

SILVERWOOD.

SILVERWOOD:

Preston, Mass. J.

A

Book of Memories.

1856

“—From the sessions of sweet, silent thought, I summon up remembrance—”

Shakspeare's Sonnets.

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TO THE

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TURNING tearfully the pages
Which the Past has written o'er,
With the thousand precious records
Of the changeful heretofore—

Records luminous, where brightly
Joy the sunbeam glows and shines—
Records with a throb of heart-break ;
Trembling all along the lines.

I have gathered of the gladness,
And the grief that fill the brook ;
Here some grace's shadowy outline—
There some tender tone or look.

Transcripts, oh ! how faint, beloved !
Dim suggestions of the rare
Inner realms the world around you
Did not dream were hidden there.

Like the spies of old, I've entered,
Searching all the richest parts,
Bringing back these grapes of Eschol
From the Canaan of your hearts !

For I need the wine of solace,
Which this cluster sweet supplies,
Since ye pluck the food of angels
'Midst the hills of Paradise.

Or, as Ruth among the reapers,
Memory, like a gleaner, strives
Thus to gather up a handful
From the harvest of your lives.

Like an exile in her sorrow,
Seeking midst the cast off leaves,
Golden grains of thought and feeling,
Dropped from out the garnered sheaves.

If she has not filled her bosom
With the full and ripen'd ears,
'Twas because her eyes were clouded,
And she could not see for tears !

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SILVERWOOD.

I.

Foreground and Background.

It was a dim, dark picture, rich with the mellow tints of age ; and the broad glow of the coal fire falling over it, brought out with striking effect from the background of intense shadow, the figures that filled the canvas. The subject of the painting was Dante's familiar story of Ugolino, who, with his sons and grandsons, was imprisoned in the Pisan tower,—the key thrown into the Arno, and they left to die of starvation. Through the narrow, grated window came a few struggling rays of light, barely sufficient to reveal the gaunt, gray-haired old Count, sitting proudly erect,—his features rigid, his hands clenched,—the impersonation of unbending endurance and stony woe. On his knee leaned "the little Anselm"

of the Poet, his innocent, questioning face lifted with a frightened expression to the eyes, which, wholly unheeding him, were gazing wildly into vacancy. At their feet lay one of the sons already dead with hunger, and in the obscurity behind, were to be seen the two other boys in attitudes that bespoke a ghastly despair, too hopeless to admit of a struggle.

“Mother,” said the young man, who had been silently walking the floor with folded hands behind him, but who now paused before the picture as he spoke—“mother, I wonder if this old painting has taught you the same kind of lessons I learn from it.”

“Indeed, my son, I don’t know. It was always full of interest for me, principally, perhaps, from home associations. One of the earliest memories of my childhood is, being held up before it by my father, while he told me the sad story it delineates, with all the touches of pathos which Chaucer introduces into his version of it. I can recall even yet,” continued Mrs. Irvine, musingly, “the very tones in which he used to recite some of the lines :

——‘ Father, why do ye weep ?

Is there no morsel bread that ye do keep ?

I am so hungry that I cannot sleep !’

As I grew older, I was, perhaps, more interested in it from the fact that it used to hang on the wall in the old ancestral home of our family, on the southern border of

Scotland. Your great grandfather, 'the Laird of Newton,' as he was called, looked on that picture many a time as you do now, no doubt; so that the associations it furnishes, make me prize it more than its own intrinsic merit as a work of art. But what particular lesson do you learn from it?"

"It teaches me to be grateful, mother dear—"

"That your lot was not cast in that barbarous age?"

"That would be a very legitimate lesson, but it is not the uppermost one in my thoughts: I make a simpler use of it; for I love to look off from the gloom and suffering it depicts, to the beautiful picture about me. These softly tinted walls, bright with the fire-glow,—that painting of the morning landscape opposite, with its cool, delicate sky,—the luxurious coloring of the carpet,—the flower-stand parting the crimson curtains,—the open piano,—the books invitingly scattered here and there,—Zilpha's drawing-table, with all her implements upon it, just as she left it when it grew too dark for her to work,—Fidèle lying so comfortably napping on the rug at your feet,—and above all, you, mother, the centre of the scene, looking so serene and happy, as if no shadows had ever passed over your heart. We need contrast to heighten effect; so Count Ugolino serves as a background to my home-picture, such as the old masters delighted in,—so dark as to make more lucid the lights of the foreground."

“Yet I have had shadows,” said Mrs. Irvine, tenderly laying her hand over the one that rested on the arm of her chair,—“shadows that form for me just the background you speak of. When, ten years ago, your father was so suddenly snatched away,—dying, as he did, so far from home,—leaving me with Josepha, a baby on my knee, and you, the eldest, not much more than a child in years, I felt as if the burden placed in my hands was a heavy one,—as if the joy of my life was extinguished forever. It would have been hard then to convince me that I should again know the quiet happiness I now possess. ‘The Lord will provide,’ I said, in my desolation ; and I have ever since proved its truth.”

“It is easy to be trustful and grateful when the sunshine of prosperity is all around us,—easy to bear other people’s trials ; and so little experience have I had of any kind of suffering, that I’m afraid I should set a sorry example of patience.”

“Yet when adversity does come, Lawrence, I hope the same grace that upheld me, will be your stay. For happy as we all are now,—so happy, indeed, that sometimes I reflect on it with trembling, I must believe that we will not be exempt from the common lot,—

‘To each their suffering—all are men’—

‘The days of darkness’ are promised ; they will be sent when God sees best.”

“Never again to *you*, mother, I trust,” said Lawrence, fondly. “Let us hope and believe that your life-picture will not again be darkened. As for myself,—you see I have been compelled to turn to the picture behind us—”

“I pray God you may want the shadows long!” interrupted his mother. “Sometimes I feel a little hesitation about Edith and you going abroad—”

“Why should you? It is very unlike you, mother dear, to harbor fears about anything.”

“I’m not disposed to do it now: but we have never been separated far,—only while you have been at college, and I shrink a little from the thought of it: that’s all.”

“Then we will not go—”

“And do you think I would let the matter of feeling stand in the way of your improvement, mental and physical? Your long course of study has worn you down a good deal, and you really need this relaxation before entering upon your professional preparation. No,—I am happy in the thought of all the enjoyment you and your sister will have. I even wish that Zilpha could go too.”

“So do I, only that it would leave you too lonely for them both to be away. Zilpha never seemed to have such a fancy for going abroad as Edith.”

“No:—as to scenery, she says she is satisfied with what our own continent can show her; and as to works of art, she thinks Nature all she can desire.”

“ Yet with her taste for the pencil, and her handling of it, she would so enjoy the fine things one sees only in foreign galleries.”

“ But she knows that Edith’s taste will be even more ministered to than her own, and I think it is her disinterestedness, principally, that makes her insist on giving her the precedence, though as the elder, it would be more natural for her to go.”

A laughing group entering the parlor, interrupted the conversation. Josepha, a child not much over ten, installed herself upon her brother’s knee ; Eunice, the next older sister, couched herself upon the rug, and took the head of the little grey-hound into her lap ; Zilpha sat on a low seat beside her mother : and to the cheerful voices that floated through the twilight room, the music, tender and soft, which Edith’s fingers awakened, formed a subdued accompaniment, as she played and listened.

“ You will go to Newton Lodge, of course, when you are in Scotland,” said Zilpha, inquiringly.

“ You must certainly do that,” rejoined Mrs. Irvine.

“ At the risk of having our motives impugned, mother ?” asked Lawrence. “ Your old grand-uncle will, perhaps, think the American nephew and niece are coming to make his acquaintance, with an eye to the estate he’ll be compelled to leave to somebody before long. Isn’t he *very* old ?”

“ Very ; but we have no reason to suppose we’ll get

any of it under any circumstances ; there are enough of Scotch kith and kin to take precedence of us. So I don't think you need let the fear of the old gentleman's suspicions keep you from seeing this ancient family home."

After the interruption of tea, the subject of the prospective tour was again under discussion, and the time of the departure of Lawrence and his sister finally fixed at a month from that period. The March winds howled and fretted without, only to add more sweetness to the din of cheerful voices within. Mrs. Irvine's face,—as she sat where the ruddy glow of the grate, and the light from the shaded lamp mingled upon it, might have seemed to owe to them something of the peculiar expression of beautiful cheeriness that irradiated it. But had the gleam from the hearth been wanting, and had only a dim rush-light been shining over the needles with which she plied her light task, the room would have gained brightness from her countenance, for it was pre-eminently one of those,—

"That make a sunshine in the shady place."

Her brown hair, and, at her age, unusual youthfulness of complexion,—fine hazel eyes, full of changing beauty,—irregular, yet singularly expressive features, were subjects for constant and loving compliment from her children. Yet she was not beautiful, in the common acceptance of the term. But the all-embracing kindliness that looked out

through her clear eyes,—the heart welcome that expressed itself, as no words were subtle enough to do, in her smile,—the ready sympathy that was like an atmosphere, thoroughly pervading all she said or did,—the delicate considerateness that marked her every action,—her absolute devotion to the happiness of others, in which alone her own appeared to consist,—all these charms of the outer and inner life, combined to form a character of rare and exceeding loveliness. Like the old English Bishop of Litchfield, her motto was, “Serve God and be cheerful.”

Lawrence was like his mother, personally ; but there was about him a steady gravity, and a quiet reserve of manner to which she was a stranger. The auburn hair, inclining to wavyness, and the fair complexion, might have imparted a feminine aspect to his face ; but on the contrary, it was one of peculiar manliness. The gaze of the eyes was grave and settled,—the cut of the mouth indicated strong decision, and about his whole appearance there was a winning dignity,—a gentle repose, which, while it never could repel, would seem, at first sight, to forbid familiar approach.

There was something very beautiful in his manner towards his mother. He loved to choose his seat near her ; he addressed to her the most of his conversation ; he anticipated her minute wants,—the stool for her feet,—the cushion for her head,—the books she liked best near her,—the first flower of Spring,—the first tinged leaf of

Autumn : there was no limit to the unobtrusive manifestations of his thoughtful love. He never overlooked her presence in a room ; and many a time would he leave the group of interested talkers, if he chanced to observe her sitting apart, and address himself to her entertainment. His attentions were more than the dictates of filial devotion,—more than the simple homage of graceful youth to riper age. Had she been a young beauty, whose fascinations had enthralled him, there could not have been a more delicate mingling of what might be termed the chivalry of the heart with the tenderness of his love. The language of look and action was,—“ others may do much for me,—but no suffering in my behalf,—no ministrations,—no devotedness, *can* be like a mother’s !” And as he now sat with his arm over the back of her chair, talking with her of his plans and prospects, and the eyes of each strayed to the circle about the table, animatedly discussing what particular thing they would like best to have brought them from abroad,—the gaze of the mother and son was simultaneously raised to the grim canvas on the wall, with an inward “ thank God,” that, as yet, the home-picture was shadowless.

II.

The Stirred Nest.

It was less than a fortnight after this that Lawrence entered the breakfast-room with the morning papers in his hand : there was no one there but Zilpha.

“ My dear sister,” he began, in so grave a tone that she looked up from her page to see his face, “ I’ve discovered some unpleasant news,—something it will grieve you greatly to hear.”

“ What ?” she asked, coming up to him, and looking over the paper on which his eyes were fixed.

“ Something that will be very unwelcome to us all, and that will put an end to all the anticipations you have been so unselfish as to have indulged for Edith and me.”

“ What is it ? tell me at once ; I can’t bear suspense.”

“ Our projected trip must be given up,—”

“ Given up,—and you so nearly ready to start ? Why, what’s the matter ?”

Lawrence answered her question by pointing to a para-

graph in the paper. She ran her eye hurriedly over it, and then with an exclamation of astonishment, sank into a seat beside him.

“You see that puts an extinguisher at once upon our plans,” said Lawrence. “It would be a comparatively insignificant affair, if this were the only consequence of it.”

“And you think there can be no doubt about it?”

“None ; here is a notice of it in this other paper.”

Zilpha took the sheet he had lifted, as if, without farther confirmation, she was not content to believe what her eyes had already read.

“Broken !—the S —— Bank broken !” she exclaimed, still half incredulously. “What a misfortune ! How much of our income does it sweep away,—if indeed it be really gone ?”

“Of that we may rest assured. As to our income, I suppose it robs us of more than one half—”

“And mother—”

“Yes, that is the tender point,” said Lawrence, as he rose, and walked back and forth with a rapid step ; “it will grieve her so, for our sakes. It may circumscribe her comfort somewhat, and that’s something I can’t think of calmly. Yet no, it shan’t be ; these hands will prevent that.”

“I dare say she will be more vexed at the disappointment it will occasion Edith and you than at anything.

What a pity ! Edith's heart was so set upon this summer's travel."

" I cannot help blaming Mr. Bryson in some measure," resumed Lawrence, as he seated himself, and again returned to the paper.

" How can *he* have had any agency in the matter ?" asked Zilpha.

" None directly : but he holds our business affairs in his hands, and as a great merchant, he ought to know what stocks were unsafe, so as to have given us time to have had our investments withdrawn. Not three months ago I heard suspicions as to the soundness of this Bank, and wrote to Mr. Bryson. His assurances quieted me. But it is all done now, and regrets are useless, as we always say, though we will still go on to utter them."

The breakfast passed from the table almost untouched that morning, such was the chagrin felt for the time at the news which Lawrence communicated ; yet upon the whole, Mrs. Irvine bore it very bravely,—so much so indeed, that her son regarded her with a new admiration. As Zilpha had supposed, her keenest present regret was the disappointment of her children in the matter of the tour, which Lawrence did not fail to represent as nothing of consequence.

" There is a wisdom in this dispensation," said Mrs. Irvine, after she had been trying silently to familiarize her mind with the reality of the loss,—“ which, as yet, we

cannot see. We were too comfortable in our nest ; we needed to have it stirred ; we needed to have a thorn put in it to keep us from nestling there too satisfiedly."

"Not *in* it, dear mother," interrupted Lawrence ; "say only that a portion of its down is torn away."

"Ah ! you are right, my son, and so long as any trials we may be called to endure, are *outside* of our home-nest, we scarcely ought to rate them as trials. Our heavenly Father has only 'fluttered' over it, to teach us how to use the weak wings of our faith. And even if he should 'take us and bear us' forth for untried flights, we should not fear ; if he sees our strength fail, he will spread beneath us the wings of his everlasting love."

"But mother," broke in Edith quickly, "you don't really mean to say that this loss may lead to any serious changes?—that we may be compelled to give up our beautiful home?"

"Oh ! no, I hope not. So long as we are thus comfortably provided for, we do wrong to look upon ourselves as sufferers. No doubt there are widows and fatherless children whom this unfortunate failure will leave penniless. Let us think of them, and be thankful."

"Spoken just like you, dear mother," said Lawrence, affectionately, "searching first of all for causes of gratitude, to be the more strengthened to bear your losses."

"I don't pretend to be such a stoic," replied his mother, "as not to regret this loss, particularly as it interferes so

sadly with your plans : but compared with what multitudes are called to bear, it is a mere nothing. While I have you all with me,"—and Mrs. Irvine looked round upon the circle with a sudden glistening of the eye that always accompanied her quick emotions,—“I am surely rich in the truest sense of the word.”

“And after all,” said Zilpha, “there is no loss so light as the loss of money,—”

“I don’t know about that,” interrupted Edith. “Poverty and dependance are a rather undesirable pair of acquaintances,—”

“Yes,” said Lawrence, smiling, “unless, in regard to the first, like Socrates in the fair, you can say, ‘What a sight of things do I *not* want!’”

“And if God’s discipline should require you to form such acquaintanceships—”

“But mother, in this instance, it is through the mismanagement or roguery of *men* that we suffer,” persisted Edith.

“They are only the instruments in a higher hand, my dear. This thing of resting upon second causes is very unwise. All trial is more easily borne, if we look beyond the immediate occasion of it, and remember who arranges and controls the minutest incidents of our lot. My old authority, Charnock, says, that ‘all God’s providences are but his touch of the strings of this great instrument, the world; and if we stay for fuller touches, they will be like David’s

harp to us,—chasing the evil spirit of doubt away.' We must not forget that there is a lesson for us wrapped up in every discipline ; and of all comforting doctrines, I feel one of the most comforting to be, a firm faith in the particular and over-ruling providence of God."

"Mother," said Lawrence, as they sat again in the twilight, with the same warm fire-glow brightening up all the objects around them, "I begin not quite so much to need the factitious background I was speaking of not long ago,"—and he pointed to the picture on the wall.

"You *begin*," repeated his mother, questioningly ; "have you a prophetic prescience for future shadows?"

III.

A Home Lost.

THE high March winds roared among the elms and poplars that surrounded the beautiful home of the Irvines ; fierce gusts rent limbs and twigs, and flung them with angry violence upon the ground, or smote them against the windows ; and the dry leaves that had outbraved all the winter's efforts to wrench them away, were tossing hither and thither in wild confusion across the midnight sky.

Lawrence raised his head to listen. He had been suddenly roused from sound sleep with the impression upon his ear that he had heard his own name spoken. But the branches athwart his window creaked and groaned, and the wind howled like a human thing in pain ; other noises there seemed to be none. He looked toward the window. A glare as of fire-light was over the sky. He started up, under the belief that a conflagration was raging in B——, a mile distant.

“ Fire ! ” There was no doubt as to the voice now.

“James!” he exclaimed, as he thought he recognized the servant’s voice, “where is it?—what is it?”

“The back building is all in a blaze, sir; the women have been helping me throw on a few buckets of water; but that way of working is no use,—quick, sir,—fire! fire!”

But it was in vain he tried to freight the air with the message he would have it bear to the sleeping town. The wind outvoiced him, and drowned his alarms with its wilder shriekings. A very few moments sufficed to bring Lawrence to the lower part of the house. He opened the door connecting the hall with the back building, but the volumes of stifling smoke intermingled with flame, compelled him to close it instantly. He flew to rouse the family who yet slept unconscious of the neighborhood of such danger. James was galloping to B——, to spread the alarm.

Consternation was depicted upon the faces that started up to meet Lawrence’s summons. The children could not comprehend just at once, why they were snatched up so hurriedly, and in their fright they made the house ring with their cries. Mrs. Irvine was a woman of remarkable presence of mind. No emergencies, however startling, confused her so entirely as to render her helpless: and though she trembled with fear, she was able at once to give assistance in the removal of articles of value from the house. Zilpha had still steadier nerves: danger seemed

to have the effect of concentrating her faculties,—of making her mental workings clearer even than usual. In this absence of all tremulousness and perturbation, and pretty womanly weakness,—in the ability to fulfill with straightforwardness the demands of the moment's exigency, without allowing herself to be occupied in the slightest degree with her own particular feelings,—she might have appeared to those who saw her only under these circumstances, too rigid,—too self-contained. They would judge differently, if they looked again, when the emergency had passed and the call for self-control was relaxed. She flew hither and thither,—clearing out presses,—tumbling the contents of drawers into the sheets she had stripped from the beds, and flinging them from the windows,—singling out what they would least like to part with,—in short, deciding and acting with as much clearness as could have been vouchsafed by the most leisurely deliberation.

The case was different with Edith. She was trembling like an aspen leaf, and so weak from terror, that, even what she had sufficient composure for, her physical powers could not accomplish. Zilpha had already intercepted her attempts to throw a handsome dressing-box from an upper window; and, as she rushed past Edith, some minutes after, on the stairway, she discovered that in the skirt of her dress, which she had caught up about her, she held a quantity of common clothing; but more conspicuous were innumerable pairs of old shoes. She

could scarcely suppress a disposition to smile, as she begged her to expend her efforts on something more valuable.

Lawrence had been mounted upon the roof of the main building,—buckets of water had been passed unremittingly to him, by the few people who had assembled; and his exertions had been prodigious to protect it from the flames. Several times had he already cut away burning shingles; but at length he relinquished the hatchet, as the desired aid came. The leaping flames were roaring close beside him; the leathern pipe was put into his hands; and in his perilous situation he stood guiding the stream of water. The fire flashed, and wreathed itself above his head. His position became too dangerous. He slipped—fell; and, to the eyes of the spectators below, seemed lost in the belching flames; but in a few minutes he was seen to descend through the trap-door. His presence above could be of no further use.

“Mother!—Zilpha!—this will never do!” he exclaimed, as he encountered them carrying out a sofa. “Better everything should burn, than that you should kill yourselves;” and he compelled them to set down their burden. “Come, all—all of you away. Edith, don’t attempt to lift that mirror; it’s entirely too heavy for you. Here stands ‘Ariadne’ on her bracket yet. I wonder you did not think of our only piece of

Parian. There, take it; but no time for tears now, Edith."

He reached down the statuette, confiding it to his sister's care. "But where are Eunice and Josepha?" he asked, looking round anxiously for them. "I see them nowhere."

"Where?—where?"—cried Mrs. Irvine, breathlessly, as she attempted to penetrate through the smoke into one of the rooms on the opposite side of the passage; but Lawrence held her back.

"Be calm, dear mother; I will search for them. They're safe, somewhere, I trust."

"The children!—the children! Eunice!—Josepha!" were now the words on every tongue.

"I saw Eunice carrying out an armful of your books, but a little while ago," exclaimed Zilpha. "She may have returned to the library for more. Oh! see—see, Lawrence!—the door is open; the room is full of smoke; you'll be stifled!"

"At any risk, I must see if she is there;" and he put aside the hand that would have detained him.

He had scarcely penetrated into the rolling cloud, when Edith's voice was heard on the piazza, "Mother,—Lawrence! here they are!"

And there indeed they were, at the far library window, using the utmost of their little endeavors to hoist out a pretty writing-stand with a desk attached,—their mother's

peculiar property. Their brother and half a dozen others flew to their aid and rescue ; and as they were lifted out into the arms that were opened to receive them, Eunice exclaimed with a burst of tears,—“ We thought you couldn't do without *that*, mother ; we knew you kept father's letters there !”

“ Now promise me,” begged Lawrence, after he had removed them all to a summer seat round the base of an old elm on the lawn,—“ promise me that you will be content to stay at this safe distance. You can do nothing more, except to injure yourselves by over-exertion.”

“ Well !—we'll do as you wish ; but you,—I'm afraid you're forgetting to take any care of yourself,—” and his mother passed her hand over his shoulders.

“ Why, you are thoroughly wet now, and this chilly air,—” but he was gone without waiting for her charges, and was soon lost amid the surging crowd.

The flames burst from one of the parlor windows, as he sprang up the steps of the piazza ; and as he attempted to pass through the hall to see if anything farther could be done towards saving the library, he caught a glimpse of the Count Ugolino's stern features, as, with a fearful splendor, the leaping and lurid flames irradiated the dark canvas ; and even in the midst of his hurry and excitement, his mind delayed for one instant, or rather the contrast sprang up as he gazed, and he needed not to delay,—

between the soft flush of the twilight scene he recalled, and the flashing, pitiless blaze that was shrivelling up his home-picture. It was too late to save it; as he looked, it fell. "Let it go!" he inwardly sighed: "I shall need no such shadow now!"

"Has nobody seen Fidèle?" asked Josepha, after they had kept their new post of observation but a few minutes. "Oh! mother, let me go and beg somebody to hunt for her: she must not, she shall not be burnt; poor Fidèle!" and afresh the child poured forth the lamentations she had been indulging in, as she recounted to Eunice the various cherished treasures so remorselessly swept away. But her tears for the missing pet were not permitted to flow long. A boy was seen coming towards them over the illuminated lawn. "Mr. Irvine told me to bring this dog to one of you ladies," he called out as soon as he came within speaking distance; "it's scared out of its wits 'most." Josepha sprang forward to claim Fidèle with a cry of joy, and child-like she was for the moment consoled.

No exertions could save the house; and the group on the lawn, with dismay, saw the roof fall in—heard the timbers crash—and watched, high above all, the mad flames triumph over what had been to them the dearest spot on earth. Few words escaped them, as they crowded shiveringly together, with their moistened eyes fixed on their burning home. A half suppressed sob—a stifled ex-

clamation—a low wail from one of the children ;—this was at first all. At length the grey light of the morning began to streak the east—the wild winds lulled—the flames had exhausted their fury, and were subsiding—the crowd had drawn off, and desolate indeed looked the neat, trim lawn of yesterday, with its trampled shrubbery, and the just freshening grass scattered over with household articles and furniture, in the greatest conceivable disorder.

Lawrence was in the midst of the group once more,—weary with his night's exertion : he had managed to find a dry coat, to his mother's satisfaction ; and, as he sat down for a little rest, Mrs. Irvine's head sank for a moment upon the arm he was about to pass around her.

“ And what do you think—what do you say now, dear mother ?” he asked, tenderly.

“ What I said and believed in our prosperity, I must say still, though it be now through tears—‘ The Lord will provide.’ It is stern teaching this, but we will try and study the lesson to the end.”

“ And what is to become of us, mother ?” sobbed Edith—“ where shall we go ?”

“ We are not left wholly destitute—we have a home yet—that is something to be thankful for.”

“ You mean the remnant of the old Virginia estate my father left to me—Silverwood ? Yes, yes, as lord of the manor,” said Lawrence, trying to smile—“ let me welcome you all to it.”

“I mean Silverwood—”

“*That* may serve as a place of shelter,” interrupted Edith; “but a home is another thing.”

“It was your father’s home—”

“Yes, mother,” broke in Eunice, plaintively; “but he died there—”

“And in sight of it lies buried,” said Mrs. Irvine, with an unsteady voice.

“Then don’t let us go there,” pleaded Josepha, laying her wet cheek coaxingly against her mother’s.

“*Do* let us go, Sepha,” said Zilpha’s clear, hopeful tones; “yes, let us go to Silverwood, mother. We will love it all the better because our father stepped from it into heaven.”

IV.

A Home Found.

Six months had passed away since the occurrence of the events of the last page ; and now, at the close of an October evening, Zilpha sat on a broken step of the old porch at Silverwood.

“And so this is home—*home* !” The word was repeated with a sort of incredulous emphasis, and a sigh escaped her lips as she spoke.

“Home ?—yes—do you think you can love it as such, Zilpha ?”

“Ah, are you there, Cousin Bryant ? I thought I was alone.”

“So I opined, or you would have been more chary of your sigh. You have been so careful to appear happy and cheerful, that I have not been able to tell whether you have been counterfeiting or not. Confess the truth candidly, now. Do you think you will be able to content yourself here, without regretful pinings for what is lost and left behind ?”

“It would be ungrateful to be otherwise than content. My present feeling is one of intense thankfulness that, after our homeless sojourn among our various friends during the summer, we are all gathered together again under one roof, and that roof our own. If only my fears for Lawrence were allayed, I think I could be positively happy here. But the over-exertion of that fatal night of the fire—the wetting and the cold ;—ah ! Bryant, you see how changed he is—how his elasticity is gone—how he droops ; I tremble for him,” and something like a tear glistened in Zilpha’s eye, which she turned away her face to hide.

“It is not like you, Zilpha, to despond,” said Bryant, soothingly ; “you are always so brave-hearted. I confess I was hardly prepared, on my arrival yesterday, for so much change in Lawrence ; but we will be hopeful and trustful of God’s unfailing goodness. We have only now to await the opinion of the physicians to whom his case has been referred ;—and, as he says himself, that he has been retrograding since he has been from under their care, we may suppose that their decision will be for his trial of a milder climate during the coming winter. So, if they say ‘Southward, ho !’ the sooner he goes, the better.”

“And alone ?—with his tender, gentle nature—so much of an invalid, too—standing in need of such care and sympathy as he does ? It seems to me impossible that he should go, if it must be alone.”

“ He need not—*you* can go with him—”

“ I ?”

“ Yes. I cannot imagine a more proper companion. You are equable in your temperament—conscientiously cheerful,—a matter of the greatest moment for an invalid,—disposed to look at things in their best aspect, and possessed, as you must know, of a mind more self-poised than falls to the lot of many of your sex.”

“ You exaggerate my possessions greatly, Bryant.”

“ Not a whit—not a whit—”

“ But—but—”

“ Ah ! I see the difficulty. You are thinking of the wherewithal to accomplish this. Well, Mr. Bryson holds some of your mother’s money, which he may not have yet invested—the proceeds of the sale of the old place at B——. As to that matter, however, please to remember how my obligations to Cousin Mary must press upon me, and what real gratification it will afford me to make some tangible acknowledgment of them ; for though I’m only a poor parson, I happen to have some surplus of funds, which cannot be so well employed in any way, as in assisting Lawrence, my foster-brother, to regain his health.”

“ You are too kind, Bryant !” exclaimed Zilpha, turning her beautiful eyes, full of grateful feeling, upon him. “ But Lawrence cannot brook dependance : I’m afraid you could not get his consent to your arrangement.”

“Necessity owns no law, you know.”

“Ah! you men overleap difficulties at one bound, that we women detail out to ourselves until they seem wholly insurmountable. In this new and untried home, among strangers, think how sad and lonely it will be for mother and Edith.”

“Yes, lonely, perhaps; but, I trust, not so sad as you imagine. Let but my cousin Mary believe it to be her *duty* to give you and Lawrence up for the winter, and she will submit to it bravely. Many a time have I seen her, when you were too young to observe,—for you know there are a good many years between us, Zilpha,—many a time have I seen her pass through a trying ordeal with as uncomplaining a cheerfulness as if it were really a pleasure to her, when I was sure that her sensitive spirit was enduring a species of martyrdom. Her own personal feelings are always the last things she takes into consideration.”

“Yes—I have often heard her say that she long since had ceased to ask herself what she *liked* to do—but what was it her *duty* to do.”

“Then set yourself at rest on that point. As to Edith, only get her strong will and sound judgment persuaded to the mastery of her feelings, and the difficulty there is over.”

“But Lawrence himself will be hard to convince.”

“Lawrence is as passive as a child. His high, inde-

pendent, determined nature has felt the subduing effects of long continued indisposition. I had never imagined he would become so plastic. Have you not noticed this wonderful change?"

"Ah! yes, till it has wrung my heart sometimes. It is almost too touching to see *him*, on whose strength we all used to lean so much, now repose himself upon us with such a beautiful trust. Those words—'Passing away!—passing away!' *will* keep ringing through my thoughts, till often their echoes almost distract me."

"Oh! here you are, sister—and Cousin Barry, too. We've been hunting you all over the house and garden. Just come and see the tea-table, if it doesn't look like it used to at home;" and so saying, Josepha seized Zilpha's hand, while Eunice made sure of Bryant's, as they drew them through the open door of the hall.

"We hunted and hunted among the packing-boxes," continued Josepha, "for the tea-bell, to ring for you, for Daphne said she couldn't find you. But it didn't turn up, things are so out of their places yet. I wonder if they'll ever get into them!"

"And we've been helping Aunt Rose to get supper early," broke in Eunice, "for she didn't know where things were as well as Sepha and I; and mother said we must all be so tired, getting matters to rights, that we needed an early supper to rest us; so, come, sister—come, Cousin Barry!"

It was not dark in the old porch, for the house faced the western sky, and the deep amber flush, left by the sunken sun, still lingered brightly above the line of mountain horizon. It had not seemed dark at least, until the old hall door creaked shut on its unused and rusty hinges. Then a desolate dimness—a forlorn and melancholy aspect settled down, like the dusk shaken from the wings of night, upon the deserted porch; the clematis and honeysuckle, whose intertwining branches hung drooping for want of support, swayed mournfully hither and thither in the growing darkness; and the aspens, whose silvery foliage had given name to this once pleasant home, rustled sadly, as the evening wind sighed through the frost-touched leaves.

V.

Fireside.

THE coolness of the evening without made a fire inviting, and broad and bright the pile of hickory blazed within the deep recess of the old chimney-place, as the party from the porch entered the dining-room. It had been many a day since those dim walls had reflected back the light of a cheerful hearth,—many a day since the last dwellers in the old house had made its rooms echo to the sound of happy voices. The dark, oaken paneling, extending a third of the way to the ceiling, with a careful reference to the protection of the walls from mutilation by chair-backs, gave a somewhat sombre appearance to the room, which the deep green of the painted plaster did not help to relieve.

Yet an air of cheery comfort had been imparted to the place, which, at first sight, it did not seem capable of receiving. The bright colored carpet,—the two or three lounging chairs,—the simple divan drawn up cosily to the

fire, strewn over with the books and papers which Lawrence had been reading,—the inviting tea-table with its checked crimson cover, that so prettily set off the fair china, and above all, the sparkling radiance of the hearth, served effectually to dispel the gloomy impressions which its untenanted aspect had suggested.

“Doesn’t it look nice?” exclaimed the little cicerone of the occasion, as she stood with the door-knob in her hand, surveying the scene with a satisfaction that proved her to have had a personal concern in the effect she calculated upon its producing. “Cousin Barry, did you think, when you saw it full of packages and boxes last night, that we ever *could* make it look so much like our old dear home?”

“I can’t say but I thought you could, Sepha. I put no limits to what woman’s hands and taste can accomplish. But, indeed, dear Cousin Mary,” continued Bryant, turning to Mrs. Irvine, who already sat at the waiter, “indeed, this is very home-like.”

“Just what Lawrence has been saying,” replied Mrs. Irvine, without lifting her eyes from the cups into which she was busily engaged putting the sugar. “It pleases me, to find you think so: any place will be like home to me, where I can make you all happy.”

“Spoken just like you, Cousin Mary: but where’s Edith?”

“Gone to prepare something tempting for my supper,” said Lawrence, rising from his seat before the fire, and

laying the book he had been reading, with its open face upon the mantel. "She knows, with my capricious appetite, that old Aunt Rose's cookery is not dainty enough for me."

"I don't believe, brother Lawrie!" exclaimed Josepha, who felt as if an imputation had been cast upon the culinary skill of the good-humored black cook,—“I don't believe anything but a nice English cook would do for *you*.”

"You think me too fastidious, do you, Sepha?"

"'Fastidious?'"

"Don't you know what that means?" asked Bryant, quizzically. "Why, to hold up a glass of fair water between one's eye and the light, before drinking it, which, by the way, the Spanish proverb says ought never to be done."

"That's what brother Lawrie always does: he's afraid of drinking bugs!"

"He should wear a cover over his mouth, like the Hindoo fakirs, and have all his drinks strained through a sieve of fabulous fineness. And don't you think it would be advisable to provide Aunt Rose with a pair of microscopic glasses, so that she may be able to detect the invisible animalcules that may invade the domain of her pots and kettles?"

"Brother Lawrie's own gold spectacles would do," said Josepha, laughing.

"But they are near-sighted ones, and Aunt Rose will need magnifiers."



Lawrence smiled quietly at the allusion to his extreme daintiness, as they all took their seats at the table; and Edith soon appeared with the delicacy wherewith to tempt the invalid's appetite. Eunice came, too, saying that Zilpha had bidden her to tell them not to wait tea for her: she would be with them presently. "Uncle Felix has brought the letters, and I believe she's reading them," the little girl proceeded to say, but a significant look from her mother prevented her going on.

"I thought you liked coffee, Edith," said Josepha, peering into her sister's cup, which had been scarcely touched, with a look of disappointment; "I told Aunt Rose how particular you were about having it *just so*; and she'll be sure to ask me if it pleased you."

"Assure her that it does, then; it could hardly be better if she had gone to France to learn how to make it."

"But you don't drink it,—nor eat your muffin either. I was hoping you'd be so hungry, and think everything so nice."

"Perhaps she has been watching the sunset from that crazy old summer-house in the garden, Sepha; and sitting among the falling autumn leaves, with a girdle of blue mountains about her, and the evening wind, whispering in her ear, the tales it had caught up in the far-away gorges, may have made her grow poetic; so let her alone, for fear you spoil the sonnet that may be brewing in her brain."

Edith felt thankful to Bryant for withdrawing the child's attention; and as soon as the tea was over, she went in search of her sister. It was not her nature to sit quietly waiting, as her mother could, till Zilpha should make her appearance; for she felt sure that the letters so anxiously looked for, yet dreaded, had come.

Daphne, a comely negress, with great golden hoops in her ears, had removed the tea-things,—leaving only a nicely prepared tray for Zilpha,—and the group drew their chairs again around the glowing hearth, except Lawrence, who, according to his invariable habit, paced with a slow step back and forth through the room.

His mother's loving eye would follow him, as he walked from her, and turn away again, as he approached,—betraying an evident unwillingness that he should be aware how much he was the object of her solicitude.

“Did I hear you say there were letters to-night?” he asked, stopping in his walk, and turning to his sisters, who had, a little before, taken their seats at the fire.

“Yes,” was Zilpha's somewhat hesitating reply; “I have given them to mother to read.”

“Any from Dr. Warder? I see you think me nervous about hearing, yet you know I am not easily discomposed.” Mrs. Irvine put into his hand the one she had just finished. He ran his eye over it without a change of countenance, while Edith watched his face with ill-disguised anxiety. Calmly he folded it up,—read another,—

and then, without speaking, or seeming to be conscious of the looks of inquiry, as to the effect of their contents, which were bent upon him, resumed his measured walk again.

"Sepha," he said at length, as he sat down and lifted the little sleepy head from Zilpha's lap, "your eyes are 'gathering straws' I see; so call the servants, and Bryant, you be our household priest again to-night."

Prayers were over, the door had shut upon the retreating children, and the diminished circle drew closer together over the ruddy coals. No one spoke for a while. There was but one thought on the minds of all, and that each waited for the other to broach.

Lawrence was the first to break silence.

"I confess myself a little startled, mother dear, by the tenor of Dr. Warder's letter. Dr. Martin's too, amounts to about the same thing. Oh! this mistaken kindness of sending invalids away from home!"

"Not mistaken in your case, I trust, my son," said his mother, in her hopeful way, as she fondly stroked back the hair from his pale forehead: "think what wonders a winter in Santa Cruz once effected for your Uncle Walter."

"And Ronaldson,—you remember him?" interposed Bryant.

"Very well: he was in the class above us at college."

"Well, you know he looked like a walking ghost then ;

but, after leaving N —, his health utterly failed. He was ordered to the West Indies,—spent a winter there, and is now a new man.”

“And our friend Williams, he died at Tampa Bay.”

“Yes; but his case was very hopeless before he went there.”

“But to leave you all here, before you are fairly settled in this strange home,—among strangers—”

“Yet what could you do for us, were you to stay, my son?”

“True,—what *could* I do,—so nerveless as I now am?” and an expression of pain passed over the usually serene features.

“Go and get well with all possible speed,” said Zilpha, “and then, what *can't* you do?”

“But the mind and body act and react so on each other, the sympathy between them is so acute, that I might experience more mischief in my weak condition from being thus alone for the winter, than the variable climate here might effect.”

“You are not to think of going alone!” was the simultaneous rejoinder; “any of us will go with you.”

“*Any* of you!—which *can*? As for you, Bryant, it's simply out of the question for you to leave your ministerial duties, just newly established in them as you are; mother's head and hands are needed here; Zilpha is necessary to encourage you all at home, and Edith is too

much afraid of strange faces,—not *brave* enough, or perhaps I ought to say, not self-trustful enough.”

“But *I* am not easily disconcerted by strange faces, and can be right brave upon occasions, if I must say it myself,” said Zilpha, cheerfully. “I’m not so important by any means, as you imagine, at home ; so what is to prevent my going ?”

The paleness of Mrs. Irvine’s usually bright cheek alone betrayed the inward emotion, whose outward tokens she was endeavoring wholly to suppress. It was always her principle of action to spare the feelings of others, it mattered not at what sacrifice or trial of her own.

“Indeed, my children, I know not what to say. It will be a great responsibility for Zilpha—”

“Why go at all ?” broke in Lawrence. “This is milder than the climate I have been accustomed to ; why not stay here ?”

“You shrink already from even this October temperature ; besides here are your physician’s letters,” said Bryant, taking up one of them and running his eye over it. “I will go with you myself.”

But to such an arrangement Lawrence would not hear. An hour later, and the whole matter had been settled according to Bryant’s first suggestion. The extreme scrupulosity, and delicacy which characterized Lawrence, had been over-ruled ; and so quietly had he at length yielded, that even Zilpha, who had been so observant of

the growing passiveness of the mind that was firm and fixed in its own decisions almost to a fault, was surprised. This, she had thought, would be the most difficult point to carry ; yet with what apparent ease it had been managed. She only saw the calm exterior ; she could not know how the high, independent spirit secretly chafed,—how the proud will, for an instant, rose defiantly against the iron thralldom of circumstances, till it caught the whisperings of faith, saying, “ Thine,—not mine, be done !”

VI.

Uncle Felix.

AUTUMN,—tender-thoughted, dreamy autumn,—came gliding down the mountain sides, throwing back from her subdued brow her veil of wreathed mists, and gathering about her bosom her robe of many colored dyes, as with laggard step she sauntered through the dim valleys and over the purple hills. The light of the sun came pallidly through the woven haze that stretched across the slumberous sky, and far away

——“The white, fleecy clouds
Were wandering in thick flocks above the mountains,
Shepherded by the slow, unwilling wind.”

The meadow-brooks ran with a hushed murmur, and the delicate vapor hung above their winding courses like the lingering memory of the summer joyousness that was now over and gone. Stillness was in all the air, and even the occasional chirp of some lonely bird had in it a drowsy

cadence. Far and wide had the sweet, pale autumn wandered ; and the mist beneath her eyelids grew tender, and gathered more and more heavily, as she listened to the rustle of the crisp leaves that were searing beneath her tread ; for change waited upon her lightest touch, and the chaplets of oak and maple leaves, of purple asters, and of golden rods, which, in idle dalliance she wove, withered while she twined them. Her's was indeed a gentle, but mournful mission—to soothe and beautify decay.

The family at Silverwood were all abroad in the cottage lawn and garden, seeking to dispel, by means of busy employment, the effect of the October day's sadness, if indeed any haunted them. The vines about the porch that had so long followed the bent of their own wild will, must at least be so gathered up and interlaced, as to afford free passage ;—the straggling rose-bushes that reached out their long branches in unchecked luxuriance, were to be tied up, so that the once gravelled walk might be unobstructed, and the sprawling syringas and guelder-roses be made to keep within reasonable bounds.

Josepha stood beside “ Uncle Felix,”—the old negro factotum of the establishment, watching him as he nailed some loose palings in their place upon the carriage-gate, at the bottom of the lawn, and cultivating an acquaintance, which had already, on her side, ripened into something of a feeling of veneration, as she regarded him and his sister, Aunt Rose, as the last remnants of the family

that had once filled this, her grandfather's home. The old man had been talking to her of her father.

"Uncle Felix, what makes you call him 'Master Henry'—why don't you say 'Master Irvine?' "

"La, Miss Josey, I knowed him when he wa'n't no bigger nor you. Me and him used to play together when we was boys."

"Yes, I know—my father lived here before he went up to my native State; he was born here, I believe,—were you?"

"*Me!* bless yer heart, no, honey; I b'lieve I comed from Africy."

"From Africa? I reckon not—that's a great ways off. I expect it must have been from Charleston."

"Well, I comed 'cross a mighty big water; and I'se ollers heern de sea, 'tween dis an' Libeery, was powerful wide."

"And how long were you coming?"

"A right smart time—I mos' forgits—it's been so many years sence. It mought ha' been a chance of two or three days. I mind ole Mas'r—yer grand pa'—was monsous sick."

"Two or three days! Why, my geography says the ocean is three thousand miles across!"

"Now, Miss Josey! you jes' wants to fool an ole nigga!" exclaimed Uncle Felix, straightening himself up, and peering incredulously into the child's face. "My son Jeff,"

wot's over dar—you know, Mas'r Henry, yer pa', sent all his black folks, wot 'ud go, to Libeery, befo' he died. Well Jeff', he writ back some sich big story as dat, but I didn't pay no 'tention to it; for Jeff', he ollers liked to make peoples stare."

"But its true."

"Well, if you say so, mebbly it is true. I never troubles my head 'bout der cur'us things folks tells. I'se heern a queer story I wants to ax' you 'bout, 'cause I don't mo' nor half b'lieve it;" and Uncle Felix paused and sat down on a stone to rest himself, after the arduous exertion of fastening on the few palings. He employed the interval, however, in searching for a straight nail, among some rusty ones of every size which he had in a gourd—that indispensable article of nature's purveying, supplying, as it does, the vacuum in the negro's lack of mechanical skill, and furnishing him with everything needful in the way of receptacle, from a drinking-cup to a porte-monnaie, or a tobacco-box—"I'se been telled der elephants war so powerful big in Africy, dat de natives *hollers* out places in der sides and gits in, and cuts off fresh steaks every day, and der creetur don't find it out!"

Jesepha shouted with laughter at such a Munchausen story.

"Why, Miss Josey, Jeff' writ, las' year, 'bout 'em growin' der own coffee, and raisin' *ile* on der plantations. De *idear* of ile *growin'*!"

Josepha was at some pains to impart her Peter Parley's knowledge on the subject of palm-trees, and elephants, and other African matters to her attentive listener, until in his interest, he had well nigh forgotten his work. When her instructions were over, she said, after a thoughtful pause: "You were here when my father died—"

"Yes, Miss Josey, Mas'r Barry Woodruff and me was all, 'cept Rose an' her child'en. You know, Mas'r Henry, yer pa', come down to look after de ole place when yer grandpa' died; and Mas'r Barry bein' older nor Mas'r Lawrence, and a kind o' 'dopted son, wa'n't he?"

"No—he's a cousin of my mother; but his parents died when he was a little boy, and we were the nearest relations he had, and so he has lived a great deal with us."

"Well, anyhow, *he* come along for company. Mas'r Henry had got things pretty much straightened up. Some of de black 'uns had jes got off, to go to Libeery, and de rest had gone down country to your Aunt Maria's, on Jeames River. Rose's husband lived to Mas'r Preacher Norris', and my ole woman, she belonged to ole Miss Sally Horton; so we was to stay here and help take care of de plantation till 'twar rented. Well, as I war sayin', Mas'r Henry jes' got his business finished, and was ready to start home, when he took sick; and in yon room, Miss Josey—"

"No—no!" said Josepha, putting her hands over her eyes, and turning her head in the other direction from

that in which the old man's finger pointed—"don't tell me; I'd rather not know which room my father died in—though I can't help guessing that it's the one mother has taken for her chamber; for the tears came into her eyes when sister Zilpha tried to get her to choose the one opposite to it, because it was pleasanter, and looked towards Milburne; but she said she had a reason for liking the other better. I wish I hadn't heard her say that."

"Oh! if you'd only seed him go, Miss Josey,"—and the expression of the black, and wrinkled, and unintelligent face became earnest and even elevated, as he spoke,—"you'd never think de place war gloomy-like. Dar's been angels dar; for I likes to b'lieve de ole Mas'r above sends 'em blessed sperits for his child'en, when dey is ready to go; an' he war ready, sure, Miss Josey. I never forgits it, though Mas'r Henry's been gone dead mos' dese ten year. But, hi!—yonder comes Mis' Nannie Grantley's fine carriage. She's gwine to call on your ma' and de young mis'esses."

"Miss Nannie Grantley! why, I read the name on the card that came with those partridges that were sent to brother Lawrie, and it was *Mrs.* Grantley. Isn't she a widow lady?"

"Sartain she is. But, honey, you ain't usen to our Virginny ways. We black 'uns never says '*Mrs.* Grantley'—too much freedery 'bout dat; 'sides I knowed her

when she was Miss Nannie Burton. Mighty fine folks, I tell *you*!—kind o' stylish—”

“Then I must run and give warning, and let mother, and sister, and Edith have time to get off their garden gloves and sun-bonnets;” and away the little messenger flew up the grass-grown pathway with her constant attendant, Fidèle, at her heels, to herald the visitor's approach.

“Glad to welcome you among us as a resident, Mrs. Irvine,” said Mrs. Grantley, in her blandest manner, as, accompanied by her sister, Miss Burton, she took her seat in the cottage parlor. “Our husbands' families were old acquaintances, so that mutual friendship is our natural inheritance.”

Mrs. Irvine's cordial greeting, and quick, kind reply, gave proof that she would not be wanting on the score of social feeling.

“I am really charmed that Silverwood is to be inhabited again,” continued Mrs. Grantley, “only that it will detract a little from the picturesqueness of our landscape to see signs of life about the old mansion. A deserted house, left to decay, and romantically hidden away among overgrown shrubbery, one must allow, is an unusual sight in this all-alive country of ours, though we have something of that kind to show in the ruins of the old Hall, near you.”

“And permit me to say, Madam,” interposed Bryant, “by no means an agreeable one.”

"Ah! think so?" said the lady, arching her eyebrows. "I confess I learned to look on it differently when in England. Time-stained walls, and moss-grown roofs, and ivy-covered turrets, vocal with rooks, and all that one sees there, about many of the grand old remnants of a former age, have so much of the delightful aroma of antiquity around them, that whatever in the slightest degree suggests them, is positively refreshing in our fast times."

"Silverwood does not furnish you with anything like the fragrance of antiquity, however," replied Mrs. Irvine, smiling. "It has been deserted long enough to have become rather unsightly; but too short a time to have assumed anything of the picturesque."

"I'm not so sure as to that, Cousin Mary," said Bryant. "The old, uninhabited 'quarters,' with the moss on their clapboard roofs, and their tumble-down stone chimneys, and doors hanging on one hinge, might come into the category. And though you are not able to supply Mrs. Grantley with a rookery, Silverwood can defend itself against the imputation of having anything to do with these 'fast times,' since it possesses a bat-ery, as I can testify, from the number of black wings which the smoke forced to take flight from my chimney last night. And why should bats not be considered quite as aristocratic as rooks? The following up of their lineage would at least leave us amidst the ruins of Assyrian palaces."

"Well, well; all this aside," replied Mrs. Grantley, good

humoredly. "I shall be glad to see Silverwood exchange its air of desertion for one of genial life. But I'm afraid your young people will sadly feel the want of society hereabouts, Mrs. Irvine, unless they mean to avail themselves of the resource my sister and I adopt, and like those rare caterers of domestic enjoyment, the English, spend 'the season' away from their country home."

"I have no fear for them on that score. I believe they have never yet learned to prefer the delights of society to the simpler pleasures of their own fire-side."

"Ah! yes, I understand: an unfailing spring of inward resources—very convenient and independent. They are like my sister, yonder, in that respect. But for myself, I confess to the necessity of a little of the wine of excitement to stimulate my mental activities. However," continued the lady, in a patronizing, yet pleasant way, "'Grantley-holm' and its mistress are at their service. My sister is devoted to horse-back exercises, forest scramblings, flower-huntings, in short, every kind of country entertainment. So I'm glad for their mutual enjoyment, that your daughters' tastes and hers will coincide."

Mrs. Irvine expressed her thanks. "Even if they had not," she went on to say, "living in the midst of such a panorama of mountains as we have here, would be sufficient to inspire such tastes. We are captivated with the noble scenery about us."

"Very fine—very fine, no doubt. But I'm like a friend of mine from the lower country, who had never

seen anything in the landscape line higher than a Carolina potatoe-hill. She arrived at Grantley-holm at night, and my sister contrived that her first impression should be from our breakfast-room, which commands a near view of the most striking of our mountains: so the next morning she drew aside the curtains, and waited mutely for a burst of enthusiasm. 'Well, what of it?' my sister asked,—tired of watching for the ignition of so slow a match. 'Why,—why,—I expect it would be very grand, if this great, shaggy thing were away, so that I could see!' I believe Betty has ceased to be cicerone for Nature since that."

