh, bressed God, take

dis nigger home to heben in dat chariot! I'se been a bad nigger in my time, but I'se sorry 'nough, now. 'Twas me, oh Lord, dat tuk dem shoes; I 'fesses it, like a honest nigger. Oh, bressed Lord, I 'pents now of all my sins. I ain't a gwine to tell no lie about it. I 'pents, good Lord, honestly 'pents of ebery sin I'se eber done in all my born days. Now, bressed Lord, I'se ready to go up to heben in Mas' 'Lijah's chariot ob fire—jest so it don't burn."

Poor Leonard, strange to tell, was speechless. It seemed that he was as superstitious as the negro. But Zenie took a hearty laugh at the frightened negro, and said—

"Go on to the church. The chariot you hear is going there. So drive on, and be ready to meet the Lord.

"Dat's so. I neber thought ob dat. Sho' 'nough dat's de right place to be foun' when de Lord comes; an' de chariot of fire is done dar now."

Accordingly, the driver took the reins in his trembling hands, and started his horses. As he moved along, the chattering of his teeth could almost be heard by the inmates of the carriage. Presently the vehicle stopped at the door of the church. When the two got out, poor Leonard tottered like a drunken man. His face was as white as fear could make the human countenance. But nobody appeared to pay any attention to the couple, who would have been, if the stars had not fallen, the observed of all observers. A scene of the wildest confusion prevailed. Some of the vast audience were screaming and yelling at the top of their voices, and half or more were on their knees, praying with more earnestness and sincerity than they had ever before manifested. The stars were pouring down thick and fast.

"Oh, the judgment day has come!" was heard in

all parts of the house. Women shrieked, and some fainted; children ten to twelve years of age were crying; many stout-hearted men turned pale; and there was shaking of limbs, and wailing, groaning, and chattering of teeth. It was a strange, wild scene, and any attempt to restore order would have been in vain, if any person had felt disposed to try it. Too many were convinced that the beginning of eternity was at hand.

Mr. Monard and his wife occupied a front seat, and the minister appeared as calm as a May morning. He was watching, with intense interest, the curious scene transpiring around him, and listening to the wild prayers that went up from the terrified multitude.

Dr. Huxley, who was fond of a practical joke, seized the stage-driver's horn, and running thirty or forty yards from the house, blew the loudest and most discordant notes he possibly could, and hastened back to witness the effects, which were truly startling.

"Dar, now," exclaimed our carriage driver, "dar now; dat am the last trump! Oh, mighty Lordy, here I is; done 'fessed all my sins, ready to ride up to glory!"

"The last trump! the last trump! The Lord has come down to judgment!" was heard all over the house. And people turned their eyes, which seemed ready to burst from their sockets, toward the door, expecting to see the Almighty Judge step in and open the Books.

Then there was a temporary pause, of which the pastor of the church, who had come to perform the marriage ceremony, took advantage, in order to make a few remarks. He said—

"My brethren and friends, listen to me just a moment. For aught I know, this may be the beginning of the Judgment Day; and I confess it looks like it; for we read that the stars shall fall from heaven. Now be

quiet. I want to make a proposition to you. It is said that confession is good for the soul. Let us meet the Lord, if he does come, with clear consciences. If any of you have injured your neighbors; if any have bitter feelings toward each other, I pray you now confess, and be reconciled. If you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you. So far as I am concerned, I have not wronged any one, and I feel ready to meet the Lord. Now, friends, be calm, and confess your sins, and adjust your difficulties, with the fear of God before your eyes, remembering that at any moment you may stand face to face with your Maker."

Immediately some one sprang up, and stated that he had a difficulty with a neighbor, who was present. "I was in the wrong. Let us shake hands, and be friends."

The injured neighbor pushed his way through the crowd, and held out his hand, saying—

"I forgive."

"Thank God," exclaimed the offender; "I feel better. My conscience is clear, and I'm ready to meet the Lord."

Mr. Monard perceived that confession would have a good effect in calming the minds of the people, and would benefit them spiritually. He thought, therefore, that he would encourage them to do so. Accordingly, he rose to his feet, and spoke very calmly. Some expected that he would confess his sin, by acknowledging that he had stolen ten dollars from Mr. Brandon.

"My friends," he said, "I am glad of this opportunity of asserting my innocence of one crime of which I have been accused. You all know what it is. If the blessed Redeemer comes in the next minute, I will say before you all, and to his face, that I never kept the

ten dollars which it is supposed by some that I did. In the presence of the great Judge I will affirm most positively that I paid it to Mr. Brandon. And now I am ready for the Judgment."

Mr. Monard took his seat, and many looked at him in astonishment. But their attention was soon directed to another party, for Mr. Brandon himself arose, and with a face burning with shame, said—

"What Mr. Monard tells you is true. He is innocent, and I am the guilty one. I will tell you how it was."

And Mr. Brandon, in a few words, explained the whole transaction. After which he said—

"I believe the Lord will soon be here, and I want to meet him with a clear conscience. Mr. Monard, will you forgive me?"

"Brother Brandon," exclaimed Mr. Monard, "as I hope to be forgiven, I forgive you. May the good Lord pardon you."

And they shook hands.

Leonard Brandon was kneeling down in the pulpit. He was so frightened that he thought no more of marrying, and on entering the house he had left Zenie to take care of herself as best she could. *Sauve qui peut* seemed now to be the fashion, and Leonard appeared to be under the impression that each one must make his own special preparation for the terrible emergency which had so suddenly and unexpectedly arisen; it was no time for marrying and giving in marriage—no time for displaying gallantry and chivalry. He and Zenie had not exchanged a word since their first glance at the falling stars. The truth was, the discovery of his uncontrollable fright aroused in her mind a feeling of contempt for the young man. When Leonard unceremoniously left her, and rushed into the pulpit, to make

such spiritual preparation as he could, she commenced discussing the question of fulfilling her promise of marriage. Would not a breach of the contract be justifiable under the circumstances? While she was revolving this subject in her thoughts, Leonard was praying, as he had never done before. He heard his father's confession, and the paternal example had a powerful effect upon him. This confession seemed to afford spiritual relief—why not unbosom himself, and be able to meet the expected Judge with a clear conscience? There was for a moment a fierce internal struggle between good and evil impulses; but at last fear prevailed, and Leonard arose from his knees, which were smiting together, and advanced a step or two in front of the pulpit. He could scarcely speak; but he managed to make his confession heard and understood. It seemed to him that all the world was acquainted with the burden upon his conscience, and he said—

“I have one great sin to confess. It was I that took Dr. Huxley's watch, and hid it in Vincent Monard's trunk. He never stole the watch; but I was moved by jealousy, and tried to ruin his character. I wish he was here to forgive me.”

Zenie looked at him, and her lips curled with inexpressible contempt. Could she marry such a man?

Dr. Huxley was sitting by his daughter, and when he heard the confession of his prospective son-in-law, he gritted his teeth, and in a low tone, he muttered—

“Vile dog! he deserves hanging!”

But no sooner had Leonard said, “I wish he was here to forgive me,” than a voice was heard in the crowd, exclaiming—

“Here I am, Leonard!” And immediately, to the surprise of everybody, Vincent Monard pushed to the front of the pulpit, and said—

"Leonard, I forgive you, with all my heart."

The young man threw his arms around Vincent's neck, and exclaimed—

"God bless you!"

At once Leonard went back into the pulpit, seeming to think that this was the most desirable place in the sanctuary, and again knelt, to offer up prayers and supplications.

Vincent turned to his father and mother. Both rose to receive him. His mother threw her arms around his neck, but could only say, in quivering tones—

"Oh, Vincent, thank God!"