Lawrence, not aware that there were visitors in the parlor, sauntered slowly in, with a book open in his hand. After due presentation, the voluble lady turned to him with ready adaptation, as she imagined, to his peculiar bent; for, from his pale, scholarly look, and his volume, she set him down in her mind as a student.

"A heavenly day, Mr. Irvine. Just the atmosphere in which to walk abroad with Nature-worshipping Wordsworth in one's hand."

"Beautiful, indeed!" returned Lawrence, in his quiet way.

"I was remarking to my sister, as we drove here this morning, that the expression of the sky was a study for an artist, such as Claude Lorraine, or the English Turner. The atmospheric effect recalled one of Claude's landscapes,

which I had been greatly taken with, some years since, in Rome,—‘the Mulino,’ I think it is called.”

Lawrence was silent, answering only by a bow ; but a listener was all Mrs. Grantley wanted.

“But we have no Southey’s, or Coleridge’s, or Christopher North’s, among us, to dignify or give interest to our Skiddaws and Helvellyn’s.”

Lawrence seemed inclined to vouchsafe a remark, and the lady paused an instant.

“Your mountains are so grand, Madam, that even the presence of nature’s best spirits in their midst could add nothing to their individual interest,—except, indeed, as they might help us better to interpret the language of their mute eloquence.”

“Glad to hear you say so, sir,—glad to hear you admire the only object we have to be proud of, more especially as I am allied to the soil here, and am touched by all that touches the pride of our State in any way. But you must allow me to dispute your position: human association adds a charm to anything. Put but a human figure in a picture, and what a sympathy we have with it, be it nothing more than some ragged wayfarer, from whose contact we would shrink in actual life,—a sympathy which, in the want of some figure, the landscape might fail to awaken. This is the reason, I believe, that I doated so upon English and European scenery, where every object

has its association ; and felt the barrenness of my own country, on this point, when I came home."

"Yet, inasmuch as nature is purer and holier than man," replied Lawrence, "do I rather enjoy these lonely mountains and solitary valleys—"

"Yes," said Mrs. Irvine, taking up the sentence her son had left unfinished ; "for do you not find that most of these old-world associations are mixed up and contaminated with man's evil passions,—with battle and bloodshed?"

"But, then, think of the chivalry,—the heroic deeds that sanctify the soil there ! When we hunt for the interest that attaches to the past of *our* landscape," and Mrs. Grantley waved her hand in the direction of the sweeping, blue mountain ridges seen through the window, "we must be content with the roar of bears, the screech of wild-cats, and the whoops of Indians—by the way no very unsullied sons of nature, either, Mr. Irvine."

Lawrence smiled. "And yet, speaking of the absence of the heroic Mrs. Grantley, it is never necessary to remind a Virginian that his soil produced the truest of modern, or indeed of ancient heroes."

"Ah ! yes ; that was the only thing I used to be proud of abroad,—that I came from the land of Washington."

After more such desultory chat, the ladies rose to take leave. Mr. Irvine and Mr. Woodruff were pressed to come to Grantley-holm, and avail themselves of its libra-

ry. "It might contain books worthy of the eye of scholars, for Mr. Grantley had selected most of it himself, with great care. Many of the editions of authors were rare, and nearly all were European." To Zilpha and Edith were proffered carriage and horses, flowers from the garden, in short, whatever the establishment had to give. Even a servant was urged upon Mrs. Irvine, in case she might not be fully provided, or were not through with her unpacking. Miss Burton was fortunately a quiet person; but even her few words were, with some difficulty, slipped in amidst her sister's overpowering and voluble leave-takings.

"Has Miss Burton been to Europe, too?" asked Josepha, who had been listening to the conversation from behind her mother's chair, after the visitors were gone.

"I don't know, indeed," said Zilpha. "All *her* talk was of the walks and rides and views there are about here."

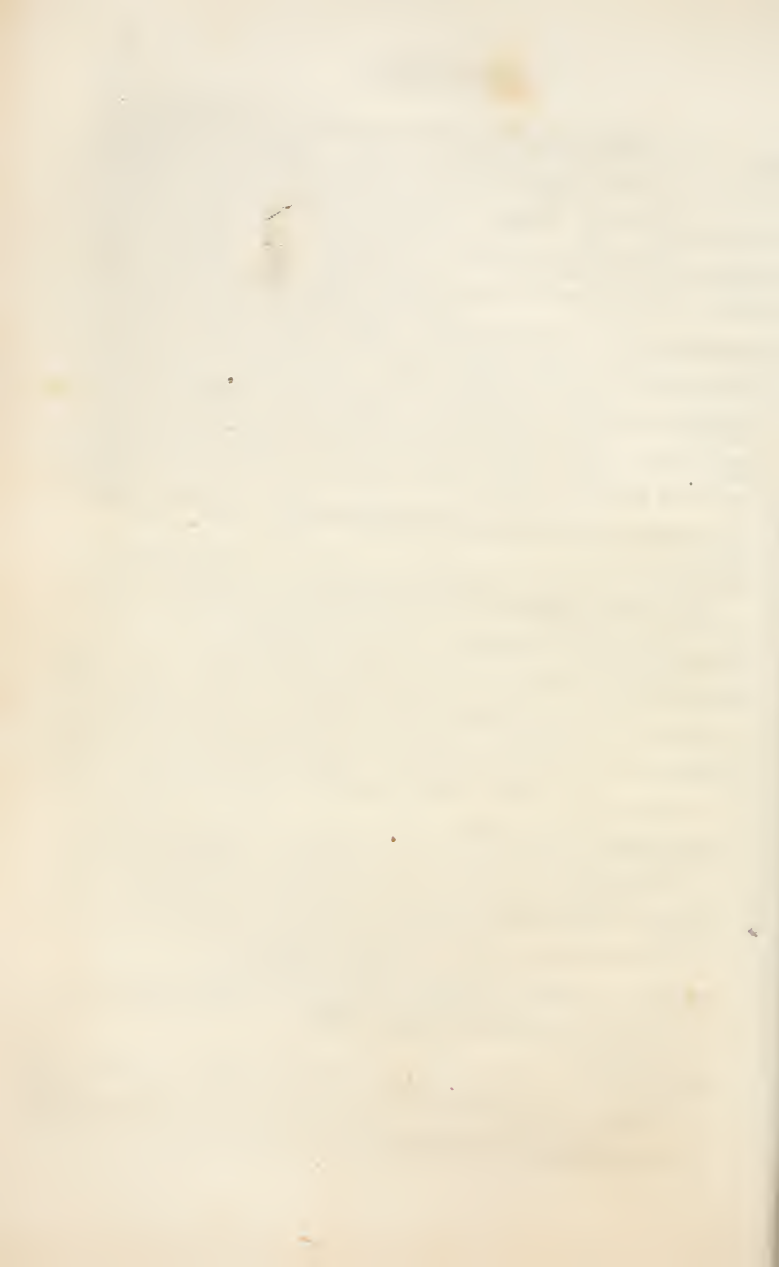
"She must differ from her sister a good deal," was Lawrence's dry remark.

"You didn't seem to 'take a shine' to Mrs. Grantley, as Uncle Felix says. I'm sure she tried to entertain you."

"Yes, Sepha; but I was not strong enough to bear the weight of all her 'Mulinos' and 'Skiddaws.'"

"And how kind she was to offer us horses, and mother a servant."

"Very. A Spanish *hidúlgo* is not more so, when he tells his guest that himself, and his house, and all he has, are his."



VII.

The Naiad's Spring.

"I HAVE been thinking, Lawrence," said Edith to her brother, some days after this, as they stood together in the morning sunshine, on the now repaired and trim porch—"I have been thinking that you might take advantage of one of these fine, mild days,—so beautiful, that they seem to have dropped out of June, and fallen into the lap of October,—to make some acquaintance with the neighborhood about us. You'll not be able to look upon it as home, when you're gone, unless you get to know it better. Suppose, if you feel strong enough, we spend part of the day, and lunch, at this 'Spring,' which the children have been teasing us to go and see ever since Uncle Felix pioneered them to it."

"How far away is it?"

"Not very far beyond '*The Ruins*,' which, for their own sake, if not for Mrs. Grantley's, you'll want to visit. 'Nade's Spring' it's called, according to Uncle Felix, who

‘reckons somebody of that name must have owned it once;’ but Eunice’s mythological studies have helped her to another interpretation, and she calls it ‘The Naiad’s Spring.’ You can ride, and we’ll walk by your side, after the fashion of the Vicar of Wakefield’s family.”

Mrs. Irvine came to the door at that moment, and when the plan was referred to her decision, she so heartily fell in with it, that her cheerful acquiescence made it seem more desirable than ever.

“We will go to-day. It will be pleasant for you to have some such ‘human associations,’ as Mrs. Grantley says, about these landscapes,—that is, if you can bear the fatigue, and are not afraid of being so long in the open air.”

“He can ride Roland, mother; and we will take the balmiest part of this bright day, and be home before there is a suspicion of evening chilliness in the air.”

So the rural excursion was agreed upon, and Edith went forthwith to give token to the others, and to purvey what might be necessary for the occasion.

“Let us have coffee out there?” exclaimed Josepha, as she danced with glee in anticipation of the pleasure to be realized.

“Oh, yes. Please Edith,” chimed in the quieter Eunice. “Uncle Felix can carry a basket with all the things, and mother likes a nice cup of coffee so much!”

“And it will be such fun to make the fire,—a fire in the

woods!—that'll be so gipsy-like!" and the child chuckled with delight.

Aunt Rose at once set to work to make some of her nicest biscuits, and Edith referred to "Mrs. Raffalds," of venerable and savory memory, for some receipt of such delicate compound as might please her brother's capricious appetite. A "lemon posset" was fixed on; so Eunice was employed to rasp a lemon, while Josepha's effervescence overflowed itself in helping everybody. She must needs measure the flour for Aunt Rose, and go with Daphne down to "the spring-house," to fill the decanter Zilpha had provided with rich cream, and pack some butter down in a deep little china dish, and see that the ham was not cut too thick for the sandwiches—"For you must know, Daphne, brother Lawrie likes ham shaved down as thin as 'bath post'—an accepted term in the family for the last degree of thinness, and about as well comprehended by the servant as the child.

Mrs. Irvine provided a square of carpet,—a sort of Prince Houssain's tapestry, according to Mr. Woodruff's fancy, on which they only needed to seat themselves, and at a given word, be wafted away to their place of destination.

Zilpha had hunted up a great basket, and in due time everything necessary had been stowed away in it.

"But the hot biscuits will melt the butter, and heat brother Lawrie's sherry," said Josepha, as she surveyed

the disposition of the edibles—"that'll never do. Cousin Barry, suppose you slip this bottle into your pocket, and I'll find a little basket for the biscuit."

"I load my pocket with a suspicious looking bottle!" exclaimed Mr. Woodruff, with an expression of sham effront. "You forget my ministerial character, child. I preach against wine-drinking sometimes."

"Lawrence has Paul's warrant," said Zilpha, laughing. "So give me the sherry—I've no scruples;" but the neck of the bottle was seen peeping out of Bryant's coat pocket, notwithstanding, as the party emerged from the gate.

"Who has been our book purveyor?" asked Mrs. Irvine. "Though I dare say some of you have made provision in that line."

"Oh! please don't take any books," begged Josepha. "Let's study nature to-day, as Eunice says;" and she tried to draw away the volume she spied under Edith's arm. "I wonder if sister hasn't got her sketch-book, too. I declare she shan't sit down and draw, when we're just going out to have a gipsy frolic;" and Josepha lifted Zilpha's mantle.

"Sure enough! here it is!—Edith, I hope you haven't got any paper with you."

"If she has more than she needs for her 'Forest-musings,' or her 'Leaves from a Dryad's Haunt,' I can borrow some, Sepha, to note down the heads of my next Sunday's sermon on."

“If you do! Cousin Barry:—but never mind; I’ll steal it all to make paper boats to sail on the spring. Brother Lawrence, haven’t you brought along that book of old Latin hymns you’re so fond of? And mother, I can run back for your thimble and some of that sewing in your work-basket, and hunt up my Geography at the same time. I reckon I might learn a lesson while the coffee’s boiling.”

“Put away your discontent, my child,” said her mother. “I’ll see to it that Edith writes no ‘musings,’ nor Cousin Bryant any sermon—so be easy. Come, Lawrence, Roland is ready, and Fidèle is all impatience,—so let’s be off. See, the shadows are shortening under the trees yonder.”

“Really, I’m ashamed to be so ungallant, mother dear,” said Lawrence. “I wish you would take the seat. I can walk very well half the way, at any rate.”

“Why, it’s a gentleman’s saddle!” exclaimed Eunice.

“Of course it is; but you used to sit your horse so firmly, when we were in the habit of riding together at B ——, mother dear, that that needn’t be a hindrance.”

But Mrs. Irvine persisted in refusing; so Lawrence was fain to mount himself, and head the procession, while Uncle Felix and his basket brought up the rear. Through a long, green lane they threaded their way, with Eunice and Josepha as pilots, till they came to “The Ruins,” as they were familiarly called,—a spot of varied and ro-

mantic beauty. — Hall had once been a place of no ordinary interest, and there were memories and associations linking it with ante-revolutionary days, that gave a charm to the remnants of the rude architecture. It had been destroyed many years before by fire, and now, over the crumbling and roofless walls, wild vines were clambering, and trailing their autumn-tinted foliage, like crimson banners, from the turreted chimney-tops.

It stood surrounded on one side by a grove of forest trees, and through the vistas that opened here and there, might be seen a picture of singular loveliness, framed in by a broken line of distant mountains. The ground sloped away into a pretty dale, spotted over by a browsing flock of sheep; and farther on, a well-worn path wandered through a stubble-field, and lost itself in a strip of yellow woods. Beyond them rose the river hills, brilliant with their many dyes, and stretching yet above them, towered aloft the purple chain on one hand, while on the other, nearer and but half visible through the flickering foliage, swelled the massive proportions of old “Castlehead,” an isolated mountain that loomed upon the landscape like some giant fortress.

After many and enthusiastic exclamations over the grandeur of the scenery, our party called a halt under the inviting shade of the oaks. Mrs. Irvine produced a little silver cup, the familiar companion of many a woodland walk, and dear to all her children and herself as a suggestive

link in memory's electric chain. Josepha would confess to no fatigue,—when do children ever get tired?—and so, while Uncle Felix trudged on, thinking that much of a walk 'wa'n't no circumstance,' she pleased herself with passing back and forth between a tiny spring that spouted at the root of an old oak, and the group under the trees, bearing to each a brimming cup of sparkling water.

Zilpha's fingers were fidgetty to be at work. So while the little Hebe's back was turned, and her attention occupied with her cup-bearing, out came sketch-book and pencil. The wavy mountain outline, the rolling hills, the meadow slope, the glade at their feet, the vine-covered walls, even to the flag-like tuft of creeper, the artistically-grouped fore-ground, all were quickly transferred by her skillful pencil to the page before her, in outlines that would not have disgraced Retsch himself. Mrs. Irvine sitting at the foot of a gnarled oak, with Eunice's elbow resting on her knee, her bonnet flung on the grass beside her; Josepha coming up the path, with the cup carefully balanced in her hand; Edith turning over the leaves of the book she had brought; Lawrence sitting sideways on his horse, talking to his mother, and Bryant just before her, tying up, with some dry stalks, the bunch of autumn flowers he had been gathering,—all were there, even down to Fidèle.

"A sight of it, if you please," demanded Bryant, as Zilpha closed her book; but she objected. He should see it when it was finished up.

"If you put us all in, your picture must look like a gipsy camp."

"Contrasts are the artist's delight, whether he draw with pencil or pen. Those calm mountains yonder, sleeping in the dim sun as silently as if an echo had never disturbed their solitudes, and those meadows with the haze hanging like a dream over them, require a foreground full of life."

"Then you put us all in?"

"Why shouldn't I?" Bryant did not answer her question; and when he spoke, it was to ask another.

"Do external aids help to make your memory's or mind's pictures any more vivid?"

"Yes; they refresh them greatly. I sometimes can reproduce on paper a scene, which, as a whole, my memory didn't seem to have possession of; but somehow, bit by bit, it comes to me as I draw. Of course, I must have it sketched somewhere, but so overlaid with other things, that not until I attempt to give outward expression to it, does it have any vividness for my mind's eye at all."

"Yet your pencil does nothing but stimulate the inward eye to concentrate itself upon the object. But pictures never do anything but tantalize me. Now your face, for instance,—why no artist in the world could paint it so true as the one that hangs up in my 'chamber of imagery.' So with the faces and scenes I love best to look at."

"I don't happen to have so much of the 'inner vision and

the faculty divine.' But see! they're beckoning us to come. The procession has received a marching signal from Josepha; so let us go."

Away they followed with the rest, down the green slope, over the rustic bars, along the path through the wheat field, until after skirting the woods for some time, they struck into them, and were soon within hearing of the babble of the brook that ran from the "Naiad's Spring," and in sight of the spring itself.

A palisade of rocks, piled high above the tallest forest trees, reared itself almost perpendicularly on one side, and in a dark recess at its base, hemmed in by a circular mason-work of nature's framing, welled the clear, cold waters. How broad the unruffled surface was, they could not determine; but as far as their sight could reach, the water stretched darkly away, and they caught murmurs as of a lapsing flow still further within. A bright, resistless stream poured itself from the spring over the rocks, with much such splashing and dashing as the water made "that came down from Lodore;" and after widening into a shallow lakelet, found its way more silently into the little river beyond.

Uncle Felix had hunted out as unincumbered a place as he could hit upon, for the carpet, which was already spread when the party came up, with the camp stools for Mrs. Irvine and Lawrence. Over the Arbor-vitæ shrubs that grew about the spot, the shawls were hung; and

that quick, bright look, begotten of tears, started into Mrs. Irvine's eyes, as was apt to be the case when a sudden pleasure came upon her, as she submitted to let herself be almost pulled into a seat by Eunice and Josepha ; so eager were they to have her look rested, while the older sisters did the same for Lawrence. The tired look of the latter reminded Bryant of the sherry he had been commissioned to take care of ; and he was in haste to call the magnificent wine-cooler into requisition, as he termed the spring. When the bottle had lain for awhile among the clean pebbles, they summoned the little cup-bearer to bring her goblet. Playfully she dropped on her knees on the carpet, as she presented it to her brother.

“ The Naiad of the fountain ! ” said Edith, smiling, as she pointed to the child.

“ Only,” said Lawrence, “ Pan does not grant his Naiads the guardianship of such ‘ blushful Hippocrenes ’ as furnish draughts like this. And now, mother dear,” he continued, as he took the cup from Josepha, and inclined his lithe, graceful form towards Mrs. Irvine, while a faint flush, kindled by a momentary enthusiasm, broke over his pale cheek,—“ let me pledge you in keeping with the classic associations Edith has been evoking. May the memory of your happiness to-day be like an Arethusa, stealing its way under the weight of years, and bubbling up for your refreshment in some far island of the future ! ”

“ Quite high-flown, sir,” exclaimed Bryant. “ Cousin

Mary, let's have a Juno-like response ; or, as you sit on a sort of tripod, we may expect something of the Pythoness order."

Mrs. Irvine only smiled, and kissed the forehead that was bent towards her. Perhaps the allusion to the future carried her mind too far forward : perhaps that sunny "island," to her thought, lay beyond the waters of death. But be that as it might, she did not allow the thought to darken the present gladness of the group around her, and forbade even the tell-tale eye to give any token of it.

"But I don't know what you mean," broke in Josepha, with a puzzled look. "Who is Arethusa?"

"Why, don't you remember Arethusa Robbins, who used to go to Miss Hays' school with us?" asked Eunice, giving Josepha's sleeve an admonitory pull. "We always called her 'Thusie :' but, brother Lawrie, you couldn't mean that you wanted anybody to be like her, for she was freckled, and had carrotty hair."

"So much for an interpretation of a classic allusion!" said Lawrence, laughing.

"A very natural and literal rendering, certainly," said Bryant.

The party seated themselves beside Mrs. Irvine, and wiled away some time in pleasant chat : but the children had no idea that that was the way to ruralize.

"Come, sister," whispered Josepha to Zilpha, "let's kindle the fire, and boil our water for the coffee : don't you see Uncle Felix has a great pile of dry sticks ready?"

“ Oh, not yet ! we are not quite in the humor yet for anything so substantial ; we want a little more of ‘ the flow of soul ! first.”

“ The flow of soul ! for my part I think the flow of coffee would be a great deal more sensible. There ! Uncle Felix has lighted the fire.”

“ You would never answer for ‘ Patience on a Monument,’ my child,” said her mother. “ Go then, you and Eunice, and have the water boiled—that will employ you for the present ;” and permission being granted, the two children were soon flitting about among the blue smoke, full of busy importance over the culinary preparations.

Great was their delight to find that Uncle Felix had a fishing-line in his pocket. A long, slender pole, cut with his jack-knife from a neighboring hickory, furnished an impromptu rod, and away the trio went, with Fidèle gyrating about them, down to the river-bank to catch some fish for their dinner. The old man was expert at the business, and soon a parcel of minnows were floundering on the grass beside them.

“ But how are we to cook them ? We have no gridiron,” asked Josepha, quite at a stand, as she watched the process of preparing the fish. But Uncle Felix was fertile in expedients. Gathering some of the broad leaves of the papaw, he wrapped the fish in them, and laid them beside the fire, (over which the little tin coffee-pot had been set,)

ready for broiling when the blazing sticks should have burnt down to a bed of coals.

"I don't wonder," began Edith, as she looked with an enjoying eye on all around her,—“I don't wonder much after all at the scheme that knot of English philosophers,¹ or rather poets of some fifty years since, had in their heads of emigrating to this new, unworn world, and establishing a literary colony here. It was a pretty fancy—pity it was a chimerical one.”

“The Bristol Poets' socialistic scheme, with the high-sounding name, do you mean?” asked Bryant.

“Yes; their ‘Pantosocracy,’ as they called it. I wouldn't say it was socialistic, though, in our modern, disagreeable sense of the word.”

“It was only intended to embrace a score or so of kindred souls, who were fretting under the old system of things in England, which there was no hope of changing, and who felt a feverish enthusiasm wholly at variance with the sluggish current of life around them.”

“You do well to call it feverish, Edith,” said her mother; “for I'm sure it was not a healthy state of mind.”

“Or perhaps it was nothing more than the over-flush of youth,” said Lawrence. “They got over it as they grew older, I believe.”

“Well, be that as it may. Doesn't the taste of wood-life we are enjoying to-day, suggest how delightful it would be to have a rustic cottage—a permanent home, some-

where hereabouts, away from the world and all its vexations, where we could do as we please, unrestrained by the trammels of society,—happy in God, and nature, and one another ?”

“But you only show one side of the picture, Edith—and that the sunny side,” said Zilpha. “Think of being kept within doors through long, bleak rains in these woods, or of being snowed up, all our store of books read, all our ideas mutually exchanged, no letters to come from distant friends, none of humanity’s demands upon our sympathies, nobody outside of our little circle to be kind to,—oh, we should grow miserably selfish and contracted in our ways of thinking !”

“He who made us, knows what system of things is best for us, and so He places us where there is necessity for this action and reaction upon each other. Much as I love almost everything Cowper wrote,” continued Mrs. Irvine, “I can’t at all echo his desire ‘for a lodge in some vast wilderness;’ but that was only the utterance of a momentary impulse, when he was sick of the ills men’s passions create ; for he knew men well enough to know that were they all to turn hermits, each would carry their own portion of deceit and wickedness shut within their own bosoms, and be as unlike as possible to the ‘Hermit’ Parnell speaks of,—

‘Prayer all his business, all his pleasure praise.’ ”

“ Yes, Cousin Mary, if they would all take to living like Saint Simon Stylites, they would fight with themselves in lack of other foes. And of course, Edith, if we all lived in a rustic cottage, it must be in a rustic way. No luxuries allowed to corrupt our simplicity ; no carpets, no sofas, no Epicurean dishes ; all Arcadian primitiveness—”

“ And no physicians within reach,” interrupted Lawrence ; “ no dainty preparations for morbid appetites ; none of the deliciousness of neighborly aid and sympathy when we were sick. Ah ! you see, my sister, what a mere poet’s fancy you harbor,—nothing feasible about it.”

“ But we should lead such temperate lives, so in harmony with all Nature’s requirements, that we should never get sick—no late, heavy dinners, no party-going, no turning of night into day. As to its making us selfish, the very fact of our mutual dependence would help to weed out what native selfishness was in us. Instead of growing contracted, we would feel the necessity of bringing forth all our treasures ; and as the mind is an unfailing spring, like this beside us, and not a reservoir, we need not fear its giving out. As to books and letters, it was far from the plan of the English ‘ Pantosocratists ’ to be without them. Their lives were to be pre-eminently devoted to literary pursuits, except so far as they would find it needful to labor, each one for his own family’s sustenance, which, in a rich soil, they fancied would be mere play. So, like them, we would have that sort of commu-

nication with the outer world, and have our letters, and our periodical invoice of new books, or write books ourselves."

"Write books ourselves!" exclaimed Lawrence. "Pray, what should *we* have to tell the world? Pliny, I remember, complains in one of his letters of the multitude of new poets that year had brought out. What would he think if he lived in these days, when books of poetry and prose flood the country so as positively to threaten it with inundation?"

"But to be serious," said Mrs. Irvine,—“you have need to be put into the heart of society, Edith, to eradicate your anchorite notions. Silverwood, I'm afraid, is not the place for you. God made us social beings, and we must not try to unmake ourselves. The old convent life you profess sometimes to have a hankering after, apart, of course, I understand you,” as Edith was about to interrupt her with an explanation, “apart from its superstitious religion—this convent life tended to uproot all human affections from the heart of woman. And it's the idlest fancy, too, to suppose that those sisterhoods didn't have constant jarrings and blickerings. I dare say even at the period of their greatest purity, they were the hot-beds of such strifes as private households know nothing of. So get rid of all these ideas, my daughter: I don't like to hear you advocate them even in sport.”

But the children had become impatient, and in answer

to Josepha's oft repeated shout that the water was boiling, Edith went to superintend the making of the coffee, while Zilpha and Eunice busied themselves in spreading out the contents of the basket. Bryant cleared the dead leaves from a flat rock, smoothed the white cloth over it, and amused them all with his awkward attempts at "laying the table." Soon everything was in readiness, and Josepha enjoyed to the utmost, the surprise occasioned by the sight of the dish of broiled minnows. The fragrance of the coffee and the savory smell of the fish, whetted all appetites, as they seated themselves around their "Arcadian table," as Bryant persisted in styling it.

"And now," said Mrs. Irvine, "before we begin, let us ask God's favor: we should acknowledge Him in our pleasures as well as elsewhere:"—and all heads were bowed, as with uplifted hand, Bryant invoked a blessing on their meal.

Not content with her own perfect satisfaction as to the unexceptionableness of everything, Josepha must have corroborating testimony from every lip; and she would hardly give them time to drink their coffee, with her continual questions, between each sip, about its goodness.

"And now, Uncle Felix, it's your turn," she called out, as her elders strolled away, after the meal was over, towards the river. "Come, I'll wait on you."

"La, Miss Josey, you'se powerful good; but I wants no white lady to 'tend to me. Jes' leave me and Fidèle to

us two selves. We'll save you de trouble of packin' up any of de eatins."

When they returned from their walk, all vestiges of the dinner had disappeared. The dishes were washed and put up, and Uncle Felix was just starting homeward with his basket. Only a faint curl of smoke floated up from the smouldering fire. They all sat down, and the book Edith had provided, was put into Mrs. Irvine's hand—"For you know, mother, none of us read so well,"—Zilpha had said, as she gave it to her. It was no modern volume, fresh from the press, and gay with flashy binding of blue and gilt; but a copy of the poet Gray's Letters, full of exquisite bits of description of English and Scottish scenery, and peculiarly fitted for open air reading. The fastidious author himself could not have asked a pleasanter or more appreciative rendering of his thoughts, than Mrs. Irvine's beautifully modulated tone and distinct utterance gave them; and so perfectly natural was her way of reading, that at times, one and another would look up, under the impression that she was introducing some remark or question of her own.

"But, my children," she said, as she closed the book after a prolonged reading, "the sun is a good deal to the west of us, and it's getting cool for you, Lawrence; so we had better turn our faces homeward."

"But let us have a little music before we go," plead

Zilpha. "Who can suggest a song suitable to the occasion?"

"Or a hymn," interposed Lawrence. "You all remember our home translation of that little Latin hymn of Francis Xavier; you've sung it with us at B——, Bryant, —

‘O! Deus, ego amo te!

Nec amo te ut salvas me’—

it's suitable for any or every occasion, Zilpha."

"Is it the one we used to sing so often on Sunday evenings at home—at B——, I mean?" asked Josepha—"the one beginning—

‘Oh! God, I love thee! not alone

That thou to me thy grace hast shown!’

Eunice and I both know that."

Sweetly the strains of the music floated out upon the autumn air, mingling with the rustle of the leaves above them, and the loud gurgle of the waters at their feet; and the plaintive echoes seemed still to linger, lost amid the mazes of the wood, as the party threaded the homeward path, and left the Naiad's Spring to its own lonely murmurings.

VIII.

Ant-Hills.

A FEW mornings after this, as Mrs. Irvine, Zilpha and Edith were sitting together, busy over some articles of the travellers' wardrobe, in anticipation of the approaching journey, the latter looked up from the sleeve of the dress on which her fingers were rather nervously arranging a fold—"Mother," she began, "has Bryant been telling you of his 'sober second thought' about going with Lawrence?"

"Yes; he mentioned something of the kind last night, but he was interrupted, and didn't finish what he had to say."

"In my place, does he mean?" asked Zilpha.

"Then he has not consulted you about it?" and Edith looked up from her sewing with more inquiry in her eye than in her voice.

"No. I supposed the matter settled as was first determined on. Bryant could not go without great inconven-

ience to himself and injury to his congregation. Besides, I don't see the necessity for it. Lawrence seems so revived within these few days, that we may hope much from the climate of Cuba, and I can't say I dread the responsibility greatly. Travelling is reduced to such a science now-a-days, that all a lady absolutely needs, is the mere show of protection, in the presence of a gentleman. Invalids have worn a sort of beaten track to the West Indies, and all we'll have to do, will be to follow on in it."

"You have a marvelously quiet way of getting through places where I should stick fast," said Edith, as she worked away with a less nervous twitching of her fingers. "The bare thought of starting out on such a journey, with only a sick brother to fall back upon, in case of any difficulty, quite takes away my breath. But we are so different in such respects. Your *physique*, somehow, is better adapted to the will that has it in control, than mine."

"If a thing is to be done," said Zilpha simply, "my plan is to proceed with the doing of it at once,—

'To do, or not to do,—that is the question,—'

and when it's settled, the less we worry ourselves parleying and hunting up difficulties, the easier for us."

"Now that's just where you fail, Edith," said her mother. Your judgment, when feeling has not knocked up a dust about it, so as to blind it, sees the bearings of a

point better, perhaps, than Zilpha's. But then you forget, often, what a curb feeling needs. You let it have the rein, and away it goes, like an unbroken colt, and your more sober judgment don't catch up with it till it has tired down its mettle somewhat. When you have the rein tight again, you are sure to regulate your pace to suit judgment's dictates. Zilpha don't let herself get run away with,—that's all."

"But, mother, I'm just as nature made me. I wish I had Zilpha's cooler way of accomplishing things. But a passionate, impulsive spirit ought not to be tried by the same standard as a self-contained, equable one."

"On that principle, my dear, none of us would be accountable for the errors into which our passions lead us. Our impulses toward evil are so constant and so strong, that life is one interminable struggle against them."

"I'm sure I can assent to that," said Zilpha.

"We all can,—at least all who try to stem the current of these inward tendencies."

"But it seems to me that I have more stemming and damming up to do than the rest of you," said Edith, half dejectedly.

"The greater volume of the current may give it more impetus."

"Ah! a salvo, mother, for the 'unbroken colt' on whose back you were putting me just now."

"Not at all, my child; but it strikes me we are wide

of the subject with which we started. All I mean further to say on this point is, that if it were clearly made out to you a case of *duty* to go with your brother, you *could* go, and you *would*."

"I don't know; I shrink from difficulties."

"I've no doubt there would be a deal of trouble in arguing down your feelings. They are very sophists, and can overwhelm reason with their eloquent talk; but in the end, it rises, like Gulliver among the Lilliputians, and snaps all the brittle threads with which they thought they had made it fast. But, as I was saying, we're off the matter in question. If either of you go with Lawrence, you, Zilpha, are the one best fitted. You don't lose your self-possession readily. Yet, if Bryant's presence would be a comfort to your brother, then he shall go too. Nothing within the compass of our ability must be spared to render *him* easy."

It was with a sort of choked voice Mrs. Irvine had uttered these last words; and she turned from her work, and while seeming to look out of the window, quietly brushed away a tear that had started to her eye.

"The going will be the most difficult," said Zilpha, not appearing to notice her mother's movement; "but after Cousin Bryant has seen us well under way, I don't doubt but that we shall get along admirably. As to his going, I'm persuaded Lawrence would be uncomfortable to think that his duties had been interfered with on his

account ; and this feeling alone might create a nervous restlessness that would injure him physically. And then as to the coming back,—why you see we'll know the way."

The coming back ! Edith tried to arrange her folds properly, but the furtive finger had to clear away the film from the unlifted eye, and Mrs. Irvine did not reply. She left the room after a little interval of silence,—for those two words, "coming back," had started mingled emotions of hope and fear to which she could not have given words. When she returned again, her face wore its usual bright look, as she laid a sprig of crimson leaves in Zilpha's lap, which she had gathered from the clematis on the porch ; and it was with a cheerful and steady voice she spoke of the gorgeous mountain-sides, reminding her, as she smilingly said, of the curiously mixed hues of a cashmere shawl.

The travellers' preparations progressed rapidly, and it was determined that at the end of a fortnight they should start. They had so recently come off a journey, that the continuance of it seemed all the easier. Eunice's superior age gave her a privilege she often availed herself of,—that of administering checks to Josepha's impatience over her sewing,—for there was so much that was novel and curious to engage the child's attention, that the tasks which were set her,—not for the assistance such little fingers

could render, but to keep her from habits of idleness, were often sadly irksome to her.

“I’ve been wondering,” she said, as she sat one day near the table at which her brother was writing, hemming listlessly at a pocket handkerchief, and receiving a suggestive poke occasionally, as a hint to be diligent, from Eunice, who was marking “L. I.” in cross-stitch on a white sock,—“I’ve been wondering how you’ll get along, brother Lawrie, in the West Indies. Cousin Barry has been asking me if I didn’t know they were named ‘Antilles’ by some traveller,—I forget who,—who thought they were more like *ant-hills* than anything else.”

“I shall have to disregard the Spanish proverb, then,” said Lawrence, smiling, as he looked up from his paper, “and always drink my glass of water in the sun. But pray don’t let us dwell on this feature of the climate.”

“But do you believe that was the way those islands got their name?”

“Bryant and you can settle that point. I’m not inclined to push investigations in that direction.”

“But even if there *are* ants and bugs of all kinds there,” pursued the persevering child, “there’s plenty of nice things, too. I’ve been reading all about the West Indies in my big Geography, and the fine fruits it tells about make my mouth water.”

“Yes, brother Lawrie,” said Eunice, “you’ll get so

used to oranges, and limes, and plantains, and bananas, that our common fruits will seem insipid to you when you come back."

"And you'll get plenty of guava-jelly, too. I wish I could go along, I like good things so much!" said Josepha, with a smack of her red lips.

"Be sea-sick and home-sick for the sake of guava-jelly! Why, Sepha, you're almost as bad as some of the old Romans, who used to go to one feast, and then go home and swallow an emetic, that they might be ready for another."

"That can't have been in any of the times I've been reading about," said Eunice, incredulously, whose present *penchant* was a devotion to Goldsmith's Rome; "and I've got down as far as Cincinnatus."

"Oh, pray Eunice, don't get on to those Roman hills! Why, brother Lawrie, she talks about them in her very sleep. Last night she was raving so about some '*queer knoll*' or other, that she wakened me, and I had to shake her to know what was the matter, and she said she was dreaming she was on—"

"The Quirinal, if you please," interrupted Eunice, laughing.

"Well, some hill or other in Rome; but for my part I think my 'Ant-hills' are a great deal more interresting. I want to know something more about them; so promise

me, brother Lawrie, that you'll write and tell me whether you really have to strain all the water you drink."

"You bid fair to become an entomologist, Sepha, I see; but yonder comes mother, and our sisters, and Bryant, from their walk. Let us go to meet them, and watch the sun sink behind Castlehead. You can think of me when I am in Cuba, as seeing it go down beneath the broad, blue ocean."

IX.

New-Found Friends.

“POOR Mr. Irvine !” exclaimed Mrs. Grant, who, with her two daughters, had been paying her respects to the family at Silverwood, and who paused in the midst of her exclamation, to return the graceful bow with which Bryant had handed them into their carriage. “Poor Mr. Irvine!” she repeated, pityingly ; “much use is there in *his* going to the Havana, or anywhere else for his health ! Why, he’s a walking ghost, with that white face, already.”

“But his sister has a marble sort of face, too, mamma—that one with the black hair, I mean ; and yet she don’t look like an invalid—so his want of color may be natural. How interesting his appearance is !—such large, half-mournful looking eyes, and something so sweet in his smile.”

“Smile !” interrupted Miss Lettuce Grant. “I saw no smile, nor heard scarcely a word. He’s much too motionless a piece of statuary for me.”

“Now *I* did, my dear,” said Mrs. Grant. “When he spoke to his mother, I couldn’t but notice the beautiful expression that came over his face, and that made my heart take to him at once. Our young men don’t expend their gallantry much that way, now-a-days. They keep their best manners, like their best coats, for going abroad with.”

“I confess his cousin, that young Mr. Woodruff, took my fancy a great deal more—something so cavalier-like in his whole bearing and appearance—quite my idea of a Spanish Don, with his brunette complexion, and raven hair, and flashing eyes—only he’s a clergyman; what a pity!”

“Don’t say so, my dear,” said Mrs. Grant. “For my part, I feel glad to think that one every way worthy, as he seems to be, should be willing to make this consecration of his gifts.”

“But the idea of such a man,—one who has so much refined courteousness and dignity, and yet easy suavity of manner,—such a tone of high-breeding, and, I suppose, mind and education to match,—the idea of such a one giving himself up, soul and body, to some rustic parish, for five hundred a year, as I dare say he does! What can he do with his ambitious feelings? He might become eminent as a statesman, for there’s that in him that could sway men.”

[“His ambition is to do good,” said the easy Mrs.

Grant, who, while she had pretty correct ideas herself, was content to let her daughters mould their own ; “ and I’ve no doubt his life will be a happier, more satisfactory one to himself, than if he had given it up to politics ; for I believe they’re the ruination of many of our young men.”

“ I can’t help thinking it’s a great waste of capital, notwithstanding, mamma, for such a man to enter the pulpit. Piety and zeal is all that is required for the plain, country people to whom he probably preaches. So there’s an over-plus of talents that might be turned to some other account.”

“ I think, Lettuce, you would not talk so, if you had a little more piety yourself.”

“ Well, perhaps so. But how did you like the young ladies, Sara ?”

“ Miss Irvine has very sweet, composed manners, I think, and such pretty, brown, bird-like eyes, that I quite envied them. As to the other one, she was too cold—too still ; indeed, she seemed rather unsocial.”

“ I’m sure she tried to entertain you,” said Mrs. Grant, apologetically ; “ but what should strangers, just meeting for the first time, have in common ?”

“ I reckon it was your own fault, Sara, for you know you generally wait to be entertained. Now, I got on admirably with her,” continued Miss Lettuce ; “ we did up the mountains, and the mists, and ‘the Ruins,’ and the

rainbow-hues of the autumn landscape, and the cool mornings and evenings, and sunny noons, and so on, and so on, to perfection."

"Just as if she hadn't seen all these for herself!"

"Oh! that's not it at all, Sara. Why, we don't say 'it's a beautiful day' to the friend we meet, because we think he can't find that out for himself—it's rather to awaken a mutual sympathy, by touching upon what we're both aware of. So much for my philosophy of small talk. You and the old lady seemed to get on finely too, mamma. Servants, happily, are a never-failing topic with housekeepers. You were in full cry, I perceived, when I gave you a hint to go."

"But she's not old," said Mrs. Grant, a little piqued. "She is younger than I am, I dare say; and what a quick, elastic step she has! Different enough from mine; but then she has not been fighting the rheumatism these ten years, as I have."

"With a son who don't look less than twenty-four, or thereabouts, she may honestly be reckoned in the category of old folks," said Miss Lettuce. "But no reflection in the world on you, mamma; you know we think *you* belong to the *genus Amaranthus*, and that you 'flourish in immortal youth.'"

"How did you find out that Mr. Woodruff was a cousin of the Irvines?" asked Miss Sara.

"I heard that pert little girl call him 'Cousin Barry.'"

“Now, *I* didn’t think she was pert,” said the kind Mrs. Grant. “She seemed like a very proper child, and only answered the questions you put to her.”

“Lettuce has a way of making children *appear* pert, whether they are or not,” said Miss Sara. “She takes too much notice of them. *My* way is to ignore their presence altogether.”

“That’s not the way to make them love you, my dear.”

“La, mamma, who cares for the love of children? I can’t bear them to be lolling on me, tumbling and disarranging my dress. I leave all that for Lettuce, and I’m sure she’s welcome to the consequences—silks stained with fruits, and crumpled collars, and spoiled pocket-handkerchiefs.”

“All true enough,” said Miss Lettuce; “but if they’re smart and saucy, I’m willing to pay the price for the amusement they afford me. I delight in impudent children, and if the little Irvine is’nt pert, I shan’t like her so well.”

“Poor Mr. Irvine!” reiterated Mrs. Grant, after she had been sitting silent for some time. “I wonder if a few bottles of that pure Catawba wine I had made four years ago, wouldn’t be nice for him to take with him on his journey. These foreign wines one can’t trust, they’re so full of trash.”

“Ah, yes. Let me beg Mrs. Irvine’s acceptance of it on

your part, mamma," said Miss Lettuce ; " you know you think me famous for my nicely turned periods in the note line ; so, by all means, let it be sent."

" Mother !" cried Josepha, running in breathlessly, the evening of this same day, from the lawn where she had been gathering some white and yellow fall chrysanthemums—" mother, there's a servant of Mrs. Grant's out here, and he has a champagne-basket on his arm, and he gave me this note," she added, thrusting a billet into Mrs. Irvine's hand. She opened the note and read it aloud for the benefit of the assembled circle :

" Mrs. Grant begs that Mrs. Irvine will do her the kindness to accept, on her son's behalf, a few bottles of very pure Catawba wine, of home manufacture, which she hopes may be of some service to him on his contemplated journey. The appeal which an invalid makes to the sensibility of a stranger's heart, must be Mrs. Grant's apology for assuming to herself thus much of the duties of commissariat."

" How kind," said Mrs. Irvine, with a glistening eye—" how kind these Milburne people are ! Yesterday you had a bag of game sent you from Grantley-holm, Lawrence ; and here is evidence of another stranger's interest in you. These people make us forget that we are not among old friends. How kind !"

X.

An Autumn Sermon.

It was a calm, sweet Sabbath morning,—the last Sabbath, indeed the last day, our travellers were to spend at home ; for all things were in readiness for their departure on the morrow. In solemn stillness—in a silence “breathless with adoration”—in an attitude expectant as that of a gentle child who bows with drooping head and veiled eyes before the father who is about to bestow his blessing,—so stood Nature, mutely, that autumn Sabbath, beneath the benediction of God !

Mrs. Grant did not forget, in her kind-heartedness, that all the family at Silverwood might not be provided with the means of getting to church ; so she had driven out of her way to take some of them up,—her daughters having determined upon a ride to a country church some few miles distant, at which they had heard Mr. Woodruff was to officiate. Zilpha and Eunice had taken advantage of Mrs. Grant’s offer ; Edith and Josepha went

in the little carriage with Bryant; while Lawrence and his mother were left to spend the morning alone.

Beautifully stood the antique, moss-grown church, almost hidden on its sloping knoll, among giant, white-branched sycamores, and stalwart oaks, and mountain ashes—the heroic remnants of the primeval forest, which, like the race whose council-fires they may have shaded, alone remained to give token of former glory. A stream of clear water crossed the road, just at the foot of the knoll on which this old structure, dating away back to colonial times, reared its venerable walls. A steep roof, with wide, projecting eaves, windows and doors scattered about with not much reference to symmetry, an outside covered stairway, all combined to make it a most quaint-looking pile. Around it,

“Where heaved the turf in many a mouldering heap,”

slept the past generations who had worshipped there; while an occasional mound of fresh clay, that contrasted strangely with those old graves, was interspersed among them. Grey, mossy slabs, wept upon many a year by the leaves drooping above, till their inscriptions were scarcely legible, were to be seen brightened now by a life singularly at variance with the tale of decay which they told; for little, merry-eyed children were sitting upon them, pulling away the long, dry grass from their sides, or blowing the down from the thistles that had thrust

themselves sturdily up among the neglected tombstones.

A few handsome carriages stood about among the trees, with comfortable-looking, shiny-faced drivers lolling lazily on their seats. Saddle-horses were picketed here and there, and groups of young people sat upon the logs that seemed to have been placed there for the purpose, exchanging neighborhood civilities and news. It was all rather a novel sight to Edith and Josepha; and as the latter caught the pleasant hum of conversation, and listened to the occasional outbreak of laughter, she turned whisperingly to her sister, and wondered if they "were talking Sunday talk."

Impish-looking little negro boys were playing pranks on one another, around the entrance to the covered stairway, and receiving, in return, sundry suggestive cuffs from an old "aunt" with a gay turban surmounted by a bonnet as venerable in appearance as herself. Josepha watched them with no small amusement, quite forgetful of the admonitions she had mentally been administering to the people about her a few moments before.

The Misses Grant, accompanied by a pair of attendant cavaliers, were not long in seeking out our little party. The gay Miss Lettuce, and the more stately Miss Sara, each in their own fashion, offered their quota of entertainment to Edith and Mr. Woodruff, while they were awaiting the assembling of the congregation; but neither of

the latter were in a mood to be amused by the piquant reminiscences of the old pastor, with which Miss Lettuce furnished them. He himself was soon seen approaching; and, after his innumerable greetings had been gone through with—a ceremony, however, which occupied no little time—Mr. Woodruff and he took their seats in the pulpit, at which signal the knots of talkers broke up; the congregation poured in through the several doors, and and the stairway echoed with the heavy tramp of the servants that crowded up it.

High-backed pews, guiltless of paint or varnish, but time-stained to the richness of a “Vandyke brown,” almost hid the worshippers, whose heads only were visible in their quaint recesses. But the invocation went up just as acceptably as if it had ascended through fretted roof; and the holy psalm, though sung for the most part by untrained voices, was not therefore the less sweet, as the wind caught up its lingering notes, and whispered them over again among the swaying tree-tops. The silent congregation listened reverently to the message which the young stranger had to convey to them. Occasionally, their attention was diverted by the passing round of the grizzly-headed black sexton, with a tin-handled, tin-bound cocoa-nut ladle of water, which ever and anon he replenished from the brass-hooped, wooden pail that stood on the bench beneath the pulpit. Once, Josepha’s risibilities were severely tried, as a little child, who

was likely to be overlooked in the general watering, cried out, at the top of its voice,—“Me, too, Uncle Jake!—me, too!” Moreover, the perfect nonchalance with which a little girl would now and then walk up to the water-pail, and supply her wants for herself, was quite astonishing to one whose ideas of church decorum forbade the unclosing of the pew door till the service was over.

Edith thought she had never rightly appreciated, before, the exceeding beauty, and eloquence, and poetry of the chapter which Bryant read from the Prophet Isaiah; and she wondered more and more, why clergymen should give so little attention to the cultivation of the art of fine reading. She remembered that the greatest actress of her own, or perhaps any age, never felt prepared to render, with perfect expression, and with satisfaction to herself, her favorite character in Shakspeare, without a fresh reading and study of it before every representation. And why, she thought to herself, why should those who ought to seek to give a grander rendering^{*}, if possible, to the infinitely more rapt and eloquent apostrophes of Scripture, content themselves to slur them over in a slovenly way, and in a monotonous tone, that, so far as they can, do away with any effect whatsoever. Not so did her cousin do his part. He added not a word of explanation or comment; and yet, as he read, a new meaning burned along the sacred page. The fire of a fervid, chastened rhetoric glowed beneath the crucible that held the

divine truth, and it flowed forth like a stream of molten gold. How many a sermon had she heard that had failed to convey any such impression as the simple, but masterly *rendering*—for it was more than mere reading—of that beautiful chapter!

“We all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away,” was the appropriate text for that autumn Sabbath morning.

“—We *all* do fade,” continued the young minister, after he had brought the more didactic part of his sermon to a close. “From the morning in which Adam passed out of the gates of Paradise, with Eve’s hand, trembling under the new consciousness of sin, within his own, to the rising of this day’s sun, that must have slanted its beams for the first time, across the short mound I see through yonder open door, fresh with the up-turned sod of yesterday,—‘we *all* do fade.’ Earth’s surface is furrowed with graves—earth’s soil is rich with the spoils of humanity. Life’s battle-ground, broad as the world, where myriads of hearts have bled, and struggled, and suffered, and conquered, and perished,—is no less a battle-ground, because the ease and comfort, and provision of the present, like the waving corn that nods over the sod where nations have striven, and where every hand breadth of turf covers a grave, hides the fact, the unrealized fact, from our vision. It is not only where we have the strife of the warrior, ‘the confused noise, the garments rolled in

blood,'—that the wasting goes on: it is not only in the populous city, amid whose heats, and poverty, and wretchedness, disease finds ready food: it is not only on the wide deep, whose gaping jaws swallow down the frantic crowd with the death-shriek on their lips: it is not only along life's worn highways, where the weary travellers faint and fail under their heavy burdens;—but in the most secluded by-paths, along 'the cool sequestered vales,' beside the rural hearth, in the forest home, in the loneliest hut of the wilderness,—goes on, just as steadily, resistlessly, and surely, this inevitable, inexorable fading away. I see it on the brow of that child before me; I feel it,—nature's own instinct,—in the needed relaxation of these vigorous muscles:"—and the speaker clenched his hands tightly, and flung wide his arms, and dilated his tall figure, till, to his audience, it seemed an impersonation of manly strength and beauty, untouched by a suspicion of decay. "I am taught it by those silver hairs," he continued,—“that tottering step,—this bended form,—those funeral weeds,—these time-worn thresholds, over which have passed generations of feet that shall cross them no more! Yea, 'we *all* do fade.' ”

“‘As a leaf.’ There was a time,—creation's sinless morning-time,—when, through all the solitudes of earth's mighty forests,—among all its myriads upon myriads of whispering trees—not a stain, not a speck of decay dark-

ened upon the most hidden leaf. But the frost of sin breathed over the world, and lo! the change! Canker-spots overspread the fair green,—the notched edges shrivel,—the foot-stalk grows sickly,—its hold on the parent stem loosens, and gives way,—it is whirled upon the bosom of some turbid stream, or blown out of the sight of day into some rocky crevice. And thus, in unfailing succession, nature's and humanity's leaf-fall have kept pace, from the moment of sin's first blight, to the trembling flutter of the sear foliage of to-day, over the fresh graves yonder.