Mr. Monard, for one time in his life, was completely overcome, and he wept like a child, as he took his son in his arms, and pressed him to his breast. He uttered not a word; but language was not necessary. The clouds that had so long hung over his family were all dispelled by the falling stars. People momentarily forgot the "Judgment Day" as this affecting scene was transpiring, and many wept with the Monard family.

Vincent had seen Zenie sitting by her father in the rear of the church. He made his way to them, through the crowd, and held out his hand to the Doctor.

"I told you, Doctor, that I was innocent."

The Doctor warmly grasped the extended hand, and said—

"Vincent, everybody is forgiving, and I beg you to forgive me. I confess I deeply wronged you by my suspicions. But who would have thought that *he* would have done such a trick? But never mind. It can't be helped now. Let the past be forgotten. But speak to Zenie, and then introduce us to your wife, if she is with you."

"My wife!" exclaimed Vincent, in surprise. "What do you mean?"

"Why, you are married, are you not?"

"I married? Where did you get any such information as that?"

"I saw a notice of your marriage in my Louisville paper."

Vincent was astounded.

"To whom," asked he, "did your paper state I was married, Doctor?"

"Miss Hackett."

"You did not read the notice correctly, Doctor. She married Col. Vernon Maynard."

"But I am sure I did read it correctly. It said V. Monard, did n't it, Zenie?"

But before she could reply, Vincent said—

"Excuse me, Miss Zenie," extending his hand, "the Doctor so surprised me that I forgot to speak to you. Let us shake hands and be good friends."

"So you are not married," she said, as she extended her hand, trying to assume an air of indifference.

"Certainly not. I did not see that notice, or I would have corrected it. The similarity of the names I suppose led to the mistake."

"That accounts for it," replied the Doctor. "I must tell you, boy, that, through my absent-mindedness, Zenie never received your letter till to-day."

To this remark Vincent made no reply; but the physician noticed that he blushed.

"I did not know," said the young man, to Zenie, in some confusion, "that you were to be married till I saw you come into church arrayed in your bridal robes. As it is the fashion to forgive, I beg you to pardon my presumption for daring to write that letter. My air-castles of that sort must now fall to the dust. As soon as the marriage ceremony is performed, I will be among the first to congratulate you."

Zenie was confused, and could not speak. Vincent had turned to go, when the Doctor said—

“Where is Hackett? He promised to attend to my case; and the court meets on Monday.”

“He was too sick to come,” replied Vincent, “and has sent me to fill his place, if you can accept my poor services. I have studied the case closely, Doctor, and I think I can gain it. But here is a letter from Mr. Hackett to you.”

Dr. Huxley hastily looked over the contents. The letter stated that Vincent Monard was a lawyer whom the Doctor could trust, and he had no doubt that Monard could gain the case, if anybody could.

The Doctor put the letter in his pocket, and turned to ask the young man a question; but Vincent had gone back to his parents, and was listening to the confessions which the people were still making. The physician then looked at Zenie, whose face wore a sad and troubled expression. He thought that he could read her mind.

“Zenie,” he said, with a quizzical smile, “how long before the ceremony shall be performed? I am getting tired. Besides, I think the stage-driver will want to start soon.”

“Tell him,” quickly answered Zenie, “to start as soon as he may please. Father,” with tears coming to her eyes, “I can never marry Leonard Brandon after the confession he has made. It was so mean of him to try to ruin an innocent man. I *despise* him.”

“I agree with you, child. I did not and could not believe that he was capable of such villainy. But we must, I suppose, make some allowance for him, as he only intended to get Vincent out of his way. This thing called love sometimes makes people act very strangely and foolishly, too. But, Zenie, I see how it is.

You have loved Vincent all the time, and you do so still. Why not marry him to-night? It would be an excellent joke."

"Why, Father," said Zenie, blushing deeply, "he has not asked me, and he cares nothing for me. Did you not observe how coolly he treated me just now?—waiting here to congratulate me as soon as I shall be married to Leonard Brandon. He talked as if it were a matter of indifference to him. But I can be as indifferent as he is." And the young lady bit her lip, as if she were bent upon the accomplishment of something desperate.

"Nonsense," said the Doctor, bluntly. "Remain here till I return."

Before Zenie could ask him where he was going, or what he intended to do, he was passing through the crowd. She rose to call to him; but if he heard, he paid no attention. She sat down, and placed her hand over her eyes. The Doctor was soon standing by Vincent, to whom he said, in a low tone—

"Vincent, have you got any sense? Boy, I know you better than you know yourself. Go to Zenie. Don't be a gump."

"May I go, Doctor?" he asked, with a grateful smile. "Is it not too late?"

"Go ask her," answered the physician.

Zenie had sat for two or three minutes, with her hand over her eyes, when she heard a voice close to her face.

"Miss Zenie."

She slightly started at the well-known tones of Vincent Monard, and looked up.

"Miss Zenie, how long before I may have the pleasure of congratulating Mrs. Leonard Brandon?"

"If you allude to me, Sir, you shall never have that pleasure at all, if it would be such a *pleasure* to you."

"Miss Zenie, suppose I tell you that if I am not married, I hope soon to be engaged to a beautiful young lady; would you not congratulate me?"

Zenie had not thought of such a thing since he had denied being married, and this sudden information caused her to betray her feelings. She turned deadly pale and her lip quivered. She looked at the young man's face, and tried to smile; but it was in vain.

"Why are you talking to me thus?" she said, trying to look indignant. "What is it to me whether you are engaged or not? Leave me."

"If you say so, I will. But before I go, let me say that you are the young lady to whom I hope to be engaged. You did not give me time to explain. Will you hear me?"

"Go on," she said, carelessly.

"I must tell you that I have just the same feeling for you that I had when I wrote that letter, which you tell me you never received till to-day. I would not dare to say this, but you say that you will not marry Leonard."

"I never will," she replied, emphatically.

"Zenie, I have never ceased to love you since I left. Just consider, then, that the letter was written last week, what would be your reply?"

"I do not like such vague questions," answered the young lady, in a tone indicative of vexation. She thought Vincent was trying to tantalize her, and she felt disposed to offer resentment.

"Zenie, I see that you are fretted. I have suffered anguish for years. Let us not have a misunderstanding just as soon as I return. I cannot remain here many days. Must I go back with a bleeding heart? I asked you in that letter to be mine. I repeat, and again I beg you, let me call you by the sacred name of wife. Will you?"

Zenie could resist no longer, and bending, over she whispered—

“I will.”

At this moment Dr. Huxley, who had been slyly watching the couple, stepped up, and said—

“What is the conclusion? I see you have reached some sort of one.”

“We have, Doctor,” said Vincent, with a smile. “You can guess.”

“Oh, yes; I see how it is. Young people always betray themselves by their looks. But let me ask, when is it to be?”

“Whenever Miss Zenie appoints the time.”

“What is the use of any foolishness about the affair. If you are both agreed, what in the name of sense is the use of waiting? Zenie is dressed as a bride, and she came here for a husband, and must have one.”

“Oh, Father, hush!” said Zenie, with a face as red as scarlet.

“Come, no foolishness. I say let us have the ceremony right away.”

“I do not have on the wedding garment,” said Vincent, laughing, “but if Miss Zenie is willing to marry me in this traveling suit, we will have the ceremony before the stars cease to fall.”

“I will humor the joke,” replied Zenie, with smiles and blushes, “as there is something so romantic about it.”

“Come on, then. We can’t have the ceremony in this bedlam of a place. We will go out of doors.”

Accordingly, the Doctor hunted up the County Clerk, who was in the house, and arranged in regard to the marriage license. The preacher was soon made to understand what was wanted, and the Doctor informed Mr. and Mrs. Monard what was about to transpire. In

a few moments a small party was standing a short distance from the church, and Vincent and Zenie joined their right hands, and were pronounced "husband and wife," while the stars were pouring around them and expiring at their feet. Indeed was it romantic.