“See!”—he exclaimed, pointing to a withered leaf that rustled along the floor of the aisle—“thus ‘our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away!’ Look at that helpless thing!”—and he leaned over the pulpit with his eye earnestly watching it; “look at it in the invisible grasp that is hurrying it hither and thither, lifting and tossing it at its will, dashing it down, and sweeping it at length away into some mouldy nook, to lie forgotten forever! What innate power is there here,”—he still pointed to the whirling leaf, and every eye followed the guidance of his finger,—“to resist the mighty impulse that can rock these deep-rooted oaks? Just so much, ah! helpless heart! as *thou* hast, to struggle, unaided, against thine own tempestuous passions and sins, that ‘as the wind, have taken thee away!’ But the wind may be hushed. There is One who ‘holds it in His fist,’ who can

say to it—‘Peace! be still!’ There is One who has struggled through a life of toil, of obedience, of humiliation, of agony, even to death, that He might win the right to stay that rough wind, to turn its fury against his own bosom, to gather up the broken leaf, and renew its blasted powers, and make it bright with immortality, and bind it into the chaplet that shall encircle the brow that once ached under the pressure of the thorns. Ye *must* fall, for *all* have shared the blight of sin. What will ye, friends? Shall Jesus snatch you from the clutch of the destroying whirlwind, and graft you on to the tree of righteousness, from whose leaves He is to weave His crown?”

“—Mr. Woodruff’s sermon was admirably suited to a rural audience,” remarked Miss Lettuce Grant to Edith, whose heart still vibrated under the pathetic tone of the closing question, as they passed from the church—“such apt illustration,—so naturally suggested by the falling leaves, and all that. Pretty conceit that of the chaplet. I felt as if I had my hands full of red, maple leaves, and was tying them together with withered tufts of grass.”

Edith did not reply for a moment. She was thinking of the further illustration the volatile girl beside her was furnishing—of the empty puffs of vanity that would be likely to sweep away all the salutary impressions which the sermon was calculated to make. “Will it do no more good than this?” she sighed to herself; but, just then, she

saw an old negro stoop and pick up a withered leaf, that was whirling along the path before him, and ponder it as if it had been a printed page, while he held it spread upon his open palm. There was something to encourage her in the simple action. That narrow mind had perhaps accepted and understood the lesson which had escaped the refined and educated, but thoughtless listener at her side.

“Cousin Bryant,” said Edith, as once again seated in the little carriage, the trio pursued their way homeward—“you cannot know how your words, about the withering leaves, went home to my heart, Lawrence is so like one. See, for example, those crimson gums and yellow hickories, how much more beautiful they are than before they were touched by the frost. So my brother seems: there is a spiritual light and loveliness, at times, about his smile, that pierces me like a dart.”

“Hope for the best, Edith: the trees you are pointing out, will all be covered with their healthy green next spring.”

“Ah! that is just such comfort as our Saviour offered to Martha, and I ought to be content with it; but I want the present assurance she craved; I want the leaves green *now*.”

“That must be as God chooses. He went beyond Martha’s expectations; He may do the same for you; He can heal the stain of decay, and, if He see best, let us

rest assured He will. ‘Shall not the Judge of all the earth do *right*?’ What could be fuller of consolatory truth, than such an appeal? It surely ought to be a pillow for the most aching head. Can you not find repose for yours on it?”

“Yes—at times, perfect: even a repose that has joy in it; and then I can echo Madame Guyon’s feeling—

‘Wishing fits not my condition,—
Acquiescence suits me best.’

“But the mood changes again: the tempest of distrust rises in my heart, and my anchor-hold of that truth is loosened. What it seemed easy to say in the calm, are but idle words in the storm.”

“But if you would only remember who is at the helm, and even when you could not see, stretch your hand of faith through the darkness, and find it met by that of the unerring Pilot—”

“Yes—if I could always do this, and feel this; but unquestioning submission—how hard it is!”

Lawrence and his mother has passed a sweet, sad Sabbath together. They had gathered and laid up a store of mutual memories, which were to be the honeyed hive from whence to draw comfort in the hours of separation or disappointment that were before them. They had held converse, such as is not often held this side heaven, for they were so soon to part. This darling son, this eldest

born, this prop on which, through her years of widowhood, this mother had learned to lean, was to be taken away for a time, whether to be returned to her as her earthly support still, she could not know. And he, the loving, confiding, yet reserved youth, who shrank to a fault, from intimate companionship with those of his own sex and age, as if nothing less than woman's delicacy and purity would satisfy his refined nature; who had turned from very boyhood to his mother for so much of heart-support as the human can give—with what an aching fullness of reverence, and trust and devotion, he had laid his head on the lap that had pillowed it in infancy, none who sat round the parlor fire that night, knew. The sacredness of those innermost feelings was not marred by what would have been at best but a stammering and inadequate utterance of them. Rather did he prefer to lie silent and apparently emotionless on the sofa, where his mother sat scarcely less silent than himself, threading her fingers through his long locks of auburn hair.

At the hour for evening prayers, even Zilpha's sweet and serene composure almost forsook her for a moment, as her brother begged that, although it was Sabbath evening, she would open the piano, and accompany their hymn with a particular air he designated. At first her fingers glided tremulously over the keys, but she very quickly mastered her emotion, and, in a rich, clear voice, assisted, however, only by Bryant and the children, sang the verses for which Lawrence had asked :

THE SYMPATHY OF JESUS.

The sympathy of Jesus !—who
That ever sobbed one sorrowing moan
On some kind bosom, fondly true, —
Some human bosom, like our own,
And felt how much those lips, close prest,
That hand close-clasped, could calm our fears—
Can turn to His far tenderer breast,
Without a gush of thankful tears !

The earthly heart on which we lean
May have its separate griefs to bear ;
Griefs, though unspoken and unseen,
Yet rankling all the deeper there.
Its faltering strength may scarce sustain
The torture of its own distress ;
And still we add our burdening pain,
Unconscious how the weight may press.

But He whose human feet have trod
Earth's hills and valleys,—He who knew
No sympathy but that of God,
Though linked with all that craved it, too—
Knows all our yearning, all our need,
Yet strong to bear our utmost smart,—
He loves to feel the throbbing head
Close laid against His pitying heart.

To think that on the throne of thrones,
He wears our lowly nature still !
To think that midst the loftiest tones
That through the eternal mansions thrill,

Earth's humblest pleader He will hear,
Though only tears his anguish tell ;
That sobbing voice falls on his ear
More sweet than Gabriel's ever fell !

Then, sorrowing spirit ! take the grief
Thou ne'er to mortal couldst disclose,
And He will give thee sure relief,
Touched with the feeling of thy woes ;
And thou shalt understand how sweet,
How filled with more than human bliss—
How dear—how tender—how complete
The sympathy of Jesus is !

Bryant read the fourteenth chapter of John's gospel—a favorite passage, he knew, of Mrs. Irvine's ; and as his full, musical tones lingered over those beautiful words,—“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you : not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid,”—a heavenly calm diffused itself over every one present. The touching remonstrance of the suffering Saviour had never come with more pleading pathos to their souls ; and as, in his closing prayer, Bryant repeated the sacred words—“*we will not* let our hearts be troubled, beloved Redeemer !—*we will not* let them be afraid”—each kneeler inwardly responded, “amen !”

XI.

The New Governess and her Pupils.

THE travelling carriage was at the door ; the early breakfast was over ; Zilpha was bonneted and shawled ; and Mrs. Irvine was, for the dozenth time, arranging Lawrence's muffler about his throat and breast, and reiterating her counsels to take every possible care of himself, with a voice that strove its utmost to be clear and steady. Edith could not trust herself to look fully at her brother and sister ; and she nervously occupied herself in selecting from a pile that lay upon the table, such "magazines" and "reviews" as might furnish them with agreeable wayside reading. The children were flitting about the carriage, making all comfortable, packing away the wrappings and carpet-bags which Uncle Felix had tumbled in, without much reference to the convenience of the travellers.

"What's this in the carriage pocket?" asked Josepha, thrusting her hand as she spoke, into its depths, and

bringing up a brown paper package, tied with a white woolen string.

"Why, Miss Josey, you see," began Uncle Felix, in a deprecating tone, "I thought Mas' Lawrence moughtn't 'ject to a few 'simmons, jes' to eat on de road, like. Dey's mighty nice now; de frost's took all de bitter out of 'em. I mind ole Mas' Henry, your pa', used to say dey was enough better nor yer boughten figs."

"And what's in this other pocket?"

"Oh, jes' a few red-cheeked apples I got at Mas' Sam. Roberts' yisterday, when I went to see my ole woman: she's cook dere, you know. I 'spected, maybe, Miss Zilphy would like some of 'em."

"Well, Aunt Rose," asked Eunice, as the old cook made her appearance from behind the corner of the house, "what have you got in that little calico bag?"

"Dey's some blackberries I dried in de summer; and I allers heerd dey's so oncommon good for folks as is got weak stomachs, like poor Mas' Lawrence. Jes' slip 'em in somewhere; dey won't take much room, honey," she said, handing them up to Josepha.

"But, indeed, Aunt Rose, there'll be so much to carry. When they get on the cars, they'll be sure to lose some of the things. See; here are Daphne's chestnuts, too."

"La, Miss Josey," said Daphne, "Miss Zilphy and Mas' Bryant can eat 'em clean up befo' dey gits to de cars. And dese flowers, dey wont take up no room at all 'most.

Dey's de very las' in de garden. Please 'stick 'em up somewhere. It'll be mighty easy to throw 'em away when dey withers."

"Can't *you* bring something, too, Homer?" inquired Josepha, jestingly, of a little negro boy—Aunt Rose's son, who was swinging on the trunk-rack. Homer, understanding the question as a hint for him to furnish his quota, scampered off as fast as his bare feet would carry him, and in a little time returned with a rimless straw hat, which he held up to the carriage window.

"Here be some wa'nuts, Miss Josey: aint got nuffin' better."

Josepha laughed, and told him he should keep them, and crack them for himself; that they would not be good for his Master Lawrence.

The partings in the parlor were over; and Lawrence, pale, but externally calm, shook hands silently with the servants, and, stepping into the carriage, flung his arms around his little sister, and kissed her over and over again with an emotion very unusual in him. The pent-up feeling would have way, and upon her it expended itself. As Uncle Felix lifted her to the ground, there were tears even on that sunny cheek, which was rarely known to own any acquaintance with sorrow. While Zilpha and Edith were exchanging some last words, Mrs. Irvine could not forbear one more look, one more embrace, as she rested upon the carriage steps, and with another fervent

"God bless you, my darling son!" reached forward, and, sobbing, held him to her bosom.

Ah! what tears we shed—what anguish we endure—what heart-rendings we experience,—all, through our inability to look into the dim future! We smile in our partings sometimes, when the lifting of the veil shows us we should have wept; and again we weep, when, had we but known the issue, we would have smiled. Yet, God be blessed for this close curtaining of the future! Of what a double agony does it spare us the endurance—the agony of watching the sure and steady coming of the dreaded evil, heightened and intensified by long anticipation, superadded to a certainty terrible and inexorable as death! And of what a zest would it rob our joy!—No pleasures multiplied by being unlooked for—no delight that had not lost all its purple bloom by being turned a thousand times over in the mind—no rapture whose draught had not been diminished by many prelibations!

Edith was the last one to whom Bryant said farewell. He pressed her trembling hand between both of his; looked with gentle sympathy upon the averted face, so full of grief; and then, passing his arm about her in a momentary embrace—as was his kinsman's privilege—stepped into the carriage, gave the signal to the driver, and they were gone.

Poor Edith! As she laid her hand caressingly that night upon her sister's deserted pillow, she did not forget

to think over his kind good-bye. It is so sweet to believe in our fellow-creatures' affection ; so she put away among her heart's private treasures, that bit of tender memory.

The occupation of the mind and the hands with present duty, Mrs. Irvine had always inculcated, as one of the best safe-guards and protections against the ingress of sorrowful thoughts. "There is," she was accustomed to say, in her aphoristic way—and her own happy Christian philosophy spared her many an hour of anxiety and ennui—"there is some task set for every moment's performance. We cannot do to-morrow the duties of the wasted to-day ; for to-morrow's hours are filled with their own requirements. We cannot eat nor sleep for to-morrow, without a protest from nature for the transgression of her laws. Sufficient unto each day is the good and the evil thereof." And when Edith (for Zilpha was not prone to do it) would sometimes allude regretfully to the past, and to the delightful home at B —, which had been so suddenly swept from them—to the ease and even luxury of her mother's early years—to her native taste for society, her peculiar fitness for it, and her large sympathies, that required something more than their present limited range for their outgoing : contrasting all this with the sombre aspect of Silverwood—the absence of many comforts to which they had always been accustomed—and above all, the now broken family circle—how cheerfully would Mrs. Irvine put all these regrets by,

with the simple repetition of the noble exclamation of Job : " What ! shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil !" or, with the familiar lines of the old poet :

" My mind to me a kingdom is,
Such perfect joy therein I find,
As far exceeds all earthly bliss
That God or Nature hath assigned :
Though much I want, that most would have,
Yet still my mind forbids to crave."

And so she did not sit down with folded hands, in the now lonely home, going back in the indulgence of a seductive grief, to him who had been the sunlight of her heart, who had made the walls around her echo to his boyhood's mirth, or dwelling with the minuteness in which sorrow revels, on the solitary death-bed in that very chamber, where, because it *was* his death-chamber, she loved the better to lie ; nor did she weary and sicken her spirit, and waste its resources, by studying over and over again the shadows that had been gathering one by one above the home-picture, which, but a few months before, poor Lawrence had been rejoicing in as so bright. The altered circumstances of the family rendered exertion necessary, and the fingers, whose delicacy might once have shrunk from the scarce lady-like occupation, now plied the busy needle as she bent over some coarse garment for Uncle Felix, or Homer. The smile of hopeful endurance was

still over her face ; the expression of unquestioning acquiescence ever upon her lips.

“ It grieves me, my daughter,” she said one day to Edith, who, since the departure of the travellers, had drooped sadly ; “ it grieves me that you should give way to depression, and lose your interest in what is around you. Do you know you worried me this morning, when Mr. and Mrs. Garrett were making their visit here, by your monosyllabic replies to their remarks ? ”

“ I’m very sorry I should have done so, mother ; but one can’t feel interested just at once in perfect strangers. Their visit was a sort of matter-of-course, because we are henceforth to be included in the society of Milburne.”

“ It is a happier thing, even for ourselves, always to put the best construction on the actions of people that they will bear. Now, I prefer to believe that Mr. and Mrs. Garrett were actuated by more than mere politeness and regard to the rules of society, in coming to see us. I think *kindness* made them do it.”

“ Well, I dare say you are right, mother ; you always are. Forgive me that I gave you a moment’s annoyance, and I’ll try and err in this way no more. From experience, I know that employment is one of the very best medicines for the mind.”

“ Yes ; the curse pronounced on Adam has always seemed to me, in our restless and sinful condition, a dis-

guised blessing. How men's passions would prey on themselves, and on each other, if they were not compelled in the sweat of their brows to earn their bread!"

"Well, then, as to regular occupation, mother, Eunice and Josepha have been running wild, as far as studies are concerned——"

"I think you must do Eunice the justice to allow that her devotion to Roman history has been pretty steady. Why, I found the child absorbed in the pages of Arnold this morning."

"Yes, mere reading; but study is a different thing, and neither of them have looked into a book for that purpose since we left home. You see, mother, I can't think *this* is home. With that word, my thoughts always go back to B ——."

"And yet how kindly we have been received here! Remember Mrs. Grant's wine, and Mrs. Grantley's partidges, and the ready-dressed dinner sent all the way from the parsonage, the first day we came out here, and that good Miss Sparrowhawk's hot breakfast-rolls."

"Yes, yes—I love them all for it. I never saw any one, though, whom little charities touched as they do you, mother; and yet how small they are in your own eyes when you happen to be the bestower, instead of the receiver. But as to the children: suppose I take the place Miss Perkins used to fill for them at B ——, and be their governess henceforth."

“ I should be gratified to see you do it, my dear, if the confinement wouldn’t weary you.”

“ Nothing of the kind. It will give zest to the employment, too, to think of being useful, and of sparing you expense—a matter certainly to be thought of now.”

Accordingly, school-books were hunted up; what remained of the library, saved from the fire, was searched for proper manuals, and they were forthcoming, notwithstanding Josepha’s secret wish that a good proportion might have been consumed. Eunice’s devotion to Cincinnatus and Fabius had to yield to what she thought not half so interesting; and Josepha confided to Uncle Felix the unwilling permission, that “ he might as well let Homer know where all the hens’ nests were in the barn, as she expected she would have no more time for hunting eggs.”

“ Don’t you wish, Eunice,” she said one day to her sister, as they sat together in the little dressing-closet attached to Mrs. Irvine’s chamber, which was now dignified with the title of school-room—“ don’t you wish all the books had been drowned in the deluge ?”

“ You foolish child !” exclaimed Eunice, who greatly plumed herself on her superior knowledge—“ why there were no books then !”

“ Weren’t there though ? Those must have been grand times to live in !”

“ You don’t like two rainy days to come together now,—

how would you have fancied a hundred and fifty, without a sight of the ground?"

"Oh! I'd have been safe in the ark: and then all those animals, so tame, and beautiful! I can play with Fidèle by the hour, and I never get tired of seeing menageries, and that would have been like being in a mighty fine one all the time."

"Yes—you'd have been sure of being in the ark," said Eunice, teasingly—"you were always so good!"

"Certainly I am! But, anyhow, now, don't you envy Homer and Silvy? They needn't trouble their heads about lessons, only to spell a little to Edith every day, and hear her read Bible stories on Sundays."

"I expect that's as hard for them as geography, and arithmetic, and grammar are for you."

"Oh! nonsense, Eunice. Just as if spelling wasn't the easiest thing in the world. They wouldn't be so happy if it was as hard as my lessons are."

"And don't you think they envy you sometimes, when they are carrying in wood, or scouring knives, or feeding the chickens?"

"That's just fun."

"*They* don't call it fun. Besides, you wouldn't like to grow up without knowing anything—mother, and brother Lawrence, and all of us would feel so ashamed of you."

"Oh! ho! my smart young lady! you think you

know such a powerful sight about those old dead Romans that never did anything, from your accounts, but fight with each other, or their neighbors, all the time, that you can crow over me."

"I expect *you* could crow a great deal better than *I* could," said Eunice, laughing. "You've been taking lessons in the poultry yard longer."

"Well, anyhow, I allow to know as much as you do, some day; only this poking over books! I wish there was some other way to get knowledge into a body's head. It's so much pleasanter scrambling among the apple trees in the orchard for mellow apples, or hunting eggs, or taking Homer and Silvy out to the woods yonder, to thrash the chestnut trees, and open the burs for me. Uncle Felix says he's thankful people can get to Heaven without knowing how to read; for if they couldn't, he's afraid he'd never be there."

A day or two after this, Edith called upon her pupils for the compositions she had directed them to prepare. Eunice came promptly at her bidding, and read the child-like, straight-forward narrative of Corolianus, which she had written, and received her sister's commendation accordingly. Josepha was then applied to for hers. "I haven't got any written," she said, with her finger in her mouth.

"And why not?"

"I couldn't find a subject."

"But I gave you one: you know I don't approve of your choosing for yourself."

"I hadn't enough to say about that to make a composition of. Nothing happened in the walk you told me to describe, worth telling."

"What did happen? Just refresh my memory with the circumstances of it."

"Well—mother said it was such a pretty, sunny afternoon, that we had better not lose it by staying in the house; so we all started down the lane behind the orchard. We stopped at the spring near the foot of the hill, to get a drink, for I never forget the silver cup. Eunice called us all to come and look at a great speckled toad that had been helping itself to a drink, too, I suppose, and it made us all laugh to see how it blinked its eyes, and looked up at us, just as much as to say—'And what do you want with me?' Mother said she wondered why Shakspeare, —wasn't that the name, Eunice?"

"Yes—she said Shakspeare called them 'ugly and venomous.'"

"Well—she wondered what he did it for, because, for her part, she thought them the most innocent, harmless-looking things in the world. And then you said something, Edith, about its carrying a 'precious jewel in its head.' I reckon you meant its eyes, for they were as bright as the diamond in mother's ring. So when we had watched the toad long enough to satisfy our curiosity,

we went through the bars, and along the path across the clover-field. We stopped again to knock some stunted apples from the old trees there, and thought they tasted right good. I think everything tastes better out of doors. I wonder what can be the reason. Well, when we came to 'the Ruins,' mother and you sat down on an old log, and Eunice and I hunted moss to make footstools for you. After we were all seated, mother said we would have the letter over again; for being there, made her think so of that day we had our pic-nic, and she took it out of her pocket—sister's letter, I mean, and read it out loud. It told how nicely they had got on the day they went away; how little tired brother Lawrie was with the long ride, and how kind Cousin Barry had been, and how he said he *would* go all the way to Charleston with them, and see them safe on the ship. After that, we talked awhile about them, and then you took out a book that had some mighty pretty stories in it about fish and fishing. I wouldn't care if all the books you carry along when we walk, were like that. I forget what you called it."

"Izaak Walton," suggested Eunice.

"Mother read some in it to us," proceeded Josepha, quite spiritedly. "I remember he told how to cook perch; and such a funny way as it was! He said it must be dressed with some particular kind of wine, and then it was so nice,—it was fit only for a good Christian. You read a

pretty song out of the book, too—"Come live with me, and be my love,"—that was one of the lines in it. Then we all went down the hill to that deep place, where the rocks have given way so much under ground, that the tops of some of the trees that are growing down there, though they are right tall, are almost even with our heads. We thought there must be water at the bottom; and though mother told us we were venturesome little bodies, Eunice and I went down. The sides were very steep. We had to hold on by the bushes, to keep ourselves from slipping; but there was no water there, only we could hear a strange noise away under the rocks, like the noise Willoughby Creek used to make, not far from our other home, running over the stones. Eunice began to talk about snakes, and I got frightened, and we both scrambled up faster than we went down. By this time it was near sun-set, so we turned about and went home."

"Why did you tell me you could not *write* a composition about our walk?" asked Edith. "You have *talked* one to me."

"*That* wasn't worth writing," exclaimed Josepha, with a look of some contempt. "I *did* write seven lines on '*Love of Country*,' but I couldn't get on any further; then I tried '*Education*,' but that wasn't much better—I could only make eleven lines and a half about that."

"Well, my dear," said Edith, smiling; "I'll just repeat to you the advice which a great writer, who wrote

many books, and wrote them better than most people, gives on this subject. He says nothing is so easy as to *say* what we see, if we will only not be thinking all the while *how* we say it, but whether we are making ourselves *entirely* and *exactly* understood. The next time you have a composition to write, just try and fancy yourself talking to me, and write as you have talked in giving me your description of this walk. You have mother's promise, I believe, to go this afternoon in the little wagon with Uncle Felix, when he goes to the mill for meal. Now, let me see if you can't make your pen *talk* an account of Eunice's and your trip—both what was, and what was *not* worth the telling."

XII.

On the Wing.

“HERE we are at length,” ran a letter received from Zilpha about a fortnight after this, and Mrs. Irvine proceeded, with a breathless hurriedness, that made it necessary for her to pause every little moment, as she tried to read aloud to her no less eager listeners; “here, in this quaint, charming, foreign-looking city, and I lose no time, my dearest mother—my beloved Edith, and Eunice, and Sepha, for you are around me as I write—in relieving your anxieties about your wanderers. Lawrence—yes, your very first question is about him. Well, here he sits beside me, looking over the ‘Mercury,’ and seeming brighter, fresher, more elastic, than I have seen him for months.”

Mrs. Irvine could not clearly make out the next line, and her voice was husky as she tried to read on. “Oh, I am so thankful!” exclaimed Edith, pressing her hands together, and drawing a full inspiration, as if a heavy

burden were lifted from her breast. Mrs. Irvine fairly put down the letter for a moment.

There is a point where joy and sorrow seem to touch, like the meeting of the glad, transparent sky, and the dark, sullen ocean; and in the poverty of human utterance, they have then but one common expression—that of tears. The same, and yet how different! In the one case, a bitter, briny flood poured from the tempest-tossed sea that rolls over the suffering soul; in the other, sparkling, purified exhalations, which, beneath the outbursting sunshine of hope, span the heart with a bow of brightness and beauty!

But the cloud passed from Mrs. Irvine's eyes, leaving a lustre behind, like "the clear shining after rain." She went on with the letter:

"As you read, you will join your thanksgiving with those that flow out while I write to the kind, loving Father above, who has folded His hand no less tenderly about us migratory birds on the wing, than over you in the quiet nest of home. We went round by sea from W —, and although we had rather rough weather, and were befogged a day, we experienced less inconvenience than you would have supposed. I see now the wisdom of Cousin Bryant coming with us thus far. He has spoiled us somewhat, I'm afraid, for the rest of our journey, by anticipating every want so completely, that we have been spared the exertion of a thought. When

he touched me this morning, as I lay on a sofa in the saloon of the steamer, where I had passed the night, I looked round in the grey light for Lawrence, who was nowhere visible. 'I wanted your nap to be as long as possible, and so wouldn't waken you sooner; but tie on your bonnet, and gather up your wrappings. Lawrence is stowed away with the baggage, in a carriage on the wharf;' and before I was fairly awake, I found myself at his side, whirling away through the streets of Charleston to the —— Hotel, where we are now most comfortably lodged. Lawrence has just dropped his 'Mercury,' and, with an air of wonderful satisfaction, is counting over, on his fingers, the items of his breakfast. For Josepha's information, I must not forget to say, that he refused to touch a morsel of what he fancied could not possibly be very dainty, cooked in a cabin kitchen about as extensive as Aunt Rose's hearth; so he contented himself with crackers soaked in some of Mrs. Grant's wine. By the way, remind that good lady of the comfort it was to him. But there he sits, counting his fingers. *Thumb*—coffee—genuine Mocha, he avers—none of your figure of speech, or poetical license for the beverage in general. *Fore-finger*—Indian 'egg-bread,' most golden-hued and delightful, with butter as *solid* (by no means a *Southern* characteristic, he thinks) as if it had been churned three days before, and were the product of Orange county cows. *Second finger*—the half of a small, fresh fish, of rare

delicacy of flavor. *Third finger*—the whole of as light a Graham roll as ever the vegetarian himself sat down to. Pretty fair, isn't it? for an invalid, who has heretofore been subsisting on what would no more than satisfy the appetite of a canary bird.

“Bryant has gone out to see an acquaintance or two he has here, and Lawrence and I have sent our cards to our Newport friends, the De Lises. There's a knock at the door, and a servant hands me their names, and tells me they are in the drawing-room below. So good-bye for the present.

“Our friends are gone, and I take up the broken thread of my chat again. Mrs. De Lisle looks even younger than when we met her at Newport, two summers ago, and is as overflowing with genial kindness as ever. She will listen to no denial or objections, on our part, to making her house our head-quarters while we are here; so her carriage is to come for us before dinner. Her son is as full of frolic, and as fond of pranks, as you remember, Edith, he used to be on the sea-beach, and persists still in taking life as a sort of joke. The air is delightfully soft and bland here, and the trellis of the verandah, opposite the window at which I am writing, is gay with climbing roses. Your favorite ‘cloth of gold’ is there, mother, if my sense of smell don't deceive me, for the breeze wafts its odor this way, and I am surrounded by quite an atmosphere of sweets. I wish you witch of a

little darling, who is darting like a humming-bird in and out of the verandah, with her amber-colored curls floating over her bare, white shoulders, would fling me a bud across the street to scent my letter with !

“ But I must leave you for a while, and have my effects in readiness for the carriage. Besides, I had almost forgotten that Lawrence has torn his cloak on some officious trunk hasp, so there’s a little employment for my needle.

“ I am writing in Mrs. De Lisle’s morning room, looking, not into the street, but upon a vine-shaded piazza, and off into a garden that even yet is bright with summer beauty. The residences here do not face the thoroughfares, as in other cities, but turn their gables to them, and surrounded as they are with shrubbery, they have a charming air of rural privacy. But I’m not going to fill my remaining half page with statistics about the ‘ Citadel,’ and the ‘ guard-houses,’ and the seaward looking Battery, and such things ; nor can I take the time now to tell you of all our kind hostess interests herself in having us see—of our yesterday’s visit to a rice-mill, or our drive this morning to the Magnolia Cemetery, a sweet, quiet ‘ city of the dead.’ These, with many other matters, must be laid over as topics for tea-table talk, when we are all together once more. How our thoughts dwell with, and linger over our beloved quartette ! Indeed, I feel as if we had brought ourselves but half away, since our hearts *will* so stay behind us ! Sometimes Lawrence

startles me by stopping in the midst of one of his silent reveries, and saying, as if he had been watching you all with a sort of seer's ken : ' mother dear is sitting at the window with her sewing now, thinking of us ;' or, ' they have gone out to walk now, and mother dear is reading to them in the shadow of ' the Ruins.' He has just come in from a ride with Mr. De Lisle, looking quite revived and gay ; and as he leans over me, he bids me ask Eunice if she has discarded Tytler, and aspired to Niebuhr yet, and wants Josepha to send him word as to the progress of her investigations in entomology. In two days we sail for Havana, and then Cousin Bryant turns his face toward the shores of the Rappahannock, and we put a belt of ocean between you and our untravelled hearts, that ' drag at each remove a lengthening chain.' "

XIII.

Grantley-Holm.

“WE have been so cheered,” said Edith, the next morning, as she left the breakfast-table, where her mother still sat, portioning out sugar into the servant’s coffee-cups, which Silvy held on a tray beside her,—“so brightened up by Zilpha’s letter, that we will accept Mrs. Grantley’s invitation to dinner to-day, with every disposition to enjoy ourselves. At what hour does her note say?”

“Five, I believe.”

“Rather late for a November country dinner; but I suppose ten o’clock breakfasts and five o’clock dinners are the remnants of the many English customs that have been perpetuated here ever since the cavalier days of the Old Dominion, and Mrs. Grantley sets too much store by her kinship with the old Sir William, to give in to a more plebeian hour. By the by, mother, I don’t believe you have a dress cap suitable to encounter the *élite* of Mil-

burne in. I wish you had been more mindful of your own wants, and supplied yourself before we had left the region of millinery shops."

"But, my dear, there was so much to get, and you know we can't do as we used to—get what we *want*. Let us be content, however, that we still can have what we *need*."

Edith gave a sigh. The altered state of the family finances was a sore subject to her; and she had not yet learned to accommodate herself to it with her mother's cheerful grace. But she recovered her equanimity in a moment; for she caught the expression of the meek eye opposite her, and she could not find it in her heart to disturb its quiet by any spoken regrets.

"I have it!" she said, with sudden gaiety. "Mother, I'll make you a cap."

"But would it do any better than those I have? Remember, you have served no apprenticeship to the trade; besides, I don't know that I have the materials at hand."

"Yes; there's *tulle* about the house somewhere; and you remember the dress I got when I was bridesmaid for Anne Harrison, and what a quantity of Valenciennes lace she sent me to trim it with. That will just be the thing." And Edith forthwith set to work with great zeal.

Josepha was no way reluctant to see the cap under-

taken, for she thought that it of course implied the omission of lessons for that day; in which, to her chagrin, she proved to be mistaken. The bit of millinery work was completed in time, to the satisfaction of all parties—at least the children declared their mother's cheeks looked like roses in the snow, through the pretty cloud of lace; and Edith protested that she had never realized before that poverty had luxuries which riches could not buy.

“If you had bought the cap in a city shop, mother,” she said, as she was fitting it on, “it would have been a matter-of-course that it should be pretty, and all that, and neither of us would have given it a second thought; but now we'll both enjoy it, if for no more than that it cost nothing but my pleasant task of putting it together.”

“Ah!” said Mrs. Irvine, with a gratified tone, as she kissed Edith's full, fair cheek, “if we would only believe how cheap the materials are out of which happiness is made! It is just as well to bring our mind to our circumstances, as our circumstances to our mind;—better indeed; for that we can always do, if we will; while the other may be out of our power.”

The mansion at Grantley-holm, with a wide lawn sloping towards the river, and a noble background of mountains, was one of the olden time, built of stone, and of more cumbrous aspect and proportions than is usual in this later day of Italian villas and Swiss cottages. The

oaken floor of the broad hall was waxed till it glistened like a mirror; and, but for the strip of carpet laid along its centre, it would have required something of a rope-dancer's expertness to have glided over its glassy surface without losing footing. The guests had in part arrived, when Mrs. Irvine and Edith entered the drawing-room. Mrs. Grantley received them most graciously; Miss Burton most calmly and quietly; while the former was profuse in her regrets that she had happened to be driving out when the young gentlemen from Silverwood had called to make their adieux.

Their hostess had evidently not been abroad in vain, for Edith was not long in discovering an exquisite *Psyche*, upon a pedestal of yellow marble, at one end of the room; and there were various pictures of real excellence on the walls, which, however, with a singular disregard to effect, were only whitewashed. She could not help fancying to herself the paroxysm of offended taste into which the authors of these works of art would be thrown, could they see what sort of a background they were disposed against, when even her own eye felt the violence of the contrast between the dead, shadowless white, and the rich, glowing carpet and dark furniture, not to speak of the statuette or the pictures. Mrs. Grant had made room for Mrs. Irvine on the sofa beside her, as soon as she had gotten through with her salutations. Miss Burton had taken posses-

sion of Edith, and they were standing before one of the paintings, when Miss Lettuce Grant joined them.

“Not paying your *devoirs* to art, I hope, Miss Edith? If that’s your queue, you’ll be sadly out of your element here, where our only ‘galleries’ are the aisles of our forests. For your own peace of mind, I’d recommend you to devote yourself to the ‘Studies of Nature,’ with St. Pierre.”

“I shall be able to do both,” said Edith, pointing up to the picture overhead, and then to the window, from whence a fine view of water, wood, and mountain stretched indefinitely away, beneath the lingering evening light.

“Your models in the art line will be few, I assure you, Miss Edith. Mrs. Grantley is the only patroness it has here; and she and you are birds of passage, Susan—off to your down-country home with the first snow-flake.”

“My sister’s possessions are limited enough in that direction,” said Miss Burton; so I don’t think, Miss Irvine, you lose much by the shutting up of our house. Psyche is a study, it is true; but you have as good a one on your own mantel, I observed.”

“She loses all Milburne has to show of works of art, however,” rejoined Miss Lettuce; “though I beg pardon of the countless Washingtons, and Jeffersons, and Madisons, and Marshalls that adorn our walls. But, seriously,” continued the gay girl, smoothing her laughing features into

affected gravity, "I do pity you, transplanted into the depth of the country just on the edge of winter."

"That's the best season for transplanting young trees," interposed Miss Burton, smiling.

"Yes—it may do for tough, hardy, human evergreens, (like our friend, Miss Eliza Sparrowhawk, yonder), who have no delicate fibres to be hurt; but, as for you, Miss Edith, I fear you'll need all the influences of the spring to make you take root."

"I'm no green-house plant, Miss Lettuce," said Edith; "and as this is the native soil of the stock from which I spring, the scion ought not to have its nature changed by having been planted a degree or two farther north."

"Well, I sincerely hope so," replied Miss Lettuce, "for really I, who am country-born, feel it something of a privation to live among leafless trees, when I remember how captivating cities begin to be at this season, with the ladies looking like fresh-blown dahlias, in their bright winter gear."

"Yet their colors fail to rival Nature's," said Edith, pointing to some trees on the lawn, which were fluttering their yellow and red foliage still, though it was mid November.

"But think what they'll be a month hence. Nature's well enough in its way, but one gets a little too much of it then."

"Too much of *Nature*, do I hear you say, Miss Lettuce?

"Ah ! is that you, Mr. Phillips?" she said, turning round to the speaker. "Let me present you to my friend, Miss Edith Irvine. Yes ; that was what I said. I am a gregarious creature, and prefer herding with my kind, rather than finding companionship with mute rocks and trees."

"Then you're not able to discover 'tongues in trees?'"

"Tongues in mouths I like better. For my part, I think a great deal of what poets write about Nature, is mere stuff. They talk of its sympathies, and of its great heart beating in unison with humanity's, as if the laughable idea of Kepler I met with the other day, were a real fact."

"Enlighten us, pray, with the result of your investigations in that direction," said Mr. Philips, assuming an attitude of mock attention. "I'm in darkness as to everything about him, beyond what my college astronomy tells me of his 'laws.'"

"Of course you ask for information, seeing the source from which you seek it."

"Of course. I sit at your feet with all the reverence the students of three centuries ago did before the daughter of the Italian astronomer—forget his name—who used to take her father's place in the lecturer's chair when he was sick."

"Well, his fancy seemed to be that Nature was a huge, living creature, whose lungs were the oceans ; its veins, rivers ; its hair, the forests ; and who spat fire occasionally, out at Etna or Vesuvius, when in a sulky mood."

“Rather a formidable creature, indeed,” said Mr. Phillips, shrugging his shoulders, “and one it would be well to keep on good terms with. But what’s your quarrel with Nature.”

“I deny that its sympathies are what poets make them out to be. For instance: I sally out in a sombre, grey mood, and Nature, forsooth, instead of lending the least countenance to my pensive fit, laughs out in my very face—has nothing but bright skies and sunshine. Then again, I’m as merry as a robin, and I go abroad into the woods and meadows for congenial influences, and behold! your tender, sympathizing *Nature* scowls and mutters like a very virago. There—I see you have your hand on a volume of Wordsworth. Compare my experience with his laudations.”

Mr. Phillips turned over the leaves of the book, and read a few detached lines—

“———I have learned
To look on Nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth, but hearing oftentimes
The still, sad music of humanity.

———I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts,—a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean, and the living air.

—Therefore, am I still
A lover of the meadows, and the woods,
And mountains, and of all that we behold
From the green earth,—well pleased to recognise
In Nature and the language of the sense,
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my moral being.”

Other and similar passages he read as he turned over the pages, until, under the influence they evoked, the spirit of badinage was laid aside.

“These are unfortunate quotations for your position, Miss Lettuce. What do you think, Miss Irvine?”

“While I can't agree with Miss Lettuce,” said Edith, “I'm disposed to believe that poets *do* carry their deification of the abstract thing they call ‘Nature,’ to an extreme; for what is Nature but the living principle that breathes through all creation? In other words, God,” she added, gravely. “If they would agree to this interpretation, I could join their worship with my whole heart.”

“Yes, many of our modern poets stand in great dread of writing a line that might squint towards pietism. Some of them, indeed, are just about as pagan in their creed as the old Greeks; for we have the spirit of beauty, and the very things they idealised in their myths, impersonated now under different names.”

“Bless me! Mr. Phillips!” exclaimed Miss Lettuce. “Are you going to give Miss Edith a dish of your *Æsthe-*

ties,—that's the approved word now I believe,—already ? Pray, wait till the dessert is served ; it will come in more appropriately then, for she couldn't brook the vulgarity of every day meat and drink after—after—”

“An ‘œnomel from Ida,” suggested Mr. Phillips, teasingly. “I know that's the word you were trying to think of.”

“Miss Edith, don't you agree with me, that pedantry is a very henious thing ?”

“I beg you wont be so personal, Miss Lettuce,” said Mr. Phillips, deprecatingly. “You might tread upon the slipper of the young lady who was quoting Kepler a moment ago.”

“Do, Mr. Bunbury, come to our rescue,” called Miss Lettuce, to a tame-looking young man on the opposite side of the room. “Mr. Phillips is about to injure our appetites for dinner, with Greek confections.”

“Ah !” said the gentleman in question, joining their circle, and gazing round inquisitively, as if in search of the confections, with his eyes. “If they're as tempting as Stuart's, I shouldn't wonder you didn't know when to stop eating. *Greek* ones, did you say ? How did he come by them ? Didn't know they were famous for anything over there but old marble.”

“Nor I,” said Miss Lettuce, giving Edith a sly look ; “but their next door neighbors, the Turks, are great on sweet-meats, I believe. You can buy as many for a few coppers, as you can carry away with you.”

“Quite an inducement for you to visit Constantinople, Miss Lettuce, if you’re so fond of them.”

“I encourage home-manufactures, sir. I patronise maple-sugar. But Mrs. Grantley is beckoning us to her. Miss Edith, she is showing your mamma a port-folio of engravings, some of the European spoils. Mr. Phillips, when you and Mr. Bunbury have done comparing tastes on the subject of confections, you can join us;” and the mischievous girl, followed by Edith, moved to the other side of the drawing-room.

“Some prints I brought from Italy with me,” said Mrs. Grantley. “I thought they might interest you, Miss Edith, as they are mostly engravings of the works of the old masters. Here is a copy of Raffaele’s ‘Madonna della Seggiola,’ and here you see are some of Correggio’s angels;” and the rubicund hostess discoursed about “purity of expression,” and “truth of tone,” and “*chiaroscuro*,” and “tender light,” with a solubility that could hardly have been exceeded if her life had been spent in a studio. Miss Burton simply called Edith’s attention to the look of maternal love upon the Virgin’s face, and the combined human and divine beauty of the child’s, as if she would fain let down her sister from her hobby; but Mrs. Grantley was fairly mounted, and picture after picture was examined, always accompanied, really very much to Mrs. Irvine’s and Edith’s satisfaction, by her reminiscences of the original.

“I lived, moved, and had my being in the Pitti Palace,

while in Florence," continued Mrs. Grantley, taking a fresh mouthful of air, and starting anew; "and it was the same way in the gallery of the Vatican at Rome—"

"That was the reason you looked so *thin* when you came home," interrupted Miss Lettuce. "I recall now, how pale you were. *Pity*, indeed! Such unsubstantial food was enough to starve you. 'Tender-loin' is better than 'tender light,' after all."

"I scarcely did take time to eat," said Mrs. Grantley, with a smile at the interruption. "Studying these noble artists, too, I find has given me a great distaste for the modern schools, so mechanical as some of them are."

"Vice versa," said Miss Lettuce, turning to Mr. Phillips and Mr. Bunbury, "as my devotion to maple sugar destroys all power of appreciating Greek confections—"

"In spite of Miss Lettuce," interposed Mr. Phillips to Edith, "you are having the dessert before the substantials. Suppose we step across the hall to the library, and, Chinese fashion, follow up the dessert of art with the strong meat of Reid or Stewart; or, if less intellectually disposed, we can whet our teeth on some of Sir Charles Lyell's fossil bones. But I see dinner is announced;" and presenting his arm to Edith, they followed to the dining-room.

"Miss Edith!" exclaimed Lettuce Grant, from the opposite side of the table, "did you hear the champagne-pop of my neighbor's wit? Don't attempt to prevent me,

Mr. Bunbury. I must tell it. I was squeezing my lemon into my soup, and told him he would find a *soupçon* of the juice a great improvement. He says he thinks this *soup song* needs improvement,—that he's tired of it, and if he had the laying down of the law about dinners, he would put another *tune* into people's heads, than this everlasting beginning with so trashy a dish."

"I agree with Mr. Bunbury," said Miss Sparrowhawk, who, as well as that gentleman, had failed to comprehend Miss Lettuce's joke. "I don't see why we Americans must eat just what the French do. Why, the last time I was in one of those grand New York hotels, I found those French *patés* were called for constantly."

"Expensive *livers* those are," said Miss Lettuce, with an innocent look—"the gourmands I mean."

"No; she means the *geese's*, Miss Sparrowhawk," laughed Mr. Phillips. "You see she's making game of you."

"Ah! sir; you fired *that* shot with Sidney Smith's fowling piece," cried Miss Lettuce, "and it fell short of its aim, too; for I hope it didn't even ruffle a feather, Miss Eliza."

Miss Sparrowhawk looked puzzled; and Edith, taking compassion on her as the momentary prey of these light shooters, began a grave discussion with her on the mysteries of the culinary art in general, in which the good maiden lady was reported to have a sort of Soyer's skill.

The dinner was at length over, coffee handed in the drawing-room, and some of the guests, Mrs. Irvine and Edith among them, had taken their departure.

"Somebody told me," said Miss Sara Grant, as the remaining ladies drew round the fire again, "that the Irvines had met with great reverses, and were, in fact, in pecuniary straits. But did you see that cap Mrs. Irvine had on, Susan? The Valenciennes lace on it could not have cost less than six dollars a-yard. It was that wide;" and she measured the width on her hand.

"Everybody has their way of being extravagant," said Miss Sparrowhawk. "I dare say you have, too, Sara."

"Now, my dear," suggested Mrs. Grant, "I don't reckon there was any extravagance about it. Mrs. Irvine may have got the cap before their troubles came upon them."

"I don't believe she ever had it on before," persisted Miss Sara.

"I didn't particularly notice the cap," replied Miss Burton, to whom Miss Grant's question had been addressed, "for I was so much taken up with the wearer, as to be quite unconscious what she had on. It's a real luxury to meet with such a person—so ready to be pleased, and so desirous of giving pleasure to others."

"Yes; it's worth one's while to have something to show," said Mrs. Grantley, "when one finds people who are so appreciative. As for you, Lettuce, you toss over my choice

pictures as irreverently as if they were ninepence lithographs."

"But, pray, bear with me, dear Mrs. Grantley. Remember I have never been to Italy—never breathed the atmosphere of *ataliers*, and must, therefore, be excused for being somewhat of a Vandal in my treatment of your Roman treasures."

XIV.

A Broken Reverie.

EDITH sat alone, in the twilight, looking abstractedly into the parlor-fire, and losing herself in such ruminations as the hour was calculated to awaken. She was forgetting what she had often heard her mother say: that mere aimless reverie was a species of hurtful mental dissipation, that left the mind weakened by its indulgence in it.

“The want of occupation is not rest,”

she was accustomed to repeat, (for it was her way to enforce her own wise counsels by some favorite distich or apothem;) “and if you are mentally wearied, and need relaxation, throw open the door to your thoughts, and let them loose, like children from school, for hearty, healthful play. Don’t let them slide into a corner, and doze away the time in waking dreams, so that when you recall them, they come back to their duties with no zest—no appetite for labor.” But Edith could not always over-

come her tendencies ; and, to-night, her reverie was long and sombre-hued. She was, however, learning one lesson—to suppress the outward demonstration of her emotions ; for, so great was her nature's craving for sympathy, that, hitherto, she had poured out all that she had felt or suffered, too heedlessly. Now, the bosom that had been the repository of every joy and sorrow, was far away, and she would not burden her mother with the utterance of thoughts so at variance with the Christian serenity which she inculcated.

But her solitude was at length interrupted by the entrance of candles ; and, at the same time, Mrs. Irvine came from the next room, with letters in her hand.

“ One from Bryant,” she said.

“ For me ?” asked Edith, rousing herself.

“ It is directed to me, but intended equally for us all—full of detail about the journey, and kind as his own dear self.”

Edith extended her hand for it ; and, while she read it, her mother broke the seal of the other letter. It was a short one, and she read it, folded it abstractedly up, opened it again, and re-read it, before Edith had finished Bryant's.

“ Who is that one from ?” she asked, as she took it from the passive hand ; and the disturbed expression of her mother's face alarmed her. She hurriedly glanced over it.

“DEAR MADAM :

“As your personal friend, and interested in what affects the welfare of your family, I feel constrained to address you on a matter of great moment to yourself. When you were in this city, some few months ago, you told me, if I mistake not, that you had placed the proceeds of the sale of your place at B —, in the hands of Mr. Thos. Bryson, for investment. I could have told you at the time, that I did not consider him a perfectly safe man, but felt a delicacy in doing it, especially as his acquaintanceship with your family dated beyond mine, and as I had had pecuniary relations with him of a character that might have given me an undue prejudice against him, in your eyes. Recently, however, my suspicions have been verified ; and it has just transpired, that his extensive, and, I fear, unprincipled speculations, have ended in bankruptcy ; at least, he has ‘broken’ fashionably—that is, his handsome house, furniture, &c., with a matter of some \$30,000, to boot, are settled upon his wife ; and so are beyond the touch of creditors.

“Now, what I would advise is, that you come on, *at once*, and make *personal* application to him for the funds which he holds from you. A letter to him will probably avail nothing : it is easy to throw it aside ; but a widow’s pleadings might move him. The creditors say they will not realize fifteen cents on the dollar ; but, from the reserved portion, your demand might be shamed out of

him. Infirm, and unused to business, as I have long been, I would have moved in the matter at once, had I not been sure that any approach, on my part, would have made against you. Come at once to my house. Jacqueline will be glad to see you. Is your son spending the winter at home? My regards to the young ladies.

“Truly yours,

“JOHN P. DUBOIS.”

Edith threw down the letter, and sank hopelessly into a chair. For some moments neither spoke. Edith was the first to break silence.

“I believe it’s true, mother, that troubles don’t come singly. See how they’re accumulating upon us! The loss of your money—the fire that swept away our home—Lawrence ill—he and Zilpha away from us; and now this additional trial—when will it stop? I tremble to think when;” and she covered her face with her hands.

“My child,” said her mother, tenderly, while her own eyes moistened, “you do indeed make the picture look dark; but are there no mercies mingled with the trials? I have been trying to think them over, and find them very many. Our losses and trials at B—— made us realize how many warm, sympathizing friends we had—and then we were not left houseless. We had this remnant of your father’s property to come to; and, surely, we have experienced great kindness here. And though dear Lawrence

and Zilpha have had to leave us, let us be thankful that Lawrence is better, and that the news of this misfortune did not come in time to keep him from going."

"Thankful! Almost your first word, one of thankfulness; mine, one of murmuring. Ah! mother, how your way of looking at things ought to reprove me! But I can't help asking myself, *why*, when God has the control of everything in His hand, He does not make things easier to His children, than to those who don't even acknowledge Him as their Father?"

"Do you remember, my dear, the passage I was pointing out to you in the old author I was reading last Sabbath evening? 'God's providences,' he says, 'are sometimes like rivers that run under ground; but they will rise again, a delightful stream, with some new medicinal quality contracted from the earth by the way.' It is not always best that things should be made easy to us. God will give us what we need, not what we *think* we need; for we are but poor judges of what is best for us. Worldly prosperity and exemption from trial He has never promised to His children; yet, even here, how much of good is mixed with their necessary chastisement! and beyond them is Heaven, where all is blessedness, without a shadow of alloy. With those who deny God as their Father, how different is it all! They have, it is true, prosperity often, as if God, in very pity, granted them ease and exemption from ill here, because He knew it would

be their only good. He leaves them to their enjoyments, undisciplined ; but whom He loves, He chastens."

"I grow better as you talk, mother. Yes; I will believe in God's goodness and love still. Before this letter came, I thought passive endurance was my set task ; but anything is better than that. Now, perhaps, there'll be something for me to do. What about this letter ?"

"I will write to Bryant, and get him to go and see Mr. Bryson for me."

"He will fly at your bidding, I know ; but he has been so much called off from his duties by his attentions to us ; besides, could he effect as much as either you or I?"

"But, my child, I can't go and leave you alone here."

Edith mused a few minutes.

"I will go," she said, with sudden resolution.

"You !" exclaimed Mrs. Irvine, incredulously.

"Mother, I feel that I am brave and strong, when I get beyond a certain point. When my physical tendency to succumb is conquered, I am ready for almost anything."