"Now, young people," said Dr. Huxley, looking up at the glittering heavens, "thank the stars for bringing you joy and happiness, for you evidently owe it to them."

"It was certainly a fortunate shower of sparks for me," said Vincent, solemnly.

"Oh, Vincent," said Zenie, with timidity, "these falling stars have saved me from a maelstrom of misery."

"Bless you, my darling wife, for those words," exclaimed Vincent, as he imprinted a kiss, which, however, did not prevent the stars from continuing to fall. They poured down from the firmament all the same.

"May the good Lord bless you both, my dear children," said Mr. Monard, fervently, "and pour out mercies upon you as thick as these stars now raining from the heavens. We read that 'the stars in their courses fought against Sisera,' and so they have fought for us, and enabled us to triumph over our enemies. Praise to the Lord!"

"Now," said Dr. Huxley, with a laugh, "let us leave this crowd of people, who have no better sense than to believe that the Judgment Day can come in the night."

Vincent and Zenie soon got into the Doctor's carriage, and with glad hearts drove off, amid the falling stars.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

IN PERIL.

"Our time is set and fix'd ; our days are told ;
And no man knows the limit of his life ;
This minute may be mine, the next, another's ;
But still all mortals ought to wait the summons,
And not usurp on the decrees of fate,
By hastening their own ends."

At daylight the next morning the stars, which had created such a wild commotion among the inhabitants of the village, ceased to fall, or at least were no longer visible. Many persons had remained all night in the church, earnestly making preparation for the awful meeting with the Judge of all the earth. But when the sun arose in usual splendor, his bright beams dispelled the illusion, and the house of worship was soon empty. Leonard Brandon was among the last to leave. No one had believed more firmly than he that the last hour of time had arrived. He thought not of his marriage till he beheld the glory of the morning sun, when he began to suspect that the dreaded day of Judgment had not come. That night he honestly bade adieu to all terrestrial scenes, and expected every moment to be changed into a spiritual body, and to enter that world in which there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage.

When Leonard left the church he looked up to the heavens, but everything in that direction was calm, and the sky was clear and smiling. He gazed down searchingly, expecting to see innumerable fragments of stars lying on the parched and scorched earth, but the dry grass was unsinged, and had no smell of fire. Leonard was amazed and bewildered, and now wished that the

Day of Judgment had come, for he felt that he would rather meet his Judge than his acquaintances.

"What a fool I've been!" he suddenly muttered. "How can I meet Zenie?"

He knew not that she had married. But he determined that he would hasten to Dr. Huxley's at once, and make the best apology he could for his conduct and cowardice. The thought that Vincent Monard had returned occasioned some uneasiness. But he believed that Zenie loved only himself, inasmuch as she had consented to marry him. And yet he moved along with vague fear and shamefacedness, avoiding the streets as much as possible. He did not care to meet any one, at least until he should ascertain how he stood in Zenie's estimation. He would persuade her to have the ceremony performed before breakfast. Presently he reached the residence of Dr. Huxley. Everything about the house was quiet. However, the Doctor had just arisen, and dressed himself, as Leonard reached the hall door. They met; but the young man could not look the physician in the face. In a husky voice he managed to ask—

"Where is Miss Zenie?"

"There is no such person here," answered the Doctor, with the uninterpretable expression.

"What do you mean, Doctor?" asked the young man, with considerable misgiving.

"Did you not go to church last night to marry her?" bluntly inquired the Doctor.

"Yes, Sir," answered Leonard, hanging his head, "but you know it was prevented."

"Yes; you left Zenie to take care of herself, while you went off to pray, and confess your sins. You confessed nobly, Leonard."

"O, Doctor, don't mention it. I confess I acted like a complete fool. I own it."

"No, Sir ; you acted like an honest man, Leonard. But I declare, boy, I did not think that you were capable of such meanness."

"Doctor, it was the only shabby trick I ever did in my life, and I did it because I was afraid of losing Zenie."

"Well, you have lost her."

"How?" gasped Leonard.

"Why, Zenie went to church to be married. But it seemed that you had deserted her. So she married Vincent Monard."

Leonard began to tremble violently, and grasped the door to stay himself. His face was as pale as death. But he looked up at Dr. Huxley with such a wild expression, and there was such a strange stare in his eyes, which were fixed with fierce boldness upon the Doctor's face, that the physician began to feel some uneasiness and alarm.

"Is that so?" cried the young man, in a startling tone. "Do you dare tell me that?"

"Leonard, it is certainly so."

"Don't fool with me, Dr. Huxley."

"I tell you the truth," replied the Doctor, who was now anxiously watching his movements.

"Oh, heavens above! strike me dead," cried Leonard, with such an air, that the Doctor suspected temporary insanity.

"Come, Leonard, be a man."

"Oh, I'm ruined! disgraced! what have I to live for? You think I'm a coward, do you? Do you think I'm afraid to die, Dr. Huxley? I'll show you, Sir. I care no more for death than for a straw. All I ask of you is to tell Zenie that I died for her."

He turned away suddenly, and was walking off rapidly, when Dr. Huxley seized him by the arm, and brought him to a halt.

"Let me go!" cried the young man, glaring at him with the ferocity of a wild animal.

"Just wait a moment, Leonard. I see what you are up to. That is all right. I think you ought to kill yourself, and if I were in your place I would do it. But, see here; I don't want you to make a botch of it. I want you to die easy. This shooting or hanging one's self is sometimes horrible. Hanging is a dog's death, anyhow. Don't you want to go off so that you will not suffer?"

"Yes; but I don't care much."

"Come into my office, then, and I will give you something which will finish you so easy that you will never feel it. Poison is the thing, Leonard."

"You're trying to fool me, Dr. Huxley."

"Come into my office, Leonard, and I tell you I will give you poison."

"You are lying, Doctor."

"No, Sir; you just try it, and see."

"Well, I'll try it; but I tell you, Sir, if you deceive me, just as sure as there is a heaven above our heads, I'll blow your brains out. Do you hear me?"

"That's all right," said Dr. Huxley: "I see how it is. You can never face your disgrace. You ought to die, and end it at once. So come into my office."

Leonard went in quietly, and the Doctor locked the door. Taking a bottle from a shelf, he said—

"See, Leonard, it is labeled *arsenic*—deadly poison, you know. Now," continued the Doctor, adroitly exchanging the bottle for another, and measuring a dose, "what message do you desire to send your parents? For I tell you that in a few moments after you take this, you will become unconscious."

"Give it to me, quick, Doctor. I want to get out of this world as soon as possible. I have no message for anybody, unless you tell Zenie that I died for her."

"Very well, then. Swallow this, and in half an hour you will be where you can feel no sense of disgrace."

Leonard eagerly seized the glass, and hastily emptied it.

"Now," said the Doctor, "lie down on my sofa, and go off easy. I will watch by you till you are gone."

Leonard stretched himself flat on his back and closed his eyes.

"One thing, Doctor, I want to say before I go. I intended to tell all about the watch as soon as I got married. I tried to get Zenie to marry me as soon as possible, just so I could wipe out the stain from Vincent's character. Tell him so, Doctor, and he will make some allowance for me. It was only jealousy, Doctor, not meanness. I'm not naturally mean, Doctor. You know that."

"I do not think you are, Leonard."

The young man closed his eyes, and lay for ten minutes, without speaking. But presently he looked at the Doctor, and said—

"I do n't feel that I'm dying at all. If you fool me, Doctor, you'll be a dead man before you are twelve hours older."

"Lie still, and in five minutes more you will feel it, and no mistake."

At the expiration of this length of time, the physician said—

"Do you not feel it now?"