"That's only a momentary feeling. Such power don't avail you for any sustained effort."

"Try me. I'd plead with that dishonest, smooth-tongued man, till I shamed him into doing you justice. I believe I can be eloquent sometimes, under high mental excitement, for that always tends to calm me outwardly."

"Who could have believed it?" mused Mrs. Irvine, as if she had not heard Edith. "Mr. Bryson seemed always so kind, and I trusted him so fully."

“ Your only error in judgment,—forgive me for saying it, mother,—is, that you are so lenient—you judge so kindly. You remind me often of your old Quaker friend, of whom I’ve heard you speak, who used to include Satan himself in her benevolence, and say, ‘ Poor fellow ! I really think he’s lied on ! ’ ”

“ Whose experience in the world is of the longest standing ? ” asked Mrs. Irvine, with a half smile. “ Leniency is, at least, a failing on charity’s side ; but I own I’ve been mistaken in this case.”

At first, the idea of Edith undertaking to go on such an errand to the distant city, seemed preposterous to Mrs. Irvine ; but, on turning it over in her mind, she began to conclude that, after all, it was not so unfeasible. Mr. Bryson would, in all probability, repel Bryant—secure in the fact, that the property settled on his wife, sometime previous to, and probably in anticipation of, his failure, was beyond the reach of law. But Edith’s pleadings on behalf of a widowed mother, and an invalid brother, might avail, where stronger words were powerless. Edith might appeal, too, to Mrs. Bryson’s sense of justice ;—a woman, and a mother—she might, she surely must yield. It would be a trial of Edith’s strength ; but a salutary one. She was growing morbid in her present seclusion. This compelled glance at the moving world again, would be an advantage to her. Her over-sensitive spirit needed some contact with the outside life in which she must one day take her part. Yes ; Edith should go.

It was not the greater of the two difficulties which Mrs. Irvine was about to let her daughter assume. It would have been easier for her to have had all her own energies called into play by active demands upon them, than to be left to the solitude of the country, with only the companionship of the two children, and the paltry, but imperative duties which fall to woman's hands—keeping them busy, but leaving the mind, like the winter-bound bee, to feed itself on whatever bitter or sweet it may have hived for its wants, through the summer's changing sunshine and shower.

There is nothing heroic in the daily performance of things so trivial, that only the fact of their being *duties* gives them claim to the slightest dignity. A seamstress, with few ideas ranging beyond her needle's point, might, perhaps as well, if not as expeditiously, have accomplished this part of Mrs. Irvine's tasks ; a conscientious governess have explained as correctly, though surely not as patiently and lovingly, the lessons which, in Edith's place, she would now daily hear ; a well-trained servant have looked as carefully, if not with such economy and judiciousness, to the ways of her household ; while her active, vigorous, clear-seeing intellect should be left free to exercise its powers on things more in keeping with its abilities ; her unerring, discriminating judgment be brought to bear on subjects worthier of its capacities ; her quick, executive skill be tried upon a range of higher objects ; her

remarkable social accomplishments have a sphere of wider influence; her light not be hidden among the shades of the nether valley, when it might have sent a trail of brightness from some "city set on a hill."

Thus *might* Mrs. Irvine have reasoned—thus did she not. To her, the path of duty was the only one of safety or pleasure, and she walked on in it with a beautiful and buoyant cheerfulness, feeling that it was not the *character* of the service at which the "great task-master" looked, but the spirit of its performance; that

"———God doth not need
Either man's works, or His own gifts;"

and that to the heart-searching eye of the unexacting Redeemer, who sits over against life's treasury, the two mites of humble, faithfully-rendered obedience, may far outweigh the rich gifts and high-sounding charities of those who "cast in much out of their abundance" of opportunity. Ah! of how many a lonely and self-denying offerer, who, while she is bringing "all the living that she hath," is yet trembling and ashamed to think the gift so small,—of how many such will He say—"She hath cast in more than they all!"

Only a few days had passed, when an incidental stranger to the Irvines, but well known to many of their Milburne acquaintances, was discovered to be passing through the village, on his way to a northern city, and with him it was arranged that Edith should go to —.

“But, mother,” she said, as she was packing her trunk, the night previous to her departure, “I feel so unwilling to leave you here alone. Suppose you and the children go down the country, to Aunt Maria’s,—we can go part of the way together,—and stay there till I am ready to come back.”

“That would involve some additional expense that had as well be avoided now,” said Mrs. Irvine; “besides, it would be necessary, then, to let Lawrence and Zilpha know of these difficulties, a thing to be avoided, at all hazards. No; it is better I should stay here, where Providence has clearly put me, and be content to let the issue of all things rest in His hand.”

“One thing comforts me,” said Edith. “I will not be long gone; and if I come back from my mission successful, we will be so happy again.”

“So happy again!” Under the shadow of this new cloud, the former gloom, which Edith had felt to be oppressive enough, appeared a comparative brightness. So relative a thing is our happiness! We cower shiveringly beneath the creeping mists that may have gathered over us, persuading ourselves that all the light is darkened away from our path; but, as the gloom really deepens, and we are compelled onward into the obscurity, we look back to the point we had thought so shaded, and wonder it had not then, the clearness we see about it now.

XV.

A Fashionable Welcome.

IT was the first week in December. The leaden, fleecy-looking clouds had been spitting snow all day ; and now, as the evening closed in, Jacqueline Dubois put aside the damask drapery of the window, and stood gazing aimlessly into the street, along which the foot-passengers were hurrying, with heads bent to shield their faces from the gathering storm of snow-flakes.

“An odd hour for anybody to make a visit,” soliloquized the young lady, as a carriage suddenly drew up before the door. “A trunk behind. It must be somebody from the cars. Bless me ! I hope it isn’t Anne Stevens, coming from the country, to bore me to death with a visit. John,” she called to her brother, who was lolling on a sofa, in a distant part of the room, “do come and see who it is.”

“If it’s Miss Stevens,” said the young man, walking leisurely to the window, “she’ll need something more to

warm her than your welcome. But it isn't—luckily for her own sake."

"Well, I breathe freer. But who is it?"

"If I didn't know them to be in Virginia, I should say it was one of the Irvines."

"Nonsense! What would bring any of them back at this season?"

By this time the new-comer had rung, and been admitted. Dr. Dubois stepped into the hall, where the lamp had been lighted.

"Why, Miss Edith! is it you?" his sister heard him exclaiming. But the opening of the outer door had admitted some of the chilling night-air; so the prudent Jacqueline awaited the visitor in the drawing-room.

"Edith Irvine, I declare!" she cried, with uplifted hands. "Why, I thought you domesticated with the turkeys, and chickens, and little Congoes, down on your Virginia plantation;" and kissing her, she led her to a sofa, and ordered one of the chandaliers to be lit.

"Didn't your papa tell you I was coming?" asked Edith. "Mother wrote him that I was."

"Not a word of it. Just like him. He's fond of letting one find out things for one's self. But you didn't come alone?"

Edith recounted the few incidents of her uneventful journey; and then was called on, in turn, to listen to Jacqueline's stream of talk.

"Don't you think me improved since you saw me last, Edith? I plume myself on constantly adding charms;" and she rose as she spoke, and adjusted her flounces before the tall pier-glass, that stretched from the floor to the carved cornice of the ceiling.

"Miss Edith," began Dr. Dubois, mischievously, "I'm really glad you've come. Jacqueline is getting so insufferable vain, that I trust to have your aid in plucking her plumes."

"The sober truth is, Edith," said the young lady, subsiding into a luxurious chair, and disposing her rich fall of drapery with an artistic grace quite natural to her in affairs of the toilette, "my brother John is continually snubbing me. I suppose he thinks I hear so many pretty things, that something of the sort is necessary to help me keep my equilibrium; for I love compliments—I love to be told that I'm graceful, and pretty, and have *un air distingué*."

"There it is!" exclaimed Dr. Dubois, rising with a kind of mock provocation. "Miss Edith, do you ever hear anything quite so bare-faced as that among your Virginia belles?"

"So *honest*, you meant to say, Giovanni; but take my acknowledgments;" and Jacqueline bowed her really most sylph-like figure before him—"take them for the implied compliment to my bellehood. You see, Edith, he lets the truth out, in spite of himself."

All this time Edith had sat with her bonnet still on, and her wrappings unremoved. Feeling the rooms warm, after the keen outer air, she unfastened the fur about her neck.

"Jacqueline," said Dr. Dubois, "will you permit me to suggest that Miss Edith be invited to lay off her travelling gear? She must be tired wearing it all day."

"Ah! pardon, Edith! We city people are so used to callers, that we forget bonnets can be laid off. But come;" and rising, with an indolent grace, Jacqueline led the way up stairs.

Old Mr. Dubois was in the conservatory, into which the windows of the back drawing-room opened, as into a garden of sweets, when the two ladies entered again; and in his absorbed interest in having a servant arrange some favorite azalias, where the light from the chandalier would show off their white and salmon-colored blooms to the best advantage, he had not noticed Edith's presence, nor had his inconsiderate daughter remembered to announce it to him.

"That will do, Martin," he said, as he stepped back into the room, through one of the glass doors, and put entirely aside the crimson hangings. "Now come, Jacqueline, and see how grand a show my pets make."

"Pets, indeed," said Jacqueline, coming forward from the other room, followed by Edith. "I believe, papa, you pay more attention to your flowers than to me."

“ ‘My ducats and my daughter,’ eh? Well, you see your parties, and operas, and what not, take you away, and I can’t have you for my plaything any more; so the old man must make pets of his flowers. But who have we here?” and he turned round to Edith. “Dear me, Jacqueline, why didn’t you tell me she had come?” and he seized her hands with a warm, cordial welcome.

“Why didn’t you tell me she was coming, papa?”

“I did, my dear; but you had an invitation to somewhere or other in your hand at the time; so, I suppose, that knocked it out of your thoughtless little head. But how are all at home, Edith, my child? Lawrence—when did you hear from him?”

“Bless me! yes, I forgot to ask!” exclaimed Jacqueline. “And Zilpha—how is she?”

“Well, when I last heard. She is with Lawrence, in the West Indies.”

“In the West Indies? for the winter, I suppose. How delightful!”

“I expect Lawrence would think home more so,” said Dr. Dubois, who, more mindful than his sister, had been interesting himself in inquiries of Edith, while Jacqueline had been standing before the mirror, arranging a spray of natural flowers amidst the folds of her luxuriant hair.

An hour or two wore away in pleasant conversation between Edith and the two gentlemen. Jacqueline de-

clared herself exhausted by her last night's party; and, so piling the embroidered cushions about her, she reclined herself upon a sofa, after due attention to the most graceful disposition of the never-forgotten drapery; and with closed eyes, lay like a dreaming Hebe. It had never occurred to her to think that Edith might be hungry, after her long day's journey, and consequently no orders had been given to have the usually late tea hastened any on her account. One and another gentleman visitor dropped in, until quite a bevy were surrounding Jacqueline, who, leaning among her cushions, in a sort of oriental languor, was dispensing smiles with as seemingly careless a grace, as the fine, full-flowering heliotrope on the tall, bronze tripod near her, was diffusing its odors.

-Just as Dr. Dubois had his hand on the bell to summon the tea, the servants entered with the trays, much to his relief; for he had been fidgeting for the last half hour, having found out from Edith that she had gone dinnerless that day. The edibles were of the slightest description—black tea, delicate French rolls, some pickled oysters, and a basket of macaroons; quite enough, after the late dinners all present, with the exception of Edith, had risen from, only two or three hours before, but rather meagre for the whetted appetite of a traveller. While Dr. Dubois was putting the sugar and cream in her tea, Edith's eye rested upon the silver bread-tray, on the edge of which she read the words, "*be thankful,*" embossed in old

black-letter characters. Her momentary stirrings of hurt feeling, at Jacqueline's want of consideration,—for that was what she felt it to be,—subsided at that mute rebuke; and, pointing to it, she made some remark about the appropriateness of the device.

“I should like to know in what way it is particularly appropriate to *you*, under present circumstances, Miss Edith;” for the doctor had not quite overcome his feeling of annoyance;—“that you're not starved outright? Well, I own that *is* something to ‘be thankful’ for. But really”—and he glanced over the waiter of tea-things,—“really, with such Titania provision as this, you are not fortified against it yet. Away, Martin, and tell the house-keeper to send up a couple of breakfast-cups of her best coffee, within fifteen minutes; and d’ye hear? let them be flanked with some cold turkey, or a few slices of beef *à la mode*, and such a plate of buttered bread as may reasonably satisfy hungry people.”

Edith protested against the order, but the doctor was imperative; and while she still contested the point, fearing Jacqueline might feel chagrined, the servant returned to say the coffee was in course of preparation.

“‘A fellow-feeling,’ &c.—you remember the old line, Miss Edith; for, indeed, I was not allowed to finish my dinner to my own satisfaction. Physicians are the veriest slaves of society—subject to any and every man’s beck.”

“I wonder, then, that the entire ‘faculty’ don’t unite,

to a man, and raise a crusade against the luxuries and indulgences that are making us a nation of invalids. And yet," said Edith, smiling, "here you are, substituting the stimulant of a cup of coffee, for one of harmless black tea; and most unprofessionally, too, setting me the bad example of drinking it yourself."

"Physicians are like sign-boards, Miss Edith—while their theories, on the subject of dietetics, may point out a safe path for others, they are not generally found following it themselves. As to coffee and tea, you're right enough; but I have a most un-English dislike of the one, and a most French *penchant* for the other,—the consequence of having had a Huguenot great-grandfather, perhaps! Be that as it may, I can associate nothing hospitable, comfortable, cozy or poetical, with a cup of tea."

"Cowper and Mrs. Unwin, to the contrary, notwithstanding?"

"Yes; for while it certainly is not the cup that 'inebriates,' it fails, just as surely, to 'cheer.' However, I expect to sit up half the night, with a very ill patient, which may account for a departure from my usual glass of cold water—since you compel me to boast of my Socratic self-control; and as for yourself, Miss Edith, you need a gentle excitant, after the fatigues of a day's travel. Ah! here it is," he said, rubbing his hands together, with his accustomed good humor perfectly restored, as the servant presented the salver, "as clear as sherry, and more

fragrant than all the spicery of Arabia Felix. ‘*Dum vivimus*’—you know the familiar motto; so we’ll practice on it, even at the risk of some loss of sleep to-night.”

Jacqueline had quite forgotten her *rôle*—the drooping languor was gone from her laughing, gipsy eyes—the cushions were thrown aside, and she sat, all sprightliness and gaiety, with a semi-circle of amused listeners and talkers about her, till the chimes from a neighboring steeple told that it wanted only an hour of midnight—an entire contrast to the wearied thing she had seemed to be before her visitors came.

Old Mr. Dubois had, long since, taken a good-night look at his flowers, and retired. Edith had been so much entertained by the doctor’s reminiscences of a residence in Paris, that she had forgotten her own need of rest—only vexed with the apprehension that he was devoting time to her that would have been otherwise employed, had his sister been mindful of a hostess’ duties; for she remembered his allusion to some professional call.

“Miss Edith must have been wishing that you were less engaging to-night, Jacqueline,” said her brother, after the last gentleman had withdrawn.

“For what, pray?” asked Jacqueline, rising, with a wearied yawn, and pausing before the mirror, as she passed it, to note the precise expression of lip and eye which the departing guests may have carried away; “because it suggested something unkind, in making myself such a foil to you, eh?”

“That’s for Miss Edith to say. I’m afraid Time travelled over the two hours we were awaiting your leisure, with his leaden boots on—”

“No, indeed,” interrupted Edith. “I can testify to his borrowing Mercury’s sandals.”

“Pity, Messrs. Fox, Swinton, Dawson and Co., couldn’t have been shod therewith! Their *soles* need wings, Jacqueline;—why didn’t you barb them with the feathers of your wit?”

“That would have involved a little *boring*—a thing I’m never addicted to,” said Jacqueline, snuffily, though she laughed while she spoke. “With your lancet as your *awl*, to follow up your own elegant figure, I dare say, you bored Edith—only she’s too polite to let you know it—”

“Oh! no such thing!” interrupted Edith.

“Too *considerate*, at least,” said Dr. Dubois, “to intimate how tired she is with her long day’s journey.”

“Bless me! I forgot!” exclaimed Jacqueline. “I expect you *are* tired, Edith. I didn’t think of it before.”

XVI.

Breakfast-Table Talk.

NATURE had been busy all the night, fashioning for the earth's shivering bosom, an ermine robe of snow, as Edith perceived on her first glimpse from her chamber window, the morning after her arrival. Mr. Dubois and his son were in possession of the breakfast-room when she descended; and there was abundance of time for the reading of the morning papers over their coffee and muffins, before Jacqueline made her appearance.

"Up already?" she said, giving a finger to Edith, by way of morning salutation. "After the fatigues of last night, Giovanni, I should have reckoned on your ordering breakfast up to Edith, to strengthen her for the exertion of rising."

"Miss Edith's true Americanism would have disdained anything quite so Parisian and disagreeable," replied Dr. Dubois.

“And charming, I think,” said Jacqueline. “I wish papa wouldn’t interdict my being as French as my name ; then every morning I’d have myself wakened by a pretty grisette, with a Sevrés bowl of chocolate on a little silver salver ; and she should lay her dainty *serviette* under my chin, administer her draught, and leave me to simmer an hour or so, in the delicious state between sleeping and waking that I love so much.”

“All that would be very suggestive of your brother’s craft, to me,” said Edith. “I think I would almost rather have to earn my own breakfast before I ate it, than take it in that way.”

“But for what, pray, should *I* get up early ?” asked Jacqueline. “To see papa and my brother burying themselves behind wet sheets, like very hydropathists, while I sat by, and twirled my thumbs, a silent victim to the all-engrossing power of the press, eh ? Commend me rather to my broken morning dozes.”

“To speak professionally, Jacqueline,” interrupted Dr. Dubois, throwing aside his paper, “sleep is much less effective in *broken doses*, than when taken as a whole. As to being victimized, Miss Edith don’t seem to have been so, from the zest with which she has been running over this article on ‘Memorable Women,’ in one of these English magazines. I venture to affirm it has proved a pleasanter excitative than your supposititious bowl of chocolate.”

"I rather detest your memorable women," replied Jacqueline, with something of a sneer curling her pretty lip; "for, of course, those are meant, who do something outside the limits set our sex. All this rant about 'superiority' and 'inferiority'—about 'sympathies' and 'cravings,' and the 'want of a career,' and so on, is just so much nonsense. What other career does a pretty girl want, than, with plenty of money at her disposal, for all the demands of *le beau monde*, and plenty of admirers, and *soirées*, and operas, and all that,—to sparkle through her days of belle-dom; and then, when that's over, take refuge in matrimony,—become the mistress of an elegant mansion, and a leader of *ton*. This is sphere enough for me."

"Well, you're honest, at least, in your confessions," said Dr. Dubois; "but mere honesty can't excuse you, any more than it did Rousseau."

"Bless me! Don't put me in such a category."

"By no means, of course. I only spoke of confessions. You have uttered the sentiments, Jacqueline, of about three-fourths of all the women in fashionable life; and pitiable, enough, I confess, does 'the career' seem to me."

"Ah! my spoiled child!" interposed Mr. Dubois, folding up the sheet behind which he had been hidden, as he caught Jacqueline's designation of 'a sphere;' "you'll come to be of a better mind after while, I hope. Don't it ever occur to you, that women were meant to be of some use in the world?"

"Of course, papa—some of them are like the cabbage

and turnips of the kitchen-garden, and their vocation is clear enough : other are like the roses and lilies of your conservatory—their duty is to look pretty and be sweet. Now which do *you* like best—our cook's turnips, that send up such unsavory odors from the kitchen sometimes, or your '*Daphne odorata*?' "

"You've attacked me on my weak point, child," said her father, laughing; "but if the worst should come to the worst, I should give the preference to Janet's turnips, for I *could* live on them; but I would find rose-leaves rather a Paphian diet."

"You would banish from your orbit, then," said Edith, "into some outer limbo, all who couldn't perform the duty of looking pretty, or were not rich, or were troubled with a surplus of that most undesirable supernumerary in a woman—intellect."

"*Undesirable*, Miss Edith?" asked Dr. Dubois.

"Yes; as the world goes: at least I'm half inclined to think that *genius* should all be man's, and only *talent*, woman's."

"Why such a distinction?"

"Because genius demands a wide range—an unobstructed field for its exercise—and that is not allotted us; or, if so, granted stintedly and grudgingly."

"Then you would cross swords with that malicious thing we call 'the world,' along with the Amazonian tribe who are fighting for a 'wider sphere?' Ah! Miss Edith, I had hoped better of you."

"By no means! I'm perfectly content to have the barriers just where they are, since I believe Providence designed this circumscription. I firmly believe our sex was commanded to be 'under obedience,' as part of the primal curse. Our regeneration is being worked out as Christianity makes progress; and who knows but that the balances may be even, by the time we have reached the edge of the millenium," added Edith, with a smile.

"Or that your side may not 'kick the beam,'" continued Dr. Dubois, in the same strain. "Wouldn't there be a 'turning of the tables' then?"

"And something more than a 'rapping of *spirits*,' I'm thinking," pursued Mr. Dubois. "But, Edith, that doctrine of *obedience* chimes in with my ideas exactly."

Edith might have reminded him that his theory must be very vague, since it was evident he had never reduced it to any practice upon his daughter; for she thought it, though she did not speak it. He felt it himself, perhaps, for he added:

"I wish you would set Jacqueline straight. She is a *bona fide* believer in women's rights."

"Oh, papa, how can you say so?" exclaimed Jacqueline. "I only mean so far as having as much money as one wants, and going where one pleases, and doing what one likes."

"Having as much money as you want," said Dr. Dubois, "embraces the control of all the finances. Going

where, and doing what you like, is comprehensive enough to take in all female M. D.'s, attorneys, divines, steam-boat captains, and so on."

"How you exaggerate!" said Jacqueline, with a provoked air. "You know, well enough, that I think the whole tribe of such creatures hideous—just made up of soured old maids, who couldn't inveigle anybody into marrying them, and so run a tilt against all *man* kind; or, of viragos, who have had meek husbands to hen-peck, and so wondered why all wives couldn't do as they did."

"And women in want of a career, who are *not* old maids," added Edith.

"Want of a fiddlestick!" said Jacqueline.

"No, of a master, my dear," interrupted her father; "or a husband—as you please."

"But, Miss Edith," said Dr. Dubois, "I've been accustomed to think that intellect, under *all* circumstances, was an unconditional blessing—one of heaven's most precious gifts—"

"To man—undoubtedly."

"And why not to woman?"

"It makes her restless; it puts temptations before her to leave the beaten track—a thing always objectionable for a woman. If she is conscious of these noble strivings within her, she *does* feel hampered by the restraints society imposes. If she puts herself in print, she belongs no more to herself—she has taken the public into partner-

ship—so *it* thinks ; and a thousand things, thenceforth, wound her sensitive womanhood : or, if she make the drawing-room the theatre of her triumphs, that seems idle, when she might move thinking men with her eloquent words : or the round of ‘woman’s duties,’ however conscientiously performed, will grow irksome, through the sense of unoccupied power,—so disproportioned to the objects on which it is brought to bear,—like setting a steam-engine to boil a tea-kettle.”

“ But, in your eagerness to make out your position, you narrow too much the influence woman may legitimately wield. Think what drawing-rooms have accomplished—Madame Roland’s, for instance ; or Madame De Stael’s.”

“ Yes ; what ? for their owners, death, and exile. But the women, apart from their surroundings,—for their intellect had nothing to do with the horror of their times,—the women themselves we are accustomed to rank among the masculine specimens of their sex. We can’t help wishing their husbands might have changed places with them.”

“ Madame Roland is one of my heroines.”

“ But you would not have *loved* her ; and that, you men delight to think, is what woman was made for.”

“ Well,” said the doctor, rising to go, “ say what you please about intellect never inspiring love ; but a woman *all* heart, is like a dinner all dessert. One is as

essential to the loveliness of the perfect woman, as the other, in my opinion."

"Then you differ from the facts in the case. Literary and intellectual men are proverbially famous for their namby-pamby wives."

"Ah! I see--woman-like—that you will not yield, Miss Edith. So good-morning."

XVII.

Dealings with a Man of Business.

JACQUELINE had an hour's lesson with an Italian master before her ; so she left Edith with her father, wondering aloud " why she was so foolish, anyhow, as to bind herself down this way, like a child." But then, Caroline Ashmead, one of the most dazzling of her friends, sang Italian finely, and was correspondingly admired for it ; so she must not be behind her.

" Well, Edith," began Mr. Dubois, taking off his spectacles, and changing his seat to her side, as soon as the breakfast things were removed, " you are really a brave girl to undertake the mission you have ; for, I suppose, of course, my letter to your mother, is the occasion of your coming."

Edith explained how it was ; and then followed an account of the manner in which Mr. Bryson had happened to be entrusted so much with the management of their pecuniary affairs.

“Your mother has so much discrimination,” said Mr. Dubois, when she had finished, “that I’m surprised she has been so deceived in this man; and yet, sometimes, I don’t know whether to pity or despise him most. I never did think there was anything high-toned about him; but my son tells me,—for I’ve drifted out of the current of things myself, Edith, into my quiet cove here, and don’t know much of what’s going on, from personal observation,—but John tells me that his wife is at the bottom of his difficulties. She is an ambitious, extravagant woman—gives grand parties—is a patroness of art—loves to be surrounded with long-bearded foreigners; and is as much the awe, as she is the admiration of her husband. Do you know her?”

“Never have seen her. Mr. Bryson was an acquaintance of my father, and managed some business transactions once very well for him; and, after his death, my mother continued to intrust him with them, as I was telling you. Lawrence was not satisfied with his agency in the affair of the — Bank, and was averse to putting the proceeds of the sale of our place at B——, in his hands for investment; but his own health became so shattered about the time, that in our anxiety for him, it was done without much reflection.”

“And what investment did he make?”

“We never heard a word from him about it.”

“I’ll tell you how he disposed of your money—put it

into his own pocket, possibly intending, when he had used it as a little help to himself in his embarrassments,—for his wife has not reduced their style of living in the least,—to invest it, and then patch up some story to cover the failure of interest.”

“If he is such a man as that,” said Edith, discouragedly, “it will have been useless for me to have come here.”

“There’s something cowardly about him, though, and my hope for you is there. He couldn’t look you fairly in the eye—that, however, was a thing he didn’t use to do in his most prosperous days, and gave me my first distrust of him; for, depend upon it, a man who skulks away from the windows at which his soul should look out, is afraid to let that soul’s countenance be seen.”

“With such a pair to deal with, my case is rather hopeless, I fear.”

“But he prides himself on his gentlemanliness—is *au fait* on all points of etiquette, and is as sensitive about his *honor*, as a *parvenu* on the score of position; so a lady, a young lady, the daughter of his early friend, can avail herself of all this.”

“You think, then, at least, I shall have the satisfaction of being cheated with all the grace of a French shopman, if I am cheated.”

“No doubt; but I hope I’m too hard on him. I can’t believe him wholly dead to any sense of justice. The sum is at least worth trying for.”

“It is *almost* our all,” said Edith, with a disturbed face.

“But you have your plantation in Virginia, unembarrassed?”

“Our plantation, as you are pleased to call it, or my brother’s—for my father left it to him—only consists of the old homestead built by my grandfather,—once, indeed, surrounded by broad acres, but now having only some fifty or so left, and they in a very neglected condition, owing to the place having been for some time untenanted, and managed only by a few negroes.”

“Poor child!” said Mr. Dubois, musingly; but his words seemed to have reference to Mrs. Irvine, for he continued—“with that pretty fortune she had at her marriage, who’d have thought it? Pity it hadn’t been settled upon herself.”

“She says my father proposed it, but she told him she was not afraid to trust her *money* in the hands to which she entrusted *herself*.”

“A wise precaution, nevertheless.”

“I can’t see it so, sir. It tends to cause a division of interests where there should be but one. Besides, what true wife would ever withhold the means that might extricate her husband from difficulties, if she had them in her possession? So, in the end, it amounts to the same thing as if no such settlement had been made.”

“You are a ‘women’s rights’ woman in no sense of the

word, Edith," said Mr. Dubois, patting her in a pleased way on the shoulder. "Well, you're none the worse for that; but when do you want to see Mr. Bryson? The carriage is at your service for any hour; but you're not rested yet; wait till to-morrow."

"The sooner the better, I think," replied Edith. "Suspense is a trying thing. Yes; I'll go to-day."

Jacqueline's Italian lesson was over, and she came dancing into the breakfast-room, with two or three notes triumphantly displayed in her hand.

"Mr. Dawson is to be here at one o'clock," she exclaimed, "with his elegant turn-out, and we'll have a magnificent sleigh-ride of it along the S——. The river is filled with skaters, and it will be *so* gay! And here are two separate requests for permission to be my attendant cavalier at L——'s concert to-morrow night. Ah! Edith, what it is to be a belle!"

Edith went with her up-stairs, with the intention of writing home before she would go out; but Jacqueline compelled her to go to her chamber, and help her to pass judgment on some articles awaiting her decision. In the first place, a box of laces had been sent for her inspection from E——'s, and the man had not taken his departure with them before another from L——'s made his appearance with a case of rich silks that had been ordered for her to look at. So her maid must close all the inside shutters, and light the gas, that Jacqueline might try its

effect upon blue *moire antique*, or *glace couleur de rose*, while she stepped back and forth before the cheval-glass, gathering gracefully about her the folds of the heavy silk. The knotty point of choice was settled at length—the shutters thrown open again, and Edith about to leave the room, when she was detained farther, by Jacqueline's producing a bracelet for her inspection. Unloosening her sleeve, she clasped it upon her own fair, round arm. "Isn't this setting of rubies exquisite?" she asked, holding it in various positions, so as to concentrate the crimsoned light. "Now a particularly good friend of mine sent me this 'toy,' as he called it, two days ago, and I've returned not a word of thanks yet, for lack of the most appropriate way to convey them. I've tried my hand at some verses, but they don't please me. Edith, don't you write *vers de société*, sometimes?"

"Why, I believe everybody does, now-a-days," replied Edith; "and not to be singular, I fall in, occasionally, with the fashion."

"Well, write a few to my order—kind, and even a little, *very* little tender. You understand—just the merest *soupçon*—nothing more."

"But it is now eleven, you see," said Edith, pointing to the French clock that ticked on the mantel.

"Time enough to dress, and do that, too, before lunch."

"But I must write home—and I go out at two."

"Where, pray?"

“On the business that brought me here—”

“*You attend to business!*” interrupted Jacqueline, incredulously. “Why don’t you ask papa or Giovanni to do it for you?”

“Nobody can do it but myself.”

“Bless me! can’t you tell them what you want done? and as to your letter—that’s soon dispatched. Come, now; for once do as I wish. Here, Jane, draw up that table to the grate and unlock my desk.”

There was no escape from her importunities, and Edith was obliged to comply, or seem stubborn; and so, while Jacqueline was being dressed, she threw off some lines, with the advantage of a running accompaniment of talk from her companion, by way of concentrative to her thoughts.

“Read them aloud,” bade Jacqueline, as Edith passed the paper over to her. “I’m busy, you see, having my hair curled.”

Edith complied, though her good-nature was a little stirred.

“TO ———.

“Your golden circlet clasps my arm,
And ’midst the gems so rare,
The light is trembling with the charm
That holds it prisoner there.

“Touched with the glowing ruby gleams,
Cloud-pillowed it will lie,

And breathe its heart in tell-tale dreams
Upon the evening sky.

“ But purer links than these,—inwove
With yet a subtler art,—
Set with that burning jewel, love,
Are clasped above my heart.

“ Thought lingers,—kindling at the glance,
And though it owns no thrall,
There gathers o’er my eye’s expanse,
A haze that tells you all !”

“ Too ardent, entirely !” exclaimed Jacqueline. “ Why, that’s a downright confession. Couldn’t you do it up in a little cooler way ?”

“ Well, since you don’t like either the setting or the cutting of the stone,” said Edith, rising, “ be the lapidary yourself ; or, Cleopatra-fashion, melt it down, to suit your taste, in some critical vinegar.”

But Jacqueline always had her way ; and by the time the revisions she suggested were made, the sleigh (a fairy enough vehicle to have served Amphitrite as a shallop) was at the door, driven by a servant in half-livery, and drawn by mettlesome horses, whose strings of bells kept time to their impatient hoofs. Mr. Dawson came in to lunch ; and, after it was over, Edith watched from the window, as Jacqueline took her seat in the sleigh,—her

plumes flying, her wavy curls floating in the wind, eyes and cheeks brilliant, and lips brimming with merriment,—wondering, the while, that under so captivating an exterior should lurk, like a serpent amid the flowers, the spirit of vanity and selfishness. “Yet I might have been just like her,” was her thought, as she turned from the window, “but for the precious guide God has given me. Poor thing! she never knew what it was to have a mother!” The sleigh was scarcely out of sight, before the carriage was at the door, and Edith was soon in it, and on her way to the accomplishment of her unenviable errand.

To a temperament like her’s—frank, self-possessed, cordial, where she felt herself loved and appreciated; but the very reverse—withdrawn, timid and restrained, where she did not know her ground, or among strangers—the meeting with Mr. Bryson was most trying; and her heart throbbed quicker as the carriage stopped before an aristocratic mansion of brown-stone. “This the home of a bankrupt!” thought Edith, as she looked up to the richly moulded window cornices, the carved door-way, almost wide enough to let in a carriage-and-four; the sweep of massive steps; the stone balustrades of the balcony—and she turned, for an instant, to her own home far away, by force of contrast, and remembered that, but for the mismanagement,—it might be the dishonesty of the dweller here,—a comfortable competence, at least, might have been

their portion, under that humbler roof, instead of the positive apprehension of poverty. With a feeling of relief she could not hide from herself, she heard the servant, who admitted her, say, that Mr. Bryson was not in. Finding at what hour he dined, without leaving card or name, she entered the carriage again, and drove to see an old friend of her mother, and whiled away the time in listening to reminiscences such as the aged delight to indulge in.

“Will you please send in your name, madam,” added the servant, after a hesitating affirmative to Edith’s inquiry, as to whether Mr. Bryson had returned. To do this, would be, in all probability, to subject herself to a denial; so she simply stepped into the hall, with a request to see him. But in his present circumstances, Mr. Bryson was chary of seeing strangers; so the servant returned with an answer, that he was particularly engaged. A boy of some eight or ten years came bounding out of one of the doors into the hall—“Why, papa is only reading the papers in the back parlor,” he said, by way of correction. “Why don’t you ask the lady in, Robert?” and, without farther ceremony, the child flung wide the door, and ushered Edith in. She looked round upon the costly furniture of the apartment—the rich lace-lined curtains—the embroidery of the divans and *fauteuils*—the mirrors—the pictures—the articles of *vertu*—in short, everything that met her eye, bespoke the most lavish expenditure. She began to turn over the leaves of a magnificent quarto

volume of French engravings that lay on a *verd antique* sofa-table near her, when a step, almost smothered by the heavy pile of the carpet, made her look up.

“Ah! am I to believe my eyes?” exclaimed Mr. Bryson, approaching with inquisitive glance, and extended hand—“Miss Edith Irvine, as I live! Pardon me,” he added, drawing an ottoman in front of her, and speaking in his courtly way. “Could I, for an instant, have anticipated such a pleasure as this, it would have been the farthest from my thoughts, in the world, to have allowed any but the most imperative business to prevent my seeing you. I’m glad my little son took it upon himself to be your gentleman-usher, as the servant produced the impression that it was only a common caller. And now, how is your good mother, and your brother? Business—business, Miss Edith, is an unrelenting master—leaves no time for the keeping fresh old friendships. But I’m impatient to hear of you all.”

Edith satisfied his rapid and minute inquiries, half reproaching herself as she did so, for her harsh thoughts towards him, for he seemed really kind, and there was no evidence of chagrin at her sudden appearance; but, on the contrary, a degree even of *empressement* in all his manner.

“Gone to Havana, indeed? Well, I’m relieved to hear that. We may hope for his more speedy restoration, than if he had remained in Virginia. His life is so precious to

you all," and Mr. Bryson paused, sympathetically, for Edith had averted her eyes; "but you have reason to hope for the best." And then followed a most minute account of the experience of a brother-in-law of his wife, who, after spending a winter on a sugar-plantation in Jamaica, had come home well. There was not the slightest pause, on the part of the voluble talker; and, without an interruption that would have seemed rude, Edith could find no means of giving the conversation any turn in the direction she wished. Endless were the questions about their new home; pressed, too, with such an air of interest, that she felt ashamed to distrust the motive; but she had wound herself up to the point, and was not to be circumvented by the lapwing-like trick. So, summoning her resolution, she broke in with the sudden inquiry:

"Are you not surprised, somewhat, to see me here, in —, under present circumstances, Mr. Bryson?"

"Ah! yes," he replied, quickly. "I was on the point of saying, that our sweetest birds fly south, instead of north, at this season; but I felt some delicacy in making any allusion that might trench upon private affairs of your own. It is suspicious, when young ladies fly off in a tangent in this way—shopping expeditions—*trousseaux*—bridals in the prospective; eh, Miss Edith? And by the way, I have not asked you whether the young gentleman who came up with your mother, on her visit to —, just before she went south, Mr. Woodruff, I mean—whether *he* has accompanied you."

Mr. Bryson bent for a moment towards Edith, and saw the slight flush that brightened on her cheek.

“Ah,—so,—” he went on in his fidgetty, mercurial way, yet, as if he had discovered something that gave him relief. “Really, I must send for Mrs. Bryson, and let her try if her efforts can’t prevail on you to dine with us ; and now just say at what hotel Mr. Woodruff puts up, and I’ll dispatch a servant for *him*—”

“Mr. Woodruff is not with me at all,” interrupted Edith, half provoked. “Allay all such suspicions, as your words seem to intimate. I came on business.”

“Ah ! indeed !” exclaimed Mr. Bryson, quite incredulously, and stepping to the door, as if to anticipate the servant who was coming to answer his ring, he called to him to tell Mrs. Bryson he wished her to come down, and bring Miss Evererts with her ; then, as if recollecting some further order, he begged Edith’s indulgence for a moment, and left the room. He soon returned, however, ushering in the lady in question, and his wife, a woman of masculine proportions, in whose shadow three such men as himself might have been concealed. Mrs. Bryson was formally and condescendingly polite to Edith, and very faintly echoed her husband’s invitation that she would consider herself their guest for dinner, which, of course, was declined. Miss Evererts out-chatted Mr. Bryson even, and had endless inquiries to make about people in Virginia, of whom Edith had never heard, and whose existence

she was disposed, in her disappointment, to think a probable myth. It was utterly in vain to say a word about the object of her visit, under the circumstances, so she rose to depart, intending to ask Mr. Bryson, pointedly, as soon as they were out of hearing of the ladies, to allow her an interview at some other time. On turning to do so in the hall, what was her surprise to find a servant only behind her, ready to hand her out. The gentleman had bowed his adieu within, and the drawing-room door was closed. Had her pride been less wounded to find herself thus shuffled off, she would probably have demanded still to see him; as it was, she threw herself into the carriage, disposed, woman-like, to cry with vexation and chagrin.

Tea was over before Edith could find leisure for the letter she had promised her mother should be written immediately on her arrival at ———, and she was leaving the parlor, to fulfill the promise, when Jacqueline detained her.

“I’m sadly puzzled over this smoking-cap. I’ve got the pattern all wrong, you see, and I don’t know how to right it. You have a knack at these things, Edith. I want you to help me out of the difficulty.”

Edith supposed a minute or so might remedy the mistake, as she looked at the piece of velvet Jacqueline flung towards her.

“It’s a senseless bother, anyhow,” exclaimed the amiable young lady. “If it weren’t that Theodore Gates will

prize a Christmas-present made by my hands, a thousand times more than any I could buy, I wouldn't trouble myself to take another stitch. Be thankful, Edith, that you have no such penalty to pay for popularity."

"I am,—thankful that I'm not a slave dragged at Fashion's merciless chariot wheels," replied Edith, spiritedly, while a bright spot came into her cheek.

"Oh! I claim to be one of the favored ones who sit in her triumphal car," said Jacqueline, satisfiedly; "but it's the gold threads that are wrong, too. Pray, rip them."

"Oh! never mind that everlasting letter," she persisted, in reply to some words of Edith. "No news are always good news; so help me, for I have this cap, and a purse, and I don't know how many more things that I *must* have finished before Christmas."

As she spoke, a couple of gentlemen were announced, and she eagerly absorbed them both, after a hurried presentation of them to Edith, who still sat with the embroidery in her hand.

To have left the room just then would have seemed too cognizant of being overlooked; so Edith sat quietly working, and listening to the conversation made up of local allusions and references to people of whom she knew nothing. Thinking, at length, that she had been in duration long enough, she turned quietly to Jacqueline:

"The mistake is rectified, I believe; so you will excuse me."

“Let me see,” and Jacqueline held out her begemmed hand for the velvet. “Why, yes ; it looks very nice. Just, pray, do a little more, you do it so prettily. Come, now ; don’t be disobliging,” she said, coaxingly, as Edith rose to go, “you know there’s no hurry at all for that letter, and there *is* for this.”

“I apprehend Miss Irvine is the best judge in regard to the letter,” interposed one of the gentlemen, as he left Jacqueline’s side, and approached Edith, with an evident wish to enter into conversation with her ; “but if the letter can be postponed, I vote for its being done.”

“Oh, well, if you are so bent upon it, I suppose you’ll have to go,” said Jacqueline, quickly. “You may as well take the embroidery with you, and if you don’t feel like joining us after your letter is written, you’ll surprise me, I know, by having some of those leaves finished.”

Take from woman what you will—beauty, wit, genius, every accomplishment and grace, but leave her, above all things—leave her *tenderness*—tenderness of look, and tone, and thought, and then will there be about her an angel-light, an inner loveliness, before which all these exterior charms—if they hide a cold and selfish nature—will seem only as the golden casket that held concealed the death’s head !

XVIII.

Sights in a Cathedral.

SEVERAL tempestuous days kept Edith quite housed, and entirely interfered with the immediate prosecution of the business she had in hand; but a packet of home-letters proved something of a salvo to her in her disappointment.

“I don’t know how to be grateful enough,” wrote her mother, “for the tender care with which (as you will see from the portions of their letters I enclose) Providence has watched over our wanderers. Surely, ‘goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life!’ Surely, I can say: ‘Hitherto hath the Lord helped me.’ And now, after all these details which I have been giving you of Lawrence’s improved health, and Zilpha’s hopeful anticipations—of the comfortable way we have managed to get on here without you, while trying not to miss you too much, will you ever again, dear child, let yourself doubt that for every emergency, for every trial, for every duty, the ‘Lord *will* provide?’ He has given us proof upon proof of the

truth of His declaration in our own experience ; so, then, let us trust Him on even unto the end."

"You cannot imagine," ran another paragraph, "how disposed I was, after you were fairly off, to regret that I had not gone to ——— myself, for I am afraid the business may be trying to you. But I did what, under the circumstances, seemed best at the time. You know my idea of duty is, to get all the light we can upon the matter in question,—to ask directions from above, and then act according to the best of our judgment, leaving the issue in the divine hand. This I endeavored to do, and so am determined not to let any regrets trouble me. Your dear father's counsel, which he used to be fond of repeating, often comes up to me,—‘never grieve over what *can* be helped, but help it; and never grieve over what *cannot*, since it will avail nothing.’ So, if you are successful in your errand, we will be very thankful; if not, we will try and believe that God would have it so, and rest content."

There were pages upon pages of tissue-like paper, covered with the journal-letters of Lawrence and Zilpha,—every line full of interest for Edith, to whom no details were too minute touching those so well beloved. There were descriptions of ocean in its various moods; there were clear, vivid sketches from Lawrence's hand, of some of their fellow voyagers, marked by the quiet, playful humor peculiar to him—little incidents on ship-board—

the first impressions of a foreign shore—the gallant “Habane-ros,” and the indolent life in their “*hermosissima isla*”—such and kindred themes filled their pages.

“I could not help thinking how Sepha would have clapped her hands at sight of the odd, gay carriages that crowd the streets every evening, filled with black-eyed and black-haired *senoritas*, with no bonnets on their heads, but wreaths of flowers instead, looking like so many May-queens. There is nothing that may be called winter here, you know, so that flowers and foliage are in luxuriant abundance, though it is almost December. The plumes of the palm-trees, the rows of pomegranates, the aloe-enclosed fields of pine-apples, the coffee plantations, and scores of other things, make us feel as if we were much farther away than we really are, from our own familiar land. Just think of it, Eunice—you who are nursing so carefully the scarlet cactus you brought all the way from B ———; think of *hedges* formed of the most splendid varieties! But if they have flowers and fruits and winterless weather here, I assure you they are wanting in a thousand matters more essential to one’s comfort. Imagine our great fortress-like hotel, with its grated windows, innocent of a single pane of glass, doors like a barn, marble floors, and uninviting beds. Oriental luxury will be sure to be associated in your mind, Edith, with tessellated pavements; but a bright carpet is a good deal more to my liking, and mother dear will hardly be able to take in the barest idea of comfort within th

shadow of Christmas, without a glowing fire. For the peace of Sepha's mind, let me inform her that insects *are* another component of the atmosphere here ; at all events, I am sure of having *breathed* them, and am of opinion that it would have been well to have accepted her suggestion of a strainer for my drinks. But such an aid, such a comfort as Zilpha is to me ! She interposes between me and these Spanish servants, and has dishes prepared as nearly as possible in the home fashion for me ; she screens my window at night with one of her great shawls ; she makes me pleasant draughts ; she cheers me when I am depressed—gives me sunshine for my spirit—strength for my heart, when it is weak and weary ; and with her sweet, calm words of hope and trust, helps to fix my soul more firmly in the persuasion of God's unalterable love. Ah ! how I thank you all for the self-denial that made you willing to give her up, and how my whole nature thrills with a tenderness towards her, which language is too poor to speak !”

“ We strayed out for a walk this morning,”—(this page was in Zilpha's hand writing,)—“ having in view a sort of pilgrimage to the tomb of Columbus, who, you know, is buried in the Cathedral here. I will not describe the interior of this building, as I have a sketch of it made for ‘you all's’ satisfaction, as Uncle Felix would say. I am not apt to become *enthused* very much over anything, but must own to a strange flutter of emotion as I stood before

the urn that held the dust of one of the noblest, most self-sacrificing beings God ever made! Do you remember, Edith, how we were moved to tears when reading of his being taken home to Spain in chains? and of his shipwreck among these very islands, when 'castled in the sea,' he so heroically fought off despair, through all that most disastrous year of his life? I recalled the time most vividly, and thought how little idea I then had, when pouring over the book with a child's delight, under the vine-covered porch at B——, of standing before the tomb of the old hero. The great incidents of his life passed in momentary review before me—his disappointments—his sufferings—his trials—his triumphs; the plaudits of a kingdom following him—royally attended, yet bending the knee with chivalric reverence before his queen—his Christian death—his name that fills the world. Lawrence's heart was as full as mine, but he did not say much. You know it is not his way to talk when deeply moved. But we saw something that touched us far more than this, in the Cathedral, and I am half afraid that if I confess all I felt, you will begin to tremble for my Protestantism, and to fancy I had better be getting away from this Popish country.

"We had lingered till most of the devotees—for it were a sin to call them worshippers—were gone: only here and there a *senora* on her bit of carpet, with the black page who had carried it, kneeling behind her. What

interested us so strongly, was a little side chapel, filled by a picture of Christ on the cross,—the moment, that in which he utters ‘it is finished,’ bows his head, and gives up the ghost. I have tried a thousand times to realize the fearful scene—the anguish of the Redeemer’s human soul, with all its perfect and exquisite sensibilities, sustained by its union with the divine, and strengthened to bear in one terrific whole,—and in those few hours of unutterable agony, what, when broken into portions, and parceled out to lost angels, requires an eternity ; but never till this morning did I seem to have approached the conception, even of the bodily suffering ; of the mental, of course, finite mind can take in no thought. The most perfect unity pervaded the picture, and although it seems presumptuous in the highest degree, to attempt to portray what must ever be beyond the power of human pencil, there was nothing here to wound my Protestant feelings—nothing to divert the mind from the one thought. There were no sorrowful disciples and weeping women—no bringing of mere human grief into competition with the inconceivable agony of the God-man, as if the same gauge might be used to measure the anguish of the earthly and the divine ! In the centre of the picture stood only the cross against a back-ground of clouds, dark, heavy, thunderous, with a wild glare of lightning concentrating itself upon the upturned face of the Saviour. Those words of more fearful pathos than were ever uttered in

God's universe, seemed just to have quivered on the deathly-pale lips, and succeeding to them, the thought that satisfied even Christ's mighty travail of soul—"it is finished!" The torture of the man, and the triumph of the God were blended in mysterious union on the heavenly face, which, even in the ghastliness of death, wore an expression of the most unearthly and marvellous beauty. The pierced hands, on which the whole weight of the suspended body hung, the stretched and starting tendons, the bloodless arms and strained sockets, the upheaved chest, the quivering feet, purple with the settled gore—these might have formed a combination from which one would shrink in fear. But that was not the effect. The bodily suffering seemed a subordinate idea. I was irresistibly drawn forward, and longed to lay my cheek against that cross, and clasp those bleeding feet. I thought of the *sin* for which such an atonement alone was adequate, and remembered with a streaming eye, that *mine* could be expiated at a cost no less tremendous.

"In my absorption, I had wholly forgotten where I was, and was only recalled by a chance sight of Lawrence. He was kneeling on the step, and leaning over the railing, just as I had seen the deluded creatures do, a little while before. But there was a strange radiance on his face, as if he had caught something of the reflected glory of the one on which he looked; and his expression, at all times, so refined and lofty, had in it a reverent joy. His

hands were clasped, and I caught some of his whispered words—‘It *is* finished. Thou has begun, continued, completed it all! I can add nothing. Where were the need? It is *finished*!’ I feared to break his ecstatic reverie. I did not; but, after a while, he turned to me with a low voice—‘Zilpha, do you feel as if you *could* go into yon street again, after having been so close to Calvary?’

“I have dwelt too long on this description, for I am sure I have failed to convey any just idea of the picture to your minds; but I did it, principally, that I might show you how dangerous is the appeal the Romish Church makes to the senses of its votaries; for the poor Papist stops at the canvas: we, I trust, went beyond it—”

“Thank God!” inwardly ejaculated Edith, as she folded up the last sheet, “for the blessed affections of home!”

Yes, thank God for them—for the unworldly love—the tenderness nowhere else to be found on all this broad, green earth—the unflagging devotion—the beautiful oneness of interest—the perfect, unquestioning trust! What is all the happiness that genius, or wealth, or fame, or honor can bestow, when brought into comparison with the pure heart-refreshment, and heart-satisfaction of *home*! It is the one spot, fresh with cool, unfailing waters, and bright, as with the atmosphere of heaven, to which memory goes back most achingly, most longingly, as we travel on

through life, beneath skies that smite our heads, and sands that scorch our feet, weary and athirst for the draughts which the world's muddy pools, impure with the green slime of envy, and distrust, and unkindness, and hate, can never give. Yes; God be praised for the blessed affections of home !

XIX.

Sympathies.

It was the Sabbath morning, clear, cold, and sparkling, and as they lingered over the late breakfast, Edith asked the hour for the commencement of church services.