"Oh, yes; something quite strange. It's easy, Doctor. Who cares for death if this is it? I don't—glorious. I believe God has forgiven me, and I will soon be in His presence. Explain it to Vincent, Doctor. You know I could n't stand it; no, I could n't. I'd rather be dead than to live in this sinful world without her."

Leonard ceased to speak, and in a few moments more he was unconscious.

"All right," said the Doctor, to himself. "He is safe for some hours, at least. Poor fellow! He is not far from downright insanity. How easy is the human mind thrown off its balance! Why did not Evolution endow it with greater strength, so that men and women could endure misfortunes with philosophic fortitude?"

At breakfast that morning Zenie looked radiant and happy, while Vincent sat at her side, as happy as she was. What a strange, sudden transition! How like romance! What a narrow escape from wretchedness!

"I do wonder if Leonard Brandon is still in the pulpit," said Zenie, with a laugh.

But Dr. Huxley said, with great solemnity—

"Poor Leonard is now in the office, in quite a critical condition. If he had not come here this morning, I think he would at this moment be a bloody corpse."

And he related the particulars of the scene which had just occurred.

"I am fearful of the consequences," remarked the Doctor, "when he recovers consciousness. He may become a raving maniac. So, Zenie, it will not do to joke about."

There was no use of this caution; for Zenie's laughter was changed to sorrow. How strange it is that there is but a hair's breadth between levity and mourning! Under some circumstances how quickly can one be converted into the other! In a few hours it was known all over the village that Zenie had married Vincent, and people said it was a capital joke. But when they were informed of Leonard's precarious situation, there was general sympathy and sorrow. No one felt like indulging his risibilities.

That morning, after the breakfast was finished, Zenie said to Vincent—

“Suppose I had married Leonard, would you have committed suicide?”

“No,” replied Vincent, with solemnity.

“Am I to understand that Leonard cares more for me than you do?”

“No; it is impossible that he could.”

“You think, then, I suppose,” she said, with a mischievous smile, “that your mind is stronger than his?”

“You have not found the true reason yet,” answered Vincent, with great seriousness. “I should not, in the case supposed, have relied on my own strength. I would have asked my heavenly Father to sustain me, and there is not the slightest doubt in my mind that He would have afforded the necessary assistance. In all my trials and troubles, I have enjoyed the sacred influences of His Holy Spirit, and I have tried to put myself completely under His guiding hand. I am a Christian, Zenie, and I fear nothing. I have a conscience void of offence towards God and men. Last night, amid the falling stars, which produced such universal alarm, though I knew it was simply a grand meteoric shower, I tried to put myself, by the power of imagination, in the situation of those who believed firmly that the final day had come, and I asked myself if I was ready to meet my Judge, and my conscience answered ‘Yes.’ Suicide is a sin, and nothing could induce me to commit it while I have the proper use of my mind. And I do not believe the Lord would permit any earthly calamity to dethrone my reason. Zenie, you do not know what a mighty power there is in the Christian religion. You were once tainted with your father’s theory of Evolution. I do not know whether you now hold to his views or not. Do you?”

"No, no!" she quickly replied. "Your father and mine had a discussion on that subject, which I heard. Mr. Monard brought so many reasonable objections against the theory that I at once abandoned it. And I have noticed, too, that Father has been a little more quiet on the subject ever since. It appears to me that he has weakened considerably. And now I tell you that I am going to try to be a Christian, like my dear mother. Religion has produced a great change in her."

"I hope," said Vincent, "that ere long all of us will be found traveling the strait and narrow path which leads to that pure and blessed region where there is no more separation, nor sorrow, nor death."

But more time cannot be consumed in detailing the conversation between the bride and groom. It is to be regretted that so few newly-married people talk as did these two.

It was not long after breakfast before Mr. Brandon called at Dr. Huxley's. He was in search of Leonard. If an attempt should be made to describe his appearance, the best and most forcible, if not the most eloquent, epithet for that purpose would be—*sheepish*. But there was also about him a very subdued air, which made the merchant look like a different man.

Dr. Huxley informed him in regard to Leonard's condition, and Mr. Brandon, of course, manifested great alarm and anxiety.

"You had better remove him home," said the Doctor, "and I will go with you, and remain till I can see what will be the result."

Accordingly, this was done, in such a way that Leonard was not aroused. He was in a deep stupor. Dr. Huxley remained till about the middle of the afternoon, and the young man awoke, but he was ill.

"I'm not dead," he said. "I dreamed that I tried to kill myself."

"So you did, Leonard," replied Dr. Huxley. "But you must not try it again. If you do, people will say you are a coward. Come, boy, you must be brave. Zenie is married; but there are just as good fish in the sea as were ever caught out of it. I would not want a girl who is as fickle-minded as Zenie is. Why, I can, and will, find you a girl who will make you a much better wife."

"Doctor," said Leonard, with a frown, "don't talk to me in that way. I know I can never love another."

"Now, come, Leonard," replied the physician, with blunt kindness, "don't make a simpleton of yourself. Listen to reason. You and Zenie could never have lived happily together as husband and wife. She is a sort of dreamer, and you are a practical man; a business man. There is no congeniality of sentiment and disposition between you. Besides, I am certain that she has loved Vincent Monard all the time. I kept her from marrying him, as I thought, for a very good reason. If she had married you, and ever found out the truth about the watch, she would have absolutely hated you, and both of you would have been miserable wretches, if you could have lived under the same roof. I tell you, it is best as it is. You think you can never love any one else; but I know you are mistaken. I remember about my first love. I loved so hard that it made me sick—lost my appetite. But she married another man. I thought, for a few days, I should die. However, I lived, and in six months I found another of whom I was more desperately enamored than the first. And thus it goes. Be a man. In eighteen hours you will be up; come to me, and I will tell you what to do."

The Doctor gave him a dose of medicine and left.

Mr. Brandon followed him, and when they were out of the house, the Doctor said—

“Leonard has made a narrow escape, Mr. Brandon. He was, for a short time, on the borders of insanity; but I think the danger is now passed. Watch him and try to keep him cheerful, and in a few days he will be himself again.”

“I can never thank you enough, Doctor, for saving my poor boy. I hope you won’t think hard of me on account of our lawsuit. I honestly think my wife has the best claim to the Alcott farm, and I hope you won’t blame me if I contend for her rights.”

“Not at all, Mr. Brandon. Next week will settle the question. I shall have no hard feeling toward you, if the suit is decided in your favor.”

“I shall have none toward you, if you gain it,” answered Mr. Brandon. “I intend to be a better man in the future. You know I have always been honest. I acknowledge my error in treating Mr. Monard as I did; but I did not take the proper view of the matter. In the future I will be a different man, and especially toward Mr. Monard.”

“I hope you will never let him come as near starving as you once did, if he ever preaches for you any more.”

“He must preach for us,” replied the merchant. “I shall never rest satisfied till he becomes our pastor again.”

“Mr. Monard,” said Dr. Huxley, “is one of the best and most pure-minded men I ever saw. I have watched him closely for several years, and in the midst of trials which would have caused most men to yield in despair, he has stood as firm as a rock. I tell you, Mr. Brandon, his example has done more to stagger me in my belief than anything else. His conduct convinces

me that he is wonderfully sustained in some way. Good-evening."

The Doctor returned home, and meeting Vincent, he said—

"The falling stars last night gave old man Brandon a good scare; but, nevertheless, he is determined to carry on the lawsuit. I intended to give the plantation to Zenie as her dowry. Now, my boy, level yourself. If you gain the case, it is Zenie's, and that amounts to being yours. You can divide the farm, and take part of it as your fee in the case. If you lose, I shall not pay you anything, you understand?"