“Not going to church to-day, Edith?” demanded Jacqueline. “Why, what grievous sin have you committed, that you are going to condemn yourself to the penance of trying to keep your balance on pavements that are slippery as glass? It’s too cold to go, besides; and I’ve got a new novel. You needn’t look so grave; it’s a sort of religious one, and if you will stay at home and read it aloud to me, you may do me more good than you would do yourself by going to church.”

“But, Jacqueline,” said Edith, gravely, “have you no hesitation in setting at nought God’s direct commands—‘forsake not the assembling of yourselves together,’ and, ‘remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy?’ ”

“ But I *do* go to church generally once a day, at least ; and, pray, where’s the harm in reading a religious novel ? ”

“ God claims the *entire* day as His. We can’t purchase indulgences for lightly spent Sabbath evenings, by the most scrupulous attention to the morning and afternoon service—that is the Rominst’s idea, and you, Jacqueline, ought to scout that, with Huguenot blood in your veins. And as to the novels,—is it for the religion in them that you read them ? ”

“ Why, no ; not exactly. Indeed, to tell the truth, I often skip the prosy sermons in them, if I can do it without loosing any of the story.”

“ Then amusement is your only aim. Oh ! Jacqueline ! ”

“ Well, pray, how would you have me spend the day so that it should not be stupid ? I’m not religious, and it would be the merest hypocrisy for me to sit with a Bible in my hand, pretending to be devout. Even when I do go to church, my thoughts treat themselves to a pleasure excursion round the pews ; and by the time I have studied the cut of the most fashionable cloaks, and the price of the furs, and the probable value of the Honiton and Mechlen collars, and a few more things of that un-Christian sort, the sermon is about up. Now, I would like to know if staying at home, and reading a good novel, is any worse than that.”

“Yes ; though the account you give of yourself is bad enough, but by staying at home, you disobey a positive command, and put yourself out of the way of being reached by the gospel. You say truly enough that you are not religious ; but whose fault is that ?”

“Bless me ! are you going to take *me* for a text ? I might as well go and hear Dr. G — sermonize. I wouldn’t be likely to find him so personal.”

“No, I will spare you ; but, pray, let me ask who it is you want to bless you ? Some unseen person, I suppose, who has the power to grant your wish.”

“Mercy on me ! how puritanical, Edith ! You think it’s wrong, do you ? Why, I don’t mean anybody in particular.”

“Yet you just called on some one to have mercy on you. Were you in earnest ?”

“Good gracious ! what would you have me say ?”

“Not *that*, certainly. Now look for a moment at your three consecutive expressions—‘bless me,’ ‘mercy on me,’ and good gracious’—a mere mincing of ‘God be gracious.’ Of course, these are all appeals to the Divine Being.”

“Why, I never think of such a thing !”

“Neither does the man who habitually uses the name of God, by way of giving emphasis to his assertions.”

“What must I say, then ? for I must have an explosive of some kind.”

“Let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay.”

“Ah! you are ‘unco good,’ as Janet, our Scotch cook says. I’ll get on bravely, if I have nothing worse than this to answer for; and I must have something to effervesce upon, when my brother teazes me.”

“Teazes? I supposed the teasing was on the other side. Don’t you remember, last night, you told him it was your determination to persist in calling him ‘Giovanni,’ just because it vexed him?”

“And I *will*, too—he professes to have such a scorn of affectation. I shall interlard my conversation with quotations from Alfieri, or Metastasio, you may rely on it, as soon as I get to reading them.”

“You find Jacqueline a giddy thing, Edith,” said Mr. Dubois, who had re-entered the breakfast-room while they were talking, “a giddy thing,” and he kissed her fair forehead as he spoke, “but she’ll settle down into something sober after a while, I hope, and become good, as her mother was.”

Yes; let the wild weeds of youthful folly fill the garden of this young heart; let them grow up rankly; let them mature, turning up their bright but pernicious blossoms to the world’s sunshine; let their seeds ripen and drop into the virgin soil. These seeds will undergo a change in time—*how*, is not just clear; but some metamorphose will take place. They will put forth vigorous, wholesome shoots, which will spring up in richness and beauty—be

clothed with fragrant flowers, which shall give way to fruits fit for the garner of God !

Mr. Dubois forgot that cause and effect are as inevitably linked together in the spiritual as the natural world—that he might as truly have expected the purple clusters of grapes on the wall of his conservatory to have been produced from the carelessly dropped seeds of the hellebore !

“ Red eyes, I aver ! ” exclaimed Dr. Dubois, as they sat round the dinner-table, waiting for Jacqueline, who had just entered. “ Whose fictitious woes have drawn upon your compassions so deeply, my weeping Niobe ? ”

“ No teasing, if you please, Giovanni. You would cry, yourself, over such a story. ”

“ *I* cry over a novel ! I see rather too much in real life to move my sensibilities, to waste a scant tear over fancy griefs. It’s my belief that whenever benevolent impulses are roused, or sympathetic tears started, which are not followed up by correspondent action, there is more injury sustained by the sensibilities thus moved, than if they had remained unimpressed. What think *you*, Miss Edith ? ”

“ As you do. These stirred emotions, like the waters of a suddenly swollen stream, ought to fertilize the meadows around them, by their overflow ; but, if the waters are *dammed up*, they may do more harm, fretting against their own banks, and drowning their verdure, than if the stream had not been augmented at all. ”

“ Your illustration don’t hold good in all points, Edith, ”

said Mr. Dubois. "Legitimately aroused sensibilities, even when 'dammed up,' and doing no good to others, can hardly be said to injure the nature stirred by them."

"Now, there, sir," replied Dr. Dubois, "is the best point in the simile, I contend. The oftener our sensibilities are called forth, and then thrown back upon themselves, without expending their force in the action to which they impel, the more blunted they become. If it were not so, wholesale devourers of novels would be the class of people the most easily moved by real distress; but they are not—"

"A side stroke for me, I suppose," interrupted Jacqueline, "because I wouldn't lay down my book the other day, to listen to some beggar's story. Such cheats as they all are! It is enough to 'harden any one's heart against them.'"

"Cheats, no doubt, there are in abundance among them. I remember having my compassions greatly moved by being beset in the streets of Paris one day by a miserable woman with a dead infant which she said she had not the means of burying. I confess to feeling the hardening process when I discovered, a few days after, that the child was a *wax one*! But because there is counterfeit coin abroad, we must not refuse to take any. I believe," he said, addressing himself to Edith again, "the secret of the fact that physicians don't grow indifferent to suffering of which they see so much, and are the least hard-hearted,

perhaps, of any given class of men, is because their sympathies are no sooner appealed to, than they tend to their rightful end—to afford relief. But for this nice provision of nature, they might become as obtuse as a fashionable novel-reader.”

“Bless me! what self-complacency!” exclaimed Jacqueline. “Edith, I suggest that we leave him to peel his orange by himself. As I am too incorrigible for any relief he can give me, I had better take myself away, for fear the sight of such obtuseness might injure the purple bloom of his over-ripe compassions.”

That same evening, as Edith sat before the library fire, turning over the leaves of a volume she had taken down, Dr. Dubois joined her.

“I had serious thoughts,” he said, “of asking you to do a deed of mercy this afternoon; but Jacqueline put her veto upon it, and I was fain to give up my idea.”

“I am so sorry!” and Edith looked with a sort of reproachful inquiry towards Jacqueline, who, with her book on her lap, sat on the leopard-skin mat near her.

“Sorry! Is that all the gratitude you have, when I saved you from a horrid, sloppy walk away to D—— street, when Giovanni had some poor miserable girl to look after?” asked Jacqueline. “You’d have had to hold your *vinaigrette* to your nose, I promise you; and I dare say she lived up five pairs of rickety stairs—your interesting sick people always do. So in kindness to you, I told

John you had taken some cold by going to church in the morning ; and, besides, I had been alone all day, and wanted you with me."

" But, why didn't you ask me about it? I should have considered it a privilege, doctor, to have gone with you, if I could have done any good. Well," continued Edith, shutting up her book, while Jacqueline went on with hers, and so failed to see the vexed expression with which her brother regarded her, " you will let me go to-morrow, or the next time you visit your patient?"

Dr. Dubois acquiesced with an expression of warm thanks ; and, after interesting Edith with some details about the poor, young creature he had been visiting, he went on, after a pause—

" You Christians talk about God's providence ; but how can you reconcile the facts with which the world abounds ? Now, there's that dying girl—patient, thankful, uncomplaining, lying alone, without earthly comforts, as utterly forsaken of man, and of God, too, one would think, but from her assertion to me to-day to the contrary, as if she were the most ungrateful wretch alive ; while your sick sinner, who defies human and divine law, is bolstered up with every appliance that money can provide—yet he rails and frets. I've just such patients at this moment. Now, where's your just Providence all this time?"

" I am sure, to go no further than mere stoical philosophy will take you, doctor, you will grant that that mind

has attained to the most rational point, which can be the most independent of external circumstances. You remember Milton's lines—

“ ‘ He that hath light within his own clear breast—’ ”

The doctor took them from Edith's lips as she paused, and repeated the fine paragraph to the end.

“ Well,” continued Edith, “ we claim infinitely more for Christianity than your philosophy can teach. Would you not this moment take the heavenly peace, and hope, and resignation, which you have been telling me is so remarkable in the case of this poor girl, with all the surroundings of discomfort and poverty, which touch not the soul, rather than your rich patient's luxury, with its accompaniment of disquiet, or perhaps anguish, of which you may see but the surface ?”

“ Still, you are not answering my question. Why does Providence thus deal with those who live so as to please him best ? Why stint and treat them so harshly, if he has the world at his command, for their necessities, and lavish luxuries on those who scorn him ? Surely, there is no bribe held out to induce people to become Christians.”

“ This is part of the discipline, by means of which they come to be ‘ put among the children.’ Trial may have been—must have been needed, to bring this sick girl to her present submissive state. It is hardly wrong to exalt suffering to the utmost—to call it divine, if it works out the result which He who sends it, intends that it should.”

“ You surely don’t think there is anything meritorious in mere suffering ? ”

“ By no means. So much do I object to the Popish idea of it, that I would not have that expression—‘ perfect through suffering ’—used as it often is used now-a-days, without a special limit of it to the *results* of the thing, not the thing itself; and is there not some such law as this, underlying all the order of nature ? The ore must be passed through the furnace, before we have the gold ; the rough stone must be filed, before we see the sparkle of the gem ; the gums must be bruised, or they will not give out their precious odor ; the roses must be crushed, that we may have the fragrant oil ; the soil must be torn up by the plow-share, before there can be any harvest ; and through such a process must the soul receive its strength.”

“ You would make endurance, divine—the Prometheus on the rock ; but that does not relieve my difficulty. Pain can by no manner of means be esteemed a good, unless the end aimed at, is to be attained in no other way. To say that God can purify His creatures, and fit them for their work here, or their reward hereafter, by no other process, is to limit His power.”

“ We don’t say that ; but we do say that it is a plan He often sees proper to adopt ; and if infinite wisdom approve it, does it become us to demand the ‘ wherefore ? ’ ‘ Even so, Father ! for so it seemeth good in Thy sight ! ’ ”

XX.

The Way of the World.

“MRS. BRYSON is just going out,” was the message with which Edith was met, as she stood upon the merchant’s stately threshold, the next day. But through the inner door of the hall, she had caught a glimpse of a nodding plume, as the lady had passed into one of the drawing-rooms; so she requested the servant to show her in—a thing he seemed extremely reluctant to do. Something very like a blush mantled her face, as she thought of forcing herself thus upon Mrs. Bryson, who did not advance to meet her, but stood coolly drawing on her gloves, as if she failed to recognise her.

“Ah! Miss Irvine, is it?” she said, as Edith extended her hand. “You are wanting to see Mr. Bryson, I suppose. He is so absorbed in business, I scarcely get a sight of him myself, except at the dinner-table.”

“My business can as well be transacted with yourself, madam,” replied Edith, subsiding into a seat; for she

quivered a little under the hard scrutiny of the cold eye upon her.

“Business! I am so intent upon my own this morning, that I positively must refuse to undertake any one else’s.”

She did not take a seat, and it was evident that she expected Edith to understand her words as a hint to go; but the thought of the little circle at Silverwood—the remembrance of the mother there, whose heart was following her with prayerful hope—the beloved ones in that far-away island, whose comfort might be so greatly involved in her present action, swept with strengthening influence through her mind, and she grew strong again.

With a gentle manner, yet firm as it was calm, she stated the object of her visit to the city—the embarrassments of her mother—the present helpless condition of the family, during the absence of her brother in ill health—the urgency there was, in consequence, for the withdrawal of the sum of money which had been placed in Mr. Bryson’s hands some months before.

“And pray, why could not your mother have written to my husband. It was strange for *you* to put yourself to this trouble and expense for a matter of business that might have been better arranged by letter.”

“Madam,” said Edith, looking up in her face, with a clear, steady eye, “I will be candid, for I can stoop

to no equivocation. You may suppose the news of Mr. Bryson's embarrassments would naturally reach us through the letters of friends. Our absolute necessities made my mother unwilling to run the risk of a letter's delay; and she hoped, besides, that a personal application to your husband, would meet with more immediate attention."

"Why am *I* troubled then?"

"I *have* sought Mr. Bryson, and have been twice disappointed in seeing him."

"He is at his counting-house. I can give you the number. What should *I* know of his business affairs?"

"You have no knowledge, then, of this claim my mother makes?"

"Why, it is absurd to suppose that I can know anything of the business details of a house that reckons its transactions by hundreds of thousands. This much I *do* know," she added, haughtily, "that like an eagle with a broken wing, my husband has been pounced upon by vultures of creditors, who worry his life out with their pertinacious demands. I make no doubt but that you know the extent of his disability, and are aware that he has given up everything. I hope that satisfies them."

"All?" responded Edith. "If he *has* done that, more cannot be demanded of him."

"Yes; all, except what is necessary to put bread

into his children's mouths. A man can't be expected to be kinder to other people, than to his own family. Thank fortune! there's something I hold in my own right, that may keep us from starving."

Edith looked round on the elegant appointment of the apartment in which she sat, and an incredulous half-smile passed over her face, as she repeated to herself Mrs. Bryson's last word. It did not escape that lady's notice.

"I suppose," she said, bitterly, "you have made all haste to put in your claim with the other creditors."

"Not yet. As my mother was involved in no business matter with Mr. Bryson, other than that he had power of attorney to dispose of property and invest the money for her, she thinks he will not be content to let her lose so large a portion of it as she would, by taking her chance with the rest."

"I should like to know what other chance she looks to. I'm sorry she has been inconvenienced; but what's that mere pittance to the sweep we have endured?"

"It is very much to us; it is nearly our all."

"Well, even if it were, you have not the mortification of stepping down from such a position as *I* must give up. *You* could teach, or sew, or do something of that sort; but for *me*—"

"The provision Mr. Bryson has taken care to make for you, madam, will always set you above *that* necessity, at

least," said Edith, her eye flashing in spite of herself as she spoke.

"I hope so, indeed," rejoined Mrs. Bryson; "but I'm in no mood to bear what may look like a taunt. Glad am I that my husband has been considerate enough as to settle a small portion of his fortune upon me. Would you be so cruel as to snatch that away?"

"No; only to ask out of it 'the pittance' of which you just spoke. I beseech you, madam," and Edith rose and stood before Mrs. Bryson, with a face pale from emotion; "I beg you to listen to me. You do not—you cannot deny this just claim. You have it in your power to restore it. Legally, I know, we can compel nothing from *you*; but you are a woman—you have a mother's heart—you will not see my widowed mother, with none to stand between her and the unpitying world, driven out in the afternoon of her life, to earn her bread—you will not recall my sick brother, and take from him his last chance of life, perhaps, and condemn us, fatherless, brotherless, penniless—to struggle with want and sorrow. No! I will not believe this of you. I *will* hope that your own trials, which must be hard to bear, have given you a fellow-feeling for those who suffer still more."

"I assume no such responsibility as driving your mother from her home, or bringing your brother to the grave, or making you beggars," said Mrs. Bryson, re-

treating indignantly a few steps. "Saddle me with no such gratuitous burdens. I've enough of my own to bear, in all conscience. No, indeed! That would be a pitch of benevolence I don't aim at, to throw the morsel from *my* children, even to keep Mrs. Irvine's from starving. 'Self-preservation is Nature's first law.' Expect me to drown, that I may give you my plank! I'm not quite so romantically philanthropic as that."

"I did not ask *your* plank—only *our own* little splinter."

"You would take from me enough to leave me swamped. No; I tell you once for all," said Mrs. Bryson, with an emphatic gesture of the hand that held a handkerchief exquisite enough in its frost-like embroidery to have cost the eyes that wrought at it, their sight, and a knitting of the brow that was a damper to every hope of Edith's; "you needn't think to play upon my woman's nature in this way. I understand, now, why you come to me instead of my husband. Heaven knows I've been persecuted beyond endurance with dress-makers' and shop-keepers' bills. These paltry kind of people have no feeling whatever—they would sting me at every point. But you will let me go now—I have been detained from an imperative item of business, already."

"Just one word more," said Edith, speaking with a marked emphasis of manner, and a keen, dilating eye.

"Mrs. Bryson, there is a God in Heaven, who calls him-

self the 'Judge of the fatherless'—who declares that whoever does violence to the orphan, shall feel his justice. 'We are fatherless—our mother a widow.'—Keep our rightful means, if you will; let them help to surround you with ease while you live; let them do their part to keep away the want that may goad *us*; but rest assured of this—an hour will come—it *will* come, if not in health, in the time of dreary sickness, or fearful death—when you will be compelled to meet again the decision of this moment. No; hear me out," she continued, as Mrs. Bryson made an attempt to interrupt her; "you *must* meet this deliberate determination to 'oppress the widow and the fatherless,' for *you* know, and *I* know, that you have the power to relieve us without injury to yourself—you must meet it before the eye of infinite justice. Enjoy, then, madam, to the utmost—the richness and the glitter of this princely home;" and she swept her hand round the costly-decorated room;—let your damasks and tapestries muffle the sound of the sobs it costs others for you to retain them; let your chandeliers sparkle so that your dazzled eyes may not see the character of the thing you have done. You will learn *that* in the inevitable blaze of eternity!"

Edith walked with a lofty step from her presence; and it was not till she found herself again in the carriage, that her old tremor returned, the overstrained nerves relaxed, and the tears she could not keep back, gathered blindingly over her sight.

"It is useless," she said to herself, "to go to Mr. Bryson. After this inexorable woman, what better can I hope for from him? But then I might reflect on myself for having left something untried. Mother—Lawrence—Zilpha! Yes, I could walk through fire and water for your sweet sakes! I will go."

In one of the busiest parts of —— street, facing wharves strewn with bales and boxes, amid the haunts of shipping merchants, where the sight of a lady was enough to elicit a stare, Edith alighted—having been furnished by Mr. Dubois with the number of Mr. Bryson's house. She entered a vast room, whose contents were being invoiced by several clerks, and was nearly overthrown by the jostling against her of draymen, who were removing barrels and bales under the direction of other employees of the establishment. With one accord, they all paused in their work, as Edith's slight figure passed up the room. Timidly she looked round, not knowing to whom to address herself.

"What's your business, ma'am?" inquired a pert young knight of the quill, looking up from his ledger. "A queer place this for a woman."

"Hush! Jacobs!" interposed another. "Don't you see she's a lady?"

"Wharves are not the places for parlor manners, or for ladies either," replied the other. "Who are you looking for, Miss?"

Edith scorned any aid from that source, and continued to advance to the head of the long room, and for the moment, she owned to herself that she would rather forfeit the sum she was in search of, than run the gauntlet thus. A quiet, elderly man saw her embarrassment, and came forward.

"What is it?" he asked. "Can I be of any service, ma'am?"

"Yes, sir; by conducting me to Mr. Bryson."

"We have our orders, ma'am, not to admit visitors."

"I'm not a visitor; I come on business."

"He might be displeased, ma'am; he is very busy."

"I'll bear the consequences of his displeasure. It can't hurt *you*, I suppose."

"He's hurt me to the best of his ability, already—three months' salary in arrears. I'm in the employ of the creditors now; but I don't care to seem to beard him. He's down, you know, and one hates to trample on a fallen man; but, if you're bent on it, ma'am, I suppose I may as well show you;—this way, if you please."

Edith followed to an upper story; and before she could know where she was, the clerk had opened the door, ushered her in, and was gone.

Desks and high stools, with clerks seated on them here and there, day-books and ledgers, were all that met her view; nothing but the turning of leaves, and the monotonous scratch, scratch of pens met her ear. She ran her

eye up the apartment, and at length descried the object of her search in a recess, busied over papers, and wholly unconscious of her presence, until she stood before him and uttered his name. He raised his gold spectacles.

“Am I to believe my eyes? Miss Irvine! why how could you have found your way here? The first time, I venture, these walls were ever honored by the presence of one of your gentle sex. Johnson, bring this lady a seat. Sorry I’ve no better accommodations than a hard chair. Can scarcely ask you to sit down either, Miss Edith. This unfortunate juncture in my business affairs, of which, I can’t flatter myself, you have not heard, leaves me neither time for eating or sleeping, I may say. A hard lot, when I’ve been toiling so sedulously, for years, to win a competence for my family, to see it swept away by the unavoidable mischances of trade; but I don’t complain, Miss Edith. I know who orders all things, and try to submit to his will;” and Mr. Bryson bowed his head reverently over his desk, as if indeed he were saying, “thine be done.”

“Yes,” said Edith, waiving away the boy who was bringing her the seat, and dashing *in medias res*, at once—“yes, Mr. Bryson, it is hard to lose our means of living, *wholly*, and just because it is, am I here to-day.”

She then went on clearly to state her business, and her family’s necessities—her mother’s unwillingness to have her money, which he had held, classed with the claims

of the other creditors, and finished by an appeal to him to press upon his wife the payment of it out of the settlement he had made upon her—her undoubted knowledge of which she gave him to understand.

“I am told that a large portion of this sum is invested in ——— stocks. Now,” continued Edith, not allowing herself to be silenced by Mr. Bryson’s repeated attempts to talk her down, “like a man who prefers a stainless reputation, to all the wealth these lines of store-houses, and of shipping, cover—who faces poverty, if need be, rather than abate one jot of his high honor, just promise me that you will try and induce Mrs. Bryson to make a transfer of the amount in ——— stocks, to my mother, which, if she loves your honor as a wife should, she will not refuse to do.”

“You are wonderfully well posted up in regard to my affairs, Miss Edith. The truth is, I have managed to scrape together a sufficiency to keep my family above want, for the present, till I can get my affairs into a proper train again. As to denying the full amount of your mother’s claim, I feel insulted at the bare suggestion. Indeed, I have been so aggrieved at the issue of things, as to shrink, unwarrantably, from giving her the pain the communication of my disasters must necessarily occasion. *That*, you may well understand, kept me from broaching the subject to you, a few days since, when you did me the kindness to call on me. But time, Miss Edith, only

time is wanting. I will rise yet, like a Phenix, from the ashes of my downfall, and will be able to pay your mother principal and interest, even to the compound. Rest assured of that, and don't lacerate me by any allusion to *want* on your part."

"Unless you can, *at once*, put us into possession of at least part of the money, I tell you, we *will* be in need. My brother must have remittances."

Mr. Bryson covered his face with his hand, as if to shut out so hideous a spectre, and remained silent. Edith went on.

"I called upon Mrs. Bryson this morning, and though *my* representations affected nothing, I am perfectly persuaded that you can induce her to regard this debt as of too special a character to be classed with your others. Now, by your honor as a gentleman—by your desire for the character of probity among the great merchants of your city—by the memory of my father's early friendship for you—by your sense of justice as a man, and by your hope as a debtor before God, I ask you to win your wife to a compliance with my demand. What ought money to be to her in comparison with your good name? Here is my mother's letter to you, in which she deposes me to act as her proxy."

She laid the letter on the desk. Mr. Bryson read it without a word of reply; then folded it slowly up.

"You are hurried, no doubt," continued Edith, "and

greatly annoyed, and I don't wish to intrude farther upon you. Here is pen and paper : sign me a written pledge that you will get Mrs. Bryson's consent to the adjustment I desire ; for, if it is *your* wish to settle the matter thus, she will surely comply."

"Suppose every other creditor should make a similar demand, how long would my wife and children be out of the alms-house ? But, I really am earnestly desirous to do what I can for you. Let me see," he mused, counting the fingers of his left hand, "in five ; no, in seven days hence, I may be able to make a disposition of matters that shall satisfy you. By the way, where shall I call on you ?"

Edith told him.

"Ah ! that accounts—well, well, let me hand you down to your carriage. Dispatch, *dispatch* is my watch-word now ; or, no," he added, taking out his watch ; "shall be compelled to sacrifice my gallantry for once. Johnson, tell Mr. Kites to show this lady to her carriage. Good-morning, Miss Edith. You have my pledge for next week : good-morning ;" and Edith found herself on the outside of the door, to which Mr. Bryson had conducted her, before she could crowd in a reply.

XXI.

Contrasts.

“I HAVE a composition to write to-day, dear sister Edith,” was the purport of a letter received a day or two after this, “and so I have begged mother to let me make a letter to you out of it ; and as I have not much to say, it will suit very well ; for, I remember once, you told me I must write what was not worth saying, as well as what was. Eunice has no trouble at all with her compositions. She’s got her head crammed full of those everlasting Roman stories, and so she just writes one of them off. I could do that, too, if I knew them ; it’s a mighty easy way—a great deal easier than making them out of a body’s head, as I have to do.

“Me and Uncle Felix has fine times—there ! Eunice made me make that blot. She looked over my shoulder, and said she thought a singular verb would do very well for us two ; for, taking us together, we make a singular pair. Well, me and Uncle Felix *have* (you see I cor-

rected my grammer this time!) have elegant times hunting eggs now. We know of twelve nests; and Homer and Silvy each got a good shaking from Uncle Felix the other day for daring to go before I did to hunt the nests. We have begun to save up eggs for Christmas, and we are going to make a plumb-cake in honor of your coming home. At first, mother said she thought you would be satisfied with pound-cake, and that fruit was expensive here; but I quietly got Uncle Felix to carry eight dozen of eggs to Milburne, and get currants, and raisins, and citron for them. Mother did not know anything about it. She did not dream I had saved such a parcel of eggs, till Uncle Felix brought in the bundles; and she wasn't a bit angry—she only laughed, and called me 'a little Yankee.'

"Last Tuesday we all were invited to dinner at Mrs. Grant's. There was ever so much company there, and mother said if she had known how much of a dinner-party it was to be, she would not have taken Eunice and me. Oh! I must tell you about my accident. Don't you think, when one of the servants was lifting the white cloth, and another was putting round the finger-bowls, I gave his hand such a knock with my elbow, that the bowl went spinning across the table into Miss Lettuce's lap, spilling all the water over the red damask cloth. I was mightily ashamed, and made a dash to save it; but Miss Lettuce only laughed, and said something about *four paws*. I

reckon she thought *two* weren't enough to catch it. I don't thank her, though, for calling *my* hands *paws*, as if I was a cat! Eunice is bothering me again. She's laughing ready to hurt herself, and says it was 'a French phrase' Miss Lettuce used; but I don't believe it was. I heard her say 'fore paw,' or 'four paws,' very plainly. I didn't enjoy myself a great deal. There were no little girls there; and Eunice found a book, and curled herself up in a corner of a sofa, and read all the time, except while we were at dinner. You know how she does. "Now and Then" was the name of it. I whispered to her that *now* was the time to look about, and when she went home, *then* would be the time to read; but she's deaf and blind when she gets a book she likes, and never minded me.

"Mrs. Grantley was there, and she told us a heap about her being in Europe; and Miss Burton asked mother ever so many questions about you and brother Lawrie, and sister, and all how she liked Silverwood. But you ought to have heard Miss Lettuce teasing Mr. Bunbury. He seemed so puzzled, that it was funny to see him. I think she was laughing at him; and Eunice says she's sure of it.

"Aunt Rose does make such nice muffins now! She says she 'reckons dem white Irisher cooks don't make none no better for Miss Edith away yonder.' I reckon so too. And now, when are you coming home, dear sister

Edith ? Eunice and I get on capitally without you ; but I think mother is lonely sometimes. Last Sunday we went to church right early, and mother took us to the grave-yard to see where our father is buried. I wish she had not gone, Edith ; it made her cry, for I saw tears in her eyes all the time Mr. Morris was preaching, though she didn't know I was watching her. I like mother's face to be bright all the time—it seems to me as if the sun was not shining when she looks sorry.

“ Isn't this a brave, long letter ? But I must stop, now, and see if Homer has fed the turkeys. Mother and Eunice send best love ; so do Uncle Felix, and Aunt Rose, and Daphne.

“ Your ever affectionate little sister,

“ JOSEPHA.”

Edith had read the letter without stopping to lay aside her out-door wrappings, and Jacqueline entered her chamber, as she refolded it.

“ I suppose, of course, you don't accept Mrs. Brearly's invitation for to-night.”

“ Why, ‘ of course ? ’ ” asked Edith.

“ Because you have been out so long, and left no time for the preparation of your toilet. What made you stay so unconscionably ? I grew so impatient to have you help me decide some points of my dress.”

Edith might have told her that she had been sitting for

the two past hours at the miserable bed-side of the young orphan of whom Dr. Dubois had spoken; but she did not.

“As to my toilet, that ‘ashes of roses’ *moir antique* would be quite sufficient for my wants,” said Edith.

“Bless me! *that* wouldn’t do. It’s to be a gay, fashionable party; and with that sad-colored thing, made up to your throat, too, why that would be *most* antique, with a vengeance.”

Edith remembered, with a sudden gush of tenderness, that the dress so lightly tossed aside in Jacqueline’s thoughts, was purchased with a secret pleasure by her mother, with some money she had hoarded for the purpose, as a birthday present; and she recalled the bright look of gratification that dear face had worn, as she surprised her with it, and displayed its rich folds, and listened to her own admiration of the pure taste displayed in its selection; and then she recurred to the loving alacrity with which those skilfull fingers had helped to make it up, after her brother and sister had gone, bestowing all that was possible in the way of the most beautiful needlework upon it, to add to its attractiveness as a dress—and to hear it ridiculed thus! Her heart summoned a tear, but the steady eye remained unfilmed.

“I think,” she only said, as she turned the key upon these simple, but to her, touching memories—“I think my wisdom would be shown to be superior to yours, by wearing neck and arms covered, with the thermometer at 18°

Fahrenheit. It certainly is senseless folly for ladies to expose themselves, as they do, at parties, with uncovered necks, arms bare to the shoulder, silken hose, and satin slippers, when gentlemen are shivering in broadcloth. I wonder the latter are able to put any faith whatever in women's sense."

"That's just the way John is forever railing, when he sees me dressed for a party; but I set it all down to the account of his profession. But, pray, where's the use of having beauty, if we don't display it to the best advantage? For my part, I think it would be something like folly to cover up *that*," and she swept up her loosened sleeve to the shoulder, baring to Edith's view, an arm of ivory whiteness.

* "You think with Waller—

" 'Small is the worth
Of beauty from the light retired.' "

"You deny imagination any exercise, by leaving no charms so vaguely defined, as to offer room for its suggestions."

"Where there is perfection, imagination can have nothing to do," said Jacqueline, conceitedly; "and I have all the authority of art on my side. But, seriously, now, you are not going to Mrs. Brearly's with that queer dress on. I should feel my taste greatly compromised by letting you go from this house in no better party trim."

“Then I might act as your foil. But no,” and Edith drew herself up with a dignity that compelled Jacqueline to feel for a moment that she had gone too far. “I have not had the slightest intention of going, or wish to go to Mrs. Brearly’s to-night; so you will be spared having me as your *umbra*.”

Dinner was no sooner over than Jacqueline insisted on some aid at the hands of Edith. There could be no pleasure in ministering to the endless demands of so selfish a nature, and the pertinacious request was rebelled against, inwardly; but Edith remembered the “seventy times seven,” and complied. She had just finished arranging some *nœuds* of ribbon on the dress chosen for the evening, and was farther provided with a pair of white gloves, which were to be edged with a fall of lace, when a servant came to say, that Dr. Dubois wished to know if Miss Edith would go with him to see the sick child.

“Preposterous!” exclaimed Jacqueline. “Tell him to be sure not. It’s too late; besides, she’s busy.”

“Certainly, I will go, Jacqueline.”

“Now, Edith, you’ll do no such thing. It is unkind in John to be wanting you to go at this hour. See, the sun is down. Jane, light the gas.”

“Tell him I will be there in a moment,” said Edith, emptying her lap of lace and ribbons; but the servant had departed with Jacqueline’s message.

“Now, don’t go,” begged Jacqueline, seizing her hands,

as she was about to pass out. "Jane can't arrange the flowers in my hair as you can; and I want to look my best to-night."

"I can be back in time to act tire-woman;" and, disengaging herself, she hurried down stairs. But it was too late; Dr. Dubois had gone.

Jacqueline sat in the library, her head swathed in the voluminous folds of a "nubia," and a fur-lined cloak thrown over her shoulders, awaiting the carriage, while her maid kneeled on the carpet beside her, drawing over the white slippers a pair of Polish boots, when her brother entered. He surveyed the arch and radiant face, gravely, even sternly, but without speaking.

"I was extremely sorry," said Edith, laying down her book, "that you had gone before I came down stairs this evening, doctor. I should certainly have walked with you to see your poor patient."

"I thought the message I received could not have been yours."

"No. I sent it out of kindness to Edith. She is too young and pretty to turn sister of charity quite yet."

"Enough, if you please, Jacqueline. But how is the poor girl?"

"Dead," replied Dr. Dubois, laconically.

"Dead?" repeated Edith, with a start. "Why, I saw her this morning, and did not conceive of the end being so near."

"It is not an hour since she breathed her last. Jacqueline, I wish *you* might have seen the look of disappointment that wan face wore, when she asked if Miss Edith would not come and see her die. It would be something for you to carry with you to the party to-night."

"Pray, how could *I* know she was going to die?"

"It might have been the same, if you had," was the somewhat bitter reply. "You have denied a dying fellow-creature the only earthly solace she asked, that a bit of lace, or a knot of ribbon, might be more becomingly disposed. Again, I say, I wish you joy of your evening."

He was about to turn on his heel, when Edith detained him; and Jacqueline starting up, with an exclamation, that the aunt for whom she was to call, would be tired waiting, kissed the tips of her fingers to Edith, and departed, without vouchsafing a look towards her brother.

"Don't go," said Edith, with an earnest face, "without letting me know, doctor, how poor Elsie died. Ah! I ought not to say *poor*. She is one of 'the just made perfect' now. Her hour in Heaven has more than compensated for the poverty and loneliness of her whole orphan life. She is rich; but how did she die?"

"With a strange calmness."

"I knew she would!" exclaimed Edith, with emotion. "I thank God for the redemption of the promise to which she was clinging so fondly this morning—'When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee.'"

“After all, Miss Edith, there is something mysterious, unfathomable to me about this religion. I have stood at two death-beds to-day,—contrasts in every conceivable point,—the rich old man’s, one of gloom; this destitute orphan’s, one of heavenly peace. During my life abroad, I had almost learned to regard all religion as a delusion; but, if it is, I pray now to die so deluded.”

“I am delighted to hear you say so,” said Edith, shading her dark eyes, as she spoke, to hide the sudden dimness that clouded them; “for, if there is delusion in the faith Christians profess, then is there no truth anywhere. Phantasies cheat us when we bring them to a stern test; but, who ever heard of a sincere believer confessing on a death-bed, that his experience had been no more than a fanatic’s dream? and who ever heard the dying man of the world say other than that his life had been wasted—his confidence in his principles deceptive? Nothing less than the faith of the Christian *can* carry the most heroic, even, who looks death deliberately in the eye, fearlessly through the terrific struggle.”

“Soldiers die heroically on the battle-field—marching up to their death without a tremor.”

“Yes; where thought is wholly stifled amid the wild confusion of war; where man, the animal, entirely holds in abeyance, man, the intellectual being. But think how delicate women, who shrink from anything like self-dependance, step untremblingly forth into the dread un-

known, and meet death without a thought of fear. Even children—those old enough to be accountable agents, I mean, such as poor Elsie—have you not seen them bid parents, brothers, sisters, farewell, with a smile of joy—put their trusting little hands into that of the unseen Saviour, and suffer themselves to be led away without a tear?”

“The Hindoo wife chants her death-song on the funeral pile; the Pagan Socrates encounters the future with a smile; the atheist Mirabeau breathes out his soul in a sensuous rapture; the philosophic Goethe placidly departs with the exclamation for ‘more light’ on his lips. Let but the faith be unshaken in what the soul professes to believe, and it can go on calmly. Christians sometimes die in gloom; and mere moralists die—”

“Ah! never in triumph,” said Edith, quickly. “To wear the outward garb of serenity, is the utmost their philosophy can compass. Christians may pass away under a cloud; but none, I believe, ever do, who have ‘*adorned* the doctrine of God their Saviour,’ unless physical reasons can account for it, as in the case of the poet Cowper. You may remember Dr. Johnson’s reply, when he was told of the calmness with which some criminal had met death—‘Sir, they never *thought* in their lives.’ So with a fearful multitude—the first thorough waking up of thought is beyond the grave.”

“It is all a mystery—life—death,” said Dr. Dubois,

musingly. "Under your guidance, Miss Edith, I might arrive at safer conclusions than have ever visited me yet; but I am compelled to go now, most unwillingly. I wish you had gone to Mrs. Brearly's, for you will have a lonely time of it by yourself—though here comes my father to keep you company."

"With all these silent, unobtrusive, delightful companions," said Edith, pointing to the rows of volumes that lined the library walls, "I would be most unreasonable to complain of loneliness; and, I dare say, Mr. Dubois and I will find our *re-union* composed of choicer spirits than any that grace Mrs. Brearly's rooms to-night."

XXII.

A Glimpse into a Heart.

—“ WHY weepst thou ?”—Edith started at the tone and the words, for there was a suffusion about her own eyes, as she sat lonely and thoughtful in the corner of a pew that Sabbath afternoon—a mood superinduced, perhaps, in some degree, by the mournful music that had just died away, leaving the air still undulating from the waves of sound stirred by the full-toned organ. “ Why weepst thou ?” The words were again repeated by another voice than the one that had conducted the previous services, and Edith bent forward with a look as eager as if she supposed the question specially addressed to herself.

The clergyman began, in a low pervading voice, by describing the presence of death in a dwelling—the unutterable, unearthly loneliness that “ stays on,” even when the straight, cold form is carried from the darkened chamber, to its last resting-place—the return of the stricken ones to the forsaken home, from which no sun seems bright

enough ever again to chide away the gloom—the pall-like settling down of

“The shadows all have known, who from their hearts
Have released friends to heaven.”

He portrayed them as the experience of the loving Mary during that most desolate to her of all Sabbaths—the one in which her Redeemer lay in the tomb of Joseph. He spoke of the restless, aching heart that could know no quiet, that drew her away from her sleepless pillow before the morning light, to “the place where they laid him.” Those hands, clasped in such speechless agony, had broken the alabaster-box of precious ointment over the stirless head of the beloved Master—that hair, falling over the tear-stained face, had wiped the wearied feet that were never more to be worn with earthly travel; but even the strange, the awful pleasure of looking, as she had hoped, upon that dead brow—of binding her costly spices about those wounded hands—of touching the pierced feet, was to be denied her. The indistinct thought which his words, remembered but not understood, had left in her mind—the something between her and utter hopelessness—was taken away—Jesus was dead! The passionate intensity of her woman’s love and tenderness are thrown back upon heart, and it is crushed—broken!

“Why weepest thou?” It was not strange the tempest of such a grief should drown the divine pathos of those

words,—“ They have taken away my Lord !” How uncontrollable the burst of tears at the designation she herself uses !—“ *my Lord !*” And the head, for a moment lifted, falls again upon the tightened hands in fresh bitterness.

“ *Mary !*” Was it from heaven the sound came ? Surely that was the voice of the Beloved ! Her whole being thrills to its more than human sweetness ; she looks up ; the tears tremble unshed in her glistening eyes ; she turns ; she springs forwards ; she falls at his feet with the rapturous exclamation—“ *Rabboni !*” Then the speaker considered earth’s many weepers, and the causes of their varied sorrows—the tears that are shed over disappointed hopes, worldly crosses, losses and trials ; and showed that not under the pressure of such griefs, when borne as the world bears them, might we expect to hear the word of comfort whispered divinely to our hearts. But when the soul pines in sadness and desertion because the Beloved is gone—goes to the cross and the tomb with the “ sweet spices” of love and devotion, and turns away un comforted, from those it supposes only the keepers of earthly gardens—then it is that under such a revelation as Mary’s, it will be enabled with no less joy, to exclaim—“ Master !”

Edith’s full heart responded while she listened, and under the irresistible tide of other memories and influences, she had almost forgotten where she was ; for, when she had last heard that voice, the falling leaves of autumn

were rustling around the country church through which its tones rang; for it was Bryant Woodruff who occupied the pulpit.

She remained in the distant pew until the congregation had almost entirely dispersed, waiting to speak with him. Slowly he followed down the long aisle, after parting with the clergyman for whom he had officiated, and was just passing out with the last stragglers, when a turn of his head brought her into view. In an instant he was at her side, with an expression on his face that bespoke the utmost perplexity.

"I must see more of you," he said, after a few hurried questions, still pressing her hand between both of his own. "If I walk with you to Mr. Dubois', I must see the family, of course, and that I don't want; and most unfortunately, I am obliged to go by the earliest morning train. Stay! I know the sexton. Excuse me for one moment."

Bryant returned after a few minutes' absence. "The sexton has the lecture-room below stairs, disarranged by the Sunday-school, to get in order for a meeting to-night; so he will be about the church for some little time, and we will just sit here. Now tell me all about the why and wherefore of your being here so unexpectedly."

"And why?" he asked, half reproachfully, when Edith had satisfied him; "why did Cousin Mary not write to me, and put the affair into my hands? You see I am here at any rate, on some business of my own, and

you might have been spared all the trouble of so long a journey?"

Edith explained; but he seemed almost hurt, and insisted that he would return, (after he had gone and performed the marriage ceremony that called him home,) see Mr. Bryson, and then conduct her safe to Silverwood.

Edith told him that the business with Mr. Bryson was to be finally settled the next day—that she had his promise to that effect, and that the same gentleman, a pleasant, elderly man, who had been her companion to —, expected to go back to Milburne in a few days; so that, however she might be tempted to accept his kindness, she felt it would be wholly unnecessary to put him to all that trouble. He was induced to think so, too, at length. Then they talked about Lawrence and Zilpha, and he gave her some of the incidents of the southward journey, which their letters had omitted—incidents that had more meaning in them to his listener's ear than he was aware, perhaps, of conveying.

"Edith," he said, suddenly, tightening the clasp of his fingers over her hand; "Edith, if the companionship of the purest, loftiest-thoughted, most exquisitely-balanced, and most symmetrical of all the minds I have ever had knowledge of, *can* do anything for the physical man, Lawrence will get well. I sounded the depth of Zilpha's nature more during those few days' of travel with her, than ever before. I got nearer, and looked deeper into it,

and how crystalline clear it is—so placid, so serene, that casual gazers might fancy its depths easily fathomed, till they find, from trial, that they have no line long enough. There is such a sweet simplicity—such an ingenuous directness—such a singleness of purpose, in all she says and does. No disguisements; no concealments; none of the innocent and pretty vanities—forgive me for saying it—which cling, in more or less degree, to almost all women. She has the artless guilelessness of a child, united to the ripe, mature susceptibilities of the most perfect womanhood. Ah! Edith! it is a beautiful soul! I meet its steady gaze out of those clear pupils, and I wonder how they can reveal to me so much. I think I know *now* what Wordsworth means by ‘the *harvest* of a quiet eye;’ but when I see how her fine, natural characteristics are heightened and purified by the all-pervading love and gentleness of Christ, you would think me extravagant were I to say all I feel. With many, the very depth of this religious sentiment may sometimes too much chasten mere earthly enjoyment; but it is far different with her. It is the lucid medium through which every object seems clothed with more than its own brightness. Yes; it is a beautiful soul!”

The hand over which Bryant’s had been closed, was withdrawn while he had been speaking, to shade the averted face; but in his earnest utterance he had not noticed the gesture. He looked up as if awaiting a reply;

and if Zilpha had stood transfigured to his thought, in the light of love and memory, Edith was no less so that moment to his eye, for through the stained glass of the western window, the setting sun poured in its rays of crimson and gold over her face.

“Ah! don’t destroy the illusion,” he said, detaining her from moving behind a pillar; “you make me almost fancy that Zilpha is before me. The burnished gleam on your hair gives its black a chestnut tinge like hers, and the glow over your white cheek warms it to her color. I wonder I never traced more resemblance between you before—the same straight nose; the same short upper lip and curved mouth. Yes, Edith, you are like her.”

“No, no,” said Edith, turning away her face; “there is not much outward resemblance, and less inward, I’m afraid. Oh! to *be* more like her! for she is even lovelier than your words have made her. You are right; Zilpha—*our* Zilpha—”

“*Our* Zilpha,” repeated Bryant, catching the emphasis quickly; “why do you say that?”

“Because—because—” Edith bowed her head down upon the seat, as if a sudden faintness had seized her. The choked voice could go no further. Bryant gently raised her, and put back, with his finger, the fold of hair that had loosened over her forehead; but it would come—that heavy drop, and he felt it fall upon his hand.

“I am not surprised you should suffer in her absence

from you. *I know how hard that is to bear.*" Yet the tender considerateness of his manner did not soothe Edith. The touch of his hand she almost shrank from, as if it had power to give her pain.

But the gathering twilight was settling down over the empty pews. Just then the sexton appeared, and signified his readiness to close the church; so silently drawing Edith's hand within his arm, Bryant passed out with her from that Sabbath solitude to the unwelcome noise and hurry of the thronged pavement again.

XXIII.

Introspective.

“It is over at last—my beautiful dream! I am awake now, and see all too clearly what I might have known, if I would, long ago. Yes; I might have been sure that it was impossible he should be associated with her as he has been, and not love her with all the passion of his strong, noble heart: and it is right; she is worthier than I of such love; she is all he has described her—just as pure; just as akin to the angels above us. There is no wrong done *me*. My own blind heart alone is to blame for the throbbing pain that aches through it, and it shall bear its own punishment. Many and many are the unrecognised martyrs that have walked smiling over this earth, while the fiery cross to which they have been bound, burned, and the ashes of blight smouldered above their dead affections. If it is appointed me to join their train, have I any right to murmur?

“Yes; I can understand now, what I have been accus-

tomed to misconstrue. It was from *my* book he always read, when we used sometimes to study together—not hers. I, silly thing! did not dream that his unconscious love—unconfessed even to himself, perhaps, then—would have blurred the lines for him, had he felt her eyes on the same page—did not imagine why the voluble tongue, that owned no constraint in *my* presence, was often silent in *hers*—did not know why his hand should so often close untremblingly over mine, yet never touch hers!

“How steadily she went on in the pursuit of knowledge from the pure love of it! I always knew my own motive to be less noble. My heart could not hide from me, that for *his* sake, I was striving to develope to the utmost, whatever native powers I possessed—for *his* sake I persisted in studies such as *she* thought too much out of woman’s line—that it was his tastes, rather than my own, I was seeking to please—*his* stand-point I loved to assume—*his* sympathies to which I was fitting the key, which, nevertheless, wound readily through the same wards, and unlocked kindred feelings in the depths of my own nature. His enthusiasms *did* ever seem more nearly allied with mine than with hers. Nature’s heart interested her the most. The human heart, with its loves and sufferings, its hopes, and its fears, and its tendernesses, was a choicer study—a more congenial theme to me, and I think, too, to him. But Nature was to her only another name for God; and in her purer simplicity of soul, the wisdom the

stars taught, was holier to her than what I gathered from earthly constellations—the poetry of woods, and waters, and flowers, and birds, truer and more perfect than what I learned from the heart of man. When I, following in the wake of his chosen favorites, was content to find my delight in the pathos or passion of classic dramatists, or, in the livid gloom of Dante, or the fancy of Spencer, or the majesty of Milton, or the philosophy of Wordsworth, receiving the interpretations of Nature second-hand, from such high-priests as these, she turned from them, in their ‘singing robes,’ and with their swinging censers, and for herself, entered Nature’s ‘holy of holies,’ because the sanctifying blood of a divine High Priest had forever consecrated it to her as the temple of his earthly praise. Hers has been the holier worship. It is right she should have the most of this life’s reward.

“*He* has loved her best, perhaps, for this very difference of tastes. We covet most what we do not ourselves possess. There must be contrariety—beautiful and harmonious antagonism. What one has not, is sought for in the other—thus the cycle of qualities is completed. The union of the two forms one perfect soul; and she will wholly satisfy him, for love will stand and hold the torch by which they will study together all of life’s beautiful and mysterious lessons. And I; shall I sullenly shut my page, because for me, this torch is an inverted one now? Shall all my book of the future be blotted, or

its record of blight be written only with bitter tears? This is what a thwarted heart would dictate; but what right have I to let a fellow mortal shadow from me all brightness? There are other torches than that of love. Fame holds a flaming one. Shall I let the dormant power I am sometimes half conscious of, flash forth to meet it? Yes, if I would find, in the end, that from which my woman's nature would turn, misled and unsolaced—that which would go out, and leave me in pitiless gloom.

“There are others to be loved and lived for. To be happy, was not God's first object in creating us, but to be holy, to do, and to bear, that happiness may follow. How often have I pleaded the theory of necessary discipline; and now, when it comes, to teach me to grow stronger, and better, and more unselfish, I faint over the lesson, I murmur—so inconsistent, and so like *me*! Part, ‘fine gold;’ part, ‘miry clay!’

“‘Why weepest thou?’ *He* might put the question now.

“But a dearer than he puts it, even one who, above all others, can be ‘touched with the feeling of our infirmities,’ earthly and human as they are; one who will not turn from me, though my heart be as an empty sepulchre, if, with the weeping Mary's glad faith, I can fall at his feet, exclaiming—‘*Rabboni!*’”

XXIV.

Disappointed Hopes.

“To-day, I think you said, Mr. Bryson set to call upon you, or promised to let you hear from him. Has he done either?”

Edith roused herself from the corner of the sofa, on which she sat, to reply to Mr. Dubois’ question; and the coming back of the soul to the eye that had been gazing on vacancy, was “like the advent of a star.”

“Neither, did you say? I’m afraid, Edith, he means to play you some trick yet.”

“Oh! I hope not—I think not.”

“With all my heart, I hope not, too; but business hours are over now, so you will not see him to-day, I fear.”

The quiet grey of night was settling down, like a mother’s twilight “hush,” upon the city.

“The day was done, and slowly from the scene,
The stooping sun had gathered his spent shafts,
And put them back into his golden quiver.”

Edith walked alone up and down the long rooms, murmuring to herself half whisperingly, half audibly, a strain that fell in with the mood that was upon her.

I TURN TO THEE.

I TURN to Thee ! My heart has been
A desecrated shrine ;
And on its holiest altar, where
Should burn a flame divine,
Strange fire consumed a sacrifice,
That was not wholly Thine.