"Yes, Sir; I cheerfully accept the conditions. If I lose, I shall feel well repaid, and will be perfectly satisfied with the fee which the falling stars sent me."

"Those stars," said the Doctor, "have had a wonderful effect on this town. The few people that I met on the streets looked as if they were ashamed of themselves. Most of those who confessed their sins so freely and publicly are at home, I suppose. Last night will be an epoch in their lives."

And as the Doctor said, so it was. For years afterwards it was common to hear such expressions as "since the stars fell," and that so and so "happened before the stars fell." And that night was long remembered.

The next week Court opened, and in due time the case of Dr. Huxley was reached. It was an interesting case, and drew out a large crowd. Mr. Brandon had secured the services of several lawyers; but Vincent Monard stood alone. It would be interesting to give the details of this case; but it would be an episode which would interfere too seriously with the progress of this story.

Vincent, young as he was, proved that he thoroughly understood his business. When the pleading commenced

he made a speech which, for eloquence and depth, had never been surpassed in that town. The consequence was, that after the jury had retired for about ten minutes, they returned with a verdict in favor of Dr. Huxley.

As Vincent and Dr. Huxley were on the way, the latter slapped him on the back, and with glee exclaimed—

“ Vincent, my boy, I declare you have more sense than I thought you had. If I thought it would not make your head swell, I would tell you that I feel really proud of my son-in-law. Any how, you have fairly won a home for yourself. But for the present you must stay with me.”

“ But, Doctor, I had no thought but of going back to Louisville to live.”

“ I will not hear to it,” said the Doctor. “ There is no earthly necessity for you going back. The Alcott plantation yields an income of from six to ten thousand a year. You can practice law here, if you wish. Besides,” he continued, with emotion, “ my poor wife cannot live much longer. That awful cancer is now eating rapidly to her vitals. She cannot possibly live six months longer, and I want Zenie to remain with us till that sorrowful event transpires. After that we can talk about your future course. Let us not add to her distress by taking Zenie away.”

“ Say no more about it, then,” said Vincent. “ If that be the case, I will do whatever Zenie says.”

Accordingly, it was soon settled. Zenie did not want to leave her mother. So, she and her husband had rooms assigned them in Dr. Huxley's commodious dwelling; and the young couple enjoyed as much happiness as usually falls to the lot of mortals in this sorrowful world.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE LAST ENEMY.

"Thou art dead and gone, loving wife—thy heart is still and cold—
And I at one stride have become most comfortless and old ;
Of our whole world of love and song thou wast the only light,
A star whose setting left behind, ah ! me, how dark a night ! "

It was several days before the village wore its usual air. So many had made a public confession of their sins that it was a subject of merriment to only a small portion of the community. But the falling stars had accomplished some good which possibly could not have been otherwise effected. Old feuds had been healed, difficulties adjusted and friendships restored. But it must be told that many who professed to repent of their sins that night were heartily ashamed of themselves, and in a few days dropped back into the same old paths of sin, thus showing clearly that repentance which springs from mere sudden fear is of a worthless character. Some of those persons who cried aloud for mercy, expecting every moment to see the dead come forth from the graveyard hard by, were serious for a few days afterward, but only from a principle of fear. .

In the village the subject of that night's transactions amid the falling stars did not seem to be productive of much pleasure. It was, therefore, dropped, by tacit consent.

In about four months after the stars fell Mrs. Huxley began to grow rapidly worse. It was obvious that she had not many more days to linger amid the scenes of this world. One day she called Dr. Huxley to her bedside, and said—

"Husband, you know I cannot live much longer."

"I do not think you can, my dear," replied the phy-

sician, with emotion. "I do not want to deceive you about it. Everything has been done to relieve you that possibly could be."

"I know it, I know it," she said. "And now the sooner I go, the better. Life is a burden, and I am so tired of suffering. But I try to be patient, and resigned to the Divine will. I have been trying for several years to be a Christian, and I feel that I have at least partially succeeded. I am not at all afraid to die, for I know that my Redeemer liveth. I cherish a sweet hope of happiness in the eternal world. There is only one thing that now gives me trouble."

"What is that?" asked the Doctor, who had been listening with respect to her words.

"Zenie," she said, "is safe, in the care of Vincent Monard."

"I know that," replied the Doctor, with emphasis.

"But you do not understand me," she said. "I mean that I have no fear as to her final destiny. Vincent is deeply pious, and he will certainly shape her spiritual character. Our son is a good boy, and I think he will be a true Christian as soon as he is a little older. I have, therefore, strong hopes of meeting my children in peace before the Eternal Throne. But, oh, dear husband," clasping his hand, affectionately, "where will you be? If you were only a Christian, I could bid farewell to this world, without a single regret."

The Doctor said nothing.

"I have tried to believe your theory of Evolution," she continued, "but I could find no comfort in it. If by it you can explain the origin of man, you cannot give even a hint in regard to his ultimate destiny. Your theory holds out no promise to me whatever, and I cannot face death without something to lean upon. My religion is such a source of comfort; and while I am

now standing on the very borders of eternity, the precious promises of the Bible blend together and form a bright arch more beautiful than the rainbow. Why can you not take my word for it?"

"I am willing," replied Dr. Huxley, "that you should die in this faith."

"Yes; but there can be only one true faith. How will it be, then, if I die in one faith, and you in another?"

"I do not know," answered the Doctor, slowly. "To tell you the truth, I am puzzled; Mr. Monard has got me perplexed. If it can be of any comfort to you, I will say that I am thinking about and comparing the two systems. I see that there are many objections to my theory—probably more than to the Christian view."

"The Bible says that if you will try you shall know whether the doctrine be of God. You have often told me that some parts of your theory are derived from actual experiments. Now, why can you not try a spiritual experiment? If you will only try it fairly, you shall be convinced. Oh, what a happy thought it would be, in my last moments on earth, that when the day of final account arrives I shall meet you and our children, as a united family, in the glory land!"

At this point her emotions overcame her, notwithstanding that she had endeavored to be calm. She well knew that Dr. Huxley was not a man to be moved by that effervescent feature of religion, which causes all impulsive Christians to make an exhibition of their spiritual emotions. He was a stern philosopher, who would act more from principle than emotion. When his wife's tears burst forth, it would be pleasant to every Christian to learn that he mingled his tears with hers; but such was not the fact. He only looked thoughtful, and, at length, said—

"The proposition seems fair. Actual experiment ought to convince any unprejudiced man. But this is a strange sort of experiment. There is no visible crucible in which I can put a substance to analyze. There is the difficulty. I do not understand this change of heart of which I have heard you speak."

"Of course, it is mysterious," she replied, as she wiped her eyes. "All I can tell you is what the Bible says. If you try it, you shall be convinced."

"Well, I am reading the Bible with more care than I have ever done, and I tell you I have no objection to becoming a Christian, if I am convinced that the system is true. I am also experimenting."

"In what way?" she asked, with a glad light in her eye.

"It would be more correct to say that I have been watching the experiments of others. Here is your example, for one. I have noticed that for several years you have been a different woman. There is Mrs. Monard, also. You know that she once had a temper like a tigress; but she is now as gentle as a lamb. I have had my eye on Mr. Monard, also. I have seen him face storms that would have hurled most men into despair. I have seen him as calm as a sleeping babe under trials which would have aroused me to desperation. I would not have taken what he has from this community."

"He is certainly a godly man, and has suffered much. Perhaps God has permitted him to undergo trials before your eyes, in order to show you and others the power of Grace."

"I don't know about that," replied the Doctor, "but I am going to give this matter some thought, and I will be honest with myself."

"And with God," added the wife.

The Doctor made no reply, and the conversation on this subject was dropped.