For when my soul in seeming faith
To Thee has sought to bow,
Divided worship filled each prayer,
And breathed in every vow.
Forgive !—my idol stands revealed—
The veil has fallen now !

Cleanse Thou the temple, great High Priest !
Anoint its altar-stone—
The blood that wet Thy wounded hands,
Is ready to atone ;
And be my offerings consecrate
Henceforth to God alone !

Within Thy golden censer now,
Bear heavenward, I implore,
As bruised frankincense and as myrrh,
The tears and prayers I pour,
And let an earthly worship fill
My hallowed heart no more.

“ ‘*No more!*’ ” repeated a voice at her side, as her hand was lifted and laid on an arm almost invisible in the growing darkness. “ Madame de Stael used to say those were the saddest intonations in our language, and from the pathos with which they come from your lips, I am not inclined to question the truth of her assertion. Let me join your promenade, Miss Edith, while you tell me why you are chanting anything so mournful. I half fancied you ill, from the pallor of your lips, to-day; and now, in my professional capacity, I might claim the right to feel your pulse,” and a smile, revealed to her by the street lamp opposite, played over Dr. Dubois’ manly face, as he lightly laid his finger on her wrist.

“ You are very sympathizing, doctor; but I am perfectly well—only disappointed, and home-sick.”

“ Disappointment, on a lady’s lip, has a delicate meaning. We summon up *une affaire de cœur* at once.”

“ Unluckily, mine has regard to money—something the world holds as of far higher value than hearts—”

“ And for which you know the world to be a dotard. But is the matter anything in which my assistance can avail you? Command me in anything—everything.”

Edith thanked him—assured him that he could do nothing for her in the case in question, and begged pardon for having so frankly confessed the causes of any inquietude she might have manifested.

“ Ah!” replied Dr. Dubois, in answer to her query

about Mr. Carey, the gentleman who was to accompany her home—"am I bound to come out with the unwilling fact? Then I *did* meet him to-day, and he bade me say he would leave this on the coming Thursday. But Christmas is just upon us. Stay till its festivities are over, or till it is warmer. Our hospitality will be compromised by permitting you to go during such weather as this."

But Edith was resolute in putting aside these and a dozen other reasons which he arrayed before her.

"You would do much—practice any amount of self-denial, to accomplish a good action," he persisted. "Now, if you were here to keep Jacqueline within bounds, and to set me right, there's no knowing what you might not effect by Spring. Miss Edith, I am restless and dissatisfied with myself and the world. I feel that *you* could put me at one with both—"

"You overstate my power, wholly," said Edith, interruptingly. "I am not *at one* with myself, always. There is a want of reconciliation between the outer and the inner, oftentimes."

"*You!* I thought Christians professed to possess a peace above, and independent of the world—that they were 'the central calm at the heart of all agitation.'"

"They ought to be, and *are*, when true to God and to themselves; but they sink beneath the burden of the same weaknesses as others, and are often false to both."

"Yet it seems to me, if I believed and felt as you do,

I should have a happiness nothing could disturb. As it is, I am tossed on a sea of doubts—my head often yielding, while I have been listening to your advocacy of solemn themes, while my heart is protesting.”

“Ah! that is just the difficulty. It is the heart always that is the last brought to terms. Man’s pride is so inveterate, he *will not* come to his Maker, confessing that he is utterly undone and wretched.”

“And would you deny humanity *all* claim to native goodness? We are accustomed often to speak of it in the abstract, as something god-like.”

“God-like in its capacities and unending being, but ruined now, and like an ancient temple, from which all the glory of the worship has departed, with only here and there remnants of broken frieze and architrave, to tell what the first splendor has been. The Master-builder only can ‘restore the glory of the former house,’ and raise ‘the head-stone thereof, with shoutings of Grace! Grace!’ The ruin is all our own—the restoration wholly His. As all good originates in God, so must it all terminate there.”

“But that He should make His own glory creation’s end and aim—is not that to associate the idea of selfishness with Him?”

“The creature’s highest, only good, is inseparably involved in the promotion of God’s glory. To attain to absolute perfection is the noblest aim the spirit can

set itself, and that is found alone in God ; so that what tends to our highest good, tends equally to His glory.” _

“And must there be such entire self-abnegation that God and holiness must be loved, not because it is our highest interest to do so, but because He commands it ?”

“We are incapable of acting without motive, and motives, too, that appeals to our self-love ; and as the Creator, who has so constituted us, addresses Himself in all His commands to this inherent principle, we are not required to divide the two. He has made it our *best interest* to live to His glory ; and though there be self-abnegation, utter and entire, as regards any innate goodness, or any claim upon God’s mercy, He *does* permit the notion of *reward* to influence us ; reward, not for what *we* have done, but for *his* obedience who perfectly kept the law, and then submitted to die under its curse, as though He were the most criminal of all creatures—thus making over to us that recompense for which he obeyed and suffered. Man has nothing to do but to agree to this substitution, and stretch forth the hand of faith that he may receive the benefits of it. In this view of the subject, must not self-renunciation seem the only thing left for the ingenuous mind ?”

“Ah ! Miss Edith, were you my chaplain, I would institute daily services, and become a devout attendant.”

“I would be but a faltering instructor. This city is

full of pulpits, from which you might have the truth in its purity. Why not consent to put yourself in the posture of a learner?"

"Pride, *you* would say, and no doubt too truly."

"But there is a humility that is ennobling—that makes human pride seem a mean and dwarfed thing in the comparison :

" 'The bird that soars on highest wing,
Builds on the ground its lowly nest.' "

"It is when we measure the distance between us and the fixed stars, that we learn how scarcely to be taken into the reckoning, is the shadow our earth casts. So when humility attempts to measure the space between her and the fixed star of God's infinitude, does her own shadow shorten into nothingness. Which then is the loftier—humility's upward, or pride's downward gaze?"

But, with the lighting of the chandelier, came Jacqueline from above stairs, with some gay friends as rattling as herself; and the conversation which was growing so grave was suspended.

"News for you!" exclaimed Jacqueline the next morning, as for a moment she picked up the fresh paper that had just been laid on the breakfast table, and she read the paragraph :

"Mr. Thomas Bryson, one of the largest shipping merchants of our city, who has been so unfortunate as to be

compelled to wind up business, in consequence, we believe, of the failure of a foreign house, sailed on Saturday, with his family, in the ———, for Liverpool. He expects to reside abroad for some years ; as in Germany he can educate his sons at less expense than here. Our old friend bears our sympathies with him in his misfortunes, and constrained expatriation."

Edith dropped her fork with a pang.

"The hypocrite !" ejaculated Mr. Dubois, energetically.

"No such thing as the failure of a foreign house. That's a story of his own getting up, to cover his villainous speculations. I don't believe a word of it—"

"Or rather his wife's heartless extravagance," interrupted the doctor.

"Both—both, Edith ; I feared some *ruse*, my dear. It is too bad—too bad !"

Dr. Dubois made some demand for enlightenment, and his father explained the nature of Edith's transaction with him.

"Villain ! swindler !" cried the doctor, striking his hand upon the table vehemently. "You see, sir, what roguery that unjust law leads to."

"What law ?"

"That allows the property a man may choose to make over to his wife, to be free from all the liabilities of the husband ; thus holding out a bribe to commit fraud. Now this woman, in the eye of common justice, is a swindler ; yet she transgresses no law of the commonwealth."

“And what will become of the fine house and furniture?” asked Jacqueline. “If there is a sale, papa, I want you to buy me that beautiful copy of Raffaele’s ‘*Fornarina*’ that hangs in one of their rooms.”

“I shall do no such thing. I wouldn’t have anything that would perpetuate my memory of Bryson in my house. Edith, I wish the proceeds of the sale—for, of course, there’ll be one—could be diverted into your purse; but I dare say all is arranged fair and square to suit the honest lady.”

“And to think of his promise!” said Edith, in a tone of the utmost disappointment.

“He was too cowardly to let you know in plain terms, as his wife did, that he meant deliberately to cheat you. Your poor mother—how grieved I am for her! You will have to take your chance with the other creditors now.”

“Now for home—home with my heavy disappointment!” sighed Edith, as she threw herself into a chair drawn up before her chamber fire, and tried to press back the hot drops that persisted in starting from her eyes. “Have pity, Father! They succeed each other fast—the brier and the thorn—and my spirit faints, as I look forward and ask, ‘What next?’ But, ‘my grace shall be sufficient for Thee—my strength shall be perfected in Thy weakness.’ Such promises as this Zilpha would quote, were she here; and ‘*Jehovah-jireh*’ would be my precious mother’s watchword still. Let me wear it as a talisman on my heart, till I grow strong again!”

The next week would bring Christmas, and Edith had never remembered the season to pass at home, without the pleasant and gleeful interchange of love-tokens. But the rich English edition of her mother's favorite Cowper, which she had fixed on for her, must be resigned for a less expensive one; the choice Leipsic copy of Greek Tragedies that Lawrence would have liked so much, was not to be thought of; Zilpha's intaglio signet-ring would be too costly; the presents for the children and the servants—all must yield to the pressure of necessity. As she walked along the gay streets that afternoon in search of the trifles she must content herself with, the presence of the fashionable throng sickened her; their smiling faces mocked her; the flashing equipages rolled by, and their occupants looked complacently out of the windows, as if they had never known care or trial; and half-forgetful that under the sable and the ermine, might beat hearts that ached as hers never had, she walked on, thinking of life's varied differences, and murmuring "why?"

It was not until she was miles on her journey the next day, that Edith bethought her of looking at the little packet which Mr. Dubois had put into her hand at parting, with the request that she would carry it to her mother. She opened the unsealed note, and found it contained bank bills to the amount of two hundred dollars—"a Christmas present from an old friend."

XXV.

Bread-and-Butter Philosophy.

THE utter failure of Edith's mission was a sore trial to Mrs. Irvine; but, true to her invariable principle of action, she tried to put the brightest construction she could on their present circumstances, and sought to lighten Edith's manifest despondency, by throwing over it some of the sunshine of her own beautiful faith. As Edith had said she would, she "bound for a token upon her hand, and for frontlets between her eyes," the precious, oft-repeated assurance—"the Lord will provide." The increasing difficulties were but a spur to her energies; and though the tear would occasionally glisten, as she looked on her children, or thought of the beloved exiles, she would lift her eyes upward, and then the clear shining of the sun of righteousness left all the heaven of her hopes spanned with the bow of promise.

But what should they do? where look for the means of future livelihood? She recognized a special providence in

Mr. Dubois' timely gift. That would, at least, answer for the necessities of the absent ones, should they need further remittances, and thus they could be kept in ignorance of the true state of the home finances. Yet often, often, the brave cheerfulness of her mother was to Edith more touching than floods of tears.

"Here are no less than three advertisements for governesses," said Edith one day, as she looked down the columns of a newspaper. "Suppose I try for one of the posts: Louisiana, Alabama, East-Florida—a broad range to choose from."

"*You* a governess!" said Mrs. Irvine, looking up from the busily plied needle "hundreds of miles from home, without sympathies, such as you love, or even common kindnesses, if we are to believe governess-life to be what story-tellers are perhaps too fond to represent it."

"But scores of sensitive, shrinking girls are glad enough to help themselves, and those they love, in this way; and am I less useful, less to be relied on than other daughters? Oh! mother!"

"No, my dear; neither—neither; but I've been turning over a better plan yet, in my mind—a very feasible one I think. It is that we establish a family school here—at home, I mean; say half-a-dozen little girls to begin with, and we may increase the number as circumstances seem to require it. This will accomplish our ends better—will obviate the necessity for a separation, and it will be

better for Eunice and Josepha, than if they were educated wholly apart from other children. We can arrange it so as to have everything ready for operation before Lawrence and Zilpha come home."

"But Lawrence is fastidious, mother. How will he like to have the privacy of home, which he guards as a sacred thing, broken in upon by the presence of strangers? You know this home-exclusiveness is all to him that tempered light is to an artist's studio."

"He will be glad to choose the lesser of two evils; for I cannot, I cannot consent to have my flock scattered, if there is any way to prevent it. Better open the fold to strange lambs. They shall love us, and live as we do, and exercise no disagreeable restrain over our home freedom—one fold still."

"‘And one shepherd,’" said Edith, fondly caressing the hand that lay upon her shoulder. "Dear mother! when I'm near you, I feel strengthened, you have such an art at leveling down ‘the hill Difficulty.’"

"It is only when we look at it through the exaggerating atmosphere of doubt and discontent, my child, that it seems so high. If we walk evenly onward, we will find that the mountain sinks as we approach it; or if it does not, we find a path leading over it, which, in the distance, we could not see. How often do we toil over

“‘The *shadow* of hills across a level thrown,
And pant like climbers!’

fretting ourselves over anticipated troubles that never come, and digging a grave to-day, for the joys we believe will perish to-morrow; but which, when the morrow comes, we find are not dead for our ready-made grave. Now all this is very useless, even if it were not unchristian. We may well have the words applied to us continually—"Oh! ye of little faith! Wherefore do ye doubt?"

It was accordingly settled that efforts should be immediately made to procure the desired pupils for a summer term. Letters were written to various friends, and with less exertion than they expected, six little girls, about Eunice's and Josepha's ages, were promised for the embryo school.

Sometimes Edith had a vague idea of launching upon the literary current, a venture of her own—a little argosy freighted with love, and fancy, and hope, that might bring her in return, the *quid pro quo* so much needed. Why should she not coin her brain into dollars—be "a bread-and-butter philosopher," as the Germans have it? Others, whom she believed possessed no more talents than herself, had made successful hits—why might not she? Barbara Butterworth had dashed off a book that had run through thirty-five editions, and had she not as much brains as Barbara? People *would* read novels. The race of misses just emerged from school-rooms, were a public of themselves. They must have the mental opium of sentimental stories, full of flash and fire—of rapture and

anguish, as a gentle stimulant to their dragging hours. The questionable taste *would* be gratified. Why should *she* not minister to it, and win the reward? A half score of fair alliteratives had done so successfully. A pretty, flowery, ferny kind of literature, the sisterhood of wood-nymphs had gotten up, not rich, it is true, with the promise of much mature fruit. But then, we do not ask the rose to furnish us with food; it has another mission to fulfill; that done, we demand no more of it.

As to a subject—why, “every man’s life,” as Carlyle says, “is an unwritten epic.” She had mazes, too, coiled away in the dim recesses of her brain that might furnish threads for a golden tissue. There were leaves on her life-tree, which that wizard worker, Thought, might, with time and patience, turn into a silken-fair fabric, not wrought for strong men’s use, but such as the daintily-pleased of her own sex might love to clothe their fancies withal. And poetry—she had no pretensions to the name of a poet—she had never seen two rhymed lines of her own in print; but she had a secret pleasure in the “*gaya ciência*” “as the old Castilians prettily called it. Her port-folios were running over with “scoopings from Castaly.” Might she not pour them out as an offering, with which the dear Public would moisten its Silenus lips? Or had its deep draughts from chalices, fiery-red with passion, spicy and foaming with pleasure-sparkles, deadened its palate to the mild fragrance, and the amber flow of her

brain-vintage, expressed with careful hands from clusters gathered in the garden of home—not *bruised*, under the world's grinding wheel, till the seeds gave out their hidden bitterness.

But poetry would bring her no money, (that was the thing to be thought of now,) and pebbles from the "fount of song" were valueless on the *Bourse*—more so even than the handful of shells offered as current coin by the native of "the central, flowery land." She imagined what the answer would be, should she attempt the barter—"The market was glutted; that sort of thing was entirely overstocked; their house expected to lose by what had already been undertaken in that line, and if authors escaped without detriment, it was all that could be expected. Only here and there a new work had a decided run; and then, some particular circumstance, more than mere force of merit, was the line that helped to tow it into the wished-for port."

But those chambers must be furnished for the expected pupils, and she knew her mother was revolving in her mind, how. She would anticipate her if possible. A few nights of secret labor would put into marketable form, some of the results of former days of study, and her bookish friend, Miss Warrington, should win them admission into "——'s Monthly." And so, for the first—the only time, did Edith take up the author's pen. The Editor did not begrudge her the sum he had given her for the

two classic "Idyls," redolent as they were with the breath of the "Formian hills," after he heard them attributed to the scholarly hand of a professed *litterateur*, whatever he may have thought of his bargain before.

There was much wonderment on the part of Eunice and Josepha, as one evening, a few weeks later, a great covered wagon, with its four horses tinkling their bells, stopped before the gate at Silverwood. Edith was soon apprised of the fact, that a parcel of boxes were being unloaded. Uncle Felix was summoned with his wheelbarrow, Homer despatched for a hatchet, and soon the unbounded curiosity of the children was set at rest by the opening of the boxes. The neat, walnut bedsteads were screwed together; the simple dressing-tables wheeled to their places; the wash-stands arranged, and then the more self-composed Eunice was sent to call her mother. A few words explained all; and when a tear fell on Edith's cheek, as Mrs. Irvine stooped over her, to kiss her thanks, she owned to her heart, that never could the bay-wreath about her brow win for her so true a pleasure or awaken so proud a thrill as she that moment knew.

XXVI.

Leaves from the Tropics.

FREQUENT letters had been received from Lawrence and Zilpha, which, while they did not indicate such decided improvement on the part of the invalid as they had hoped, still buoyed them up with the assurance that at least no ground had been lost. They had left Havana, after a few weeks' stay there, and had taken up their abode a score of miles or so distant from the capital, with an English family, who sometimes opened their house as a hostelry for sick strangers.

“To be sure our Spanish suffers a good deal in consequence of our almost entire separation from all who speak it,” wrote Zilpha; “but then, in other respects, we have what far more than compensates for the loss, in the home-like comfort that surrounds us. Every morning we have a charming ride on our little ponies—tough, wiry creatures, of a remarkable, Andalusian breed, with the pleasantest possible gait—who trot with us over the hills, or along

the sea-beach, where we sometimes dismount and gather shells, or down to Don Jose Gonsalez's sugar plantation, where we stop and get the sweet cane, which Lawrence likes to chew, and where he often gets weighed. Dear fellow ! how pleased he is, when he thinks he has gained a little ; and how it brightens him up for the rest of the day, making him think our afternoon dippings into the interminable Lope de Vega quite entertaining, and giving a zest to all his talk ! Every afternoon we have walks through the growth of palms and bananas, and I often take little sketches of views that please Lawrence, —I shall have quite a port-folio of them to show you all,—he gathering flowers for my botanical dissections, while I draw."

"Yesterday," ran a page from a later letter, "our party was augmented by the arrival of a family here from New-York, composed of a Colonel Fleming, his wife, and son, a young man several years older, I should think, than Lawrence. They are people of wealth, apparently, from their surroundings. The father has retired from the army lately in a broken state of health, and it is on his account they are here. Mrs. Fleming is a quiet woman, of no very particular force of character, judging from the little we have as yet seen of her. Lawrence seems highly pleased with the young man ; indeed, for his sake, I am quite glad they have come. He needs more companionship than mine, to keep him from dwelling upon the daily

phases of his invalid life. There is a little air of exclusiveness about these Flemings. Cousin Bryant, with his frank and open manners, would be very apt to say they *were* exclusive; but Lawrence, with his graver, quieter mien, declares there is just the admixture of ease and dignity which he likes.

—"We have closed as sweet and placid a Sabbath as I ever passed,"—it was Zilpha who wrote again,—"darkened only by the fear that our dear Lawrence is not gaining much strength in this enervating climate. I wish I could see him improving as Colonel Fleming does; but God manages all things in the best way. Ah! to keep that truth in patient remembrance! Mrs. Fleming and her son joined us in our Sabbath occupations after breakfast. The old gentleman don't seem to have any sympathies with them on these points. Mr. Fleming proffered his services as reader, and gave, with the same sort of power we have often thought Cousin Bryant remarkable for, the chapters Lawrence asked for, such as the sixty-third of Isaiah, the nineteenth Psalm, the twelfth of Hebrews. He had with him a volume of Melville's sermons, and as he read that fine one on 'the humiliation of the man, Christ Jesus,' Lawrence would rise from his sofa, and walk to and fro, in a tumult of responsive feelings. Sometimes he would pause before Mr. Fleming, interrupting him with remarks and comments that half startled me with their lofty sweetness and faith. As we sat together on the verandah in

the evening, looking out over the level sea, beneath which we had watched the sun go down with a rare splendor, they made me sing Sabbath hymns to them; and though Lawrence looked weak and weary, I never saw his face wear a serenity so beautiful. Dear, dear Lawrence!

—“He is bright and full of animation to-day, and talks confidently of being able to go home when the Fleming’s do, which will be within a few weeks at most. I am encouraged to hope he may. These kind friends are unwearying in their delicate attentions to him. The old Colonel brings him in fresh fruits gathered in his rides, and between walks and talks, and the sharing of his books with him, Mr. Fleming cheats the days of their tediousness. They have many scholarly conversations, and just now they have been discussing poetry in the general, and Mrs. Browning in particular. Shall I take notes for you, Edith, instead of finishing up these sketches I outlined this morning? Mr. Fleming had brought Lawrence the works of this English writer some days ago, and he has since been regaling himself on them with a relish unusual to him; for, like most men, he is not fond, you know, of *women’s* books. But the secret lies, I suspect, in the uncommon sympathy he finds in this author, with his own classic studies. He asked Mr. Fleming to re-read to him a passage he pointed out in the preface to ‘The Seraphim,’ as having struck him greatly by its manly strength and glowing poetic thought. Since it pleased him so, let me copy it for you.

“ ‘Had Aschylus lived after the incarnation and crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ, he might have turned, if not in moral and intellectual, yet in poetic faith, from the solitude of Caucasus, to the deeper desertness of that crowded Jerusalem, where none had any pity—from the ‘faded white flower’ of the Titanic brow, to the ‘withered grass’ of a heart trampled on by its own beloved—from the glorying of Him who gloried that He could not die, to the sublimer meekness of the Taster of death for every man—from the taunt, stung into being by torment, to *His* more awful silence, when the agony stood dumb before the love! And how, ‘from the height of this great argument,’ the scenery of the Prometheus would have dwarfed itself even in the eyes of its poet—how the fissures of his rocks, and innumerable smiles of his ocean would have closed, and waned into blankness, and his demi-god stood confessed so human a conception, as to fall below the aspiration of his own humanity! He would have turned from such, to the rent rocks and darkened sun—rent and darkened by a sympathy thrilling through nature, but leaving man’s heart untouched—to the multitudes whose victim was their Saviour—to the Victim whose sustaining thought, beneath an unexampled agony, was not the Titanic—‘*I can revenge!*’ but the celestial—‘*I can forgive!*’ ”

“ Then he turned to some passages against which he had run his pencil, in ‘The Drama of Exile,’ and asked to have them over again. One beginning

“ ‘Eternity stands always fronting God,’

he lingered upon as uncommonly grand, and the words put into the mouth of Christ, as he appears in vision before the trembling Adam and Eve, he thought not unworthy to have made a part of our greatest epic ; but both he and Mr. Fleming agreed to believe Milton’s idea of our sinning parents *after* the Fall, more in keeping with the new nature fresh upon them, than ‘The Drama’s—’

“ ‘Hast thou strength, beloved,
To look behind us ?’

“ And the reply,—

“ ‘I have strength to look upward—to thy face,’—breathe nothing of the discordant spirit of the ‘Adam severe’ and ‘ungrateful Eve’ of the ‘Paradise Lost.’

“Lawrence said human love must have seemed a paltry compensation *then*, for the loss of the divine favor ; and that the ‘Drama’ represented Eve as too much consoled by Adam’s tenderness. The choruses he did not like, and he wondered that even the author’s manifest love for old Greek art had betrayed her into modeling a Christian poem thereon.

“He said, that, after all, the greatest charm of these books to him was their religious element, not the religion that characterises poets in general—a mere vague belief in God’s providence or goodness, but the faith of the gospel of

Christ. The Atonement was the key-note to her song—that, begin where she might, or take whatever path she would, she made all terminate at Calvary.

“I have transcribed this extract, and given you just a hint or two of Lawrence’s conversation, that you may see how changed he is in one respect—that his silence on the highest of themes, on which we know he has long felt so much, has lately been quite broken.

—“‘I have just been looking over the ‘Phædo,’” he said, this morning, as Mr. Fleming came into our sitting-room,—‘and never have I been so struck before with the absolute poverty of its arguments. Compare this best that the wisest of the pagans can give us, with the logic of Paul’s Epistle to the Romans, and who would not be convinced by the disparity, that the one is only human, the other all God-like? I used to doat upon ‘Plato, the divine,’ carrying his works with me as regularly as my Bible, as you see; but in the shadows amidst which I stand now, how bright, how consolatory are the *positive*, distinct utterances of the gospel of God! How contrasted the ‘I know’ and ‘I am *persuaded*,’ of the Apostle of the Gentiles, with the ‘noble *hazard*’ of Socrates!’

“‘But it has not needed that you should stand with the gloom of sickness about you,’ I said, ‘to convince you of anything Paul teaches.’

“‘Oh, no! not to *convince* me, but to fill me with such an intense realization of the sweetness and adaptedness of

these truths to our human cravings, such as I never knew in health.'

"Mr. Fleming said he thought one of the compensations of sickness was the singular power it had of dissolving the earthly vapors that form a distorting medium about the soul, thus giving it a purified atmosphere, in which things appear as they really are. He alluded to a dangerous fit of illness he had had, when a student at Bonn, in Germany, and dated from that time all his clearer views of life and his present settled faith.

—"I had somewhat of an alarm to-day, occasioned by Lawrence's fainting while we were out riding this morning. I succeeded in assisting him from his pony, and laid him down on the grass; but when I saw him quite swoon away, I felt thankful it was I, instead of Edith, who was with him—she would have been so terrified. I folded some plantain leaves into a cup, and ran to a little stream I had remembered our crossing a few minutes before. The water soon revived him; but as he lay there, with his pale face turned up to the sky, the sudden thought came—*what if he were dead!* I became frightened, and could only sob; but I turned the sob into a prayer, and soon my fear was dispelled. Dear Lawrence was opening his eyes again, as I sat on the ground with his head on my knee, when I heard a horse's hoofs behind us. I felt so thankful that I was to have the presence and aid even of one of the natives; but imagine how grateful and relieved I was, to

find, on looking round, that it was Mr. Fleming. He thought, as he watched us ride away, that Lawrence looked exhausted, and so he made up his mind to follow us. You see, dear mother, how good God is—providing for us in all our emergencies.

—“It is night now, and Lawrence is sleeping most peacefully. He has talked even less than his custom, to-day; but I will not, must not hide from you, that there is a meaning calmness about his eyes, his words, his movements, that affects me strangely. God grant it may not be the serene tranquillity that sometimes gathers over the sky at the setting of the sun!”

XXVII.

Lawrence at Home.

THERE was grief in each of their hearts, which neither Mrs. Irvine nor Edith spoke of to one another when the last letters from Cuba were read. The hope that had been gilding the cloud with its golden fringes, was sinking beneath a horizon of gathering gloom. With her ready and ingenious invention, Mrs. Irvine had that very day been fitting up an easy chair for Lawrence. To his nice eye, she said, the velvet, so scorched and damaged by the mishaps of the fire, would be unsightly; and so she made it give way to some bright, fresh damask; and at the willing task she was working, when Uncle Felix had brought the packet. It contained a short letter from Lawrence himself. There was nothing mournful in it—rather a glad thankfulness that they would, he hoped, be so soon all together again; but it closed very abruptly, and as his mother laid it down, there was a pressure of her lips that betokened inward pain. Josepha picked it up.

"Why look, Edith, how crooked the lines are, and how funny brother Lawrie has made his letters. That's just the *trembly* way *I* write when Eunice shakes the table."

"Hush-sh!" said Edith, under her breath; and the child wondered, as she looked up, what *she* had done to fill her sister's eyes with tears. Mrs. Irvine left the room quickly. She was long gone; and when she came back, the children scrutinized her ~~close~~ly, and though they saw traces of weeping, she was calm then, and they thought that whatever the sorrow was, it had passed away.

"And wont you finish the chair, mother?" asked Eunice, as she was bidden to gather up the things scattered about, while Josepha was sent to tell Daphne to carry it into another room. "Only the damask to fasten along the top, and here are the little tacks all ready."

But the question was put aside with, "Not to-night, my dear; no, not to-night."

April, with her eyes full of tears, and her hands over-running with wet violets, had come. The aspens around Silverwood were tufted all over with their delicate leaves; the peach trees were blushing under the gaze of the warm sun, and the sweet-brier was making the old porch fragrant. The cleared spots high up the sides of the grand old mountain beyond, were beginning to look fresh, and the forests were brightening every day with the tender green of the feathery leaves. Uncle Felix was busy digging the garden, and the children, who felt oppressed by

a weight upon them when within doors, which they could not understand, were glad to employ their hours, when released from books, in assorting seeds and watching the planting of them, and in coaxing the old man to "hurry and have the beds and walks all trim by the time brother and sister would come home."

"'Pears to me, Miss Josey, dat ole mist'ess and Miss Edith ain't a reckonin' much on Mas' Lawrie comin' back, nohow."

Josepha, in her surprise, scattered the bulbs she was waiting on him to plant, and asked what he meant.

"La, Miss Josey, you're alive all over; and how'd ever you suspicion anything about dyin'? Now, honey, I didn't mean to say nothin' to make you cry!—mighty sorry! But look yer, Miss Josey; you see I'se made a deep hole, and drapt in dat sort o' *'tater* wot you say bears sich a gran' posy—"

"That's an elegant scarlet dahlia. Plant it carefully, for sister thinks so much of it;" and in her interest to have the bulb rightly set, the child forgot the tear not yet dry on her cheek.

"Well, you see it's nothin' better nor a *tater* now, anyhow; but wait a chance. Ole Mas'r above, yonder, can make it come up a mighty different sort o' thing from what I'se done planted; and jes' so he do wid de body. When Mas' Lawrie dies, and you dies, and me dies, he's gwine to make us all spring up a sight more beautifuller

nor yer fine posies, bein' if we has de true life in us when we's done covered up; for if dis root hadn't life in it now, I'se like to know where yer posies 'ud be next summer!"

"Yes, I understand; you mean if we aren't good when we die;" but Josepha did not want to hear particularly about being "good" just then. It made her feel gloomy, or she fancied it *ought* to have that effect; and between herself and gloom, there was no more affinity than between sunshine and shadow; so she escaped from Uncle Felix's sermon with the dahlia-bulb text, and went to aid Eunice in making drills for her flower-seeds.

Days came and went mournfully—heavily for the inmates of Silverwood. For Edith, there was nothing but mocking brightness in the fitful flashes of the April sun—nothing but a taunting calm in its setting splendors, as it sank pavillioned in clouds behind the straight top of Castlehead. She could only think of the brilliant hopes quenched in tears—of the beautiful sun that might "go down at noon."

Oh! that long agony of suspense, during which no letters came;—and the tossed spirit wandered up and down in alternating lulls and storms of doubt—fear—hope and despair! The worst our imaginations summon up, is, perhaps, easier borne than this racking tumult of contending passions. Better that hope should be shipwrecked at once, than be hurled back and forth over a sea of distracting emotions, sometimes on the crest of a wave, from

which the near headland can be seen, then plunging down, down, pitilessly into the abysmal trough; then within frantic reach of a floating spar; then dashed, bleeding and senseless, against the sharp rocks of despair!

These were Edith's experiences during the days that Uncle Felix returned from the village without letters. They must have been her mother's, too; but if they were, she gave no outward sign of them, but continued to keep her head and hands restlessly busy. When bending over her needle, she would employ Eunice to read some favorite devotional volume that might prove an anchor to thoughts that could not be other than tempest-tossed; and when the rapid fingers would rest, and the quick step that could be heard here and there about the house, as she held herself firmly to the performance of every necessary duty, would be still, as she sat down in her accustomed seat, with the basket of keys placed on the carpet beside her, she yet permitted no interval for wearying meditation; and Edith would sit withdrawn, regarding her with silent amazement, as with a brow that gave no indication of the inward disquiet, except the absence of the invariable sunlight from it, she pored absorbedly over some holy page.

The sun had long faded from the western sky, not even the glow lingered around the place of his setting, and Edith sat on the porch straining her eyes in the direction of the road by which Uncle Felix was to return from Milburne. She heard at length the horse's hoofs, and

in a tumult of anxiety, which, yet, she felt she had scarce strength to bear the breaking of, she rose to go into the house, to get away, if possible, from the news she had been so impatient to have hastened. Then again, with a determination to master her feelings, she turned and walked resolutely down the gravel path to the gate. It was so dark that the outlines of the horse were just discernible. She had only voice to ask—"Any letters, Uncle Felix?" when she felt her hand grasped by, she knew not whom; and before her scattered senses could be recalled, she found herself in the parlor, in the midst of the startled group, with Bryant Woodruff supporting her.

"Lawrence—Zilpha!" were the words all uttered with one eager breath. Bryant folded his arm round Mrs. Irvine, and drew her to the sofa, where he had seated Edith. For some moments no one spoke—no one had voice for a question; even the children pressed closer to their mother's side, with a vague feeling of terror. "*The Lord gave—the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord!*" were the first sounds that broke upon the fearful stillness of the room. It was enough—they knew it all! Mrs. Irvine clasped her hands together with a convulsive gesture, and a deadly paleness overspread her face, but she uttered no word. The power of speech was gone. Rigid, motionless, marble-like, she sat erect, shedding no tears, giving forth no wail. The purple life seemed as if congealed, so that the heart, though broken, was not seen to bleed.

A low, hopeless moan of anguish escaped Edith's lips, and she sank back, mercifully bereft for the present of all consciousness—deaf alike to the piteous shrieks of the children and the unrestrained cries of the servants, who, by this time, had assembled to learn the tidings. In their fright, they imagined that their young mistress, too, was dead; and their lamentations rang through the long passage, as they hurried to and fro for restoratives. But Bryant would let them use none. He would not rouse the spirit that had succumbed under the blow, to the full sense of the truth it could not bear.

But all the piercing cries, and the hastening steps, and the dusky crowd pressing around the pale form that lay on the sofa, where she still sat unbending and moveless, failed to attract the stony gaze of Mrs. Irvine. Bryant became alarmed; he unclasped her tightened hands; he kneeled at her side, repeating one scripture promise after another; he followed the freed, glorified spirit within the gates of the celestial city; he spoke of its unutterable blessedness—of the angels' joy over it, gathered, as it was now, *safe home*—of the Saviour greeting it with his look of divine love, as he recognized in it a fruit of “the travail of his soul” and “was satisfied”—till at length the stiffened muscles began to relax; the set eye-lids drooped; the unlocked tears streamed, and the quivering lips murmured—“Thank God! thank God!--my beloved is in glory! but —*the precious clay!*”

"*My brother! my brother!*" With what a wailing iteration that made Bryant shudder, did Edith's cry break in amidst the sobbings! The one thought absorbed all her soul—"Lawrence dead!" It could hold no more. There was bitterness enough there to dash the cup of consolation which Bryant tried to press to her pallid lips. He attempted to soothe her with the precious truths—never felt so precious as when we are sinking in the deep waters—with which he had succeeded in starting the fountain of her mother's heart, but the agony on that contracted brow—the unspeakable plaintiveness of that thrilling tone with which she would turn pleadingly to him—"dead—Lawrence dead!"—was too much even for his strong self-control. He tried the consolation of prayer, and the Comforter, in some measure, descended, in answer to his touching, tearful appeal for *peace*.

Oh! the intense, the immeasurable anguish of trying to bring home to the aching soul the idea of death as connected with our beloved! We link the terrible word with the precious name—"dead—dead!"—but fail to compass a tithe of its fearfulness. We repeat and repeat it, as though we thought thus to wear the conception into our unwilling belief, but it remains only a drear sound.

"What is—to die?"

We cannot hold the meaning, more than can

An oak's arm clasp the wind."

We sleep, we wake, still saying—"dead ! dead !" The sun rises just as it did ; it sets the same ; those about us begin to talk as of old, even to smile again ; but we move on through the chilling gloom as in a grim, oppressive dream. We will surely awake bye-and-bye. This nightmare of the soul will pass away. We listen, we long, we watch, we wait ; but there is "no further change." We have comprehended as much of the mystery as our finite natures can take in, while we walk on, still incredulously murmuring—" *dead ! dead !* "

XXVIII.

The Coming Back.

“It was Sabbath evening. I had sat all day at his sofa, fanning him, as he lay in a half-dreaming state, from which he occasionally roused himself, and talked as Bunyan’s Pilgrim talked when he drew near to the heavenly city. The ‘shining ones’ seemed to encompass him as they did ‘Christian,’ and the glory of the open gates streamed around him, ‘which, when I saw, I wished myself, too, among them!’ I was not alone. Our friends, the Flemings, were watchers with me. But never shall I forget the tender, wistful look with which my precious brother caught my hands as I was bending over him, arranging his cushions. ‘Oh! my mother! if she were only here, it would be easier, I think, to go!’ I whispered the words—‘As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you, and you shall be comforted!’

“‘How sweet! how infinitely compassionate!’ he murmured, with closed eyes. ‘Yet I have such an unspeakable longing to see her dear face once more! Ah! my sister!

your love is very sweet to me ; but what human love *can* be like a mother's !'

“ ‘ Think then,’ I said, ‘ what Jesus’ must be. ‘ Yea, a mother may forget, yet will not I.’ ”

“ ‘ I am content !’ he sighed. ‘ When I see *her* face next, it will have the radiance of heaven on it—that is better.’ ”

“ Not long after, I heard a low sound. I bent down my ear, and caught the words—‘ Mother—Zilpha—Edith—Eunice—Sepha ; yes, all—all will come !’ ”

“ He brightened a little, and told me he wanted to have a long talk with me, but that he was weary and would sleep first. As we were silently watching him, I saw his lips move. ‘ Mother—heaven—Jesus !’ Then there was a strange stillness. ‘ Dearest Lawrence,’ I said, laying my hand on his damp forehead, ‘ tell me how precious you feel Him to be.’ It lay there while I waited for a reply. I kissed his cheek to rouse him, but he did not move. Mr. Fleming whispered—‘ He is answering that question in heaven !—’ ”

—“ The mother and sisters of my departed friend will forgive the intrusion of a stranger into their grief ; but the bereaved sufferer, who has this evening had strength granted her to follow the beloved clay to its resting-place beneath the tropic shade of a rural cemetery, has yielded now to the pressure of the sorrow that did not come in its intensity, till all was over. She has been able to lean

with unquestioning submission upon the arm of the Redeemer, as I have seen none other do in circumstances of such sore bereavement.

“ The late twilight was closing around us, as we laid the head of your precious one down to rest in the sleep which God ‘ giveth His beloved.’ These were the words I heard his sister utter, as we turned away from the sacred spot. May the pitying Father, who does not willingly afflict, comfort her and you, each and all ! Do not allow the thought of her desolation too afflict you too much. All that Christian sympathy can do, on my mother’s behalf and mine, shall be done to make her feel that her sorrow is ours, as well, for we had both become singularly interested in the lovely and beloved one who is gone. Such a transparent purity of soul, whose inmost workings might have been shown to the world without the dread that anything would be found there that would skulk from such an unveiling, I have never known. He was a ‘ beloved John.’

“ Before we leave the Island, we will have a stone placed above him, so that you shall not have the mournful thought to dwell upon—that he lies in an unmarked grave ; and, with Miss Irvine’s permission, there shall be cut upon it the words that fell from her lips as she saw them smooth his green pillow—

“ ‘ He giveth His beloved sleep.’

“ We expect to sail within a week, and I beg you will allow yourselves no uneasiness, as I shall make it my care and privilege, as a Christian friend and brother, to conduct Miss Irvine home to you, as I trust, in safety.

“ Yours in like precious faith and sympathy,

“ ROBERT FLEMING.”

Such was the tenor of the letters of which Bryant was the bearer. Zilpha had enclosed them to him, with the request that he would himself be the bearer of the sorrowful tidings, and help to sustain them in their lonely grief. True to her self-forgetful nature, she, although alone on a foreign shore, or at least with none but those who had so recently been entire strangers to her, bethought herself of making a provision that should, if possible, soften the violence of the blow to the circle at home.

As they all sat together, a week later, still heavy and oppressed with sorrow, a carriage was heard at the gate, and in a few minutes Zilpha and Mr. Fleming stood among them. What a fresh opening of the agonizing wounds! For the first time they seemed to realize the truth after which they had been ineffectually grasping. Where was he who had been at her side when they had seen her last? Yet, in clasping her to their bosoms, they felt as if brought nearer to the dear lost one—they felt that through her eyes they looked upon the far-away, forsaken, island-grave. Uncle Felix deposited the ownerless trunk in the passage,

filled with the garments that had been exchanged for the robes of immortality ; and the old man's tears fell fast, while Josepha, sitting down upon it, buried her face in her apron, and sobbed aloud.

Zilpha was the first to grow calm ; and as, after a while, she went over with touching detail the story of his last days on earth, they all felt the influence of the meek and holy resignation that breathed through all her words ; and in listening to the low ripple of her voice, broken, oftentimes, by tearful pauses, they owned in their hearts that "an angel spake."

For some days the two gentlemen lingered with them, but duties called each away, and they departed, leaving the current of life so fearfully swollen by the storm of affliction that had swept over them, to fall back in some degree into its old channel. Externally, the quiet of spirit returned to Mrs. Irvine. She laid away as sacred relics—made doubly so by her baptism of tears—everything that Lawrence's touch had consecrated, kissing the books he had used and the clothes he had worn, and winding up the watch that had been last turned by the dear, silent fingers, while she dimmed its face with her fast-falling drops. Edith shunned the sight of every memento that could renew her anguish. She spiritualized the loss as far as possible, allowing no object of sense to come before her that might impress her with a tangible realization of it, thus unwisely keeping her mind with that

certain shadow of doubt upon it, which the resolute facing of all these memories would have dispelled into something softer than what her imagination made her suffer.

The rose-tree, which has been beaten to the ground by the driving rain, and left to lie there in its desolation, even when raised again, does not turn at once to the sun, as it had turned before, but in time it yields to the genial influences about it. Gradually it betakes itself to the support of the trellis, to which it has been bound, and the shining side of its leaves are won round again to the kindly light of day.

“ Even the tombs where love repines,
Lonely tenements of tears,
Learn to look like happy shrines,
Through the golden mists of years.

“ Sorrows that are sorrows still,
Lose the bitter taste of woe ;
Nothing’s altogether ill
In the griefs of long-ago !”

God be evermore blessed that so it is !—that in pity to His weak and bleeding-hearted ones, He staunches the wounds His own hands have made, by healing balm gathered from the Tree of Life !

And so, as the Spring-days went by, came it to be the experience of the bruised hearts at Silverwood. Mrs. Grantley, who paid them a visit of condolence, went away, saying to her sister, whose eyes were moist with sympathy,

that "they bore it with beautiful calmness—that Zilpha looked as passionless as one of Canova's sculptures; and Edith reminded, in her statuesque paleness, of a figure in one of the frescoes in the Sistine chapel."

Miss Burton said, with a quick twinkling of her eyelids, that "they rather reminded her of the sisters of Bethany, as they sank subdued, but suffering still, at the feet of Him who had 'loved Lazarus.'"

XXIX.

A Bridal.

How impertinent seem the intrusions of the outer world, when our souls are all consecrated by “the solemn dignities of grief!” How we sicken and turn away when its inexorable demands are thrust upon us, and feel that we are wronged in not being permitted to sit dumbly down beside our dead sorrow, and hug it to our bosoms! And when those who love us, and better know what is fitting for us, than in our unreasoning and absorbed condition, we can know for ourselves—when these come in between us and it, and with gentle violence separate us from it, and heap smooth and green the mound of memory for us, and plant the everlasting flowers of hope there, we are inclined to think them almost unfeeling—to look upon them as the child does on those who carry away the confined form of the darling mother, and cover it up under the church-yard sod, heedless of the outstretched arms that would have clung to it still!

With some such feelings as these did the inmates of Silverwood regard the necessities that compelled them to arouse from their seducing apathy, and apply themselves to the business of life again.

Sorrow does not long darken away the morning light from the eyes of childhood; and though Eunice's face wore a softened expression that made it seem quieter than usual, she could not understand the frequent failure of her mother's attempted cheerfulness—a cheerfulness that, like a watery sunshine, had in it more than even the sadness of tears. As to Josepha, she liked not the pervading pensiveness of the house, and under the open sky, child-like, she sought to lose the remembrance of the grief that at times, though she would not speak of it even to Eunice, would swell her little heart. The arrival, too, of the additional companions, was a source of great gratification to the children. Their cousins, Sophy and Maria Irvine, were as merry-tempered and socially-disposed as they could desire. Lucy Fletcher was thoughtful and quiet, older than Eunice, even more given to withdrawn and silent readings, and withal, a little suspected of home-sickness by Josepha, a thing she could hardly forgive. Fanny Richards she judged to be somewhat grum and hard to please—an opinion, however, which she prudently confided to nobody but Uncle Felix, who attributed it to her “feelin’ kind o’ strange like.” Virginia Browne and Sally Edwards were both pleasant enough in their way—the latter

something of a mischief; but upon the whole, Eunice and Josepha, after gravely comparing notes, concluded they would all have a very pleasant summer together.

Classes were a novelty to them, educated as they had been thus far, alone; and the competition naturally excited began to make Eunice think that there were other studies that might even vie in interest with the stories of history. "Composition" grew to be anything but a bug-bear to Josepha, when half a dozen others were occupied over the same subject, each trying who could make hers the best. Sophy and Maria were never weary of telling their companions what "a mighty difference there was between the nice, coaxing way Cousin Zilpha and Cousin Edith had of teaching, and the way their last governess from Vermont, Miss Fitch, had." "Yes," Virginia Browne would say, "papa always says that persuasion is better than force, and he has a picture to prove it, too—one boy cantering away on a donkey, while he holds out over its nose a long stick with a bunch of carrots fastened to the end of it; and another boy beating his donkey, and making it set its feet down more stubbornly at every blow."

"I admire *that* donkey's spirit," was Fanny Richards' opinion. "Nobody should ever *drive* me to do anything."

"Or *coax*, either, eh?" Sally Edwards could not forbear suggesting.

June, with its wealth of roses and honeysuckles, was embowering Silverwood, till it looked like a nest of beauty

hidden away amongst the tremulous aspens. School hours were over, and the little girls were assembled on the porch with their laps full of flowers, weaving wreaths to ornament bridal-cakes, as that night was to witness the important affair of a wedding at Silverwood, Daphne being the bride elect. Maria Irvine had furnished a fine, embossed sheet, and Eunice had written out in her fairest, "copper-plate hand"—"Miss Daphne Irvine, at home, eight o'clock P. M. Silverwood, June 10th;" and then followed "the list" of the invited guests who were to have "a bid," taken down from the lips of the bride. Josepha was interested, heart and hand, in the matter, and so, in less degree, were most of the others.

Daphne appeared, as they were busy over their work, with a roll of white ribbon in her hand, and the request that Eunice would make rosettes out of it for her hair. Sophy suggested that as there were plenty of syringa-blossoms, they would answer instead of an orange-wreath, and be more appropriate than the ribbon.

"La, *sakes!* Miss Sophy; garden-posies arn't fitten for *my* wool—mighty nice for white folks' har; but to see dem in a cull'ed gal's, it's contrar' to my taste."

"Why, *grapes* and *flowers* would go very well together," said Sally Edwards

"Thank you, Miss Sally; you sees no *grapes* on *my* head—done lef' 'em for Homer and Silvy; 'sides, Miss Eunice, flowers 'pears cheap-like; and Nathan," she added,

with a show of maidenly bashfulness at the mention of the name of her *affiancé*, "he bought me dat whole bolt, purpose to have me fixed off partic'lar."

"I wonder it don't make you blush, Daphne," said Virginia, "to speak of Nathan before us."

"How you know but it do, Miss Ginnie? I blushes brown, you see."

"Hope you won't forget to scour your ear-rings with soap and sand in honor of the occasion," broke in Fanny Richards, who sat pulling the flowers to pieces instead of tying them into wreaths.

Daphne lifted her hands to her great hoops with a look of offended dignity.

"Miss Fanny don't mean to say dese arn't as much goold as dem little dangles at her years?"

"Hush! Daphne!" commanded Eunice. "You mustn't take liberties because we're making so much of you just now."

"La, Miss Eunice, I'm not takin' nothin' from nobody."

"No, not even my suggestion of sand for your brass," said Fanny, coolly; "but look here, don't scour your face; the metal there shines enough; it might put old Mr. Norris out of countenance."

"Don't tease her, Fanny," interposed Sophy. "You'll put her out of humor for to-night."

"No she shan't, Miss Sophy; nothing oughten ter put me out, when I see sich powerful pretty fingers workin'

for me ; 'sides arn't I gwine to be married to-night ?" and with a triumphant chuckle she disappeared behind the house, as she heard Aunt Rose's shrill call.

Fanny turned up her little scornful nose, as she looked down on the group seated on one of the steps. "Something *I'd* be above," she said, "making wreaths for darbies ! Why I wouldn't do it even for our white servants."

"Why ?" asked Josepha, with a wondering look.

"Why ? why it's no business of yours to be waiting on servants ; besides, it spoils them. My mother always says, if you're kind to servants, you'll have them in your lap ; so it's best to keep them at a distance."

"But it makes them love us better, if we show some interest in their affairs," said Maria. "Mamma likes us to make frocks and aprons for Mammy Winnie's and Aunt Tabby's little black babies—don't she Sophy ?"

"The idea of caring whether servants love us or not !" retorted Fanny, contemptuously.

"But we *do* care," replied Sophy, with some spirit ; "and I've heard mamma say that the very reason you all had such trouble with your white servants, changing them so often, was just because, up North, you take so little interest in them."

"Making bibs for black babies !" persisted Fanny, in quite an amused way. "Wouldn't that be good to tell to some of our school-girls in —— ?"

"All city girls are so set up !" returned Sophy.

“*All?*” d’ye hear that Lucy Fletcher?”

“What?” asked Lucy, turning the book she had been reading, back upward on the seat, and sitting down on the step among the others.

“Oh! it don’t apply to *you*, Lucy,” said Sophy; “you see you’re just on a level with the rest of us now. I meant it for Fanny’s friends—the school-girls up yonder. For my part, Fanny, I wonder your mother ever let you come away from such a grand place.”

“She only did it because she thought I would be healthier in the country.”

“But I’m surprised *you’ll* allow there’s better health in country than in city,” chimed in Sally Edwards.

“*I* don’t; but it was mamma’s fancy.”

“Come, girls,” said Eunice; “my rosettes are finished, and Sophy’s and Sepha’s wreaths; and you, Maria and Virginia, have surely got *bouquets* enough there for all the bridesmaids. Come, let us go and arrange the supper-table. Mother told Daphne she might use the laundry-room for the occasion. Fanny,” she plead, coaxingly, “you have the best taste among us; go with us and show us how to do things up in city style.”

Fanny was not very hard to appease, so away they all went to superintend the laying of cloths, and the placing of dishes. Josepha ran to beg her mother for the cut-glass salvers and jelly-glasses, “for you know, mother, Nathan is one of Mrs. Grantley’s house servants, and he knows

what's what, as well as white folks." The request was granted, and Maria followed, coaxing for the candelabra from the parlor mantel—"mamma lent our's, Aunt Mary, to Chrissy, my maid, when *she* was married." And so the table began to look really tasteful under the busy little hands. Sally became too interested to tease, and Fanny forgot to remember that they were working only for the gratification of servants. Homer and Silvy fetched and carried for the young mistresses, and the whites of their eyes shone and their teeth glittered in admiring wonder, as the wreaths were bound round the white cakes.

"D'ye ever see der like, mammy?" questioned Homer of Aunt Rose. "Hi! but Daphne'll be sot up! I'll declar' she'll think she's done got white. How she'll make Silvy and me fly a'ter dis—hi!"

Uncle Felix had gone with the little carriage to bring "Mas'r Preacher Norris," as the servants called him, who was to take tea with the family, and afterwards perform the ceremony. As he sat at the foot of the table, looking kindly along the line of bright little faces, so untouched of care, so expectant, so mirthful, he could not forbear contrasting them in his mind with those meek, subdued ones which he had been sitting tête-a-tête with for the half hour before.

In due time Uncle Felix appeared as usher, to announce that the bridal party was in readiness. The little girls

hurried away, and arranged themselves along the wall in a state of high anticipation. In the centre of the room stood Nathan, a fine, athletic negro—"God's image cut in ebony," as old Fuller quaintly styles the African—looking very groom-like with his spotless pants, vest and gloves. Daphne, with conscious blushes—*brown* ones, of course—leaned lovingly on his arm, and flourished with imitative grace the "book-muslin" handkerchief, redolent with the Lubin's extract which she had begged from Sophy Irvine. On either side were arranged brides-maids and brides-men of "assorted colors," as Sally Edwards whispered to Virginia Browne. The old clergyman had no sooner taken his station in front of the expectant couple, than one of the attendants stepped forward, and with a profusion of bobbing and scraping, placed a paper containing the fee in Mr. Norris' hand. One better up to the points of etiquette attempted to prevent the *faux pas* by grasping at his coat skirts—a gesture that set the grown ones of the assembled sable coterie to tittering, and the big-eyed, barefooted urchins, whose bullet heads were poking out here and there among their elders, to roaring outright with laughter. A few cuffs and shakes administered by some of the white-turbaned "aunties" restored order, and the ceremony proceeded without farther interruption. Mr. Norris shook hands with the happy pair, as soon as it was over, leaving the unopened paper in the bride's palm. The family did the same, and then the servants fell back,

and the younger fry were turned out of doors, while "the white folks" were invited forward to partake of the good cheer. This done, they returned to "the house," where their ears were saluted with the "tumming" of the banjo, mingled with the sounds of hearty jollity and innocent mirthfulness, such as set Fanny Richards to thinking that perhaps, after all, it *was* worth while to do what one could to make even servants happy.

X X X.

A n r e s t .

EDITH was sitting alone on the steps of an old summer house, through which, amidst the openings in the clematis that rather held it together, than owed any support to it, the early moon-beams were beginning to slant. The bell had rung for an hour's evening study, and the children had all just left her. She had been exerting her powers as a story-teller for their amusement, and successfully, too, to judge from the merry laughter that had echoed through the garden as they listened to the tale. She had smiled when they did, but it would have taken more discriminating eyes than theirs to discover that the smile came only from the lips—that the heart had nothing to do with it.

How little do those who see us most constantly—who know us best—who love us dearest, dream of the inner world of joy or sadness—of hope or doubt—of blissfulness or despair, that crowds the cycle of our being! Thousands of the strongest emotions that stir us, die away unspoken.

Circumstances, like pebbles thrown into a smooth lake, start concentric circles of feeling, the innermost, the deepest indented ; but the far shore of our outer life, if, indeed, the ripple reach it at all, is scarcely touched by the faintest emotion. The occasion of the inquietude is hidden beneath the waves that only parted to open it a way, and the unruffled surface shows no scar, more than does the yielding water under the blow of the hurled pebble.

“It is strange,” thought Edith ; “strange that there should be any topic about which Zilpha and I cannot speak to each other. How seldom we name Bryant ! Various times, indeed, has she made very distinct allusions, with an evident desire to open all her heart to me ; but I shrunk from her revelations ; I would not let her go on ; I have not been strong enough to hear all the truth. How like a son’s, are *his* tender letters to mother ; and what a thoughtful compassion in them, too, for me ! Love must be very beautiful when its purple bloom is yet unbreathed upon by its being spoken of to another. How beautiful Zilpha must know——”

“Edith, are you here ?” It was Zilpha’s softly-modulated voice that spoke. Edith bade her come and sit down beside her.

“But, my dear, mother sent me to call you in. You know how averse she is to any solitary indulgence of melancholy moods. Don’t you think you give way to them too much ?”

“No. It is better to unclosethe flood-gates, and let out the overcharge occasionally. It relieves me.”

“Is your heart, then, so full of sorrow still, dear Edith?”

“Zilpha, I believe all life is a disappointment to me. I feel as if my clinging to it was being loosened; not so much because I realize the overtopping claims the better life has on my affections, as that it fails me at so many points. It is not what my hopes had led me to expect; in plain words, it disappoints me at every turn.”

“You forget that trial, discipline, are the surest things promised us. ‘In the world ye *shall have* tribulation.’ Why, then, be so disappointed that a little of it has come? But it has been gently dispensed; and if you had seen, as I did, dear Lawrence’s translation—for it was more like that than *death*—you would feel that the prevailing sentiment of our minds should be thanksgiving.”

“I believe I *can* thank God for the light over our brother’s grave. Sometimes I feel that if he were sleeping beside our father up yonder,” and Edith pointed in the direction of the village cemetery, “I should like to lie down beside him.”

“Because you can say with Paul—‘I have finished my course?’”

“I’m afraid I think too much of the rest and peace of heaven, and of the weariness of earth.”

“Weariness! Why, *you* are not worn down with toil, like Arnauld of whom we read the other day, who would

not yield to the feeling of weariness, because he 'had all eternity to rest in.' You are young; you are surrounded by those that love you; you have never known want. Ah! God has been very good to us. Think what our case would be if He gave us our deserts."

"I feel the truth of all you say; but somehow I can't attain to that calm state of acquiescence which dear mother and you have reached. If I were but as good as you!"

"Oh! don't say that, Edith."

"Yes, I *must* say it. You don't know how often, when I have watched you both in trying circumstances, I have envied the meekness with which you have gone through them, and longed to learn the secret by which you evaded the struggle that was raising a tempest in my own breast."

"Mother would tell you, and I think I can, too, that a calm exterior does not always betoken the absence of all struggle. But the secret you have—'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee.'"

"'Perfect peace:—Edith repeated the words two or three times over.

"What a music there is in them!" said Zilpha.

"Yes; but it does not drown the unquiet murmurs of my restless heart."

"Why 'restless,' dear Edith? I don't understand this."

Edith leaned her head on her sister's shoulder, and did not at once reply.

"I think," she said, after a long pause, "that my difficulty is, that I look backward and forward too much, and *upward* too little. *You* remind me of what is told of Michael Angelo, after he had finished painting the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. His gaze had been turned upward so long, that when he descended from the scaffolding, he could not, without pain, look upon the ground. I keep counting over one loss after another—home—friends—property; and ah! the dreariest of all, the taking away of our hope and stay; the leagues of ocean between us and his lonely grave," and Edith buried her face in her sister's lap. She calmed herself again, and went on. "It grieves me now to see dear mother's incessant occupation and anxiety, and—and—if *you* should leave us, too! These thoughts weary me, and make me wish sometimes that the end were come, and we were all at home in heaven."

"If *I* should leave you?"

"Sister," said Edith, straightening herself up rigidly, "I know it all; I know you are beloved; I have read it in his eye. You love him; I have read that, too, and you have told me as much. I can see, then, what the end must be."

"He did not speak to you of it?"

"No—no—not exactly in so many words; but I could gather more than his tongue could have revealed."

“And would it make you sorry, Edith, were I to tell you that it is all so?”

“Glad for your sake, Zilpha,” and the white moonlight made the cheek over which it fell, look wan; “but I dare not think *how* sorry for my own. Oh! this rending apart of home-ties, the sweetest, the most precious of earth, how bitter it is!”

“Don’t let us think of it, then,” said Zilpha, caressingly. “Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”

“But I can’t help thinking; and I can see how it is all to be arranged. Mother and the children will go with you, for we couldn’t live at Silverwood, if you, our strongest arm, next to dear Lawrence, were taken away; and I—I can go and be a governess.”

“Edith; dear Edith, as long as you are unclaimed, your home and mine must be the same.”

“Would you condemn me to a life of dependence when self-support is within my reach? No, Zilpha, I shall never marry; I feel that, and I must teach myself thankfully to accept what hundreds do—the provision my education makes for me. Others as proud-spirited as myself are constrained often to be content with a dependence that would be galling to me, however pure and disinterested and noble were the intentions of those who might invite me thus to lean on them. But I have not this further trial of compelled dependence, and I ought to be grateful.”

“ Dear Edith, you are borrowing trouble, and paying a most exorbitant interest for it,” said Zilpha, soothingly. “ Do not attempt to look into the future, for pry as we may, we cannot tell what a day may bring forth. Let us trust Him who knows what is best for us all, and then come what will, we can appropriate the lines we so often hear dear mother use—

“ ‘ Give what Thou canst, without Thee we are poor,
And with Thee, rich, take what Thou wilt away ! ’ ”

“ Yes,” sighed Edith, “ a *practical* faith ; I know that is what I need ; mine has been too theoretical.”

“ ‘ Ask, and it shall be given.’ ”

“ I do—I do,” replied Edith, earnestly. “ I will try and be more like mother and you.”

“ Look higher, my dear ; follow Jesus.”

A voice was heard shouting their names at the garden gate—“ Sister ! Edith ! mother wants you to come in out of the dew.”

“ But promise me,” said Zilpha, retaining Edith in the seat from which she was about to rise ; “ promise me that you will not sadden yourself by such anticipations as you have been setting forth to-night. These unsubstantial spectres of the future have no business to be here scaring you in the daylight of the present.”

“ Promise *me*,” replied Edith, kissing her sister, “ that the subject we have touched on shall not be spoken of between us, unless I introduce it.”

“ Does it, indeed, grieve you so ? ” asked Zilpha, a little sorrowfully.

“ You shall talk of it as much as you will, after a while ; but I don’t feel strong enough for it just yet. Time, Zilpha ; time and prayer ; ” and with intertwining arms the sisters walked together to the house.

XXXI.

Summer Visitors.

ONE morning, not long after this, Uncle Felix made his appearance at the parlor door, where Edith was giving a music lesson to one of her pupils.

“One of de servants down to Mr. Carson’s hotel brung dis note for some of you alls, Miss Zilphy.”

Zilpha received it. “It’s for you, Edith,” she said, looking at the superscription, as she handed it to her. Edith colored a little, as she opened the note and glanced over it.

“Ah! here are Dr. Dubois and Jacqueline, and two or three of their city friends whom I met last winter in Milburne, on their way to ‘the Springs.’ The party go on to-morrow, with the exception of the doctor and his sister who expect to delay a few days to see us and our pretty country hereabouts. Zilpha, it will be incumbent on us to ride in and see them.”

“Certainly it will, and engage them to dinner, too.”

“Yes ; how kind old Mr. Dubois was to me, and the doctor, too. I shall be glad of an opportunity to show some appreciation of it. But need we ask these other people ? You know we have entertained no company since—since we put on mourning.”

“It will not do to make a selection, especially if you received attentions at their hands last winter.”

Accordingly, Mrs. Irvine took her daughters' place in the school-room, while they went to pay their duty to the strangers. They found Jacqueline protesting that she was in a state of general dislocation, and vowing that unless a spring-seated and backed carriage were found for her use and behoof, she did not think she could be induced to encounter another day of such roads as they had made trial of, for all the pleasure a season at a Virginia watering-place could promise. The two ladies and the gentleman who formed their party, joined her hue and cry of abuse of the roads, but made their *amende honorable* by their unstinted admiration of the scenery around Milburne. Dr. Dubois thought the rough journey better than a score of medicated baths, or a hundred draughts of medicinal waters. After a half hour's visit, Zilpha and Edith came away, having obtained a promise from the party that they would all drive out and dine at Silverwood.

Aunt Rose had already entered upon her leisurely preparations for the simple meal she expected to prepare, when her young mistresses returned with the announce-

ment that five strangers were invited for dinner. To hurry, was a thing she had never done in her life. "Hur-ryin'," she said, "allers hendered her," and with her elephantine proportions, her movements and methods all corresponded. Uncle Felix, though he had no such corporeal incumbrance to carry about with him, was possessed of the same "masterly inactivity;" and Daphne, while she was "a smart chance" of a girl, did not understand better than other negroes, the practical meaning of *dispatch*, in her way of doing business. So Zilpha and Edith lent them the aid of their quicker hands in concocting a dessert.

Homer was sent to help Uncle Felix catch a pair of ducks and a turkey to add to the roast that was to have sufficed for dinner; but after running himself out of breath, he came back unsuccessful, with Fidèle at his heels, declaring "dat dar dog wan't no 'count, nohow; he jes' skeert de things; dat's all; an' Uncle Felix, he so stiff, he say, sence he have de rheumatis', he's done good for nothin' for runnin'."

"Why don't you scatter some corn," asked Edith, "and coax them to you in that way, and then make a dash at some of them? Run and get some in your hat."

"Ar'n't got no crown in it, Miss Edith."

"Well, take something else, then; only catch them as soon as you can, or Aunt Rose's dinner will be so late

it will have to be put off, like the Irishman's, till to-morrow."

Homer scampered off, with Silvy and Fidèle and Uncle Felix to help him, and in a little while returned with a duck under one arm and a chicken under the other.

"Sure 'nuff, Miss Edith; here dey be!"

"But they don't match, Homer."

"Dey's both got a blind eye—see!"

But Homer was assured they would not do to go together, and so, after no little farther delay and trouble, the needed fowls were at length secured.

Daphne had Zilpha's assistance in compounding puddings and cream-tarts, which were to rival those of "the widow of Nourreddin;" and as Aunt Rose set down the second pitcher of cream she had been dispatched for to the milk-house, with an emphatic jerk upon the table beside Edith, she gave vent to the opinion that "company was like de 'Gypton locuses—eats up all clean afore 'em."

Edith had her materials for the ice she was preparing ready to deliver into Uncle Felix's hands for freezing, when she remembered that it had not been flavored. Josepha, who was making herself "generally useful," now that her lessons were over, was sent to bring a vanilla-bean.

"Only a bit of a one here," she said, holding up the empty box.

“ Well, some of the ‘ pine-apple extract ’ will do.”

“ Mother gave out the last of that for Daphne’s wedding.”

“ And not a lemon within a mile of us ? No wine in that bottle either ?”

Josepha turned the bottle upside down.

“ We seem to be rather in an extremity. Well, they’ll have to take it plain.”

“ Needn’t do dat, Miss Edith,” said Daphne, and laying down her rolling-pin, she ran out and returned in a moment with a handful of peach-leaves. “ Jes’ you bile ’em in a pint of de cream, and dey’ll never know but you’d a bushel of bitter almonds.”

At the appointed hour Dr. Dubois made his appearance alone. Jacqueline, with her accustomed self-indulgence, had allowed her slight fatigue to release her from her promise ; and as she declared it would be too stupid to stay behind alone, by dint of coaxing and pouting she prevailed on the lady who was anxious to go, to remain with her, especially as their other companion was in bed with a head-ache, and “ it could make no difference whatever to the Irvines whether they came or not.” The other gentleman of the party felt obliged to stay, too, particularly as Jacqueline intimated that it would be awkward to go down to the table without him or her brother. Dr. Dubois evidently was mortified at the lameness of Jacqueline’s excuse, and softened it as much as he could,

reminding Edith that she knew his sister of old for a spoiled child, and would therefore make allowances.

“Hosh!” ejaculated Aunt Rose, pushing Homer from her as he imparted the result of his investigations gathered at the dining-room door, between which and the kitchen, twenty yards from the house, he was runner for Uncle Felix; and she puffed away vigorously at the pipe where-with she was regaling herself after the Herculean labor of dinner-getting. “Now, boy, don’t tell *me*,” she said, removing her mouth-piece, and rolling a slow cloud from her voluminous lips, “dat dar’s no more nor *one* gentleman dar. I done got eatins ‘nuff for ten, least calc’lation.”

“Only one, mammy, I tell *you*; I seed him.”

“Bless my heart! all dis yer stewin’ and sweatin’ for ony one;—an’ dar’ll be two pounds less butter at de nex’ churnin’, d’out mistake! Wonder at dis rate when I’s to git dat dar new coat ole Mis’ promised me if I’d make butter ‘nuff from our own cows to do d’out buyin’ dis month? You Silvy! tetch dat silver fork agin if you *dar*. If you want de turkey-leg off de plate, take it wid yer own fingers. Silver forks is got no business in niggas’ mouths;” and the old cook betook herself to her consolatory pipe again, musing, as she smoked, on “the cur’us ways of white folks.”

Edith drove down to Milburne the next morning for Jacqueline, as she and her brother were pledged to take up their abode with them for a few days, as soon as the rest of their party would leave them.

“Ah! you, Edith?” said the lady in question, rising languidly from the sofa in the hotel parlor, and letting a kiss drop somewhere on Edith’s cheek. Why, you look paler than you did last winter. Been sick, eh?” and without waiting for a reply, she rattled on in her *nonchalant* way, through a half hour of rather wearisome chatter to Edith, drawing up, at length, on the not yet worn-out topic of the roads.

“Such highways as you do have in Virginia! Really, Dickens’ experience in the ‘District’ isn’t so overdrawn as I supposed. Your limestone strata all ‘crop out’ into your roads, it seems to me. Now, Giovanni, assure me professionally that I will suffer no farther risk in riding out to Silverwood.”

“Not so much as in walking from Chestnut and Fourth to Chestnut and Twelfth; and it’s about as far.”

“My brother is a tease yet, you see, Edith; but I’ve made enough progress in my Italian studies to hurl lines from Ariosto and Goldoni at him when he becomes insufferable. If I get to the ‘White Sulphur’ alive, and don’t have too many bones dislocated to dance, I expect to have a rare time. Can you go, too, Edith?”

Edith’s eyes fell on her mourning dress.

“Oh! to be sure!” said Jacqueline, comprehending her thought; “but *you* needn’t dance. John hates it, and undertakes to say it’s a silly way for sensible people to find amusement in; so he’ll suit you in that respect.”

Dr. Dubois joined his solicitations to his sister's passing question, and in a kind, earnest way to which she was a stranger.

"We are going to take the general circuit," Jacqueline went on, "and will have you back here by the first of September."

Edith thanked them and declined, saying that their school duties would not be up before that.

"Bless me! and you teach!" exclaimed Jacqueline, with something more akin to pity in her voice than her listener had ever heard there before. "How that would fret me! But never mind; your mother can do that for you."

"My sister and I feel as if our mother had duties enough, without that in addition; but come, shall Uncle Felix get your trunk?"

"She has two of them as big as dining-tables," said Dr. Dubois, "and a bonnet-box to boot, in which Queen Elizabeth might have carried a score of her tallest ruffs. I protest, Miss Edith, against having your house lumbered with them all."

"Separate a lady from her baggage!" broke forth Jacqueline, rising, and looked for the first time animated. "No, indeed; I say like Ruth: 'where thou goest, I will go.'"

"Oh! by all means it shall go," said Edith, smiling. "Uncle Felix can easily return for it."

“For *one*,” plead the doctor. But “all or none,” was Jacqueline’s ultimatum, and so the matter was settled.

“Sister ! Edith !” shouted Josepha, making an excited irruption into the parlor, where, an evening or two after the arrival of the Dubois,’ they sat talking together ; “I do believe Cousin Barry is coming up the lane ! It’s a gentleman on horseback, and he shook hands with Uncle Felix when he opened the road-gate for him. Oh ! I do hope it’s Cousin Barry !” and the little news-carrier rushed out again to ascertain whether her hopes were to be realized. Zilpha followed her. Edith sat still, not unconscious that a pair of questioning eyes were fastened upon her, while Jacqueline filled up the pause.

“ ‘Cousin Barry ?’ who’s that ?”

“Mr. Woodruff, a relation of mother’s,” replied Edith, rising and arranging the pieces of music Jacqueline had scattered over the piano.

“Oh ! yes ; he was with you a few days when I spent a month at B——, two summers ago. Didn’t I hear you say he was a clergyman now ? That a craft I’ve a desperate fear of.”

“But if all ‘the cloth’ were like Mr. Woodruff, as I used to know him,” said Doctor Dubois, “people of the world would have no need to be scared away from religion by the gravity of its teachers. Many of them, unfortunately, are like the man Charles Lamb tells us of, from whom Newton might have deduced his law of gravitation. Has his profession changed Mr. Woodruff, Miss Edith ?”

“No ; except, perhaps, to tone down his native exuberance a little, leaving the same firm, buoyant manhood about him.”

“To a leaden grey ?” asked Jacqueline. “That’s what I can’t understand, why clergymen should eschew life’s sunshine so much.”

“How mistaken you both are !” exclaimed Edith. “There *is* no class of men who lead happier, more sunshiny lives than they do. If you had been accustomed to see parties of them together, as I have often, and to listen to their sparkling, vivacious, genial talk, you would change your opinions. You judge them from their pulpit faces, for that’s all you see of them. In social life, no men as a class, are—I was a going to say—quite *so* delightful.” Edith had been listening while she spoke, and now the steps of the party were heard entering the house. She advanced in the gathering dusk, holding out her hands with eager cordiality to the figure that filled the doorway, and found them grasped, not by Bryant Wooduff, but by Mr. Fleming. So prepared had she been to meet the former, that for a moment she had as much trouble to recall her self-possession, as Josepha had to hide her disappointment.

“Dr. Dubois, Mr. Fleming.” The gentlemen bowed distantly, as Zilpha named them to each other ; but no sooner were lights brought, than Mr. Fleming started up, exclaiming : “Is it possible !” and extended his hand to

the doctor, on whose part the recognition was just as simultaneous. "Who would have thought we should come here to meet?" said Mr. Fleming.

"Who, indeed? It's just four years last month since we parted in the Custom House at Liverpool, and as I've heard not a word of you since, I didn't know but that you had expatriated yourself wholly, renounced mother-tongue, and smoked away all memory of any world outside of a German University."

"And I might as well have surmised that some Parisian Hospital had engulfed you."

It was soon made plain to the somewhat mystified lookers on, that the very natural circumstance of being passengers on board the same steamer to Europe, had started an acquaintanceship mutually agreeable, which, after separation, had never permitted to ripen, and they both hailed with pleasure the fact that came out in the course of conversation, that they were bound for the same watering-place, and could be, consequently, travelling companions for the next few weeks.

Jacqueline could not restrain the satisfaction she felt at the prospect, especially after she ascertained Mr. Fleming to be the son of the Colonel Fleming whom she had heard frequently named in her visits to New-York as making quite a figure there during his furloughs.

"Now do go with us," she whispered in the course of the evening to Edith. "Three are no company, you know."

and your mother and sister can take care of these few little girls very well without you."

"Circumstances would not warrant my going just now, even if I wished it. Times have changed with us, you must remember."

"Dear me! it wouldn't cost much—not over a hundred and fifty dollars, I'm sure."

"You remind me, Jacqueline," said Edith, smiling faintly, "of some English Princess, who, when she heard of a famine in a certain district, expressed astonishment at it, declaring she would rather eat bread and cheese than starve!"

There were some visitors at Silverwood the next morning, and among them, Mr. Phillips. . In answer to some questions from the gentlemen as to the localities of the neighborhood, he offered himself as cicerone, if they and the ladies present would make a party for the ascent of Castlehead, whose grand and striking proportions they had just had under review. He described the evening view from its top as enchanting to a sun-set fancier, and so fired the imaginations of his listeners that they were eager to fall in with his proposition. It was accordingly settled that on the following evening the party should leave Silverwood in time to make the distance before the sun would sink below his horizon of purple mountains.

XXXII.

Castlehead.

It had been a rich, golden day, and through the Silverwood aspens the westering sun was pouring its gleams of restless radiance, as the party assembled on the porch, ready for their equestrian excursion. The little girls had all been treated to a canter up and down the long lane by the servants who held the horses in waiting, and they now came bounding up the gravel path in exuberant spirits, their hair disheveled, and their bright, pretty faces all a-glow with the inspiriting exercise.

"Mr. Fleming," said Jacqueline, addressing herself to that gentleman as they all descended from the porch, "pray, be my train-bearer, and take charge of my whip while I draw on these gauntlets;" and gracefully gathering up the long riding-dress, she deposited its folds in the proffered hand. Then her cap was to be adjusted, and her floating curls re-arranged, so that before she was ready to mount, Zilpha and Edith were both in their saddles. Mr.

Phillips stepped forward, though she had not yet relieved Mr. Fleming from duty, and was about to lower his hand to receive her foot, when she turned to him with one of her blindest smiles—"You see, sir, I have one cavalier already in waiting."

"Then I am to understand that your *footing* is secure with this gentleman? Quite an *underhand* ruse, by the way, Mr. Fleming, for you to practice on me," he added in a playful aside, "after you had yourself arranged the matter differently."

"Nevertheless, you will throw me down no gauntlet. The *commands* of fair ladies are not to be disobeyed."

"I am a disinherited knight, Miss Irvine," said Mr. Phillips, coming back to Zilpha. "Will you take compassion on me, and allow me a place at your saddle-bow? You see how Miss Dubois has put her foot upon Mr. Fleming's expectations."

In a couple of hours' time they were threading the narrow bridle-path that wound up the mountain's side. Tall trees of primeval growth almost wholly shut out the view, and even when here and there they did come out upon patches of cleared ground, Mr. Phillips exacted a promise from them that they would not look back, and thus lessen by half glimpses the effect of the *tout ensemble* when they should arrive at the top of the mountain.

Mr. Phillips and Zilpha were the leaders of the party; and whilst the others were still shrouded amidst the tang-

led brushwood and overtopping trees, they could catch Zilpha's exclamations of delight as she stepped out upon the flat rock which commanded a sweeping view of the almost entire ridgy horizon. They pressed upward as fast as the steep ascent would permit, for they had dismounted some hundreds of yards farther down, and left their horses picketed under the care of Uncle Felix, who, as sumpter to the party, carried a supply of shawls for the possible coolness of the homeward ride.

"How magnificent!" "how beautiful!" were the exclamations of one and another as they emerged from the forest and joined their companions on the rock. "And how weary *I* am of such chamois leaps!" cried Jacqueline, as she made it Mr. Fleming's first care to roll up a loose stone for her seat before he had given the scene a moment's attention.

Beneath their feet the tops of the tallest oaks were nodding their graceful obeisance to the whispering evening wind, and "all the leaves of the trees clapped their hands." Irregular strips of cleared land were conspicuous here and there down the mountain's slopes, with the rude log cabin in the centre, from which the smoke curled in blue wreaths heavenward. From its base stretched away the farmlands, with their innumerable and various shaped fields, some pale brown, some white with the ripened harvests, some purple with clover, others green with waving corn, and scattered among them over the wide-spreading valley

were the homesteads with their windows gleaming in the light of the setting sun, and the roofs of Milburne, its spires showing clearly against the depth of shadow behind. Then there were wooded knolls, deep ravines with jagged shadows under their brows, dark copses warmed here and there by exquisite touches of gilding light, chasms from which the day had already faded, little vales running up between the hills, and winding brooks braided like silver threads into the velvet tissue of the landscape. Above and beyond all, surged away the broken line of mountains of every form, smooth and wooded, and of a misty green; bold, jutting and gray, or towering promontory-like, with sharp peaks; range upon range, one rounded curve over another, till the pale, purple vestments in which they wrapped themselves, dissolved and faded away into the silvery gray of the distant sky.

“How does all this gorgeous and golden show impress you?” asked Mr. Fleming, coming up behind Zilpha, who stood in a maze of speechless admiration.

“With a silent wonder—everything is so beautiful, so grand! Who, but the Almighty Builder, could congregate such an uncounted variety of splendors as stretch from this rock on which we stand, away yonder to ‘the utmost bound of the everlasting hills?’ How fine that scripture expression sounds here!”

“You went to the highest source, I see, for your thought; *I* had gone to Tegner for mine:

“ ‘ Ah ! if so much of beauty pour itself
Through all the veins of life and of creation,
How beautiful must the great fountain be—
The bright—the eternal ! ’ ”

“ And I to Beattie for mine,” said Edith, whose hands were joined unconsciously, as if in worship, while she repeated :

“ ‘ Oh ! how canst thou renounce the boundless store
Of charms which Nature to her votary yields !
The warbling woodland, the resounding shore,
The pomp of groves, and garniture of fields,
All that the genial ray of morning gilds,
And all that echoes to the song of even,
All that the mountain’s sheltering bosom shields,
And all the dread magnificence of heaven,
Oh ! how canst thou renounce, and hope to be forgiven ! ’ ”

“ And you, Dr. Dubois, what has your thought been ? ” asked Zilpha.

“ Why, to speak truly, an idea of Ruskin’s was running through my head about mountains being the *bones* of the earth, the muscles and tendons of its anatomy being in them ; that their spirit is *action*, as with heaving bosoms and exulting limbs, and clouds drifting like hair from their foreheads, they lift up their Titan hands to heaven, saying : ‘ I live forever ! ’ ”

“ Now isn’t that like Giovanni, Edith ! ” exclaimed Jacqueline, laughing, “ to go to his profession for an illustration or a quotation to suit him ? ”

“Or like the poet Bryant: he speaks of the mountains as ‘rock-ribbed.’ The idea, though it may commend itself to you professionally doctor, is, nevertheless, natural and beautiful.”

“But you, Mr. Phillips,” interposed Zilpha, “let us share your thought, too.”

“I? Oh, of course, with my practical turn of mind I have been making a mental survey for a canal through the valley yonder, and am hesitating through which gap among those mountains a rail-road could be most easily constructed. I think it quite excusable in Dr. Dubois to be taking his own view of matters, weighing, perhaps, the small chances a disciple of Esculapius must have of employment where there are such barriers to disease as these ridges, and where Nature puts on such airs, and laughs to scorn the ills to which ‘flesh is heir,’ as forbidden intruders among the valleys to which her own pure breath is air.”

“What an extinguisher you put upon our enthusiasm and sentiment!” said Edith, laughing, in a half-chiding way.

“The bare mention of rail-roads and canals in such a presence is a sort of desecration.”

“It would kindle, instead of extinguishing mine,” broke in Jacqueline, “if there were a rail-road there. I would prefer seeing it, to a river like the Hudson or the Rhine, for then I should be spared the vision of slow, lumbering, old-time stage coaches that now looms before me.”

“But you didn’t hit my train of thought, Mr. Phillips, after all,” said Dr. Dubois.

“Ah! too fast for me, was it?—flown by on Miss Dubois’ railway?”

“The farthest, possible, from it. Miss Edith, I will turn from these irreverent speculators in rail-roads and canals, to you. Do you recall that exquisite pastoral of Wordsworth, which you read to me one evening in my father’s library; the one you told me Coleridge said he never could read with an unclouded eye?”

“‘*The Brothers*,’ do you mean?”

“Yes, that was it. There are two lines in it I am trying to remember.”

“Is it the old ‘Priest’s’ reply to the ‘Traveler’ who had been so moved by his sad story?”

“‘If you weep

To hear a stranger talking about strangers,

Heaven bless you when you are among your kindred!’”

“No; it related to the spirit of mountaineers.”

“Ah, yes!

“‘The thought of death sits easy on the man

Who has been born and dies among the mountains.’”

“But why,” asked Zilpha, “should death be less to them than others?”

“That it is so, facts prove,” replied Dr. Dubois; “for the world over, mountaineers have ever been famous for

their daring, and their scorn of danger and death. They find more in their daily life to test these qualities. Trial develops and strengthens them, and their souls grow into something of the grandeur of Nature in her loftiest exhibitions."

"Those sun-burnt rustics hoeing corn down on yon cleared patch you will allow are exceptions, with Miss Dubois and myself," interrupted Mr. Phillips, mischievously.

"I beg to be left out of that category, if you please, sir," said Jacqueline, bridleing a little; "rusticity is my abomination."

"Ah! beg pardon, Miss Dubois. If the category offends you, let me substitute my dogmatical assertion, that any one less suggestive of rusticity than your delicate self cannot be conceived of. Except from present proof, I might have imagined that your eye had never even before rested upon a cornfield."

"Mr. Phillips," said Edith, "I wish we had Miss Grant with us to keep you in order, or to cross blades with you in your word-play."

"Let us grant—"

"Yes, Lettuce Grant," retorted Edith, catching up his unfinished sentence.

"You took advantage of me there, Miss Edith. I only meant to propose to Miss Dubois that we should grant a truce to any further hostilities against the 'sentiment' so evidently in the ascendant, and crouch at your feet, meekly

receptive of whatever shreds of poetry you may choose to throw us."

The trio who sat at the foot of a knarled old hemlock, taking in the sublimity and loveliness of the scene before them, had pursued their conversation uninterrupted by this by-play.

"*My* associations with mountains are mostly of a holy character," said Zilpha; "they have been so signalised by grand displays of Almighty power and mercy. There is Ararat, Moriah, Sinai, Horeb, Pisgah. Ah, yes; over some such immense circuit of hill and valley must the eye of the old Prophet have swept, as he looked over into the land of Promise across the Jordan. You remember, Mr. Fleming, reading to dear Lawrence, Melville's imaginings as to the extent of the prophetic vision?"

"Yes; and remember, too, how your brother was touched by the fancied arrest of the eye of Moses, as he saw down through the vista of ages, by the gleam of the white walls of Bethlehem."

"Then there is Carmel, and Olivet, and Tabor, and Calvary. Those who have 'been born and die among the mountains,' might well let the thought of death 'sit easy on them,' Dr. Dubois, if they only remember how the footsteps of God have consecrated them, and that a mountain was the chosen altar for the world's sacrifice."

"I confess *that* had not occurred to me as a reason for the thought of death being softened to them," replied the doctor.

"It is the only thing that can reconcile humanity *anywhere* to dissolution," said Zilpha, with a sweet gravity.

"And to come down to later times," pursued Mr. Fleming, "still following out your thought, Miss Zilpha, how the Waldenses, and the Huguenots, and the Covenanters, have made sacred the Appenines, and the Alps, and the Cévennes, and the Highlands of Scotland, and the New England hills, and these very Alleghanies. But while we talk, we are forgetting to note the fine effect of this flood of golden light over the landscape. Look at the sharp, grey line of shadow those peaks to the right yonder cast across the mountains east of them."

"And what a cool amethyst these western ones leave against the golden edge of the sky!" exclaimed Edith, enjoyingly.

"Yes; I was just comparing them in my mind to the amethyst set of jewelry papa gave me for a Christmas present last winter," remarked Jacqueline.

"What a miracle of sublimity a sun-set would be accounted, did we see it but once in a life-time," said Mr. Fleming.

"Yes; see what a triumphant smile he sends up, like a dying martyr, from the midst of his death-fires!" and Edith waved her hand round the burnished horizon.

"And can't you improvise a death-song for him, Miss Edith? Come, be our tenth muse."

"I am, unfortunately, not like novel heroines, ready

with appropriate stanzas for every emergency. Zilpha has a more faithful memory than I have ; perhaps she can recite you something in keeping with the time and place."

Zilpha was at once beset with applications to become *raconteur*. "A ballad," "a sun-set tale," "an Indian legend," were suggested in turn.

"With these fresh mountain breezes about us, and this glorious land stretching away on all sides, we want something heroic, patriotic ; something that will make us feel what a rich heritage of freedom we have," said Mr. Fleming.

"Something *à la* Young-American," hinted Mr. Phillips.

"If any, or all of you have read 'Silvio Pellico's Imprisonment,'" interposed Edith, "you will recall the touching story he tells of a young Italian nobleman, who was thrown by the Austrian government into the dismal castle of Spielberg, where he perished for no other crime than that of loving his country. Sister, you remember the ballad that relates the incident."

In a low, musical voice—that more "excellent thing in woman" than even beauty of face or form—low, yet wonderfully distinct to its faintest utterances, Zilpha recited

THE MARTYR OF LIBERTY.

In a lone and dreary fortress,
Buried from the light of day,
From the pleasant, loving sunshine,

And the free air's gladden'd play,
Where no human sound could reach him,
Save the weary monotones
Of the sentinels whose footsteps
Dully echoed o'er the stones,
Lay the young and noble victim
Of the Austrian's tyrant law,
Worn with slow consuming sickness,
On his meagre bed of straw.

Oft he strove to press his forehead
With his pallid hand, in vain ;
For the wrist, so thin and pulseless,
Could not lift its heavy chain ;
Though his lips were parched and burning,
While the quenchless fever raged,
None had brought him cooling water,
That his thirst might be assuaged :
And through many a sleepless night-watch,
Did his tender spirit groan
O'er the dim, unmeasured anguish,
Borne so utterly alone.

From beneath the fair, blue arches
Of his own Italian sky,
Dragged from country, home, and kindred,
They had thrust him here to die :
Not because his young existence
Had been stained by crime and guilt,—
Not because with murderous weapon
He his fellows' blood had spilt :—
But he learned to think that freedom
Was a guerdon cheaply bought
By the lives of slaughtered heroes,
And—he dared to speak the thought !

And for this,—for *this* they bore him
Where no arm could reach to save,
And with youth's warm flush about him,
Plunged him in a living grave ;—
Strove to bury in a dungeon,
From the dangerous view of men,
Thoughts whose grasp might fling the despot
From his rocking throne again :
But the silent, subtle essence
Cannot thus be chained at will ;
Midst Italian hills and valleys,
Thrills the quickening influence still !

Yet the captive pined and wasted,—
Thirsted for his native air,—
Sickened for the home of childhood,
And the dear, sweet faces there,—
Yearned so longingly to enter
At the old familiar door,—
See his mother's tear of greeting—
Clasp his father's hand once more ;
And he murmured, as the vision
Rose before his restless eye,—
“ Oh ! to hear their voices breathing
Blessings on me ere I die !

“ Oh ! to lay beneath the sunshine
Of my own bright land of song,
The decaying, fleshly garment
That my soul has worn so long !
Can I think, that in the shadow
By my prison-fortress made,
It will rest as it had rested
Underneath the Lime-trees' shade !

Can its sleep be as unbroken,
With yon stony pavement prest
By the iron heel of soldiers,
Sternly laid above my breast ?

“Thou who shrank'st with human shrinking
From Thine anguish, and didst pray
That the cup of bitterest sorrow
From Thy lips might pass away,—
Hear me, while my fainting, breaking
Spirit would before Thee bow,
Pleading for the strength to offer
Thy divine petition now :
Yet the cup, untaken from Thee,
Thou didst drain, oh ! suffering One !
Give me then Thy heavenly patience,—
Let me say—‘Thy will be done !’ ”

In the deep and fearful midnight
As the lonely captive lay
Panting in the silent darkness,
Longing for a gleam of day—
Burst a flood of light celestial,
Through the dungeon's murky cell,
While an angel, hovering o'er him,
Touched his fetters—and they fell !
And the free, rejoicing spirit,—
Every weight of bondage o'er,
Sought that bright and better country
Where oppression comes no more !

The fires of day had been quenched beneath the western horizon before Zilpha had finished, and already in the

eastern sky began to creep up the ashen gray of twilight as they all took their way down the mountain footpath. Uncle Felix had fallen asleep at the foot of a tree, and he started up in some alarm at the sound of their voices, rubbing his eyes, and in evident doubts as to his whereabouts. The party was soon remounted, and making its way with care down the indistinct bridle-path, when suddenly Edith's horse swerved to one side, scared by the sudden whirring away of some wild game, and before Dr. Dubois could grasp the rein, he plunged on down the steep descent. The doctor and Mr. Phillips followed as fast, and through the dim silence of the woods the crashing tramp of their horse's hoofs reverberated, mingled with Jacqueline's womanish screams, and Uncle Felix's terrified cry. In the dumbness of her fright, Zilpha had dropped her bridle. Mr. Fleming seized it, and with all possible speed they hastened on.

"Oh, Edith! Edith!" broke piteously from Zilpha's lips as she drooped over her horse's neck.

"'Be not afraid of sudden terror;' the horse and his rider are His," was all her companion could find time to say.

They very soon emerged from the forest, upon one of the clearings, and across it they could see the group. The frightened animal had been secured, but Edith lay stretched on the ground. A groan escaped Zilpha as she threw herself upon her sister.

“What is it, doctor? tell me all—tell me if she is dead!”

“Oh, no, no—only fainting I hope—fainting from fright and pain. Unloose her gaiter, Miss Zilpha; her ancle has received a wrench; I’m afraid it is dislocated.”

“Thank God!” breathed Zilpha audibly, as she instantly removed the boot.

“Here, Mr. Phillips—Mr. Fleming—your aid. Please be quiet, Jacqueline,” and with one strong effort the ancle was restored.

The intense pain brought Edith back to consciousness, and with an agonizing “*Oh!*” she opened her eyes.

“Bless God, dearest,” said Zilpha, embracing her while her warm tears dropped over the upturned face. “Bless Him that it is no worse!”

“I do—I do. I have been so terrified! but, sister—sister—I shall be lamed for life!”

XXXIII.

Moonlight Revelations.

THEY were gone—Dr. Dubois, and his sister, and Mr. Fleming: it was the first night after their departure, and Edith lay on the sofa in the parlor, still helpless from her recent injury, which, however, was of a slighter character than she had at first anticipated. The disablement was only temporary, and though it had confined her to the sofa for some days, and been the occasion of the breaking up of an excursion or two, which they had planned for their friends, to other localities of interest in their neighborhood, it had called forth the most delicate and gentle solicitude on the part of Dr. Dubois. He had hovered about her with unremitting care, and, in a thousand little ways, shown his consideration for her comfort. Mr. Fleming, too, came daily out from Milburne, and, while Zilpha was busy in the school-room—conceiving that her duty to their pupils took precedence of that to their visitors, and, therefore, remitting no lessons—he

would read to her, or entertain her with pleasant talk. Even Jacqueline was moved to some self-forgetfulness, and, several times, insisted on taking the book from Mr. Fleming, and reading in his stead. "Nothing is without its uses," Mrs. Irvine had said; "for you see, my dear, if the accident had not occurred, your own warm glow of gratitude would not have been called forth, and you would not have needed the tender ministrations of your friends—ministrations it has been of as much service to them to render, as to you to receive. It was from the *smitten* rock that the refreshing water flowed."

The moonlight streamed through the wide-open windows, over the faces of the two sisters, as they looked out upon the wreaths of mist that were stealthily creeping up the gray sides of Castlehead; each silent, and lost, apparently, in abstracted thought.

"Zilpha," said Edith, at length, raising herself on her elbow, and bringing back her eyes to the pure, quiet face before her; "Zilpha, it is a hard thing to do."

"What, my dear?"

"To crush out forever all the love and hope we may have inspired in an ingenuous and trusting heart. The thought of it gives me a pang, to-night, that I cannot get rid of."

"Then you *have* done it?"

"Yes; by my actions I hoped I had given sufficient intimation of my true feelings to avert any necessity for

spoken words ; but they were misconstrued. My decision, I believe, was hardly less painful to myself than to him. The doctor needs but a deep, earnest piety, to make him every way admirable. And, Zilpha, when he plead with such strong emotion, and told me, in reply to this obstacle I had mentioned—this want of a steady faith—that I could teach him to love God, and to understand the principles by which I professed to be governed, as none other could, I was so touched, that he thought my determination shaken. Men never will believe what a keenness of pain it occasions a true woman's heart, to place back in the hands of the offerer the most precious gift a human being has it in his power to bestow. After all the gentle, unobtrusive kindness I have received from *him*, to be forced to wound him thus ! But I did it with tears, Zilpha ;—like me, wasn't it ?”

“ Very like.”

“ *You* would have done it with a prayer—a benediction. Well, I did that, too ; and God *will* bless him : he is too earnest a spirit not to find his way to the light.”

“ Had he been what you desired in a religious point, would the result have been different ?”

“ No.”

“ Why not ?”

Edith sat up, and looked into her sister's eyes.

“ Zilpha, I must surrender into the hands of him whom I would love, my very self—my heart of hearts—my

whole being. I must obey him—not because it is the requirement, but because I feel such obedience to be the sweetest thing in the world. I hardly quarrel with Milton's assertion—

“ ‘He for God only, she for God *in* him’—

as derogatory to woman, for there would be no humiliation—at least, *I* should be conscious of none—in the willing deference rendered to a man I owned to be intellectually, intelligently, physically, morally, my superior. What humiliation does the loving, all-confiding child feel in leaning for everything, venturing everything, upon the father she doats on? I am disgusted with this rant about the servility of a wife's obedience, on which some of the sensible women even of this generation have gone mad. As if ‘perfect love’ did not ‘cast out fear!’ They who talk and feel this way, have not yet learned the alphabet of love, human or divine. They forget that God's *absolute sovereignty* is the true Christian's ground of serenest confidence, because he unites with it the thought of His *absolute love*, and ‘there is no fear in love.’”

“But you would not have the wife the mere passive recipient—the wax to the seal—without tastes, and opinions, and emotions of her own?”

“By no means! no more than I would have every branch, and tendril, and curl of the vine wound rigidly round the supporting oak, thereby spoiling all the grace-

fulness of its appropriate proportions, and the oneness of its identity. But the *faith of love*, in its object, must be kindred to the Christian's faith in God—unquestioning, immovable. When it is so, willing obedience must be a heart-delight—a very blessedness."

"But might not such an entireness of trust—such a complete repose of the being upon a creature, subject to the same errors and weaknesses as ourselves—be dangerous?—a putting of the human between us and God?"

"It is the position in which Paul places the wife, and must, therefore, be no less right than safe; besides, *heart-subjection* is a different thing from *soul-subjection*. Of the latter, *you* would never be in any danger, Zilpha; I feel that *I* might, and yet I don't know. The very intensity of my love would keep me too keenly alive to the least defeature in the beloved one, that, instead of being blinded into idolatry, my acuteness of vision would be apt to magnify slight defects, and thus make me ever too much aware of the human, to bend down in overweening reverence. Now, to reply to your question: I *could* not have had all this feeling towards Dr. Dubois. While he is self-reliant, and manly, and forms opinions for himself, he did not hold in his hands the clue that could have guided me. I should, in time, come to exercise too much influence over such a character; in plain words, *he* could never make me know the heart-satisfaction of being better, and more wisely governed than I could govern myself."

The sisters sat silent for awhile.

"I have been listening to your confessions, dear Edith," began Zilpha, hesitatingly, playing, as she spoke, with the long, dark hair that hung loosely over her sister's forehead, "and it is my turn now. Will you not remove your embargo of silence, and let me tell you of what interests me so deeply?"

"I believe I have been very selfish, very unsisterly," replied Edith, as she folded her arms about Zilpha, "in shutting your confidence so away from me. Forgive me, and tell me all."

"There is nothing to forgive, my dear; but if it will pain you, I don't like to speak."

"I shall teach what makes *you* happy, to make me so too. Go on."

"I do long to see you more tranquilly so, for often I fear you are not. But now that you have had an opportunity of judging for yourself, without any bias exercised on my part, tell me truly, whether you think him worthy of all my love."

"Him? who?" exclaimed Edith, starting bolt upright from her reclining posture.

"Mr. Fleming, of course."

"Mr. Fleming! I have all along thought you loved Bryant!" and in a maze of revulsed feeling, Edith covered her face with her hands, and sank back upon the sofa.

Zilpha did not speak, for her own astonishment at the

misconception was quite as great as her sister's. A new thought flashed in upon her mind that had never occurred to her before—a thought that made her murmur to herself, “dear, *dear* Edith !”

After a few minutes embarrassed silence, her hands were seized with a tight pressure.

“Tell me—Bryant loves you, does he not? Hasn't he told you so?”

There was no evasion of so direct a question.

“Yes; he told me so when we separated at Charleston, last December.”

“And you?”—

“Confessed to him just the simple truth. I had always regarded him with a warm, sisterly affection, putting him only second to Lawrence in that respect; and I told him I was conscious of no other emotion towards him then. But he would not let the matter terminate thus. He believed the seeds of love for him were in my heart, and that with proper fostering they would blossom in time. I was in doubt; so I yielded to his entreaties, and left the matter open. Not many weeks after this, I met Mr. Fleming; and I was not long in learning from my own heart, that love was not a seed, as Bryant would have had me suppose, which time and circumstances could develope into beautiful life, but a miraculous plant, which requires no slow process to unfold its powers—an amaranthine flower, which expands like the night-blooming *Cereus*, *at once*, into marvellous and perfect loveliness.”

"And you had to break his noble heart by telling him this!"

"No, not *break*, only *bow* it. It is too elastic not to rise in all its fair and native strength as soon as the pressure is removed. I am not suited to Bryant, Edith. I am too calm, too quiet for his buoyant, imaginative temperament."

"People always love their antipodes—there is a diversity that is harmonious."

"I don't think they do; besides, our tastes are very diverse. He never could have interested me in his chosen studies—in his liking for old lore—in all his scholarly habits, up to the degree that would have satisfied him."

"Yet he is a teacher of the noblest of sciences: surely, there you could have gone hand in hand."

"Yes, I am sure of it; but still we each have our different way of looking upon life, and I doubt whether I ever could have found the key to *all* his being, or he to mine. He is bookwise, and best loves those who sympathize in that respect with him, as companions. I have often noticed that the poem or the passage that filled him with a tumult of enthusiastic feeling, would leave me quite unimpressed."

"Yet, Mr. Fleming has been a student at a German University—something quite beyond Bryant."

"Yes, a student of mathematics, and astronomy, and science; for while he is not quite indifferent to the

ancients, he likes the moderns better; and though he might own to some admiration for Schiller or Goethe, no doubt Euler is more to his mind; and I dare say he attended Farraday's lectures, when in England, while he wouldn't have gone a mile out of his way to see Wordsworth. All this better suits me, for you know that nature, the outer world, has always been more interesting to me than the inner world of man's life. But you haven't told me yet, Edith, whether Mr. Fleming would have been *your* choice for me? whether he has your approbation?"

"He is rich; he is handsome; he has a princely bearing."

"Ah! don't name those little things."

"He has a clear, vigorous mind; he is thoroughly cultivated; he has a generous, strong, noble heart; and above all, and for which I liked him best, he has as lowly and reverent a Christian faith as I ever knew."

"Dear Edith," said Zilpha, kissing her, "you have gone far enough; I am satisfied. He is indeed *so* good. That firm faith of his, was of such comfort to our darling brother, and such a support to me. I could not choose but love him for all his inexpressible tenderness to me in my affliction, away from you all. He made my grief so truly his own, that my whole heart went out to him, for he seemed mother, brother, sister, in one, so sweet and precious was his consolation."

The moon climbed higher into the heavens; the white

barred clouds obscured her disk, quenching out all the glory of the sleeping landscape, or floated with slow majesty away, leaving all beneath them bathed in a splendor the more brilliant from its sudden contrast with the curtaining darkness just withdrawn. The silver-touched mists crept farther and farther up the mountains' sides, till their tops only were visible, like far-off islands in the measureless ocean of blue. In the changing and chasing light and shadow, the sisters sat with encircling arms, and cheek pressed to cheek, while Zilpha recounted with lingering minuteness the history of her love.

"But to give you up to another," sighed Edith, when her sister had finished—"to learn to live without you—that will be so hard!"