Several days passed away, and the last hour of Mrs. Huxley's life drew nigh. It was a solemn time in the Huxley family. No person can find any difficulty in bringing within the scope of imagination the distressing scenes of a death-bed; for the monster permits no household to escape his terrible visits. With his icy breath he was now chilling and paralyzing the prostrate form of Mrs. Huxley. The night was cold, yet beautiful; but the dying woman was insensible to all this. Her sight was opening upon the fair scenes of another world. There was Dr. Huxley, half reclining on the bed, and holding the pale, cold hand in his. Vincent and Zenie sat near by, and the young wife was bitterly weeping, while the young husband would occasionally brush a tear from his eye. Mr. Monard was there, with his thoughtful, solemn face; but he wept not. His nature was tranquil and quiet, and he was calm under nearly all circumstances. It required something unusual to make him betray emotion. Dr. Gurdone was there, and the minister in charge of the church. Two or three friends were present, and all were silently watching the progress of the work of death. Presently the dying lady whispered to Mr. Monard—

“Pray once more with me.”

The minister asked all to kneel down; and he commenced a prayer which could not be excelled for appropriateness and fervor. No such petition had ever before ascended from that residence. When they arose from their knees, Dr. Huxley was crying like a child. Where now was his Evolution theory? What comfort could he derive from it? Indeed, of what avail in such an awful hour is any mere earthly philosophy?

The work of death went on, and in the course of an

hour she was speechless. Presently there was one little gasp, and all was over. Mr. Monard said—

“ ‘Part of the host have crossed the flood,
And part are crossing now.’

She is safely over, and is gone to swell the number of the everlasting host that no man can number. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away ; blessed be the name of the Lord ! Thank God ! religion will do to live by, and it will do to die by.”

He said nothing directly to Dr. Huxley, concluding that his own thoughts would for the present be sufficient. No one had ever seen the physician shed a tear before. But the death of the wife touched the strong man’s heart, and floods of grief now streamed down his cheeks.

It was Saturday morning, before daylight, that Mrs. Huxley had crossed the dark river of death, and the funeral was to take place the following Sabbath. It was thought proper that Mr. Monard, whose sentence of suspension had been repealed, should conduct the service.

On Sabbath morning, at eleven o’clock, the church was filled to overflowing. The hearse drove slowly to the door, and the coffin was lifted out, and followed by the relatives of the deceased. There was weeping all over the house.

Mr. Monard arose. This is one of the most trying duties the minister has to perform. He must control his feelings. He may be standing over the remains of some dear friend ; and yet he must keep the fountains of grief closed till his sad duty is finished. But Mr. Monard could perform this distressing duty with solemn dignity. He could talk to a weeping audience without himself shedding a tear. His hearers could plainly perceive that he was in sympathy with them, notwithstanding his undisturbed exterior. It had been

frequently remarked that his harsh voice on funeral occasions became more melodious, and subdued so greatly that his intonations were not unpleasant. Presently his text was announced. His entire sermon would no doubt be interesting ; but it would require too much space to give it. As a certain portion of it, however, produced an unexpected and surprising event, it is here transcribed.

“Transport yourselves, my brethren, in imagination, to the last day of time. Only a few months since, when the meteors were coming down from the heavens as thick as a shower of hail, many of you were expecting to stand face to face with your Judge. You well know what your thoughts and emotions then were. Take advantage of the circumstances of that night in November, in order to give vigor to your imaginations. All of us will, no doubt, go down to the tomb, and there we may slumber for ages—we cannot tell how long. But we shall not lie forever, imprisoned in the bosom of the earth. No ; the last day will yet roll up, and the angel, standing with one foot on the land and the other on the sea, will place the trump to his lips, and send forth a long, loud blast that will shake the universe to its centre. The living will be startled by the unearthly sound, and will quake with fear. The voice of that trump will penetrate through the soil, and reach the bottom of the cold, dark grave. Death will fly away in terror and dismay. The dust and bones which he has so long trod down under his iron heel will move again, and become instinct with life ; and the graves in which they have lain still and silent while generation after generation has made its exit from the stage will burst wide open ; and living bodies will spring up from the cemetery, from the mountain top, from the valley, from the hill. Old ocean, on whose bottom lie the ruins of fleets and

armies, will shake in dread at the sound of the trump, and will disgorge the dead, whose winding sheets have been sea-weeds, on which no eye has ever gazed, except that of Almighty God. From every spot where death has asserted his authority in this world his victims will come; come trooping up in vast hosts whose numbers will defy calculation. You and I will come forth. from our dark homes in the ground. She whose form now lies motionless and rigid before us, blessed be God, will rise up in strength and in heavenly beauty. The vestments in which she is now shrouded will be exchanged for garments which shall be white and glistening, like that of Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration. You will all see her again, mingling with the tremendous hosts that shall assemble while the earth trembles beneath their feet.

“Angels will be seen in the firmament, one above another, higher and higher, till the eye cannot take in the number. Then the Almighty Judge will descend with a great shout, his face brighter than the disc of the sun—the clearness of heaven in his body. There before him we shall all stand to hear our final sentence. The book will be opened; and there, written in letters as of fire, will be your history, my history, every one’s history. Every deed we have performed, every word which has escaped our lips, every thought which has flashed through our minds, every desire which has stirred our hearts—all will be held up to the gaze of the universe. Oh, what shame and confusion will there be as that record of our earth-life is displayed to the view of men and angels! What amazement and horror, when some shall cry out, in despair, to the rocks and the mountains, ‘Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne!’ What terror will be depicted on the face of the transgressor, as he hears some dear com-

panion shriek out, 'Lost! lost! lost!' What groanings and wailings will fill the air, when the line of demarkation is drawn by the unerring Judge, which shall cut right through families, placing some on the left and some on the right. How the souls of wretched sinners will recoil, as the withering words of their eternal doom break upon their ears in tones harsher than the jarring thunder crash, 'Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels!' On the other hand, what glad shouts will rend the air, when the blessed Saviour, with his face wreathed in smiles, shall turn to the faithful, and in the accents of love, softer than the gentle breeze of a summer's morn, shall say, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'"

"The wicked shall go away into everlasting darkness, where no ray of hope will ever penetrate the gloom of endless woe and despair—where no voice of friend will ever be heard; but where weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth shall add to scenes of horror of whose reality no man's fancy can justly conceive; where the smoke of torment shall ascend forever and forever. But how with the righteous? See them, as they unfold their white wings, and prepare to leave this reeling world soon to be enveloped in flames. Blessed be God! I shall take my little Willie in my arms—my darling boy, whose life went out in a flood of heavenly glory—I shall take him again in my arms; and some of you will rush to your darling little babes, whose remains now lie hard by in the old churchyard; and we will join hands, and the angels and the redeemed hosts will strike up such music as no mortal ear ever heard; and as we fly upward, perhaps, we will make the air vocal with the old hymn, of such precious memory, which our

fathers and mothers have sung around the fireside and in the church,

‘ How happy every child of grace
Who knows his sins forgiven.’

The sweet voice of her over whose remains we now weep, and whose soul is no doubt at this moment in the balmy groves of Paradise, will mingle with those of the flying hosts—and,” lowering his voice, “ will *all* her family be there ? ”

As Mr. Monard was describing these awful scenes of the last day, there was deep silence throughout the house. With soul aglow, he seemed to be gazing at these scenes as they rolled up in rapid succession to the eye of faith. Great tears streamed down the cheeks of his hearers ; but it appeared that they were afraid to move, lest the spell should be broken. No sooner had Mr. Monard asked, “ will *all* her family be there ? ” and paused, as if expecting an answer, than Dr. Huxley, with quivering frame, sprang to his feet, and pointing at the coffin, said, with trembling voice—

“ By God’s grace, I will be with her. My friends, pray for me.”