"I am not to be given up yet, my dear. For though Mr. Fleming pressed a home for you all, with him, upon mother, her native independence made her shrink from the obligation she thought it would impose; so I have told him, that for the present, my duty lies here. Circumstances may change in a year's time."

"What circumstances *could* take place that would make it any easier to give you up then than now?"

"We cannot guess at the future. *You* may marry."

"*I!* No, Zilpha;" and there was a bitterness in Edith's tones, and yet a pathos that was half tearful—"no; my destiny is to be cast among the unblessed sisterhood—unblessed of earth, but recognized of God, as having among

them some of his purest and most sainted ones, who learn to live outside of themselves—who labor for no rewarding love—who teach their hearts to be content with the questionable warmth reflected from the happiness of others—”

“ I protest against any such self-immolation to the great Moloch of this imagined destiny,” said Zilpha, with a smile. “ You are too young, at all events, to be devoted, even as a willing victim, yet awhile ; so shut your eyes, dear, to this ogre of the *Hereafter*, and be satisfied to meet the demands of the ever-pressing *Now*.”

When Zilpha opened her Bible the next morning for her accustomed reading, she found the following lines laid between its leaves :

A cloud s on my heart, darling,
A shade is on my brow,
And the low current of my thoughts
Is gliding sadly now ;
The careless smile comes seldomer
Than it was wont to come,
And when the playful jest goes round,
My lips are strangely dumb.

I meet your lifted eyes, darling—
Their look is mildly gay—
But beaded drops are on my cheek,
And I must turn away ;
And often, when you speak to me,
With softness in your tone,

'Tis silence only that can hide
The faltering of my own.

You do not know how fond, darling,
Are all the thoughts you share ;
You cannot think how sobbingly
I breathe your name in prayer,
And plead that God will teach me how,
Unmurmuring to resign
That inmost sympathy of soul
I've claimed so long as mine.

From very childhood's years, darling,
We've known no separate joy ;
Whatever grieved *your* spirit, brought
To mine the same annoy.
Together, o'er one page we bent ;
Our kindred hearts have strayed
Together through life's summer walks,
In sunshine and in shade.

But now our paths diverge, darling—
A thought I cannot share
Has seized your heart's high sovereignty,
And rules supremely there.
Yet while, as if disowned of love,
I feel an exile's pain,
Believe me, that I question not
That sovereign's right to reign.

But yet the tears *will* come, darling,
Soft-dropping, sad, and slow ;
How can I, when you are so dear—
How can I let you go ?

For never seemed your silent kiss
So tender on my brow,
And never clung my soul to you
So yearningly as now.

You are too rich in love, darling,
To feel a sense of need,
Should mine be lessened to you now ;
But I were poor, indeed,
If from my hoardings were withdrawn
Your sweet, imparted store—
For I, with craving want, should feel
Heart-hunger evermore.

Yet home *must* lose its charms, darling,
As fast the years come on ;
And, one by one, my best beloved
Will go—till all are gone !
'Tis but the common work of time
To mar our household so,
And I must learn to choke the sob,
And smile to see them go.

Forgive these sadden'd strains, darling—
Forgive these eyes so dim ;
I must—*must* love whom *you* have loved—
So I will turn to him ;
And clasping with a seeming clasp,
Whose tenderness endears,
Your hand and his between my own,
I bless you through my tears.

XXXIV.

The Clouds Return after the Rain.

IT was an evening late in September. The pupils, who were gone home for their fall vacation, had not yet returned, and, in their absence, the old quiet brooded once more over Silverwood. Mrs. Irvine, Zilpha, and Edith, sat together round the evening lamp, busy in their several ways—one sewing, another writing a letter, another examining a new series of school-books.

All that day an unusual disturbance had rested on Mrs. Irvine's face, and, though it had not escaped her children's observation, they had not spoken of it. It was not her way, they well knew, to talk of what troubled her when no end was to be gained by it beyond the mere relief of talking; and so they had forborne to ask the cause. Again and again would she lay down her work, as if about to speak, and then resume it, without doing so. Then she would pause, as if in dreamy abstraction, while the needle dropped from her listless fingers, and her uncon-

scious eyes, from which the soul seemed gone away, wandered to the glowing hearth with a weary fixedness. Zilpha laid aside her pen, and sat down on a low seat at her mother's knee.

"Mother dear," she said, laying her hand restrainingly over the ones that had lifted the work again, "I am afraid you are worn out, or sick. This endless occupation is too much for you. You are not so cheerful to-day, and we cannot bear to see you otherwise."

"Yes;" and Edith swept away her books, and dropped on the carpet at her mother's other side—"yes, mother, when our heart-light is clouded, everything looks sombre. Its cheeriness is far more needful to us than the common sunshine."

There were tears in Mrs. Irvine's eyes as she laid a hand on each dear head.

"I can't bear to grieve you," she said, speaking with difficulty. "These poor heads have had enough to bow them already; but you will have to know it."

"What?—what?" they both cried, beginning to feel alarmed.

"Be calm, my dears—"

"You are ill; yes, your hand is dry and hot, and there is a languor about all your movements lately that is not natural."

"I will send for Dr. Forsythe, at once," said Edith, springing up hurriedly. "Oh! why did you not tell us?"

Why have we not seen ourselves that you ought not to have been wearying and working yourself down—”

“No, my child,” interrupted her mother, detaining her, “you need not send for the doctor to-night, at least; I believe I am more than half-sick, yet that is not it. But quiet yourselves, and I will not keep you any longer in suspense.

“You have often heard dear Lawrence speak of his college-friend, Waldron, who acted such a brother’s part in nursing him through the severe attack of illness he had whilst they were students together; and you may remember—though perhaps it was not mentioned to you—that just immediately before our misfortunes at B——, that he was applied to by this friend to become his security for a loan of some four thousand dollars which he wanted to effect. Waldron was poor, but energetic and honorable, and Lawrence felt so sincere an interest in him, and under so much obligation to him, that he could not hesitate, especially as he conceived that he was running no risk in the matter; so, with my approbation, he consented to do it. Within a couple of months Waldron has suddenly died, leaving the loan unpaid, and nothing to meet it with. As Silverwood was left by your father to Lawrence, it will have to become liable for the debt. Here is the lawyer’s letter,” and she drew one from her pocket. “You can see for yourselves what he says.”

All this was said hurriedly, yet with pauses for breath, as if the uttering of it had exhausted her.

“Homeless—homeless !” burst from Edith, as she dropped her face full of surprise and distress upon her mother’s lap. Zilpha read the letter with a rigid brow and compressed lip, but her large open eyes were filled with quiet tears, as they turned again to the patient face looking down upon her.

“Poor mother,” she said, fondling the arm that languidly rested on her shoulder. “For *you* this is so hard !”

“It is for *your* sakes, my darlings, I am grieved. Sometimes, to-day, I could not keep back the thought—if my dead boy were only here ! But there is a dearer, a stronger than he. Let us lean on Him.”

“We have surely need of his support now !”

“Has he not forgotten to be gracious ?” asked Edith, hopelessly.

“No, no, my child ; that he will never do. ‘Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.’ We need the night in order to see the stars ; we need darkness about our path to constrain us to look aloft to the shining promises. ‘The Lord is my Shepherd ; I shall not want ;’ he will never forsake or forget His own.”

“Yet He is stripping us bare,” sighed Edith.

“That we may be clothed upon with the better garments of His providing. Dear Zilpha ! dear Edith ! the way is but a short one, at best ! What if it is a little rough and uneven ? We can surely put up with the inconveniences of the inn, since ‘the prepared mansions’ in our

Father's house are not very far off. Only a little while, and then we shall have a home we can no more lose—a home where your darling father, and our precious Lawrence will hail our coming. Ah! *that* thought is very, very sweet!"

"If we could only save *you* the roughnesses, dearest mother," said Zilpha, "how willingly would we do it!"

"That is not the way, my child—'the parents for the children.' But you will have to bear them the longest."

They both looked up at her. It was not usual for her ever to grieve them by any allusions to the possibility of losing her.

"Don't be alarmed," she went on quietly. "I shall, I hope, feel better to-morrow. We must talk a little more about our affairs. Of course, this liability must be met by making arrangements for the selling of the old home-
stead here. I will write, however, to Bryant, and get him to attend to the whole matter for us. There will be no difficulty, I trust, in getting the sale postponed till Spring. In the meantime the little girls can return, and we will go on as usual with our plans for the winter. As soon as the school-term is over, we will all go down to your Aunt Maria Irvine's, as a temporary measure. There, Mr. Fleming shall come to claim you, Zilpha—"

"Don't speak of *me* leaving you in the midst of trial and perplexity," interrupted Zilpha, turning aside her glowing cheek, "unless, indeed, you will consent to agree to

the proposal that has been already so pressed on you, that we all have the same home."

"Yes, let that be the plan for you, mother, and the children," exclaimed Edith, brightening; "and I—oh, I will be strong in the faith that strengthens you; I will teach; I will do more than provide for myself; I will help to make you independent—that will be a thought to inspirit me—something nobly worth the living for!" and the expression of the face, so piteously brave, brought a compassionate tear to Mrs. Irvine's eye.

"We always have something to live for, my Edith. It is as bounden a duty to *suffer* God's will as to *do* it, and a duty that may glorify him more in the end, since it is the harder of the two."

"But it will be better for me to work. It will help to keep my heart stronger."

"No, no, Edith; you distress me with that hopeless, sinking look," said Zilpha. "You *must* consent that it shall be as I say. Dear mother, don't you see the leadings of Providence in it all?"

"Well, it shall all be as He directs. Let us strive to cross none of His designs, and we will find—I am perfectly assured of it—we will find that still, still, 'The Lord *will* provide.' "

XXXV.

Darkness and Light.

“EDITH!” It was a low, alarmed kind of whisper, and the obscure light of the just breaking day was not sufficient to reveal who had spoken. Edith started up frightenedly. Zilpha stood at her bed-side. She had insisted on sleeping that night in her mother’s room, in consequence of the uneasiness she had felt about her, and now came to call her sister. She tried to speak composedly and quietly.

“I am afraid dear mother is quite ill. She has had a most restless night, and I have sent Uncle Felix for the doctor.”

Edith threw on her clothes, and in a few minutes was in her mother’s chamber. She saw enough at a glance to give occasion for anxiety—the dry, burning hand; the cord-like pulse; the purple flush of the cheeks; the languor and the pain, to which, all the means Zilpha and Aunt Rose had been using had afforded no alleviation.

“It’s my opinion ole Mis’s gwine to be oncommon bad,

Miss Edith," whispered the old servant, with the exaggerating fear to which the negro is given in all cases of sickness. "She's done hurt herself looking a'ter Silvy so partic'lar, and now she's like got de fever heap worse nor Silvy."

Uncle Felix soon returned, but without the physician. He was not at home.

"Why didn't you think to go for Dr. Martin?" asked Zilpha, anxiously.

"Did, Miss Zilphy; but he's done laid up hisself. Mrs. Forsythe thinks de doctor will be home sartain, very soon, for he's been away all night."

But it was afternoon before he arrived. Intensely questioning were the faces bent on his, after his prolonged stay in the sick-chamber; but it was hardly necessary to ask whether he thought their mother very ill. The nature of his treatment proved that.

Several days had passed away without bringing any abatement of the violent seizure—days of weary watching to Zilpha and Edith, and heavy with a nameless gloom to the children.

It was late at night, and Dr. Forsythe had left them without the encouragement they were longing for from his lips. Aunt Rose and Daphne had come to watch, while their young mistresses should sleep; but intense anxiety had scared the gentle visitant too far away to be readily wooed back. Towards morning Zilpha had occasion to

leave the room to prepare a draught, and the tears that had not come before, started as she opened the door into the passage, and discovered old Uncle Felix propped up against the wall, where he had fallen asleep. He sprang up as the light fell on his face.

“De good Mas’r above bless her, Miss Zilphy! I’s afeared to ask—don’t tell me she’s worse.”

“I hope not; but I’m afraid no better.”

“I’s been prayin’ for her—de Lord bless her—dat’s all I can do; dat’s what I done did for Mas’r Henry in yon very room, but my prayers was no account *dat* time; de Lord’s time was done come. I dreamed just dis minute a shiny angel war a-comin’ for her.”

“An angel *will* come for her when God sees fit,” replied Zilpha, with a tremulous voice, as she descended the stairs; “but oh! may the angel’s coming not be now!”

How heavily wore away those long, long night hours! The tick of their mother’s watch; the regular breathing of the servants who were dozing on the rug before the fire; the restless flinging of the sufferer’s arms; the low moaning; the occasional whispered word to each other; the rustling of the wind among the aspens before the window, were the only sounds that broke the oppressive stillness. With the quiet control peculiar to her, Zilpha sat at her mother’s bed-side, now holding the weary hands—now wetting the parched lips—anticipating every want—watchful of every movement—herself motionless, and, externally,

perfectly calm. Edith wondered at the subdued, still figure, as she herself glided with a hushed step back and forth through the chamber, utterly unable to sit still and bear in its full force the upheaving of her troubled thoughts and fears. She would pause, and look out upon the moonless night with its sparkling stars, and wish the dream of life were all well over—the weight lifted away forever, and she and her beloved ones beyond those points of twinkling light that burned so steadily on, unconscious of the aching hearts and brows they shone upon.

How our weak natures chafe under the dull, inexorable pressure of grief! How we turn hither and thither for some avenue of escape! How we pray for any suffering rather than just the one under which our spirits are fainting! How ready we are, like the victim stretched on the rack, to vow anything, to give up everything, if we might win thereby a suspension of the torture!

Another day had come and gone. Acquaintances from Milburne had been at Silverwood with offers of service, and some had remained during the day, but they were gone now. Zilpha and Edith would let no one take their place as watchers. They did not feel weary. The mental excitement stimulated their physical powers till the necessity for rest seemed taken away. The old pastor had been with them; had prayed tenderly for them, and commended them to the mercies of their mother's God. As Dr. Forsythe left the sick-chamber, Zilpha followed him out.

"Tell me candidly, doctor, what you think," she said.
"I am strong; I will bear it quietly."

She clasped her hands and looked upward at his reply, and the tears rushed to her eyes.

"God bless you, my dear!" exclaimed the doctor with an unsteady voice, as he hurried away.

Edith was ascending the stairs at that moment. Zilpha's wet eyes met her view, and with a piteous cry she threw herself into her extended arms.

"Oh! don't let me hear it; hide it from me; I cannot, cannot bear it!"

"Yes you can, dear Edith; it is blessed news. We have not been praying in vain. Our precious mother is better. The doctor thinks she will recover."

Oh! the terrible, oppressive forebodings that have shrunk away, like sheeted ghosts before the breaking dawn—the hearts whose bleeding flow has been staunch—the drooping heads that have lifted—the knotted brows that have relaxed, at that one sound—"better!" Oh! the hopes that have trembled back into glad life again—the ecstasies that have thrilled along the pulses—the speechless thanksgiving that has been sobbed out over that little word—"better!"

The stupor had passed away. The sufferer's eyes were open and intelligent—what they had not been for weary hours before. She knew and named each of her children as they leaned over her and kissed her with an emotion too strong for words.

Zilpha was the first to command herself.

“Dearest mother ! you are better. We are so thankful !” but she could not go further, and Edith’s attempt to speak expended itself in tears.

“Better ! yes, for your sakes, my darlings, I thank God that I am ;” and she kissed them both fondly, again and again. “For my own, why should I be glad !”

“Oh ! mother ! mother !” cried Edith, through choking sobs, “be glad then for *us*. We could not live without you.”

“Yes you could, my child. God never puts his beloved in any circumstances in which He does not grant the grace necessary for those circumstances. Had He taken me from you, His grace would have been sufficient for you.”

“And would you have been willing to go, dear mother ?” asked Zilpha, tenderly.

“For many years, my child, it has been my daily prayer, my daily struggle, to have my own will lost in God’s, and I trust these prayers have not been in vain. Yes, if it is His will, I think I can go without regret.”

“My precious mother,” sobbed Edith, hiding her face on her mother’s neck, “pray, pray to be spared.”

“Be calm, dear Edith,” murmured Mrs. Irvine, faintly, as she patted the head that lay against her breast. “If my Heavenly Father sees it is best for me to tarry longer here, and stand, with what little power I have to shield,

between my darlings and the world, I am thankful—I am willing. If he says, ‘leave thy fatherless children to me,’ still, through his grace assisting me, I can as truly say, I am willing. Is it in your hearts to desire another frame of mind for me than this?”

“I bless Christ for it!” exclaimed Zilpha, with a tone that proved the triumph of a holy faith over her natural feelings.

Poor Edith could only reply by a closer clasp and a fresh gush of tears.

“Those little feet!” sighed the pallid lips after a pause for rest; for she had become exhausted, and in the interval of silence she could hear the sound of Eunice’s and Josepha’s steps in the next chamber. “Those little feet! Sometimes nature gets the upper hand—all the mother is roused, and I feel then as if it would be a heart-breaking sorrow to leave those children with the rough path of life all before them, beset, too, with temptations that may beguile those little feet astray. But the feeling passes. The tenderness of the pitying Father in heaven, the yearning love of the elder brother, are pledges for their guidance which I can, and do accept.”

“But, dearest mother,” said Edith, lifting up her weeping face, and smoothing back the brown, unsilvered hair from the sufferer’s forehead; “you are not going to be taken—God is so good. We need your guidance—I do, at least, as much as the children.”

“ Ah ! my child, I am but a poor guide. I can only put my own hand, as you must do, into that of the Redeemer. There is no compassion, no sympathy, no human tenderness, no pity, like His. I remember the proof He has given us of it in the garden and on the cross, and my whole soul is filled with emotions of unutterable gratitude and content. From His lips I have learned to say, ‘ Even so, Father ! ’ ”

XXXVI.

The Setting Sun.

WE have often seen the watery clouds that had all the day stretched over the sky a vapory veil, through which the light came with a dreary pallidness, suddenly part, while through the rift, struggled a touch of gold over hill and valley, so unexpected, so glad in its contrast with the previous gloom, that Nature's moistened eyes grew lustrous with rainbow hues as she lifted them in thanksgiving. And even as we gazed with an answering joy, we have seen the brilliancy flit away—the heavy fringes of the clouds close again—the kindled blaze die out, and the grim night enfold us in a vesture of palpable darkness.

Such had been the experience of the watchers at the sick bed. Three more days had passed between alternating hope and fear; and now, as the sun descended behind the dark, straight brow of Castlehead, leaving a rich, amber glow, like a breathed farewell, on the wide-spread

landscape, another sun was wearing to a more cloudless setting, with a trail of light on its parting path of more translucent purity than ever tinges the hills and valleys of earth.

“Once more,” faintly sighed the sufferer, “let me once more see the day fade,” and as Zilpha arranged the pillows, and Edith put back the muslin curtain from the window, a smile so joyous, so beaming, broke over the sunken features, that at the sight of it, Edith and the children could not restrain their sobbings, it was so like the cheerful beauty of the olden time. True to the principle of her life, the brightness clung to her to the last. That serene, sunshiny spirit had never, through all its course, had any affinity with sombreness—it could have none now. There was even an exultant tone in her voice, tremulous though it was. She had risen above the atmosphere of time ; she already breathed the rarer breath of a higher world. “My sun will rise in heaven !” she murmured, with her bright, unfailing eye full of the western radiance, fixed steadily on the spot where the rim of light had just disappeared. “My children ! there is no night there !”

“But oh ! mother ! mother !” exclaimed Josepha, flinging herself upon the bed in a burst of sorrow, “it will be all night here—and so dark !”

“Not if the Sun of Righteousness shine on your heads, dear Sepha. He can make it *all day* ; and He will ! He will !”

"If only the gates of heaven would open, and take us *all* in!" exclaimed Edith, clasping her mother's cold hands with passionate earnestness between her own, as she chafed and tried to warm them. "Oh! to go with you!"

"You will all come soon," was the faint reply—"all! all! How many are there already! Your precious father—he waits my coming. I think I can see his angel face, grown radiant with looking so long upon the Redeemer's—and the last who ascended—my blessed boy! Ah! yes, I will know *him* among them all! *They* will lead me, between them, to the divine feet; but the thought is too rapturous; it overwhelms me!"

"And have you no fear of the dark river, my beloved mother?" asked Zilpha, steadily.

"None—none! 'When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee.' I believed that long ago. Why should I doubt it now? 'The dark river!' It is not dark, my child; the lights from the city on the other side stream all across it. It is not—*not* a river; only a rill; just a step over, and then—heaven!"

An interval of exhaustion followed.

"Tell the servants to come near," she whispered. She gave a farewell word to each, as they bent, weeping over her extended hand; but her own eye was dry. With the golden gates ajar, what had *she* to do with tears!

"And now, Mr. Norris, one more prayer," she said,

turning her eyes to the old clergyman; "then—then—all praise."

Amidst suppressed sobs that sometimes broke into violent weeping, the earnest voice arose. It poured out thanksgiving for the triumphant trust; it pleaded for a gentle, easy dismissal; it besought that the unclosing gates might stand wider open, so that a gleam of the inner glory might fall round the sorrowing group who stood in the shadow of the nether valley; and with the grasp of a strong faith, it essayed to lift up those breaking hearts, and lay them within the pitying hand of Jesus.

There was a ring at the door-bell, as they all rose from their knees, except Zilpha and Edith, who still clung to the cold hands. Uncle Felix, who had glided out of the room, re-appeared in a moment, and stooped with a whisper towards Zilpha.

"I am thankful," she breathed. "Let him come up;" then attracting her mother's attention, she whispered, "Bryant has come."

"That is kind!" was the faint response.

"Now it will be easier to go," she murmured, after the strangely sorrowful greetings were over, and Bryant had knelt beside the kneeling sisters. "How unbounded is the goodness of God! Bryant, I need not ask you to be a brother to my daughters—to be what my Lawrence would have been."

The tall, manly form quivered with emotion, and he could only bow his head in reply.

“ Did I not say it, Zilpha—Edith, that the Lord would take care of you ? and He will. Man may—does disappoint. It is the testimony of my dying breath that God disappoints never, never. Jehovah-jireh !”

The eyes closed ; the lips moved in silence for a time.

“ Zilpha, your ear.”

Zilpha bent her ear to her lip, and the words that were whispered, bathed anew the listener’s face with tears.

“ Come here, my darlings,” and the pale hand was extended towards Eunice and Josepha, and laid on each bowed head. “ The blessing of your parents’ God and Saviour be upon you. You will both meet me yonder,” and the wasted finger pointed upward, “ will you ?”

The two children almost shrieked their quick reply.

“ Remember—I carry that promise with me to heaven—remember !”

“ Don’t think you will be lonely without me, my children. When you are enabled successfully to resist a temptation ; when you are glad with a strange joy in prayer, think it may be I who have been sent with a ministering spirit’s consolation. That thought will keep me near you. Only a thin veil of flesh will separate us. That will fall off in a little while, and then we will be together—an eternity !”

The clasping hands relaxed ; the drooping lids closed ; the colorless lips moved without utterance ; a thrilling stillness was felt through the chamber.

“I thirst,” were the words Zilpha’s bended ear caught. With her wild grief petrified for a moment to silence, Edith attempted to hold a glass of water to her mouth. She opened her eyes, and fixed them full upon her with a lofty, triumphant smile.

“Not for that; it is for the—the—”

The words faded into air; the arms were lifted with an eager gesture, then fell again; the bosom heaved; the breath came fainter, slower, slower; the lip that was athirst was drinking from the river of the water of life!

XXXVII.

Left Behind.

—“FOR three months the sod has been smoothed above my mother’s grave; the wintry winds have moaned over it; the snow has whitened it once, twice, thrice; I have kept count of its kindly covering up of the ghastly, yellow clay, for that has been all my thought as I watched it falling. *Her grave!* I push from me the bitter, stinging conception. It is too terrible, too chilling to the life-blood of my heart to be taken home to it, even yet, as a deliberate, inexorable truth, that she is the owner of a grave! That bright, genial face; that loving, tender-throbbing pulse-flow; that quick step; that unbent form—what have these to do with death? Nothing, nothing. She is not dead—only heaven

“ ‘Has opened on a hinge of harmony,
And let her thro’ to glory—’

while I, poor weeper, am breaking my heart over the 'locked wardrobe' that holds only the cast away garment of the beautiful soul, now radiant with the white raiment of immortality. But oh! the coffin—the mound of withered grass—the stone with that precious name cut upon it—the lonely, far distant burial spot, lonely as Lawrence's island grave, all haunt me with a ghostly terror. Surely she was kindred enough to God's angels to have been wafted, Elijah-like, invested with the body, to heaven!

"Oh! those days and nights of benumbing anguish that followed her going away—the lifting of the rigid form across the threshold where I had so often seen her stand, looking off towards the golden sunsets—the slow, silent tread of those who bore it carefully, as if they feared it might wake her, down the long gravel-walk—the breaking up of home, *my* last home—the coming away without *her*, she who had always planned every movement for us, to be left behind! Compassionate Redeemer! fold to thy human heart, the throbbing, aching one, that, but for Thy pity, would break and die! Thy tenderness can be gentler than even her's. A mother's tenderness! The language of earth can give hint or shadow of nothing half so sweet; and when I try to fathom the depth of Christ's love, all the rich expressions of Scripture furnish me with no words so exquisite in their pathos as this—'As one whom his mother comforteth, will I comfort you.' This is the pillow on which my soul finds rest;

but these famished, these craving, these importunate human affections, that will not be reasoned down—that cannot live without their daily supply of sweet, satisfying sympathy—that faint, even while they question not the truth of all that faith is whispering to them—ah! *they* must go ‘an hungered’ to the grave!

“It is over, and she is gone. Five months ago ‘the angel of our household’ went from our hearts heavenward. To-day, Zilpha, my beautiful, my best-beloved—ah! poor heart, is that said in perfect truth—thy best-beloved?—to-day she has left my side to return as heretofore no more. I stood beside her, as she leaned so trustingly on that strong, supporting arm; I listened to the spoken words that made her another’s than mine; I saw him seal the vow he had taken, with a kiss on that pure forehead, when all was over, and I did not tremble—I did not shed a tear. A strange apathy is colding my heart, I sometimes fear, or is it only that it has felt, and ached, and suffered, till feeling and capability of impression are alike gone! Nothing, I believe, can move me greatly now. I had thought it would cost me unspeakable grief to be separated from Zilpha, when the idea was first presented to me—her full, unshared confidence was such a part of my being. To-day, that oneness of confiding love, the all that the most grasping heart wants or needs, is passed over to another. She and Eunice are both gone. I may not see them for months, but I write with a steady hand.

I do not manifest even the grief that disturbs poor Josepha, though the truth is breaking over me with a dull inevitableness, that I am left behind.

“*Left behind!* My father’s farewell kiss was given me long ago, and my child’s heart ached for many a day over the empty place he never came back to fill. Then Lawrence went away—to find a grave; but sorest and most desolate of all, came *that* leaving, like which there can be none hereafter. Now my lovely saint-like sister is gone, not as they, indeed, but with the grave of marriage dug between us, in which must lie buried the dead confidences of our hitherto undivided souls. It is surely a sad going away. The heart-chambers are emptying fast. They echo hollowly, with low, piteous wailings, so that thought often affrighted, turns the key, and glides away, daring neither to venture in nor listen. It cannot bear the counting over of the golden-hoarded memories that are stored away there. The luxury has in it too much of heart-break. It cannot hear without quailing, the pleading, plaintive refrain, ‘mother! mother!’”

“I have a vivid remembrance of crossing a wide common once, when a very little child, with a half dozen companions. I dallied, picking wild-flowers, till I found on a sudden that they had all gone and left me. The setting sun threw interminable shadows before me, and the east was beginning to darken with the coming of night. I shouted, but they were too far away too hear me;

I ran to overtake them, but fright had deprived me of all my little strength. I sank down on the grass, overcome with a sense of despair, that to this day I cannot forget. Was the childhood's experience a fore-shadow of my future?

“There is another name that disquiets me with its haunting sweetness. Strange that time, and hopelessness, and sorrow, have not drowned that sound long ago! Strange that the letters which have come to me since my mother's departure, full of only a natural, but very tender condolence, should make my hands tremble while I open them! The chance expressions of ordinary friendship; the ‘dear Edith;’ the ‘affectionately yours,’ such as any one feeling the least interest in me, might write—such as could not well be less, coming from a kinsman, why *will* my foolish heart try to extract a sustenance from them they were never meant to give? I almost wish I had not known what it was to have him to lean on during those last, bitter days at Silverwood. His sympathies, so unutterably satisfying; his words of precious consolation; his beautiful prayers; his sweet helpfulness in teaching me the uses of my sufferings; the touch of his hand; his arm wound so frankly about me, as it might have been about Eunice or Sepha—ah! they were all too soothing, too strengthening, too beguiling! I felt the fainter when the arm was withdrawn, for it *was* withdrawn, and I sank down weaker, wearier, lonelier than before. Shame,

shame poor heart! that when thou hast God to lean upon, thou shouldst yet cling with such a fond conviction to the belief that the love of a human heart like thine own, could endue thee with a mysterious strength to do and to bear all things! Let me falsify the belief, if I can; let me compel myself to write of *him* as of the others—

LEFT BEHIND.

I CANNOT chide away the pain,
 I cannot bid the throb be still,
 That aches and aches through heart and brain,
 And leaves them pulsing to the thrill
 Of overburdening sorrow. They
 Who never saw the eyelids close,
 Beneath whose drooping fringes lay
 The charm of all their life's repose—
 The bloom, the blissfulness, the joy,
 The love that could not know alloy—
 Who have not sat and watched the breath,
 That only breathed to bless them, come
 Fainter and fainter till the dumb
 Unanswering lips grew pale in death—
 They cannot know, by grief untaught,
 What an unfathomed depth I find,
 Of ebbless anguish in the thought
 That I am left behind.

What matters it that other eyes
 Have smiles to give me just as sweet,
 Or softly other lips repeat
 Endearments of as gentle guise?

I only feel the smile, whate'er
 Its yearning tenderness may be,
Is not the one whose winning cheer
 Was more than all the world to me !
I only feel, howe'er so kind
 Is everything that voice may say—
'Tis not the one that passed away,
 When I was left behind !

I know—I know that as of yore,
 Nature is festive in her mirth ;
That still the sun comes shining through
The clear and palpitating blue,
As goldenly as heretofore ;
 I know this fair rejoicing earth
 Tides underneath the smile of God,
As to the moonbeams tides the sea—
But yet there's little joy for me,
 In all the brightness spread abroad.
The smiting blow that grief has given,
 So jars the mirror of my mind,
That everything of sweet or fair,
Has but distorted reflex there :
 And oh ! the tears—the tears, like rain,
 Upon its surface leave their stain,
Since my beloved went to heaven—
 Since I was left behind !

There is a hand that can restore
 The spirit's equipoise, till true,
In faith's serene, soft light once more,
 His image trembles back to view.
Dear Christ ! when there Thy form appears,
Let me not blot it with my tears,

That are not murmuring tears—yet sad ;
I would be patient, I would find
How much the thought can reconcile—
Can lift me up, and make me glad,
That only for a little while
Shall I be left behind !

XXXVIII.

The Redeemed Pledge.

A FORTNIGHT had dragged itself drearily away for Edith since Zilpha's marriage, and with the increasing days the burden of her loneliness grew none the lighter. The constant letters which came from her could not assuage the heart-thirst. They were refreshing, indeed, and solacing ; but there was a faintness within which the drop could not satisfy. Her aunt was kind, but then it was a kindness that had no communion with the inner world of thought and emotion in which Edith lived. She was not obtuse, but when her husband had died, she had folded her hands in no morbid despondency—had wasted little time in unavailing regrets. These her natural energy and love of activity, as well as the pressing demands of a large plantation on her hands and thoughts, alike forbade. She imagined that Edith could do as she had done—let the stream of the Present, with its small, ever-recurring incidents, cover up the foot-prints memory

had left on the sands of the Past. The daily instruction of Josepha and her little cousins had its unconscious uses and consolations in compelling an arrest of the feelings too unduly lingered over; and although the light thoughtlessness of the children seemed many times to mock her, Edith could find in them a companionship more to her liking than in the colder and more world-worn natures about her.

But she had no one now to whom she could talk about her mother or her sorrows with that undoubting assurance of answering sympathy which the confiding heart demands. Josepha shunned the topic. It made her only cry, and the child had never had any love for tears; and Edith would sometimes fear that the remembrance of what she was so anxious to cherish in her, might grow dim. But if she seemed to turn away from the subject in her waking hours, in her sleep she often stretched out her arms and sobbed, "*mother—mother,*" with a piteousness that filled the listener's eyes with tears.

"A letter again from sister!" exclaimed Josepha, bursting into Edith's room, "and a thick one too. There must be one inside from Eunice for me."

Edith broke it open, and instead of the expected one from Eunice, her eye caught the superscription of one bearing a foreign post-mark, to her mother, at their old home in B——, from whence it had been forwarded to Mr. Dubois, as a known friend of the family, whose pres-

ent whereabouts the post-master was ignorant of. There was a momentary start of sorrow. The hands that should have opened it, were moveless now. The eyes that should have read it, were to be unclosed no more. She turned to Žilpha's letter for explanation, and soon came to the following paragraph :

—“ I knew, my dearest Edith, that sooner or later we would, in some way, realize the truth of our beloved mother's trust for us ; but the idea of having the verification of it put before our eyes so soon, and in such a manner, would have seemed chimerical. ‘ Jehovah-jireh ’ were among our mother's last words. Read the enclosed letter, and confess the fulfilment of her unwavering faith. While I have been overpowered with a sense of God's goodness to me, I have had, in the midst of my quiet joy, a strong pain at my heart to think of your loneliness—you who need support more than I—and I have felt as if it were selfish to be quite so happy as I might be, when you were sorrowful. But a load is lifted, to-day, from my spirits, by this unexpected and blessed letter. From it you will find that, contrary to all our expectations, the Scotch grand-uncle has, after all, left dear mother or her heirs a handsome portion of his property. Thirty-thousand dollars ! It is a God-send, Edith, in the fullest sense of the word. Now, your too sensitive spirit shall not be chafed by a feeling of dependence ; now, there's an end to the acceptance of the governess-ship you have proposed ; now, you and

Josepha shall join us, in two or three months' time, as we return on our way to Mr. Fleming's Georgia home—the bequest of a rich aunt, who died two years ago, and to which, owing to his father's ill-health, he has never yet assumed the care. Since he came to New-York, he has found reason to change his former plans, and has now determined to go and reside on the estate himself, as he feels too sensibly the responsibility of looking *personally* after the physical and moral condition of his servants there, to delegate it to other hands.

“It is my fixed purpose to renounce all interest in the legacy from Newton Lodge in behalf of my three sisters. I did not need Mr. Fleming's suggestion to that effect, as my mind was made up before he proposed it. It has only been since my marriage that I have learned from him how very ample his resources are, so that there is no pretext for my setting up a claim of self-denial on the occasion. There is one difficulty about this legacy. The Scotch executor suggests that a representative of the American branch of the family come over at once and attend to it, as there is a possibility of some litigation in regard to the will. Suppose we employ Cousin Bryant to undertake it for us. He has fine business talent, and it will afford him a pleasant opportunity of seeing Britain. Mr. Fleming thinks it is just the thing.

“To think how sweet it will be for us all to be together again, makes my heart run over. We shall be happy in

each other's presence and love ; happy in living over the bright, yes, and even the trying past ; happy in our beloved ones' exceeding joy ; happy in following them as they followed Christ—heavenward."

Edith laid down the letter which she had read, with many pauses, and with clouded vision ; and leaning her forehead against Josepha's bright head, she clasped her arms tightly about her, without the power to speak.

" Dear sister Edith, don't cry. Why, it's something to be very glad about. Don't you feel thankful ?" and the child soothingly stroked the jetty hair. " It's just as mother said, isn't it ?"

" Yes, yes ; just as sweet mother said. If only she were here, or Lawrence, we could be very gay. But, indeed, I'm ashamed of my doubts, my dear—that's what makes me cry. Don't you ever do so ? Believe like darling mother did—that God will provide *always*."

" I *do* believe it ; I always believed everything she said, because she never in my life told me anything that wasn't *just so*."

" Well, believe it, Sepha, not only because *she* said it, but because it is God's own precious truth. For your sake and Eunice's, I am very, very thankful ; and dear Zilpha, what a devoted sister she is ! Heaven bless her for her love and care ! For myself—"

But Edith did not finish the sentence. For herself, she would have said it made but little difference—the mere

provision for physical comfort did not seem a matter of great importance now. But she recalled her mother's mild rebuke—that we have God and His service always to live and suffer for—and a chastened emotion, nearer akin to joy than she had known for many a day, stirred her soul, as she made, then and there, a vow and a surrender more entire than had ever passed her lips before.

The next day, after the school-duties of the morning were over, and Edith sat in her chamber writing an answer to Zilpha's letter, a servant came to Edith with the message that there was some one in the parlor wanting to see her.

“ Didn't he send up his name ? ”

“ No, ma'am ; but it's de gentleman who fotched you alls ladies here when you fust come.”

Edith rose instantly, and, with hands that trembled in spite of her resolution to make them steady, closed her desk, and followed to the door. For a moment she stood with her hand on the knob ; then she closed it, sat down, and tried to reason and command herself into perfect composure ; but it would not do. She turned the key, and dropping on her knees, offered up a few earnest petitions that were better than all ; for when she passed out of the room her face had attained its old quiet again.

Josepha was in the parlor when she entered, overjoyed at seeing “Cousin Barry” once more ; and, child-like, as she stood with an arm round his neck, she had crowded

into the fifteen minutes she had been with him, all the news she could think of about the travellers, together with the contents of Zilpha's last letter. Edith met Bryant with none of the embarrassment her chamber had been witness of; the traitorous voice, nevertheless, had to be condemned to some moments of silence.

"It is very kind in you, Cousin Bryant," she said, after a pause, "to come and see us *just now*." But she checked herself. Zilpha's marriage was a tender point to touch upon, and she did not know exactly how to go on. Bryant drew her towards him with an easy frankness—for she had seated herself at the furthest corner of the sofa on which he sat—and, with his other arm around Josepha, began to speak of Zilpha and Mr. Fleming in such a way as put Edith at her ease in talking of them.

"Tell me all about her marriage; how she looked; how you bore it; how Sepha comported herself. I want to hear all."

Edith essayed, but her tongue, somehow, did not do her bidding well; and Josepha could not resist taking the story from her lips.

"She was married before breakfast, Cousin Barry, which we had just at ten o'clock. Mr. Fleming rode over from F—— about an hour before, and Mrs. Grayson, Aunt Maria's sister, and her daughter, Miss Virginia, were all the strangers that were here, besides Mr. Maclean, the minister. The servants, though, made quite a big party,

for about twenty of them asked sister's leave to come and see the ceremony; and it made me laugh to see Aunt Tabby, the old cook. She was so taken up with her 'Sally-Lunns,' and her muffins, and her rolls, and so on, that she wouldn't leave them till Mr. Maclean was beginning; and then she rushed in with her sleeves rolled up, which she didn't find out till the ceremony was nearly over, and then you ought to have seen what a scuffle she and Mammy Winnie had to get 'em down! I wondered sister didn't have *you* to marry her, Cousin Barry; it would have seemed more like the thing. Well, she looked mighty sweet, only 'as white as cotton,' Sophy said. She didn't cry any; but her eyes were bright, just as if the tears were there, but didn't like to fall. Sister Edith didn't cry either, I believe. Then we sat down to *such* a beautiful breakfast! and, as soon as ever it was over, they started away."

"The whole affair in a nut-shell—very succinct and satisfactory. I'm glad to hear sister Edith didn't cry."

"The very depth of our emotions sometimes has the effect of making us appear calm," said Edith; "that was the way with Zilpha."

"Yes, I think she suppressed her feelings too much, often; for the sake of saving it to others, she took upon herself just so much additional pain as the suppression caused her. But such a Spartan virtue must not answer for you, Edith; with your temperament, this sort of pas-

sive endurance is not to be encouraged. Well, I am thankful that Zilpha is happy ; who could deserve it better ?”

“ None on earth,” replied Edith, energetically. “ I know her as no one else can, and I must say, that unless I except my mother and brother, I never met with so pure and unselfish a spirit. She is one of God’s angels, who walk the earth disguised in the garb of humanity, whom we entertain unawares.”

“ I believe it—I believe it,” said Bryant, warmly ; and again Edith checked herself, for she fancied her voice had a tremor in it ; but these were her uppermost thoughts, and they would have egress.

“ It is to be hoped that there is nothing of the reformer in Mr. Fleming’s composition, for ‘ his occupation would be gone ’ with Zilpha as a subject. Would anybody so perfect have suited me, do you think, Sepha ?”

“ Not if you like to have somebody to correct, as you used to do Eunice and me ; but we were only children. Grown up ladies don’t need to be corrected.”

“ Ah, indeed ! your friend Miss Jacqueline, for example. It strikes me you had some faults of her’s to tell me of, when we were travelling together last Autumn.”

“ Uncle Felix said ‘ it was his opinion Miss Jacqueline thought the sun rose and set in her own face.’ ”

“ Uncle Felix is a discriminating judge. Pray, when did you hear from the old man ?”

“ Oh ! I’ve had two letters since we came here. You

know he went to live at Mr. Roberts', where his wife is ; and he gets one of the little boys there to write for him. He says he shuts his eyes when he has to go by Silverwood, for the gentleman who bought it hasn't come to live there yet, and it looks mighty lonely. His last letter told me, too, about Miss Lettuce Grant's and Mr. Philips' wedding."

But the entrance of the rest of the family made the conversation general, and by the time dinner was announced, "Mr. Woodruff" was the established darling of all the children of the household.

XXXIX.

Clear Shining after Rain.

“EDITH.”

There was nothing more uttered than her name, and Edith looked up from the handful of early violets gathered in her walk, which she was busying herself in arranging, to Bryant, who sat at the brook's side near her; but he seemed too intent, just then, on trying to stem the ripples with the point of his cane, to finish his sentence. The March afternoon was bright and beautiful with the promise of Spring; the air was musical with the pleasant piping of the robins and the blue-jays, as they flew in and out among the budding alders; the sycamores were beginning to look green, and, under the withered grass and leaves at their roots, the “spring-beauties” were thrusting up their timid heads, as if a little distrustful that the promise with which the whispering airs had coaxed them from their hiding-places, might not be fully redeemed. The humming of wild bees and the droning of flitting insects filled the

atmosphere with a drowsy languor that seemed to steep the meadow slopes, and the fringing belt of woodland, and the forest-aisles, through which the stream gurgled away over its blue pebbles with low laughter.

“Edith, did your sister ever tell you the story of my love for her?”

“Not till I asked her if she had not a story to tell,” said Edith, entangling her violets with the grass she had been knotting together for a string to bind them with, and letting them all drop, disarranged again, into her lap.

“And what made you think she had?”

“That would be a difficult question to answer. What makes up the indescribable Spring fragrance we inhale this moment?”

“The mellowing earth, the dried leaves, the wet mosses on the brook-side yonder, your violets, a thousand nameless things.”

“‘A thousand nameless things!’ That will suffice you for an answer, then.”

“After my mother’s death,” Bryant went on, after a pause, “when I came to be an occasional member of your family, I set Zilpha up in my boyish fancy as my ideal of girlish loveliness. I never undertook to amend her, or to quarrel with her, as I sometimes did with you. My admiration threw a halo around her, and, in spite of the mischievous twinkle her eyes used to have then, and the archness of her mouth, which seemed to pass almost entirely away as she grew up, I could not

approach her in that perfectly familiar manner indulged in towards you, though you were not so frank as she. Ah ! that is just what I was wanting you to do," he continued, as, with a sudden impulse, Edith tossed the flowers into the stream ; " for you were too busy with them to listen. Come, sit on this old log. There, that is it. I could not half see you before. That great sycamore kept the sunlight from your face.

" Well, to go on : each vacation as I returned from college, I found some new phase to admire in the developing character, which grew to be a beautiful study to me, as I would sit and watch upon her face the working of the cunning sculptor, Thought. I dwelt upon it as the student of art does on one of Raphael's Madonnas. Indeed, I went so far as actually to have a small copy of Guido's Beatrice taken, because of the resemblance I fancied between their faces, after having once seen Zilpha represent that picture in one of our home *tableaux vivants*, and had it hung like a presiding divinity above my study table. As she unfolded into fuller womanhood, there was a passiveness, a subjectivity about her, such as her earlier years did not give token of. The change surprised me somewhat. It did not lessen my delight in her, I think, but it made her more unlike myself. The perfect transparency, simplicity, and thorough ingenuousness of her nature, made it specially difficult for me to compel her to any understanding of my feelings towards her. She never *did*

know them till we traveled together southward. Then, when I saw the steadiness of her true womanly heart, the depth of her love and tenderness towards her sick brother, her self-restraint and self-forgetfulness, my lips were unsealed. She, herself, has told you the rest."

"Hard to give her up, did you say, Edith? Yes, it was the rude breaking of the dream of years; but I taught myself to do it. Such lessons *can* be taught—*can* be learned."

"Yes; by men."

"And women, too, if they choose that they shall be. I brought reason at once to bear upon the case. I saw the folly of granting sustenance to an utterly hopeless love. I saw the injury it would be to me in weakening my zest for life's enjoyments and life's labors. I listened to the dictates of judgment; yes, I, with my passionate temperament, which is not prone to be cool and collected where feeling is deeply interested, determined upon self-conquest—prayed for it—obtained it. And when we met, as you remember we first did, that sorrowful night of her coming home with Mr. Fleming, I could see her lean on *his* arm without being overmastered. When intercourse had shown me the native nobility of his character, the purity of his heart, the strength of his religious principles, I went further. Since her happiness would be secure in such hands, I could resign her wholly."

"Your force of will must be very strong to be able to

compel the obedience of the heart and affections in this way."

"It *is* strong. You might remember that of old, Edith. I have long made it a principle of action, when I have been assured that my volitions were right, to force all else to bow to their decisions. *Before* we met, I had some torturing struggles to encounter ; but *after* listening to the tale of her love as she frankly told it to me during that week's stay at Silverwood, my self-subjugation was complete. I do not regret that I have loved her, Edith ; it did me good—made me purer—strengthened me through the strife.

"Since then—would you believe it?—yes, since then, I have ventured to love again. You see I have no faith in 'the heart's one spring-time.' I *have* faith in the possibility of a wealth of summer richness, even after the frosts of disappointment have nipped its earlier blooms. *This* time, it is not an enthusiastic admiration—a thralldom before qualities esteemed almost perfect—it is a deep, uncritical, unquestioning emotion ; in short, the simple encasing of another heart within my own. Will you let me tell you this story, too, Edith?"

"Certainly," said Edith, turning her face from the sunshine that flickered down through the thinly-fringed boughs overhead, and disengaging the hand Bryant held, under the pretext of arranging her hair.

"But will you promise to be interested?"

“Yes;” and she went on twining up the long, dark braids. “Yes; dear mother begged you to take Lawrence’s place, and you have done it. Surely then, what so closely touches your happiness, cannot be indifferent to me.”

Something glistened on the black, drooped lashes, as a streak of silvery light fell across her eyes, which did not escape Bryant’s observation.

“Well, now your hair is arranged, your hand again. This sweet, tender heart, that has been taken into mine, would you know what it is like? It is not as tranquil, nor as evenly-beating, nor as self-sustained, nor as hopeful as Zilpha’s; but it is more easily stirred, more ardent, more craving, and has, *I* think, a greater capacity for loving. It is not so faultless as hers; but I cherish it none the less for that. It is pleasant to have what is more akin to ourselves—to find something to blame occasionally—something to improve—something to be planted, as we plant a seed, and watch it bud and blossom under our own weeding and watering.

“‘Her tastes?’ Well, they are exactly such as I would choose them to be. We love the same poets, the same books, the same kind of people, and above all for a clergyman, she loves with an equal love the service in which I am engaged, and will be a most gentle ministrant therein. To sum up the matter, the key that can unlock the innermost being of the one, can do the same for the other. Are we not congenial enough?”

“Yes; just what will suit you, it appears.”

“And now you are wanting to know what the casket that holds my jewel is like, or you have no woman’s curiosity. Suffice it to say that it is fair enough in every respect to please me. Is not that satisfactory? And her name? you must know that. Ah! don’t turn away so, Edith. Come, I want to enjoy the look of interest on your face. Please lift your eyes, as if you cared to know—yes, that way. Her name”—and Bryant spoke with a slow deliberateness, his eyes looking steadfastly into those that drooped beneath their scrutiny—“her name is Edith—*Edith Irvine!*”

The upturned face blanched with sudden paleness; the slight form quivered, but the next moment it was caught to the strong loving heart, in a caress whose passionate tenderness was an over-payment for all the tears that had dimmed, and the disappointments that had shadowed, and the sorrows that had embittered the pathway of those young years. On a sudden, the Future ceased to be a level, dead sea, on whose borders grew no refreshing fruits—over whose sullen waters no winged hopes were wafted; but it stretched away, a joyous, sparkling current; its every chasm bridged across by that marvellous architect, Love!

It was a long time before Edith could utter one word. Surprise, bewilderment, tumult of soul, confused joy, had struck her dumb. Fast-showered kisses seemed powerless

to warm back the blood to those unresisting lips, and the shut eyes had no look to give—nothing, nothing but a struggling tear. Her head rose and fell to the quickened pulsations of the heart against which it was pressed—a repose how exquisite in its unuttered, unutterable luxury! But the word so pleaded for, trembled forth at last.

“It is enough; I ask no more now; I am wholly satisfied. I have been seizing occasional chances of looking into this fluttering, imprisoned thing beneath my hand here; and may I tell you some of the revelations it has unconsciously made to me? Ah! darling, don’t look distressed. There has been never once, any unwomanly unveiling of what the true woman will always hide away in her heart’s farthest corner, as her most jealously guarded secret. But remember how peculiar my opportunities of observation have been, in your incautious hours of anguish, when you forgot to think of your mask. No, no; very slowly, very beautifully, has the belief of what I now realize, grown upon me; but too slowly to keep pace with my own strengthening love. We shall have multitudes of such revelations for each other now, Edith—long lessons which it will take us years to learn.”

The hidden face was lifted after awhile; the tears suffered themselves to be dried away, and the tender smile ventured forth, triumphing over the pressure of all sad memories, even as the “spring-beauties” at their feet came timidly up, at the call of the life-giving sun, through

the clogging masses of last year's dead leaves. Hour after hour passed, and still the beguiling talk, the sweet "tautologies of love" flowed on as musically as the brook beside them. The story of the good fortune Zilpha's letter had brought tidings of, was told, with all her proposed plans.

"Admirable!" said Bryant, as he listened. "Edith dear, we will make this European trip our summer bridal tour. You were sorrowfully disappointed once—you and Lawrence. You know I am to take his place. We will go together now."

The sun was darting his last red shafts through the alders; the robins and the blue-jays had almost ceased their twitterings; and only a rim of crimson was visible above the waveless, western horizon, as they rose to turn homewards.

"And now," said Bryant, holding Edith's unrelinquished hand still in his own; "what motto shall I have engraved inside of the band I am to send for this slender little finger?"

There were tears again—grateful, self-reproachful tears in Edith's eyes as she answered—

"*'Jehovah-jireh!'*"