He sank back in his seat, and buried his face in his hands. Shouts went up from every part of the house, and the floods of emotion, which had for some moments been pent up, broke over ; they could be restrained no longer ; but when Zenie arose and threw her arms around her humbled, broken-hearted father, it was too much, almost, for human endurance. The scene which ensued is simply indescribable.

Mr. Monard’s own feelings had been wrought to such a pitch, as the scenes of the last day passed across the field of his imagination, that when Dr. Huxley responded to his appeal, and shouts of joy burst forth from the vast audience, he dropped upon his knees in the pulpit,

and in silence offered gratitude to God. It was useless to attempt to finish his sermon. He felt that he could never get back to the plain from which he had been speaking, if he should attempt to proceed. He therefore wisely concluded not to run the risk of marring the good effects which his sermon, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, had produced. Fortunately, however, he was in the midst of the peroration when the interruption occurred, and there was no necessity of renewing his discourse. He could not well have done so, however earnestly he might have desired to continue, for it was full fifteen minutes before the audience became sufficiently tranquil to proceed to the grave. But, at length, the coffin was lowered down into the narrow prison-house, and the awful sound of falling clods—the voice of the grave, telling the living that the dead will never again be seen on earth—was heard ; and in a few moments more a small mound appeared ; the assembly dispersed, and the remains of Mrs. Huxley were left to rest in peace till they shall be called back to life by the notes of the last trumpet.

“ She’s gone ! forever gone ! The King of Terrors
Lays his rude hands upon her lovely limbs
And blasts her beauties with his icy breath.”

CHAPTER XXX.

FAREWELL.

"All of a tenor was their after-life,
No day discolored with domestic strife;
No jealousy, but mutual truth believ'd,
Secure repose, and kindness undeceiv'd."

The persons figuring in this story have been followed through the most exciting and thrilling events of their lives. It would probably be of no particular interest to enter into the details of their subsequent history. After the occurrence of the startling incidents already related, they sank down into the monotonous routine of common affairs, and traveled the journey of life just as do those people whose career is varied by no unusual events. Therefore, only a few words more will be necessary.

Time is the great healer. Any kind of grief is forced, by a law of our nature, to soften and to fade as the days glide by. We deposit the remains of a dear friend in the dark bosom of the grave—a wife, husband, child—and, for a long time, it may be, our feelings are harrowed by the sight of a "vacant chair." But we become accustomed to our burden. The stream of time flows on, and we drift away from the scenes that once produced such sorrow and anguish. Not many years roll by before it is with difficulty we recall the beloved features of our loved ones. We outgrow the pangs of grief; our memories become dim, and, after a while, nothing is left but a feeble outline of the most sad and sorrowful scenes that ever occurred on the theatre of human life.

These remarks are applicable to Dr. Huxley, as well as to other beings surrounded by the same, or similar

circumstances. It is a wise provision of the Father of Mercies that we cannot brood over misfortunes and sorrows for any great length of time. Dr. Huxley for some days was inconsolable for the loss of his wife. But as the weeks and months went by, he necessarily adapted himself to his changed situation, and no one could have told, by looking at him, that he had ever been deeply grieved. But the Doctor was changed in another respect, and it was a wonderful change; for he became a true Christian. However, he never did become an active worker in spiritual affairs. He could never be induced to pray in public. This is generally the case with men who come into the church late in life. But no one doubted that he was a true believer. There was one thing, however, in which he did display great zeal; and that was in the pecuniary affairs of the church. As soon as Mr. Monard was restored to his former position of pastor of the church, Dr. Huxley was elected one of the officials, whose duty it was to overlook the monetary affairs. At the very first meeting of these officers, he proposed that the salary of Mr. Monard should be raised to fifteen hundred dollars *per annum*.

"We'll never be able to do it," said one.

"Nonsense," exclaimed the Doctor, in his rough way, "I know we can do it, and we *must* do it."

"How in the world can we do it, when we never have raised more than four or five hundred? Besides, what use has Mr. Monard for so much money, when he has scarcely any family?"

"We have no right to discuss any such questions," replied Dr. Huxley. "He must be paid for his labor, and not according to the size of his family. You have no right to make a man work for a small amount because he happens to have a small family. You don't apply that rule to men of other professions, and I don't see

why you should make the preacher an exception. Besides, I don't see why a minister should not lay up a little something for old age and his family, as well as anybody else. Where do you get the idea that a minister must practice a niggardly economy to keep from starving? None of you can live on three or four hundred dollars a year. Why, then, should you expect Mr. Monard to do it? I am determined he never shall be troubled and harassed as he has been."

"Well," said one, "just show us how the fifteen hundred is to be raised."

"Just the easiest thing in the world. Multiply your present subscriptions by three or four, or even by two, and the thing is done at once. But some can do better than that. Here is Mr. Brandon, who has been giving twenty dollars—a most trivial sum for him. He must give two hundred."

"He will never do it," said several.

"Mark what I say," replied Dr. Huxley, "he will do it."

Mr. Brandon was present, as he was one of the official members. With a smile, he said, as the others were looking at him—

"I'll give it."

"I knew he would," said the Doctor. "As I have never yet given anything, put me down three hundred; put Vincent Monard down two hundred." The Doctor thus went through the list of members, assigning to each what he thought could be paid without inconvenience. As a matter of course, there was some grumbling; but the Doctor was bent upon the accomplishment of his purpose. In his peculiar way he talked to the members; some he shamed, others he persuaded, adapting his remarks to their peculiarities of character. But he raised the fifteen hundred dollars.

Yet this effort did not exhaust the Doctor's zeal. He soon put on foot another project, which some of the members thought could never be carried to a successful issue; and that was the erection of a manse. He headed the subscription paper himself, with five hundred dollars. He was sustained and encouraged by others, whose spiritual energies were aroused to activity by the Doctor's example.

To the surprise of everybody, Mr. Brandon gave liberally. But a great change had come over the merchant since the stars tell. That fearful night his true condition was revealed to him, and in the church he earnestly prayed for the pardon of his sins. He formed some conception of what would be his real feelings on the day of judgment, if he kept on in the course he had been pursuing. He had made an honest confession of what he regarded as the meanest act of his life. But that did not satisfy him. He perceived that he had been trusting to a species of self-righteousness, in which his boasted honesty was the principal element. He needed humility, and that night, as the meteors were coming down in awful grandeur, he felt that avarice was his besetting sin. He could never forget the thoughts which passed through his mind on that fearful night; and Mr. Brandon was a different man. When Dr. Huxley presented the subscription paper to him, he said, with a smile—

"I once thought, Doctor, that you would go crazy on Evolution; but it looks now as if you might go crazy on religion."

"Well, if I do, Mr. Brandon, I will lose my senses in a good cause. I was once a firm believer in Evolution, but I saw plainly it would avail nothing in the hour of death. However, Mr. Brandon, I have not entirely abandoned my theory. I now believe in an Evolution which is under the control of God. My great error

consisted in leaving God out. I am now a Christian Evolutionist."

"I am glad, Doctor, that you are changed, and so am I. So give me the paper."

Mr. Brandon signed his name, and placed opposite the sum of five hundred dollars.

"Religion is certainly a great thing, Mr. Brandon, when it can cause such men as you and I to give five hundred dollars each to a benevolent enterprise. But, so far as I am concerned, it is about all the way I can be of any service to the church. It is too late for me ever to learn to pray in public. But I can help the cause with my money, and I intend to do it."

"I have been a useless member myself, heretofore," replied the merchant. "I never could pray in public. But, Doctor, if we cannot do much at prayer-meeting, we can, at least, let our light shine."

"That is true, Mr. Brandon. We can set a good example by a perfect walk. I used to have a poor opinion of church members, because they appeared to be so parsimonious in contributing to religious purposes. But I call you to witness, Sir, that it shall never be said of me that I was a stingy Christian. Good-morning."

"What a wonderfully changed man!" said Mr. Brandon to himself, as the physician walked off.

And so he was. Dr. Huxley infused new life into the church. In a few months an elegant manse was built, in a desirable and convenient part of the village. When Mr. Monard moved into it, he said to his wife—

"This place shall be called *Osher*—mighty."

After this, the minister had no more pecuniary troubles. He had nothing to do but give himself up exclusively to the duties of his sacred calling. Even a change had come over him, produced, however, not by the falling stars, except as those stars affected others;

but he was benefited by the secondary effects. In consequence of the improvement of his financial condition, his mind was freed from all worldly cares, and he became a more effective preacher.

The observations made in the beginning of this chapter applied also to Leonard Brandon. From necessity he made a violent effort to wrench his affections from the object that once absorbed his heart. It was a severe struggle; for as some poet says—

“ Our first love murder'd is the sharpest pang
A human heart can feel.”

But time, the mighty healer of mental suffering, enabled him to conquer. In a few months he could meet Zenie without having the pulsations of his heart sensibly accelerated. If, in the next few days after “the stars fell,” any one had “joked” him about his defeat and confession, he might have been provoked to the commission of suicide. But Dr. Huxley had cautioned the villagers not to refer to it. Fortunately the developments of that night did not constitute a subject for jocularity. Every one was willing to say no more about “the falling stars.” Leonard soon perceived that he was not held in detestation on account of the shameful trick he had practiced. No one, that he could discover, frowned upon him, and it was not long before he recovered his former status. But Leonard was also a changed man.

One day Dr. Huxley met him, before the air of sadness had left his handsome face.

“Leonard,” said the Doctor, “do you not remember that some time ago I told you I would find you a girl who would suit you exactly?”

“Yes, Sir; but one man is hardly capable of choosing a wife for another. Besides, I don't feel, Doctor, that I want to marry anybody.”

"Oh, tut, tut, boy. That is nonsense. You will never be any account till you do marry."

"But, Doctor, I can never love again."

"You are most egregiously mistaken in that, boy. I know, from my own experience. As I told you, the first girl I ever loved made an impression on me which I thought never could be effaced. My tender sensibilities were thrown into a commotion which it appeared to me nothing could still but marriage. But she discarded me, and married another young man; and it proved to be a fortunate circumstance for me; because in six months afterward I met the dear wife who left me a few weeks ago. She inspired me with a far deeper and purer affection than did the first. We lived happily together till she went to heaven. So true was my love for her that my heart is buried in the grave where she sleeps."

The Doctor looked sad, as he uttered these words; but he continued—

"It is useless, Leonard, to repine over the past. Look forward to the future. Turn your attention to that girl who I think will make you a most excellent wife."

"Who is it, Doctor?"

"Connie Monard."

"What!" exclaimed Leonard, "that shy thing! You don't mean it, Doctor. Why I never spoke a dozen words to her in my life."

"No; I suppose not," quietly answered the Doctor. "She is as shy and timid as a wild gazelle. But Leonard, I have studied phrenology and physiognomy, and if these sciences can be relied on, I know, even without other evidence, that she is a treasure. But I have seen a great deal of her. I noticed her particularly during the sickness of her brother and mother, as she tripped

in and out with cat-like tread. She is a thoughtful, well-educated girl, and though not unusually brilliant, yet she is a woman who will make a wife in the true sense of the word. I tell you the man who wins her will secure a priceless pearl."

"But, Doctor, I have never thought of marrying her, even if she would have me."

"She will be hard to win, in my opinion," answered the Doctor. "But you can try. Her disposition is as sweet as an angel's. Constance is her name, and constancy she will be as long as life shall last. You care nothing for her now; but I have observed that when young people associate together a great deal, it is the easiest thing in the world to "fall in love," as they call it. Seek the company of Constance as much as you can, and you will see what will be the result. Win her, boy, if you can, and take my word for it, you will find yourself in possession of a rare jewel. Good evening."

It will be perceived that nothing has thus far been said, in this story, about this young lady, except in the earlier pages it was stated she was a living personage. She was so coy that she avoided company as much as possible. It was her delight to get off in a corner, and pore over some book, or magazine, or newspaper. Amid all her father's trials Constance was cheerful, and was never heard to murmur.

Leonard knew that Dr. Huxley was a sensible man; and at last he came to the conclusion to follow the physician's advice, and if he could love her he would propose. So one evening he made a short call. Constance was so shy and diffident that he could not induce her to enter into any extended conversation. But he went again and again, and, as a matter of course, the young lady became more inclined to loquacity. Yet Leonard could never discover that he was making any progress.

One evening he said—

“Miss Constance, I never did but one thing in my life of which I am heartily ashamed.”

She said nothing.

“Do you want to know what it was?”

“If you want to tell me,” she answered.

“You have so little curiosity,” said Leonard, “that I ought not to tell you anything. But I will tell you that, any how. I am ashamed that I was guilty of playing such a shabby trick on your brother. You know what I mean?”

“Yes, Sir; I think I do.”

“Will you forgive me?”

“I felt sorry for you the night you confessed it. Certainly, I forgive you.”

“The Lord knows I have repented; but you don’t know how madly I loved your brother’s wife. If you did, you would not think hard of me.”

“I do not think hard of you, Mr. Brandon.”

“I am glad to hear you say so; for it gives me hope.”

Constance looked at him, in surprise.

“I will tell you something,” he said, “the next time I call.”

The next time soon came, and Leonard proposed. Constance gave him no answer. But the young man persevered, and in the course of a few months led the timid girl to the altar. It was not till after their marriage that she became at all demonstrative. But Leonard’s affection increased, and he felt happy when she would run out to the gate every evening to meet him, as he returned from his store.

The young couple lived with Mr. Brandon, Leonard’s father, and the parents were glad that Connie dwelt beneath their roof. She was like a beam of sunshine.

To his dying day, Leonard never did regret the choice he made.

Dr. Huxley resolutely and persistently opposed Vincent's return to Louisville. What was the use? And Vincent asked himself what was the use? After his marriage, his vaulting ambition to make the world feel that he lived in it considerably cooled down. Some one has said that "Love is a cure for ambition;" and so Vincent found it, to a great extent. He was happy in the village where his fondest hopes were realized. Here were his relatives and friends. Why, then, break up such pleasant ties and associations, and take Zenie among strangers? Like a wise man, he concluded to practice his profession where he was. But such a man as he could not pass his life in obscurity; he was forced out, by the public voice, from his retirement, and became a candidate for office. He was elected to Congress, where he served his country for ten years. After this, he declined to accept any office. As he was wealthy, he concluded to spend the remainder of his days at home, in the enjoyment of the most solid happiness which this world affords.

"The eternal surge of time and tide" rolled on, and, one by one, the parties of this story disappeared from the walks of men, till at last all lay slumbering in the silent City of the Dead.

And such is life—checkered with joys and sorrows, hopes and fears. How rapidly it speeds away! We come upon the stage, play our brief parts, and then the dark waters of oblivion roll over us, and none can tell where we have gone. The rains of heaven level the little hillocks that rise above our senseless ashes, the marble monument crumbles and falls to dust, the willows planted by the hands of loving friends droop and decay, and we are as though we had never been.

"Morn, noon and eve will soon be past,
And death's dark night approaches fast;
No light can cheer the midnight gloom
Which reigns within the silent tomb.

"Let us improve our life's short day,
That, when its hours have pass'd away,
We may behold, without a fear,
Death's long and dreary night draw near.

"Another morn will surely break,
And all our sleeping dust awake;
Oh, may we then, with joy, arise,
And meet our Saviour in the skies!"